



## Overview of Minnesota

Minnesota is known for the authenticity and welcoming nature of its people, its respect for the land we've been blessed with, and for the cultural diversity and sophistication of its urban centers. It combines pristine lakes and coniferous old growth forests in vast protected wilderness to the north, prairie farmland stretching to the west, peaceful river towns dotting the banks and bluffs of the Mississippi to the east, and the rolling hills and farmlands to the south. It is home to seven Chippewa and Ojibwe reservations and four Dakota (Sioux) communities. Its 11,000+ lakes and 92,000 miles of rivers and streams include the headwaters of the Mississippi River, and its numerous state parks offer abundant recreation opportunities.

Home to 5.6 million, Minnesota's largest population centers are: the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, with St. Paul the state capitol; Rochester, the fastest growing city in the state in the southeast; and the great port of Duluth on Lake Superior, with many smaller towns and cities in between. With major art museums, theatres, a world-class symphony orchestra, and a vibrant arts and music and food scene, its urban centers are alive with creative energy. Home to over 500,000 foreign-born Minnesotans, the state is becoming increasingly diverse to the benefit of all. Recognized for scientific, medical, socio-cultural, and agricultural innovation, Minnesota has a well-educated population with 92.8% of those over 25 holding a high-school diploma or higher (Minnesota State Demographic Center. 2017). With a State university system (30 state colleges and 7 state universities), as well as 17 private colleges, and the University of Minnesota's 5 campuses, our academic institutions offer undergraduate, graduate, technical, and professional degrees and research excellence.

Minnesota is also known for outstanding health care institutions, among them, Mayo Clinic, the state's largest employer—a world-renowned nonprofit medical center located in Rochester, serving over 1.2 million patients per year from across the U.S. and 132 countries around the globe.

While Minnesota falls considerably below the median crime rate, it is not without challenges, among them homelessness, drug addiction, an increasing suicide rate among farmers, and racial divisions. These challenges represent opportunities for ministry, for living into the teachings of Christ as we reach beyond ourselves in creative, spiritually inspired, hands-on ways with the can-do spirit that defines Minnesota.