



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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RESIDENT BISHOP

March 2018

Dear Members and Friends of the West Virginia Conference:

Spring is on its way and that means the meeting of the West Virginia Annual Conference is right around the corner. I am honored and thankful to be the Resident Bishop of the West Virginia Conference.

In the name of Christ, it is my joy and privilege to issue the call for our Annual Conference gathering on the campus of West Virginia Wesleyan College June 7-10, 2018. Just to remind you, for this quadrennium our Conference theme is "Cultivating a Culture of Leadership that is Hopeful, Innovative, Invitational, and Generative." This year we will focus on what it means to be "Innovative" as we lead people into our mission of reaching people for Christ.

As we prepare for the 2018 Annual Conference, let me remind you that last year we met the goal and celebrated reaching 2400+ new persons for Christ. The focus on doubling our annual professions of faith has inspired many of our faith communities to prioritize building relationships with our neighbors and helping them to delight in Jesus.

While we want to reach another 2400+ people for Christ this year, we desire to expand our vision and goals to include having 2400+ new persons engaged in intentional and innovative discipleship learning and growth opportunities. We would like to have at least 50% of our congregations be able to tell us about their new and innovative disciple-making systems and processes. As United Methodists, we have always believed that the goal is not just to reach people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but to help them grow in Christ-like holiness. It is not about membership, it is about discipleship!

It is my hope and prayer that the members and churches of the West Virginia Conference see the mission field all around us. When we step out of the sanctuary, we have entered the place where God is sending us to make a difference. This world constantly challenges us to reach people for Christ in new innovative ways -- ways which require intentionality and ways that help people truly understand and live into the commitment to give of prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness on behalf of others.

May we experience anew God's call for us to be a Christ-led, spiritual breath of fresh air that changes the world! Led by Christ and allowing Christ to work through us, we can be filled with innovative and exciting dreams for how we can multiply the love of God and those who are walking with Christ.

Grace and Peace,

Sandra L. Steiner Ball
Resident Bishop

- P.S.
- 1) Don't forget that the Laity and Clergy Sessions will be held on Thursday morning, June 7.
 - 2) Don't forget to bring your lawn chairs and blankets as we will be having a community BBQ in front of the Chapel on Friday evening immediately following the Business Session.