



From Your Bishop: Connected in Christ at Annual Conference

“Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.”

Acts 2:38-39 (Peter on the Day of Pentecost)

During his Episcopal Address at the 2022 Northern Illinois Annual Conference, Bishop John L. Hopkins holds up a copy of the Discipline from 1832, a much thinner, smaller book compared to 21st century versions. “At the beginning it talks about the Methodist movement,” said Hopkins. “This book is not the law of the church but about how we come together as a covenant relationship.”

Just three days after Pentecost Sunday, the Northern Illinois Conference gathered June 8-10 at the Convention Center in Schaumburg, Ill. Members from our churches came to share the gift of the Holy Spirit and celebrate the goodness of God in the first in-person conference in three years. That is 36 months, 156 weeks, or 1,095 days that we had not gathered to be connected in Christ!

Over that period, we ordained clergy, appointed pastors, set budgets, and continued the day-to-day work and worship of the church, much of it virtually because of the pandemic. Two of our district superintendents, Fabiola Grandon-Mayer and Brian Gilbert, and pastors appointed in 2019 or later have served up to three years without the connection of worship, singing, and sharing of an annual conference. Seeing clergy and lay members singing together restored my soul, reminded me of my purpose, and connected me to Christ and colleagues for the year ahead. For those of you who were able to attend, I hope it did the same for you.

The annual conference is the basic unit of our church since we are a holiness, missionary movement that became an organized church. From the organizing conference on Christmas Eve in 1784, all clergy are members of the conference and most of our local churches and service ministries, with a few exceptions, were started by the annual conference. We are not an association of churches but a covenant community dedicated to serving Christ and his Church with accountability for our local ministries through the annual conference. The strength of our annual conference—our missionary movement in Northern Illinois—is dependent upon the strength of our local ministries.

Several years ago, I quipped, “the decline of Christianity in America is directly related to the development of fluorescent lights and the conference room table.” That is, the more we try to organize, calendarize, strategize and politicize the work of the church, the more we are like the people of Babel who tried to “build a tower with its top in the heaven and make a name for themselves.” (Genesis 11:4)

The church grows by relationships and conversations that matter. At some point, conversations that matter turn to spiritual conversations that move beyond our needs and

wants to our yearning for new life, love, peace, and hope. Our annual conference session was a place for conversations that mattered, and we are more unified in our mission because we remembered our connections to Christ and one another. I think the Church may grow more by worship—praying, singing, and preaching—than by our efforts to reform it.

When people ask me, “How are you doing?” I frequently respond, “I am living the dream!” More accurately, I should say, “I am living the dream God has for me.” I cannot do that without a larger community of Christian believers to help me.

When people ask me, “What do you do?” I often respond, “I am changing Western Civilization one conversation at a time!” I think every conversation we have, every prayer we offer, and every song we sing together should connect us to Christ and one another. Thank you, Northern Illinois, for helping me be connected in Christ and to live the dream!

~Bishop John L. Hopkins

To watch and read Bishop Hopkins’ Episcopal Address from Annual Conference, visit umcnic.org/bishop.

United Voices for Children



United Voices for Children seeking award nominees

It’s time to nominate individuals or groups who exemplify service and advocacy efforts on behalf of children, youth and/or families throughout the Northern Illinois Conference. United Voices for Children is excited to receive your nominations by July 31.

Each year, UVC gives these special awards to honor extraordinary volunteer service or advocacy efforts on behalf of children, youth and/or families throughout the Northern Illinois Conference.

Any United Methodist member or congregation in Northern Illinois can nominate individuals both laity and clergy to receive one of these awards. Receiving such

an award is an affirmation of service and advocacy that impacts children.

To learn more about the three distinguished awards – Bishop Jesse. R. DeWitt, Katherine B. Greene, and Rev. Margaret Ann Williams – please go to unitedvoicesforchildren.org/programs/awards for descriptions, nomination forms and event information.

Save the Date

These awards will be given virtually during the Raising Our Voices Through Resources: A Bridge for the Gap event on Tuesday, Sept. 13, 11:00 a.m. - 12 noon.

During this event, resources focusing on mental well-being, anti-racism, equity and accessibility will be highlighted for both clergy and laity to equip ministries, services and programs. A full resource list will be made available.

2022 UVC Child Advocate Award Nominees will be honored and speak on behalf of their ministries. Part 2 will be hosted in 2023.

For more information and award nomination forms, email unitedvoicesforchildren@gmail.com or go to the website unitedvoicesforchildren.org



2nd Annual DIY Rally Against Racism



Members at Friendship UMC in Bolingbrook hold a rally against racism in the summer of 2021 for the inaugural Northern Illinois Conference DIY Rally Against Racism campaign.

Last summer, the NIC Annual Conference Shepherding Team (ACST) and the Anti-racism Task Force (ARTF) joined together to spearhead a way for churches to visibly show their commitment to the goal “to live out the conviction that racism is incompatible with Christian teaching.”

Several churches across the conference participated by holding rallies in a variety of different ways. Churches were encouraged to be creative and hold Do-it-Yourself or DIY rallies.

Rallies ranged from church members standing outside on the front sidewalk holding signs to speakers sharing resources in the town square.

Our Saviour’s UMC in Schaumburg hosted an anti-racism event along with a youth group parking lot fundraiser Labor Day 2021 during the village’s Septemberfest and plan to do so again.

“We placed ‘United Methodists Stand Against Racism’ signs around the parking lot and within the church’s open house-hospitality center with the goal of raising awareness,” said church member Tim Alexander. “We also directed folks who had questions to our website for resource lists, video links and book suggestions.”

Join with churches across the Northern Illinois Conference this summer through September to Rally Against Racism.

To watch a video from last summer’s event, learn more about ways to hold your DIY Rally and to register, visit umcnic.org/rallyagainstracism.

If you would like to join the Anti-Racism champion team or host a Becoming the Beloved Community workshop, email AntiracismTF@umcnic.org.



Church gives away crosses to show support for Ukraine

By Anne Marie Gerhardt, NIC Dir. of Communications



Members at East Jordan UMC in Sterling, IL plant small wooden cross in the church's front yard for anyone to take and show their support and prayers for Ukraine.



Volunteers help put together and paint each cross inside church member Kevin Deets' woodworking shop. They've made more than 600 and plan to continue making more.

The welcome sign outside East Jordan UMC in Sterling, Ill., is stopping people in their tracks and inviting them to turn into the church's parking lot. It reads, "Stop! Take a cross home. Christ is Risen."

Small white wooden crosses dot the church's front lawn and are free for anyone to take and place in their front yard in this rural community.

The Rev. Jim Miller says church members started building the crosses when Russia invaded Ukraine to offer a sign of prayer and hope.

"When the terrible atrocities began in Ukraine, we began a weekly prayer service every Wednesday evening," said Miller. "East Jordan wants to stand in the gap for people. We are planting crosses because the people in Ukraine can't."

An attached plastic bag includes a note about the cross, a prayer for the people of Ukraine, and a brief story about a community effort in Frankenmuth, Mich., where residents rallied in response to an Atheist's complaint about the Christian cross.

"We want to encourage people to pray with us for safety, care, love, and protection from the vicious killers of Ukrainian's freedom and families," said Miller. "We pray that our actions as Christians encourage others to join in."

East Jordan's Administrative Council Board Chair Kevin Deets, a woodworker, cuts the wood for the crosses and church members help assemble and paint them.

"They've evolved a little since we started," Deets told local television station WQAD8. "The first ones were 10 inches tall, but we didn't think it showed up in the yards enough, so we made them 16 inches tall and 10 inches wide. I've made the process pretty streamlined now so that I can cut a lot of them in a short amount of time."

So far, Deets has made more than 650 crosses, and they're trying to keep up with the demand as people are picking them up almost daily, and requests are coming from across the state.

"Which is kind of amazing for where we started from because we didn't know if 100 would go," Deets told WQAD's reporters. "When I drive around, see one in a yard, I'm thinking I have a sense of pride because I help make that... It's also that these people were willing to put this in their front yard and to show what it means to them."

Miller says they will continue making the crosses until people stop taking them.

"It's like feeding the hungry until hunger is gone," said Miller. "We will continue to pray for people in peril, whether it's the people in Ukraine to the victims of the terrible shooting in Uvalde, Texas. The cross Jesus died on is a sign of hope in this world."

East Jordan UMC, which also received a 2022 One Matters Award, is located at 22027 Polo Rd., Sterling. Learn more at eastjordanchurch.org.

Hispanic/Latinx ministries reunite at Annual Conference

Many NIC groups have been unable to meet in person during the pandemic due to COVID-19 restrictions and many missed hosting meals at Annual Conference. Gratefully, the Hispanic/Latinx Ministries, which traditionally offers a dinner during the Annual Conference session, took the opportunity to get back together this year for the first time in a long while. Like other groups, they were eager to get together, talk, laugh, eat and share about their ministries.

After two long years, this dinner was offered again on the last day of the 183rd Northern Illinois Annual Conference, on Friday, June 10, at Our Saviour's United Methodist Church in Schaumburg. Thirty-five people from different churches across the conference attended the dinner.

"Our annual Hispanic/Latinx ministry celebration highlights the numerous and diverse ministries within the Northern Illinois Conference," said Rev. Patricia Bonilla, Chair of the Hispanic/Latinx Ministry team.

The Prairie North District Superintendent, Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer, opened the dinner with a prayer and greeted the audience by saying, "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" using the psalmist's words in Psalm 133.

This year they also celebrated the new class of pastors taking the licensing school in Spanish to become Licensed Local Pastor and will continue their process through Course of Study.

Our Northern Illinois Conference has 20 Hispanic/Latinx churches and New Faith Communities and 35



NIC Hispanic/Latinx ministries hosted a dinner at Our Saviour's UMC in Schaumburg, Ill., after the close of Annual Conference.

pastors and lay missionaries who serve in Spanish-speaking congregations and cross-cultural appointments. It has not been easy to get together in the last years, but the plan is to create new spaces to meet to share experiences and support each other in the coming years.



Back together connecting in Christ

By Anne Marie Gerhardt, NIC Dir. of Communications

After two years of meeting virtually, nearly 700 clergy, lay members and guests came back together in person for the 183rd Northern Illinois Annual Conference held June 8 - 10 at the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center. This year's theme was "Connected in Christ: Come to the Water." It was a time to reconnect and reunite with colleagues and friends while also being reminded of what connects us as United Methodists.

While the AC committee kept health and safety guidelines in check, the energy and excitement of being together again face-to-face could be felt throughout the halls of the Convention Center from registration to people stopping by the information display tables to learn more about the many NIC ministries and organizations.

The Annual Conference began with a standing-room-only Laity Session, which included updates from each district lay leader and worship with communion.

Bishop John L. Hopkins opened the 2022 Annual Conference session with the Memorial Service to honor and remember clergy, spouses and lay members who have passed away since our last gathering. Bishop Hopkins asked all to come to the water and remember your baptism.

"Don't say you don't remember your baptism because you were only an infant or young child at the time," said Bishop Hopkins while displaying a photo of his baptismal certificate on the screen. "Your baptism is bigger than your experience. Like Jesus, I received my Christian identity at my baptism and so did you. We 'Come to the Water' to be washed clean from our sin, to die to self, and be raised to new life in Jesus Christ."

The Rev. Jane Easley delivered a two-part Bible study focusing on the story of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8: 26-40. "What does the story of the Eunuch tell us?" Rev. Easley asked. "Expect surprises, open ourselves up, and never be too sure how and where things will end up. The Holy Spirit encourages us to come to the water."

The Retirement Service opened the second day by celebrating 16 retirees with a combined 364 years of service. Bishop Hopkins then delivered his Episcopal Address, asking if we are ready for a "spiritual awakening."

He said, "Can we let the Holy Spirit of Pentecost weave us together and join with others to spread scriptural holiness across the nation? Are you ready to go? Let's do it!"

NIC Co-Leader Eugene Williams delivered the Laity Address and called on us to re-dedicate ourselves to the work of Christ.

"Sisters and brothers, even without the pandemic, these have been some of the most challenging times we've faced in many years," said Williams. "Uncertainty continues to abound as we deal with talks of splits, restructuring, and cancellations. But our core as United Methodists is we are connectional, and I know without a doubt, we have much more in common that connects us than separates us."

Annual Conference Shepherding Team

Annual Conference Shepherding Team (ACST) Co-Chairs Rev. Myron McCoy and Liz Gracie led table talks encouraging Annual Conference members to get to know each other better. Wearing #BeUMC T-shirts, they posed questions to help each table group reflect on why you are United Methodist. Participants engaged in conversations around: "What experiences in your faith journey bring you joy?" and "Who are you and what brought you to the UMC?"

After serving beyond his four-year term, we celebrated Rev. McCoy's dedication and service as the ACST Co-Chair. As he rotates off, Rev. Hannah Hwa-Young Chong, senior pastor at Community UMC in Naperville, will take his place and co-chair with Liz Gracie.

Legislation

After legislation passed in 2021 calling for legislative sections to provide more opportunities for conversation, they were brought back this year after more than a decade without them. Annual Conference members were randomly selected to participate in one of five sections to consider legislation to put on the consent calendar. The final votes included 17 items of concurrence and one non-concurrence that was around disaffiliation processes.

Day two included a vote on the consent calendar, which passed. One piece of legislation was lifted from the consent calendar - 700.12 to hold elections in 2023 for General Conference delegates. After a substitute amendment to include the phrase: unless Judicial Council requires the 2020 delegation to be seated in 2024, the legislation passed.

Annual Conference members also approved the 2023 budget for mission and ministry totaling \$6,073,45, a decrease of \$82,036 from 2022. The Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CCFA) celebrated NIC churches for abundantly giving despite the challenges of the pandemic and helping the Conference pay 100% General Church

Apportionments in 2021. NIC's expected 2022 payment for General Church apportionments decreased by nearly \$180,000.

The equitable compensation legislation also passed that outlines the minimum salaries for full-time clergy and includes an increase of \$500 for accountable reimbursements to \$5,500. CCFA says this will help with the rising gas prices and cover costs related to travel, continuing education, and other expenses incurred while providing pastoral ministry.

Other approved legislation included a narrative for continuing the United Methodist Church and another that affirms "A Call to Grace," which was approved at the North Central Jurisdiction Special Session in November 2021. It calls on support, space and resources for local churches and individuals since the "continued delay in making decisions about the future of The United Methodist Church hurts our mission and is especially harmful to our central conference and LGBTQIA+ siblings who are caught up in this conflict."

Also, the annual Conference prayed and celebrated the years of ministry of two closed churches, Flowing Forth (Prairie Central District) and Cortland (Prairie South District).

To read the legislation and find the amended Consent Calendar, visit umcnic.org/AC2022docs.



Offerings

This year's Bishop's Appeal offering brought in a record \$275,000 to help alleviate human suffering in Ukraine and for refugee relief through Global Ministries. The total includes \$2,370 from on-site T-shirt sales organized by Rev. Keck Mowry.

"We extend our gratitude to the generous people in the Northern Illinois Conference for their fantastic support to the 2022 Bishop's Appeal," said Conference Global Ministries secretary Rev. Shirley Pulgar-Hughes.

The Ministerial Education Fund (MEF) offering, which supports the ongoing work of the NIC Board of Ordained Ministry for recruitment and education for those who serve in ordained ministry, raised \$2,400.

Commissioning and Ordination

The Annual Conference closed with the Ordination and Commissioning Service welcoming Bishop Jonathan Keaton back to the NIC to preach. He began and closed his message by singing, "Take Me to The Water." He reflected on the hundreds of pilgrims who come to the Jordan River in the Holy Land to be baptized and went deeper into the story of the Ethiopian Eunuch who desired baptism.

"Never forget we can always be taken to the water to remember our baptism," Keaton preached.

The ecumenical guest was Bishop Yehiel Curry of the Chicago Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

During the service, Bishop Hopkins commissioned four candidates toward Elders Orders and ordained seven (six Elders and one Deacon). He recognized one person for the office of Deaconess.

Statistics

Membership stands at 70,554, down from the previous year of 74,030. Worship attendance stands at 14,512, down from 17,412. Online attendance is down to 14,191. Church school attendance stands at 3,103, down from 3,642. The number of professions or reaffirmations of faith for 2021 is at 756, up from 605. The number of adults and young adults in small groups for 2021 was 15,267, coming off a year when most churches couldn't hold small groups in person. The number of worshippers engaged in mission for 2021 was 8,778, down from 10,103.

Save the date for the 2023 Annual Conference scheduled for June 6 - 8 and returns to the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center with the theme "Connected in Christ: Come to the Table."

Look for videos and more photos on the Annual Conference webpage at umcnic.org/AC2022.

Memorial Service Remembrance

We remember our colleagues, friends and loved ones who have passed in the last year.

Retired Clergy

Fred Arthur Berchtold, June 28, 2021
Richard M. Boyer, August 6, 2021
Fred H. Conger, June 11, 2021
Leo M. Constantino, August 10, 2021
Gregg Downs, May 5, 2022
Cylde Galow, November 13, 2021
Judith Marie Geise, September 29, 2021
Edward Leon Heyer, May 31, 2021
Bruce Janes, April 19, 2022
Robert Keller, April 25, 2022
Evaristo Loaiza, February 13, 2022
J. Peter Lovell, June 29, 2021
Thoreau May, July 29, 2021
Andrew Carson Noxon, August 29, 2021
Rogelio Pangilinan, December 27, 2021
Flora M. Robinson, July 20, 2021
Orrell Charles Ruth, March 21, 2022
Henry Vellinga, September 20, 2021

Spouse of Active Clergy

Milton Wayne Wills, January 19, 2022

Child of Active Clergy

Amos Innis Miller, April 24, 2022

Spouses of Retired Clergy

Ben Allen-Stewart, November 13, 2021
Johanna Berman, April 29, 2022
Robert L. Brandner, April 14, 2022
Clara McLaughlin, May 9, 2022
Kay Potenza, May 8, 2022
Leanne Rolfe, October 1, 2021
Marcia L. Ruth, September 13, 2021
Betty L. Waynick, December 9, 2021

Surviving Spouses

June B. Cummings, November 14, 2021
Gwendlyn Kleinschmidt, December 6, 2021
Iris Morales, August 18, 2021
Loretta Stein, June 25, 2021
Mary Eleanor Wall, February 21, 2022

Lay Members of the Conference

Donald Linder, March 12, 2022
Paul Stevens, April 19, 2022
Mike Galati, October 9, 2021
Stephen Somuah Sr., April 11, 2022

Celebrating our Retirees

The Northern Illinois Annual Conference 16-member 2022 retirement class has contributed a combined 364 years of faithful service! We give thanks for the many ways they've lived out their calling and stayed Connected in Christ: inviting people to come to the water in their local churches and ministries. We give you thanks and bless you in your retirement! Read more about each retiree at umcnic.org/2022retirees.

Retiring Class of 2022 (Years of Service)

Robert B. Campbell (27.75)
Larry Edward Dunlap-Berg (43)
Sharon Engert (13.5)
Richard M. Fassig (12.75)
Vickie L. Hadaway (19.5)
Michelle Oberwise Lacock (36)
Teri Jean Lafferty (11.75)
Cheryl Magrini (18)
Catiana P. McKay (23)
Deborah A. Percell (21)
Peter R. Pereira (35.5)
Pamela M. Rossmiller (13)
Bonny S. Roth (9.5)
Michelle Taylor Sanders (21)
Cheri Lynn Stewart (16)
Daniel L. Swinson (43)

Annual Conference Awards



Members of Grace UMC in Blue Island accept the One Matters Award at the 2022 Northern Illinois Annual Conference.

One Matters Discipleship Ministries Award

The One Matters Discipleship Award was created by the Discipleship Ministries (GBOD) in 2015 with the purpose of lifting up churches who have in recent years moved from 0 baptisms and 0 professions of faith into positive numbers as they redirected their focus toward intentional discipleship.

In addition to the One Matters Discipleship plaque, each church receives \$1,000 to encourage the continuation of their work in discipleship. The Northern Illinois Conference is one of the most diverse conferences in The United Methodist Church, so instead of recognizing one congregation, we have the opportunity to offer five awards, with the help of the Office of Connectional Ministries.

Most importantly, as we celebrate these churches and hear their stories, we are invited to ask “What are they doing differently that is helping them to turn things around by God’s grace?” And when we discern an answer to that question, we can ask ourselves, “What can we do to make a difference?” Each person matters to God!

One Matters Presented to:

- Lake North: West Ridge Community United Methodist Church in Chicago
- Lake South: Grace United Methodist Church in Blue Island
- Prairie Central: Our Saviour's United Methodist Church in Schaumburg
- Prairie North: Cedarville United Methodist Church
- Prairie South: East Jordan United Methodist Church

For narratives, visit umcnic.org/onematters.

Questions about One Matters? Please contact Rev. J. Martin Lee, Director of Congregational Development and Redevelopment, at mlee@umcnic.org or 312-346-9766, ext. 708.

2021 Mission Links Awards

The Conference Board of Global Ministries is proud to announce the award winners for Rainbow Covenant giving (2020) and Mission Links giving (2021).

A church's apportionments (both conference and general church) need to be paid at 100% and at least one project in each of the giving areas need to be supported (Special Sundays, Global Advance Projects, Missionary Support, UMCOR/Emergency Relief Projects, U.S.-Based Advances, Northern Illinois Conference Projects, NIC District Projects).

Lists of the Rainbow Covenant and Mission Links churches can be found on the Mission Links website umcnic.org/missionlinks.

The John Wesley Award goes to the church that has the highest mission giving per member:

In 2020, Hanover UMC (Prairie North district) was the highest at 47%.

In 2021, Triumph UMC (Prairie South District) was the highest with 55%.



Raiza Sitchon and Megan Frame came to receive their award in person from James Barry, co-chair of the NIC Older Adult Ministries Council during a luncheon held in a nearby restaurant on the last day of the 2022 Annual Conference.

The Philip Otterbein Award goes to the church that has the highest total giving:

In both 2020 and 2021, the United Methodist Church of Libertyville in the Lake North district received the award (\$22,000 and \$34,000 respectively).

Golden Cross Awards

The NIC Council for Older Adult Ministries recognized Raiza Sitchon of Wesley Willows in Rockford, Megan Frame of Oak Crest Retirement in DeKalb, and Sharon Oidem of Bethany Methodist in Glenview with a monetary award from the Golden Cross Offering.

The award is given to workers in NIC-related senior care centers for exemplary performance.

The centers nominate their deserving workers to the OAM council. The awards were held in a luncheon to welcome representatives of the senior care centers on the last day of the annual conference in Schaumburg, Ill. The Golden Cross Offering is one of the conference-wide offerings and is administered by the OAM Council.

Donations flood mission truck at Annual Conference



Despite a rainy first day, volunteers from Our Redeemer's UMC in Schaumburg help sort and organize donations for the mission challenge truck at the 2022 Northern Illinois Annual Conference.

The NIC Board of Global Ministries thanks the more than 60 churches who helped fill the truck for the Annual Conference mission challenge.

Volunteers collected and sorted nearly 4,500 pounds (and still counting) of most-needed items for the Midwest Mission Distribution Center (MMDC)! An additional \$700 plus in cash was donated.

Special thanks to the youth and adult helpers from Our Redeemer's UMC in Schaumburg who helped take in the donations, even in the rain.

New Needs for Ukraine

Midwest Mission asks for your help in supplying:

- Men's Socks
- Rain Ponchos
- Adult Underwear

You can send all - NEW ONLY - items to 1001 Mission Dr., Pawnee, IL 62558. Donations must be received at Midwest Mission, no later than July 22. Or you can donate by texting UKRAINE to 855.589.1314 or give at midwestmission.org/donate.

Permanent Collection Sites

Midwest Mission strives to ensure that those affected by a disaster receive the supplies they need to recover. Needs change quickly and that is why they are working to set up a network of collection sites around the Midwest so that

when people are ready to help, the supplies needed to assist are close by.

The NIC Global Ministries Committee is working to get a permanent donation site in every district across the conference. So far, New Lenox UMC (Lake South District) and Lanark UMC (Prairie North District) are confirmed sites.

For details on donation drop-off, contact the church:

New Lenox UMC

339 West Haven Ave., New Lenox, IL 60451

Contact: Ray Trent

Cell: 815.277.7053 Email: mmostl1@hotmail.com

Lanark UMC

405 East Locust, Lanark, IL 61046

Contact: Church Office

Office: 815.493.6300 Email: lumc@lanarkumc.com

Near the NIC:

Coal City UMC

6805 East McArdle Rd., Coal City, IL 60416

Contact: Deb & Dave Gowdy

Home: 815.634.2151 Email: dd_gowdy@att.net

MMDC has shipped 23 international shipments so far this year. Four shipments to Ukraine provided more than 432,000 meals, emergency blankets, and baby supplies. For more information, visit midwestmission.org.



Sharing what makes us United Methodist - #BeUMC

At Annual Conference, many of you stopped by the NIC Communications video booth to share what makes you proud to be United Methodist as part of the #BeUMC campaign. This grassroots campaign, built upon powerful stories of congregations and people living their faith, celebrates what draws us to The UMC and what we aspire to be.

We had so many responses that putting them into one video would be too long (you would need to get out some popcorn to watch). Please forgive the background noise, but many people

passed by reflecting the joy of being back together in connection and in community during AC. So, we will be periodically sharing your responses in a series of videos. To watch the first one, visit vimeo.com/720775607.

Thank you for sharing your stories and if you missed the chance to be videotaped, you can share your own recordings on social media and send them to communications@umcnic.org. Be sure to use the hashtag #BeUMC.



◀ Rev. Barbara Morgan of First UMC in Waukegan shares on video why she's proud to be United Methodist.

Leading the Laity

Words of encouragement, insight & inspiration from lay leaders



Mark Manzi, NIC Co-Lay Leader

What do we do?

I still find it hard to believe the news of the horrifying mass shooting in Uvalde, Texas. I am writing this with Uvalde in mind, as well as Chicago, Laguna Woods, Buffalo, and the other more than 200 mass shootings that have occurred in 2022. My heart

aches with the sadness of the loss of young children, teachers, people at the Bean at Millennium Park, in church, grocery shopping and people just gathering to have a good time.

Are these events still in our memory over a month later when you are reading this? Has there been movement by our political leaders? I read an article in the newspaper that asked, “Is the U.S. numb to mass death?” The answer several quoted experts gave was “Yes.” Are we also among those who say “yes?”

I retired from middle school principalship thirteen years ago. I remember the first active shooter drill we conducted. We only did the drill once a year then. Now, students and teachers are doing it more often. Prior to my retirement, I still told parents that school was the safest place for their children. I don’t think I can say that as easily now, and I have heard in news reports that some students don’t think school is a safe place for them.

After these shooting events, we scream out, “Not Again.” We ask, “What can we do?” And, yes, sometimes we even ask, “God, how can you let this happen?” As United Methodists, we know that God did not let this happen! We know that God’s heart aches right along with parents, family, friends, and all of us. Our hearts ache. We know that God is holding all of the people who have had a loved one murdered in God’s hands. We know that Jesus wept, and Jesus continues to weep as he sees this violence happening. But, what do we do?

We are God’s mouth and ears. We must listen to those affected directly and indirectly. We must pray. But what else can we do?

We can strengthen our relationships with our church family for the work God is putting before us. We can be in prayer and be in conversation with church members to learn about the multiple methods that must be put in place to overcome gun violence. We can build our understanding of the causes of gun violence. We can discuss the impact gun violence has on all people. We can use our connection to listen and learn from those who may be more directly affected than we and how we can help. We can initiate conversations with our neighbors and work together to assist those affected by gun violence. We can advocate for gun safety and gun regulation. We can campaign for greater mental health assistance in our communities. We can put our faith into action, working to make peace, mercy, and the love of Jesus Christ radiate from our churches and communities.

The work ahead will not be easy. The work will not be over quickly. But, we are God’s people, and we must not give up.

More Resources

Church and Society of The United Methodist Church has more resources and ways that you can get involved. Visit umcjustice.org for more information.

New era for church and Boy Scouts of America

By Sam Hodges*

BOYSCOUTS OF AMERICA

The United Methodist Church will continue to partner with the Boy Scouts of America but in a new relationship that should lighten the load for local churches. That’s a message that denomination leaders are working to get across after a difficult two years that has included the BSA’s child sex abuse-related bankruptcy proceeding and the pandemic.

“We think that Scouting is important ministry,” said Bishop John Schol, during a June 16 webinar for United Methodists interested in the denomination’s future with Scouting. “We want to do everything we can to grow Scouting through The United Methodist Church.”

But Schol and other United Methodist leaders are just as emphatic that The United Methodist Church’s partnership with the BSA is entering a new era.

Going away is the practice of local churches serving as chartering organizations for Scouting groups. Instead, churches will have the option of entering into an affiliation agreement. Essentially, they will be promising to provide space and lots of support to Scouting groups, but supervisory responsibility will rest with local BSA Councils.

“We looked for a new vision of relationship,” said Steven Scheid, director of Scouting Ministry for United Methodist Men, in a press release. “This one is one that will last for the next several generations.”

The United Methodist Church and predecessor denominations have been a partner to the BSA for more than 100 years. Many local churches have not only been the headquarters for Scouting troops and packs, but also have recruited and screened adult leaders.

At the end of May, about 6,600 Scouting units were chartered by United Methodist churches in the U.S. The denomination remains the largest partner of BSA programs. But as recently as 2020, just over 10,000 such chartering relationships existed between Scouting groups and United Methodist churches.

The pandemic was a factor in the decline, causing some churches to close buildings for more than a year and re-evaluate programming. Scouting groups faced their own COVID-related operational struggles. That was particularly true of Cub Scouts, given that Zoom gatherings with younger kids proved especially hard to pull off, Scheid told UM News.

Another factor was the struggle of the BSA just to survive. In February 2020, a few weeks before the pandemic gripped the U.S., the BSA filed for bankruptcy due to the growing number of lawsuits from men alleging that they had been sexually abused while in Scouting.

As the BSA entered bankruptcy proceedings, seeking to reorganize and carry on, United Methodist leaders formed a committee to represent the denomination’s interests as a longtime BSA partner. Church leaders have stressed that dealing fairly and compassionately with abuse survivors has been and remains their No. 1 concern. But they also worried about liability exposure for local United Methodist churches that chartered Scouting groups where abuse was alleged to have occurred.

United Methodist leaders expressed frustration with the BSA at points during the negotiations. But late last year, as part of the BSA reorganization plan, United Methodist leaders worked it out for U.S. annual conferences of The United Methodist Church to pay \$30 million into a fund for survivors of Scouting-related abuse — with the assurance that local churches would be released from liability.

The settlement also committed the denomination to work in concrete ways toward survivors’ healing, and to review and enhance safety protocols for children and youth spending time on United Methodist church campuses.

The survivors’ fund was at \$2.6 billion even before

the United Methodist settlement, making the BSA bankruptcy plan the largest sex-abuse settlement in U.S. history. A federal bankruptcy judge is still considering whether to approve that plan, which has gathered support from a large majority of survivors and other stakeholders.

“We are anxiously awaiting ... and anticipate a favorable ruling so that the Boy Scouts can continue to reorganize and continue to serve young people,” Schol said during the June 16 webinar, which drew an audience of some 3,500, with 1,500 more registering to watch later. But Schol, part of the United Methodist Ad Hoc Committee that represented the denomination in the bankruptcy negotiations, said there was no need to wait for a ruling to move forward with redefining the denomination’s relationship with the BSA.

Indeed, negotiations on that front have led to the BSA and United Methodist leaders arriving at the affiliation agreement. The key changes include having BSA Councils — not local churches — do leadership background checks.

“The church will not sign off on or approve any adult leadership,” Scheid said.

The BSA Councils will have ownership of assets (such as trailers, camping equipment and canoes), while also being responsible for property insurance and providing an Employer Identification Number (EIN) for banking needs by Scouting groups.

Churches signing an affiliation agreement commit to providing meeting and storage space for their Scouting group. They pledge to help with communications, membership growth and fundraising, while also providing spiritual opportunities and support.

The United Methodist Church’s Book of Discipline, in Paragraph 256, describes the position of local church scouting coordinator. Under the new relationship, that person will be key to making sure the church truly is in ministry to the Scouting unit.

“We’re going to rely very heavily on that local church scouting coordinator,” Scheid said.

There will be a standard affiliation agreement to be used by United Methodist churches in all 50 states. Scheid said a facilities-use agreement also has been arrived at for local churches that only want to provide meeting space.

The affiliation agreement — which also clarifies insurance coverage provided by the BSA — will be shared with churches by June 30. After that, churches can begin right away to work with BSA Councils and Scouting groups in getting the affiliate agreements in place.

Churches can continue their current relationships with Scouting groups until that happens, but the goal is to have all local churches under new agreements by Oct. 31. Scheid said United Methodist Men is positioned to provide long-haul support of Scouting as a denominational ministry.

Among those pulling for a mutually beneficial partnership between The United Methodist Church and the BSA is the Rev. Greg Godwin, a retired elder in the West Virginia Conference.

As a youth, Godwin earned the rank of Eagle Scout, and as a local church pastor, he worked closely with Scouting groups. He’s currently resident chaplain at The Summer Bechtel Reserve, a BSA-related training and adventure center in West Virginia.

Though he hasn’t followed the negotiations in minute detail, Godwin is ever more persuaded that kids need the outdoors life and values offered by Scouting, and that the church remains well-positioned to help.

“I want to support every effort to continue Scouting in The United Methodist Church,” Godwin said.

*Hodges is a Dallas-based writer for United Methodist News.

Calendar Events July - September

July

5th Sunday Appeal - United Voices for Children

Sunday, July 31

This special offering supports United Voices for Children's affiliated agencies—Kids Above All, MYSI and Rosecrance. Congregations participate by inviting their members to give to a special offering on the fifth Sunday of any month (happens four times a year). Through this collaborative giving effort, United Methodist congregations of all sizes can make a real difference in the lives of at-risk children, youth and families. To learn more, visit unitedvoicesforchildren.org.



July & August

From Surviving to Thriving: Platinum Rule Leadership for Changing Times

Wednesdays July 27, Aug. 3 and Aug. 10.

Fun and insightful online workshops that empower you to communicate with greater emotional intelligence! Sponsored by the United Methodist Foundation of the Northern Illinois Conference. Cost: \$99. To register, visit threesimplerules.org/workshops-summer-2022.

August

Summer Mission u:

August 19 - 20

Hybrid event



United Women in Faith

This year's study will focus on Luke 13. In the midst of a devastating pandemic, divisive political climate, unaddressed systemic racism, ecological crises and economic turmoil, we turn to the stories of Jesus that have anchored Christian communities for two millennia.

Our hope is that we will leave Mission u with a bigger and broader vision of the community Christ is calling us to be in times of loss, grief and massive disruption. What would be possible if we tend to the needs of our communities in small yet radical ways, as Jesus did in Luke 13?

Our newly designed Mission u 2022 is more flexible and intergenerational than ever— with curricula for youth, children and adults. For further details, visit umwnic.org.

September

Renewable Energy Summit

Sept. 10, 2022, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Location: Euclid Avenue UMC, 405 S Euclid Ave, Oak Park, IL.

Host: NIC Eco-Sustainability Task Force
Co-Sponsors: Wespeth and Global Ministries

Learn more about sustainable renewable energy sources and ways to reduce your church's carbon footprint. The event will include a report on the United Methodist interagency net-zero emission commitment with Jake Barnett, Director of Sustainable Investment Stewardship at Wespeth and Rev. Jenny Phillips, Senior Technical Advisor for Environmental Sustainability at Global Ministries. Also, participate in solar and geothermal tours, get information from several resource tables, enjoy lunch and fellowship.

Register to attend in person or virtually at umcnic.org/calendar/renewable-energy-summit.

For questions, email Richard Alton at richard.alton@gmail.com or Rev. Nancy Blade at harvestlove2day@gmail.com, Northern Illinois Conference Co-Chairs, Eco-Sustainability Task Force.

Speaker Series: Undenied: No Longer Willing to be Unheard

Thursday, Sept. 22, 12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

In-person and via Zoom

Speaker: Rev. Chebon Kernell, Executive Director of the UMC Native American Comprehensive Plan, shares insights and learning related to indigenous communities' history, present work being done, and how we can be in solidarity as we prepare for the future.

Moderator: Rev. Pamela Pirtle

Online registration coming soon. For more information, visit umcnic.org/2022speakerseries.



Fresh Expressions Teachings

Explore the wave of new Christian churches emerging to reach unchurched and dechurched people living in a culture that is increasingly non-religious and multi-religious.

Rev. Michael Beck

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Michael Beck is a pastor, professor, and author. He is a spiritual guide who helps people heal, love, and unleash imagination to create better lives, organizations, and communities. He serves as the director of Fresh Expressions for the Florida Conference of The UMC, director of the Fresh Expressions House of Studies at United Theological Seminary, and director of ReMissioning for Fresh Expressions US.

Sunday Event: Sept. 18, 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Schaumburg: Our Saviour's 701 E. Schaumburg Rd., Schaumburg, Ill.

5 Teaching Offerings

- Monday, Sept. 19 - 9:00 a.m. to Noon - Prairie North - Freeport: Harmony
- Monday, Sept. 19 - 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. - Prairie South - Dixon: First
- Tuesday, Sept. 20 - 9:00 a.m. to Noon - Lake South - Oak Lawn: First
- Tuesday, September 20 - 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. - Prairie Central - Naperville: Grace
- Wednesday, September 21 - 9:00 a.m. to Noon - Lake North - Park Ridge: First

Register and find out more at umcnic.org/calendar/fresh-expressions-2022. Questions? Contact Martin Lee at mlee@umcnic.org.



UM Foundation seeking grant applicants

The Foundation's grants program annually offers funding of \$500 - \$2,000 to several local churches and church-related organizations as they develop new or expanded creative ministries.

A "church-related organization" is any organization within the Northern Illinois Conference area that partners with a local United Methodist church and/or members of the United Methodist Church in our conference.

The Foundation has granted more than \$1,000,000 to 200+ ministries since 1999. Grant applications are due by Sept. 15. For more information and to apply, visit umfnic.org/grants.



The United Methodist Foundation of the Northern Illinois Conference has produced several videos to honor the life of one of the Foundation's benefactors, Mildred Vannorsdall, who worked for the Chicago Public Library for many years and loved stories.

UM Foundation President Chris Walters thought, "What if we invite a younger Methodist and an older Methodist to simply share their personal stories with each other? No agenda, other than to bring two people together to share a bit of their faith journey as the church."

Chris and Rich Havard, former Campus Minister of The Inclusive Collective, had talked about this kind of project over the years. In the fall of 2021, the Foundation contracted with Rich to produce the videos with Lavender Digital in Atlanta.

After nine months of planning, preparation, and production, the resulting high-quality videos are deeply personal and inspiring stories available for churches and individuals to use in worship, small groups, town halls, or however you feel called! The videos are available to encourage and inspire local churches.

See the website for more information and to view the videos at umfnic.org/mildred.



Kids Above All Back to School Backpack Drive

June 20 - August 26, 2022

It's time again for Kids Above All's annual Back to School Backpack Drive through Aug. 26! Kids Above All invites individuals, as well as our community, corporate and faith partners, to step up for the 1,000 school-aged kids in the agency's care this summer to ensure they have the supplies they need to succeed this school year.

Lia* (pictured), age 7, received a backpack and school supplies from last year's Kids Above All Back to School Backpack Drive. As school approached, Lia thought she would have to use her same worn-out backpack and old supplies from the year before because her family was struggling to purchase everything she needed. Lia was so excited when she got her new backpack from Kids Above All that she couldn't stop hugging it. She now had the tools and confidence to succeed in school. *For their privacy, client's name has been changed.

Recommended donation drop off is between July 27 and August 12. If you have a small group interested in volunteering, Kids Above All will need many helping hands to assemble the backpacks. For more information, please contact Catherine Inserra, Manager of Faith & Community Relations, cinserra@kidsaboveall.org or 847-224-2870.





DYK DID YOU KNOW?

183rd Annual Conference wow factor

Rev. Arlene Christopherson, Asst. to the Bishop/Dir. of Connectional Ministries

Wow! That's my first impression when thinking about the 183rd session of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference. The gathering was a mix of revival, homecoming, worship, business, celebration, and inspiration. I have not been to all 183 annual conferences, but I've not missed one in 40 years since I became a United Methodist, and this one was amazing.

After spending 2020 and 2021 online with virtual annual conferences, 2022 saw a return to in-person conferencing. Online was necessary during the pandemic, we did what was needed, but the interactions were sparse, and the joy of interaction and conversation were missing. This year's gathering renewed our relationships and gave way to engagement and the flexibility that is only possible in person. We not only leaned into the theme "Connected in Christ: Come to the Water," we lived it! Water poured down upon us on the first day of the conference drenching those working to collect mission donations and reminding us of how powerful and refreshing rain can be.

There was hugging, laughter, intense conversations, joy and energy as we "connected." At every break before sessions and into the evening, people renewed

friendships, made new friends and found joy in being together.

This year, the Bishop's Appeal went toward United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) support for assistance in Ukraine. We've been taking a Bishop's Appeal offering for almost ten years, and this year the outpouring of support was phenomenal. As we come out of a pandemic and face the possibility of a recession, giving for the appeal surpassed anything we could have imagined. You gave \$275,000 for relief – quadrupling past gifts. WOW! I was amazed and proud, overjoyed and grateful. The heart of United Methodists is with those who suffer, and when we see hurt and pain in the world – we respond.

Taking intentional time to reflect with our table mates this year, our Annual Conference Shepherding Team co-chairs: Elizabeth Gracie and Myron McCoy, led us in sharing. We learned why each of us is United Methodist and reflected on how we build our faith and find spiritual renewal. The Shepherding Team sponsored a video booth inviting people to record a short testimony on what it means to be United Methodist. Over 100 video testimonies were filmed! WOW!

From the opening Memorial Service to the closing Ordination Service, we experienced lively music, robust singing, lots of conversation, buzzing around the display tables, and a Laity Session so well attended that some participants couldn't find a seat.

There was greater participation in the Retirement Service than I can remember from past years and it was truly a "preaching event." As I listened to the reflections – really sermons – I regretted not having the opportunity to be in the pew of each retiree's church over the years to drink in their wisdom, wit and insight.

The Rev. Jane Eesley, one of our Elders and pastor at Christ UMC in Rockford, did a masterful job of walking us through the story of Phillip's encounter with the Ethiopian Eunuch, bringing us back to the theme of our gathering: "Connected in Christ: Come to the Water."

It was a WOW week and I hope that feeling carries into all our connections – from the lay members and clergy attending the Annual Conference to every member of every church in our Northern Illinois connection. Faith is strong, commitment is deep and connection has carried us through some very hard times. I can't wait to see how we celebrate in 2023.

2022 Clergy Appointments and Retirements

Bishop John L. Hopkins announces the following clergy appointments and retirements for the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church, effective July 1, 2022 (unless otherwise noted): The 2022 appointment book is posted at umcnic.org/appointments.

Ed Bickham (District Superintendent Supply) to Chicago: Clair Christian (1/4 time) (Lake South District). Ed follows Richard Mosley who will be serving as interim pastor at Chicago: Hartzell Memorial (Lake South District).

Anthony Clause (District Superintendent Supply) to Chicago: Mandell (Lake North District). Anthony follows Dawn Gardner who will continue at Evanston: Hemenway (Lake North District).

Brett Todd (Full Elder) to Rockford: Beth Eden (Prairie North District) while remaining at Rockford: Aldersgate (Prairie North District). Brett follows Eric Reniva who is appointed to Waterman (Prairie South District).

Wes Dorr (Full Deacon) to West Cook YMCA (Appointment Beyond the Local Church) from Downers Grove: First (Lake South District). Effective May 1.

John Sianghio (Licensed Local Pastor) to Melrose Park: Cosmopolitan (Lake North District). John follows Juan Pablo Herrera who moved to Chicago: Urban Village Church (Lake North District).

Jenny Weber (Full Elder) to Hampshire: First and Zion (Prairie North District) from Kirkland (Prairie North District). Jenny follows Matthew Mariani who is moving to chaplaincy.

Beverly Dukes (Provisional Elder) to Lombard: Faith (Prairie Central District) while staying at Maywood: Neighborhood (Lake North District). Beverly follows Ayla Samson who is moving to Morris: First (Prairie South District).

TJ Kim to Leave of Absence from Schaumburg: Salem Korean (Prairie Central District).

Joshua Brown (District Superintendent Supply) to Chana and Oregon: Lighthouse (Prairie South District). Joshua follows Matthew Smith who is appointed to Warren (Prairie North District).

Miguel Nieves (Associate Member) to retirement while continuing to serve at Winthrop Harbor: North Prairie (Lake North District). Effective August 1.



Safe Sanctuaries training

The Northern Illinois Conference is offering training options this summer to help meet our goal of ensuring safe spaces of trust for all where we gather to worship and serve God. The trainings are being offered both online via zoom and in person.

The remaining dates offered are:

- Saturday, July 16 - 1:00 p.m. - Des Plaines: First UMC
- Saturday, July 30 - 10:00 a.m. - Rockford: Christ UMC
- Saturday, August 6 - 10:00 a.m. - Rockford: Christ UMC
- Saturday, August 20 - 1:00 p.m. - Des Plaines: First UMC

Find more information and register at umcnic.org/calendar/safe-sanctuaries-training.

**This free training is an alternative for those who cannot participate in other training options and does not include a background check.

For updated videos, policies, FAQs, downloads and more updated resources, visit umcnic.org/safesanctuaries.



Mission Journey grants available

New grants through United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) provide financial support for Northern Illinois Conference (NIC) districts and local churches with a passion and plan for organizing, funding and leading youth and/or adult Mission Journey teams.

Teams supported by this grant must register with the UMVIM North Central Jurisdiction Coordinator and have medical/accident insurance coverage. In addition, teams must include a trained UMVIM Team Leader who has completed conference-approved training within the past three years.

Grant funds of up to \$1,000 per team can help cover expenses for UMVIM Team Leader Training, insurance, and Safe Sanctuary Training.

Learn more and apply at umcnic.org/grants/umvim-mission-journeys-grant.

Important Grant Deadlines:

Winter 2022 through Spring 2023 UMVIM Mission Journeys:

Grant Applications received through Sept. 1, 2022

Summer/Fall 2023 UMVIM Mission Journeys: Grant Applications received through March 1, 2023.



Job Openings

For the latest job openings in the Northern Illinois Conference and across the connection, visit www.umcnic.org/jobs.

Stay Connected

Sign up for the weekly NIC eNews, Appointment Announcements and Sympathy notices. Visit www.umcnic.org and scroll down and click on "Sign up for our Newsletter" to enter your name and email.

Submissions

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. Submissions will be edited at the discretion of the Communications staff.

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