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of The United Methodist Church
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Kevin and Dina Kleckner along with Rev. Cal Haines (back row) take time out of cooking for a photo with the campers in the church's commercial-style kitchen.



Elise Vock learns to grate carrots and make homemade, healthy meals from Kevin Kleckner at the first Kids Culinary Camp at First UMC in Freeport, Ill.

What's cooking in kid's ministry?

By Anne Marie Gerhardt, Dir. of Communications

Kids strapped on aprons and put their chef's hats on for a weeklong camp to learn how to cook inside the kitchen at First United Methodist Church in Freeport this summer. This was the first of its kind Kids Culinary Camp at the church which was all hands-on.

"I've learned how to cut and peel carrots, how to measure, and grating," said 11-year-old camper Elise Vock.

The church was looking for a way to invite the community and children to the church and a local couple who owns a meal prep and catering business was looking for a kitchen. It was a perfect mix.

"I think it's great for our church because we are opening our doors to our community and neighborhood and getting kids inside the church who can see that churches are welcoming and you can do fun things at church," said First UMC's pastor Rev. Cal Haines.

Husband and wife Kevin and Dina Kleckner started making and delivering meals last September for the elderly and others coping with an illness who are unable to make healthy meals for themselves. Dina, who says she's been cooking since the age of four with her grandmothers, says the demand was so high they could no longer keep up their ministry and business, called "What's for Dinner?" in their own kitchen.

That's when she decided to phone area churches for a place to cook and First UMC was the first call she made.

"When I called they were very welcoming," said Dina. "We are grateful to the church and they've taken excellent care of this kitchen. You wouldn't know that it's 20 years old."

When the church asked the Kleckner's if they would consider teaching a children's cooking camp, Kevin and Dina jumped at the opportunity.

"This is like a dream come true," said Dina. "I love teaching kids how to cook and teaching them about nutrition."

The Kleckner's use all local farm to table ingredients and healthy recipes like vegetable chili and grilled chicken and the kids eat it up. The menu board on day three read "welcome sprouts" and listed lettuce wraps, broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, corn, chicken and Korean beef.

"Eating it is the best part!" said 9-year-old camper Cooper Kopp. "It's just really fun because we are making stuff and trying new stuff"

The children bring samples home each day and on the last day of camp they take home a whole meal for their families.

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Bishop's Column: A transforming worldview



“Transformational” is a buzzword these days. Like “awesome,” it is often applied to all kinds of things, and frankly often to minor things—like electronic products that we buy. But the meaning of the word is big, if you will.

“Transformational” conveys an experience that is truly life-changing. But how many life-changing experiences can you have in a day, month, year or even a lifetime?

I’ve had a couple. One of them was the result of a fellowship I received to be a student at Bossey Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in partnership with the University of Geneva just outside of Geneva, Switzerland during the winter of 1978-1979. Ken and I both attended Bossey following graduation from Boston University School of Theology. We lived for almost 5 months with people from 40 countries and studied “The Holy Spirit and the Ministry of the Church.” As a group, we ate together, talked about life, ministry and the church, and went to places like Taizé and finally to the Vatican (where we met Pope John Paul). Oh, yes, we studied together, too!

But the study wasn’t the transformational part of being at Bossey. The transformational part was learning to know and love and better understand people from all over the world and what it’s like to live there and be a Christian there. We’ve maintained relationships with some of them, recently visiting a couple in Europe, and running into others through various occasions (Facebook has helped maintain those relationships).

The transformational part was that we experienced an immense broadening of the horizons of our world. We requested a certain kind of ministry in East Ohio when we returned in spring 1979. And as a result of that choice, too, our lives have been forever changed! Our experience with the WCC was fresh, vibrant and deeply meaningful to us as it informed our urban ministry in Cleveland.

Shortly after we returned from this transformational experience, the World Council of Churches came under attack in the United States due to a *Reader’s Digest* “expose” about its Programme to Combat Racism. The Programme to Combat Racism was aimed at the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa. But fears, conspiracy theories, and prejudice caused many Christians in the U.S. to

withdraw all support and interest in the World Council of Churches. This controversial programme is actually credited with focusing Christians from around the world on the injustice of racism and apartheid in South Africa and in bringing about its demise. But even mentioning any association with the WCC following the early 1980s *Reader’s Digest* “expose” would get me in trouble (and may still do so) because of people’s strong feelings against it. (Frankly, maybe we need another Programme to Combat Racism today!)

I’ve been on the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches since 2006. The WCC is truly global and ecumenical, including the various Orthodox communions from around the world. While the Catholics aren’t in the fellowship of churches, there is a representative and in June 2018 Pope Francis himself came and spent the day with us at the end of our meeting. Today the WCC includes denominations and church fellowships in more than 110 countries throughout the world, representing over 500 million Christians. It is by far the largest ecumenical organization in the world.

It’s the WCC’s 70th anniversary, being founded on August 23, 1948, in Amsterdam. There were predecessor groups since the 19th century and into the early 20th trying to bring together Christians from around the world. Leaders from more than 100 churches (denominations/communions) voted in 1937-1938 to form a World Council of Churches but World War II broke out and it was delayed in its implementation. After the war, Christians in Europe, North America, and other places sought to address the needs of refugees, migrants and the poor and the WCC gained momentum. (Maybe we do better in our theological differences when we work together rather than just talk about theology!)

During the Cold War, the WCC helped provide a space for East-West dialogue. In the early 1960s world mission and evangelism were added to its focus. It still addresses matters of justice around the world; its present theme is “a pilgrimage of justice and peace” which focuses on overcoming racism, commitment to children, human rights, and care for creation. The WCC is deeply committed to unity, interfaith dialogue, gender justice, nonviolence, theological study, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and the Ecumenical Prayer Cycle.

The United Methodist Church is a strong member of

the WCC. We have a number of people who are directly involved in leadership or staff. In addition to me, Cynthia Kent, a layperson and Native American/indigenous person from Greater New Jersey, is a member of the Central Committee. Retired Bishop Mary Ann Swenson is a vice moderator of the Central Committee. United Methodist Women’s General Secretary Harriet Olson is working on a gender justice task force. And the Rev. Jin Yang Kim and Rev. Kyeong-Ah Woo, who are clergy members of the NIC, are General Board of Global Ministries missionaries to the WCC. (When I was in Geneva in June, I was able to spend some time with them and their son, Micah.)

I find the WCC to be a unique lens through which to view the world, the Church universal, and my own faith. I read the gospel and the world news differently because of my awareness of a God and a faith that is big! Globally big, historically big, liturgically big, and even relationally big.



Pope Francis participates in an ecumenical prayer service in Geneva, Switzerland at the World Council of Churches 70th anniversary commemoration on June 21, 2018. Pope Francis told the WCC he had come “as a pilgrim in quest of unity and peace.” The visit is only the third by a pope, and the first time that such an occasion was dedicated to visiting the WCC. Photo by Albin Hillert/WCC

From the Cover



Ready to dig in to the casserole children made at Chana UMC’s cooking class this summer.

“The feedback from the families is overwhelming,” said Dina. “I feel like the kids are being challenged and the fact that they are taking home what they’re learning is very exciting to me.”

The Kleckner’s know the challenge parents face of providing summer activities that are engaging and educational as well as fun for their kids. They’ve raised 11 children including eight with special needs who Dina fostered as a neonatal intensive care nurse and then adopted.

“I think anytime you can keep them busy doing something positive where they’re learning and having fun, it’s a good thing,” said Kevin. “Being in a church they get to learn about God, food and cooking while having fun. If you make that a combination they’ll have a great time.”

Chana United Methodist church experimented with a cooking class this summer, too. Senior Pastor Rev. Chan Choi says it was part of their F.U.N (Faithful United Neighbors) program which offers family-focused activities every first Thursday of the month.

“Our goal was to give our kids an experience of preparing dinner for their family,” said Choi. “Even though we prepared all the recipes and ingredients, they fully

experienced a joy of cooking and serving with a loving and caring heart.”

Chana church plans to organize another cooking class after receiving positive feedback from parents. “Thank you so much! Dinner was great and the kids were very excited to show us what they made!” said one parent. “The children did a great job and we really enjoyed the casserole! Thanks again for everything. They look forward to the next FUN night!” added another.

The Rev. Melissa Meyers started a weekly cooking and art class at Genoa Faith after it was a hit during Vacation Bible School in 2015. Meyers said many schools are eliminating these classes from their curriculum. By offering these classes at the church, children still have the opportunity to learn these important life-skills she said.

Pastor Haines incorporated a devotion during their Kids Culinary Camp and hopes the children not only took home a good, homemade meal but also a positive message.

“We tied in food and the Bible with stories of Jesus being the bread of life,” said Haines. “We wanted to share lessons of eating healthy and our faith.”

Cooking ministries seem to be the perfect recipe for showing children God’s love and making something good to eat!

The importance of relationships

By Mark Manzi, NIC Co-Lay Leader



The NIC Board of Laity gather at Annual Conference in June.

A Jewish religious expert asked Jesus: “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Be in love with God, but next build loving relationships with your neighbors. We all want good relationships. I would bet that if you can remember what brought you back to the church you now attend after your first visit, one of the most important reasons is “people talked to me.” People were friendly and encouraged me to return the next week. In other words, people started to build a relationship with you.

The Rev. Junius Dotson, General Secretary of Discipleship Ministries, tells us that community engagement and the discipleship begin with relationship. If we are going to reach out to the members of our own church and more importantly to our community, we must remember

that these things will be built on creating strong relationships.

How do we build strong relationships? Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.”

Now immediately, this may seem to be beyond what you can do. We each have different personalities and you might say that I just don’t think that is who I am. Yes, perhaps, but we must begin somewhere.

In this time when it seems as if we have lost respect and confidence in institutions and each other, when we don’t want to hear ideas or opinions different from our own, I would ask that we all remember who we are. We are people

of the “way” - the way of Jesus. So, remember to love and clothe yourselves in compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. To build a relationship, take time to “be” with another person. Listen to him/her. Treat what each of you says with respect. Be patient as you listen and speak. Agree to disagree, but most of all agree to love each other. The Rev. Martin Lee puts it in a simple yet effective statement. “Be a friend, make a friend.”

Strong relationships are key to the success of what we do. In my laity address at Annual Conference, I said that the Board of Laity was working to build strong relationships with leaders in all local churches. The Board of Laity encourages you to reach out to us for help as needed. We encourage you to not only build relationships with each other in your congregation, but with your neighbors including neighboring churches both United Methodist and other denominations. As Jesus reminded his disciples: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Annual Conference Shepherding Team strategizes over summer

By Anne Marie Gerhardt

Members of the Annual Conference Shepherding team met twice over the summer for all-day sessions to continue their work on strategic planning while working toward new goals for the Conference.

The team met on July 14 in the Chicago Southern District at the Compassion Factory Art Gallery in Brookfield. The Rev. Karl Sokol shared the journey of Compassion UMC, a new faith community he started in 2011, from worshipping in more than a dozen locations including coffee shops, forest preserves and restaurants before finding a more permanent home at the art gallery for Sunday worship.

The second meeting was held on August 11 in the Aurora District at New Lenox UMC where the six District Superintendents joined the team for listening and conversation. During these two meetings, ACST Strategic Planning Consultant Helen Chang led the group discussion accessing the conference’s programs, membership growth opportunities, and habits and practices for spiritual vitality.

Director of Connectional Ministries and Assistant to the Bishop Rev. Arlene Christopherson presented an extensive, line-item outline of where program dollars are allocated as the team delved into conference funding. Conference Treasurer Lonnie Chafin shared budget information on apportionment giving, unpaid invoices and local church support. Director of Congregational Development and Redevelopment Rev. Martin Lee shared population trends and data in northern Illinois and the potential for growing membership and reaching new people in new places.

“Under the guidance of Helen Chang, we began to brainstorm about developing criteria for future allocation of Conference resources that will make our ministries healthier and stronger,” said Liz Gracie, ACST Lay Co-Chair. “While we are far from completing this work, we have a much better understanding of the task before us.”

Bishop Sally Dyck said the ACST’s “deep dive” look into our culture as an annual conference and our finances has been enlightening. “Hopefully our work together will help us create meaningful goals and strategies as an annual conference,” said Dyck. “This is adaptive work in that there’s no apparent solution or path, but it has created many deep and honest conversations that have needed to happen for years.”

Gracie said she’s grateful to the members of the ACST who have hung in while they’ve been feeling a way forward. “I think we are gaining clarity about what we are doing and we are gelling as a group,” said Gracie.

Gracie added that as she grows to understand our Annual Conference and the more she gets to know clergy, laity and staff, the more hopeful she becomes about the future of our church. “Our challenge is to steward our abundant resources to foster an environment in which individuals



ACST’s Strategic Planning Consultant Helen Chang leads the group at the Compassion Art Gallery in conversations to develop and define initiatives and goals for the Conference at one of two meetings held this summer.

and churches will grow spiritually, grow in relevance to their particular communities and, God willing, grow in numbers and further enhance our ability to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world,” said Gracie.

The next steps include refining goals, establishing preliminary priorities, and by the end of the year developing a draft of an initial strategic plan. The ACST will meet again on Oct. 13 at Hampshire: First UMC and the District Superintendents will again be present. The team is comprised of 22 members. The Rev. Jerrod Severing of Lanark UMC joined the team as the Rockford District Shepherding Team representative.

Visit www.umcnic.org/shepherding-team for more information on the ACST.

Certified Lay Minister named under new process

By Peggy Hansen, Director NIC Lay Servant Ministries



Brian Fu becomes a Certified Lay Minister under new process.

The 2016 Book of Discipline transferred the certification of Certified Lay Ministers from the District Committee on Ordained Ministry to the Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries. The Northern Illinois Conference Committee is honored to announce the first Certified Lay Minister, lay person Brian Fu, to complete the revised process.

Brian heard a call to serve while still in high school and has been pursuing certification much on his own as the Conference Committee continues its work of creating a workable and sustainable process of discernment, education and networking for laypersons being drawn to laity ministry.

Brian tells of his calling:

“As a young person, discerning my call to Lay Ministry was a challenging time, trying to balance a life in the church and in high school. I spent months after receiving my certification as a lay servant praying and listening for God’s voice among all the noise, ultimately deciding it was God urging me towards the ministry of lay minister.”

Brian is a member of First Methodist of West Dundee. He is currently attending college in Washington D.C. where he attends Foundry Methodist and knows where his ministry is

leading him:

“With my certification, I hope to use it to the benefit of the church in my local setting, the church universal, and above all my neighbors whom I and all are called to love. I hope to be able to become more involved in a number of ways: worship (preaching, assisting with sacraments, etc.), congregational care, and social justice advocacy and ministry, specifically as it regards to immigration and welcoming the stranger and working for the full inclusion of every person in the church regardless of who they are.”

We’re proud of Brian. He grew in the Elgin District and attended Lay Academy classes in the Elgin and Aurora Districts. On his journey to certification, he completed his study online through BeADisciple.com. Brian may be the first Certified Lay Minister (CLM) in the Northern Illinois Conference who has moved through this new process, but we know there are many laypersons hearing the call to serve that will follow a journey similar to Brian’s.

For more information on Lay Servant Ministries visit www.umcnic.org/layservantministries.

Plumblineline returns to New York

By Amania Drane, Plumblineline Coordinator



Sixteen students and five chaperones enjoy sightseeing in New York City during the 2018 Plumblineline Tour including a stop at the United Nations building.

We’re back! After four extremely full days of expanding our hearts and minds toward a better understanding of actively “Confronting Islamophobia,” we rejoice in the wonderful memories of a transforming time together during the Plumblineline Tour to New York City, July 29-Aug. 1. Our time together also included going to a Broadway play (The Band’s Visit), a United Nations tour, 9/11 Memorial & Museum, the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, the Empire State Building, and oh yeah, plenty of eating and walking.

Although our time in New York City has come to an end, life-long friendships have been made. We enjoyed a fun and fruitful time with United Methodist youth from around the Northern Illinois Conference from the city, suburbs, and rural Illinois. These youth were engaging, thoughtful in their responses, and attentive. The churches who supported these youth in going on the 2018 Plumblineline Tour should be proud and thankful to have such amazing youth in their congregations.

Our instructors for the United Methodist Women’s seminar program did an exceptional job of providing quality programming and exceptional opportunities for the students to talk, learn and share their perspectives on confronting Islamophobia, as well as confronting other actions and opinions that harm and marginalize others.

We received many verbal and written responses from students and parents including a request to add a couple more days to the trip. We heard these comments, “loved eating exotic and cultural foods,” and “It was a successful trip and a positive experience for my child. Thanks to those who organized and chaperoned!”

Despite a short hiatus, we are thankful the Conference continues to support Plumblineline for our youth. We look forward to continuing this transformative work and hope that more students are available to participate.



Commission on a Way Forward report translated and released



The commission members say farewell to each other after the final meeting May 2018 in Nashville, Tennessee. Photo Courtesy Maidstone Mulenga

The final report of the Commission on a Way Forward has been released in English, French, Portuguese and Swahili; all four official languages of the General Conference. The report will be presented to the 2019 Special Session of General Conference Feb.23-26 in St. Louis, MO. Subject to final copy editing, the report will be printed in the Advance Daily Christian Advocate (ADCA) in November.

The Commission’s moderators said they’ve refrained from commenting about the plans contained in this report until everyone could read it in their own first language. “With this distribution, we give thanks that this work can now begin, and we can have a conversation that represents our global and catholic nature—more fully who we are as The United Methodist Church,” said Bishops Sandra Steiner Ball and David Yemba, Moderators, Commission on a Way Forward and Bishop Ken Carter, President, Council of Bishops in a statement following the report’s release.

For more information on the Commission on a Way Forward, visit:

Website: umc.org/wayforward

Facebook: www.facebook.com/umcforward

Twitter: [@UMCForward](https://twitter.com/UMCForward)

Instagram: www.instagram.com/umcforward

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)

We are starting a new monthly column called "Ministry Makers" to highlight local church outreach ministries which are making a difference and transforming lives. We hope sharing these success stories will inspire and become learning tools for other churches.

Church's neighborly outreach to school builds relationships and community By Anne Marie Gerhardt



Rev. Rob Hamilton (right) helps rally students inside the gym at Central School in Rochelle, Ill.



Students enjoy face painting, games, bounce houses and more at the 2nd annual block party organized by Rochelle UMC.



When the nearly 300 elementary students go back to the classroom at Rochelle's Central School this fall, their next door neighbor will be by their side.

Through their "Love Thy Neighbor" ministry, Rochelle United Methodist church, which sits across the street from the school, has been reaching out to Central School through a variety of neighborly gestures.

"Our vision team kept praying about how do we take our love outside the walls of the church and how do we bring Jesus into the community," said Mary Ellen Taylor, a lay member at Rochelle UMC. "We started with greeting teachers as they came to the first day of school with coffee and muffins and there it began."

Taylor says as the teachers and church members got to know each other, a trust and relationship began to build. The church started by taking "baby steps" to grow their outreach ministry with the school.

Following what became quarterly coffee breaks, the church placed English and Spanish friendly messages, "love notes", in their large windows facing the school. Soon after, teachers and students responded with their own greetings in their classroom windows facing the church. A connection was made.

The Rev. Rob Hamilton says when he was first appointed to Rochelle UMC he looked at the school across the street and felt that God was calling the church to be there.

"We have this command to love thy neighbor that is central to our Christian faith," said Hamilton. "We believe this ministry fits perfectly with our mission statement to 'connect, grow and serve.' We are connecting with a more diverse community, growing in faith as we learn to love outside our walls, and serving our neighbors."

Hamilton says the K-5th grade school's population lives mostly outside of town, is about 80% Hispanic, and more than 85% of the students qualify for the free or reduced lunch program. He says even though the students and the congregation share different cultural and economic backgrounds, it's an opportunity to learn from one another.

"Being in ministry with the school is a great way for us to learn how to be multi-cultural. That's one of the gifts we receive back," said Hamilton. "We get to learn to be more like our neighborhood, which I think is call for all churches in the 21st century and also one of the biggest challenges."

Thinking what more the church could do for the students, the congregation asked the teachers what supplies they needed for their classrooms, knowing many have to pay for them out of their own pockets. The teachers provided lists and the church responded with \$2,500 worth of supplies and books.

At the end of the school year in May, the church hosted their 2nd annual Block Party. Students enjoyed a bounce house, face painting, a piñata, games and an assembly in the school gym with special entertainment, Matt Wilhelm, BMX Flatland rider and motivational speaker jumping over the principal and Pastor Hamilton. Volunteers also handmade more than 260 colorful pillowcases for each student with notes inside reminding each of them they're beloved children of God.

The school's principal says they wouldn't be able to provide this big of a celebration without the church's help.

"Everything they've done for us the last few years has been awesome," said Justin Adolph, Central School Principal. "It's just been such a model of being a neighbor and serving others to our kids and staff and it's been inspiring all the way through."

The School District Superintendent stopped by the block party and expressed his appreciation, too.

"This church has been great for the students to feel the community support and for being loved and cared for. The relationship with the teachers has also been beneficial in this partnership," said Todd Prusator, Rochelle School District #231 Superintendent. "This whole relationship with the (United) Methodist church has been great and we're extremely grateful for them adopting and taking care of us."

Luisa Nambo, a member of the Parent Teacher Organization, has a daughter at the school going into second grade. She says she has no reservations about a church helping a school and says the block party was a hit.

"As a community we do need to come together because that's how we going to keep our community safer. For the students here it helps them branch out to see what the community offers," said Nambo. "This a great event to bring more focus on good, healthier things in our community and gives these kids who don't necessarily have these opportunities an opportunity to have fun."

What's next for this ministry? "Whatever God has planned we will follow through," said Taylor. "We will see where that wind is blowing and let Him lead us. We couldn't do this on our own and I'm excited to what happens next year. This is a God thing!"

The church has received Keagy, United Methodist Foundation and community grants to help support this ministry. Rochelle UMC is located at 709 4th Ave, Rochelle, IL. For worship times and more information visit their website at www.rochelleumc.com.

To watch a video of the this ministry visit vimeo.com/284409005.



Hispanic Heritage Month is Sept. 15-Oct. 15, and new tools are available to help your church celebrate the contributions of Hispanic-Latino individuals in your community. Use these resources to invite your community to join you for worship and events throughout the month and to celebrate and build awareness of Hispanic-Latino culture and traditions.

For resources visit:

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

More Local Church News

A merger between old and new

By Al Benson

A new Aurora Methodist church was born Sunday, July 1, 2018. Flowing Forth United Methodist Church, a union of east and west Aurora Methodist congregations, held its inaugural combined worship service at Aurora Christian School.

The new church culminates a marriage of Fourth Street United Methodist UMC, a historic East Side church, and Flowing Grace UMC, born in 2007 on Aurora's West Side. After months of planning and discussions, members of both congregations approved the merger and the church's new name in April and May votes, respectively.

The Rev. Derek Rogers, a North Aurora resident, debuted as Flowing Forth pastor. The Sandwich native formerly served as pastor at Wheatland Salem UMC in Oswego.

"We stand on the brink of a new adventure" Rev. Rogers said in his premiere sermon, "Who Are You?"

A newlywed of 23 days, Rev. Rogers likened his first appearance at Flowing Forth to his first date with wife Breann. He said his main goal will be to get acquainted with congregants from both former churches.

Joanne Mendicino, former Flowing Grace member, welcomed Rev. Rogers with varied gifts to launch his ministry. Gifts were a Bible, baptismal water, communion bread and cup, hymnal, the Book of Discipline and a liturgical stole signifying his ordination and shepherd of

the Flowing Forth flock.

The service was followed by a celebratory potluck luncheon. The event concluded with Rev. Rogers and Breann fielding personal questions from visitors in an informal session moderated by Flowing Grace member Dan Kaluaski.

Until a new location is found to serve the former congregations, Flowing Forth will operate a two-campus structure. Rev. Rogers will lead worship services at 9 a.m. at Fourth Street UMC, 551 S. Fourth St. and at 11 a.m. at Aurora Christian School, 2255 Sullivan Rd., former Flowing Grace location. On the first Sunday of each month, a combined worship service will be held at 10 a.m. on a rotating basis at the two campuses.

About Flowing Grace UMC

Flowing Grace UMC was founded in 2007 as an outreach ministry of Batavia UMC, establishing a rental church site at Herget Middle School in Aurora. The church's first service was held March 4, 2007, before moving to Aurora Christian in 2010. The church was chartered in a special service June 1, 2014.

About Fourth Street UMC

Fourth Street UMC, 551 S. Fourth St., Aurora, was founded in 1886 as the South End Mission chapel on



Joanne Mendicino, left, Sunday presents Rev. Derek Rogers a stole symbolizing his appointment as pastor of the new Flowing Forth United Methodist Church in Aurora. Flowing Forth UMC, a merger of former Flowing Grace and Fourth Street United Methodist churches in Aurora, held its inaugural worship service at Aurora Christian School. Photo courtesy: Al Benson

Rosewood Avenue in Aurora to serve families south of North Avenue and east of the Fox River. After relocations for expansion, the church was chartered as Willard Methodist Episcopal Church on Aug. 25, 1891. In 1898, a cornerstone was laid for the church's current location. The church celebrated its centennial in 1991.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER CALENDAR NEWS

Hispanic/Latinx Celebration

September 8, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Cost: \$5 p/person – Max \$30 p/church (everyone is welcome)

Location: Epworth UMC/La Luz de Cristo, 37W040 Highland Ave. Elgin, IL

Let's celebrate the Hispanic/Latino ministries in our NIC with a time of worship, training, fellowship, renewal, and camaraderie. Come with all the members of your church. Everyone is welcome. Childcare provided.

Visit www.umcnic.org/calendar/hispaniclatinx-celebration to register.

2018 TeamWorks: To Equip Leaders

Dates:

1st Session: Sept. 8-9 - Futurecasting

2nd Session: Nov. 3-4 - Spiritual Life of the Leaders

3rd Session: Dec. 8-9 - Connecting With Your Community

4th Session: Jan. 12-13 - Creating a Discipleship System

Location: For locations and times visit

www.umcnic.org/calendar/teamworks-futurecasting.

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

Purpose: To develop healthy, strategic teams in local churches in the NIC.

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

UMM Spiritual Congress

September 14-16

Location: Conference Point Center, Williams Bay, WI

"Teach a Man to Fish"

Spiritual Congress is an opportunity open to all United Methodist Men for fellowship and spiritual renewal. This year's special guests are the Rev. Drew Oakley and David Holcombe of the Southeastern Jurisdiction of United Methodist Men Younger Men's Work Group. For more information and to register visit www.nicum.org.

Early Response Training (ERT)

Sunday, September 16

Time: 12 noon - 8 p.m.

Location: Kingwood United Methodist Church, 401 W. Dundee Rd., Buffalo Grove, IL

Persons completing the course will be certified and vetted to do level one emergency response for natural and human-created disasters. For more information contact Clayton Edwards at cedwards@kingwoodumc.com.

Service of installation for New Aurora District Superintendent

Come welcome Jeffry Bross

Date: Sunday, Sept. 16

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Location: Grace United Methodist Church 300 E. Gartner Road, Naperville, IL

Dessert reception to follow.

Clergy are invited to robe and process, wearing green stoles. If you are processing, please arrive at 1:30 p.m.

Service and installation New Chicago Northwestern District Superintendent.

Come welcome Rev. Brittany Isaac

Date: Sept. 23

Time: 3 p.m.

Location: Evanston: First, 516 Church St, Evanston, IL

Clergy are invited to arrive at 3:30 p.m. to robe and process as a part of the worship service.

Sixty Plus Retreat

October 5-6

Location: Crowne Plaza Hotel, 2875 Milwaukee Ave, Northbrook, IL

Back by popular demand, the NIC Older Adult Ministries Council will lead another SIXTY PLUS Retreat focusing on seniors, 60 years and over. Activities include meditation and study led by clergy and lay folks, worship, physical and mental exercises, and recreation. Summing it all up, the participants will experience spiritual journey and growth.

For registration, fees, scholarships, and schedules visit www.umcnic.org/calendar/sixty-plus-retreat.

Paul Nixon Speaker Series

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

photo: Paulnixon.jpg

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

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.

UMW Annual Meeting

October 17, 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

For the Love of the Child

Date: Oct. 27

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Location: 215 N Court St, Rockford, IL

Cost: \$15 lunch included

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

For more information and registration visit umwnic.org.



NIJFON announces new executive director

Claudia Marchan

The Northern Illinois Justice For Our Neighbors (NIJFON) is pleased to announce Claudia Marchan as the organization's first executive director.

NIJFON, now in its eighth year, continues to grow in its mission to welcome immigrants into our communities by providing free, high-quality immigration legal services, education, and advocacy. Amid challenging circumstances around immigration policies, the NIJFON board decided it was time to hire a full-time executive director who will be able to implement, along with their other dedicated and capable staff, the vision which they see for the agency's future. The search began in April and Claudia emerged as the leading candidate.

Claudia began to live out her commitment to serving some of Chicago's lower-income neighborhoods working on quality of life plans and comprehensive community development as a community organizer. While she continued in this community work, she strengthened her skills with degrees in business and administration.

In this work, she also discovered that her story was like many others and felt empowered to work closely with her

community on issues of immigration and education. Her passion to work on immigration issues has always been fueled by her own family's journey. Claudia immigrated to the U.S. from Mexico at the age of five. She grew up in Chicago with her mom who came to the U.S. for a better job and her dad, a lawful permanent legal resident originally from Mexico.

Most recently as Claudia was about to take the next step to live out her passion and come on board with NIJFON, she was presented with a personal family situation which made her realize this is the work that she needs to be doing.

"I will never forget July 25, 2018, two life-changing events took place: I was extremely excited to accept the position of Executive Director at NIJFON and later that day I received a call from my dad's attorney who informed me that he had been taken from immigration court into detention for removal proceedings," said Claudia. "I was devastated and could only think that this was a sign of what I need to dedicate my energy to."

Claudia says she was fortunate to have a network and resources to help her dad, who was cleared and his case terminated. He can now become a U.S. citizen. Working with NIJFON, Claudia says she can help other immigrant families who may not have the resources or knowledge of

how to navigate the complicated immigration system.

"Nothing in life happens by coincidence, we are on a forever journey to find ourselves and make ourselves better through others. I believe that joining JFON will not only allow me to become a better person through joining others to fulfill JFON's mission but that we will all become better together and address the many injustices in our immigration system."

The NIJFON board of directors says Claudia brings to NIJFON a strong foundation in fiscal management and deep roots in community organizing and leadership development. "We are confident that she will effectively communicate and work with the diverse group of people, organizations, churches and foundations that are partners in the mission and ministry of NIJFON," said NIJFON Board Chairperson Judith Siaba. "We look forward to Claudia coming on board with our dedicated staff which consists of two lawyers - including our awesome lead lawyer Jenny Ansay - a paralegal and an appointment scheduler."

Claudia is a mother of two young children and hopes to instill in them a love and passion for education and helping others. To contact Claudia visit nijfon.org.



NIJFON Champions for Justice Event

We invite you to join us on October 14, 2018 between 4 - 6:30 p.m. at the Two Brothers Roundhouse in Aurora for the Northern Illinois Justice For Our Neighbors (NIJFON) Champions for Justice event. This is NIJFON's 7th annual fundraiser. Your presence will support the work of JFON as it continues to protect immigrants by providing free, high-quality legal services and invites allies to learn about complex immigration issues and advocate for justice.

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

This year we will have the honor of recognizing Bishop Sally Dyck with the 2018 Champion of Justice Award. Since its founding, Bishop Dyck has been an ardent and generous supporter of NIJFON. She and her husband, Ken Ehrman, have generously provided financial resources to support JFON. In addition, her advocacy has also encouraged many Northern Illinois UM churches and individuals to support JFON. We encourage you to be present to help us thank Bishop Dyck for

her support and advocacy on behalf of JFON.

We will have a special treat at this year's event. A highly acclaimed storyteller, Nestor "the Boss" Gomez, will be present to entertain and enlighten us with stories. Nestor Gomez was born in Guatemala and came undocumented to the U.S. in the mid-1980s. Many are familiar with the Moth radio storytelling programs. Gomez told his first story at a Moth slam as a way to get over the stuttering that plagued his childhood. He won the slam that night and has now won over 30 Moth Slams and three Moth Grand Slams. His stories have been featured on several national radio shows. Gomez hosts and produces his own show, 80 Minutes Around the World Immigration Stories, which highlights the stories of immigrants and allies.

To get a flavor for what we will experience on October 14, please visit Nestor's website at www.nestorgomezstoryteller.com. Much of his storytelling relates to his own experiences as an immigrant to this country.

In addition to the presentation of the "Champion of Justice"

award to Bishop Sally Dyck and storytelling by Nestor Gomez there are other highlights of the evening:

- Great food. Appetizers, pasta, dessert!
- Current information about the work of JFON in Northern Illinois.
- Wonderful craft beer from Two Brothers Brewery sold at a cash bar.
- Introduction of Claudia Marchan, the newly hired first Executive Director of NIJFON.
- Silent and live auctions of items "too good to be true."
- This event is Metra friendly. The Two Brothers Brewery Roundhouse is adjacent to the Aurora Metra Station with convenient access to and from Chicago.

Sponsorship opportunities are available for this event.

Contact Michael Mann at standrewcspastor@gmail.com for details.

Visit www.umcnic.org/calendar/nijfon-fundraiser for more information and to purchase tickets online.

National Creation Care Summit sparks learning, conversation, action By Christa Meland*



More than 100 United Methodists from 17 states and the Philippines gathered in Minnesota July 26-29 to discuss environmental stewardship and explore specific ways in which they are called to care for the planet.

The Creation Care Summit is an annual event for clergy and laity, and it moves to a different city each year. The 2018 gathering took place at Hamline University in St. Paul, MN. Attendees listened to a panel discussion on what they're called to offer the world at this moment, heard from Dakotas-Minnesota Area Bishop Bruce R. Ough and Jim Bear Jacobs of the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican Nation, and engaged in action planning around topics they are passionate about.

"I hope attendees left energized, hopeful, and with a direction for action," said Rev. Susan Mullin, a deacon who serves Faith UMC in St. Anthony, Minnesota and one of the organizers of the summit. "My dream is that we come to realize as a church that our theology includes caring for the earth and the people of the earth. We've come to understand environmental justice as issues that are peripheral to who we are as Christians—but they are at the heart of who we are. I think when we really know that and claim it, we'll see a change."

In a thought-provoking sermon during worship, Bishop Ough talked about how we are co-creators with God, who has given us stewardship authority and power. "As you give leadership to a creation care movement,

(continued on page 8, see Care)



DYK???

Did You Know? "Program Ministry Grants have launched"

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

For years the Northern Illinois Conference has had a tradition of encouraging local churches to dream beyond their current ministries by offering small grants for new and creative experiments. With the transition to the Annual Conference Shepherding Team in 2017, we have been realigning the Program Ministries of the conference to address today's realities. This fall we are excited to launch a newly organized granting structure to help our congregations experiment with ministries that are risk-taking and adventurous.

The three newly designed grants are: Social Reform, Congregational Redevelopment, and Creative Ministries. A small portion of the program budget has been allocated to these grants and is offered to churches who are dreaming of new ways to engage the community, give witness to the transformation of society, and experiment with new ways of being the church.

To make these opportunities accessible to the local church, a single application process and coordinated deadline has been designed and is available online at the conference website at www.umcnic.org/congregationalgrants. Grants will also be awarded following a uniform time frame.

The Social Reform Grant coordinated by the Conference Board on Church and Society aims to provide financial empowerment to churches in the conference that have a passion and propose a plan for how to address a specific social justice-related issue. These funds can be used for both domestic and international social justice work and must address root causes of injustice while extending God's grace and mercy to all people. Primary consideration will be given to applicants that build partnerships between different ministries.

The Congregational Redevelopment Grant coordinated by the Development and Redevelopment Committee of the Conference aims to encourage congregations to deepen their effectiveness in ministry. Grants will support projects that seek to increase engagement with faith or the church, help the congregation rediscover its unique call to mission in the community, and/or reimagine congregational life for greater fruitfulness in ministry. Projects may focus on specific areas of congregational life or mission, but should ultimately contribute to a larger vision of revitalizing the church's mission and ministry. Grant priority will be given to churches that have done goal-setting and have participated in conference training for redevelopment.

Finally, the Creative Ministries Grant coordinated by Program Ministry members of the Conference Shepherding Team aims to encourage creative, collaborative ministry programs throughout the NIC. Grants will support new, risk-taking initiatives that seek to impact your community and fulfill the mission of the church for the transformation of the world. This grant may be used for projects whose success is not necessarily guaranteed so that you are free to explore new ways for your community to learn and be transformed in mission and ministry.

More information about these grants and the grant application can be found on the conference website at www.umcnic.org/congregationalgrants. The first round of applications is due by October 15, 2018 and will be awarded in November. Churches are encouraged to choose one of the three areas to apply in. Remember, several additional grant options are offered to Northern Illinois Conference churches through the NIC United Methodist Foundation, Keagy Town and Rural Ministries, and the Conference Committee on Accessibility. For a snapshot of all these grants click on the FAQ that is provided on the conference website.

We are excited about the work of partnering with the local church in this project. If you have questions about these opportunities please be sure to contact me at achristo@umcnic.org.

Care *(continued from page 7)*

I urge you to wrestle with the central question of the creation story: 'What will you do with your blessing of power?'" said Ough.

Attendee Debi VanDenBoom, a student at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill., and a member of the Wisconsin Conference, said creation care is near and dear to her heart, but she's never preached on it before. She appreciated the opportunity to hear from the presenters and see them demonstrate what it might look like to do just that, and she's committed to addressing creation care from the pulpit going forward.

"I will definitely engage my preaching differently," she said. "Since I hadn't had anyone model it, wasn't something I put at the forefront as far as importance...but if we continue to harm Mother Earth and our resources, that harms all of us. I can't change people. But I can present in a prophetic voice the harm that is being done that we tolerate. People can make a difference if they choose."

Attendees were invited to participate in a variety of topical workshops and field trips throughout the four days of the summit. Field trips took them to one of the largest urban farms in the country and to

see and learn about the history of a granite boulder located on the grounds of Newport UMC that's considered a sacred object to the Dakota.

"I hope attendees left with a sense that each one of us has our unique role to play and that we're not alone, and that they will go home with energy and clarity around their work, knowing that they have partners coming alongside them," said Cathy Velasquez Eberhart, a member of Prospect Park UMC in Minneapolis, Minn., and one of the organizers of the summit.

Eberhart stresses that everyone is needed to address the environmental concerns facing our world, and The United Methodist Church has an opportunity and an obligation to be part of that change.

"We really need people in every annual conference and in as many local churches as possible bringing their skills to this work, whether they're teachers or farmers or curriculum writers or worship leaders. My dream would be to get to a point where we're helping society make a shift," she said.

**Christa Meland is director of communications for the Minnesota Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church.*



Confirmation Retreats

Date: October 5-6: Wesley Woods Retreat Center, Williams Bay, WI

Date: November 16-17: Camp Reynoldswood, Dixon, IL

Through Bible studies, group activities, team building and worship, we explore who we are as individuals, as a community of faith, and as Christians in an ever-changing world. We work with local pastors to ensure that the weekend experience complements and enhances your church curriculum. For more information visit www.niccamp.org and click on Retreats.

Appointments and Retirements: July/August Announcements

Bishop Sally Dyck announces the following clergy appointments for the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church, effective July 1, 2018 (unless otherwise noted)

Lisl Heymans Paul (Elder) to Extension Ministry at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary as Associate Director of Field Education from Family Leave. Beginning July 1, 2018.

Michele Watkins Branch (Provisional Elder) to University of San Diego as Assistant Professor of Theology and Religious Studies from Iliff Theological Seminary, effective September 1, 2018.

Audrea Nanabray (Elder) to Homewood: St. Andrew (Chicago Southern District) ½ time while remaining at Chicago: Faith (Chicago southern District ½ time). Audrea follows Timothy Biel Jr. who is appointed to Skokie: Central.

George David (Retired) to Cary (Elgin District) 1/4 time as retired associate pastor. George follows Daniel Lee who is appointed to Rockford: Christ as an associate pastor.

Woo Min Lee (346.1) from the Greater New Jersey Conference to Hyde Park Korean and Campus Ministry (Chicago Southern District) ½ time. Woo Min follows Mosung Eam who is appointed to Highland Park: Galilee.

Beverly Duke (DSS) to Chicago: East Side (Chicago Southern District) ½ time. Beverly follows James Galuhn who died while serving East Side.

Doug Williams (Elder) to Medical Leave from Barrington: Salem (Elgin District).

Laura Barkley (Elder) to Barrington: Salem (Elgin District) from Leave of Absence. Laura follows Doug Williams who has moved to Medical Leave. Effective 8/1.

Soon Sun Lee (Elder) to Wauconda Federated (Elgin District) from Durand. Effective 8/1.

Elizabeth Bowes (Deacon) to Everytown for Gun Safety Action Fund as Organizing Manager from Leave of Absence. Effective July 2.

Regina Davis-Bridges (Deacon) from Seasons Hospice to Transitional Leave. Effective July 18.

Ryan Kiblinger (346.1) to Grayslake: United Protestant (Elgin District) from the Central Texas Conference. Ryan follows Joan Patten-Seaton who has been serving as interim. Effective July 15.

Lauren Rheingans (Provisional Deacon) to the Wesley Foundation at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities Campus as Campus Minister.

Dong Keun Lee (¶ 346.1) to Orland Park Korean (part-time) (Aurora District). DK follows Kun Sang Choi who served as Interim. Effective August 15.

Howie Snyder (¶ 346.2) to Rockton (Rockford District). Howie follows Megan Smick appointed to Oregon (DeKalb District). Effective September 1.

Nicole Snyder (¶ 346.2) to Durand (Rockford District). Nicole follows Soon Sun Lee appointed to Wauconda Federated (Elgin District). Effective September 1.

To find the complete listing and 2018 appointment book visit: www.umcnic.org/2018appointments.

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