



UNITED METHODIST UNION OF GREATER DETROIT

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Rev. Carol J. Johns
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Dear Colleagues and Friends,

September 1, 2025

The Board of Trustees of the United Methodist Union of the Greater Detroit District is delighted to announce that Rev. Olu Brown will be the guest speaker for our 106th Annual Meeting and Banquet. This event will be held at 6:15 pm on Thursday, October 23rd at Troy First United Methodist Church, located at 6363 Livernois Rd, Troy, Michigan 48098.

Olu Brown reminds us, "We are living in a new unconventional reality where everything has changed or is changing. All one has to do is listen to a snippet of the news on any of a dozen devices to notice a dramatic change. The Rev. Dr. Jack Harnish illustrated it best for the church world in this Monday Memo when he asked his AI Assistant to write an article on **"Why I Go to Church."** Unfortunately, there is not enough room here to print that letter for you, but check it out on the Michigan Conference MIconnect. Take a moment to look at what an AI "non-human, non-church going computer-something" wrote. In response to it all, Jack said, "Wow!" I wish I had written that..." so do I, Jack! Yet, it is a bit scary. The good old days in the church are slipping away, and we cannot live in them anymore. **Where is God leading us now?**

Maybe that's one of the reasons Olu Brown captured my attention in this new book, *Normalizing Next*, when he asks, **"What is your next?"** It was our District Superintendent, the Rev. Dr. Darryl Totty, who encouraged me to consider him as a possible speaker for the United Methodist Union Banquet and Rev. Brown will be leading a *Normalizing Next* cohort in our district in the fall. In 2007, Olu was the founding and Head Pastor of Impact United Methodist Church in Atlanta. Under his leadership, Impact grew from a core team of 25 to a vibrant congregation of over 5,000 worshippers, both in person and online. Olu retired early from pastoral ministry in 2022 to embrace God's call to coach and equip churches as they navigate change and step forward into the future. He calls it *"Normalizing Next."* I call it equipping churches to make disciples in a new reality.

I believe that Rev. Olu Brown will bring a powerful message and hope you will join me and our United Methodist Union Trustees for our 106th Annual Meeting & Banquet. Please invite several lay delegates from your congregation to share this evening with you. We will start serving at 6:15 pm; then adjourn to the sanctuary for the business portion.

Please plan to be with us that evening. A separate letter is being mailed to your church leadership. A dinner order form is enclosed for you to complete. Coordinate your ticket order, include a check for the total number of tickets and return by October 16, 2025. Hope to see you there!

Grace & Joy, 😊

Rev. Carol J Johns
Executive Director