

January 31, 2024

## **United Methodist Followers of Christ in the Alaska United Methodist Conference,**

With this letter, I call the regular 2024 session of the Alaska United Methodist Annual Conference to meet at St. John United Methodist Church in Anchorage, AK, on June 27-30 to attend to its regular business, gather in worship, and explore impactful ways to spread wellness across the area.

Registration, hotel information, and further details about our time together will follow in the coming months. Dates for preparatory gatherings will also be released as schedules are confirmed. Registration will be required to receive voting credentials. An online option will continue to be offered for those who cannot join us in person. If you believe you received this letter in error, please get in touch with your district office administrator as soon as possible.

### **OUR THEME**

In the fourth chapter (verses 4-17) of his Gospel, John shares the story of a Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus at the well. In the ancient world, wells functioned as grocery stores do today, a communal space where towns folk and travelers alike would gather the precious and necessary resource of water. The chance meeting of Jesus and the Samaritan woman and their interaction brought refuge for her and those around her. Their encounter prompts a teaching moment for Jesus, which we can choose to learn from even today.

From this story, we draw the theme for our 2024-25 conference year, "Being Well," which builds on the 2023-24 theme of "Go and Do Likewise." With it, we are not abandoning our call to do no harm and to do good. Instead, *Being Well* is our call to be as Christ would have us be in this time and space. Being well emotionally, physically, spiritually, and ecologically is a daily pursuit. When we intentionally include space to look inside and around to identify and amplify structures, policies, and behaviors that support being well and well-being, we are actively doing good and wisely dismantling harm.

Last year, I introduced [the M.I.L.E.](#) (Ministry that Matters; Itineration & Location; Lay Ministry Enhancement; Eliminating Racism) in a sermon series I offered during our 2023 GNW Area conferencing season. Our focus this year on wellness is not replacing that either. The vital work of the M.I.L.E. requires us to be well, care for the wellness of others, and maintain or develop systems that support us all in the work God calls us to.

### **PREPARING TO MEET AT THE WELL**

Our time of conferencing will arrive amid a busy year of connectional gatherings. It follows a little over a month after the delayed 2020 General Conference, which finally meets in Charlotte, North Carolina, April 23- May 3. Our Alaska Annual Conference Session also

occurs weeks before our Greater Northwest Area hosts the 2024 Western Jurisdictional Conference in lovely Spokane, Washington.

As you prepare for annual conference, please pray for The United Methodist Church and our conference delegations throughout this season as we discern our next faithful steps forward. As delegates gather from conferences across the globe, may they be both humble and curious so that together, they can draw deeply from the Spirit for the wellbeing of the whole Church.

We have many details to discuss between now and when we meet in June. I solicit your prayers for me, the staff, and the volunteer teams engaged in the planning processes, as well as your patience as we try to get information out to you in a timely fashion.

Finally, please accept my gratitude for the personal preparations you will make in the months and weeks ahead. As you submit and read reports, prepare and study legislation, and tackle the logistics required to be present in-person or online, may God be ever present with you.

Be Well!

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive 'C' followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

**Bishop Cedrick D. Bridgeforth**