

Northern Illinois Conference
of The United Methodist Church
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GBCS Board member Cindy Johnson (from Rio Conference), Bishop Hope Morgan Ward, GBCS staff member Rebecca Cole, GBCS General Secretary Susan Henry-Crowe, Bishop Peggy Johnson, Bishop Sally Dyck, and GBCS staff member Tricia Bruckbauer visit the the border of Mexico in August 2018.



BISHOP'S COLUMN: Giving witness at the U.S. - Mexico border

At the end of August, I went to the border of Mexico at McAllen, TX with the General Board of Church and Society to witness, and to give witness, to the plight of those who are seeking asylum and refuge in the U.S. from Mexico and Central America. A

group of six—three GBCS staff and three bishops from the board—gathered with the resident bishop, Robert Schnase (who grew up and served churches along the border before being elected a bishop in 2004), and several others from the Rio Conference.

First, we went to Anzalduas Park in Mission, TX overlooking the river where we met with several officers of the Border Control. These second-generation Mexican-Americans shared with us about their work. They search out the river for those who are crossing it (a U.S. federal crime) by boat, horse, ATVs, and patrol cars. They talked about how it's their job to track down those who are trying to make it across the river or through the high grass or trees. Usually, when someone is apprehended by them, the first thing they ask for is water; some of them dying of dehydration. The Border Control takes the people they apprehend to the Ursula Processing Center.

In the Processing Center, we saw hundreds of men, women and children. Mostly young adults with children; I

don't remember seeing many if any older people. Children older than 10 are separated from their parents in the Processing Center. They are all in big wire cages, lying on thin mattresses on the floor with space blankets made of mylar to keep warm in the heavily air-conditioned room which hummed with the sound of rustling space blankets. Other than that, there was very little noise. The officer said it was because they spend most of their time sleeping, finally resting after being on the run. Even children were very subdued. When those who spoke Spanish put their hand up to meet the hand of someone inside the cage, they would offer to pray for them. Tears would flow. They seemed more than physically tired.

Restroom facilities were in the middle of the cages where you could see the feet and often the head of anyone going into them for security reasons. Showers were off to the side. They were allowed to shower when they first got there. They were supplied with clean warm-up clothes while their own clothes were being washed and then returned to them.

Supposedly they only stay about three days before they are transported to a bus station or respite facility or their families give them tickets to a destination near them. The respite center that we visited was across from the bus station in McAllen. It began its work in 2015 when the city of McAllen was overrun with unaccompanied children. The respite center is far more inviting and lively. Here children came up to us as we sat, listening to Sister Norma, who

runs it, and played with us. They were rambunctious but well-behaved; in the Processing Center they were lethargic and looked scared.

Across the street was the bus station where they would go when contact was made with family or friends and tickets were given. The respite center sent them on their way with whatever clothing items they needed, diapers, water and a sizable lunch. I can't imagine how scary it must be to have a stack of bus tickets for the next couple of days and unable to read English.

Yet the journey through uncharted and sometimes dangerous waters doesn't end when they arrive in Chicagoland (or anywhere else in the U.S.). They face the uncharted waters of a language they may not know or still struggle with.

But maybe all of this pales in the face of yet more uncharted and dangerous waters that people of color in our country face: the imposing and massive boulders of racism and prejudice. My family came to this country due to religious persecution, but we never had to worry about racism. As I've said before, what if our church had spent so much time, energy and resources addressing racism as we have homosexuality? Some might rightfully argue that our obsession with sexuality has in fact successfully diverted us from facing our racism.

In McAllen, we were with a number of people whose work relates to immigration at the border, but perhaps the

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NIC Delegation reviewing Commission on the Way Forward's proposal By Elisa Gatz, Delegation Chair

After much anticipation, the report from the Commission on The Way Forward has been released. If you have not seen it but would like to read it, it can be found at www.umc.org/who-we-are/way-forward-report-released-in-all-four-official-languages-of-general-confe. Delegation members are studying the legislation and beginning strategy discussions.

We met with Bishop Dyck in August, and met with the delegations from the North Central Jurisdiction and the College of Bishops in September to further discuss and learn about the legislation before we have our conversations with the conference.

We are still waiting on other proposals that have been submitted from individuals and groups, which will be mailed to us later this fall. Other documents will be presented from the floor of the special session in February. Right now, we are keeping our minds open, listening to all of the information coming our way, praying for discernment, and waiting for yet another declaratory decision of the Judicial Council as requested by the Council of Bishops. We are working through our understanding, thoughts, and strategies, and we are refining our thinking as the conversations continue. We do have consensus on a few things:

- We agree with removing the incompatibility clause, as the One Church Plan does.
- We are devoted to the United Methodist Church and we do not wish to see it break apart. We will work to create a way for the UMC to be the church for all of

God's children because unity does not exist if some are excluded.

- We cannot continue to let this divisiveness get in the way of us doing God's work through the church. We continue to seek a way forward that does not elevate either unity or justice over one another.
- We do need a way forward for the church just as urgently as we did when we approved the creation of the Commission on The Way Forward at General Conference 2016, and we continue to seek to be the church through this process.

The Methodist Church has been in crisis before. Hindsight tells us we did not always choose the best path, and people were hurt in the process. In many cases, the hurt still continues. We are keenly aware of the responsibility before us, and we commit ourselves to lead as God is calling us.

We need YOUR help as well. We urge you to:

- Read the report and let us know what stands out to you.
- Have conversations in your own congregation.
- Continue to pray.
- Plan to come to one of the conversations with the delegation that will take place in each district (see Listening Conversation Sessions)

We will continue to keep you updated as we get closer to, throughout, and following GC2019. Follow the delegation on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NICDelegation.



Listening and Conversation Sessions

The NIC General/Jurisdictional Delegation will be holding listening and conversation sessions this fall leading up to the General Conference Special Session.

You can choose to attend any one of the locations:

- **October 6 – 9:00 am** Rockford District (Freeport: First) 1:00 pm Dekalb District (Sterling: Wesley)
- **October 20 – 9:00 am** Chicago NW District (Park Ridge) 1:00 pm Chicago Southern District (Chicago: St. Mark)
- **November 10 – 9:00 am** Elgin District (Barrington) 1:00 pm Aurora District (Aurora: Bethany Fox Valley)

Children advocate workshop raises racism awareness By Mark Bowman, United Voices for Children

Sixty persons representing 25 congregations in northern Illinois gathered on Saturday, August 25, for a lively conversation about how to confront and challenge racism as it impacts the lives of our children and youth.

The Colors of Love: Raising Children in a Racially Unjust World workshop featured a presentation from Dr. Jennifer Harvey, professor of religion at Drake University, whose research addresses the encounter between religion and ethics, race, gender, activism, politics and spirituality in the U.S.

Dr. Harvey challenged parents, clergy, and educators to consider how to be effective in making their children aware of U.S. racial realities, while simultaneously nurturing their children's emotional resilience and a healthy sense of racial identity. In particular, Harvey used personal stories to demonstrate how the common approaches of "colorblindness" and "diversity" fall short in responding to our deeply racialized and hierarchical society. She offered suggestions for how parents and church leaders can stretch themselves to adopt "antiracist" ways to communicate with and empower our children and youth.

Following Dr. Harvey's provocative presentation, three high school youth shared their personal experiences and reflections on how they have confronted racism in their lives and relationships. Lucy Hermann (Trinity UMC, Mt. Prospect), Abigail Mendoza (First UMC, Park Ridge) and Jaelyn Pirtle (Gorham UMC, Chicago) talked insightfully about what they have learned and who has influenced them in observing and challenging racism at their schools, churches, and home.

Rev. Darneather Murph-Heath, Elgin District Superintendent, opened the workshop with a prayerful and impassioned invitation to the attendees to be open to being changed by what they heard that day—and then to be that change they want to see in their families, communities, and churches.

"I appreciated Dr. Harvey's caution that if parents, teachers, church leaders and other caring adults practice

'white silence,' our children's default formation about race will come from TV, friends, school, social media, and others. White silence occurs when white people become silent in the face of racism rather than engaging our children by stepping in and stepping up to name, confront, and challenge actions as racist. Ignoring manifestations of racism by silence fosters and festers racism," reflected Kim Coffing, United Voices for Children (UVC) President.

UVC board member Ed Miner left the workshop realizing that, "We need to talk to kids about our attitudes about race. They know more than we think they do and they learn it earlier than we think. Our own attitudes may be incomplete but we need to talk to our kids anyway."

Another UVC board member, Meg JungEun Park, succinctly identified helpful components of Dr. Harvey's parenting strategy: 1) create a race-conscious schema in children's early development by talking about difference early and often; 2) develop "racial scripts" to become attentive, careful interpreters of the stories of/from others; 3) develop an anti-racist "agency" by complicating history (and stories people tell) at every turn. Park noted that "Our kids need to wrestle with the complex stories of what actual people have done and what people actually still do."

Christine Hides, UVC board member, expressed hope for what we can do: "What was most powerful for me was seeing a diverse group of faith-filled people confront an issue that impacts the lives of all our children. With practical tips and resources like this workshop, churches can and should place where the evils of racism are identified and actively resisted."

UVC President Kim Coffing also looked ahead to next steps after the

workshop: "UVC is committed to confronting the issues that put children at risk in all of our communities and equipping churches to advocate for our children's well-being. Racism puts us at risk of losing our children. Racism in our churches destroys our credibility of being witnesses of a God who loves us all. It is our task to let God make a difference through us."

Colors of Love: Raising Children in a Racially Unjust World was sponsored by United Voices for Children (www.unitedvoicesforchildren.org) in collaboration with First UMC Elmhurst, Christians Engaged in Faith Formation, Commission on Religion and Race in Northern Illinois and the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Dr. Jennifer Harvey's 2017 book, *Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America* is published by Abingdon Press and available from Cokesbury.



Erin Simmons, Jaelyn Pirtle, Lucy Hermann, Abigail Mendoza and Jennifer Harvey help lead the Colors of Love workshop sponsored by United Voices for Children.



Oak Park Producer discusses “America to Me” documentary

By Linda Hendelman

“America to Me” is an eye opening documentary on the Starz network which goes inside the Oak Park and River Forest High School where students and teachers navigate issues of race, equity and education.

Risé Sanders-Weir

*Let America be America again.
Let it be the dream it used to be.
Let it be the pioneer on the plain
Seeking a home where he himself is free.*

(America never was America to me.)

*Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed—
Let it be that great strong land of love
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
That any man be crushed by one above.*

(It never was America to me.)

“America to Me,” the title of a new documentary series, derives from the much longer Langston Hughes poem “Let America Be America Again,” originally published in Esquire in 1936. The acclaimed series was produced by Risé Sanders-Weir, a member of First United Methodist Church of Oak Park, and directed by Steve James, the noted director of the award-winning “Hoop Dreams,”

The ten-part documentary airs on the Starz network on Sundays at 9 p.m. CDT through October 28. It examines the racial, economic, and class issues of teens at Oak Park and River Forest High School in unscripted stories told by the teens themselves, their families, and the school faculty.

A member of First United Methodist Church since she moved to Oak Park in 2010, Sanders-Weir explained that she became interested in the project when she learned in the local newspaper that the school board was debating whether to allow Director Steve James to film a documentary at Oak Park and River Forest High School (OPRF). Having worked with James on previous films, Sanders-Weir contacted him to express her interest in the subject matter and to let him know she wanted to work with him and Kartemquin Films on the project. Her husband, Drew Weir, who also previously worked with James, was the sound designer/mixer for the series, and their son Duncan is a sophomore at OPRF.

Docu-Series Director

Originally from a small town in Arkansas that still grapples with racial equity issues, Sanders-Weir explained that despite policies put in place by the school system to address historical inequality, the school she attended in the 1970s and 1980s reflected what the subjects in “America to Me” are still facing. Now Director of Kartemquin Films, Sanders-Weir has directed and produced documentaries for MSNBC, PBS, and National Geographic, among others. She has been nominated for the NAACP Emmy® Image Award and an MPSE Golden Reel Award.

In addition to chairing the education committee, Sanders-Weir has served on First UMC’s worship committee and as lay mentor to the church’s Education Director. Although she attends church regularly, she says she’s never considered herself a “religious person.” In speaking about her racial views and being a United Methodist, she says:

“My experiences taught me to look beyond myself or my immediate group when seeking answers to tough questions. Other churches seemed to be saying that they were the ‘right’ way or had all the answers, but I didn’t see the problems being solved. I appreciated the United Methodist openness to listening and valuing lived experiences. I value the struggle to make the world a better place - that’s why I am here.”

Filming

The documentary, which takes place over the 2015-2016 school year, follows 12 students— seven African American, three bi-racial, and two White, as well as a bi-racial teacher. In selecting students for the documentary, Sanders-Weir explained, they looked for a matrix of age, socio-economic and academic levels, household make-up, and extracurricular activities. Some 40 students were interviewed over the summer, along with parents because they wanted parental support from the beginning and also to film the students at home. Finding the right mix of White students was the most difficult, she said. They sought students who were racially aware and able to talk about race in a way that was helpful for the documentary. However, she says:

“Most White people, myself included, don’t go through our days assessing the world on the basis of race. It’s a privilege that I’m only now becoming as aware of it as I should be. By the end of the first semester, we’d found two White students who rounded out our selection of subjects.”

Reactions and Race Relations

The students basically became accustomed to the filming in their classrooms several times a month and eventually largely ignored the cameras, Sanders-Weir noted. She also noted that while the White, progressive population of Oak Park had mixed feelings about the idea of the filming, she said, it was generally positive. She explained:

“There was a layer of concern that Oak Park would be held to some sort of standard that virtually no school in America has been able to achieve. That somehow the documentary would damage a good thing that is the high achieving high school in town.”

In discussing her perceptions about race relations in Oak

Park, which is noted for its liberal and successful diversity, Sanders-Weir says: “Oak Park is a progressive place, where, I feel, very few people would say that all our culture’s racial problems have been solved. There is an awareness that work needs to be done. But I do think that there is a lack of understanding on the part of White people, myself included, to what needs to be done.”

She explained that the school’s vice principal for instruction, Chala Holland, who was interviewed, early in the series, says “people move to Oak Park for diversity, but not for equity.” Giving that comment some thought, Sanders-Weir said: “When I first heard that comment, I had to take a hard look at myself. We had chosen Oak Park because it had both economic and racial diversity, but now that we live there, what concrete actions were we taking to further the goals of equality?”

Resources for Discussion

Sanders-Weir explained that part of the reason for the discussion guide accompanying the series is to get people talking about the issues presented. For churches or individuals who wish to continue examining the issues in the “America to Me” series, Participant Media has developed an episode-by-episode guide available at americatomerealtalk.com. The materials are appropriate for teens and adults, Sanders-Weir says.

Like Langston Hughes, Sanders-Weir offers hope for improved racial relations from the “America to Me” series: “We hope that the series goes beyond the original broadcast and has some deeper impact. We plan to make it widely available. Some churches are watching it each week and doing a discussion. It is our intention for this series to live beyond the viewing and for it to start needed conversations in our culture about systemic racism and our need to continue to strive for justice for all.

*O, let America be America again—
The land that never has been yet—
And yet must be—the land where every man is free.*

*O, yes,
I say it plain,
America never was America to me,
And yet I swear this oath—
America will be!*

Let America Be America Again, Langston Hughes

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

From the Cover



Ephraim Guerrero, Attorney of the Eastern Conference of the Methodist Church of Mexico and Coordinator of Immigration Affairs in Monterrey, Mexico and Azalea Aleman-Bendix, Assistant Federal Public Defender, talked about the immigration situation from the Mexican side of the story. Photo courtesy of Sally Dyck.

most impressive to me was at the Federal Courthouse where we met with Ms. Azalea Altman-Bendix, Assistant Federal Public Defender. And she’s United Methodist! She and her assistant told us how it is their job to defend and work to find a solution for those who have been apprehended at the river. In order to defend them and with the number of people they process, they have no more than one minute to talk with them before they go before a judge. We left Azalea and her assistant by praying for them and all those who come through their care.

The next day we met more people who work within the overwhelming effects of our broken immigration policies, seeing and caring for people who are the victims of it. Most of them are also people of faith, like Sister Norma and Azalea. I remembered the saying from Mister Rogers: when bad things happen, look for the people doing good.

You may know this journey of uncharted waters far better and more intimately than I do. Or you may disagree with what seems

to you to be my opinion as I share what people who live and work there told us. But nothing seems more certain and true than our nation needs a better, more humane and compassionate immigration policy as we have had in other times in history.

Let us pray for those who are in such desperate situations of violence that they would leave their home, facing such obstacles. Let us pray for their families and friends back home and the countries they left that they might know peace and people wouldn’t have to leave home. Let us pray for our nation that it may truly be great and have a fair and humane immigration policy that benefits all of us, including those of us who rely on the work of immigrants on a daily basis. Let us pray for our president and his administration, including Attorney General Jeff Sessions (a fellow United Methodist), that reason and compassion will provide motivation to work for a comprehensive immigration policy.

One-on-one strategies build membership By Al Benson

Senior Pastor at Grace UMC in Naperville the Rev. Cindy Marino says their church is seeing a turnaround. “Over the last 28 months approximately 62 people have become Grace family members,” said Marino. “We are presently working with another 15 family units that we believe will become members over the next 90 days that would equate to approximately 25 new Grace family members.”

Naperville Grace once worshiped 900 congregants weekly Rev. Marino recalled. She said, “As a larger Methodist congregation Grace has been slower to feel the decline experienced in many churches, but the decline is just as real.”

She said the people of Grace have employed three one-on-one strategies to address a changing culture that no longer sees church attendance as a priority.

1. The first shift is to change focus from programs to people: just as everything in culture is now customized. From lattes to the online shopping experience, we can't assume great programming will bring people to church or to Christ. We are learning to focus less on programs and more on new ways to facilitate relationships of trust and transparency.
2. Through trusted relationships a second shift begins, the shift from education to faith formation. Learning has always been important to this congregation, but learning about God doesn't always bring us to be formed as a disciple in the image of Christ.
3. Faith formation leads to the third shift: moving from an inward to an outward expression of faith. The

people of Grace have always been community-oriented and active in issues of justice and mercy. Renewing our inward faith reignites our outward passion for love of God and neighbor.

According to Rev. Marino, offering a one on one conversation with a pastor as the first step— from program to people – provides the basis for deeper connection. A pastor offers a safe place to wrestle with issues of faith and life and allows people to move confidently into participation.

One-on-one meetings are easier to schedule than a class and give newcomers needed support in a personal and timely manner. We are scheduling persons to join as they are ready and not when we have reached critical mass for a class. Meetings with newcomers are scheduled with the pastor within the first week of their first visit. Most meetings take place on Sunday mornings, when newcomers are likely to be available. Rarely have they turned down the offer to meet. Out of these conversations we find pastoral care needs and the passions and gifts of the newcomers. We can connect them with others accordingly and they see familiar faces when they return on Sunday.

Along with this one on one care for newcomers, we also have begun what we're calling Church Community Builders. The idea is to gather a group of at least six persons who will each meet with one other member of the group over a five-week period. The sixth week there is a gathering of all six members, who now have spent one-on-one time



Grace UMC was one of six churches to receive the One Matters Award at the Northern Illinois Annual Conference in June.

getting to know one another. With several groups meeting on an ongoing basis, we're seeing new relationships and new connections growing. There are no perfect or grand programs that will 'fix' the church. We are seeing the need for adaptability, collaboration and trial and error, and will continue to do our best to discern God's call to reach out to those who need to know the love of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, Rev. Marino said.

Grace UMC was one of six churches in the Northern Illinois Conference which received a One Matters Discipleship Award plaque and a \$1,000 grant this year.

If you would like to submit a suggestion for a “Ministry Makers” upcoming column, please send your ideas to agerhardt@umcnic.org.

Merged church celebrates 10th anniversary



On Sept. 9, Faith United Methodist Church of Orland Park celebrated 10 years of being a new church. In 2008 Orland Park UMC and Pathway UMC (Oak Forest UMC and Midlothian UMC) voted to merge congregations. A third Methodist church had been asked to join the merger but their vote fell short of the required 66% by seven votes. And so began the task of choosing a new name, finding a new church building, merging building equipment, and combining laity leadership. Newly appointed Pastor Caleb Hong has led us in becoming a growing and dynamic

church. Former Associate Pastors Melissa Meyers, Kelli Beard, and current Associate Pastor Caitlyn Butler have also helped us grow.

It took us two years to accomplish the nitty gritty of moving, and during part of that time we actually met in a local theater on Sunday mornings. As the months wore on, we knew that if we could put up and take down in a movie theater for Sunday mornings, we could handle anything else that got in our ways.

Finally, a local church was available for sale. We raised

(continued on page 6, see Anniversary

CONAM and the Native American ministry of presence

For over 25 years the Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM) has helped to support the St. Kateri Center of Chicago, the city's only Native American Christian church (www.facebook.com/stkatericenterofchicago), through a ministry of presence. CONAM helps with the Kateri Center's many cultural events, facilitates the presence speakers such as Dr. Casey Church (Potawatomi), and participates in their Leadership circle.

CONAM also supports the ministry of Chicagoland's well-known Native flute players, Bill Buchholtz. Bill has participated since the 1990s through organizations such as the American Indian Center of Chicago, Midwest SOARRING, and the Anawim Center. Music has always been at the center of Bill's life, especially when he was gifted a Native American flute by a Lakota elder. He had been taught by Elders to accept a gift with gratitude. He told her

he didn't know how to play it, to which she replied, “Yes, you do.” By listening to the Creator speak to his heart he learned it well.

Bill has become well known through performances at numerous churches and interfaith groups, schools and universities, museums, and cultural events, including powwows. His cultural presentations feature his flute music and talks that touch upon the history and the cultural and spiritual significance of the instrument. He regularly plays both flute and piano at the bi-monthly services at the St. Kateri Center as part of the UMC ministry of presence.

The NIC supports CONAM and Bill's ministry through donations received during Native American Sunday (April 15, 2018 and May 5, 2019) and/or through the Rainbow Covenant. As Rev. Michelle Oberwise Lacock, Co-Chair of CONAM says, “It's never too late to hold a Native American Sunday service.”

If your church would like to host Bill Buchholtz or is seeking help with a Native American Sunday service, contact Michelle at: mickiol@aol.com, 630-336-2317.



CONAM also supports the ministry of one of Chicagoland's well-known Native flute players, Bill Buchholtz.

Northern Illinois early response team helps flooded neighbors in Wisconsin



An Early Response Team from First UMC Morris helped homeowners with cleanup and repairs in Elroy, Wisconsin following damaging floods.



Volunteers work on mold remediation inside several homes by removing flood soaked walls and insulation.



The crew helps fill several large dumpsters stacked along the curb with debris.

An Early Response Team (ERT) of six volunteers from First UMC of Morris headed to Elroy, Wisconsin for five days in early September to help in flood cleanup. The team was invited by the Wisconsin Conference to assist after heavy rains caused the Baraboo River to overflow its banks and flood the town.

Here are excerpts of their experiences by the team's leader Colin Monk posted on Facebook:

Day One:

Sept. 3 The ERT group arrived in the Elroy, Wisconsin area. The first day was spent assessing flooded homes. The area received an additional 6-7" of rain. More flood damage and road closures. Due to the excessive water and flash flood activities the area is not accepting any other volunteers now. More rain forecasted. God bless all.

Day Two:

Sept. 4 Today the ERTs had a busy day. After an organizational meeting we headed out to an Elroy home that needed their roof tarped and their basement pumped. The roof was damaged causing water to run thru the house and the old basement walls couldn't hold back the 6-7" of rain we had last night. Before leaving, our crew dug a drainage path in the gravel driveway to divert water away from the house foundation. Our next project took us to a house in Kendall that flooded. The crew helped the family remove the bottom 18" of plaster, lathe, drywall, plywood and wet insulation from all walls of the house. Mold retardant was sprayed on all wall surfaces. Part of our crew went to LaFarge to deliver a truck full of flood clean up kits and we did damage assessments on 5 houses. We enjoyed a wonderful chicken dinner at the Lutheran church in Elroy. Back to Winding Rivers UMC in New Lisbon for a well deserved mini shower and some rest. Heavy rain is forecast for late tonight.

Day Three:

Sept. 5 This morning the ERT group awoke and surveyed the rainfall damage from last night. The majority of the rain missed our area and we only received 1-2" of rain. After a quick breakfast, from our wonderful host church Winding Rivers UMC, we set out for a day of work. Our first stop was in Kendall to finish mold remediation work at the house we worked on yesterday. The house was drying out and the family seemed to be in good spirits. We traveled to La Farge, a small community of 746 friendly people. After a quick lunch we started a big project. The house had been flooded with almost 2' of raging water as a wall of water sweep thought part of La Farge. We removed 4' of drywall on bottom of all the walls. Then we removed plaster and lathe so we could remove the soaked wall insulation. We also removed the kitchen cabinets and some of the plywood flooring. We plan on finishing that job up tomorrow. We had a wonderful dinner at Lutheran Church in Elroy. Then we returning to our host church to clean up in our mini shower and relax a bit before bedtime. Thanks for all the prayers and God bless.

Day Four:

Sept. 6 This morning the ERT gang was pleasantly surprised by bright sunshine and clear skies. After a quick breakfast we set off to La Farge to finish the job we started yesterday. The team enjoyed working for such a wonderful family. The family rents the house but felt they should help repair "their home". It is a very good feeling to be able to help out such a nice family. We missed seeing the two girls as it was their first day back to school. We finished removing the bottom 4' of walls so we could remove wet insulation and then we treated all the framing with mold and virus killer and inhibitor. Our family was so kind as they made us brats for lunch.

After a final clean out we said our goodbyes and took a few pictures. We drove the scenic way back to Elroy. The views were stunning as drive the winding hills around Wildcat State Park. We stopped into the UMC in Elroy to get details on our final project for tomorrow. An elderly Elroy couple has been dealing with some major health issues. The flooding has left their home inhabitable. They are currently living in a nearby hotel. We have been told that this couple is very loved by the community and the church family. Our goal tomorrow is to do what we can to give this special couple their home back. God bless all those that we are so privileged to serve.

(continued on page 6, see Flood)



Hurricane Florence Relief

UMCOR reported that conferences were as prepared as possible to respond to the potential damage caused by Hurricane Florence. They ask that those wishing to assist to please not self-deploy.

Cleaning Kits, Tool Trailers and other supplies have been strategically placed throughout the region. Moreover, experienced Early Response Teams (ERTs) and Disaster Response Coordinators (DRCs) are prepared to assist immediately when conditions are safe for entry in the following conferences: South Georgia, North Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Western North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Peninsula-Delaware, Baltimore-Washington, Eastern Pennsylvania, Western Pennsylvania and Susquehanna (Northeastern and Central portions of Pennsylvania).

These teams bring supplies into affected areas, beginning cleanup and assessment for long-term assistance.

Conferences in the region that are not severely impacted by the storm are prepared to send teams and resources to those most affected.

The South Carolina and North Carolina conferences have both requested \$10,000 emergency grants, which UMCOR awarded. These grants allow for the immediate use of funds for response after the storm.

UMCOR and DRCs across the region are actively monitoring Florence's path and impact and will continue to do so as the storm makes its way inland.

How you can help

PRAY for those whose lives will be impacted by current disasters.

MAKE relief kits and send them to our relief-supply depots or an affiliate warehouse. Learn more about how to assemble and send a kit by visiting www.umcor.org.

GIVE towards the efforts of UMCOR and its partners. Donate to U.S. disaster response, international disaster response, or to the UMCOR undesignated fund by visiting www.umcor.org/donate.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER CALENDAR NEWS

NIJFON Annual Benefit

October 14, 4 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Location: Two Brothers Roundhouse in Aurora

NIJFON will hold its annual "Champions for Justice" celebration and honor Bishop Sally Dyck this year. Your presence will support the work of Justice of Our Neighbors as it continues to protect immigrants by providing free, high-quality legal services and invite allies to learn about complex immigration issues and advocate for justice.

Tickets are \$60 online or by sending a check to NIJFON at P.O. Box 68892, Schaumburg, IL 60168.

For more details visit nijfon.org



Paul Nixon Speaker Series

October 17, 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

"Contextual Leadership"

Location: Evangelical Lutheran Center, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago.

Paul Nixon

Cost: \$30, includes lunch & program

Spend a day with author Paul Nixon exploring ideas from his books *Weird Church and Multi*. Paul passionately believes that God has a better story in mind for 21st-century congregations than simply struggling for sustainability and longing for twenty years ago.

For more info and to register visit www.umcnic.org/calendar/paul-nixon-speaker-series.



Fellowship Asian American (FAA) Leadership Training

October 23, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

"Contextual Leadership"

Rev. Dr. Shanta Premawardhana

For all clergy and lay leaders in the Northern Illinois Conference

Location: First Korean UMC, 655 Hintz Rd. Wheeling, IL

Registration Fee: \$10 includes lunch

Speaker: Rev. Dr. Shanta Premawardhana, President of OMNIA

Dr. Shanta Premawardhana is a master of helping church bodies to articulate, dialogue, and cooperate in the contemporary contexts. Registration and Question? Pastor Hyujae Lee (224-558-3887 or email: hle763@yahoo.com)

Please R.S.V.P by Sunday, October 21.

UMW Annual Meeting

October 27, 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

For the Love of the Child

Location: 215 N Court St, Rockford, IL

Cost: \$15 lunch included

Speaker: Kim Coffing, ChildServ Director of Faith and Community Relations

Topics: Adolescent Health: What parents need to know
Safe Sanctuaries, the Basics
All Children Are Special

For more info and registration visit umwnic.org.

Breaking Barriers HIV/AIDS ministry conference

October 25-27

Location: St. Luke's UMC, 100 W 86th St., Indianapolis, IN

Cost: \$125 per person (includes two lunches and two dinners plus program costs)

Registration deadline: October 1, 2018

Sponsored by the UMC Global AIDS Committee

The purpose of the Breaking Barriers HIV/AIDS ministry conference is to help create an AIDS-free world through saving lives, reducing stigma and increasing awareness. The gathering is open to anyone with an interest in reaching out to the HIV/AIDS community with a message of love.

For more information and registration visit inumc.swoogo.com/bbaid18.

Drawing Closer to God

Saturday, November 3, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

One Day Retreat sponsored by NIC Spiritual Formation Committee

Location: Grace UMC, 1718 Avalon Ave., Joliet, IL

Cost: \$25

"Praying for Discernment: Changing the Way We Do Church"

Keynote Speaker: Rev. Dr. Frederick W. Schmidt Director, The Rueben P. Job Institute for Spiritual Formation Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

To register visit

www.umcnic.org/calendar/spiritual-formation-retreat

2018 TeamWorks: To Equip Leaders

Plan: Each church will send a TeamWorks Team of 3 to 5 leaders, including the lead pastor, to the four seminars with the following themes:

1st Session: Nov. 3 - Futurecasting

2nd Session: Dec. 3 - Spiritual Life of the Leaders

3rd Session: Jan. 12- Connecting With Your Community

4th Session: March 30 - Creating a Discipleship System

Location: South Suburban Korean UMC, 1930 Kedzie Ave. Flossmoor, IL .

Registration fee : \$10 (includes the guidebook) each session.

Leaders: Craig Kennet Miller, Director of Congregational Development at Discipleship Ministries (GBOD), Martin Lee, Director of Congregational Development and Redevelopment, Rev. Jacques Conway, Chicago Southern District Superintendent, Rev. Darneather Murph-Heath, Elgin District Superintendent, Rev. Young-Mee Park, DeKalb District Superintendent

For more info contact Rev. Martin Lee 312-346-9766 ext. 708 mlee@umcnic.org.

Purpose: To develop healthy, strategic teams in local churches in the Northern Illinois Conference using TeamWorks developed by Discipleship Ministries.

Want to list an event?

Contact Anne Marie Gerhardt, Dir. of Communications agerhardt@umcnic.org

Flood (continued from page 5)



Flood waters leave extensive foundation damage to several homes in Elroy, Wisconsin.

Day Five:

Sept. 7 We awoke this morning to another sunny morning. After breakfast we packed up our stuff and headed to Elroy UMC to find out what home we would work on today. The owner of the house that we were asked to work on wouldn't be at the house until 10:30 a.m. We met up with a guy who also lived on the same street as the couple that we would be working for. The homes on the street and the adjacent street we're heavily damaged by the rapidly moving flood waters. I spent part of the day assessing the damage to each house and talking with the homeowners. Unfortunately, many of the homes had extensive foundation damage and will be destroyed. The rest of the crew helped fill several large dumpsters with stuff stacked along the curbs.

When the homeowner arrived, we quickly began to remove flooring and the bottom 16" of all the walls along with the wet insulation. Being able to help another person in need is a wonderful feeling. We finished our work, said our goodbyes and hit the road back to Morris. Again the crew would like to thank all those who helped us in our mission to serve those in need and show what God's love is all about. We have been blessed to meet some of the nicest people. We wish all those affected by the torrential rains the best in their recovery and you will remain in our prayers. God bless.

Midwest Mission Distribution Center sends supplies to Wisconsin

The first call for supplies for the heavily flooded areas in Wisconsin came in on the morning of August 30 and by noon, a crew from the Midwest Mission Distribution Center was headed to Baraboo, WI with a load of Hygiene Kits and Cleaning Kits. On the 31st, a semi picked up 2,016 more buckets for Baraboo and the box truck headed out a second time with buckets for Viroqua and Gay Mills, WI.

In two days, 2,916 Cleaning Kits and 2,555 Hygiene Kits were shipped out to help flood victims in Wisconsin. Nearly \$250,000 worth of relief supplies were delivered! The following week, the team from Coldwater UMC in Coldwater, MI started filling more buckets to restock the shelves.

Early Response Teams are still needed in Wisconsin to respond to the recent tornadoes, heavy rain, and straight line winds. ERT Team leaders contact Lynnette Jordan by email at lynette.jordan0707@gmail.com.

Anniversary (continued from page 4)

the \$275,000 needed to acquire a bridge loan and the endowment funds from the two churches loaned us over \$1 million to purchase the church. We are currently repaying the interest on the endowment fund loan.

During the past year our Mission Committee challenged the congregation to undertake 10,000 hours of volunteer service in honor of our 10th celebration. Individuals and committees worked hard to accomplish this goal. We reached it and even surpassed it with more than 11,600 hours being documented. Throughout the year we have spread the news of Faith UMC through our work and projects.

At the September celebration, our Endowment Committee presented Bishop Sally Dyck with a check for \$10,000 for her Bishop's Appeal to benefit the Global Migration Fund. We celebrated with verbal reminiscences and a power point presentation documenting our 10 years. Several pastors who had served at the merged congregations joined in the celebration. At the close of the service we celebrated like good United Methodists do -- with a potluck luncheon for 250.

We're strong and moving to the future.

**Submitted by Sandy Ward, Faith UMC Program Coordinator*



Public health official Adolfo "Trio" Paras III leads a class on AIDS prevention at Wesley Third Millennium United Methodist Church in Cabanatuan City, Philippines, in July 2018.)

Churches can help erase stigma of HIV/AIDS By Linda Bloom*

In 2010, more than 130 United Methodists went through HIV/AIDS testing during that spring's Council of Bishops meeting to draw attention to a major global health issue and express solidarity with those suffering with the disease.

These days, such attention — from both the faith community and society at large — has diminished, says Indiana Area Bishop Julius C. Trimble, committee chair of the United Methodist Global AIDS Committee.

"It's what I call apathetic neglect," he explained. "It's another form of discrimination."

Trimble hopes that an upcoming denominational conference will "generate some tangible commitment to re-prioritize HIV and AIDS in our overall concern about global and national health."

The goal of the "Breaking Barriers" HIV/AIDS ministry conference, from Oct. 25-27 at St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Indianapolis, is to save lives, reduce stigma and increase awareness. Scholarships, supported by the Indiana University Health Network, a co-sponsor, are available to help participants with registration and hotel costs.

The intent, Trimble said, is to both sound the alarm and extend an invitation for faith communities to join with those who have had some success in reducing HIV/AIDS deaths and increasing prevention. Sponsored by the Global AIDS Committee in partnership with the Council of Bishops and the denomination's general agencies, other co-sponsors include seminaries, annual conferences and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Keynote speakers and worship leaders for Breaking Barriers include Ambassador Deborah Birx, U.S. Global AIDS coordinator; Hydeia Broadbent, an HIV/AIDS youth activist; Bishop Minerva Garza Carcaño, San Francisco Area; Bishop Tracy Smith Malone, East Ohio Area, and Trimble.

Trimble said the conference has attracted support "because it is rare that a mainline denomination, in collaboration with partners, has raised the clarion call regarding the over 1 million persons living with HIV in America and 36.7 million globally living with HIV/AIDS."

The target audience is people of faith, health professionals and advocates, community leaders and volunteers and, especially, those living with HIV, said Linda Bales Todd, a committee member and conference organizer. "We want to hear from them, share their stories and say, again, this is a safe place for you to be."

A major focus at the conference is the need for more testing, Todd noted. While there are statistics on who is living with the virus, a significant part of the population is infected and doesn't know it, she said.

For those who have been tested globally, about 50 to 60 percent are getting treatment, she said, "but there's still a huge chunk of people who aren't."

Stigma and complacency still present barriers to overcoming AIDS, as pointed out this summer during

the International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam and at a pre-conference faith-based gathering.

"Medical advances have been significant in the battle against HIV and AIDS, but progress dealing with stigma is still very limited," declared the Rev. Donald Messer, executive director of the Center for Health and Hope, Centennial, Colorado.

"People are still afraid and ill-informed around the world," said Messer, who has been involved with the Global AIDS Committee since its beginning.

In the U.S., he believes, the stigma has gone underground. "It keeps people from getting tested, treated and also from revealing their status to others," he said.

While there was a period of time when certain churches were very vocal about the poor treatment of those with HIV/AIDS, an attitude of sin around the disease still prevails.

"There's unnecessary fear and misinformation and a lack of real information of telling how people can avoid HIV," Messer said. "Silence doesn't help anybody."

It is significant that the conference is being held in a state where the late Ryan White — a teenager who contracted AIDS through medication for his hemophilia — fought against stigma after being expelled from his school. Messer noted that White and his mother were United Methodists but were mistreated by the church because of that stigma.

More recently, said Trimble, Scott County in Indiana is "the intersection of the opioid crisis and HIV/AIDS meets" with a spike in infections of IV drug users.

Just "being willing to talk" and become better educated can help reduce stigma. Sponsoring organized programs is another step in the right direction. "We're hoping to promote some of what I call these 'can do' things," the bishop said.

For example, the West Ohio Conference has annual HIV/AIDS healing weekends to offer rest, respite, acceptance, affirmation and love. About 100 attend, most of them HIV positive but not connected with the church, Todd said. "It means a lot to the people who go to that retreat."

One of the workshops at the Breaking Barriers conference, repeated twice, will focus on how to organize retreats and healing weekends.

Trimble pointed to the need to get beyond the "quiet assumption" that, overall, HIV/AIDS is not really a problem.

"The church has never elevated HIV/AIDS as a sustained priority that allows us to embrace social holiness at the intersection of education and advocacy with compassion," the bishop said.

"This must change and I, for one, am committed to repenting for our quiet neglect as we accept the challenge to reduce infections, deaths and remove stigma."

**Bloom is the assistant news editor for United Methodist News Service and is based in New York.*

OUTDOOR AND RETREAT MINISTRIES

FALL CONFIRMATION RETREATS

- Wesley Woods – Nov. 2-3
- Reynoldswood – Nov. 16-17

NIC CONFIRMATION RETREATS OFFER

INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITIES TO:

- grow relationally and spiritually,
- experience Jesus in a new and reviving way with nature,
- validate first-hand that they are not the only Illinois youth who worship God.

The dynamic of open space and natural environment encourages listening, learning, and interaction with one another and the Holy Spirit. For many confirmation students, this retreat is their first opportunity to experience community outside their immediate family and home congregation. Confirmation students explore the Bible, the Methodist faith and the foundations of intentional Christian community. Participants will be challenged to answer the question of how they experience God's Grace, Comfort and Will in their daily lives.

Cost: \$75/person - includes Friday night Snack and lodging, Saturday breakfast and lunch and all supplies for activities.

REGISTRATION FORM

Please access the Group Registration form via www.niccamp.org/retreats

REPEATING ANNUAL SCHEDULE

Please note that—based on your feedback these past three years—we have adopted a repeating, annual schedule starting this fall to facilitate local church planning and scheduling:

Always 7 p.m. Fri. to 3 p.m. Sat.

FALL:

- Wesley Woods, 1st Fri. of Nov.
- Reynoldswood, 3rd Fri. of Nov.

SPRING:

- Wesley Woods, 1st Fri. of May
- Reynoldswood, 3rd Fri. of May

We hope the four separate opportunities make it easier for you to juggle church, family and extracurricular calendars to gather your Confirmands for an exciting weekend of spiritual growth, fellowship and fun.

DYK???

Did You Know? "NIC Offers a Foundation for Building Safe Sanctuaries"



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

As fall settles in, Sunday School and youth ministries ramp up. At the same time, news stories of child abuse in the church remind us that we all need to provide safe space for our children, youth and vulnerable adults. This fall is a good time to refresh Safe Sanctuaries policies and practices in every local church.

The term Safe Sanctuaries became familiar to United Methodists in the early 2000s with the publication of a guidebook from Discipleship Ministries by Joy Thornburg Melton. Ten years earlier United Methodists were already working on the prevention of child abuse in the church through a variety of resources and educational events.

We have long acknowledged that there is no "magic bubble" of protection for our children and youth when attending church functions. It is our responsibility to screen and train our staff and volunteers, doing everything we can to ensure the churches care for those who trust and need our protection.

I know that our churches are thinking seriously about these issues. In the past month, we have received numerous calls and emails asking for assistance in updating Safe Sanctuaries policies. This is a great start! Policies that sit at the back of the file drawer are not very effective. Policies that were written 10 years ago probably need some refreshing. Policies that are not shared annually with staff and volunteers fade away over time.

If your church does not have a Safe Sanctuaries Policy or if it is time to update the one you have, there are resource links on our conference website at: www.umcnic.org/safesanctuaries to assist you in this work. One of those links will take you to resources at United Methodist Discipleship Ministries. There you will find tools for designing a Safe Sanctuaries policy as well as sample policies for large and small congregations.

Following the initial work in the 2000s when churches began to write Safe Sanctuary policies and train their volunteers, the conference realized it needed a more consistent, sustainable way of bringing quality training and screening resources to every local church. It was out of this need that we developed a partnership with Safe Gatherings in 2014.

Safe Gatherings is an organization designed to meet the needs of our churches through low cost, high quality, consistent and easily accessible online training and background check processing. This resource began in the Kansas East Conference of the United Methodist Church in 2012 and now serves 4,000 churches and organizations across 40 states and multiple denominations.

We use the Safe Gatherings training and background check process for our Northern Illinois Conference camping staff and volunteer leaders in conference level events. Last year 37 of our churches also turned to Safe Gatherings for their training. Over 125 volunteers were trained, but this does not cover every congregation engaged in ministry with children and youth.

We need to do better. More congregations need to establish or refresh their policies and practices, train their staff and volunteers. We have been offered the precious opportunity of welcoming children and youth into the family of faith. We want our faith community to be a place of security and safety so the stories of Jesus gathering the little children around him are stories of hope and love and safety. You can find more information on Safe Gatherings also on our website at www.umcnic.org/safesanctuaries. I encourage you to assess where you are as a congregation and make plans now to become a Safe Sanctuary community this fall.

September celebration lifts up Hispanic/Latinx ministries



More than a hundred people gathered at Epworth United Methodist Church in Elgin on Sept. 8, 2018, to celebrate the many Hispanic/Latinx ministries in the Northern Illinois Conference. The day included testimonies from five different pastors, one from each district, serving Hispanic congregations, workshops, and worship with communion. Music was led by Dr. Rev. Tercio Junker who put together a team of musicians from different churches and the Liturgical Dance Academy from La Luz de Cristo performed in the closing service.

The NIC Hispanic/Latinx Ministry Team organized this event as an opportunity to celebrate the 24 Hispanic Ministries/Congregations in the conference. "This was an opportunity to get together to worship, to have fellowship and to support each other," said Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer, Chair Hispanic/Latinx Ministry Team. "It's not easy to be a Hispanic/Latinx in this country, but when we get together as one body, we listen to others' testimonies and we realize that we are not alone in this journey."



The Liturgical Dance Academy from La Luz de Cristo perform during the Hispanic/Latinx celebration's closing worship service.

How does it help our local ministries be connected as Hispanic/Latinx in our Conference?

"Being organized and integrated in the Conference helps us to get to know each other, gives us identity, keeps us united and at the same time we receive support, advice, and tools that we need as Hispanic leaders," said Omaira Mora, Pastor at "Ministerio Fe Y Esperanza" at Elgin: Wesley UMC. "It also strengthens and consolidates the participation of Hispanics within the Conference by giving us the opportunity of voice and vote."

"I think that having organized events in which churches come together are a big benefit to the church. Being together, even if only for a day, is a benefit because we are reminded of God's worldwide mission for the church. Sharing our difficulties, I believe is extremely important because not everything is perfect all the time. As the body of Christ, we are called to be in fellowship, be honest, and encourage each other in faith and mission of making disciples and nurturing those already in the faith," said Paula Hernandez who is a 20-year-old member from First UMC in Crystal Lake.

Pastors shared their ministry highlights, struggles, and successes leading Hispanic churches including Nino Espinoza who said celebrated seven years of mission work in the

Blue Island area with 50 people in the church. Jesus Molina of Stone Park Mission in Melrose Park celebrated 16 years of ministry and the attraction of millennials to the church while also helping to encourage several clergy leaders to go out and serve on their own.

Bishop Sally Dyck delivered

the sermon in the closing worship and shared her experiences from her recent trip to the U.S./ Mexico border with the General Board of Church and Society (read more in this month's column.)

The Hispanic/Latinx ministries continue to grow and flourish in the Northern Illinois Conference and have spawned new traditions along with longstanding programs such as the Hispanic Women's retreat which started more than 30 years ago. Follow news and updates from the Hispanic/Latinx team on Facebook at www.facebook.com/HispanicLatino-Ministry-Northern-Illinois-Conference

www.umcom.org/learn/hispanic-heritage-month-outreach-resources

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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.

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