

Bishop Shelton: I'm Bishop Connie Shelton, serving the NC Conference of the UMC, the Raleigh Episcopal Area.

Bishop Carter: I'm Bishop Ken Carter, serving the Western NC Conference of the UMC, the Charlotte Episcopal Area. As a result of the significant number of churches choosing disaffiliation from our conferences of the UMC, there is a unique opportunity to intentionally strengthen our connection by co-creating new United Methodist places for discipleship, worship, and mission, and increase our community impact across the state of North Carolina.

Bishop Shelton: While disaffiliations have created 'UM Deserts' and other historically and geographically significant UM congregations and communities have been deeply wounded, our two conferences engaged our faithful partner, The Duke Endowment Rural Church Division, to respond to this unique opportunity in our Conferences' history.

Bishop Carter: We are profoundly grateful to announce a five-year grant extended to the NC Conference and the WNC Conference by The Duke Endowment

Bishop Shelton: \$5.25 million for the NC Conference,

Bishop Carter: and \$5.25 million for the WNC Conference. The grant funds will help our conferences to strategically co-create new places for new people to gather in communion with Jesus Christ, as a witness to the hopeful future of the UMC in North Carolina.

Bishop Shelton: This extravagant grant will allow our two conferences to invest in the future of the United Methodist Church in NC through mutually beneficial relationships that strengthen congregations attentive to the needs of their community

Bishop Carter: and invest in communities who would benefit from the presence of a United Methodist congregation committed to community revitalization. Join us in giving thanks to God for the partnership and vision of The Duke Endowment Rural Church Division

Bishop Shelton: and for our shared life as United Methodists across North Carolina **"to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."**