

**Statement Related to the Northern Illinois Conference Resolution
with the First United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple Regarding Office-Space Lease**

From the Northern Illinois Annual Conference Shepherding Team

Posted March 19, 2024

The Northern Illinois Annual Conference Shepherding Team works to build and strengthen relationships among the people of the Northern Illinois Conference. Trust is a vital part of maintaining healthy relationships, as is transparent decision-making and communication. As a part of that effort, the ACST offers a transparent account of a concern that arose between the NIC Board of Trustees and people of the First United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple. The ACST is gratified that this dispute has been resolved through a sincere and respectful process that has maintained our United Methodist connection.

The United Methodist Church is a connectional movement. Our connectional structure links all our congregations for the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We are grounded in scripture and in Christ's mandate to live as a community.

When the body is broken, we are called to work toward reconciliation. In this spirit, NIC leaders have been on a journey of healing for the past year regarding a broken relationship between the conference and the people of First United Methodist Church. The relationship suffered damage over a conflicted understanding of the NIC's office lease with the Chicago Temple. The ACST commends the NIC Board of Trustees for addressing this matter in a mature, Christian manner, using the principles of the rule of Christ (Matt. 18:1-6).

The NIC Board of Trustees is tasked with overseeing the properties and leases that belong to the annual conference. For generations, the board has worked to be good stewards of conference resources. For several years, the NIC leased office space in the Chicago Temple. In 2022, negotiations over renewing the lease did not result in a mutually understood conclusion. In October 2022, the trustees decided to discontinue leasing office space from the Chicago Temple and moved to 303 E. Wacker Drive, Chicago. The ACST grieves the pain and brokenness that grew from this disagreement.

In conversations with the conference Board of Trustees and representatives of the Chicago Temple, members of First United Methodist Church expressed that the events following the failed lease negotiations had caused spiritual, economic, and reputational harm. Bishop Dan Schwerin and the Board of Trustees take this harm very seriously and greatly regret the pain the church experienced.

The ACST values the relationship between the conference and the Temple, and sincerely urges its healing. We are grateful that at the end of October 2023, the conference Board of Trustees and the Temple agreed on a restorative settlement.

Restoration has financial implications. To that end the annual conference will pay First United Methodist Church \$145,000 as a rent settlement and \$3,000 in legal fees. Further, the bishop's office will be located at the Temple until August 2024. The funds are being drawn from conference reserves. Costs would have been much greater if we did not enjoy a deep covenantal relationship with each other. The Board of Trustees, the bishop, and ACST are thankful that the situation has been settled and hope for a repaired relationship with First United Methodist Church.

May the peace of Christ be in our steps.