

GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH UPPER MIDWEST CONFERENCE NEWSLETTER

Early Edition

October 2025

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What is Your Favorite Season?

by Rev. James Parks, Upper Midwest Conference Superintendent

When I ask this question, many people say fall. With cooler weather, changing colors, football, and pumpkin spice, fall has a lot to offer.

Others pause and then respond that their favorite season is pheasant season, which doesn't come until later in October here in Iowa. But I don't think I've ever heard anyone say their favorite time of year is charge conference season. And yet, that is exactly the season we are entering in the Upper Midwest Conference. Every church is preparing for its annual charge conference.

This may not sound exciting at first, but it is an important time. Charge conference gives us a chance to pause and reflect on what God has been doing in our congregations. I hope each of you can point to stories of lives changed, people served, and steps of faith taken.

In the congregation I serve, for example, a few months ago our youth have decided to take over the front three rows of the sanctuary. They even put out "reserved" signs (as if someone was going to take those seats). Each week, they gather there with passion and joy. Their presence lifts the hearts of the congregation and encourages me as a preacher. I believe God will use their commitment to grow His kingdom.

Our *Book of Doctrine and Discipline* reminds us:

"The Charge Conference shall be the connecting link between the local church, the annual conference, and the general church. The ministry of the Global Methodist Church happens primarily through the local church, overseen and governed by the charge conference. The purpose of all Global Methodist Church organizations is to strengthen and support the work of the local church." (§206)

I firmly believe the local church is where ministry happens. Through charge conference, we not only organize ourselves for the mission God has given us, but we also link arms with the wider church. The image that comes to my mind is a giant fishing net stretching across the Upper Midwest. Jesus calls us to be fishers of people. One congregation cannot reach everyone—but when we work together, in step with the Holy Spirit, our reach expands, and many more can be gathered into the love and grace of Jesus Christ.

You can find Charge Conference forms by going to: <https://www.uppermidwestgmc.org/charge-conference>

If you need to know your district and presiding elder, go to: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.uppermidwestgmc.org/_files/ugd/e430ce_95472576e7724f439df40196d3489982.pdf

I doubt charge conference season will ever become anyone's favorite. But my prayer is that it becomes a season of significance—a time to celebrate what God has done, to strengthen our connection to one another, and to become more effective in sharing the saving, transforming Good News of Jesus Christ.

May God bless this season in all our local churches.

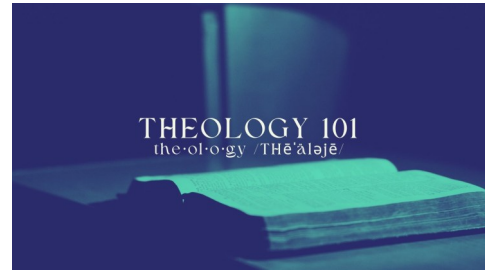
The Communion Table - The Center of the Gospel

by Rev. Dr. Travis Stevick

Pastor, Grace Methodist Church, Marcus, IA

youtube.com/tstevick1 • traviststevick.substack.com

That title might seem a bit provocative, and it is certainly at least a bit of an exaggeration. After all, the *real* center of the Gospel is the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ for us and our salvation. Everything else gains theological value by how it is related to that center. What I mean is that I have become increasingly convinced that the practice of Holy Communion is vitally important.



In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus famously predicts his own death three times. It was an unwelcome message to hear for those who were following him, at least partially hoping that he would step into earthly power and they would join Him in that power (Mark 10:37). As a general rule, the disciples said less and less each time this topic came up.

Even if the disciples totally failed to understand that Jesus was going to die, it was a repeated theme in His teaching. The disciples could not have possibly known what his death would mean because they had not yet seen and understood the resurrection.

The place where Jesus explained what His death would mean, that it was not merely a death but a death *for* us (Luke 22:19), that His blood was being poured out to establish the new covenant and to forgive sins (Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20), was at His Last Supper.

This is something that we practice so often in the church that we can lose sight of how powerful it is. In commemorating the events of the Last Supper, of remembering the bread, the cup, and the words, we rehearse the moment when Jesus Himself interpreted His death for His disciples. It might not be too strong to say that the reason we understand the death of Jesus at *all* is because of these words at the Last Supper. How beautiful that this key insight, central to the Gospel, or at least our understanding of it, is not merely *taught* but *lived*, and *repeated* among God's people!

It is at the center of the Gospel in another way as well. Jesus called folks to follow Him from every walk of life. In particular, I want to highlight the fact that He called Matthew, the tax collector, a person whose very livelihood was seen as an unholy collaboration with the occupying Roman force. He also called Simon, not Peter, but one known as a "zealot." The Zealots were so committed to the restoration of the Israelite nation that they were prepared to engage in acts of violence and revolution to overthrow those same Romans.

In order to follow Jesus, they had to lay down their differences, at least enough to put Jesus first. I am sure there is no way for those two to see eye to eye on many things, but they were together in Christ. Jesus sets the table for us and calls us to come and share that moment with our Lord and everyone else that He invites. We won't see eye to eye on everything, but we see how radical the call to follow Jesus is at the Table.

There is a third way in which we see the center of the Gospel at the Lord's Table. Two others that were invited to eat were the more famous Simon, Simon Peter, the man who was about to walk out the door and deny his Lord three times; and also Judas, the man who was about to walk out the door and betray *his* Lord

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When I was a new Christian, I had this sense of awe at the Table and I couldn't understand why. I only began to grasp how beautiful and powerful Holy Communion was when I began to study the Bible and when I began to deal with people who disagreed with me and who did not see eye to eye with *me*.

The Lord's Supper is not just some thing that we do in the church, it is not merely an empty tradition. It is not something to do if we feel like doing it, but we could just as easily leave it aside if we *don't* feel like doing it. It is something we have been told to do in remembrance of Him. Whether we always remember the power of the bread and cup shared in the company of Christ's body, the Church, may we always come forward to receive what God has to give, for that is always what we need.



News & Prayer Requests from your General Conference Delegation

by Mike McInnis, Clergy Alternate Delegate

General Conference 2026 is now less than one year away (Aug. 30 – Sept. 5, 2026). Your Upper Midwest Conference delegation has been meeting monthly (on Zoom) to pray and prepare together to represent you well in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Pray for your delegation especially as we learn the new Global Methodist process for nominating and electing our bishops! These servant leaders are now elected by the General Conference, after being successfully nominated by annual conferences. Each annual conference can select one nominee from their own conference, and one from outside their conference. You can learn more about that process at: <chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcjpcglclefindmkaj/https://irp.cdn-website.com/1876eae9/files/uploaded/Episcopal+Election+Process+English.pdf>

Along with a new process for the election of episcopal leaders, there is a new support system of both encouragement and accountability for Bishops — an “Area Episcopal Committee”. This committee is composed of one clergy and one lay person from each annual conference for which that Bishop has oversight (so around 14 persons). Please pray for us as we discern a clergy and lay person from our conference to serve on this Committee. (If you have suggestions for these persons, please contact us through the email below.)

Pray also as we begin to look at legislation for General Conference over the coming months; as a new denomination we are making important decisions about our doctrine, structure and ministry priorities. Over the next few months as we receive this information, we will be sharing about resolutions and important discernment in upcoming newsletter articles here.

Finally, please pray for the health and well-being of our delegation team members and their families, so that we are able to travel to South Africa.

We have a [NEW Webpage](https://www.uppermidwestgmc.org/general-conference-delegation) <https://www.uppermidwestgmc.org/general-conference-delegation> for updates and ways to connect and communicate with us. You can also email us with questions, encouragements, and your prayers at gcdelegates@uppermidwestgmc.org.

Thank you!

MULTIPLICATION TEAM UPDATE

The Methodist Movement: A Legacy of Multiplication

by Rev. Zach Kingery, Multiplication Team Leader

Last month I shared with you how the task before us is to recover the multiplying DNA of our historic Methodist movement - a movement fueled by a zeal for the Gospel. As we look forward to 2030, a time where it is my hope that we are a Conference where that zeal is actively being rediscovered, I think it is important that we also look back. To be a Conference where Every Church Plants is not a new idea, it is deeply woven into our Wesleyan DNA.

Laity Leading as Lead Followers

American Methodism did not begin with large institutions or ordained clergy - it began with the unwavering commitment of ordinary, yet profoundly spiritual, faithful witness of laypeople. In 1766, Barbara Heck encouraged her cousin Philip Embury, a lay preacher, to begin meeting with a handful of Methodists in his New York home. Around the same time, Robert Strawbridge, another layman, organized societies and built preaching houses in Maryland. Add to these pioneers individuals such as Captain Thomas Webb, a soldier-preacher whose zeal helped spread the movement, and you begin to see the pattern: the Methodist movement grew because laypeople were abandoned to the Gospel, living on mission, and were empowered to fulfill the Great Commission.

Systems for Multiplying, Not Structures propping up Institutions

John Wesley knew that discipleship required a certain amount of organization. He warned that “preaching like an apostle, without joining together those that are awakened and training them up in the ways of God, is only begetting children for the murderer” (Wesley’s Journal, Aug., 1763). To ensure ongoing growth, Methodists organized class meetings and bands - small groups of believers who met weekly for accountability, encouragement, and holiness. These weren’t just for personal edification; they were seedbeds for multiplication: disciples making disciples and teaching them to obey all Christ commanded, leaders raising up leaders. And the result? People being led closer to the heart of God, a God who put on human flesh and stepped into His creation; closer to a Savior who said, “As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” The result was churches sending out believers to plant and multiply churches.

Under leaders like Francis Asbury, the Methodist movement kept pace with America’s westward expansion, multiplying communities of faith wherever people settled. By 1820, Methodism had grown in America from just over 1,000 members in 1773 to more than 273,000 - an exponential expansion fueled by apostolic, sending leaders (Bevins, Marks of A Movement). The Christmas Conference of 1784, where Asbury and Thomas Coke were appointed superintendents, gave organizational form to this multiplying movement in America. Yet the real strength of Methodism remained its commitment to discipling and sending. Societies became churches, leaders raised up leaders, and disciples made disciples. Alongside active, deep discipleship, Methodists invested in education, literature, and care for the poor - transformation not only of the soul but for the whole of the person and community.

Our Legacy, Our Calling

The legacy is clear: multiplication is our heritage. Methodism thrived not by settling, but by sending.

Friends, our Conference and the Global Methodist Church can reclaim this legacy. If we, like Wesley, have the faith to recover primitive Christianity then we might reawaken our multiplying DNA. If our multiplying DNA comes alive again, then ‘That is the way it has always been’ (*TITWIHAB*) will not be the tired sigh of a complacent church but the battle cry of a movement: souls saved, disciples sent, and holiness spreading like fire - not a stagnant faith trying to delay decay... **What is the Holy Spirit prompting you to do today so TIT-WIHAB might become a word of blessing on the lips of the next generation?**

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“Yes, our church leadership gathers regularly for prayer and discernment retreats, TITWIHAB.”

“Yes, we raise up lay preachers from within our congregation, TITWIHAB.”

“Yes, our home groups launch new home groups, TITWIHAB.”

“Yes, we networked with area GMCs to start a new church, TITWIHAB”

The vision of Every Church Plants is simply a modern expression of our Methodist DNA. Just as our forebears, we are called to multiply disciples, raise up new leaders, and plant new faith communities across the Upper Midwest. It isn't about large budgets or the number of people gathered on a Sunday morning, it is about our commitment to the Great Commission given to us by our Savior.

Scripture is clear and our history points us forward. If early Methodists could spread scriptural holiness across a continent with limited resources but great courage and conviction, what might God do through us if we embrace the same multiplying vision?

Lord, for your sake and glory, and for the generations that follow after us, may we become a Conference where Every Church Plants.

❓ Reach out to us at multiplicationteam@uppermidwestgmc.org for tools, coaching, and support as we move together toward becoming a conference where Every Church Plants.

UPPER MIDWEST ANNOUNCEMENTS



Recap of Our Marshalltown & Aberdeen Gatherings

We were blessed to have Bishop Mark Webb with us this past month, and it was truly a meaningful time together. The Spirit encouraged him to offer us messages about reaching one more person for Christ, which is the mission God has entrusted to us.



In case you missed it—or if you’d like to watch them again—you can find Bishop Webb’s evening messages from both Marshalltown, Iowa, and Aberdeen, South Dakota, now available on our Conference YouTube page at: Upper Midwest Conference of the GMChurch Media. Search for Bishop Gathering 2025, Marshalltown and Aberdeen.

We give thanks for the way God is at work among us and invite you to continue praying for our churches, pastors, and leaders as we live out our calling together.

Leadership Development Survey

A few weeks ago (on September 10th), you received an email with a few links. One link directed you to a [survey](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd_WFKbtHetySfm9aZwrhfHDGW6gMyeaAepZctAg1zd4lg-NA/viewform) that can be found: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd_WFKbtHetySfm9aZwrhfHDGW6gMyeaAepZctAg1zd4lg-NA/viewform on behalf of the Leadership Development Team of the Upper Midwest Annual Conference. The other link was to a video explaining why you should fill out that survey. It is possible that it got filtered to a “Promotions” Tab or ended up somewhere else so you may not have seen it.

We have another [video](#) to remind you of the key parts of what this whole project is about!

Please go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=exhp9akLUJY>

1. Please take a few minutes to fill out that survey (see link above) . It is our goal to get as many people to fill it out as possible. It will help us think through the current state of Conference leadership, what breakout sessions to offer at Annual Conference next year, what training is needed across the Conference, and whom we can call on to share their gifts and skills with others.
2. Once you have filled out the [survey](#), make sure to pass the email and [survey](#) on to anyone else you know in your congregation or community who exhibits Christlike leadership qualities. This is NOT just a survey for pastors.
3. Make sure to get all of this done before October 20th. We want to set a deadline to get as many responses as possible!
4. Please help us, as your Leadership Development Team, get to know how God has blessed our congregations and our leaders, so we can build up the Body of Christ together!



Thank You! and Welcome!
A Presiding Elder Transition

The Iowa South West/Nebraska East District of the Global Methodist Church welcomes a new Presiding Elder, Mike Hader. Mike brings great pastoral experience and the understanding of life in the secular world. He is a retired Naval Commander and is a great servant of God. Welcome Mike to the work of a Presiding Elder.

We are grateful for the faithful service of Steve McElroy as Presiding Elder of this district and pray God's blessings as he continues faithfully to serve Jesus as pastor and servant of his local congregation .

GLOBAL METHODIST ANNOUNCEMENTS



JOIN US IN PRAYER FOR THE 2026 GENERAL CONFERENCE

Please pray the following prayer points for the 2026 General Conference gathering of the Global Methodist Church

GOD'S GUIDANCE FOR WISDOM AND CLARITY for the Commission on General Conference including the following teams: Finance, Legislative, Credentialing and Registration, Hospitality, Housing and Logistics, Worship, Translation, International Relations, Communications, Missions, and the Prayer Team.

"For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding." Proverbs 2:6

GOD'S PEACE rests and rules over Johannesburg and South Africa as a whole.

"And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful." Colossians 3:15

You may find the sept-Oct prayer guide at the following: chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://mcusercontent.com/64124f1d5b1170491dea9f3cf/files/7d191308-696a-5a5f-5715-2e1abb7f2e89/Sept_Oct_General_Conf_Prayer_Guide.pdf

Introducing *Spirit-Filled Methodism*: An Assembly of Bishops Video Series

We are excited to share a **new eight-week teaching series, *Spirit-Filled Methodism***, from the Assembly of Bishops of the Global Methodist Church. The first lesson dropped on September 30. You can view the lesson https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wxvib9P4_rs. Each week, you'll hear directly from our bishops as they explore what it means to be a Spirit-filled Methodist — **living, leading, serving and praying under the power of the Holy Spirit.**



Over the next two months, you can receive one lesson per week in your inbox. [Sign up at: https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sl/2Ns1Lli](https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sl/2Ns1Lli)

Share the videos with your church and community to grow alongside one another and encounter the Holy Spirit.

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What You'll Experience in This Series:

- The biblical call to Spirit-filled living and **holiness**.
- The evidence of the Spirit's presence in **spiritual gifts**.
- How Spirit-led disciples **live, lead, serve, teach, evangelize and pray**.
- Practical reflection and prayer to help you **grow in faith**.

We invite you to watch, reflect and share. Let's walk together as Spirit-filled Methodists, empowered to love God and neighbor with freedom and joy.

MORE INFORMATION



November 6-18, 2025

Mission Trip to South Africa

June 19-21, 2026

Upper Midwest Annual Conference

August 30-September 5, 2026

General Conference in Johannesburg, South Africa

Upper Midwest Prayer Opportunities



The Upper Midwest Conference Daily Noon Prayer

Can you imagine what would happen in the spiritual realm if we prayed the same prayer together at noon daily?

Join Us and Let's Find Out!

<https://www.uppermidwestgmc.org/prayer>



Scheduled Zoom Prayer Meetings

Please click the button below and let us know that you would like to join and we will send you the link.

**Monthly on the 3rd Tuesday
at 7:00 PM (CST)**

prayer@uppermidwestgmc.org

Be the First to Know!



Sign up for our Upper Midwest Newsletter

<https://www.uppermidwestgmc.org/newsletter>

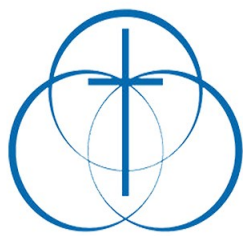
****Note:** The Deadline for Newsletter Articles/
Info is the 20th of the Month.

Global Methodist Church

“Across the Globe” Newsletter

<https://www.globalmethodist.org/connect>

Don't miss out on the latest updates, inspiration,
and more—delivered straight to your inbox. Sign
up now!



**GLOBAL
METHODIST CHURCH
UPPER MIDWEST CONFERENCE**

Lovingly walk alongside laity and clergy as they make disciples of Jesus Christ
who worship passionately, love extravagantly and witness boldly.

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**Our mailing address is:
Upper Midwest Conference
PO BOX 53
Watertown, SD 57201**