

The Northern Illinois Conference OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Reporter

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DO NOT DELAY. DATED MATERIAL

Children blossom as readers and confident students in St. Mark UMC's Freedom School

by Victoria Rebeck,
Director of Communications

St. Mark United Methodist Church in Chicago's Chatham neighborhood has been especially busy this summer. Some of its rooms were buzzing with the sound of children dancing, moving, or discussing a story they heard read aloud that day. After lunch, though, the building would settle into 15 minutes of stillness, when children and adults were quietly reading.

So passed a lively July and August in Freedom School.

Initiating a Children's Defense Fund Freedom School at St. Mark "is a longtime dream of mine," says Rev. Pamela Pirtle, an assistant pastor at the church. She oversees administrative and strategic leadership at the church.

The seven-week summer program is a continuation of the after-school sessions held at St. Mark during the previous academic year. The 46 summer scholars ranged in grades from kindergarten through high-school. They came to receive a healthy, safe, moral, and fair head-start in life and successful passage to adulthood, with the help of caring families and communities, explains the CDF website (childrensdefense.org/programs/cdf-freedom-schools). At the heart of the program is instruction that encourages children and youth to become independent thinkers, problem solvers, and agents of change in their own communities, the organization says.

Strengthening literacy is one of the primary avenues through which the schools meet their goals for the young scholars, so quite a bit of the program focuses on developing the skills and enjoyment of reading.

Scholars met at St. Mark five days a week and start with a 9 a.m. breakfast. The youngsters then moved into *harambe* (a Swahili word that



Movement enhances children's learning at Freedom School.

roughly translates as "all pulling together"), during which they listened to a book read aloud by a guest reader. The morning sessions are guided by CDF curriculum, which develops scholars' critical thinking skills and invites them to contribute ideas to the group discussion. They also take part in hands-on activities.

Northern Illinois's Bishop Dan Schwerin was a recent guest reader. He shared the story *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut*, written by Derrick Barnes and illustrated by Gordon C. James. It offers a glimpse into the day in a life of a barbershop in a Black neighborhood—the men who meet there, their conversations, and the community nourished there.

An author who writes haiku, Bishop Schwerin recited to the scholars three of his original poems and invited their reflections. The children enjoyed their conversation with him, Rev. Pirtle says. (What they found endlessly amazing about the bishop, she says with a chuckle, was that he oversees more than 300 churches!)

Bishop Schwerin says he was moved by the CDF curriculum, particularly in how it "teaches

continued on page 2, see Freedom School

Welcome to the new Reporter

You have probably noticed that we've freshened up the look of The Northern Illinois Reporter. We have made some changes that we hope you will enjoy.

We've chosen a larger typeface, to make the text gentler on the eyes. We have chosen type fonts and layouts that will hope will make it easier for your to scan the pages. We are also opening up the design a bit, giving it a bit more "air," to help you quickly find the stories you'd like to read first.

We remain committed to printing stories of the many inspiring ministries happening in our churches and those we participate in together through faithful and generous giving. You will continue to receive information from across the international United Methodist Church, to keep you apprised of compassionate mission work, helpful resources, and opportunities for all to grow in faith and share God's love with others through word and actions.

Change requires a bit of adjustment, but our hope is that these adjustments make The Reporter even more valuable to you. Let us know whether you find these helpful.

The faithful apportionment giving of Northern Illinois churches delivers *The Reporter* to you.

Victoria Rebeck,
Director of Communications & Editor
Lisa Smith,
Communications Specialist & Designer





From Your Bishop:

By your Spirit make us one ...



This line has stayed with me for some months. It hits me with a force now that I have been consecrated as a bishop. It is worth noting that in the Great Thanksgiving the paragraph that begins, "Pour out your Holy Spirit" is followed in the next paragraph with the implications. "By your Spirit, make us one..." It is only by God's Spirit that we find the power of a unity in Christ that can confront the world's prejudices, racism, and fear-based division. My soul has lingered long on this for the past month. I am praying, "Make us one."

I see in the work of the Annual Conference Shepherding Team a commitment to anti-racism that lives out a "beloved community life" together. I recently read an interview with Howard Thurman's daughter, Olive Thurman Wong. She said the least appreciated aspect of her father's writing and witness is the deep Oneness he saw in the world, through the eyes of faith. This Oneness, if we could live it, would be healing for ourselves and others.

I pray for the work we committed to while at annual conference session this June: to commit to equity in clergy salaries, so that Christ is made known and healing comes to this body. I pray that your commitment to full payment of your conference and general church apportionments affirms that we are in this together and vivifies our common ministry. I pray that we make a commitment to our conference Net Zero work and live into a planetary health that blesses to the seventh generation—or we will be prisoners of fires, smoke, toxic water, and more. Beloved community must include our nest, the planet, the world God "so loves."

I have been listening to and praying about the Shepherding Team's vision work. I'd like to offer my own synopsis of the vision we share as we keep refining it:

By your Spirit make us one
in a beloved community life together,
living a theology of abundance
for developing vital faith communities
that make disciples of Jesus Christ
for the transformation of the world.



I believe that the new United Methodist Church that is emerging post-disaffiliation has an opportunity to claim a unity that can heal each of us and the world we serve. We are jeans and suits, Republican and Democrat, doubters and believers, east and west, gay and straight. We are Black, Brown, and every kind of child of God—and we are the people of The United Methodist Church.

I invite you to pray and consider the elements of communion.

Know that I am praying for you.

Freedom School (continued from page 1)

about the inner life, how to find it, express it, and remain grounded in it." He was impressed that the Freedom School helped scholars who had fallen behind in school to grow significantly in their ability and love of reading.

Following lunch came the quiet reading time. After that, various guest experts offered workshops in the afternoon. Rev. Pirtle lists a chef, photographers, musicians, gardeners, and social-movement therapists among the many leaders who have engaged scholars in these activities. Kids Above All's Catherine

Fridays were particularly fun. On those days, scholars took field trips to museums like the DuSable, Field, and Science and Industry; a community garden, a zoo, and a water park.

CDF's website explains that its Freedom Schools have their origin in the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project of 1964, during which college students from around the country traveled to Mississippi to secure justice and voting rights for Black citizens. They also helped lead Freedom Schools, which were aimed at keeping Black children and youth safe and giving them rich educational experiences that were not offered in Mississippi's public schools.

St. Mark's summer program continued the after-school version that the church offered during the 2022-2023 school session. Rev. Pirtle is pleased that St. Mark got to be part of the academic year pilot project.

"I had the opportunity to attend their program this summer, and it was a remarkable demonstration of our CDF Freedom School model," says Rev. Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger, senior partnerships associate, Faith Communities, for CDF. "St. Mark also did a fantastic job of involving the local community and church members in the program."

After only 12 months of sessions, the St. Mark school has already borne remarkable results.

Rev. Pirtle offers an example of a reluc-

tant scholar whose grandmother sent her to Freedom School. The child's elementary class experience had not been inspiring or encouraging for the child. Today, this formerly reticent student is reading twice as much as she once did and readily offers her ideas about what she has learned and read.

Not all the scholars come in with academic challenges, Rev. Pirtle explains. Some are bright and successful in school. A child who is already an academic achiever may be paired with a child who is struggling and together, they instill more confidence in each other.

Even the college interns are energized by their Freedom School leadership. They receive robust training and through experience come to realize that they have the ability to transform the lives of young people.

Freedom School requires a lot of preparation, assistance, and resources—including meals and snacks for the scholars. Even with this level of investment, the schools are more than worth it, Rev. Pirtle says. Churches are ideal hosts; Freedom Schools demonstrate God's love profoundly.

Rev. Birkhahn-Rommelfanger agrees. "CDF Freedom Schools at churches are especially wonderful because they already have a community to draw from to create a fantastic program for their context."



Bishop Dan Schwerin reads the book *Crown: Ode to a Fresh Cut* to Freedom School students.

Inserra, a United Methodist lay deaconess, arranged for an especially popular session that taught the scholars skills in diffusing anger and frustration and to express these emotions healthy, constructive ways.

The Northern Illinois Conference OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Reporter

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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.

Job Openings

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



Annual Conference Shepherding Team hears hard truths as it determines its purpose



by Victoria Rebeck, Director of Communications

Clarifying its role in strengthening Northern Illinois Conference shared ministries is priority one for the Annual Conference Shepherding Team and was its focus at its July 29 meeting at Friendship United Methodist Church in Bolingbrook.

The team, created in 2017 to coordinate and communicate the conference ministries, was interrupted by the pandemic of 2020-2021 in its efforts devise a plan for this work.

Susan Czolgosz, a church and organizational development consultant who specializes in congregational and middle judicatory vitality, continued her guidance at this meeting.

Given a number of choices, the majority of task force members identified developing vital congregations, leadership that focuses the mission of the church, and developing disciples for compassion, mercy, and justice ministries as the most important work of an annual conference.

Supporting this, the majority named connecting people and resources, vision, and putting vision and money together as the ACST's primary responsibilities.

The timing of the creation of the ACST has been one factor that has held it back. Mark Manzi, the task force's co-chair, noted that the conference Standing Rules related to the task force were written when the future shape of the

United Methodist Church, beset by persistent conflict, was unknown but expected to shift.

In 2019—only months before the pandemic significantly changed life across the world—the annual conference approved three goals for the ACST: to grow and reach new disciples of Jesus Christ, to live out the conviction that racism is incompatible with Christian teaching, and to increase the number of highly vital congregations.

The conference affirmed these goals “to set a direction that could get us moving toward something,” Manzi explained. “They came out of responses received from the ‘landscape survey’ of many conference groups.”

“Where we insert a period, God inserts a comma.” Bishop Dan Schwerin

While some unknowns remain, The United Methodist Church remains intact, and God's call on churches continues.

Czolgosz urged the team to appreciate the urgency of identifying and pursuing its goals and tasks.

“We are on a burning platform,” she said. “How much time do we have to talk about

what we do, while membership, resources, and other aspects of ministry continue to decline in the conference?”

She commended six capacities (“hows”) for the task force to ponder in the coming weeks. At its September meeting, Czolgosz urged, the task force should agree on a plan for how it will develop these capacities:

1. Formulate and fulfill a mission
2. Facilitate change
3. Lead and govern effectively
4. Cultivate lifelong learners
5. Resolve conflict
6. Actively discourage triangulation (the habit of avoiding direct conversation)

Listening first, talking straight (honestly and directly), transparency, keeping commitments, and extending trust should define the task force's behavior, Czolgosz said, as it envisions and lives out its purpose.

Bishop Dan Schwerin reflected on what he heard in the day's meeting.

“When you do a new thing, expect a lot to fall off,” he observed about the changes that the task force is pondering. He added, “Be willing to let go of things so that we can be about our message. Where we insert a period, God inserts a comma.”

The task force next meets on Sept. 23.

Will Wisconsin and Northern Illinois share a bishop?



by Victoria Rebeck, Director of Communications

Wisconsin and Northern Illinois conferences continue to anticipate the possibility they will share a bishop—something like a two-point charge—in the near future. A Bishop-Sharing Task Force in Northern Illinois met on Aug. 28 to plan NIC's next steps in the exploration.

Sharing a bishop does *not* entail a merger of conferences.

The conferences would continue as distinct entities. One bishop would lead the two conferences, appointing clergy, presiding at annual conference sessions, and overseeing administration for each conference separately.

At the 2022 North Central Jurisdictional conference, delegates from Northern Illinois and Wisconsin conferences read a shared statement affirming that the two conferences were willingly considering sharing a bishop, including holding joint conversations.

Over the past several years, jurisdictions have been asked to reduce bishop positions. It is possible—though not yet certain—that Northern Illinois and Wisconsin would be assigned to share a bishop. Some other conferences around the United Methodist connection relate in this way.

Each conference, separately and together, is thinking ahead about what the possibility might require.

“We are not reacting to a problem,” says Rev. Myron McCoy, chairperson of NIC's Bishop Sharing Task Force. “We are exploring how we can create a positive future.”



Constituting the task force are Rev. Myron McCoy, chairperson; Lonnie Chafin, Rev. Arlene Christopherson, Rev. Brian Gilbert, Liz Gracie, Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer, Mark Manzi, Rev. Victoria Rebeck, Eugene Williams, and Bishop Dan Schwerin.

Joining forces as a two-part episcopal area could also enhance partnership opportunities, the task force observes. For example, churches in both conferences that minister with language minorities could collaborate and achieve more together. Each conference has its strengths, and if yoked in an episcopal area, may be able to assist each other.

A few statistical similarities and differences between the conferences:

- Both have significant rural expanses as well as urban centers
- Geographic area: NIC is about 25 percent the size of Wisconsin
- Number of churches: NIC, 321; Wisconsin, 400
- Disaffiliations: NIC, 8; Wisconsin, 43
- Districts: NIC, 5; Wisconsin is reducing from 5 to 4

Jurisdictions around the connection—including the North Central Jurisdiction, of which Northern Illinois is a member—have already begun realigning their bishop assignments. “In various jurisdictions, conferences have experimented with different models for sharing a bishop,” said Rev. Arlene Christopherson, assistant to the bishop. “This is a time to take a look at those models.”



Pledges are welcome now

Bishop Dan Schwerin thanks those churches that made a pledge to Northern Illinois Conference's “Repair the Harm” campaign. Along with other conferences, ours is contributing to a fund to help those who experienced harm in Boy Scouts of America troops. Many churches charter BSA troops, demonstrating our commitment to young people. Though harm may not have happened in our churches, we care about the young people who were hurt. As it says in Isaiah 58:12, “You will be called Mender of Broken Walls, Restorer of Livable Streets.” Thank you for being a Mender and Restorer.

Some churches have remitted their pledged amount, for which we are grateful.

If your church has yet to fulfill its pledge, please consider doing so soon.

Payments can be submitted online using Tithe.ly or Prosper. Find links to those sites here: umcnic.org/RepairtheHarm/pay.

To pay by mail, write a check to Northern Illinois Conference and include a note or indicate on the check that it is for the BSA or Repair the Harm.

Mail to:

Northern Illinois Conference - Repair the Harm
303 E. Wacker Drive, Suite 2020
Chicago, IL 60601

More information on the campaign at umcnic.org/repairtheharm

2023 Vacation Bible school recap: friends, fun, & God's love



Des Plaines: First UMC



Rockford: Christ UMC



Hinsdale UMC



Princeton: First UMC

A number of churches used Cokesbury's "Hero Hotline" curriculum, including **First UMC (Des Plaines)**, **Hinsdale UMC**, **First UMC (Princeton)**, **Rochelle UMC**, **Christ UMC (Rockford)**, and **Scales Mound UMC**. The young participants, called heroes, learned about some heroes in the ultimate Hero Handbook, the Bible. The characters Professor and Super Meer reinforced that answering God's call together means striving for the things that bring peace and build each other up.



Rochelle UMC



Scales Mound UMC



Chicago: Maple Park UMC

Maple Park UMC in Chicago's "Learn, Laugh, and Grow" VBS taught children to be themselves while learning to better themselves. They learned about Bible-based healing and tried their hands at skills and crafts. The church fueled the youngsters every day with breakfast, lunch, and a snack.



Erie UMC



Freeport: Faith UMC

Faith UMC (Freeport) taught children that "We Are All Connected" during their VBS, which was part of their day camp. Wearing matching rainbow tie-dyed shirts, children participated in many activities that even included a pool party.

Two other Cokesbury curricula, "Food Truck Party" and "Knights of North Castle," were put to good use. **Erie UMC** welcomed 46 children (and many helpers) to their Food Truck Party and raised \$675 for the Erie Food Pantry. **Kaneville UMC** hosted 80 knights at their North Castle, held outdoors on the days when weather permitted.



Kaneville UMC



First UMC (Evanston) went wild at “Faith in Wild” VBS. They explored and enjoyed daily outings to nearby parks and animal sanctuaries. After a wild and wonder-filled week, the adventure of becoming as fully human as Jesus by loving others as we are loved had just begun.



Kingswood UMC (Buffalo Grove and Deerfield) invited children from both towns to their “Changing “Gears” VBS. The robot theme taught how Jesus changes us.



Wesley UMC (Sterling) had fun with “Pirates of Possibilities,” during which children learned about Jonah and the big fish, Noah’s ark, the parting of the Red Sea, and Paul’s shipwreck.



**Wheaton:
Gary UMC**

Gary Memorial UMC (Wheaton) and **Oregon UMC** (teaming up with nearby St. Paul’s Lutheran Church) invited children to an out-of-this world adventure with Group Publishing’s Stellar curriculum. Gary Memorial children raised \$550 for the church’s Educate a Girl/Change the World mission. The Oregon area youngsters collected offerings for Operation Kid-to-Kid, which sends to children around the world Bibles printed in their languages.



The Tri-City United Methodists from **Geneva, Baker Memorial (St. Charles), and Batavia UMCs** teamed up and offered the “Deep Blue” VBS from Grow Curriculum. The kids became S.E.A. Agents (“share your story, extraordinary gifts, and acts of faith”).



Oregon UMC



Steward UMC organized a “Pets Unleashed” VBS (Group Publishing), showing kids that Jesus cares “fur” them. In addition to Bible stories, singing, snacks, and crafts, pets—live and plush toys—stayed for visits.



Dixon: Grace UMC

Grace UMC (Dixon) used the “F.R.O.G (Fully Rely On God)” curriculum. It instills values like courage, kindness, and embracing differences, all while fostering a sense of unity among participants.



Apple River UMC

Apple River UMC’s VBS, “Peacebuilders,” was created by a church member who is a teacher. The children explored peace with Jesus through story, art, exercise, and even snack time.

If you’d like your church included, sending information and photos to Lisa Smith at LSmith@UMCNIC.org.



Visit umcnic.org/news/vacation-bible-schools-taking-place-across-the-conference for more!

What do you need from the NIC website?



Every few years, an organization's website needs a refresh. In the coming months, your Northern Illinois Conference communications staff will be preparing a redesign of the conference website, umcnic.org.

Our priority is to make the site useful and easy to navigate for the site's lay and clergy users. We need your viewpoint to succeed!

Visit umcnic.org/newwebsite to participate in the survey.

Thank you for your participation! It will make a great difference.

And please spread the word among your church's staff and laypeople in leadership roles.



KAA's Day of Service Readies Kids for School



Forty-two people representing Kids Above All's mission partners came together for a Day of Service on Aug. 12 at the organization's Better Life Distribution Center in Des Plaines. They filled 50 backpacks for KAA's Camp Sheilah clients, sorted incoming school supplies for other clients, and toured the distribution center. Rev. Norval Brown (Cary and Community, Fox River Grove, United Methodist churches) blessed the backpacks.

Camp Sheilah is an annual bereavement camp founded by the Sheilah A. Doyle Foundation in 2011. It helps children ages 7 to 17 heal from the loss of a parent, legal guardian, or sibling to homicide.

KAA was founded in 1894 to alleviate suffering, eradicate the causes of injustice, and facilitate the development of full human potential.

Raising Our Voices through Resources: A Bridge for the Gap, Part 2

September 29

10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

**Kids Above All:
Better Life
Distribution**



Center, 1801 E Oakton St., Des Plaines

Guest speaker: Rep. Delia C. Ramirez.

Awards presented by Bishop Dan Schwerin. For further details and registration visit unitedvoicesforchildren.org/raising-our-voices-through-resources-a-bridge-for-the-gap-part-2/

Faith leaders join call for peace treaty to end Korean War

by Rev. Thomas E. Kim for United Methodist News Service

On July 27, the 70th anniversary of the Armistice Agreement of the Korean War, hundreds of Korean peace advocates from across the country and South Korea gathered in Washington, D.C., for Korea Peace Action.

It was part of a three-day convening called National Mobilization to End the Korean War. The conference, which took place July 26-28, was organized by a broad coalition of peace advocates and various faith traditions, including the United Methodist Church's Board of Global Ministries and Board of Church and Society, and the Peace Committee of the Korean Association of The United Methodist Church.

Northern Illinois United Methodists commemorated this day on June 7, during annual conference session. A group of Korean-American clergy and laity led the conference in a moving service of prayers, songs, and personal testimonies for peace.

One of the primary goals of Korea Peace Action was to mobilize support for the Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act (H.R. 1369), which calls for a peace agreement with North Korea. Christians worldwide have called for an end-of-war agreement and a peace treaty.

Christine Ahn, executive director of Women Cross DMZ and one of the event organizers, described the scope of the event.

"It's to be together, to be energized, and to know that we are an unstoppable [Korea Peace] movement," she said. "We're multigenerational, multinational. We represent families, divided families, and the military; and nuclear scientists are here. It is the power of the people and we will end this war."

Among the United Methodists present were U.S. Rep. Delia Catalina Ramirez, IL-3, who said that her faith and the importance of her participation in peace and justice actions led her to join the press conference.

"I learned about public service at [Albany United Methodist] church and got to work there for 13 years," she said. "When I walk into the Illinois House chambers, I am reminded that God has called me to be able to live out my faith through action and representation. That's what I take with me every single day into that chamber."

Hundreds of people joined a rally at Lafayette Square, in front of the White House, followed by a march and an interfaith vigil at the Lincoln Memorial.

One of the most moving witnesses at the rally came from the Rev. Wehyun Chang, the chair of the Peace Committee of the Korean Association of The United Methodist Church.

He shared his own family's suffering from the separation on the peninsula. They were preparing to leave North Korea in January 1951, but because of severe winter weather conditions that year, his father's younger sister had to remain behind. His father promised her that he'd be back in three or four months, but by the time of his death 57 years later, in 2007, he had never been able to return.

"Can you imagine being separated from family for, let's say, seven months? Would you be OK with that? Seventy years?"



Hundreds of Korea Peace Action participants march from Lafayette Square in front of the White House to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., on July 27, the 70th anniversary of the Armistice Agreement of the Korean War.

Photo by Thomas E. Kim

President Biden, please end the war and bring me and millions of families to see our own loved ones. That's the only humane thing to do," he said.

Chang also called for remembrance of the over 36,000 American soldiers who died during the Korean War: "I don't think a single of them sacrificed their lives thinking that this war would last for 70 years."

Rev. Doug Asbury, a retired clergyman from the Northern Illinois Conference and a member of Korea Peace Now!, believes that Christian belief and practice supports the pursuit of a peace treaty.

"We want to be faithful to Jesus Christ, who would walk across the DMZ at the risk of his own life to bring healing to North Koreans and would sacrifice his life. He did sacrifice his life so that we would devote ourselves to him and his purpose in the world," he said.

"So, when are we going to be true Christians and follow Jesus rather than the forces of war in this world?"

Leading the Laity



Take time to restore your soul: find your own quiet center.

by Connie Augsburger, NIC Co-Lay Leader

It's hardly an earth-shattering revelation to comment on the turmoil in the world today. At every level of society and in every corner of the Earth, people are suffering, forests are burning, rivers are overflowing their banks, governments and the folks they're meant to serve are clashing and neighbors are fighting their neighbors. The list goes on and on. I'm not suggesting the end is at hand, and I have no idea whether the chaos we're currently witnessing is greater or lesser than people in other times have witnessed. Wiser and more learned heads than mine can make pronouncements if they wish. I offer nothing more than a simple thought: take time to restore your own soul, no matter what is going on around you. If each one of us takes the time to rest and refresh, we can better equip ourselves to handle whatever comes next and to better serve those around us who are in need.

We hear the phrase "self-care" a lot these days. The concept dates back millennia. Maybe now is a good time to revisit wise words from the Holy book. Open up to Psalm 23 and offer a reviving drink to your thirsting heart and soul. First prepare yourself by finding a quiet place to sit: away from the cat or dog, radio or television, computer or phone. Just power down and give yourself the time and space to breathe. Close your eyes and just be.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. Psalm 23

The Lord, our shepherd, will surround you in these moments of solitude, and you will need nothing but your faith. Picture the green pastures; feel the soft grass beneath your feet; inhale the gentle scents of nature. Imagine the still waters; touch the cool surface and see tiny ripples move out from your fingertips; listen to the almost imperceptible current. It's there. I promise you it's there if you will allow your soul to open up and receive God's presence.

When we take time out from the routine and the often petty cares of the day, we can find that quiet center and replenish ourselves to go the next mile. I'm not offering empty platitudes. Dr. Cleo Williamson,



clinical psychologist at University College Hospital, London, and a consultant for the UK-based Point of Care Foundation, says it's important to recognize the need to refresh our perspective so we can keep our values in focus. The everyday grind can lead us to accept as normal things that go against our grain and irritate our senses. Compassion fatigue is real; burnout is real. Just ask a doctor or a nurse. Check in with a waitress or a sales clerk or a teacher or your pastor: life can wear us down. We can wear each other down. Shelly Esher, executive editor of the online faith-based magazine *Just Between Us*, asks whether peace is even possible in this noisy world. She suggests that there is a transformative quality to seeking solitude and to quieting the noise around us so we can hear and feel God with us.

In my own life, I feel that fatigue when one more person asks for help. (I'm the interim director of the Winnebago County Law Library and Self-Help Center; my job is to answer questions and help people find solutions to all kinds of difficult legal situations.) I wonder who is helping *me*. I get irritated that people seem so needy. That's when, whether I realize it or not, I must refresh my perspective and seek a slice of solitude. I need to be refreshed, and the best, the surest way to do that is to "find the quiet center," as envisioned in the lovely hymn by Shirley Erena Murray.

When I do that, I know that God is with me and strengthens me. I take the time and the space to allow hope to enter into my heart, my soul to be restored: to "be at peace and simply be."

Upcoming Events

See the full calendar at umcnic.org/calendar

September

21 23 Film Series Privilege, Power, & Race

6 to 8 p.m.

Happening at multiple locations and online via Zoom.

Cost: \$5.

Meal, presentation by *The Long Shadow* director Frances Causey, and table discussions around privilege, power, and race. For further details and registration visit umcnic.org/calendar/23-film-series-privilege-power-and-race.



26 Black Healing Collective 18-Month Cohort

Starting Sept. 26. Most sessions will be held via Zoom on the 4th Tuesday of the month.

\$200 registration fee.

The \$200 registration fee covers a DNA test, binder, genogram, and learning sessions. The cohort program will use trauma-informed research and practices to develop pathways toward healing. For further details and registration visit umcnic.org/calendar/black-healing-collective.



October

7 HISPANIC/LATINX CELEBRATION

9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Franklin Park UMC,
9857 Schiller Blvd. Franklin Park

Cost: Free (A free-will offering will be taken to support Hispanic/Latinx Ministries.)

Celebrate the Hispanic/Latino ministries in the Northern Illinois Conference with a time of worship, training, fellowship, renewal, and camaraderie. For further details visit umcnic.org/calendar/hispaniclatinx-celebration-1.

21 What Makes for a Vital Church Today? Workshop

9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Our Saviour's UMC,
701 E. Schaumburg Road,
Schaumburg

Fee: \$20 (includes box lunch.)

This workshop is part of the How to Reach New People series with the Office of Congregational Development and Redevelopment. Led by Rev. Dr. Paul Nickerson. For further details and registration visit umcnic.org/calendar/what-makes-for-a-vital-church-today-workshop.

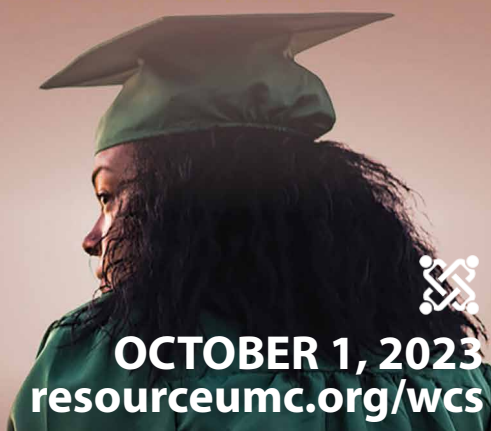


SPECIAL SUNDAY

WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY

"Make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind."

—PHILIPPIANS 2:2, NRSVUE



OCTOBER 1, 2023
resourceumc.org/wcs



DYK DID YOU KNOW? It's School Time

by Rev. Arlene Christopherson,
Assistant to the Bishop

One of my favorite back-to-school memories is shopping for school supplies. We were a large family, so a new box of crayons with perfectly pointed tips was a once-a-year treat. I would check my box of crayons before it went into the shopping cart just to be sure there were no broken tips. I loved the freshly sharpened pencils, lined notebook papers, rulers, and cool pocket folders.

Shopping for school supplies is a late-summer ritual handed down from generation to generation. Communities have backpack give-a-ways and some churches incorporate a special litany or "Blessings of the Backpacks" into worship as the school season begins.

While we prepare our children for their classes, teachers, administrators, and a vast array of staff prepare buildings, classrooms, and lesson plans. They review the safety and security of the school buildings and playgrounds. Today is a good day to stop and think about all that goes into providing our children with a safe and welcoming environment for learning. Today is a good day to thank those who do this work.

But, it's not only schools that are ramping up for fall. Our Sunday school programs, youth groups, childcare centers and all sorts of children's programming is gearing up in our churches as well. There is a long list of visible signs that our classrooms are back in business.

Refreshed bulletin boards, a neat stack of Bibles, craft supplies, and Sunday school curriculum are being readied for the season.

Not as visible are the ways in which we prepare our buildings, our classrooms, and our volunteers to insure a safe and healthy experience while children and youth are in our care. Statistically, in the United States the most vulnerable population for abuse are children between the ages of 7 and 13. The median age for reported abuse nationally is 9 years old. There are so many challenges in today's world for our children and youth to navigate. Being exploited by adults shouldn't be one of them.

For every congregation in the Northern Illinois Conference, training in Safe Sanctuaries is not a sign that our church volunteers are untrustworthy. Rather it is a witness to our commitment to provide safe spaces for ministries and programs for those who have little voice and are easily exploited. It is a witness that the church is providing trusted adults who can prevent abuse and sometimes even identify those who have suffered abuse at the hands of another.

Training equips our leaders in identifying predatory behavior. Training provides tools for identifying signs and symptoms in those who have been harmed. When we have leaders well trained in prevention, we deter bad behaviors. When we model good practices, we help others learn as well.

I invite you to add Safe Sanctuary training to your list of steps needed as your church gears up for the season.

Our Safe Sanctuaries landing page is umcnic.org/safesanctuaries. You will find tools, resources, and training options to equip your church volunteers well for the work of being Christ-beloved community. No classroom is complete without this step checked off on your to-do list.

May God grace our children and youth with caring teachers and mentors as their faith is shaped for the future.



Training Opportunity September 30

10 to 11:30 a.m.

**Downers Grove: First UMC,
1032 Maple Ave., Downers Grove**
Trainer: Deaconess Joy Hayag

This free training is an alternate to online Safe Gatherings trainings for those who cannot participate. Background checks not included and need to be coordinated with your local church leadership. For further details and registration visit umcnic.org/calendar/2023-safe-sanctuaries-training.

Clergy Appointments and Retirements

Bishop Dan Schwerin announces the following clergy appointments and retirements for the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church, effective July 1, 2023 (unless otherwise noted):

Lanny Hartzell (Elder) to Harvey: Transformation (1/2 time) (Lake South) while continuing to serve Homewood: St. Andrews (1/2 time). Lanny follows Addison Shields who returns to retirement.

John Bell (Elder) appointed under ¶ 345 to an Ecumenical Shared Ministry with First Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Louisville, Kentucky.

Michele Watkins (Provisional Member) to St. John's University in Queens, New York as Assistant Professor of Theology and Religious Studies from University of San Diego. Effective September 1.

Hannah Phillips Mollenkamp (District Superintendent Supply) to Sycamore: First as Associate (Prairie South). Hannah follows Joe Munroe who is appointed to Sugar Grove (Prairie South). Effective July 15.

Kyeong-Ah Woo (Elder) to the position of Program Manager for Mission Engagement with the Mission Engagement Unit of the General Board of Global Ministries.

Jin Yang Kim (Elder) to Liaison for Peace and Justice within the office of the General Secretary at the General Board of Global Ministries from the position of Coordinator of Korean Peninsula Dialogue and Peace building at the World Council of Churches in Geneva, Switzerland. Effective June 12.

Teren Loeppke (Deacon) to Collaborative Center for Justice from Common Cause. Effective May 1.

G. Morris (Provisional Elder) to Lansing: First (Lake South) from Chicago: West Ridge. G. follows David Price who is appointed to Glen Ellyn: First (Prairie: Central).

Aaron McLeod (Provisional Elder) to Chicago: West Ridge (1/4 time) (Lake North) while also serving at Evanston: Sherman (3/4 time) (Lake North).

Fernando Candumbo de Castro (District Superintendent Supply) to Oak Park: St Johns (1/4 time) + Chicago: Edison Park (1/4 time) Associate (Lake North District). Fernando follows Hannah Kardon who is serving as interim. Effective September 1.

Matt Temple (District Superintendent Supply) to Chicago: United Church of Rogers Park as part of the Northside Co-Op (1/2 time) (Lake North District). Matt follows Hope Chernich who is appointed to Des Plaines: First (Lake North District). Effective August 1.

Charles Yoon (Full Elder) to Flossmoor: South Suburban Korean (Lake South District) from Downers Grove: Faith (Lake South District). Charles follows Chung Nam Kwak who has been serving as interim. Effective October 1.

UMM UNITED METHODIST MEN

NORTHERN ILLINOIS CONFERENCE

2023 SPIRITUAL CONGRESS

Friday, September 15-Sunday, September 17
Conference Point Center
300 Conference Point Road
Williams Bay, WI

nicumm.org

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**HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH
SEPTEMBER 15 — OCTOBER 15**

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