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In her Episcopal Address, Bishop Sally Dyck says inclusion is at the heart of this Annual Conference as well as hers.



Clergy and laity came together for a Special Session of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference on Nov. 16 at Kishwaukee College in Malta, Ill., to vote on a budget and hear a report from the Exploration Team. Photo courtesy Aquilino Javier

## Annual Conference approves reduced 2020 budget By Anne Marie Gerhardt, NIC Dir. of Communications

Approximately 550 clergy and lay members gathered Nov. 16 in the gymnasium at Kishwaukee College for the Annual Conference Special Session to vote on a budget, apportionment formula changes, and to hear from the Exploration Team, a task force directed by legislation passed at the June Annual Conference to explore a way forward for the Northern Illinois Conference, including the possibility of new Methodist expression.

After a presentation from the Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CCFA) and Q&A, the Annual Conference passed a \$4,574,255 budget for 2020, down 5% from 2019.

CCFA Chair Stephanie Uhl acknowledged 2019 has been a difficult year financially for the Conference and local churches. "The Special Session of General Conference earlier this year resulted in many of our churches losing members and along with that significant financial contributions," said Uhl. "We've also struggled as a conference and while that struggle is not new, it has been more pronounced this year."

The reduction in spending is about \$288,000. The largest savings will come from a consolidation of district offices and staff. Technology has streamlined much of the work of the District Superintendents (DSs) and many of them have been working via "mobile offices" for several years.

"Most DSs are rarely in our offices. We are in our cars and pull over on the side of the road to look at tablets," said Elgin District Superintendent and Dean of the Cabinet Rev. Darneather Murph-Heath. "Most of our files have been

digitized and we no longer have to go to paper files. While these changes come with pain, we have come to a point where we have to do things differently."

The three Regional Administrators will be reduced to two Administrative Assistants who will be based out of the Conference's Chicago office to allow for collaboration and efficiency. DSs will be the first point of contact and connection for local churches "in the field." Not much will change for local churches and they will receive the same personal customer service, resources, and support through Conference staff.

The job descriptions and application process for the two administrative positions will be posted the first of the year. All three regional administrators may apply, and the Conference offers a severance package for positions being eliminated. The savings from these changes are projected to be approximately \$80,000 in 2020, with additional potential savings in 2021 once any outstanding lease obligations and contracts are met. Reducing the number of DSs from six to five is also being considered in 2021 for more cost savings.

Other cost savings include a change from an in-house IT professional to outsourced IT support, resulting in a reduction in expenses of approximately \$60,000; reduction in the number of clergy moves per year, estimating a savings of \$20,000 in moving expenses; and reducing Conference program ministries by approximately \$60,000.

The Annual Conference also approved a reduced local church apportionment formula for 2020 to help churches with financial difficulties. Apportionments will be

calculated using a 12% rate instead of the current rate of 14%.

CCFA also announced it will no longer withhold funding from the General Administration Fund, beginning Jan. 1, 2020. The Annual Conference in June approved CCFA's legislation to suspend payments to the General Administration Fund, one of seven apportioned funds of The United Methodist Church that finance general church activities such as General Conference (GC), in light of an investigation into improper voting at the February GC Special Session. Since the investigation has been completed and action steps are being taken, CCFA believes the funding should be reinstated.

CCFA says so far in 2019, general church apportionment receipts are less than 10%. Uhl recognized changes to the apportionment billing and statements as well as miscommunication over the legislation to suspend payments to the General Administration Fund may have caused confusion.

"Some mistakenly believed we were not paying any General Church funds and we apologize for that confusion," said Uhl. "While we understand that it is highly unlikely that we will receive the additional \$1.8 million needed to pay in full, we hope our local churches will continue to support our General Church apportionments," said Uhl. Learn more about the seven General Church apportioned funds and how we give at [www.umcgiving.org/resource-articles/did-you-know](http://www.umcgiving.org/resource-articles/did-you-know).

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## From Bishop Dyck: We all need a little Christmas

*Yes, we need a little Christmas  
Right this very minute...  
For I've grown a little leaner,  
Grown a little colder,  
Grown a little sadder,  
Grown a little older,  
And I need a little angel  
Sitting on my shoulder,  
Need a little Christmas now...  
For we need a little music,  
Need a little laughter,  
Need a little singing  
Ringing through the rafters,  
And we need a little snappy  
"Happy ever after,"  
Need a little Christmas now.*

This song is from the 1966 Broadway musical, *Mame*. The musical begins in the extravagant lifestyle before the 1929 Wall Street crash and then continues into the struggles after 1929. In the Depression, Mame and her family members have "grown a little leaner... a little colder... a little sadder... a little older." So, Mame calls for some Christmas joy!

In 2019 with the violence repeating itself in random communities in the U.S., turmoil and even possible impeachment in the federal government, a planet "groaning in travail" at the effects of our addiction to fossil fuels, an Internet search that reveals 10 official wars and eight active military conflicts recognized by the U.S., and refugees struggling to find a home after dislocation... we need a little Christmas... now!

For those of us in The United Methodist Church, the uncertainty and anxiety about the impact of the Traditional Plan on clergy and local churches combined with a multiplicity of "plans" for how to be Methodist beyond the General Conference in May as well as a weariness about being stuck fighting with each other over welcoming all people into the life of Christ through the church... well, we need a little Christmas, right this very minute!

Advent is a protest statement to our lagging faith with its themes of hope, peace, joy, and love.

Hope isn't optimism that everything will work out all right. At least I hope not! Because things don't always work out all right. Hope is more like resilience; the ability to face harsh realities with determination and grace. Hope has flexibility and is able to adapt to circumstances without getting mired down. Hope requires some improvisation of spirit and tactics in situations that are typically marked by uncertainty. That's what the Christian faith calls us to – and yet hope doesn't stand a chance if we're in isolation, competition, and antagonism with others. Hope comes in the connections we have as people of faith. Hope is rooted in a faith community.

"Peace on earth, good will toward all" is a Christmas blessing and aspiration. Peace isn't superficial, willing to overlook our differences in order to get along. Peacemaking is contrary to our cultural inclination to vote others off the island in the "Survivor" mentality, or to say "You are dead to me" to friends who disagree with us. Peacemaking is part of discipleship. How we are with each other is an expression of our commitment to Christ and the church: "In so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Romans 12:18).

Joy: "Serve the Lord with gladness," my devotions reminded me one morning. With all the anxieties and fears within the church as well as the country, serving the Lord with gladness is a stretch some days! It's one thing to unintentionally harm another, but too often we harm others intentionally just to be right, to rub their noses in our win and their loss. It makes me sad and weary. But joy is more than "a snappy 'happy ever after.'" It's rooted in a deep trust in God; the fruit of that trust is joy in spite of it all.

Love of God is the root, and love for each other is the fruit of our

faith. No excuses. No exceptions. How can we give an account of our faith when we're quick to condemn or seek revenge? Love is something that doesn't exist in cheap words but in demonstrated action. And then, if our action is off the mark in spite of our best efforts, love is revealed when we're willing to seek forgiveness and try another way of showing it. It would be easier if there was a little angel on our shoulder telling us how we're doing. Instead, we need to be in communication with each other lovingly.

"We need a little music... need a little singing, ringing through the rafters." Hope, peace, joy, and love aren't just whipped up like figgy pudding. They come through our disciplines of faith, which include, among other practices, singing.

To all liturgical purists who believe Christmas carols shouldn't be sung until Christmas, I would encourage you to get everyone singing with gusto throughout the whole season! Christmas carols are really protest songs: protesting against despair ("In the Bleak Midwinter"), conflict and violence ("It Came Upon the Midnight Clear"), sadness ("Joy to the World"), and hatred or even indifference ("Love Came Down at Christmas").

Let Advent and Christmas ring from the rafters this year! After all, we need a little Christmas now!

~Bishop Sally Dyck



## NCJ Delegation acknowledges harm done

During a pre-General Conference gathering Nov. 8-9, 2019 at First Korean UMC in Wheeling, Ill., the 177 delegates, alternates, and the Mission Council from around the North Central Jurisdiction were guided through small group discussions and open conversations. At the end of the meeting, they released the following statement:

*In a crucial moment in the life of The United Methodist Church, we, 140 members present and voting from the North Central Jurisdiction's Annual Conference delegations and the North Central Jurisdiction's Mission Council, through honest, prayerful dialogue discerned the following:*

- We as NCJ delegations acknowledge and apologize for the harm that is being done and the escalation of potential harm that will begin January 1, 2020. We repent of the ways we have abused our privilege and the ways that it has harmed the marginalized.
- We witness the Holy Spirit moving in our midst. We witness God's seeking, saving, healing and liberating grace at work in our communities. We renew our commitment to follow the Spirit's leading and joining in God's gracious work.
- We believe that God is not finished with the people called United Methodist. We renew our commitment to lead our conferences, congregations and ministry settings in

*"making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world" in just, compassionate, creative, equitable and innovative ways.*

- We call NCJ laity, clergy, Annual Conferences and bishops to covenant to a moratorium on complaints, charges, and trials related to officiating same-gendered weddings and LGBTQIA+ identity and credentialing.
- We call laity, clergy, Annual Conferences, Boards of Ordained Ministry and bishops to covenant for greater freedom and diversity for ministry with LGBTQIA+ people.
- We will hold accountable and support laity, clergy, Annual Conferences and bishops in these commitments and calls.
- When we gather for the 2020 NCJ Conference, we desire to elect bishops who will join us in these commitments and calls.

While officially non-binding, the statement was adopted by a vote of YES: 80% , NO: 18% , ABSTAIN: 2%. NCJ Mission Council Chairperson Ryan M. Russell described the outcome, "I had some concrete hopes for the gathering. As the body worked together, the spirit of openness and respect was present even with some disagreement. I am heartened that we as the United Methodist in the NCJ

were able to come to a commonplace with the document adopted by this gathering."

The North Central Jurisdiction includes Northern Illinois, Dakotas, East Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, West Ohio, and Wisconsin Annual Conferences.

The 2020 General Conference will take place May 5-15 in Minneapolis, and the 2020 North Central Jurisdictional Conference will take place July 15-18 in Fort Wayne, Indiana. At General Conference, delegates play a key role in making decisions that impact the future of The United Methodist Church, and at Jurisdictional Conference, delegates elect bishops.



Delegates from the North Central Jurisdiction met for a Pre-General Conference Briefing at First Korean UMC in Wheeling, Ill., to participate in group discussions and open conversations.



# Episcopal nominee process

At the July 2020 North Central Jurisdictional Conference in Ft. Wayne, Ind., the delegates will elect new Bishops for the Jurisdiction and recognize retiring Bishops Sally Dyck and Bruce Ough.

In February 2020, the Northern Illinois Conference Delegation will invite all interested candidates to an interview, after which they will discern and announce our endorsement.

If you are feeling called to the Episcopacy, please review the online documents, "Discernment guidelines" for the Jurisdiction and the "Northern Illinois Conference delegation criteria," that will be used by the delegation for discerning endorsement.

If you desire to seek endorsement by the NIC delegation, please send an email titled, "I would like to be a candidate for Episcopal Nominee," to Rev. Alka Lyall, the chair of the delegation, at [pastoralkalyall@gmail.com](mailto:pastoralkalyall@gmail.com).

After considering the guidelines and if you would like to submit your name as a candidate for Episcopal Nominee, please submit the Episcopal Nominee Information form, no later than June 25, in order to be included in the packet of nominee information sent to all the Jurisdictional Conference delegates, to: Rev. Paul R. White, Secretary, 2020 NCJ Conference, 3815 Ashwood Street NW, Canton, OH 44708-1603, [paulw2800@gmail.com](mailto:paulw2800@gmail.com).

To find the documents and the form online, visit [www.umcnic.org/NICdelegation](http://www.umcnic.org/NICdelegation).



## Bishop's Appeal raises money for farmers

Thank you for your donations to the Bishop's Appeal offering at the Special Session to give a little extra help to farmers in northern Illinois who are struggling after a difficult growing season and harvest. The total collected was \$30,636!

Bishop Sally Dyck was thrilled with the response. "I'm delighted at the generosity of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference! This is a wonderful example of 'we're stronger together!' Together we will be able to help at least 60 farmers with tangible support as well as hope and care," said Bishop Dyck. "Thank you to all of you who gave so generously!"

### Micro-Grant Applications for Farmers

The Keagy Town and Rural Committee will use the Bishop's Appeal donations to award micro-grants to area farmers. Committee Chair Rev. Mary Bohall says this year has been very difficult for farmers who have one of the highest suicide rates among professions.

"Added to the stress of a late planting season because of the heavy rains and a drought in July, farmers are now having a tough time harvesting because of the early snow," said Bohall. "The grant money may be used for whatever the farmers need, such as groceries, medical bills, equipment payments or any other necessities, no questions asked.

The application should be filled out by a clergy member on behalf of Farm Service Agency (FSA)-recognized farmers who need the extra assistance. The recipients of the ministry do not have to be affiliated with the congregation. Grants will be awarded up to \$500. To find the application, visit [www.umcnic.org/bishopsappeal](http://www.umcnic.org/bishopsappeal).

Also, a big thank you to those who brought donations for Bahamas Hurricane Relief to the Mission Truck parked outside Kishwaukee College before the Special Session began. A total of 963 pounds of donations was collected for the Midwest Mission Distribution Center, an estimated value of \$7,704, plus \$365 in cash contributions were received. Thank you to Ray Trent from New Lenox UMC and Larry Dunlap-Berg, NIC UMVIM Co-Coordinator, for volunteering to load the truck and transport the items to the MMDC's warehouse in Chatham, IL.

## From the Cover



CCFA Chair Stephanie Uhl presents the 2020 reduced budget and outlines their cost saving decisions.

When asked if the Northern Illinois Conference is still viable, Treasurer Lonnie Chafin said, "If we are doing vital ministry together we are vital. Look to each other and what you can accomplish together that is our viability. As long as we are moving together – we are viable." To find the budget and explanatory materials of further cuts, go to [www.umcnic.org/specialsession](http://www.umcnic.org/specialsession) under "legislation."

### Bishop Dyck: Inclusion is Heart of this Conference

In her Episcopal Address at the Special Session, Bishop Sally Dyck expressed a few thoughts about where the United Methodist Church stands in light of the Traditional Plan, which goes into effect January 1, 2020 and imposes punitive action against clergy who are LGBTAI+ and/or perform same-gender weddings. "To say that many clergy—LGBTQIA+ and straight as well as concerned and allied laity—are very anxious is to understate the situation," said Dyck. "I want to say, as I have before, that the Traditional Plan is untenable for many of us and specifically for this annual conference."

Bishop Dyck reminded the Annual Conference that the body voted in June to direct the Bishop how to respond to complaints or trials against LGBTQIA+ clergy by doing no harm and reaffirmed a commitment to inclusion as a Reconciling Conference since 1986.

"Let me be clear. I will not facilitate or move on trial complaints against LGBTQIA+ clergy or clergy who perform same-gender weddings," said Dyck. "I joined the UMC years ago because it welcomed and provided space for someone like me to be in ministry. How could I deny a welcome to belong and fully serve Christ and the church to someone else?" Bishop Dyck added she will commission and ordain whomever is brought by the Board of Ordained Ministry and the clergy session approves.

While the future of the denomination seems uncertain, "what's important is to do what we can see to do now," said Dyck. "What we can do now is to make sure our

local churches and our annual conference are as strong as possible. This is not a time to hold back—financially or otherwise."

Bishop Dyck encouraged clergy and laity who come from different positions to go deeper into a conversation to seek understanding. "We are better together even in our differences when we allow those differences to be portals of the gospel, reaching out to different kinds of people who need the love and grace of Jesus Christ," she said. "It's important that you recognize and support what the heart of this conference has been from the 1980s at least. The heart of this conference is what will endure into the future with your next bishop...and that holds a future with hope."

To read the Bishop's full statement, visit [www.umcnic.org/news/bishop-dyck-inclusion-is-the-heart-of-this-conference](http://www.umcnic.org/news/bishop-dyck-inclusion-is-the-heart-of-this-conference).

### Exploration Team Introduces Draft Statement

After the June Annual Conference passed a resolution asking the Bishop to form a task force to explore a new expression of Methodism and a straw poll overwhelmingly rejected the Traditional Plan, the newly formed Exploration Team began meeting a few weeks after Annual Conference.

The Team's Chair Rev. Chris Winkler said they're an intentionally diverse, thoughtful group of clergy and laity who are serious about their work. But as multiple plans for the denomination's future and Judicial Council decisions emerged, Winkler said what became clear is that "clarity would not be something we could hope for or expect until after General Conference 2020."

The Exploration Team worked on a draft identity statement and covenants to guide the Conference in the discernment of who our future ministry partners would be. "We know there is a wide diversity of theology and ecclesiology in our Conference and we are not all of one mind," said Winkler. "Thus, one of our essential functions of this process is to gain a sense of who among us is united in our desire to be part of a new expression when they emerge and who might wish to align with another."

The team is asking churches to share and discuss the statement and covenant with their congregations. Suggestions, affirmations, and edits may be emailed to [explorationteam@umcnic.org](mailto:explorationteam@umcnic.org).

Several sessions across the Conference are scheduled in February for discussion and discernment. In March and April, the team will evaluate the feedback and make changes. In May, the Team will be closely watching the decisions that come out of General Conference and in June they will present the final draft of the statement and covenants to the Northern Illinois Annual Conference.

"We hope to present legislation that establishes a direction for the churches in our Conference who wish to remain together shaped on the outcome and timeline set by the General Conference," said Winkler. "We must look forward with hope to May when a new expression of Methodism that expands our vision of ministry beyond what it has been and beyond what we can ever imagine will be born."

To read the Exploration Team's statement, visit [www.umcnic.org/specialsession](http://www.umcnic.org/specialsession) under "other documents."

## Road to GC2020 Conversations

Co-hosted by the NIC Exploration Team, NIC General Conference Delegates, and the Cabinet.

- **Sunday, Feb. 2 at 3-5 p.m.**  
River Forest UMC
- **Thursday, Feb. 13 at 3-5 p.m.**  
Woodridge UMC
- **Thursday Feb. 13 at 7-9 p.m.**  
Schaumburg: Our Saviour's
- **Sunday, Feb. 16 at 3-5 p.m.**  
Rockford: Christ

For registration and more information, go to [www.umcnic.org/calendar](http://www.umcnic.org/calendar) and click on the date of your choice.





Author and Fuller Theological Seminary Assistant Professor Tod Bolsinger presents a workshop on leadership at Barrington UMC.



Karen Klaus (left), Director of Spiritual Development and Family Ministries at First UMC in Crystal Lake, engages in table conversations during the "Canoeing the Mountain" workshop on Oct. 17.

## Workshop equips NIC leaders with new navigational tools

By Diane Strzelecki, NIC Communications Specialist

Back in 1805, explorers Lewis and Clark had to adapt their journey in an unexpected way. Their expedition party had prepared to find a waterway to the Pacific Ocean but instead found the Rocky Mountains. The explorers had to sit down, evaluate themselves and everything they had brought with for the expected journey—including canoes.

On Thursday, October 17, approximately 120 clergy and laity gathered at the NIC-Office of Congregational Development and Redevelopment sponsored workshop "Canoeing the Mountains," at Barrington UMC led by author and Fuller Theological Seminary Assistant Professor Tod Bolsinger.

Designed to equip UMC leaders to hone their leadership skills to help their churches move into the future, the workshop was based on Bolsinger's book "Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory." Four intensive 75-minute sessions presented lessons on leadership, including the new context of the church, what leadership looks like in today's world and finding new navigational tools to chart the course of the church.

"I hope that everyone attending can use what they learn today to take one challenge or issue they've been struggling with at their church and get a better result," Bolsinger said.

The Rev. Megan Smick (Oregon UMC) had been looking forward to the workshop. "I read Bolsinger's book, and I think he's absolutely right that our old paradigms and ways of being the church are no longer working to grow the Kingdom of God in a rapidly changing culture," she said. "I think it's crucial for pastors, local church leaders and our annual conference to learn new leadership styles and skills that will promote vital congregations, growth in discipleship, and welcome for the unchurched. Because our old ways aren't getting it done!"

For Karen Klaus, Director of Spiritual Development and Family Ministries (First: Crystal Lake), the many "God connects" associated with Bolsinger's book

inspired her to attend. "The title and synopsis captured my professional interest and then resonated with my personal experience moving from Ohio to Montana to Marengo to Crystal Lake," she said. "I'm grateful for the conference for making this learning opportunity happen."

The workshop dove deep into the concept of leadership in a climate of change. "The answer is not trying harder—you can't tell people in a canoe to paddle harder when they run out of water," Bolsinger said. "We're going to have to learn new pathways and then lead the learning of our congregations." The workshop included time for attendees to work together to process and discuss some of the issues raised.

Connie Scheitzer, Elgin District Lay Academy Dean, had several takeaways. "This training event was jam packed with new ways to look at doing church leadership in an increasingly new culture," Schietzer says. "[Rev. Bolsinger] brought in a fresh perspective of how change has gridlocked many churches and offered concrete ways to move off of that stuck place."

Smick agreed. "We've been doing a lot of hand wringing in the last decade about the decline of our churches and Rev. Bolsinger eloquently names that for us," she said. "But he has reframed this as a holy moment, a liminal place where we can begin to see how God is calling us beyond our old models. He has also shown us how to lead in such a place and moment."

"I couldn't be more encouraged and pleased by the caliber of the author/speaker the conference brought in," added Klaus. "What he had to share was vital in having churches minister to the next generation. Thank you!"

*Tod Bolsinger is the Vice-President & Chief of Leadership Formation and Assistant Professor of Practical Theology at Fuller Theological Seminary. He spent 17 serving as the Senior Pastor of San Clemente Presbyterian Church in San Clemente, California; prior to that, he served for 10 years on the pastoral staff at First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood.*

## A new chapter at Bethany Methodist

This autumn, Bethany Methodist began a new chapter in their 130-year mission with the move of the corporate offices to Glenview and the appointment of Rev. Dr. Sunny Lopez as the seventh President and CEO of the organization.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Dahl, recently retired as CEO after 35 years and now serving as Chairman of the Bethany Methodist Board, said, "Sunny has been an integral part of Bethany's corporate leadership since 1992 and there is no one better to lead us into the future...In addition to strategic planning and corporate oversight, Sunny's background also includes a strong passion for building upon Bethany's close relationship with the UMC's Northern Illinois Conference. She has earned the trust and respect of everyone she meets, and we are blessed to welcome her to this expanded role."

Given the changing economic climate for small, independent hospitals, the Bethany Board of Directors recently made the decision to sell the Chicago Campus—consisting of Methodist Hospital and Bethany Retirement Community—to Thorek Memorial Hospital, a fellow non-profit organization. Methodist Hospital was able to remain independent considerably longer than most similar sized facilities, and this transfer of ownership (effective October 1, 2019) will make it possible for the campus and

the remaining staff to continue providing exceptional care in the Andersonville neighborhood.

Bethany's Glenview campus, consisting of Chestnut Square at The Glen (an independent senior living community), Partners in Healthcare (private duty caregiver services), and Partners in Home Healthcare (Medicare-certified home health providers) will remain under the ownership and management of Bethany Methodist.

The Bethany story began in 1889 with the faith-filled vision of Mrs. Lindgren, who asked her son to go out to the Swedish Methodist congregations to raise enough money to build Bethany Retirement Community in Chicago. The story unfolded in many ways over the years in response to the changing times, but the core of its mission has remained the same: to provide faith-based exceptional health and housing programs for seniors.

David Carlson, who retired this November as Chairman of the Bethany Methodist Board, said in reflecting on Bethany's past and future: "The heartbeat of any organization is its people...and Bethany's heart has always been strong."

Rev. Lopez agrees, and believes that the Bethany team at the Glenview campus feels the strength of the Bethany heartbeat as they move forward.

Looking to the future, Sunny also shared, "I am excited

to be a part of writing the next chapter of the Bethany story with our amazing staff and the residents and clients we serve."

To learn more, visit [www.bethanymethodist.org](http://www.bethanymethodist.org) or call 847-904-5122.



From left to right: Rev. Dr. Sunny Lopez (President/CEO of Bethany Methodist), Vera Lampe (Administrator of Chestnut Square at The Glen), Joan Loyd (Resident Council Chair), Terry Arceo (Director of Partners in Healthcare), and Fritz Soon (Director of Partners in Home Healthcare).



# North Central partners with Garret-Evangelical Theological Seminary

North Central College is uniting with Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary (GETS) to offer students the unique opportunity to take graduate-level courses in religious studies while completing their undergraduate degrees.

The official signing ceremony between North Central and GETS took place October 9 at Garrett's Chapel of the Unnamed Faithful. Participants included North Central College President Dr. Troy Hammond; Dr. Lallene Rector, president of GETS; and North Central and GETS alumnus Rev. Thomas Babler '69. Former North Central trustee Bishop Sharon Rader of the United Methodist Church presided over the service.

Students will be eligible to take classes at the seminary's campus in Evanston, Ill. This is the first time the College will allow students to transfer graduate course credits toward their undergraduate work. Junior and senior students in good academic standing with at least 12 hours of religious studies courses will be eligible to enroll in online, summer-intensive or traditional courses. They can either count the courses toward their North Central electives or accumulate up to 15 credits of graduate

coursework toward a future master's degree at GETS or elsewhere.

The program represents an exception to North Central's existing policy against transferring religion or theology coursework that involves beliefs taught by a church. Faculty and administrators at the College agreed that the benefits to both institutions as well as North Central's rich history with The UMC made the partnership worth pursuing.

"It's a perfect combination of the approach that our religious studies program takes, which is non-doctrinal and interpretive, and a denominational approach that some of our students crave," said Stephen Maynard Caliendo, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and professor of political science. "The faculty and staff at Garrett-Evangelical are excited about this partnership because they know how well North Central students are prepared for their graduate programs and they look forward to having more of them in their graduate courses."

The partnership is a way for students to prepare for advanced degree programs as well as careers in ministry, service and social engagement. It will also serve as a "study

away" opportunity, as North Central students will get a feel for a different kind of campus by visiting GETS for on-site classes.

"We designed this program with our eyes toward students who eventually want to have a professional life in the Methodist tradition, but even students who are contemplating another path in a faith profession will benefit from taking classes at Garrett-Evangelical," Caliendo said. "It's a world-class institution with a global student body and access to resources that we do not have at North Central."

Another benefit to students will be deferring some graduate school tuition by acquiring credits during their undergraduate years. "We very much had the cost of higher education in mind when we developed this program," said Caliendo.

The partnership between North Central and GETS will begin in fall 2019. North Central students interested in taking classes at GETS should contact their academic advisor or a professor in the Department of Religious Studies.

## Global Ministries Commissions New EarthKeepers



Participants in the EarthKeepers training tour the rooftop at Euclid Avenue UMC to view the 99 solar panels installed in 2014 to reduce the church's electric bill.

Global Ministries commissioned 67 new EarthKeepers from 23 conferences, including 10 from Northern Illinois, in an online service on November 19, 2019. The service affirmed the EarthKeepers in their call to the ministry of creation care and will bless their work in their communities.

Commissioning online creates the opportunity for all three classes of EarthKeepers trained in 2019 to be commissioned together while minimizing the carbon footprint of the service. It also allows EarthKeepers to participate with family, friends and church community alongside them. Bishop Larry Goodpaster of the Southeast Jurisdiction, Roland Fernandes, Global Ministries COO and UMCOR Executive Director, and Rev. Jenny Phillips, Creation Care Program Manager, led the service.

EarthKeepers is a training program to equip United Methodists in the United States for environmental stewardship. Participants spend three and a half days immersed in discussions on theology, United Methodist resources, community organizing, and anti-racism, and then use what they learn to develop an environmental project for their churches and communities. It serves as both a launchpad for people looking to turn an idea into action and an incubator for people who want to deepen an existing ministry. Participants develop plans in conversation with their peers, troubleshooting ideas and sharing strategies.

This year's participants range in age from 13 to 83 and are from annual conferences in every United States Jurisdiction.

Trainings were held in Philadelphia, PA, Austin, TX and Chicago, IL. The Northern Illinois Conference training was held at Euclid Avenue UMC in Oak Park, which is powered by solar and geothermal energy.

"Creation is in crisis. Global Ministries EarthKeepers recognize the many ways in which the Bible calls people to participate in the health and flourishing of Creation," said Rev. Jenny Phillips, Creation Care Program Manager. "EarthKeepers are empowered to turn big ideas into powerful action by developing projects that address urgent environmental concerns in their communities."

Upon completion of the training, EarthKeepers are expected to launch an environmental project in their communities and can apply for UMCOR grants to support their work. This year's projects include community gardens, green building programs, waste-management initiatives, and more.

The EarthKeepers from the Northern Illinois Conference are Richard Alton, Rev. Nancy Blade, Edwin Mencias, Rev. Jane Cheema, Rev. Larry Dunlap-Berg, Jill Graham, Judith Horsley, Michael Horsley, Margaret Meiser, and Phyllis Tholin.

To learn more about the EarthKeepers program, visit [www.umcmmission.org/earthkeepers](http://www.umcmmission.org/earthkeepers).

## Becoming stronger disciples

By Mark Manzi, NIC Co-Lay Leader

General Secretary of Discipleship Ministries Junius Dotson often says "a disciple is a person who knows Christ, grows in Christ, serves Christ, and shares Christ!" Making disciples is the WHY of The United Methodist Church. At Annual Conference 2019, we approved three strategic goals put forth by the Annual Conference Shepherding Team (ACST). The first goal is "To Grow and Reach Disciples of Jesus Christ."

Maturing as a disciple is a life-long journey. As one of your co-conference Lay Leaders, I encourage all people of the Northern Illinois Conference to take this goal to heart and start, reenergize, or continue your journey of discipleship. Begin to see yourselves as disciples and work to make yourselves stronger disciples. Move from "I ought to" to "I am doing!"

What does becoming a stronger disciple look like? Individually, we can:

- Worship every Sunday and become more aware of God every day,
- Move from receiving gracious hospitality to offering it to others every day,
- Pray and read scripture regularly,
- Give regularly of our money, time, and gifts,
- Seek to become like Jesus and serve others.

What can a church do? Instead of just a few members working to become stronger disciples, churches can create a church-wide intentional discipleship system. How does a church do this? Discipleship Ministries can help. Check out the "See All The People" section on the Discipleship

Ministry website. Here in our conference the Discipleship Task Force, a part of the ACST, can help. Karen Bonnell, DeKalb District Lay Leader, and Rev. Caleb Hong, pastor of Orland Park: Faith, are the chairpersons.

We want to grow as disciples. We want to reach new members. We want to be more effective in our community outreach. Wanting to reach these goals and reaching these goals takes a commitment. No one is better equipped to do these things in our churches than the people. Do we remember the refrain from the hymn "Are Ye Able?"

"Lord, we are able. Our spirits are thine. Remold them make us, like thee, divine."

Yes, we can remold ourselves to become stronger followers and disciples of Jesus.



# School construction in Tanzania underway after long wait

By Rev. Young Seon (Christina) Kim, NIC Missionary in Tanzania



Rev. Young Seon (Christina) Kim (second from left) celebrates the construction progress of the Global Mission Secondary School in Tanzania.



Construction crews clear the area for the future site of the school.

August 27, 2019 was a historic day for me and the future Global Mission Secondary School in Tanzania. After a long wait caused by a United Methodist Church of Tanzania (UMCT) land problem and obtaining necessary permits, a construction contract was finally signed. Immediately, the contractor started site clearance and mobilizations!

Our 15-month wait was not wasted: it had an end. It was God who made this happen against all odds. When I came home on that day, the first thing that I did was to give praise and honor to God, while standing before the cross. God is so good!

Ever since I said “YES” to this secondary school project in the summer of 2016, God has been so faithful. As He promised, He provided the right people for me in stages, including: Professor Choi who visited Tanzania from Korea and drew a master plan; five Tanzanian engineers who provided all the detailed drawings; Ilala district land and education officers and district engineer, Contractor (Dr. Geophrey Mbatta and his team); a lawyer; and Korean missionaries and Korean engineers in Tanzania who shared their experiences and gave me timely advice.

Through individual donors and churches, God also provided \$400,000 for the first phase of the school construction. He also provided amazing breakthroughs during tough situations that made me say, “Lord, I don’t know what to do. Teach me and guide me.” More than anything else, I am so grateful for the Word of God during my daily quiet time that gives me a sense of direction and light for my path. I have a lot of testimonies that make me smile. During actual construction, I’m confident we will have more and more stories touched by God, who is the Lord of this project.

Noah is an inspiration to me. He and his family built an ark for 120 years. They were a family of perseverance and faithfulness. After construction, they continued to be faithful in the rocky ark to feed many animals, give

them water, and clean up after them for 40 days, all while trusting the God of promise. Just like them, I trust God who began a good work in me and I will be faithful to do my part.

School construction will be finished in three phases. During the first and second phases, we have to build all that is required by the government. During the third phase, we will build more facilities, including a multi-purpose hall, a volunteer missionary house, additional classrooms, and an outdoor activity center. We need \$432,764 for the second phase and \$325,500 for the third phase.

During my daily devotions, God drew me to Matthew 19:26: “With God all things are possible.” I shared this verse with the engineers as a theme for the school’s construction. In Tanzania, there is NO tax exemption for all churches, but I have been knocking on doors to ask some favors. I believe God will meet all our needs in Christ (Philippians 4:19).

## How to Give:

Bishop Sally Dyck has designated the Secondary School in Tanzania as the recipient of the 2020 Bishop’s Appeal. Churches are encouraged to fundraise to help the second stage of the school’s construction and bring their offering to the Northern Illinois Annual Conference in June.

“I am so thrilled to hear this unexpected great news,” said Rev. Kim. “*Mungu ametenda maajabu*, which means God did a great thing. As I started to raise funds for the second stage of school construction, I prayed so many times that many churches in the Northern Illinois Annual Conference would support this mission project. Being the recipient of the Bishop’s Appeal has increased my faith and set my heart on fire!”

Find more info at [www.umcnic.org/bishopsappeal](http://www.umcnic.org/bishopsappeal). New resources will be added over the next few months.



## Upper Room ends publication of Pockets and devozine magazines

The Upper Room will cease publication of both Pockets and devozine, its devotional magazines for children and youth, due to declining circulation. The January/February 2020 issue will be the last issue for both publications.

Pockets, a colorful publication featuring stories, poems, games, and daily scripture readings, began in 1981 for children ages 6-12 and reached a peak circulation of 108,894. devozine, short for devotional magazine, was first published in 1996 at the request of teens from the Dakotas Annual Conference. At its high mark, nearly 98,000 youth and church youth leaders used each issue of the magazine.

“We celebrate the tremendous impact these two magazines have had on hundreds of thousands—perhaps millions—of children, youth, families, and churches over the years,” says Stephen D. Bryant, publisher of The Upper Room. “Yet, in the decades since, so much has changed in the publishing world, including the proliferation of content on the internet, ebooks, audiobooks, digital magazines, and smartphones with apps in everyone’s hands, including our youngest readers. As a result, paid circulation has declined to the point where The Upper Room realized we must discover new ways to serve the devotional needs and spiritual formation of young people.”

Bryant invites people who are interested in learning about The Upper Room’s forthcoming spiritual life resources for children and youth to subscribe to “Rising Generations,” a bi-monthly resource newsletter.

Looking toward the future, Sandy Miller, the editor of devozine, writes in the last issue: “Saying goodbye to something you value is difficult. But every ending makes

room for a new beginning. As the magazine comes to an end, I pray that you will discover new ways to spend time with God. Ask questions. Embrace life. Love well. And continue to tell your story, for it is a whisper of God’s story.”

Lynn Gilliam, the editor of Pockets, writes in the last issue, “We have been incredibly blessed to be part of the lives of so many amazing kids over all these years! We were honored to have the opportunity to help our readers grow in their faith in God and Jesus.”

The Upper Room is grateful for the children and teens who have grown in faith through Pockets and devozine and for the churches and adults who have supported this growth. The Upper Room expresses gratitude for all writers, designers, and contributors who made possible the production of Pockets and devozine.

The Upper Room is a global ministry dedicated to helping people create daily life with God. From its beginnings as a daily devotional guide, The Upper Room has grown to include publications, programs, prayer support, and other resources to help believers of all ages and denominations move to a deeper level of faith and service. The Upper Room is a part of Discipleship Ministries. Visit [UpperRoom.org](http://UpperRoom.org) to learn more.

To learn more about The Upper Room’s offerings for children, youth, and young adults, sign up for Rising Generations, a bi-monthly e-newsletter designed specifically for people invested in the spiritual lives of young people at [www.upperroom.org/risinggenerations](http://www.upperroom.org/risinggenerations).





## Ministry together flourishes in La Moille

By Linda Hendelman

"We're all in this together," is the theme in La Moille, a small, rural community of 700 off Interstate 80. According to the Rev. David Jungnickel of Community United Methodist Church, this also applies to the four churches in La Moille, which work together to serve the community. Pastor Dave, as he is known in the community, explained, "It just seems to me the community connection is where the church is headed in the future, worshipping out in the community."

The four churches in La Moille—United Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran, and Congregational—have worshipped together for Easter Sunrise, Thanksgiving, and during the town's annual "Buffalo Days" event. Because the churches work together, the community sees them as united in their efforts.

The Rev. Jerry Graham, pastor of First Baptist Church of La Moille, said the 20 churches in Bureau County have always held some worship services together but the combined ministries in La Moille have blossomed since Pastor Dave arrived four and half years ago. Graham said that this can have the benefit of lightening the pastoral load a bit, but, more importantly, it demonstrates a united front among Christians. "It is just good for the community to see that each of our churches has a love for Jesus Christ, despite our theological differences," he said. "We all love Jesus as equals."

### Bell Ringing Ceremony

"There is this coming together in many ways around prayer and God in the community," Jungnickel explained, noting that these ways include a monthly prayer breakfast for teachers, school staff, and residents. The four pastors also meet monthly. In addition, the churches mail monthly postcards to residents with contact information for the churches and their pastors, schools, local businesses, and emergency help.

La Moille's 1887 historic middle school is the oldest

building in the state of Illinois that has been in continuous use as an education facility. Traditionally, at the start of the school year, there was a community bell-ringing ceremony but it ended decades ago. However, the superintendent of schools advocated for bringing back the tradition. This August the bell-ringing ceremony was re-instated and about 200 people showed up for the event. "Each of us pastors had a place on the agenda," said Jungnickel. "We were quite shocked at the community turnout."

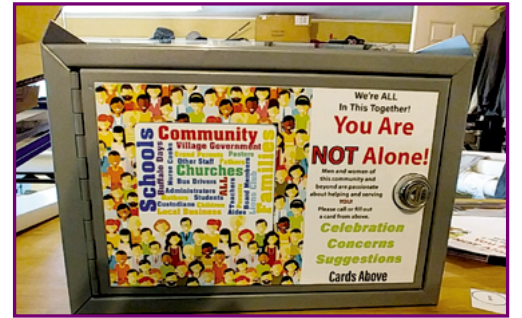
### Community Ministries

The churches also support a Prayer Box ministry and Snack Pack program in the schools. Teachers, staff, and students can fill out a preprinted card with their celebrations, concerns, and suggestions, and place it in the Prayer Box placed in the schools. The pastors collect the cards each day to pray for the community. Information about the churches, pastors, schools, and emergency help are on cards on a shelf next to the Prayer Box. Jungnickel says the next step is to put the Prayer Boxes in other areas in La Moille: "two or three businesses, the library, and a gas station," he said.

With the Snack Pack Ministry, the churches work with teachers and administrators to determine the need and alternate providing food each Friday for children on the weekends. Now in its second year, 25 children (about 12% of the student population) receive the Snack Packs. The Snack Pack might include macaroni and cheese or a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, a fruit cup, some veggies, cookies, and a granola bar. Jungnickel hopes the program can be expanded eventually to include seniors citizens.



Rev. David Jungnickel of Community UMC in La Moille, Ill., participates in a traditional bell ringing ceremony to kick off the school year.



Churches in La Moille, Ill., are working together to pray for school children, teachers, and administrators as part of a collaborative partnership.

Finally, the Micro-Pantry, a take and share cabinet at Community UMC filled with non-perishable goods from people in the community, has been operating for about six months. People can contribute anything they have to share and can take whatever they need.

### Stepping Out

Jungnickel's ministry extends beyond the doors of Community UMC with him stepping out into the community on a regular basis to meet people where they are—and he can be found almost anywhere in La Moille. "God put on my heart to get out into the community and that marks my ministry," he says, noting that because not many towns have more churches than bars, he does spend some time in local bars chatting with people. "We have been inviting people to come to church for years, but that does not necessarily bring them to church. If you want to be in relationship with them, you have to go where they are," Jungnickel said.

La Moille's summer festival "Buffalo Days" is a popular event that features a beer tent and special music—jazz, country, and Christian—which draws a lot of attention in the community. Whatever is going on in the tent stops for worship, right there in the beer tent. "This is what it means to minister to people where they are," Jungnickel explained. "Our ministry together is an ongoing work of God and the growing awareness of God in La Moille."

## OUTDOOR AND RETREAT MINISTRIES

### New Aurora District Winter Youth Retreat "Unplugged and Reconnected"

**January 2 - 4, 2020**

(Thursday night through Saturday afternoon)

**Cost:** \$120

Registration Deadline: Sunday, December 23, 2019

Registration Contact: Rev. Wesley Dorr [wesley@dgfumc.org](mailto:wesley@dgfumc.org).

All Aurora District 7th-12th grade youth are invited to the Aurora District Winter Youth Retreat at Wesley Woods Retreat Center on beautiful Geneva Lake. We will spend a few days unplugged from our devices and technology to focus on:

- growing closer in our relationship with Christ AND one another,
- go deeper with spiritual formation and
- enjoy all that beautiful Wesley Woods has to offer, including campfires, hiking trails, outdoor and indoor games, activities and team challenges.

Check in 4 p.m., Thursday, January 2 at the Wesley Woods, 250 Stam St, Williams Bay, WI 53191.

Friday night will kick-start the weekend with a 5:30 p.m. pizza party, games and campfire.

Parent pick-up will be 2 p.m., Saturday, January 4. This camp is made possible thanks in part to the 2019 Bishop's Appeal offering.

### New Winter Camps 2020!

Wesley Woods is hosting awesome weekends of fun winter activities and Christian fellowship with three new winter camps in 2020! Bring your youth group to focus on relationships, spiritual rest and renewal, and the discipleship aspects of youth ministry. Youth will explore God's vision for their lives while experiencing fast-paced games, delicious meals and amazing activities, including a new Escape Cabin!

Each of the three weekends will serve a different age group, and all will feature appropriate, optional activities.

These weekends are intended to "replace" our previous Ski Retreat Weekends which have grown so expensive that many guests have asked us to come up with a "different" winter focus that serves non-skiers as well.

Dates:

- January 17 - 19 for 4-6th grades (bring 1 chaperone for every 6 campers)
- January 31-Feb 2 for Junior High (bring 1 chaperone for every 8 campers)
- February 21 - 23 for High School (bring 1 adult chaperone for every 10 campers)

**Cost:** \$99 per youth, \$69 per chaperone

Registration deadline: 12 days prior to the retreat date.

Registration and health forms are available online at [www.niccamp.org/retreats](http://www.niccamp.org/retreats).

### 2020 Confirmation Retreats

**Spring:**

@Reynoldswood: May 15 - May 16

@Wesley Woods: May 1 - May 2

**Fall:**

@Reynoldswood: November 20 - November 21

@Wesley Woods: November 6 - November 7

### 2020 Summer Camps

**@Reynoldswood:**

- J.O.Y. Camp, June 14 - June 20
- Woodland, July 5 - July 10
- Metro, August 2 - August 7

**@Wesley Woods:**

- Total Camp, June 28 - July 3

Registration deadline: 12 Days prior to the camp start date.

Registration and health forms are available online:

[www.niccamp.org/summercamps](http://www.niccamp.org/summercamps).





DYK???

## “Won't You Be My Neighbor?”

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

I did not grow up with Mister Rogers' Neighborhood but I've known the theme song for as long as I can remember: “won't you be my neighbor?” The release of the movie “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” caught my eye when the promotions said it starred Tom Hanks and Matthew Rhys. I was even more intrigued when I learned that Sony Pictures had invited our own United Methodist Discipleship Ministries to write the faith-based study guide that accompanies the movie.

It's exciting to see The United Methodist Church playing a key role in providing tools to engage this story. Fred Rogers was an ordained Presbyterian Minister. He focused much of his ministry on the PBS television show Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood. The theme of the long-running television show centered on the emotional and moral health of pre-school children. He taught about civility, tolerance, sharing, and self-worth. He tackled topics such as death, sibling rivalry, moving, and divorce. A special episode even dealt with the assassination of Robert F. Kennedy a few days after the tragedy occurred.

In a statement from the Author, Claudia Black said: “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” is a moving, poignant, and powerful movie. A young journalist, Lloyd,

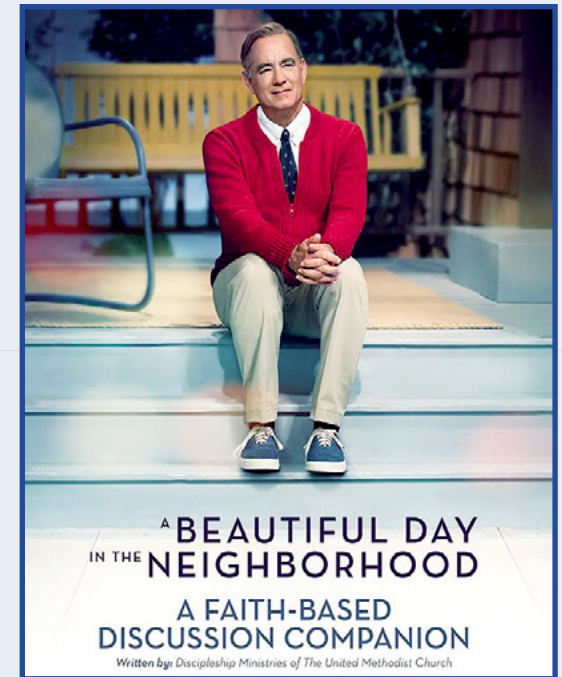
is given the assignment of interviewing Mister Rogers for Esquire Magazine and Mister Rogers' way of life has a profound effect on Lloyd, who is living out the outcomes of being raised with the trauma of an addictive family. Without having to show much of his early childhood, the movie depicts the consequences resulting in this man's anger, cynicism, negativity, and the impact it has in every aspect of his life. Lloyd's anger is no match for the deep source of love that emanates from Mister Rogers. The implied simplicity of Mister Rogers' life is only the backdrop for the power of love, truth, and a willingness to feel.”

In an increasingly polarized world where relationships are broken and feelings of anger and division drive us to extremism and harm, the theme of Mister Rogers' message is as relevant today for all of us as it was in the 1980s for young children.

During the Northern Illinois Conference Special Session on November 16, Bishop Sally Dyck said: “when you find yourselves as clergy and laity in different positions, go deeper into a conversation with a sister or brother so as to seek to understand as much as you seek to be understood. When one is suffering or weeping from the burden of this disagreement, we weep together; but when one is

rejoicing in being who God has created them to be – actually each and every one of us – we rejoice together.”

Mr. Rogers had a formula for this work of building emotional and moral health, of creating relationships that respect differences. You can find a flow chart for this work in the UM Study Guide. We are encouraged to (1) Learn more, (2) Create a safe space to explore thoughts and feelings, (3) Reflect internally and process emotions, (4) Discover the roots behind any difficult feelings, (4) Engage with the world and make it a better place, then start all over again, learning more.



The concept of applying a childlike approach to our complicated adult conflicts and differences may seem oversimplified, but the consequences of our increasing polarization are monumental.

Join with others over the next few months in watching the movie “A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood” and working through the study guide from Discipleship Ministries so we too can take a step toward living out Christ's vision of understanding and acceptance. To download the study guide, go to [resources.abeautifulday.movie](http://resources.abeautifulday.movie).

## CALENDAR EVENTS

### Advent Preaching Workshop

*Preaching Peace and Joy in Times of Upheaval*

**December 10, 2019, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

**Location:** Trinity UMC, 9848 South Winchester Avenue, Chicago, IL 60643

**Cost:** \$25 (includes lunch)

Presented by the Chicago Southern District of the Northern Illinois Conference in Partnership with the Styberg Preaching Institute.

Led by Rev. Dr. Gennifer Brooks, Styberg Professor of Peaching and Styberg Preaching Institute Director.

Register by Dec. 8 by visiting [www.umcnic.org/calendar/advent-preaching-workshop](http://www.umcnic.org/calendar/advent-preaching-workshop).

Questions? Contact Debbie Rogers, Chicago Southern District Administrative Assistant, at [drogers@umcnic.org](mailto:drogers@umcnic.org) or 312-346-9766 ext. 732.

### Rockford/DeKalb District Clergy Retreat

**Jan. 12-13, 2020**

**Location:** Northern Illinois University, Holmes Student Center, 340 Carroll Ave., DeKalb, IL

**Cost:** \$60 for commuters. \$75 for overnight accommodations with roommate / \$90 for single accommodations.

Rev. Rob Fuquay, author of “Faithful and Inclusive: The Bible, Sexuality, and the United Methodist Church”, will create a safe space in which to navigate through this complex issue.

Please register by January 6, by visiting [www.umcnic.org/calendar/rockford-dekalb-district-clergy-retreat](http://www.umcnic.org/calendar/rockford-dekalb-district-clergy-retreat).

### NIC UMW Mission u Retreat

*Come learn with us!*

**January 17-19, 2020**

**Location:** Dixon: First, 202 S. Peoria Ave., Dixon, IL

**Fees:** \$100 (postmarked/mailed by December 31, 2019); \$125 (postmarked/mailed by January 6, 2020). Make checks payable to: NIC/UMW.

**Lodging:** Quality Inn, Dixon (815 284-0500). Rooms on reserve.

**Mail registration to:** Linda Osikowicz, 21647 Inglenook Ln., Deer Park, IL 60010, or email [nilumw.registrar@gmail.com](mailto:nilumw.registrar@gmail.com).

Registration closes January 6. For details and registration form, visit [www.umcnic.org/calendar/nic-umw-mission-u](http://www.umcnic.org/calendar/nic-umw-mission-u).

### District Leadership Training Events

- Aurora - Jan. 25
- Rockford - Feb. 1
- DeKalb - Jan. 25
- Elgin - Feb. 22

For details and registration, go to [www.umcnic.org/calendar](http://www.umcnic.org/calendar).

### Human Relations Day

**Jan. 19, 2020**

Human Relations Day, one of six churchwide Special Sunday offerings of The United Methodist Church, calls United Methodists to recognize the right of all God's children in realizing their potential as human beings in relationship with one another. For resources, visit [www.umciv.org/hrd](http://www.umciv.org/hrd).

### Laity Convocation - "Unpacking Racism"

**Feb. 8, 2020, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.**

**Location:** Sycamore UMC, 160 Johnson Ave., Sycamore, IL  
**Cost:** \$10/person or \$40/church - A box lunch will be available for an extra fee for those who want to stay and catch up with friends.

The focus of Laity Convocation 2020 will be on racism with this year's theme “Unpacking Racism.” For more info and registration, visit [www.umcnic.org/calendar/laity-convocation](http://www.umcnic.org/calendar/laity-convocation).

### John Wesley Institute

**Feb. 23-24**

**Location:** Elmhurst: First, 232 S York St, Elmhurst, IL.

**Speaker:** Dr Ashley Dreff, author of *Entangled: a History of American Methodism, Politics, and Sexuality*

**Cost:** \$150 (\$100 for students), includes Sunday evening dinner and Monday lunch. Participants are responsible for arranging their own accommodations. One CEU credit is available.

For more info and to register, visit [www.umcnic.org/calendar/john-wesley-theological-institute](http://www.umcnic.org/calendar/john-wesley-theological-institute)

### Justice Songfest with Mark Miller

**March 7, 2020**

**Location:** Evanston: First, 516 Church Street, Evanston, IL

**Cost:** \$15

Hosted by the Music Ministry and Reconciling Task Force of First UMC of Evanston, the day includes a series of morning and afternoon workshops and rehearsals with Mark Miller culminating in an evening concert.

Registration is open at [faithatfirst.com/registrations](http://faithatfirst.com/registrations).