

Miracle Sunday Save-the-Date

Bishop Connie Mitchell Shelton & Rev. Bill Gattis



North Carolina United Methodists, I'm so excited to be sitting next to Reverend Bill Gattis, a retired clergyperson here in our conference, beloved mentor by all of you and certainly by me.

How many of us are in the vocation of ministry today because there was someone at the appropriate time by God's grace who guided us? Like the Ethiopian in Acts 8:26-40 encountering Phillip, who apparently was puzzled by the scripture he was reading, inquired of Phillip, "How can I understand unless someone guides me?" We rejoice today with deep gratitude for those along the way who served as our guides.

Now we have the opportunity to increase and grow trained clergy or "guides" across the Regional Conferences of Africa, Europe, and the Philippines. The Council of Bishops is renewing an initiative first established in 2014 - The Endowment for Theological Education for clergy training across these Regional Conferences.

Clearly, there is an overwhelming need for training United Methodist clergy outside the United States. Within the USA, 71% of United Methodist clergy have a master's degree in theology. However, outside the USA, fewer than 5% hold such. Thirteen of the United Methodist seminaries in the US have a combined \$1.2 billion of endowment, in contrast, over 20 seminaries outside the USA have little to no endowment.

The goal of this initiative is to grow the Endowment for Theological Education to the level that annually 500 clergy outside the USA would be granted funds to further their ministerial training, as well as for generations to come.

Over the early months of 2026, you will be hearing more about this initiative as it rolls out across our conference and the General Church. And especially during the six weeks following Easter, you will be encouraged to inform and educate your congregations of this need and opportunity to grow and train United Methodist clergy outside the United States.

Videos, testimonials, printed material, and online studies for Sunday School classes, small groups, and worship will be made available for you, free, over those six weeks leading up to the Miracle Sunday Offering, May 17, 2026. On that day, that offering will be received across 30,000 congregations around the world. And just as in Jesus' miracle of the loaves, there will be baskets overflowing!

In January, we'll share the name of each district resource person who can assist you in promoting this initiative and locating the available resources for leading you and your congregation to that Miracle Sunday offering.

We hope that this endowment renewal, God-led and Holy Spirit empowered, will unite our 30,000 congregations worldwide to live into the new United Methodist vision - "Love Boldly, Serve Joyfully, and Lead Courageously."

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I pray and trust you will invite the seeds of generosity to be scattered and find fertile ground. By God's grace, there will be a bountiful harvest on May 17, 2026.

So grateful for Reverend Bill Gattis, who will be our champion here in North Carolina. Won't we join in God's miracle?