

Northern Illinois Conference
of The United Methodist Church
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Greg Miller, (center) a farmer in Freeport, IL, shares how the wet and cold weather this spring that delayed planting continues to hurt farm production in northern Illinois.



The USDA says farmers across the Midwest are expected to take a serious toll on acres planted, crop yields, and crop quality as harvest begins because of the extreme weather challenges this season.

Farming community weathering difficult season

By Anne Marie Gerhardt, NIC Dir. of Communications

On this particular hot August summer day, the sun shines on the fields. Cows peacefully graze up on the hill. Playful sheep cluster in the barn. Hay bales sit neatly bundled ready for sale. Maintained tractors idle on standby. All seems right on Greg and Sheila Miller's farm in Freeport, Ill., but behind it all are signs of a challenging season.

"Farmers are under a lot of stress," said Greg Miller who has owned his farm since 1989. He raises cattle and sheep as well as grows corn, soybeans and alfalfa for hay. "Right now the economy translated with inflation is comparable to the 1980s farm crisis (which left many farms with heavy debt loads)."

Miller said the heavy rains this spring delayed and prolonged planting considerably. "We started planting late April and finished June 15," he said noting that a dry July has added to the stress. "Feed quality is down by 30 percent, hay quantity is low and we bale what we can." According to the USDA, Illinois farmers planted 1.1 million fewer acres of corn and soybeans combined this season.

The Miller's farm was the first stop on a day tour by Bishop Sally Dyck and the Cabinet on Aug. 14 to hear the concerns of farmers in northern Illinois (see the Bishop's Column pg. 2 for more.)

Fourteen miles away at the Bardell family farm, chickens, hens, and pigs greeted the group on their second stop. The Bardells have been farming in Freeport since 1839 and have adapted to the unpredictable agriculture business through

the years – slowly changing from a traditional, diverse farmstead to market gardening today by growing and selling vegetables, flowers, and herbs along with grass-fed beef and free-range eggs. The family participates in land conservation practices, is working to open a farm stand soon and has applied to become "certified organic."

"We had 1,000 square feet of land that flooded every year, so we stopped planting there," said Margaret Bardell, who helps manage the family farm with her husband Trale along with his parents. "We just moved the planting to fields that are flat and drain well. With 100-year floods happening more frequently, we can't keep just doing the same thing."

The Cabinet tour continued on for lunch at First UMC in Freeport provided by the Miller's downtown Freeport restaurant, featuring their homegrown beef and food. The visit included an informational session with Dan Obert from the Carroll County Farm Bureau and Josh Richardson, a student at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

Richardson is working with Rockford and DeKalb districts to build educational programs around climate migration to help churches gain a better understanding of the acute environmental issues facing northern Illinois and around the world.

"With rising temperatures and precipitation changes, conservative estimates project a 40 percent yield decrease for corn and soybeans by the year 2100 in northern Illinois," Richardson said. "There's no quick fix solution

and we are at the point of mitigation. Understanding what's happening in your community and being aware that this is a global situation is really important."

Both the Bardells and Millers are members of Faith UMC in Freeport and appreciated the show of concern and prayers from their Bishop and NIC leaders.

"It was a privilege to have them come out here and find out what the real problems we are facing are," said Miller. "It was wonderful."

Bishop Dyck gathered the farmers in a circle of prayer after each tour. "We thank you God for farmers and we pray for a prosperous harvest," said Dyck. "We thank you for farmers who seek to practice earth-friendly agriculture endeavors. We appreciate their adaptation. May we all learn and grow from it. Bless their families."

The Cabinet tour concluded in the DeKalb District at the Jonamac Orchard in Malta, a three-generational family farm, to learn about the growing agritourism business and how it's contributing to the economy.

For traditional farmers, Miller said the future is uncertain. As for harvest, the Millers are praying for a late frost so they can salvage those crops that have survived. "It doesn't look good, but only time will tell," he said. "We are taking it one day at a time, sometimes hour by hour."

DeKalb District Superintendent Brian Gilbert asked Sheila Miller what the church can do for farmers. She replied, "pray, lots of prayers."

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FROM BISHOP DYCK: WHERE DOES IT HURT?

The Somali poet, Warsan Shire, wrote this as part a poem, “What They Did Yesterday Afternoon”:

*later that night,
i held an atlas on my lap
ran my fingers across the whole world
and whispered
where does it hurt?
it answered
everywhere
everywhere
everywhere*

Every day we read, hear, see and experience the pain that injustice, violence, inequity, callousness, loss, and evil inflict upon people often by other people. Innocent people become collateral to larger dynamics at play. Sometimes it's the result of natural disasters, but even those can experience the “pile on” of economic, political and social influences. “Everywhere” is here, even in our annual conference, and sometimes in places and situations we're not mindful or aware of.

In August, the Cabinet and I went on a farm tour to experience and hear from some farmers in northern Illinois who have been affected by recent adverse weather conditions. We visited several different kinds of farms, including a family farm, a practicing organic farm, and an agritourism farm.

Many farmers have inherited the farm. In one case we heard about a farmer who grew up on a farm, but his father lost the land in the farm crisis of the early 1980s. Determined to be a farmer, he lived out of his car for a while, worked in the tool and dye industry, and slowly began to start farming full time.

His farm is diversified with corn, soybeans, cattle, a few sheep, hay, and some other smaller crops. His tool and dye experience really pays off as he repairs many older machines. He has one newer combine which he indicated was rather expensive. When asked how expensive, he



Bishop Sally Dyck and Cabinet members visit the Bardell family farm in Freeport, IL during a day trip to hear from farmers who are struggling through a difficult growing season.

said, “\$1.2 million.” He wasn't keen on purchasing it a few years ago but there was little choice if he was to continue farming.

This year has been particularly difficult because of the constant rain in the spring (roughly from April into June), which kept the crops from being planted, and then there was no rain in July. Fortunately, a good rain came mid-August. But much of the damage has been done. Now the only hope is that the fall will go late and be warm since an early frost will prevent the corn from fully maturing and being a quality that can be sold. Even now as you drive by the cornfields, you see cornstalks almost to their usual height but they're not fully maturing in many cases due to the weather and the late planting season.

The hay crop was late, missing one whole cutting in the spring, and in addition to reducing the farmer's income, this will affect dairy and cattle farmers due to the shortage of hay.

With this year's weather patterns, farmers had to figure out what to do. Each farmer—no matter what kind of farm and how long they had been farming—commented on how they learned some things in terms of dealing with the effects of this year's weather. They admitted to having made some mistakes as they “gambled” on what to do. Adaptation is needed. Doing things differently than they had done for years and years isn't easy to do!

As we talked to one farmer, it was clear that depression is a reality for many. Suicide rates are high among farmers. Unfortunately, resources for mental health in some of the rural communities is scarce. The emotional strain is not just the financial pressure - although that is great. Even a small micro-grant of \$500 from an organization for

living expenses was greatly appreciated by one farmer as it took the edge off of daily living. It's also the frustration of having built something from nothing or inheriting the family farm and then not being sure that there will be anything left after this year or another one like it. An extreme sense of failure and letting others down, such as parents and grandparents, is common. Tears flowed along our farm tour. Hearts were heavy.

What can you do? What can your church do? Two things.

First, you can pray and raise awareness of the farm crisis in our conference and across the Midwest. It's not always covered in the news, so calling for prayers in our congregations raises awareness about “where it hurts” in our own conference.

Second, you can give. On November 16, 2019, the Northern Illinois Annual Conference will hold a special session. A call letter will be coming out shortly. It will be held at Kishwaukee College in Malta, Ill. You'll drive by some cornfields to get there. More importantly, we will collect a special Bishop's Appeal offering for the farm crisis. More information about how the money will be used will be available shortly, along with resources to better understand the situation. Make a point of learning more about what hurts your neighbor, the farmer.

We run our fingers across the map of our annual conference and ask where it hurts, knowing that it hurts in many places and many ways, such as gun violence and immigrants who are further oppressed by our nation's lack of comprehensive immigration policies and other concerns. But let's not overlook our farmers!

~Bishop Sally Dyck

Improper voting at GC2019 voids key vote By Heather Hahn, UM News

General Conference organizers have determined enough improper voting likely took place at the 2019 special session to nullify a key vote on how congregations can leave The United Methodist Church.

The Commission on General Conference — meeting behind closed doors during its Aug. 7-9 meeting — reviewed an investigation that found “credible objective evidence” of four ineligible people casting votes using the credentials of delegates who were not present.

The commission did not speak in public about its investigation's findings and did not provide the names of the accused ineligible voters or the conferences they represented.

“When you are dealing with allegations, they may or may not be factual in nature so you don't want to do any defamation of anyone's character by inappropriately saying certain things,” said Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton later told United Methodist News. He is the Council of Bishops representative on the commission and leads the New York Conference.

Ultimately, the commission wants the Judicial Council — the denomination's top court — to weigh what the fraudulent voting means for the legality of the disaffiliation legislation.

The investigation findings come more than five months after a pivotal special General Conference, called by the

Council of Bishops to try to resolve the longtime debate over the status of LGBTQ people. Since the Feb. 23-26 special session in St. Louis, discussions of splitting the denomination have only intensified and giving to general church ministries has dropped.

The denomination's top lawmaking body, by a vote of 438-384, adopted the Traditional Plan that adds enforcement measures to bans on same-sex weddings and “self-avowed practicing” gay clergy.

The number of ineligible voters was too slim to affect that outcome. However, the invalid vote count was enough to cast doubt on the disaffiliation legislation that allows, with limitations, congregations to leave the denomination while keeping church property.

By a two-vote margin, 402-400, the body substituted a minority report for Petition 90066, the originally submitted disaffiliation legislation.

Because voting at General Conference is supposed to be confidential, the investigation did not determine whether the ineligible voters favored the substitution or not. But under Robert's Rules of Order — which General Conference uses — the possibility that invalid ballots might affect the result of a vote invalidates the entire ballot.

“Having found sufficient evidence that there were invalid votes that potentially affected the result of the vote, the



Members of the United Methodist Commission on General Conference listen during a presentation at their meeting in Lexington, Ky. From left are: Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton, the Rev. Gary George and Kim Simpson.

Commission determined that the vote to substitute the minority report is void,” the commission leadership said in a press release.

The substitution eliminated the precondition that departing churches repay any grants from their annual conference. It also gave a conference's board of trustees, rather than the bishop, a role in setting the terms and conditions of church's departure.

The substitution required that departing churches make any payments under those terms and conditions prior to the effective date of departure. The original legislation allowed a term of payment up to 10 years.

With the substitution, the disaffiliation plan went on to pass by 420-390. It is now listed as an addendum to the *Book of Discipline*, the denomination's policy book. Seven

continued on page 4, see Voting

Task force explores Annual Conference future By Rev. Chris Winkler

In June the Northern Illinois Annual Conference authorized Bishop Sally Dyck to form a task force to explore our future as an Annual Conference in light of the passing of the Traditional Plan at February's General Conference Special Session in St. Louis. Named the "Exploration Team," the task force first met in June and then in August at Barrington UMC.

At the first meeting, the Exploration Team divided into three subgroups: Education and Engagement, Theology and Vision, and Networks and Alliances. These subgroups met between sessions of the larger Exploration Team and presented their initial work in August.

The Education and Engagement Team is exploring ways to communicate and provide resources to individuals and local congregations about what the Traditional Plan is and how it will affect our Conference and our churches. This team is also considering how to engage

the whole Conference in conversations to help us discern our direction as we navigate a rapidly changing United Methodist landscape. The team anticipates working with the Bishop and Cabinet to conduct a straw poll at each Charge Conference this fall to help this team proceed with its work.

The Theology and Vision Team is engaged in authoring a statement to define who we are as a Conference and the values we share, and to affirm our Methodist and Wesleyan heritage. The team aims to present an initial draft at the Special Session of Annual Conference in November, with time for feedback and comments during the following months. The team anticipates presenting a final version for ratification at the regular June conference session. The team hopes that the document in its final form will guide us and inform potential ministry partners about what we hold to be of ultimate importance as we move into the future that

God has in store for us.

The Network and Alliances Team is active in discussions with potential partners, paying careful attention to the discussions, proposals, and plans that are emerging quickly around the church.

The Exploration Team began its August meeting by recognizing that numerous discussions—both formal and informal—are taking place and that it seems likely that multiple plans for moving the United Methodist Church forward will be introduced at General Conference in 2020.

In light of these many discussions and plans, the team affirmed that its most productive work would be to gather a firm understanding of who we are as NIC United Methodists and what our "negotiables" and non-negotiables are. The Exploration Team asks for your prayers and support as they engage in this important and timely work.

BMCR celebrates 50 years and looks to the future

By Diane Strzelecki, NIC Communications Specialist



The Mayfield brothers, Jason (13) and Justin (9), from Resurrection UMC, sing "A Change Gon' Come" at the June BMCR celebration.



From left to right: Meghann Oglesby - Guest Emcee, Rev. Dennis Oglesby, Jr., Claudette Lehw - Guest Minister of Music from Memphis, and Rev. Albert M. Shears, Worship Service Preacher and retired NIC Elder, celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Chicago BMCR at St. Mark UMC on June 30, 2019.

On Sunday, June 30, the Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) held its Annual Worship Celebration at historic St. Mark UMC, a Northern Illinois Conference (NIC) Chicago Southern District landmark that produced Chicago BMCR founders and early leaders such as Rev. Maceo D. Pembroke, Sr., Rev. William T. Carter, Helen M. Fannings (Ammons) and Marie McFarland.

The celebration, which brought together members, family, and friends to lift up ordinands, retirees, life members, and honorees, was also a time to celebrate BMCR's 50th anniversary with the theme "This Far by Grace." Musicians included the Chancel Choir of St. Mark UMC, and musicians and vocalists from Transformation UMC and Resurrection UMC. BMCR President Rev. Dennis M. Oglesby, Jr. provided greetings and the Rev. Albert Shears (retired) preached the sermon.

Selena Roberts, Lay Leader at Resurrection UMC in Chicago and longtime member of BMCR, said the service was inspiring. "If you had any doubt of how we could make it through another 50 years, Rev. Shears' words were very encouraging and really motivational," she said. "I could see others were motivated to continue on and do whatever we can to make sure BMCR is around to celebrate at the 100th anniversary."

A member of Chicago BMCR since 1971, Sylvia Jo Oglesby organizes the annual event and was honored to be part of the anniversary celebration. "I'm blessed to be

aware of our history and still be producing and serving and doing what the Lord requires me to do," she said. "We had a wonderful worship program."

BMCR was founded in 1968 with the mission "to raise up prophetic and spiritual leaders who will be advocates for the unique needs of Black people in The United Methodist Church." The June 30 event celebrated such milestones as 47 years of the Maceo D. Pembroke Institute for Ministerial Recruitment and Leadership Development, 23 years of Keeping Hope Alive Ministries (HIV/AIDS Awareness), and five Episcopal Leaders: Bishop Edsel Ammons, Bishop Charles Jordan, Bishop Jonathan Keaton, Bishop Julius Trimble and Bishop Tracy Smith Malone.

Roberts notes that part of BMCR's work centers on running culturally relevant programs for children and youth so they "see who they are and what it means to be a United Methodist." It's important to her to stay connected with the movement of African Americans in the UMC and the church's policies and relationship to BMCR, but at the end of the day, it's the word "United" in the denomination's that is her greatest affirmation.

"We may have Korean churches, Hispanic churches, Caucasian churches, African American churches, but I see all of us worshipping together," Roberts said. "We are worshipping a true and a just God; we are brothers and sisters in Christ."

BMCR 2019 Awardees/Honorees

Life Members Awards

Rev. Dr. Norval I. Brown (Deerfield: Christ)
Darryl Harris (Chicago: Gorham)
Luenetta Jones (Chicago: Hartzell)
Sandra Jones (Chicago: Hartzell)
Betty Lewis (Chicago: St. Mark)
Valorie Tatum (Chicago: Engelwood Rust)

The Founders' Legacy Life Membership

(established in 2018 to honor BMCR founders in the 50th year)

Rudolph D. Smith (St. Mark)
Yvette Harris-Black (Harvey: Transformation)

The Rev. Margaret Ann Williams "Joy of Serving Award"

(given to a clergy and layperson for rendering extraordinary service)

Rev. Darneather Murph-Heath (Elgin DS)
Vickie Powell-Bass (Chicago: Wesley)

Veteran takes flight of lifetime

By Linda Hendelman*

We can honor the sacrifices and achievements of our veterans in many ways, but one that resonates with veterans is the Honor Flight, which takes American veterans on “one more tour with Honor.” This was true for the Rev. David Rogula of Esmond UMC who was among the 106 vets on an Honor Flight out of the Dixon/Quad Cities area on May 30, 2019. The Honor Flight, funded by donations, sends World War II, Korea, and Vietnam veterans to Washington D.C., for a one-day trip to explore war memorials dedicated to them and other attractions.

Although he said he almost forgot to submit an application for the Honor Flight two years ago at the suggestion of a friend, the Rev. Dave Rogula was pleasantly surprised by a phone call notifying him that he'd been selected for the distinguished trip. “Taking off from Moline Airport at 7 a.m. began an emotional whirlwind that continues to this day, said Rogula. “The whole experience, and especially that 24-hour day of the flight itself, was one mountaintop high.”

Air Force Service

Stationed at Kincheloe Air Force Base, Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., Rogula served during the Vietnam era, from January 1962 to October 1967. A staff sergeant with the 507th Supply Unit on the Air Defense and Strategic Air Command, he supplied and set up the first computer equipment for expediting parts and equipment to aircraft deployed for flights covering the Northern Hemisphere. Noting the lifelong friends he made from various parts of the country during his military service, Rogula said he actually considered a career as a chaplain but the opportunity just never arose.

Incredible Day in Washington, D.C.

The Honor Flight began with breakfast served by the “very courteous and friendly” staff of Sun Country Airlines. According to Rogula, the arrival at Dulles Airport was a moment he will never forget, “We were greeted by throngs of well-wishers applauding and thanking us for our past service.” Loaded onto three buses led by a police escort, the participants were highly visible all day in the D.C. area by their bright orange T-shirts and jackets with insignia of Honor Flight Veterans.

The veterans, accompanied by 100 volunteer guardians, visited the Vietnam Memorial, World War II Memorial, Air Force Memorial, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and Arlington Cemetery. Describing his “very emotional day,” Rogula said, “We were greeted with high fives, hugs, and thanks for our service; at both airports, there were crowds of children, teachers, [and] military servicemen and women in uniform welcoming and thanking us for our past service.”

Ministry

After his retirement in 2007 from the Iowa Annual Conference, Rogula began serving Esmond UMC in the DeKalb District, which he calls a “beacon within the community.”

Rogula is also a volunteer hospice chaplain for Serenity Hospice and Home in Oregon, Ill. As a Hospice Chaplain, he helped implement a program recognizing hospice patients who served in the military. The veteran receives a flag lapel pin and a certificate thanking the veteran for his/her service.

Rogula says he has been “blessed beyond measure” to mentor several persons throughout his ministry. His first confirmation class at Chana UMC included a confirmand who eventually became a United Methodist minister, the Rev. Ryan Sutton. In addition, a local assistant local pastor at the Brooklyn, Iowa church, from which Rogula retired from, now serves her own church, he explained.

Future Plans

When asked what keeps him going in his long-term service, Rogula replied that it is “the joy of seeing people respond to God’s care and realizing how very much each of us is loved by our Creator.” He credits his very loving and understanding wife and his family—son, daughter, step-daughter, and nine grandchildren—with keeping him going. He expresses the wish that he can continue ministry as long as his health allows.

Rogula is also taking to the skies again. Having received a free flying lesson as a Father’s Day gift in 2018, Rogula has become hooked, he said, and has been taking light aircraft flying lessons ever since. He hopes to complete the course by his 80th birthday.

“God isn’t finished with me or the gifts He has given me to share in whatever capacity seen fit for whatever occasion,” said Rogula.

Honor Flight Network

A nonprofit organization recognizing American veterans, the Honor Flight Network flies veterans at no cost to Washington, D.C., to see the memorial dedicated to his/her service. At the end of 2017, some 200,000 veterans had been escorted to Washington. For additional info or an application for an honor flight, see www.honorflight.org.

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



Rev. David Rogula of Esmond UMC poses at the Korean Memorial in Washington, D.C. during an emotional Honor Flight trip.

Voting *(continued from page 2)*

congregations in Mississippi already have used the legislation to exit the denomination.

The Rev. Beth Ann Cook, a 2019 General Conference delegate from the Indiana Conference, presented the minority report and serves on the General Conference commission. “The Commission acted with the highest integrity,” she told United Methodist News. “I’m blessed to be associated with all of our members. I’m obviously disappointed that the substitute motion vote had to be voided. I will continue to pray and work for a gracious exit path. As I said at GC2019, I believe this is how we can best live out Christ’s call to love one another deeply in the midst of disagreement.”

The Council of Bishops (COB) has voted to ask the Judicial Council to rule on the implications of the invalid votes discovered during the independent investigation. “We were also given two additional tasks, exploration of additional voting irregularities and collaboration with the General Council on Finance and Administration on the membership statistics of our annual conferences. We are naming two small working groups to fulfill this request,” said Rev. Ken Carter, COB President.

Bishops preside over annual conference meetings where

delegates are elected.

The sons of two different bishops, East Congo Area Bishop Gabriel Unda and South Congo Area Bishop Kasap Owan were named in a New York Times article as possible ineligible voters. However, Unda provided UM News a document listing his son as a reserve and Kasap provided a conference journal showing his son elected as seventh reserve.

Just before The New York Times story appeared March 14, the Rev. Gary Graves — secretary of the General Conference — acknowledged problems with credentialing and voting. He announced that “a very limited number” of people initially denied credentials to vote had later obtained them. At the time, he declined to give a precise number.

On March 16, the General Conference commission named 12 of its members to serve on a task force to investigate improper voting. The commission also authorized staff members Graves and Sara Hotchkiss, business manager, to negotiate with auditing firms to help with the work.

The Council of Bishops’ executive committee soon called for an independent probe, and the commission hired

attorneys with the Nashville, Tennessee, law firm Bass, Berry & Sims to work with the auditing firm, LBMC, in the investigation.

The auditing firm looked at available documentation for every authorized delegate, including voting lists, attendance lists, travel reimbursement forms and visa information.

Delegates to the multinational General Conference are equally divided between lay and clergy. The 2019 General Conference was to have 864 delegates, but 31 were absent — primarily because they were unable to get visas.

In the commission’s report, several actions were approved to develop new registration, credentialing and voting procedures to make them more secure and to safeguard against unauthorized votes at future gatherings, including dedicated entry points to the plenary room and ensuring that names match the government ID in the delegate’s profile.

The next General Conference will be May 5-15, 2020, in Minneapolis.

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Youth campers say 'thank you'

By Anne Marie Gerhardt, NIC Dir. of Communications



Children from both the Chicago Northwestern and Chicago Southern Districts enjoy outdoor fun activities for a combined week-long camp made possible through donations from the Bishop's Appeal offering.



Campers participate in Bible study led by Outdoor Retreat and Ministries leaders.



Campers enjoy swimming in Geneva Lake during the last week of camp this summer at Wesley Woods in Williams Bay, WI.

For one week in August, more than 60 children from the city could just be kids and enjoy the great outdoors at one of NIC's two camps. The campers from 14 churches in the Chicago Southern and Chicago Northwestern Districts took part in the Chicago Metro Camp at Camp Reynoldswood in Dixon, Ill. This week of fun was made possible in part thanks to the generosity from all the churches and individuals who donated to the 2019 Bishop's Appeal offering at the Annual Conference in June.

"Without the Bishop's Appeal, this group of children and adult chaperones would not have been able to attend," said the Rev. Jacques Conway, Chicago Southern District Superintendent. "Financially, the costs are more than any of these families would be able to set aside."

The Bishop's Appeal offering of more than \$53,000 for the NIC's Outdoor and Retreat Ministries (ORM), which operates camps in Dixon and Williams Bay, Wis., along with other church donations, covered 90 percent of the cost for the camp.

Each year Bishop Sally Dyck designates a ministry for the Northern Illinois Annual Conference's special offering. ORM planned to use this year's donations to expand the urban summer week-long program like the Chicago Metro Camp and to develop more opportunities for children and youth who might not be able to afford to attend camp.

Chicago Northwestern District Superintendent Brittany Isaac said the offering gave that opportunity to many of the youth from her District's churches. "Camp is a time to see God and community in new ways," said Isaac. "I'm so grateful for all those that contributed to the Bishop's Appeal so that our young people in the city get to have a life-changing experience with our camping ministry."

The youth spent the week at Reynoldswood playing games, swimming, making arts and crafts, eating three nutritious meals a day – which is not always the case for some of the families – making new friends, taking part in Bible studies, star-gazing, sitting by the campfire, and enjoying many more fun activities.

"The youth had a wonderful time," said Conway. "They kept asking me if they could stay longer."

ORM's Director Jeff Casey says they are overwhelmed by the outpouring of generosity from the Bishop's Appeal.

"The money donated is allowing us to do new activities, focus on recruiting new children and families, and work with new churches and startups through both of our sites," said Casey. "We can't thank all those who donated enough. You rejuvenated us and all our staff and we are all excited as well as surprised by the generosity. We appreciate you so much."

"Outdoor ministry matters," said Becky Boggs, ORM's office administrator. "There are times in both kids and adults lives that you just need to go outside the church and this is one of those places where people can come to experience God's love and grace. It's through generous gifts like the Bishop's Appeal that we are able to continue this ministry and we thank you."

College student Kelly Pringle from First UMC in Downers Grove spent many summers attending camp at Wesley Woods on the shores of Geneva Lake as a youth leaving an indelible mark on her. She's been a counselor and co-leader there the last four years and knows the difference camp makes in the children's lives. "I feel so grateful for everyone that has supported us and makes these camps happen," she said. "It makes all the kids really happy and it changes their lives."

Besides the fun activities, the youth at camp often find a closer relationship with God. "We talk about a relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit," said Casey. "The back of our staff shirts says 'preach the Gospel always, if necessary use words'. We try and communicate with the kids that we can be witnesses through our actions and how we live our lives; words are not always necessary to invite people in."

ORM is already making plans to reach more children and families in the year ahead with a new Aurora District camp this winter at Wesley Woods. Casey also hopes to expand the metro camp to the Rockford District next summer. Lots of exciting things are happening at both Reynoldswood and Wesley Woods! If you or your church would like to get involved, email Jeff Casey at jeffcasey@niccamp.org, 262-245-6631, or visit www.niccamp.org.



Kaitlyn Frantz serves as the new campus minister at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb.

NIU campus ministry reinvented

Starting this fall, the Wesley Foundation at Northern Illinois University (NIU) is undergoing a name change and will have a new appointed campus minister. In partnership with the Northern Illinois Conference's (NIC) growing campus ministry, the Inclusive Collective at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), NIU's campus ministry will become the Inclusive Collective - NIU.

The leaders of the Wesley Foundation at NIU and the Inclusive Collective at UIC discerned that God's call to connectionism and partnership makes them stronger together. Bishop Sally Dyck appointed Pastor Kaitlyn Frantz to lead this next chapter of this vital ministry at NIU. Kaitlyn is a Master of Divinity student at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. She has spent her last year interning with the Inclusive Collective at UIC and will bring her skills and experiences from that context to NIU.

The ministry celebrates the Rev. Rosa Lee's work at NIU and her dedication to students since 2015. Under Lee's leadership, the ministry launched Hungry Huskies, which offers a substantial and healthy meal to one hundred students on Sunday nights in an effort to create community and combat student hunger.

The Inclusive Collective - NIU will carry on the ministry of Hungry Huskies and looks forward to continuing to host students for this "dinner party" tradition.

"Building upon the success of Hungry Huskies, we will launch and experiment with several new ministries this year, including small groups, retreats, and worship," said Frantz. "Many of these ministries will partner with the Inclusive Collective at UIC, allowing our students to broaden their network and experience God's movement with new friends."

Frantz says the Inclusive Collective - NIU ministry is about offering the good news of a God who likes you as you are, hearing the stories of young adults in DeKalb, and offering

spaces of rest and dialogue that can grow and stretch students through the radical work of the Holy Spirit.

"We are so excited to see what this new expression of Methodist ministry at NIU will look like!" said Frantz.

How can you get involved?

- If you know a student or faculty/staff at NIU, reach out to Kaitlyn (pastorkaitlynfrantz@gmail.com).
- If you are a student, join a community group, attend Hungry Huskies, and/or simply have coffee with Kaitlyn! See more at (letsgetinclusiveniu.org).
- Follow us on Facebook and Instagram @letsgetinclusiveniu.
- Give financially by writing a check to the Northern Illinois Conference and put "IC at NIU" in the memo line as well as your church's name and mail to PO Box 5646, Carol Stream, IL 60197-5646.

UMF Foundation 70th Anniversary



We invite your church to send two guests to an evening banquet to celebrate 70 years of the Foundation's ministry and the seven special grant recipients receiving \$10,000 each.

Location:

Doubletree Suites & Conference Center, 2111 Butterfield Road, Downers Grove, IL 60515

Time:

5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. - Dinner is free and space is limited.

Starting Sept. 9, visit the website for more information at umfnic.org.

Still time to apply for a local church ministry grant! Apply by visiting umfnic.org/grants; applications due 9/15.

HealthFlex Exchange

More Choice, More Flexibility—
Same HealthFlex Quality



HealthFlex Exchange workshops offered

Attention HealthFlex participants: your medical insurance plan is shifting to the HealthFlex

Exchange effective January 1, 2020. The HealthFlex Exchange is a model that gives HealthFlex participants more flexibility to choose their coverage while giving plan sponsors, such as the Northern Illinois Conference, more control and predictability over health plan costs.

During this year's open enrollment period from **October 30 - November 14**, you will be able to choose from six medical plans paired with prescription drug plans, three dental plans, and three vision plans. Many of the same high-quality partners and well-being programs will remain such as Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois, OptumRX, Virgin Pulse, and Blueprint for Wellness.

To help you choose the health plan that works for you, the NIC will offer five workshops around the conference this fall. Wespeth and conference representatives will lead the workshops to explain each plan and help you choose the best option to fit your family's needs and budget.

"It's very important to be informed and elect the plan you want for 2020," notes Woody Bedell, NIC Director of Human Resources. "For example, if you are currently in a \$1,000 deductible PPO plan and you do not make an election, you will default to a higher deductible plan."

Workshops will be offered on the following 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., Mount Prospect, IL

In September, Wespeth will open up ALEX, an online diagnostic tool to also help participants select the most appropriate plan for their expected medical expenses and budget.

Take charge of your insurance options and plan to attend one of these informative workshops!

Questions? Please contact Woody Bedell at 312-346-9766, ext 707 or wbedell@umcnic.org.

For more information and to register, visit www.umcnic.org/healthflex.

Youth travel to nation's capital for Plumblin Tour

By Amania Drane



Youth and chaperones from across the Northern Illinois Conference participate in the inaugural Plumblin trip to Washington, D.C. to learn about social and justice issues facing our nation.

Being the first can be challenging, but it can also be very rewarding. The Northern Illinois Conference has been sponsoring United Methodist high school students to go on faith-building trips to New York City since 2002. This year, plans changed to take our conference youth to Washington, D.C. for the first time. Participation was lower than anticipated, but the spirits were high and the trip certainly didn't disappoint. High school youth from urban, suburban, and rural United Methodist Churches all took part.

The focus of the trip was on understanding immigration from a faith perspective. This was done through our session leader, Aimee Hong, Director of the UM Seminar Program at the General Board of Church and Society, a visit with Legislative Aides from Illinois Senator Tammy Duckworth's office and Illinois Congressman Bill Foster's office, a visit to Sojourners Office, the Holocaust Museum, daily devotion time, and much more. We also made sure there was plenty of fun and exploring the city by visiting the Ford's Theatre, a cruise on the Potomac River, bicycling, a motorized scooter outing, and great food and discussions!

Responses from students, parents, and others were plentiful. Students said the experience made their faith more meaningful and it gave them a sense of

unity with other Christians. Jaelyn Pirtle, a member of St. Mark UMC in Chicago, a Junior at Flossmoor High School, and a two-time Plumblin participant said, "A truly great experience! I enjoyed every second of it, even when the walks were long and the air was hot, I learned a lot and it was fun."

Angelease Bunton, a Junior at Marist High School, also a member of St. Mark UMC, was a first-time Plumblin participant. More than a week after the trip, Angelease's father, Euel Bunton, said, "Angel is still talking about her trip to the United States Holocaust Museum and the Q&A session with Congressional aides."

Helen Salita, Campaigns, Mobilizing and Media Associate of Sojourners, a D.C. faith-based organization for social justice, said that she "felt particularly hopeful getting to see young people who really care, are invested, and want to make a difference."

As our first conference-led Plumblin Tour to Washington, D.C., the trip exceeded our expectations. If your church and youth leadership are interested in helping our United Methodist youth grow in their understanding of social justice issues from a faith perspective in 2020, please contact Amania Drane at niaenterprises1@comcast.net.

Belvidere Faith Community charters, welcomes all By Diane Strzelecki, NIC Communications Specialist



Local pastor Cris Ramirez (right) celebrates the chartering of Iglesia Cristiana Emêrge in Belvidere on June 9, 2019.



Bishop Sally Dyck, former Rockford DS Rev. Lisa Kruse-Safford, and Rockford DS Fabiola Grandon-Mayer participate in the chartering service for Emêrge.

On Sunday, June 9 (Pentecostal Sunday), Iglesia Cristiana Emêrge (Belvidere) was chartered as an official UMC congregation. Approximately 150 attended the chartering service, which featured uplifting music and a special message from Bishop Sally Dyck.

The service was an emotional time for church leaders, a time when their hard work was recognized and a bright future anticipated for their community. It was also an emotional time for Cristobal (Cris) Ramirez, local pastor for Iglesia Cristiana Emêrge.

"When the bishop was laying hands and praying for our leaders, that was very emotional for me," Ramirez said. "I have that in my heart."

When Ramirez was assigned to the community in 2011 as a youth pastor, he began a journey that would lead him to establishing a new faith community and chartering a new congregation. Ramirez notes it wasn't always easy, but his faith and passion for evangelism were instrumental in the process.

"God is the one in charge, not me," he said. "I keep praying to Him, telling Him this is your church, I'll just do what I know to do, and know that God is at work."

The Rev. Martin Lee, NIC's Director of Congregational Development and Redevelopment says planting a new church is one of the most effective ways to reach more new people, more diverse people, and younger people. He says out of the more than 140 people in Sunday attendance at Emêrge about half are young people.

"We planted this new faith community because demographic studies show that the Hispanic/Latino population in growing in areas around Belvidere and we found a great church planter, Cris Ramirez, who is a graduate of The Conference Academy for Faith Community Development," said Lee. "We have a more than two million Hispanic Latino population within the Northern Illinois Conference boundaries."

Ramirez, church leadership, and the congregation especially felt God at work when Iglesia Cristiana Emêrge received a One Matters Discipleship Award in 2018. "The congregation was very excited to know that what we were called to do here in Belvidere was making a difference—and it was being noticed by our church in general," Ramirez said. "It was a great energizer for us all."

Rev. Lee is thankful for Pastor Cris and his wife, Melissa, for their sacrificial love of God's people. "Effective ministry is all about passionate leadership, discerning and then calling and equipping those who have a heart for God's people in such a time as this."

The newly chartered church meets for worship on Sundays at 11:30 a.m. at Belvidere: First, 610 Bonus Avenue, but there's also important work happening at one of seven Casas de Bendición / Houses of Blessing in the community. Over the last six to eight months, groups of congregation members, their neighbors, and friends gather weekly at one of the "houses" for Bible study, relationship building, and support.

"We are being very intentional about developing Casas de Bendición into a very core, important system of the church when it comes to evangelism," Ramirez said, adding that there is also an effort underway to help visitors feel more welcome.

"When someone new comes in, they want to connect with someone at the church," he said. "I tell everyone 'maybe you can be that someone.'"

The One Matters Discipleship Award was created by the Discipleship Ministries (GBOD) in 2015 with the purpose of lifting up churches who have in recent years moved from zero baptisms and zero professions of faith into positive numbers as they redirected their focus toward intentional discipleship. In addition to the One Matters Discipleship plaque, each church received \$1,000 to encourage the continuation of their work in discipleship.

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

By Mark Manzi, Co-Conference Lay Leader

Laity Sunday focuses on the celebration of the ministry of all lay Christians. A Sunday to commemorate, recognize, and honor the partnership between ministry and laity in every church. It may be a Sunday where lay leaders and lay servants lead the worship service.

The work of laypeople has always been essential to the life of the church and making disciples of Jesus Christ. During the Wesleyan Movement, both Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury carried on John and Charles Wesley's legacy of equipping and empowering laity to be in ministry. Through the ministry of the laity, more and more people made a commitment to Christ, were nurtured in the faith, were equipped for ministry, and were sent out to be in ministry with others. The movement was alive because the ministry partnership between laity and the clergy was also alive.

Today, when we reach out and receive new people in our churches by building relationships with them, are we also offering them opportunities to commit themselves to Jesus Christ? Are we offering opportunities for growth in personal holiness through a relationship with Christ and others? If we are to reclaim the movement and truly #SeeAllThePeople, we must be harbingers of HOPE—the core process of discipleship, the method of Methodism:

Hospitality—We go into the world in outreach and mission, offering hope through proclamation of the gospel, seeking, welcoming, and gathering as we offer (and receive) hospitality to (and from) those not yet in the body.

Offer Christ—We provide opportunities for people to commit their lives to God through baptism by water and Spirit and profession of faith.

Purpose—We nurture people in Christian living to help them find a true sense of purpose in life, as they learn what it means to live out their beliefs through acts of piety and acts of mercy, Christian conferencing, and regular participation in the sacrament of Holy Communion and other means of grace.

Engagement—Through engagement, we again offer and receive hospitality.

On Laity Sunday, we celebrate that all of us, laity and clergy, are called to go and make disciples in a world so desperately in need of hope through our humble service. Coke and Asbury lived it out in their own lives. Therefore, go!

Need help? Looking for ideas? Please call/email your District Lay Leader or your Co-Conference Lay Leader. Visit www.umcnic.org/laity for more information.



DYK???

Did you know? We've Done This Before

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

Not in your lifetime or mine, but in our history, our Methodist ancestors faced issues that caused conflict and divided the Wesleyan movement.

This year has been one of stress in our churches, for our pastors, bishops and denominational leaders. The tension that grew out of close votes during a General Conference Special Session in February concerning LGBTQ inclusion in the church remain with us and grow as we look to more decisions in 2020.

If you follow the UMNews Digest (and I would encourage you to do so*), you know that almost every week another plan or report or action reminds us of our instability. Resistance, compliance, split; every manner of a pathway forward is being investigated, suggested, or pursued.

When the world around us is in open conflict – politically, socially, economically, we seek places where we can find stability, clarity, guidance, peace. It's hard to stay in our pews or even in the pulpit when the church presents us with another point of anxiety.

I find hope in faith, in knowing that my church is really God's church. I find hope in community as we bind together in visioning a future with a common mission and witness. I find hope in the stories of the past, reminding me that "we've done this before" and we survived.

The Rev. Dr. Daniel (Dan) Swinson, pastor at Sycamore UMC, is also a church historian. He sees our current circumstance through the eyes of history and while history might not solve our current dilemma, it is helpful to know we have been here before. Dan shared some of the following stories with me recently.

Until 1852 the *Book of Discipline* maintained Wesley's requirement for building Methodist preaching houses. They were to be plain, without bells, steeples, or instruments. Seats were to be simple and free to all. Men and women were to sit separately. As the church spread to New England these architectural restrictions were resisted. Pewed churches, with mixed seating and rented boxes, were the norm. Thus grew an "open secret" that the Discipline would not be enforced in the New England conferences.

Moving west the "banned" architecture prevailed. And in 1852 the Discipline's language was changed from required to recommended in maintaining the old standards Wesley had first introduced.

Our differences today go far deeper than the physical appearance of our church buildings, but this illustration reminds us that enforcement of the Discipline has not always been a high priority. Making disciples outweighed sensibilities opposing bells and steeples.

In 1808, a motion was made at a General Conference to

authorize the printing of 1,000 *Disciplines* for the South Carolina Conference (which included Georgia and part of North Carolina) with the section and rule on slavery left out. This held the church together for a time, as it was a compromise. But eventually the divide over slavery split the church and the Methodist Episcopal Church South was formed in 1845. For 94 years, the Methodist Episcopal Church North and the Methodist Episcopal Church South were two separate denominations.

Today's tensions in the church (even in our country) are moving the current generation of United Methodists to new places of exploration. Yet, these new places are reminiscent of our history. Compromise, defiance, and schism are all part of our DNA.

As we wander through the current morass of conflict, options, differences, and uncertainty, we live a new chapter in our story knowing that our history reveals our highs and lows. Some bright spots and some embarrassing moments.

Passionate leaders are working to find the best path. Stay tuned through the Northern Illinois Conference eNews, Reporter and the UMNews Daily or Weekly Digest. Stay prayerful as we explore. With God's help, we will find our way. "We've done this before".

*Sign up for the UMNews weekly and/or daily digest by visiting www.umc.org/resources/umns-subscription-form.

July/August Announcements

Bishop Sally Dyck announces the following clergy appointments and retirements for the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church, effective July 1, 2019 (unless otherwise noted).

Annie Lockhart-Gilroy (Provisional Deacon) appointed to Phillips Theological Seminary as Assistant Professor of Christian Education and Practical Theology.

Heesung Hwang (Deacon) appointed to Chicago Theological Seminary as Visiting Assistant Professor of Christian Education and Louisville Institute Post Doctoral Fellow from appointment to attend school.

Annie Gonzales (Elder) to Access Community Health Network as Chaplain from Transitional Leave, also serving Chicago: Union Avenue (1/4 time) (Chicago Southern District). Effective July 8.

Danice Loveridge (Deacon) to Transitional Leave from appointment as Executive Director of the Belvidere Boone County Food Pantry. Effective June 14.

Erin Simmons (Provisional Deacon) to Department of Children, Youth and Families in the State of Washington as Social Services Specialist, from Transitional Leave. Effective May 16.

Christine Hides (Provisional Deacon) to Kenilworth Union Church as Director of Christian Education.

Grant Swanson (Provisional Deacon) to Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary as the Recruitment Coordinator.

Rosa Lee (Elder) to Dixon: Grace (DeKalb District) from Northern Illinois University Wesley Foundation Campus Minister and Cortland (DeKalb District). Rosa follows Marilyn Nolan (Elder) to Lanark (Rockford District). Effective Aug. 1.

Kaitlyn Frantz (Local Pastor) to Northern Illinois University Wesley Foundation Campus Minister (1/2 time) (DeKalb District). Kaitlyn follows Rosa Lee who is appointed to Dixon: Grace.

Paul Judd (Elder) to Medical Leave from appointment to another conference.

For the complete 2018-19 appointment booklet, visit www.umcnic.org/appointments

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER CALENDAR EVENTS

Discipleship Systems Training

Sept. 10-12
Jeff Campbell, UM Associate General Secretary for Strategic Programming, will lead "SeeAllThePeople," a conference-wide event for leaders to become more intentional about making disciples in their ministry setting. The event will occur six times in six different NIC locations.

For more info and to register, visit www.umcnic.org/news/being-intentional-about-making-disciples.

NIC - UMM Spiritual Congress

Sept. 13-15
Conference Point Center, 300 Conference Point Rd., Williams Bay, WI.

Cost: \$175 for all three days. One-day and Two-day options available.

"Changing the Game" is this year's theme and the keynote speakers will be Rev. Norval Brown of Chicago and Rev. Mark Lubbock of Baton Rouge, LA., with musical guest Alleluia Quartet.

For more info and to register, visit www.nicummm.org

Brunch with the Bishop

Sept. 21, 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Location: Wheatland Salem UMC, 1852 95th Street, Naperville, IL
NIC Local Pastors, Associate Members, District Supply Pastors, and Certified

Lay Ministers are invited to connect and converse with each other and the Bishop at this gathering. Please RSVP by Saturday, Sept. 14 to Sharon Engert at safe331@comcast.net.

Questions about this event? Please contact Sharon at 630-739-4339.

Welcome New District Superintendents

DeKalb DS Installation Service for Brian Gilbert
Sunday, Sept. 22, 2019, 3 - 5 p.m.

Dixon First, 202 Peoria Avenue, Dixon, IL

Rockford DS Installation Service for Fabiola Grandon-Mayer
Sunday, Sept. 29, 3 - 5 p.m.

Beth Eden UMC, 3201 Huffman Blvd., Rockford, IL

Chicago BMCR 30th Annual Laity Awards

Sept. 28, 12 noon
Luncheon at Holiday Inn Matteson Hotel, 500 Holiday Plaza Drive Matteson, IL.
Donation: \$60.

For more info, contact the BMCR office at 708-940-5315 or email chicagobmcr2@gmail.com.

NIJFON Annual Celebration Dinner

Sept. 29, 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.
Two Brothers Roundhouse, 205 N. Broadway, Aurora, IL

Northern Illinois Justice For Our Neighbors (NIJFON) celebrates its 8th year with this annual fundraising event. To purchase tickets, visit nijfon.org.

50th Anniversary Memorial Service

Sept. 29, 10:30 a.m.
For former NIC Pastor Rev. Bruce Johnson and his wife Eugenia who were victims of an unsolved murder in their parsonage.

Service will be held at Parish of the Holy Covenant, 925 W. Diversey Pkwy., Chicago

Hispanic/Latinx Celebration - Back to the Future

Oct. 8, 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 for children 12 years and under.

Everyone is welcome! Bishop Sally Dyck will participate in the closing worship. For more info please contact Rev. Patricia Bonilla 847-393-6348.

Stay Connected

Sign up for the weekly NIC eNews & Appointment Announcements and Sympathy notices.

Visit www.umcnic.org and scroll down to enter your email and name under "Sign up for our eNewsletter".

Job Openings

For the latest NIC job openings, visit www.umcnic.org/jobs

Submit News

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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