



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Dakotas-Minnesota Area

Bishop Lanette Plambeck
Resident Bishop

October 23, 2024

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ.

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ~Ephesians 4:1-3 NIV

As I shared during our annual conference session this past June, I, along with the Appointive Cabinet, Conference Board of Trustees, and other conference leadership, have been in conversation with the leadership of Embrace Church since the fall of 2023 regarding the possibility of their discontinuance as a United Methodist Church. After much prayer, discernment, conversation and mediation, we have come to a shared decision regarding the future mission and ministry of Embrace in relation to the Dakotas Conference of The United Methodist Church.

Therefore, in accordance with our standing rules and ¶603.5 of the Book of Discipline; I hereby call for a special session of the Dakotas Annual Conference on November 23, 2024, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Central Time and 9:00 a.m. Mountain Time.

The special session will be conducted in a virtual format utilizing ZOOM technology. This will allow members to join from individual devices as well as have voice and vote during the session.

The agenda will include one business item: consideration of the resolution ratifying the closure of Embrace Church/Embrace United Methodist Church per the provisions of ¶2549.

Clergy members and lay members who were elected to represent their churches/charges at the 2024 Annual Conference are asked to register to attend this special session so that we might distribute needed information and instructions accordingly. Registration will open on Monday, October 28, 2024. Further information regarding the session and its business, including the legal and financial matters related to this discontinuance, will be sent to members of the Annual Conference in the coming weeks. There will be a pre-conference webinar on Monday, November 18, 2024, beginning at 7:30 p.m. central time, 6:30 p.m. mountain time.

In paragraph 2549, there is a phrase, "with the consent of the presiding bishop." This has not been an easy action to consent to. I know, through shared stories, all that was invested by United Methodists across the Dakotas into the planting and expansion of Embrace. While we can give thanks for the Kingdom fruit that has grown - and we pray continues to grow - through the ministry of Embrace, we know we have a unique call to steward resources for the advancement of the United Methodist witness in this region and we grieve the loss of a partner church in that specific mission. We were intentional, in our deliberations and through the mediation process, to ensure that the financial terms of this action would honor that investment.



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More than financial impact, however, this decision was deeply troubling because of the ways in which it impacts the Body of Christ and also diminishes Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17:20-23. That is why, in part, discernment and mediation were critical partners in this process; we knew dealing with this final discontinuance using 2549 could appear to be a pathway to disaffiliation. It is not. We chose to bring this process to completion in order to honor our word and maintain the integrity with which we entered the conversations with Embrace in 2023.

As we prepare ourselves—body, mind, and spirit—for the upcoming special session, may the peace of Christ guard our hearts and minds as we see to be faithful out our mission and ministry in the United Methodist Church trusting the Triune God to hold our future.

With you on the journey,

Bishop Lanette Plambeck

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