



Jeff Campbell with Discipleship Ministries leads trainings across the conference.



Clergy and laity share ideas and experiences around the 'why', 'what' and 'how' of making disciples at the training session at Our Saviour's UMC in Schaumburg.

Trainings around the NIC fan the flame of discipleship

By Diane Strzelecki, Communications Specialist

The week of September 9, approximately 350 clergy and laity attended one of six Discipleship Systems training sessions across the NIC led by Jeff Campbell, Associate General Secretary for Strategic Programming with Discipleship Ministries (UM General Board of Discipleship). Just one of many conference programs supported by NIC church apportionments, the sessions (subtitled #Seeallthepeople) outlined a return to the primary mission of The United Methodist Church: To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

"Everything flows out of this mission," noted Campbell at the September 11 afternoon session at Harmony UMC in Freeport, Ill. "There is a real need for clarity about what is a disciple and how they are formed."

The Rev. Martin Lee, NIC Director of Congregational Development and Redevelopment, began organizing the training soon after the NIC's Annual Conference Shepherd's Team finalized their strategic goals, which were presented to and approved at the June Annual Conference. The training aligned perfectly with the first goal—To Grow and Reach New Disciples of Jesus Christ—and Lee was encouraged by the number of registrations.

"The wind of new possibility is blowing across the Conference," Lee said. "I was so excited by the number of walk-ins as well as pre-registered participants. Everybody expressed how helpful and practical the teachings were at the end of the training."

Lee noted that one of the key points of this training was learning the tools each congregation needed to create a unique discipleship system based on their individual missional context. In addition, after six to seven months

of implementing Discipleship Systems, six congregations (one from each district) will become a cohort and will be coached by Discipleship Ministry staff to learn how to help other congregations.

Some attendees came for new ideas to bring back to their congregation. Some came for renewal of their ministries. All left with the charge to love their congregation and their community with renewed fervor—and a renewed focus on making disciples.

Mary French, a member at First UMC in Freeport, attended the session at Harmony. "Our church is always looking for ways we can help people in our community," she said. "We've been working on our mission and vision statement and we're hoping to get new ideas."

Local Pastor Jeff Brace knows the challenges of making discipleship a priority for the church. "People are so busy and some regard church as just another thing to do," he said, adding that he hoped the workshop would help with engaging congregations in discipleship making. "We need to go beyond weekly Bible studies and put faith into action—get the focus back on the meaning of church."

The workshop was structured around lectures, with occasional breakouts where attendees discussed such questions as Why did you become a follower of Jesus? How does your church make disciples?

"When we began researching discipleship in the UMC, we visited congregations all over the country asking the question: 'What does your church do?'" Campbell remarked. "We heard a long list of wonderful things but not once did a church say 'our church makes disciples.'" He noted that congregations make disciples by first discovering

or returning to their answer to the question of "Why?"

"When you know your 'why' your 'what' becomes more impactful because you're walking into it and through it," Campbell said who added then you can work on the 'how'.

Attendees discussed the refreshed outlook on discipleship and ways to help reframe discipleship in their congregations. Beth Spielman, a laymember from Durand UMC, noted that her bracelet imprinted with the words "Be the Change you want to see" was a good reminder of what she was called to do about making disciples in her church. "I am taking home that I need to be more of a disciple and I want to people in our church realize they are disciples," she said.

The Rev. Keri Rainsberger from Lena UMC was pleased that the conference brought a training session to her area. "I'm looking for new ideas to bring back to the congregation – maybe even just different ways of thinking about old ideas," she said. "I'm grateful this training was nearby."

Campbell's greatest hope is that attendees would leave with a greater sense of their "why", ideas for developing a discipleship system in their congregation, and a practical plan for putting it into place.

"We are beginning to hear stories about inspired leaders going back to their congregations and renewing the spark and joy in being a disciple," Campbell said. "Our hope is that this is not a program, but a movement."

Visit www.seeallthepeople.org to learn more and retrieve resources and downloads to participate in this discipleship movement.

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FROM BISHOP DYCK: PRAYERS FOR OUR VENEZUELAN IMMIGRANTS

On a beautiful July evening, I went to the Church of The Redeemer of Calvary or El Redentor del Calvario in the Jefferson Park neighborhood of Chicago. The Rev. Shirley Pulgar-Hughes is the pastor. A group of immigrants from Venezuela has become active in her congregation and she wanted me to hear their stories.

The political and economic situation in Venezuela has become very difficult: a decade-long trajectory toward worsening political corruption, poverty, hunger, lack of clean water, lack of health care and medicine, crime, violence, human rights violations, high mortality rates, and untenable situations. As a result, there has been a massive wave of emigration, and some Venezuelans have emigrated to Chicago.

As I waited in the basement of the church that evening, the room slowly filled until at least 30 men, women, young people, and children gathered. As they shared their stories with me, I noted that most of them identified themselves by their profession (before they came to the U.S.): professors, attorneys, pharmacists, engineers, and other educated persons with master's degrees. Yet, most of them had come from jobs at packing plants or domestic work, and maybe Uber as a side job.

With the exception of a couple of people who have been in the U.S. for a year or less, many of these immigrants already own a house, drive their own car (good enough for Uber), and have developed a life for themselves and their families.

Like many immigrants, none of them had wanted to leave their home in Venezuela. Many told me that it was their political views that came under scrutiny by the government as they advocated for democracy and freedom. One woman had been a town mayor working for reform to provide basic needs for people in her

community. When someone came and put a gun to her head, she knew it was time to leave.

Another young woman said that her life was going really well in Venezuela. She studied to become a radio broadcaster, but then she had a guest on her show who joked about the government and president. Before she knew it, the commissioner of communications came and shut her station down. She lost her job and her future in Venezuela.

Those who came to tell me their stories are much like the people who built the church that hosted our meeting, German-Russian immigrants who came here more than a century ago. My guide, Gwen, told me that her ancestors came to this country, leaving behind their household goods in Russia at the turn of the century. They left everything behind in case it didn't work out so well in America; they thought they could go back to their farms and their homes. We got a good laugh about that! And they founded and built a beautiful church with a painting of Jesus the Good Shepherd with a lone sheep, looking to follow their master's every move.

These immigrants from Venezuela want the same things that the founders of the church wanted: freedom from persecution, intimidation, poverty, and violence, and a better life for themselves and their children. They worked when they got here acquiring the necessities of life and coming together as a church.

Before I left that evening, I told

them that they represent what America is at its best. I apologized (for what it was worth) that they probably don't hear that message every day: you are what has made America great over the years, over and over again. They are hard-working people who seek to make a life for themselves with the basics of food, shelter, security, family—and freedom and democracy.

What can you do to help? Some of these immigrants are looking for political asylum in the U.S. Some have received political asylum. Most are waiting to at least hear whether they have asylum. Initially, they benefited from Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON) and its legal expertise to get political asylum. But a 6-month wait mushroomed into a 3-year wait for many refugees and asylum seekers. All of us can help support JFON so that they can continue to help people find legal solutions to their immigration situations. Visit nijfon.org for resources.

Pray for our brothers and sisters from Venezuela who actively support their church, each other, and their families back home. Blessings upon them!

~Bishop Sally Dyck



Bishop Sally Dyck visits with Venezuelan immigrants at The Redeemer of Calvary who shared their stories of why they emigrated to Chicago.

Donations needed for Hurricane Dorian disaster relief

The Midwest Mission Distribution Center (MMDC) in Chatham, Ill., is working with their on-the-ground partner Food for the Poor to help with Hurricane Dorian relief.

Pre-packaged personal dignity kits, rice meal packs, and linens were airlifted into the Bahamas on September 7. Food for the Poor has sent a request for other items for Bahamas' residents and MMDC wants to help.

One relief worker in the Bahamas who emailed MMDC to thank them for the supplies. "I am working the primary relief effort and we are handing out your lovely personal gift packages. They are so appreciated. Many thanks and God bless you," wrote Michelle Cove.

MMDC is continually working to restock its shelves to be ready to help disaster victims and donations like the tens of thousands of personal dignity kit items collected at the 2019 Northern Illinois Annual Conference are a huge help.

"We sent two of the 100 containers Food for the Poor sent to Puerto Rico in 2017 to help with relief and they want to do that many, if not more, for the Bahamas. MMDC Executive Director, Chantel Corrie. "MMDC doesn't have a date for the shipment yet but will send it as soon as they are prepared and have enough supplies to fill a 40-foot container."

Some of the times being collected to aid those recovering in the Bahamas include, tarps, blankets, flashlights, and personal dignity kits. For a complete list, visit www.midwestmission.org.

When you purchase supplies from the DollarDays wish list, you will get wholesale prices and they will be shipped directly to Midwest Mission. For the wish list, visit www.dollardays.com/midwestmission/wishlist.html.

Items can be dropped off at Midwest Mission during business hours (Monday - Friday from 8am - 4pm) or anytime in the front foyer.

MMDC is looking for churches in the Northern Illinois Conference to serve as collection spots for supplies and they will send their truck for pick-ups. If your church is interested, contact MMDC Executive Director Chantel Corrie at chantel@midwestmission.org.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) awarded a solidarity grant to Bahamas Methodist Habitat, the Disaster Ministry of the Bahamas Conference of the Methodist Church immediately after the storm. The grant provides immediate, emergency short-term funding to address basic human needs of those affected by this catastrophic storm.

The international response in the Bahamas will take time, with assessment, evaluation and careful collaboration to help direct sustainable recovery efforts.

Churches and individuals may also send monetary donations to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) to support International and U.S. disaster relief efforts by visiting www.umcor.org/donate.



Hurricane Dorian, a record category five storm, caused widespread damage in the Bahamas after pummeling the islands with 185 mph winds, torrential rains and storm surges in early September.



Children play at an evacuation center in the Bahamas. Photos courtesy Michelle Cove.

Bishop Dyck calls for special session of the annual conference

As the summer winds down, may God's Spirit blow through our local churches and annual conference to renew our commitment to discipleship! I am writing to announce that there will be a special session of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference on Saturday, November 16, 2019, at Kishwaukee College (21193 Malta Road, Malta, IL 60150) beginning promptly at 9 a.m. and continuing until 1 p.m.

We trust that all elected lay delegates and clergy at the June session will be in attendance. If there needs to be changes, please contact your district administrative assistant with the change.

There are three purposes on the agenda for the special session:

1. Approve the 2020 financial plan, which includes budget, apportionment formula, and the General Administration Fund decision. Legislation for the 2020 financial plan will be available mid-October. There will be a process for feedback and questions ahead of time so that we can maximize our time when we are together at Kishwaukee College.

2. Hear a report from the Exploration Team. This team was formed as a result of legislation at our June session to explore our future as an Annual Conference, in light of the passing of the Traditional Plan at the special General Conference in February.

The Exploration Team's report will include an initial draft statement defining who we are as a conference with the values we share and that most closely define us. This statement will help determine how to propose aligning and moving forward when the time comes after General Conference 2020. This draft will be presented to initiate a process for feedback and comments to the Exploration Team over the few months following this November special session so that the Team can craft legislation for our June 2020 annual conference.

3. Take a special Bishop's Appeal offering. The offering will be used to support and provide relief for farmers who are suffering from the weather conditions that delayed planting this spring due to constant rain followed by the effects of a drought during July. The Keagy Town and Rural Committee will determine the allocation of the offering. More information and resources will be provided to help raise monies for our farming friends and family.

These are the only three agenda items that can be acted upon at this special annual conference session but they will undoubtedly inspire robust conversations! Please allow sufficient time to arrive at Kishwaukee College. You should see plenty of cornfields on your way! I look forward to seeing you on November 16!

~Bishop Sally Dyck

Special Session of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference Saturday, Nov. 16, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Location: Kishwaukee College, 21193 Malta Road, Malta, IL
Registration cost: \$10

Off-site childcare at Malta UMC will be available. Pre-order a box lunch to go for \$8.

Register at www.umcnic.org/specialsession.

Rosecrance hosts NIC Cabinet

Rosecrance hosted the Northern Illinois Conference (NIC) Cabinet members at the Rosecrance Griffin Williamson campus, an adolescent substance abuse and mental health treatment facility in Rockford, for their quarterly meeting in mid-August.

The NIC has been a longtime partner of Rosecrance for more than 100 years; James and Fanny Rosecrance whose bequest gift led to the founding of Rosecrance were members of the Methodist Church in New Milford, Ill. The Conference Cabinet includes new Rockford District Superintendent Fabiola Grandon-Mayer, who is also a new member of the Rosecrance, Inc. Board.

Over a day-long meeting, lunch and tour of the facility and healing garden, Rosecrance leaders and Cabinet members discussed ways in which their partnership can benefit each other and most importantly the community at large. They delved into topics of faith, stigma around behavioral health, intervention tactics, and more.

Episcopal leader, Bishop Sally Dyck, said "It's so incredible to be here and see how Rosecrance is transforming lives and lifting people out of a place of despair. The work Rosecrance does and



Bishop Sally Dyck and members of the Cabinet tour one of the Rosecrance's treatment facilities in Rockford during a visit in August.

the work the United Methodist Church does is all about bringing people to a place of hope."

Rosecrance Director of Clergy and Alumni Services, Fr. Jim Swarthout, added, "Our mission is about restoring hope and joy. I often tell people you have the right to have faith and you have the right to have joy. It's our job to help them get there."

Rosecrance CEO Phil Eaton expressed gratitude for the faithful and generous support received from churches and individual church members across the Conference. He credited the Church's steadfast support for sustaining Rosecrance and nurturing and encouraging its mission.

Visit rosecrance.org for more info.



Rev. Martin Lee welcomes participants to the Discipleship Systems training at Harmony UMC in Freeport, Ill.

This I Celebrate! Making Disciples

By Rev. Martin Lee, Dir of Congregational Development and Redevelopment

District Superintendents and the Office of Congregational Development and Redevelopment are working closely to help every congregation thrive in its unique context. Our purpose is to coordinate and support the conference-

wide effort to revitalize existing congregations and plant new churches so that we can grow disciples and reach new disciples of Jesus Christ.

This I Celebrate!

At the Discipleship Systems Trainings in mid-September led by Rev. Jeff Campbell, Associate General Secretary for the Strategic Programming of Discipleship Ministries (see pg. 1), a participant asked, "How do we keep young people in our church?" This question is being asked in nearly every congregation in our denomination and beyond.

Rev. Campbell helped everyone present answer that question – by getting us to think about another question – WHY? The training helped participants rediscover the "WHY" of our disciple making efforts and refocus on the current reality of our mission field. The session actually asked two WHY questions: 1) WHY are we making disciples of Christ (Note: Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action by Simon Sinek) and 2) WHY did you become a follower of Jesus?

Campbell challenged each of us by reminding us that every congregation already has a disciple making system, but maybe it needs rethinking or it's time to try something different.

As we move forward in the conversation of WHY, it is important to address the three strategic goals of our annual conference:

1. To Grow and Reach New Disciples of Jesus Christ,

2. To Live Out the Conviction that Racism is Incompatible with Christian Teaching,
3. To Increase the Number of Highly Vital Congregations. These three goals were presented by the Annual Conference Shepherding Team and approved at the 2019 Annual Conference. Making disciples is our number one goal. The Holy Spirit is our great aide in this work.

I am encouraged by the atmosphere of events like the Discipleship Trainings. The participants' passion and eagerness to do all that they can to make disciples is contagious. One participant was in tears from watching a video clip prepared by Amnesty International of Poland. In the video promoting the situation of refugees in Europe – people of different cultures had to sit facing one another in silence for three minutes. Through this, they were able to relate to the other person's humanity. The participants received tools to create a discipleship system based on their unique missional context and the humanity of their community.

Since the trainings, I have received comments from people who were inspired to take action. One person said, "We need to stop and "see" people." They said that they were convinced by the video to stop and stare for three minutes. Someone else was excited to go back to their church council that very night to share the information while it was still fresh. Another talked with the other churches in their cluster so that multiple churches could work together. Many people felt that they were ready to "jump back in" and get to work now! Rev. Campbell's challenge of WHY has really made a difference. Together we can make a difference!

This I celebrate!

*Rev. Lee recommends churches download and use the book "Developing a Discipleship System: A Guide for Congregations" by Junius B. Dotson and can be found at www.seeallthepeople.org



Bishop's Appeal Help Struggling Farmers and Their Families

- As of Sept. 3, the U.S. Department of Agriculture rated only 6% of corn crops and 7% of soybean crops in Illinois to be in "excellent" condition.

- This summer, the USDA reported that only 24% of corn in Illinois had been planted by May 19, compared to 95% on the same date in 2018. The harvest is uncertain.

- At the Nov. 16 Annual Conference Special Session, a Bishop's Appeal offering will be taken to help local farmers facing hardships due to a rainy, cold spring that delayed planting and then a drought in July.

Please consider helping these families by holding a special offering and bringing donations to the Annual Conference Special Session Nov. 16. Or mail your checks to Northern Illinois Conference, PO Box 5646 Carol Stream, IL 60197-5646. Make sure to note "Bishop's Appeal" in the memo.

Visit www.umcnic.org/bishopsappeal for resources.

Every little bit helps

2019 Clergy Age Report shows dramatic decline in number of young elders

A new report shows a dramatic decline in the number of young elders this past year. According to the *Clergy Age Trends in the United Methodist Church* report released by the Lewis Center for Church Leadership of Wesley Theological Seminary, not only did the number of elders under 35 decline for the third consecutive year, but the decline in 2019 is the largest since these reports began in 2005. The annual report is prepared in partnership from Wespath Benefits. This research examines elders, deacons, and local pastors.

Highlights of 2019 report:

Dramatic Decline in the Number of Young Elders

In addition to the unprecedented size of the decline, another difference is that while the previous losses have come primarily from female elders, in 2019 the losses came proportionately among men and women. The decline among men means there are fewer male elders under 35 than any time for which we have records. Similarly, there are fewer young female elders than since 2008.

There was a decline of 74 young elders, 875 in 2019 compared to 949 the previous year. This is the lowest number of young elders since the record low year of 2005 in which there were only 850 elders under 35.

Young female elders reached a high point in numbers in 2015 with 404. The number in 2019 is 325. In terms of their percentage of young elders, the high point was in 2015 at 41 percent. The comparable figure in 2019 is 37 percent.

Interestingly, due to the overall decline in the total number of active elders in the United Methodist Church, the percentage of young elders of all active elders remains around 7 percent, up from the record low of 5 percent in 2005.

Middle Age and Older Elders Mirror Recent Trends

The makeup of middle age elders (ages 35 to 54) and older elders (ages 55 to 72) remained proportionately about the same as last year even as their numbers declined. This middle age group is 37 percent of all active elders, a record low, and down from 65 percent in 2000. Elders between ages 55 and 72 comprise 56 percent of elders in 2017, a record high, and up from 30 percent as recently as 2000.

Fewer Elders and More Local Pastors

Elders and local pastors are appointed as pastors of congregations. Since at least the 1980s there has been a major decline in the number of active elders while the number of local pastors increased dramatically. This pattern continues in 2019. There are 514 fewer elders and 25 more local pastors in 2019 than in 2018. The result is that since 1990 there are 8,352 fewer elders and 3,627 more local pastors. In 1990, there were over five elders for each local pastor; today there are fewer than two elders for each local pastor. In 2019, there are 13,155 elders and 7,563 local pastors.

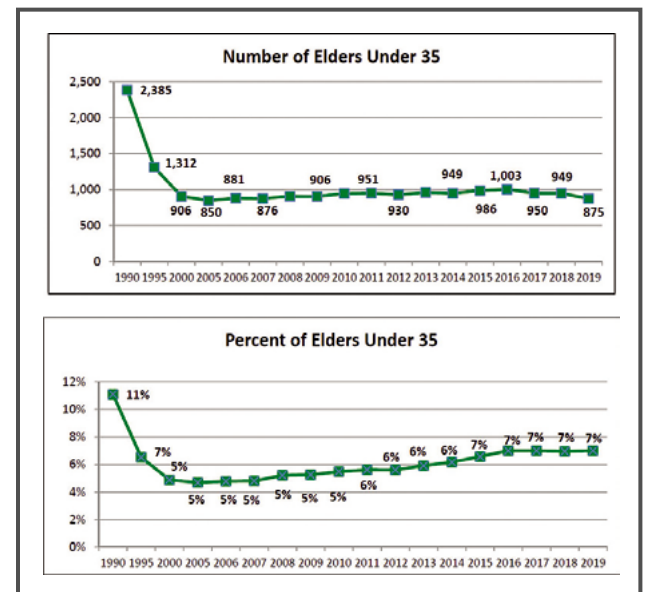
Baby Boomers Are Retiring Somewhat Later

In recent years, there has been about a two-year increase in the age of retirement for all categories of clergy. The increase when all clergy groups are combined is from an average retirement age of 64 to 66. The first of the Baby Boomer generation reached 65 in 2011. While there are many variables in determining when someone retires, the increased retirement age of Boomer retirees matches patterns seen outside the church as well. The average retirement age across all clergy categories in 2018, the last full year of data, was 66.2, unchanged from the year before. The retirement ages for different types of clergy are similar but not the same.

Full Report Available for Download

Much more information is available in the complete Clergy Age Trends report, which is available as a free PDF download at www.churchleadership.com. It shows the average and median ages of elders by United Methodist conference and features a breakdown of young, middle age, and older clergy by conference for elders, deacons, and local pastors.

The Lewis Center for Church Leadership of Wesley Theological Seminary is pleased to provide this report as a service to the church.



UNWRAP
the true meaning of
CHRISTMAS

Get ready for your Unwrap Christmas event!

When it comes to what matters most at Christmas, people say that it's spending time with family and friends. United Methodist Communications' 2019 Unwrap Christmas event campaign is designed to help local churches offer meaningful places for people to connect with one another throughout the Advent season. United Methodist Communications is supporting these outreach efforts by offering event grants and other resources to local United Methodist churches.

Congregations are encouraged to plan events, such as free cocoa stands in busy shopping areas, toy giveaway or food packaging experiences, holiday music concerts in parks or live Nativity scenes, as a way to connect people

with faith communities. Grant recipients will receive promotional items and resources for the events.

"There are many people throughout the world who seek hope and a sense of belonging and the Christmas season heightens those feelings," said Dan Krause, United Methodist Communications' chief executive. "Through the Unwrap Christmas initiative, our desire is that local United Methodist churches will reach out into their communities to offer an invitation for fellowship."

Congregations that are interested in hosting an Unwrap Christmas event may apply for a limited number of event grants while they are still available. Even without an event grant, churches can host an Unwrap Christmas event

using a planning guide developed by United Methodist Communications to make organizing for Advent outreach simple.

In addition to the Unwrap Christmas events, United Methodist Communications is offering customizable Advent resources to all churches. A limited number of \$300 grants to offset the costs of the invitational items are available. Learn more at Outreach.com/UMC.

A complementary national ad campaign created to offer a message of hope during the Christmas season will be running throughout Advent. For resources and details, visit www.resourceumc.org.

Fair trade store closes in Rockford



After 14 years in business, the JustGoods Fair Trades Marketplace at the corner of Seventh Street and First Avenue in Rockford closed its doors on August 31. The non-profit fair trade store, one of three projects in the building managed by Rockford Urban Ministries (RUM), was an anchor business in the Midtown Neighborhood of Rockford.

Stanley Campbell, RUM's Executive Director, said the reason for the closing came down to finances and declining sales. "There just hasn't been enough income to purchase inventory for this year's Christmas sales, which is when the store breaks even," said Campbell. "The store's volunteers hosted benefits, sent out

appeals and sought volunteers to run the store. But the Board of Directors found that the volume of sales is such that it no longer makes sense to operate as a Fair Trade store."

A couple of volunteers first opened the store after a number of people wanted access to gift items not made in sweatshops. Fair trade (as opposed to "free trade") promises living wages to third world artisans. Fair-traded gifts included pottery, baskets, Christmas ornaments, toys, clothes and even furniture, some made in the U.S.

"Sadness prevails because it's such a lovely store in which so many volunteers and lightly paid staff have spent so much time and effort," said Campbell. "They organized benefits to help pay for heat and electricity, assisted in raising funds to put a wind turbine and solar panels on the roof, and donated items to other nonprofits while selling crafts in support of Rockford missions and ministries."

In addition to providing beautiful, unique and special gifts

for their customers, Campbell added the volunteers and the store served as wonderful ambassadors of the important role that Fair Trade plays in the global economy.

"There are too many people to thank individually for supporting the JustGoods Fair Trade Store, from the customers who purchased their Christmas presents regularly, to the donors who forgave loans and helped buy inventory, to the many volunteers and staff who put in long hours and who made memories and supported individual craftspeople around the world," said Campbell.

Plans are in the works to fill the space but in the meantime Friday night music concerts and RUM's vintage art and book sales will continue in the building, as well as RUM's mission for social justice.

RUM welcomes your prayers, ideas and donations. You can reach them at rockfordurbanmin@aol.com, or mail tax deductible checks to RUM, 201 Seventh St., Rockford, IL 61104. For more information, visit rockfordurbanmin.org.

Children’s Saturday School serves diverse neighborhood By Linda Hendelman*



Nearly 50 children learn about art, chess and other activities at a Saturday School organized by West Ridge Community UMC last spring.

For five Saturday mornings last spring, West Ridge Community UMC’s building echoed with laughter and conversations in a multitude of languages including Spanish, English, Urdu, Chinese, and Korean. The church was hosting a free Saturday School, a children’s program made possible by a Creative Ministries Grant from the Northern Illinois Conference.

Saturday School offered two hour-long enrichment classes in art, Zumba, chess, and balloon art to nearly 50 neighborhood children of various ethnicities and languages mirroring the congregation’s makeup. Filipino, Latino, Middle Eastern, Indo-Pak, Caucasian, African American, Congolese, Chinese, Korean, and Hispanic children in kindergarten through 5th grade attended their choice of morning or afternoon classes.

According to the Rev. Taekwan (T.K.) Lee, pastor of West Ridge Community, the selection of classes was intentional to provide instruction in areas rarely offered to children anywhere else. Teachers were selected for their expertise and experience. Lee said the children attending Saturday School reflected the diversity of the church’s congregation and neighborhood on Chicago’s north side.

“Saturday School provided a learning environment for refugee, neighborhood and other marginalized children,” Lee said. In addition, the program was intended to help welcome new families to the neighborhood. Parents who brought their children to Saturday School were offered refreshments and invited to stay while their older children attended class. Comfortable seating, a small library for both children and adults, and a selection of quality toys help visitors and others with small children relax and connect with each other.

Next Generation Ministry

Drawing on his Korean heritage, Lee is passionate about next generation ministry and says it is the future of the church. “The church and families need to work together for the generations coming up,” he said, adding that ministries to children and youth should extend to the family as they create an opportunity to

reach out to parents. Following this model, Saturday School included a Family Lunch Celebration after worship the Sunday following the final class. Seven new families participated in worship prior to the lunch.

Love Your Neighbor

For Lee and the small West Ridge Community congregation, which also co-sponsors a welcome center for immigrants and refugees, loving God means loving the neighborhood.

“Opening our hearts and our doors to the community is one of the ways we can express God’s love to others and serve them,” Lee explained. “I see the Holy Spirit working through different people in various ways as One Spirit. I see multiethnic and refugee children as diversity in the unity of one family in the name of Jesus. In this dynamic, I believe the Holy Spirit works in this ministry.”

That’s why the Saturday School program with its emphasis on loving your neighbor is a good fit for West Ridge Community’s diverse congregation and languages, said Lee. Each Sunday worship service begins with the congregation reciting its mission statement: “We Are the Church – We don’t go to church, but We Are the Church for making disciples of Jesus in our community.”

Pastor Lee feels that the community needs and wants programs like Saturday School, noting that some children who attended lived far from the church but managed to attend every Saturday. He said that families are already asking when another Saturday School session will begin, with parents remarking on the program’s “great hospitality, smiles, quality classes, and professional teachers.”

Lee hopes that he and the church can continue working with neighborhood and refugee children. “I believe God will provide the people and financial resources to continue this ministry in amazing ways,” he said.

*Linda Hendelman is a freelance writer and editor, a lifelong United Methodist and Lay Servant in the Chicago Northwestern District.



OCTOBER CALENDAR EVENTS

Hispanic/Latinx Celebration

- Back to the Future

Saturday, Oct. 5, 2019, 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.



Des Plaines: First UMC/Nuevo Amanecer, 668 Graceland Ave., DesPlaines, IL

Registration: \$5 per person - Max \$30 per church Lunch included

Childcare: Provided for children 12 years and under.

Let's celebrate the Hispanic/Latino ministries in our Northern Illinois Conference with an opening gathering, workshops, display tables, closing service, and a meal. Bring photos, posters or brochures for display. Everyone is welcome! Bishop Sally Dyck will participate in the closing worship.

For more information please contact Rev. Patricia Bonilla 847-393-6348.

Celebrate World Communion Sunday on Oct. 6 or a date that is convenient for your congregation.



Calling All Plumblin Alumni

Columbus Day, Oct. 14, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Reflect, engage and share at our first Plumblin Reunion!



Location: Community UMC 20 Center St, Naperville, IL

The NIC has been taking high school students to New York City on the 4- day Plumblin Tour since 2002. In 2019, we took students to Washington, D.C. Whether you went on the tour in 2002, in recent years, or any years in between, we'd love to see you at the reunion!

Why Now?

We desire to reflect with you on your past experience with Plumblin, engage with you on social justice issues from a faith perspective, and listen as you share perspectives that are relevant in today's world.

Questions? Email us at niaenterprises1@comcast.net.

Continental breakfast and lunch will be served.

Canoeing the Mountains:

Workshop for clergy and laity

Thursday, October 17, 2019

First Korean UMC, 655 E Hintz Rd., Wheeling, IL

Cost: \$50 includes box lunch.

Please register by October 10. Cost at the door will be \$70.

After the General Conference Special Session, United Methodists are struggling to navigate our future. We need wisdom, even more, to navigate our ministry together.

Based on the book *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory*, Author and Fuller Theological Seminary Assistant Professor Tod Bolsinger presents a workshop that will equip UMC leaders to move into the future and learn to lead in a world that looks nothing like it did in the past.

Learn key lessons about leading in a context you may have never expected. Reimagine what effective leadership looks like in today's world. If you're going to scale the mountains of ministry, you need to leave behind canoes and find new navigational tools. For more information, flyer and registration, visit:

www.umcnic.org/calendar/canoeing-the-mountains.

Kicking the tires, checking under the hood

A workshop for the local church Board of Trustees

Saturday, Oct. 19, 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Barrington UMC, 98 Algonquin Road, Barrington, IL

The opening session, "Best Practices for Local Church Trustees," will be for all attendees. This session will include local church checklists for maintenance and safety items, emergency procedures manual, keeping current with background checks for staff and volunteers, and the how to share space and with whom. Following the opening session, attendees can attend the following breakout sessions with matters of concern to local churches:

- "Moving Towards a Green Church: Steps You Can Take Now!"
- "When You Need a Lawyer and How to Find One"
- "Regulatory Requirements Related to Cemeteries and Columbaria"
- "The 2019 NIC Local Church Insurance Program"
- "The Many Benefits of a Local Church Endowment and How to Start One"

The cost for this workshop will be \$10/person and \$25 for as many as are able to attend from one local church. Snacks, but no lunch, will be provided.

Visit www.umcnic.org/calendar/trustees-training for more information and registration.

Laity Sunday October 20, 2019: "Therefore Go! With hope through purpose"

October 20, 2019

Laity Sunday celebrates the ministry of all Christians. On Laity Sunday (this year, October 20, 2019) we embrace our shared vocation (lay persons and clergy) to proclaim, grow in, and embody the good news of saving love in Jesus Christ. As we welcome and offer the good news of Jesus to all, we commit to grow in love and respond to a world that needs God's life-mending, justice-creating grace. Therefore, go (with hope) through purpose! For resources, visit www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship/laity-sunday-2019.

NIC UMW Annual Celebration

Saturday, October 26, 2019, 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Theme: "Welcome to the next 150 Years!"

Location: Olympia Fields UMC, 20301 Western Ave., Olympia Fields, IL

Keynote speaker: Andris Salter, Assistant General Secretary of UMW.

Breakout sessions:

- Membership: Much More Than Census
- Disrupting the School to Prison Pipeline
- Immigrant Children in Detention

Registration: \$15 covers continental breakfast /light lunch, and program. For more info visit umwnic.org.



Exploration creates sacred space for young adults, ages 18-26, to be in meaningful fellowship, passionate worship, theological reflection, and practical workshops as they discern whether God's call on their life is to ordained ministry in The United Methodist Church and what faithful steps they can take in response. For more information and to register, visit www.explorecalling.org.

What comes after GC2020 petitions deadline?

By Heather Hahn, UM News

The deadline to submit legislation to the 2020 General Conference is now in the rearview mirror. So what is ahead?

The coming months will provide a fuller picture of what options will be before delegates when The United Methodist Church's top lawmaking assembly meets May 5-15 at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

A big focus of the coming assembly will be dealing with the fallout of this year's special General Conference. The contentious gathering has led to varied proposals for the denomination's future in light of its still-unresolved debate over homosexuality.

But getting legislation into a format that is readily accessible for a multinational and multilingual denomination takes time.

By denominational rules, the Advance Daily Christian Advocate — which contains the petitions and reports requiring General Conference action — must be distributed to delegates at least 90 days before the assembly begins. That date is Feb. 5 for the 2020 gathering.

"It's a pretty safe bet that we can have it ready in advance of that 90-day publication date," Brian Sigmon, the editor of the Daily Christian Advocate and its advance edition, told the Commission on General Conference at the group's August meeting.

He and other General Conference organizers hope to have the Advance Daily Christian Advocate available online for download as soon as the materials are finalized.

As of Sept. 19, General Conference staff said it was still too soon to know an exact date.

The entire Advance Daily Christian Advocate must be available in the four official General Conference languages — English, French, Portuguese and Kiswahili. Typically, about 1,000 petitions are submitted for consideration at a regularly scheduled General Conference.

Proposals coming to GC2020 include legislation to add five more bishops to Africa, to revise the Social Principles, to create a new structure for U.S. decision-making and to establish the 2021-24 general church budget. All four of these proposals were drafted by international church bodies.

United Methodist News also confirmed that petitions have been submitted for at least three plans for the denomination's future.

In alphabetical order, these include:

- **The Indianapolis Plan**, submitted by the Rev. Kent Millard and assembled by a group of centrists, traditionalists and progressives. This plan includes provisions for separating into different denominations depending on views around homosexuality.

- **New Forms of Unity**, submitted by the Texas Conference's Bishop Scott Jones. Under this plan, an annual conference could become a self-governing church or join an existing one. Jones first began working on the plan with the Michigan Conference's Bishop David Bard. Bishops do not have a vote at General Conference.

- **The UMCNext Proposal**, assembled by a group of centrists and progressives. This proposal lifts restrictions related to gay ordination and same-sex weddings, while allowing local churches that disagree to depart and organize into new forms of Methodism.

These three plans were all drafted in the United States.

However, this is not a comprehensive list of the options that will be before the delegates to reorganize or divide the denomination and its assets. Individual United Methodists also can submit legislation, and some already announced plans to do so ahead of the deadline.

During the shortened special General Conference, delegates considered plans that contained multiple petitions as a package. But General Conference organizers have decided that won't be the case at GC2020, at least not initially.

The Rev. Abby Parker Herrera — General Conference petitions secretary — has the task of giving numbers to each properly submitted petition and assigning it to one of 14 legislative committees or the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters.

The legislative committees deal with different subject matters and related sections in the Book of Discipline, the denomination's policy book. The standing committee deals with proposals that affect United Methodist regions in Africa, Europe and the Philippines.

These committees are the first stop where legislation is debated, refined and possibly approved to go to the full General Conference plenary for a vote.

So if a plan has multiple petitions that deal with different sections of the Discipline, those petitions will first head to the committees that handle those sections.

If petitions coming from multiple committees need to be considered together, the Committee on Agenda and Calendar can schedule that, said the Rev. Gary Graves, General Conference secretary.

There is also a Committee on Reference, which meets at the start of General Conference and considers requests to reassign petitions to different legislative committees.

The Book of Discipline requires all valid petitions to receive a vote in legislative committee, and all petitions approved by a legislative committee to receive a vote in plenary.

The 2020 General Conference will have 862 delegates overall, equally split between clergy and laity. Of the 2020 delegates, 55.9% will be from the U.S., 32% from Africa, 6% from the Philippines, 4.6% from Europe and the remainder from concordat churches that have close ties to The United Methodist Church.

As the big meeting approaches, Graves and other General Conference organizers urge continued prayers for all staff and volunteers working diligently to prepare.

Hahn is a multimedia news reporter for UM News. Contact her at (615) 742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org. Sam Hodges, a UM News reporter in Dallas, contributed to this story.



Church leaders gather for the opening of the 2019 United Methodist General Conference in St. Louis. File photo by Kathleen Barry, UM News.

Key terms to know

Like any legislative body, General Conference has some of its own lingo.

The Book of Discipline: The United Methodist Church's policy book that contains its law, doctrine, constitution, organizational work and procedures. Each General Conference amends the Book of Discipline.

The Book of Resolutions: This volume contains resolutions or pronouncements on issues that General Conference has approved. The text of any resolution is considered the denomination's official position on a topic.

Petition: A request to the General Conference for official action on a topic or issue, similar to a bill before the U.S. Congress. But not all petitions are intended to become law. A petition can suggest a change in the Book of Discipline, approval of a resolution or some course of action the denomination should take.

Advance Daily Christian Advocate (Advance DCA or ADCA): A set of volumes containing the agenda, rules, delegate listings, petitions, reports from church organizations and other information for delegates.

Daily Christian Advocate (DCA): The official journal of the General Conference.

NIC Delegation preparing for General Conference



The NIC delegation meets monthly across the conference. They gathered at Wesley UMC in Aurora for their Sept. 15 meeting. Photo courtesy Al Benson

Elected at Annual Conference in June, the Northern Illinois Conference's six lay and six clergy delegates, plus alternates, have been meeting monthly as they prepare for General Conference, set for May 5-15, 2020, in Minneapolis and the Jurisdictional Conference from July 15-18, 2020, in Ft. Wayne, Ind.

The Rev. Alka Lyall was the first elected among clergy and serves as the chair, and Adrian Hill, first-time lay delegate is the vice-chair.

"These meetings are important for us since half of those elected are first-time delegates, said Rev. Lyall. "We begin our time with learning about each other through an activity or game led by our 'minister of fun', the Rev. Britt Cox, followed by worship."

Lyall said the rest of the meeting time is spent in discussions, deliberations, and sharing their views on matters that will be part of the General Conference agenda.

"This work is extremely important for us to grow together as a team, educate ourselves and prepare ourselves for the work ahead of us. We pray and hope to do all within our ability to be the church that God intends for us to be-inclusive and welcoming of all persons." The meetings run from 3-8 p.m. Delegates spend the time before dinner in logistical and administrative processes and have open conversations after dinner, from 5:45 - 8pm, which are open to anyone interested in joining.

Following are the future meetings dates for the delegates. Times and locations will be posted on the group's Facebook page www.facebook.com/NICDelegation and on the NIC website www.umcnic.org.

- November 8-9 (Jurisdictional Delegation Meeting)
- January 26
- February 23
- March 22
- April 19 (Sending forth worship with Bishop)
- May 31
- June 14



DYK???

Caregiving benefits for clergy

By Rev. Arlene Christopherson, Assistant to the Bishop/Dir. Connectional Ministries

Clergy serving in the local church fulfill many expectations. We show up to lead worship on Sundays, preach a good sermon, visit the sick, administer the church, provide comfort to the grieving, teach, witness, make disciples, and engage in social justice.

This broad sweeping list reminds us that the life of a pastor is primarily focused on others. Clergy are caregivers who are drawn to the task of serving. This is good for our faith and good for the church but not always as good for the individual pastor.

Did you know changes are coming for active, full-time clergy health insurance options? As caregivers, pastors can be so engaged in the task of others that we sometimes forget to take time to care for ourselves, and, by extension, our families. Our founder John Wesley, who was methodical in his living and ministry, often wrote about the disciplines of a leader's life. These disciplines were spiritual, physical, financial, and emotional.

Clergy in the Northern Illinois Conference have been blessed with a system that relieves us of the day-to-day burdens of ordering our financial future and physical world. We have a pension program that "cares" for our investments and we have comprehensive health insurance that covers our routine and special needs. We are cared for as others care for us.

Even as others are caring for us, these benefits are a partnership. Clergy can interact with their pension program

designating funds to a personal investment plan and choosing the ways in which their pension resources are invested. Clergy can maximize their health insurance benefits by participating in wellness opportunities designed to minimize our dependence on medications and medical interventions. Virgin Pulse, a program that encourages physical activity and wellness, actually pays clergy for their self-care, offering incentives for doing the right thing! (Are you wearing your pedometer?)

This fall our Conference Board of Pensions is introducing a shift in the way the conference "cares" for clergy health insurance. Clergy will be given a choice in their health insurance coverage. Rather than "one size fits all," this program will partner with clergy and their families, giving each participant an opportunity to choose the plan that best fits their situation.

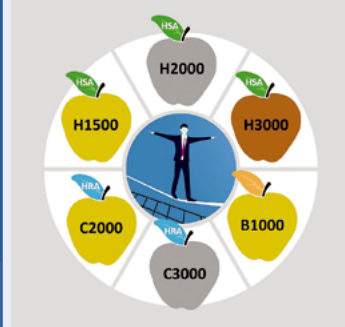
This is a big shift for those of us who have had the benefit of being cared for while we are busy caring for others. Now we are asked to take responsibility for our health coverage and give time and attention to our insurance needs.

We will go through a learning curve since we have been taken care of for so long, but it is important that we participate in this work. Clergy currently enrolled in the HealthFlex program are invited to attend one of 5 training events in October. To learn more visit www.umcnic.org/healthflex.

Be sure to participate in one of these training events and embrace this opportunity to care for ourselves.

HealthFlex Exchange

More Choice, More Flexibility— Same HealthFlex Quality



HealthFlex participants (full-time clergy, spouses and lay employees) are invited to come learn more about the Northern Illinois Conference's shift to the HealthFlex Exchange, effective January 1, 2020, at five workshops across the conference in October. The workshops will be led by NIC and Wespath staff to help you choose the plan that works best for your family's needs and budget.

Please attend one of the workshops listed for information on:

- How HealthFlex plans work
- How to choose the right plan for you
- How premium credits work
- What are health accounts (HSA, HRA and FSA)
- How to use the online benefit tool ALEX
- How to make your annual elections

Workshop dates/locations

- **Oct. 15, 9 - 11 a.m. Orland Park: Faith**
15101 S 80th Ave, Orland Park, IL
- **Oct. 15, 2 - 4 p.m. Naperville: Grace**
300 E Gartner Rd, Naperville, IL

- **Oct. 16, 9 - 11 a.m. Barrington**
98 Algonquin Road, Barrington IL
- **Oct. 16, 2 - 4 p.m. Sycamore**
160 Johnson Ave, Sycamore, IL
- **Oct. 22, 9 - 11 a.m. Mount Prospect: Trinity**
605 West Golf Rd., Mt. Prospect, IL

The open enrollment period is from October 30 - November 14. Mark your calendar and make your elections online— wespath.org > HealthFlex/ WebMD. For more information and to register for a workshop visit www.umcnic.org/healthflex.

Attention Retirees: Your retiree benefits through Via Benefits will remain exactly the same and are not affected by the Conference's HealthFlex Exchange changes. Your benefits would only change if you elected to be in another Medicare Supplement program for 2020. If you are retired and participating in Via Benefits and receiving an HRA benefit you do not have to do anything to maintain your benefits for 2020. Questions? Contact Woody Bedell at wbedell@umcnic.org.

THE COMMITTEE TEACHING SERIES



A free online teaching series based on *Chuck Knows Church* and designed to help congregations discuss critical issues that potentially are preventing them from being vital churches, is now available from Discipleship Ministries.

The 16-session video teaching series uses a study guide to help congregations talk and learn about topics such as discipleship systems, evangelism, stewardship,

church committees that work, innovation, and more. Highly collaborative, individuals and groups will have the opportunity to engage and interact with other participants online.

"The real-world topics used in this outstanding teaching series will help congregations

examine the struggles facing them as they work to develop the discipleship systems that will grow vital churches," said the Rev. Junius B. Dotson, General Secretary (CEO) of Discipleship Ministries.

Classes opened on Oct. 1 for the teaching series, but participants can begin at anytime.

The sessions use the highly successful video series *Chuck Knows Church: The Committee*, which follows Park Grove Community Church, a fictional urban U.S. congregation. Park Grove is a struggling congregation faced with the difficult decision about whether or not to close, and the last remaining members must decide what to do.

Instructors for the teaching series are:

Rev. Steve Horswill-Johnston, who leads the Office of Communications at Discipleship

Ministries, is the creator and producer of *Chuck Knows Church* and is a four-time Emmy Award winning director and producer.

Rev. Dr. Craig Kennet Miller, associate pastor at Alhambra First United Methodist Church in California, founder of Change Your Ministry and former director of Congregational Development at Discipleship Ministries.

"Not all congregations may be facing closure, like the fictional Park Grove Church," Horswill-Johnston said. "They may have a wonderful pastor and be a vital and growing church. But at some point, all congregations face the issues addressed in *The Committee*."

For more information and to register, go to chuck.umcdiscipleship.org.

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Please submit items at least two weeks prior to publication date. Include your name, address, email, phone number and name of local church. Space is limited. Electronic submissions are preferred with high-resolution attached jpegs. For guidelines and to submit online, visit www.umcnic.org/communications/submit-news.

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