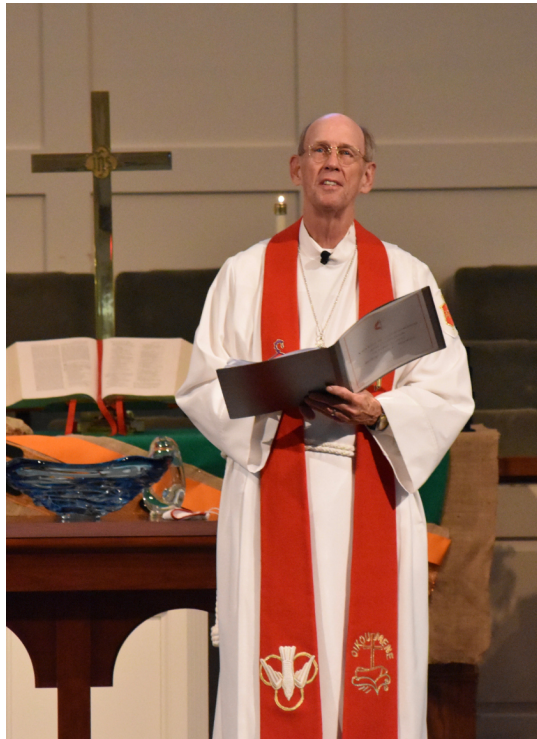


Hopkins remains NIC Interim Bishop in 2022



Bishop John L. Hopkins welcomes guests and online viewers to the ordination and commissioning service held Oct. 1, 2021.

At the close of their fall meeting, the United Methodist Council of Bishops approved the extension of retired Bishop John L. Hopkins as Northern Illinois Conference Interim Bishop past the initial end date of December 31, 2021.

The North Central Jurisdiction College of Bishops called to extend Bishop Hopkins' assignment in the Northern Illinois Conference until either new episcopal elections are held within the jurisdiction, or another plan for episcopal coverage is brought to the Council of Bishops.

In 2020, the NCJ College of Bishops made a plan to cover for retiring bishops and Bishop Hopkins agreed to serve in the interim through 2021. With the North Central Jurisdiction Conference postponement until 2022, the College of Bishops said they needed to extend the interim assignments, including Michigan Conference Bishop David Bard who is also covering the Minnesota Conference and Iowa Conference Bishop Laurie Haller who is also covering the Dakotas Conference.

While not necessarily in his plans, Hopkins said he joyfully accepts another year of interim assignment with the Northern Illinois Conference.

"I thought my interim ministry would be concluding soon. I thought the pandemic would be over by the end of summer. Last October, I thought we could have an in-person annual conference," Bishop Hopkins said. "Although my expectations have not turned out, I have been surprised by the blessing of serving in Northern Illinois. I continue to meet people with a love of Jesus and his Church. I am surrounded by people who want the Kingdom of God to be on earth as in heaven. I am inspired by your faith, hope, and love."

Bishop Hopkins thanks all the churches, clergy, and laity in the Northern Illinois Conference for welcoming him and his wife Elaine this past year.

"Northern Illinois already feels like home to Elaine and me," said Bishop Hopkins. "Staying in a place you love with people you love is a blessing. God is good."



North Central Jurisdiction special session addresses racism, inclusion and number of bishops

By Christa Meland, Dir. of Communications Minnesota Conference

When Rev. Ron Bell was in high school, his father became superintendent of the Eastern District of the Delaware Annual Conference. As their family was moving into the superintendents' big, beautiful parsonage in Eastern Maryland, the entire local police department surrounded the house with guns drawn and told Bell and his father to get on the ground with their hands behind their heads. Why?

"Because a little white girl across the street saw black folk in her neighborhood," said Bell, who serves Camphor Memorial UMC in St. Paul, Minn. "That's when I knew race matters."

Rev. Juyeon Jeon, senior pastor at First UMC in Bensenville, Ill., came to the U.S. from South Korea in 2008 and said "she worked very hard to assimilate to the culture and language."

But says she deeply realized that race matters through her six-year-old daughter.

"It was right after George Floyd's death and I was taking a walk in our predominantly white neighborhood with my daughter, who looks just like me," said Jeon. "About 100 feet away two men in a car driving by started shouting 'hey Chinese' and they kept calling out to us."

Jeon said she held her daughter close and kept walking but said the experience is still hurtful.

"Whatever their intention was, I was feeling threatened and mocked and to think this is the reality my daughter will live, I was so upset," Jeon said. "This needs to be changed and stopped."

Jeon and Bell were among six "truth-tellers" who shared their personal experiences with race at a virtual North Central Jurisdictional (NCJ) gathering that took place Nov. 10 and 11.

Approximately 250 delegates participated in the official Zoom meeting, and others from across the 10-conference jurisdiction watched it live online. Delegates spent the majority of their time together on three big topics of conversation—dismantling racism, the future of episcopal leadership, and the future of The United Methodist Church.

Dismantling racism

In the dismantling racism portion of the session, retired Bishop Hope Morgan Ward reminded attendees that the ministry of anti-racism centers in discipleship.

"The arc of history bends toward justice, and we will be forceful in pulling that arc

down together, all to the glory of God," she said. She noted that the Council of Bishops has centered the ministries of equity, inclusion, justice, diversity, and antiracism—and in doing so, has appreciated the work of Brian Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama, and chief creator of the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. He urges four pillars for anti-racism efforts:

- Hear and share true stories; in particular, give space to and honor stories of people of color.
- Get "proximate" to the suffering and pain of racism and inequality.
- Expect resistance.
- Protect your hopefulness.

After hearing from Ward, the six truth-tellers each issued a challenge to the North Central Jurisdiction and the Church.

"Justice takes more than just words; it requires sacrifice," said Andres De Arco, National Assistant Director to the United Methodist Hispanic Youth Leadership Academy and a member of the West Ohio Conference. "What are you willing to sacrifice for justice?"

continue on page 2, see From the Cover: Beloved

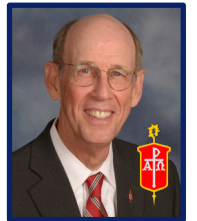
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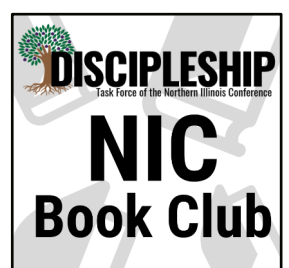
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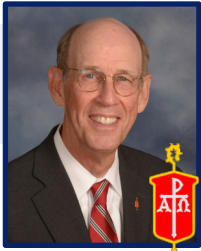


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FROM THE BISHOP: Living with expectation and finding joy

As I return to the Northern Illinois Conference for another year, I wish you an early Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I look to next year

expecting God to break into our lives to save our world and give us hope. I expect God to give us joy as we follow the way of Jesus.

Yes, I know the times are hard. They were hard when Jesus was born. Israel had been waiting a long time for a Savior. God seemed so distant. When Matthew interpreted the birth of Jesus, he remembered Isaiah's (7:14) prophecy almost 735 years earlier:

"All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, And they shall name him Emmanuel...'
which means, "God is with us."

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus." Matthew 1:22-25 (NRSV)

A child, born of a virgin, called Emmanuel—"God with us." What a surprise! What joy! Of course, Mary and Joseph both needed angels to see the joy in such a situation.

Joy is often born of sorrow or pain or fear as a gift. At the time, Mary—and certainly Joseph—were more afraid than filled with joy. She was a virgin—who would believe that? He took her as his wife—wondering, trusting—but had no marital relations. They had no money, or home, or security—only faith.

Jesus usually comes to us in situations where we are not in control, when "our way" is not working. Advent is a time to wait for that which we cannot see. Do you remember being a child waiting for Christmas to come? I imagine you did not like the waiting, but the anticipation and excitement opened your heart to a wonder you have never forgotten. Perhaps that is why Jesus said you must become like a child to experience the kingdom of God.

I remember waiting for our three sons to be born. During that time, I learned that "expectation" is not the same as "hoping." To "hope" means to wish for something that we are not sure is going to happen. When we "expect" something, we are sure it is going to happen. That is why a woman with child is not said to be "hoping"; she is said to be "expecting!"

As Elaine and I began to prepare for the big event, we purchased baby furniture, looked for baby clothes, and bought food and toys. I practiced or pretended to put them to bed and kiss them good night, even before they were born! My world changed as I waited and anticipated. The fruit of living with expectation was a birth that was not without struggle but filled with joy and everlasting love.

Expectation changes our lives because we live in a new reality even before it arrives. Our faith is much the same way. We live in the reality of that first Christmas and continue to live each new day expectantly. Christ not only comes to us on Christmas Day, but every time we open our hearts, change our lives, share our faith, and serve our neighbor.

Ultimately joy—like hope, love, and peace—is a gift. God surprises us with the birth of a special child not to terrify us and run us away but to bring us closer, evoke our love and admiration, and give us joy.

As you look forward to Christmas and the New Year, slow down and live with expectation again. Pay attention to what God wants to be born into your world again. Act like a child. Look for the joy in expectation. Listen for the angels. Do not miss the miracles!

From the Cover: Beloved



Pictured with her daughter Rev. Juyeon Jeon, pastor at First UMC in Bensenville, was among six truth-tellers who shared their personal experiences with racism at the virtual North Central Jurisdictional (NCJ) gathering. Photo courtesy Juyeon Jeon.

The dismantling racism session ended with small group discussions among delegates. They reflected aloud on a question posed by Bishop Tracy Smith Malone, resident bishop of the East Ohio Conference: As you think about your context and your discipleship journey and life in Christ, how might God be calling you to make a difference, to step out more boldly and prophetically...to put your weight on the arc of history, bending toward justice?

NIC Clergy Delegate Rev. Hwa-Young Chong, who leads Community UMC in Naperville, Ill., said the witnesses from the "truth-tellers" had a profound impact on her.

"It was painful to hear how structural racism continues to harm and dehumanize the communities of color," said Rev. Chong. "At the same time, these witnesses were so powerful and I think we need to keep telling the stories and naming our hurts and wounds, even though it is very painful to do so."

The future of episcopal leadership

On the second day of the conference, delegates voted 142-13 in favor of a proposal to reduce the number of active bishops in the NCJ from nine to eight to align with the membership threshold for bishops that's set by General Conference.

In a presentation before the vote, Rev. Sara Isbell, chair of the NCJ Committee on the Episcopacy and a member of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, explained that if a

jurisdiction falls below a certain threshold in membership, the General Conference makes a decision about the number of bishops needed for that smaller number of members. Although the General Conference has not yet met to vote on a reduction, for several years, the NCJ has been below the number needed to secure nine bishops—so such a vote is expected at the postponed 2020 General Conference, now slated for Aug. - Sept. 2022. The NCJ could vote to stay with nine bishops, but then it must figure out how to pay them, apart from the Episcopal Fund that typically covers this cost.

Isbell also pointed out that we've had an opportunity over the past year to practice operating with eight bishops. Since Jan. 1, Bishop David Bard has been serving Minnesota on an interim basis in addition to being resident bishop for the Michigan Conference, Bishop Laurie Haller has been serving the Dakotas on an interim basis in addition to being resident bishop for Iowa, and Bishop John Hopkins left retirement to lead the Northern Illinois Conference. Before the vote, delegates met in small groups to explore a variety of questions around episcopal leadership.

"Everyone in my small group was committed to the process and participated," said Nancy Pendergrass, NIC lay delegate. "I found the discussion about episcopal leadership helpful, especially the priority we place on the roles enumerated in paragraph 403.1 of The Book of Discipline. We were able to share our thoughts with the jurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy, but also I clarified what I believe are the essential gifts and graces our next elected bishop should exhibit."

The future of The United Methodist Church

Drawing on John 6: 1-14, Bishop Laurie Haller told the story of Jesus feeding the 5,000 to close the day on Wednesday. She pointed out that after the meal, Jesus told his disciples to gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost.

"My dear friends, I know that you are tired," said Haller. "We often think somebody else will gather the fragments of our beloved UMC and transform the world. But now it's time for us to do something in the North Central Jurisdiction. The future of The United Methodist Church is in our hands, as we gather here to hope, to dream, to share the gospel, and to claim our connectionalism."

Jesus sends you and me out to gather up the fragments, Haller noted, which are our mixed loyalties, our stubbornness to forgive, our reluctance to accept those who

are different, and our fondness for judging. But the fragments are also the loving words we say, the songs we sing, the money we give, the food we share, and the care we offer to the discarded and battered of this world.

"No matter how many fragments we gather up or give away, the basket will always be filled with God's love, for the circle is wide, and no one should ever have to stand alone," she said. "That my friends, is beloved community. That, my friends, is our vision. That, my friends, is the future of our church. It's time for us to do something right now."

Bishop Hopkins who shared the closing prayer on the first day of the session said while most participated via Zoom, it was a joy to meet in the same place, in person with his colleague bishops for the first time in two years. He said the NCJ Conference demonstrated that we can have a virtual meeting with small groups and have meaningful discussions.

"We were able to tell stories, share perspectives, and learn from each other," Hopkins said. "While not everyone has the same views about our church, my prayer is that we can find a way for everyone to feel included in the church we love and serve. After all, it is the body of Christ!"

Delegates spent time in breakout groups to discuss what they see as priorities for the NCJ going forward and what the NCJ should accomplish in the next two to five years to fulfill these priorities.

"Overall, this special session of the Jurisdictional Conference provided a much-needed sense of hope and direction. I deeply appreciate the hard work of our Bishops, organizers, and the writing team," said Rev. Chong.

**Anne Marie Gerhardt, NIC Dir. of Communications contributed to this article.*



The NCJ special session was held via Zoom and livestreamed. To watch videos from the conference, visit vimeo.com/miumc. Photo by Rick Wolcott

NIC Delegation supports covenant to build a beloved community

By Rev. Hwa-Young Chong (Hannah), Communicator for the Northern Illinois Conference General and Jurisdictional delegation

The NIC General and Jurisdictional Delegation actively participated in the virtual North Central Jurisdictional (NCJ) Conference for the two days in November. Delegates spent most of the first day, engaged in small group conversations, discussing three main topics: dismantling racism, episcopal leadership, and the future of The United Methodist Church.

The reports from these discussions, and other pre-work reports, helped a six-person writing team (selected by delegation heads) to develop a covenant. Our own Rev. Brian Gilbert served on the writing team that brought the “Covenant to Build a Beloved Community” to the floor. The delegates overwhelmingly supported and adopted the covenant, which is grounded in the United Methodist baptismal vows, connecting our sacramental life to our praxis of faith.

“It is important to understand that, just as our baptism is one step in a lifelong journey of faith, so too is this covenant one step in a journey toward being the Beloved Community that God calls us to be,” said Rev. Gilbert.

The covenant calls on the North Central Jurisdiction to:

- Name colonialism, racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism as sins;
- Commit to the ongoing work of ending racism;
- Request the NCJ Bishops of Color convene all BIPOC delegates to address the trauma in communities of color;
- Request the Mission Council to address white supremacy and Christian nationalism at the next NCJ session;

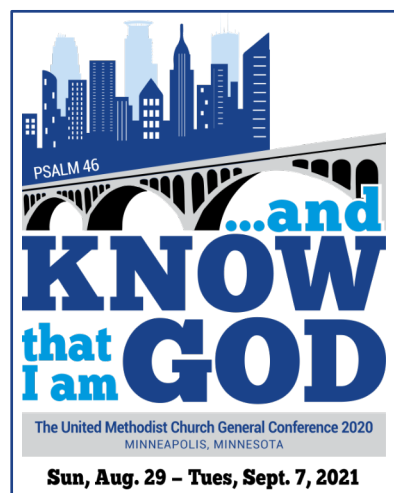


- Support the work of the Conference Commissions on Religion and Race and Annual Conference anti-racism task force
- Avoid pursuing charges to LGBTQIA+ clergy;
- Request the Bishops to dismiss charges related to LGBTQIA+ identity or officiating same-gender weddings;
- Convene a special session of the NCJ on November 2-5, 2022, if the 2020 General Conference, currently scheduled for 2022, is further postponed or canceled;
- Use existing disciplinary and conference provisions to accommodate local congregations and clergy seeking disaffiliation; and,
- Encourage conversations about contextualization and regional unity.

The NIC delegates actively engaged and offered leadership in the pre-work, strategy development and building collaboration with other Annual Conference delegates, fully support the covenant and commit to live into it. We hope for our Annual Conference to also adopt this covenant and continue the work of ending racism.

Please feel free to get in touch with our delegation chair, Rev. Alka Lyall by email at pastoralkalyall@gmail.com if you have any questions.

To read the full text of the covenant, visit umcnic.org/NCJ.



Setting criteria for 2022 General Conference

By Heather Hahn*

Organizers are pressing forward with plans to hold what many expect to be a pivotal General Conference next year. At the same time, they acknowledge that the pandemic may once again thwart those plans.

The Commission on the General Conference aims to

decide in the first three months of next year whether The United Methodist Church’s top legislative assembly can go ahead as scheduled Aug. 29-Sept. 6 in Minneapolis.

In the meantime, the international elected body met online Nov. 18 to continue preparations. Commission members also unanimously approved a list of values that will guide their decision to go forward or delay once again. The main obstacles to General Conference remain the availability of travel visas and vaccines.

The coronavirus already has twice forced postponements of the assembly originally set for May 2020. The bishops also found it impossible to hold a special one-day virtual General Conference earlier this year.

Kim Simpson, the commission’s chair and a veteran delegate from the Central Texas Conference, urged fellow members to make clear that the event will be “as inclusive as possible.”

“It will not be just U.S. delegates,” she stressed. “We as a commission are the ones that make the decision, so we as a commission need to make sure that we allay the fears that are out there.”

General Conference is the only body that can officially speak for the church. The coming gathering has 862 voting delegates — 55.9% from the U.S., 32% from Africa, 6% from the Philippines, 4.6% from Europe and the remainder from concordat churches that have close ties to The United Methodist Church. Half of those delegates are lay and half are clergy. Bishops from around the globe as well as interpreters and other staff also play key roles in the proceedings. Bishops preside but do not have a vote. It’s possible to have a quorum with just U.S. delegates, but commission members and General Conference staff agreed that is not good enough.

“The fact that we are an inclusive church means that we should be working tirelessly for getting as many people there as is possible — and not being content with just receiving the quorum,” said the New York Conference’s Bishop Thomas Bickerton, the Council of Bishops representative on the commission.

While the timing of General Conference remains a question mark, no one questions that the coming assembly will likely mark some kind of turning point. After decades of intensifying debate over the status of LGBTQ people in the denomination, the coming General Conference faces multiple proposals to divide the global denomination along theological lines. All were drafted before COVID-19 became a household word.

The most endorsed of these proposals is the Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation. If adopted, the protocol would allow traditionalist churches and conferences (those that support restrictions on gay marriage and ordination) to leave with church property and \$25 million to start a new denomination. The proposal also sets aside \$2 million for other groups of churches that might leave.

With the importance of this General Conference in mind, the commission approved the following values for consideration:

- Reasonable threshold for delegate participation (overall and by global region)
- Health and safety of General Conference delegates, staff, volunteers and guests
- Inclusion
- Anti-racism
- Integrity
- Credibility
- Recognition of The United Methodist Church’s mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world
- Owning the responsibility of the commission to set the time and place of General Conference

Marie Kuch-Stanovsky of the Pacific Northwest Conference added to the value of inclusion that the commission should consider the participation of young-adult delegates. The Rev. Beth Ann Cook of the Indiana Conference also reemphasized the value of not using only U.S. delegates to reach a quorum.

Commission members briefly debated whether it’s possible to hold a hybrid General Conference where most delegates meet in person while others meet online. Last year, the commission named a technology study team to look into the possibilities of holding General Conference online. The team’s report outlined several obstacles in the way of such a conference.

Those hurdles include the multiple time zones between delegates who live in the Philippines and the U.S., the inequity of internet availability and the difficulty in safeguarding voting. After the special General Conference in 2019, the commission found evidence of four ineligible people casting votes using the credentials of delegates who were not present.

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Tending the Harvest weekend highlights discipleship



Rev. Olu Brown, senior pastor at Impact Church in Atlanta, delivered the message on Discipleship Making at the conference-wide worship service held Nov. 14 at Our Saviour's UMC in Schaumburg.

The NIC Discipleship Task Force thanks all those who attended the Tending to the Harvest weekend events Nov. 13 - 14. It was a great joy to be in person for the conference-wide worship service at Our Saviour's UMC in Schaumburg.

The Rev. Olu Brown, lead pastor at Impact Church in Atlanta, brought an inspiring message on "Making Disciples" focusing on Matthew 9:37: "Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.'" Brown said to make disciples we need to "see" people, "connect" with each other, and "follow" Jesus.

"What is your church's call to action?" asked Rev. Brown. "In the

final chapter of Matthew's gospel, we are told to go into all the world, making disciples of Jesus Christ. The call to action of the church is still the same. And in my opinion, we are living in the greatest evangelistic season of our lifetime. We need to shift from seeing pandemic problems to pandemic possibilities – this is a great time to make disciples."

Also a special thanks to Rev. Kyungsu Park, NIC elder and former youth/young adult pastor living in California serving as a hospital chaplain, for leading a Zoom symposium on Saturday, Nov. 13. He spoke about the connection between relationship building and discipleship making with youth.

"You can't have discipleship without relationship," said Rev. Park. "In that sense, our leaders have to 'grow together' with their youth if they hope to help make disciples of Jesus Christ," said Rev. Park.

Following the presentation, participants learned more about the Intentional Discipleship System (IDS) process. The Task Force has several resources available to help congregations develop or enhance an Intentional Discipleship System for your congregation, including IDS Resource Team contacts for each district who can help guide you. To find out more, visit umcnic.org/intentionaldiscipleship.

The Bible as a resource for diverse perspectives, wisdom, and love

By Michael Graves*

I teach biblical studies as an academic discipline in college, and I also teach the Bible in adult education classes at church. In our church, we are blessed to have thoughtful, encouraging, and challenging sermons, and a host of other opportunities to experience the transformative power of the Bible's message. The Bible is more than a foundation for the church's life, it is also an ever-present source of inspiration for loving God and loving our neighbor.

One special blessing that the Bible offers is diverse perspectives on complex topics. The Bible gives us a center of gravity in Jesus, but it also provides well-rounded viewpoints to help us think about challenging issues. On a host of topics, such as divine providence and human freedom, or community obligations and individual responsibility, biblical passages present us with a measure of blessed diversity. Because these topics are not simple, the Bible is not simplistic in how it addresses them. We can learn from biblical diversity how to think with balance, depth, and charity. Sometimes the Bible offers diverse perspectives because its ancient contexts differed from each other. This teaches us that contexts matter and that applications can change as contexts change.

When we read the Bible, we are not looking for pat answers, but wisdom that can guide us to apply abiding truths to new situations. In the stories of Genesis, the poetry

of Psalms, the teaching of Jesus—and all scripture—we find core values that anchor us, even as we learn new insights that extend the reach of biblical teaching into new areas. One of my main goals as a teacher is to help us see beyond the context-specific facets of biblical texts, such as ancient warfare or slavery, to find the underlying message that has transformed Christians throughout the centuries. This message has major themes, such as love, justice, holiness, and mercy. It comes to us through the Bible's rich literary forms and diverse voices, which help us to cultivate the wisdom we need to apply scripture's message today.

Biblical interpretation is a process that takes place in community. We interpret and apply the teaching of scripture in conversation with each other. I love studying the Bible with members of my church family. The insights I learn are more precious than gold. The more I study, the more I sense my need to be humble about what I think I see, and to listen to what the Spirit may be saying through the Bible to others. In order to gain the full measure of wisdom from scripture, we need to be deeply connected to each other, listen well to one another, and invite all to the conversation of biblical interpretation. Perhaps the most beautiful thing about the Bible is that, in order to interpret it well, we must be bound to each other in love.



*Michael Graves (PhD, Hebrew Union College) is a professor of biblical studies at Wheaton College (IL) and is a member of Gary United Methodist Church in Wheaton. He is the author of numerous books and essays on the Old Testament and early Christian and Jewish biblical interpretation. His most recent book is titled "How Scripture Interprets Scripture: What Biblical Writers Can Teach Us about Reading the Bible."

Online courses focus on biblical education, interpretation

A pair of upcoming online courses from BeADisciple.com will focus on Bible education, with enrollment open now. "Teaching Adults" and "Biblical Interpretation" are two-week classes that will begin in January.

The courses' instructor, Rev. Beth Perry, has more than 30 years of experience in the pastorate and has taught these classes multiple times each year for the past six years.

"One of the things that has happened during the past couple of years is that the number of Bible users actually has gone up," Perry says. "Research by the Barna Group shows that as COVID-19 took over, there was a drop in the proportion of Americans who never use the Bible, down from 35 percent in 2019 to 29 percent in January 2021. But my experience also has shown that church leaders and teachers often struggle to effectively help persons in Bible study."

"Teach Adults" is a technique course, focusing on how to best capitalize on each person's learning styles. The first week outlines generational characteristics, multiple intelligences (innate ways in which a person learns), influential factors, stages of development, and the role of the

teacher. Learners also look at mission statements, spiritual development, and the classroom climate. In the second week, participants explore learning hooks and teaching methods (such as storytelling), develop mission statements, and create lesson plans.

Both new and experienced teachers enroll in the class and participate in the online format. "Because everyone responds to our discussions, it's a much richer, fuller education than you would get in an in-person course without input from quiet people," Perry adds.

"Biblical Interpretation" is all about context, Perry says, recognizing that there was a context for the original writers of Scripture, context for us, and context for all others across time who have (or will) accessed the Bible.

"This is designed for people who really enjoy digging into Scripture, who love hearing what people hear in the Scripture and learning from that," Perry says. "It's for people who love words and looking at multiple meanings, people for whom the intellectual element of faith is part of their spiritual journey."



The required textbook (which is read before class begins) asks key questions about Scripture, readers of the Bible, and how those two interact. It explores the interpretation method and gives examples of its application.

"As Bible usage continues to go up, we want our learners to have access to the tools to make both teaching and learning Bible more meaningful," Perry concludes. "These two classes do just that."

More in-depth information and enrollment information on "Teach Adults" and "Biblical Interpretation" is available at BeADisciple.com under the course schedule.

BeADisciple.com is a ministry of the Richard and Julia Wilke Institute for Discipleship, a United Methodist institution in Winfield, Kansas that is dedicated to providing Christian resources and education for building disciples and strengthening ministries.

More information is at InstituteforDiscipleship.org.

Aurora church hosts KAIROS blanket exercise By Al Benson*



Michelle Curiel, right, narrates a KAIROS blanket exercise Sunday, Nov. 7, at Aurora's Wesley United Methodist Church to teach history between U.S. Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Curiel directs worship and children and family discipleship at Wesley. Photo by Al Benson.

**Benson is a freelance photojournalist based in Aurora, Ill.*

"What you do to one color, you do to all colors," said an Ojibwe nation member at Wesley United Methodist Church in Aurora Sunday, Nov. 7.

Joseph Standing Bear Schranz, a United Methodist, chronicled centuries of injustices imposed on native Americans by the U.S. government, settlers and European explorers. He keyed a KAIROS interactive blanket exercise outdoors on the church's east lawn.

Schranz founded the Lockport-based Midwest SOARRING (Save Our Ancestors Remains & Resources Indigenous Network Group) Foundation. According to Schranz, injustices included forced removal of tribes from ancestral lands, prohibition of worship customs and no voting rights until the 1950s.

"We don't want a handout," Schranz said, "We want a hand up." He pointed to poor schools, high rates of alcoholism and drug addiction and lack of opportunities as Native American issues.

"What we don't lack is courage," he said. "We're not crushed."

Small group discussions followed presentations. Accompanying Schranz was Annette McFeely, another activist, who invited the public to visit a Native American cultural center in Glen Ellyn that is currently in development and will open soon.

The two-hour afternoon program attracted about 50 persons. Blankets arranged on the ground inside a circle of folding chairs represented Native American lands. Michelle Curiel, director of Wesley worship and children and family discipleship, narrated the script provided by KAIROS, a Canadian ministry working towards peace and justice. A half dozen congregants read prepared statements. Refreshments were served before and after the program.

Members of the Northern Illinois Conference Anti-Racism Task Force and NIC Committee on Native American Ministries partnered with Wesley UMC in organizing the event. Rev. John Bell, Wesley UMC pastor, said his church began a celebration of Native American Heritage Month on Nov. 1.

"It is a time to celebrate rich and diverse cultures, traditions, and histories and to acknowledge the important contributions of Native people," he said quoting the National Congress of American Indians. "Heritage Month is also an opportune time to educate the general public about how tribes lost access to their lands, to raise a general awareness about the unique challenges Native people have faced both historically and in the present, and the ways in which tribal citizens have worked to conquer these challenges."

UMCOR launches Afghan refugee resettlement reimbursement program

Following the fall of Kabul, an estimated 75,000 Afghans are arriving in the United States to rebuild their lives. They are fleeing retribution or persecution from the Taliban and have one goal: to live in safety.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is supporting long-time partner Church World Service (CWS) in welcoming, resettling and providing these families with housing, legal assistance, case management, mental health support, medical care, school enrollment and community sponsorship.

Community support is essential for successful resettlement. UMCOR and CWS are appealing to local United Methodist churches in the U.S. to engage in resettlement efforts and enter a sponsorship relationship with CWS. Congregations with prior experience resettling refugees and those without prior experience are welcome to participate.

UMCOR recognizes that providing resettlement support to refugees presents congregations with new responsibilities. Therefore, because the church is explicitly called to "welcome the stranger," because John Wesley claimed for us a broad definition of pastoral care when he declared "I look upon all the world as my parish," because "there is no holiness but social holiness" and because there is a long tradition of offering welcome

to refugees, UMCOR will partner with local United Methodist churches to share some of the costs associated with Afghan refugee resettlement.

The Afghan Refugee Resettlement Reimbursement program will reimburse up to \$1,000 per local United Methodist church in the United States that is in a sponsorship relationship with Church World Service.

United Methodist churches in the United States in a sponsorship relationship with Church World Service are eligible to apply. Local UMCs who have not yet entered into sponsorship but are interested can visit CWS' website at cwsglobal.org for more information.

Application materials include the Afghan Refugee Resettlement Reimbursement form and the Wire Transfer Request form. Applications must be signed by the senior pastor and by a Church World Service staff member (affiliate or national).

Complete applications will be received on a rolling basis through April 30, 2022. (Note: This invitation to apply does not guarantee funding. UMCOR reserves the right to deny any request for funding at any time to any organization without providing cause.)

UMCOR must receive scanned receipts for expenses

Afghan Refugee Resettlement

Reimbursement Grants

UMCOR reimbursement grants of up to \$1,000 for U.S. UMC churches that partner with Church World Service to resettle Afghan families



listed in the Afghan Refugee Resettlement Reimbursement form. Expenses eligible for reimbursement must fit the following criteria:

- Pre-arrival support, such as: setting up/furnishing an apartment; providing a culturally appropriate welcome meal; welcoming a family at the airport.
- Post-arrival support: assisting in English Language Learners (ELL) tutoring; providing transportation to medical appointments; assisting with grocery shopping or community navigation; mentorship.
- Providing other financial support to a newly arrived Afghan family to help them adjust to life in the U.S.

Questions about the application form or the process can be sent to migrationsp@umcor.org. To apply, visit umcmmission.org/umcor/afghan-refugee-resettlement-reimbursement-program.

Learn more about local resettlement efforts by contacting the Northern Illinois Conference Refugee Coordinators Rev. Jonathan and Rhodalyne Crail at jcrail@firstumc.net.

2022 GC (continued from page 3)

The Rev. Joe DiPaolo, a commission member from the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, urged the commission not to completely rule out the possibility of holding a hybrid General Conference.

"Technology has been evolving," he said.

But a particular concern to multiple commission members is how a hybrid United Methodist gathering would handle legislative committees — the first stop for most legislation at General Conference. During the coming assembly, there will be 14 legislative committees — each with delegates from multiple delegations and in need of interpreters working in multiple languages.

"I just think about the practical fact that legislative committees are already hard in person and to make sure

everyone is included in the conversation," said the Rev. Laura Merrill, a commission member from the Rio Texas Conference. "In this case, how does it work to have a delegation in one place when they're on six different legislative committees?"

The Rev. Mujinga Kashala, the commission's vice chair, said through an interpreter that internet connectivity remains a big challenge in her country of Congo.

"For instance, I missed the executive committee because, again, I had connectivity problems," she said. "Sometimes we can connect for a little while but then we are cut off again."

Ultimately, DiPaolo agreed that the commission "is working to try to have as much full participation in an in-person conference as possible."

Bickerton said that the values the group adopted set "a very high bar."

"I think the embracing of these values signals to the whole church that this commission is taking this work very seriously."

The group next plans to meet in January, but it may take more than one meeting to decide whether the 2022 General Conference is a go.

**Hahn is assistant news editor for UM News.*

LOCAL CHURCH NEWS **Jesus Love sets new chapter as a chartered church**

By Anne Marie Gerhardt, NIC Dir. of Communications

Through many prayers and support for more than a decade-long journey, Jesus Love Korean New Faith Community (NFC) became a chartered United Methodist Church on Nov. 14.

"As we have heard from African wisdom, 'It takes a village to raise a child!' That has been true in the process of this new faith community coming to fruition," said Rev. Martin Lee, NIC Dir. of Congregational Development and Redevelopment. "Since we planted Jesus Love NFC in 2008, as a part of the conference Harvest 2020 movement, so many people have been involved in the process. As the apostle Paul said, 'I planted, Apollos watered, but God made it grow.'"

Along the way, Jesus Love has gone through many changes, including three bishops, three District Superintendents, two pastors, and a pandemic that postponed their chartering for two years. Today, the congregation has grown to 145 chartering members with a mission to serve and love their community. They share space with Central UMC at 8237 Kenton Ave., in Skokie, Ill.

Jesus Love's lead pastor Rev. Sun Hyung Jo says only 30 people were attending when he first came in 2013. Today, 90% of the Korean congregation is in their 20s, 30s and early 40s, and there are nearly 40 families with young children. The congregation's younger population includes 30% working young adults, 20% undergraduate students from Northwestern University, and 35 children and six youth.

Bishop John L. Hopkins, Lake North District Superintendent Brittany Isaac and Rev. Lee presided over the chartering service. The church's official name is Chicago Jesus Love. Bishop Hopkins said during his message, "Today we are standing on the shoulders of those who came before us."

He referred to the apostles and prophets whose cornerstone was Jesus Christ. "They carried the message of God's awesome love in Jesus to those who did not know the peace of Christ and felt included in God's salvation," said Bishop Hopkins. "Now is your time to build on the foundation of the apostles and prophet and make Jesus Christ your cornerstone."

Rev. Jo said the service and the Bishop's message felt like a new calling from God and for Jesus Love, especially in Chicagoland and worldwide.

"I feel like it's a new start for this congregation and how to be part of universal church for the glory of God," said Rev. Jo. "Our mission is simple: We want to make a new church to confess Jesus' love in action, by loving worship, loving the word, loving church and loving people."

Since his appointment in 2013, Pastor Sun Hyung Jo has baptized 20 people and three people are currently in a baptismal class. The congregation has six active small groups, supports a missionary in Jordan, advocates for undocumented immigrants, and fully pays conference apportionments, said Rev. Lee.

The congregation has been blessed financially over the years. In recognition of that blessing each year during their anniversary celebration, the congregation gives back by taking an offering to develop other new faith communities totaling more than \$6,000.

"I thank God for the first church planting Pastor, Rev. Kook Jin Yun and his wife, Mi-Kyung, for their sacrificial work and for the current Pastor Sun Hyung Jo and his wife, Monsoon, for their resilience and love for the 1.5 generation of Korean people in Chicagoland," said Rev. Lee.

Kelly Yang who is on the church's leadership team says Jesus Love feels like home for her family. "My husband and I have two daughters and we find comfort here," said Yang. "Worship here is a big part of our life and I can feel it in my heart."

Ryan and Jessica Lee and their 2-year-old son moved to the Chicagoland area from New Jersey about a year ago and found a church home at Jesus Love. "This church is a grace for our family," the couple said.

Numerous partners beyond the Northern Illinois Conference, including the Korean National Plan of the General Board of Global Ministries, the North Central Jurisdiction Korean Mission and the connection of Korean congregations that stretches from California to New York Island helped Jesus Love grow along the way.

"The support both spiritually and temporally from these organizations has been essential to the success of this congregation," said Rev. Lee.

Chicago Jesus Love has seen many young professionals come to have faith in Jesus Christ during its ministry.

"There is a rich pool of gifts in this congregation that I am confident will be an asset to the reign of God for many years to come," said Rev. Lee. "This church will have an impact around the world. It already does, as with its short-term mission to Mongolia, Guatemala, and Costa Rica.

The people of the church have experienced Jesus making a way, something that Bishop Hopkins alludes to regularly."

Learn more about Chicago Jesus Love at jlchurch.org.



Bishop John L. Hopkins (left) presided over the chartering service for Chicago Jesus Love on Nov. 14, 2021 with Lake North District Superintendent Brittany Isaac (center) and Rev. Sun Hyung Jo (right). Photo by Anne Marie Gerhardt.

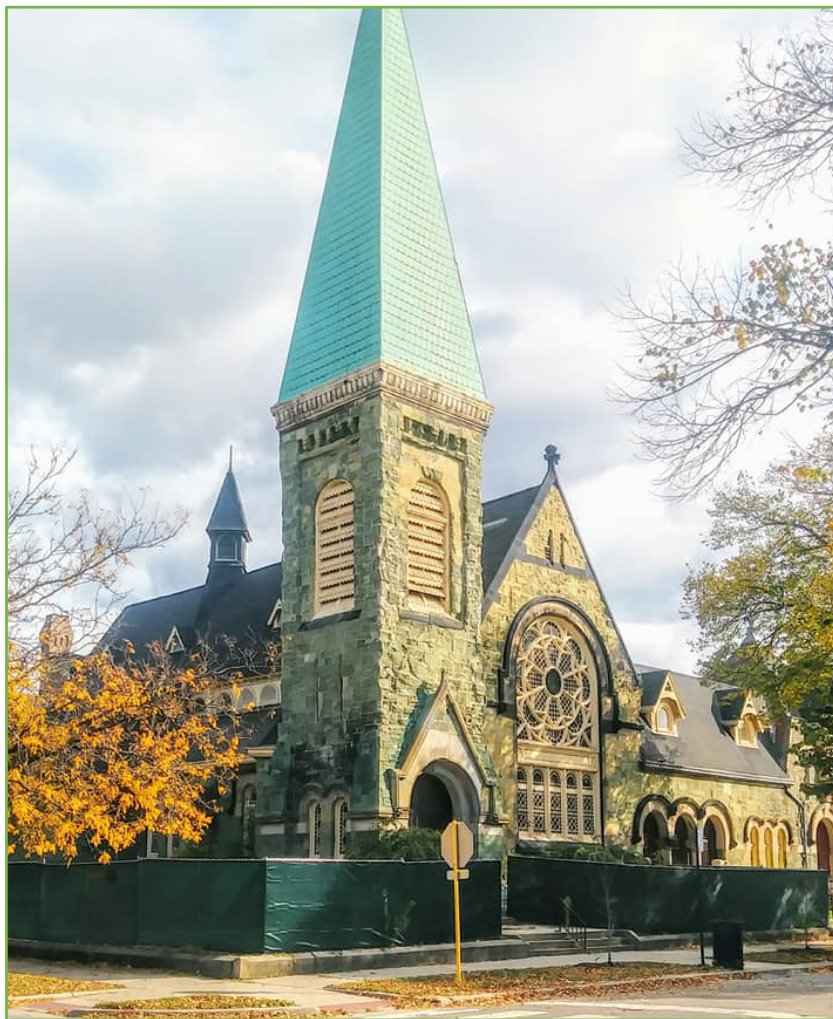


Chicago Jesus Love's 145 chartering members pose making signs of a heart following the service. Photo courtesy Chicago Jesus Love.



A young girl makes the sign of a heart in her hand showing her love for her church during the chartering service. Photo by Anne Marie Gerhardt

LOCAL CHURCH NEWS Chicago historic church receives large preservation project grant



A United Methodist Church in the historic Pullman district, a Kenwood synagogue and two homes associated with the Great Migration of Black Americans to Chicago are among 12 recipients that are selected for Adopt-A-Landmark grants from Chicago's Department of Planning and Development (DPD).

Valued at more than \$4.3 million, the tentative grant awards are the largest to be allocated in support of planned restoration projects since the Adopt-A-Landmark program debuted in 2016.

"This round of grant awards is focusing on neighborhood-scale buildings and structures that help define who we are as a city," Commissioner Maurice Cox said. "Whether it's for a house of worship, a corner commercial building, or a neighborhood tavern, the grants will help preserve these structures for generations of neighborhood residents to come."

Greenstone UMC, located at 11211 S. St. Lawrence Ave., was awarded \$1.08 million. After receiving a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Greenstone UMC began restoring its 135-year-old church building in October 2020 and embarked on its campaign, "Raise, Repair, and Restore." Work has included a full roof replacement, restoring the "greenstone" facade and stabilizing the bell tower. Greenstone UMC pastor Luther Mason says the DPD grant will put the total restoration project that includes exterior facade work, interior improvements and restoration ahead of schedule by 2-3 years.

The Greenstone Church was built by industrialist George Pullman in his "company town" of Pullman in 1882. Designed by Solon Beman, it features a unique facade of green stone quarried in Pennsylvania. The original cost of the building was \$57,000, and seats 600. With the exception of the chancel arrangements, the sanctuary has remained unchanged since the 1880s. The cherry wood that comprises the altar and pews, over 90% of the stained glass windows, and the two manual-tracker pipe organ are original to the building.

The city's Adopt-A-Landmark award is one of the largest grants for a Northern Illinois Conference church.

Pastor Mason says the Methodist Church has been a major part of the Pullman history for 139 years and this grant helps put the church in a place to continue serving the community.

"We have gotten support in this effort from the Pullman community, and they realize that it's not just the historical significance of the building, but the fact that the church has been the 'community center' and that the community needs a place of faith, justice, and service within the Pullman historic district and beyond," said Mason.

Financed by downtown construction projects through the Neighborhood Opportunity Bonus system, the DPD awards are made available to individual landmarks and landmark district buildings on an annual basis. The 12 projects were selected from 16 applications received by DPD staff this summer. Awards were determined based on project viability, neighborhood needs, project scope, and other factors.

January/February 2022 Calendar Events

Day of Call 2022 Sunday, January 2 or Sunday, January 9

The NIC Board of Ordained Ministry Recruitment Team is working to highlight God's persistent calling of all servants to lives of holiness and ministry, and some servants to the set-apart ministry of the ordained. This year we are highlighting the season of Epiphany and offering resources that could be used in worship on January 2 or 9.

Clergy are encouraged to share your own call story, reflecting on the call of Mary, Elizabeth, John the Baptist and the Magi, or the joyful response of the shepherds to the angels' proclamation and their experience of the good news of Christmas.

If you would like to review liturgical resources (prayer, call to worship, Scripture, song), or need a video resource that could be played during live or virtual worship, please reply to us at srpastor@fumcbelvidere.com.

Epiphany is the season in which we declare that new light from God continues to shine in the darkness and the darkness has not, can not, and never will be able to overcome it. Thank you for your ministry and please let us know how we can support you as you steward that trust. For more information, visit umcnic.org/dayofcall2022.

District Leadership Events

- Lake South - Jan. 22. Details to come.
- Prairie South - Jan. 22, 9 a.m. - 12 noon, DeKalb First UMC. No Cost
- Prairie North - Jan. 29, 8:30 a.m. - 12 noon, Freeport
- Faith UMC, \$10, Worship will be Livestreamed
- Prairie Central - Jan. 29. Details to come.
- Lake North - Jan. 29, 8:30 a.m. - 12 noon, Glenview UMC and online. No cost

For further details and registration, visit umcnic.org/calendar.



NIC UMW Mission u January 21 - 23 "There's Far More Than Meets the Eye"

Mission u is presented by United Methodist Women for all (children, youth, men and women).

Purpose: Learning for the Transformation of the World.

Organizers will offer at least two adult classes, possibly hybrid (in-person & online).

Possible study options can be found at unitedmethodistwomen.org/mission-studies.

For details and registration, visit umwnic.org.

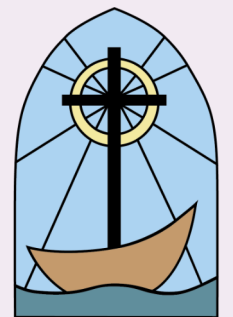
Laity Convocation 2022

Saturday, Feb. 12, 9 a.m. - 12 noon (Online via Zoom)
"Hold Fast To The Mast"
Strengthening Our Spiritual Lives

Speakers: Kara Lassen Oliver, Associate Publisher of The Upper Room and George Groves, UMM President.

Breakout sessions will be held for small group conversations following the presentations.

Registration will open in January. For details, visit umcnic.org/calendar/laity-convocation-2022.



HOLD FAST TO THE MAST
Strengthening Our Spiritual Lives
LAITY CONVOCATION 2022

Save the Date: Vital Mergers Workshop

March 19, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Location: First UMC, 503 N. Lily Creel Rd., Freeport, IL.
Registration fee: \$20 - lunch box provided

Speaker: Dirk Elliott, Director of Congregational Vibrancy and Leadership Development for the Michigan Conference.

Attend this workshop and explore new ways your church might become healthier through a merger.

Register at umcnic.org/calendar/vital-merger-workshop-2022.

Sponsored by the NIC Office of Congregational Development and Redevelopment.

DYK???



Rolling with the changes

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



The NIC Cabinet takes a tailgate break outside First UMC in DeKalb during one of their in-person meetings across the conference.

As I write this reflection, we are in an in-between time. In-between fall and winter. In-between Advent and Christmas. In-between the current year and the New Year. In-between a sense that we are on the other side of COVID-19 but also facing another variant circling the globe; its impact is yet to be determined.

2021 has been filled with ups and downs, adjustments, and compromise. While we cling to some semblance of normality, we are also aware of the fragile state of our day-to-day existence. Most churches are gathering for worship and preparing for the first in-person Christmas Eve Service since 2019 while also growing in their skill and capacity to livestream. Most congregations are moving cautiously, one step at a time into their futures, knowing that contingencies are now necessary for all our planning.

The Northern Illinois Conference Cabinet has also been adjusting and readjusting over these past two years. In 2020, we quickly learned how to work as a team on Zoom. In 2021, we welcomed Bishop Hopkins to our

Zoom table and tentatively met in person a few times into the summer.

This fall, as we reacquaint ourselves with in-person meetings and introduce Bishop Hopkins to the geography of the conference, we have been alternating between Zoom and in-person meetings while traveling to churches across the conference. At each site, we have respected the guidelines of our host church as a guest in their space.

In May, we met in Schaumburg at Our Saviour's (Prairie Central). In June, we met in Chicago at African Community (Lake North) and enjoyed a feast of African foods. In August, we met at Starved Rock in Utica, Ill., for a three-day retreat. In September, South Suburban Korean in Flossmoor (Lake South) graciously hosted us. In October, we met at DeKalb: First (Prairie South) and held a tailgate break in the church parking lot because of food restrictions inside the building. In November, we met at Belvidere: First (Prairie North) and in December, we met at Elgin: First (Prairie Central). Everywhere we gathered, the churches welcomed and treated us with

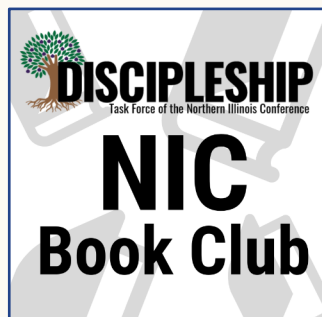
outstanding hospitality. Come January, the cabinet will meet for our annual appointment retreat in Northbrook (Lake North).

It has been good to reacquaint ourselves with the depth and breadth of the conference, showing off our churches, their ministries and leadership to Bishop Hopkins at each site. It has been good to refamiliarize ourselves with working in person while we celebrate the communities we serve.

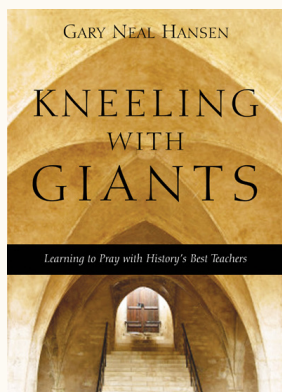
In late 2020, we all looked toward the New Year with hope as a vaccine was on the horizon, and we thought the pandemic would subside. 2021 wasn't what we envisioned; we needed to remain cautious throughout the year. It isn't easy these days to understand what might be in store for 2022. What we can count on is the grace of God, the faithfulness of Christ's disciples, and the ageless commitment of the church to be in mission and ministry no matter the challenges, bringing hope and comfort to our world.

I am grateful for that spirit that sustains and nurtures us into the unknown.

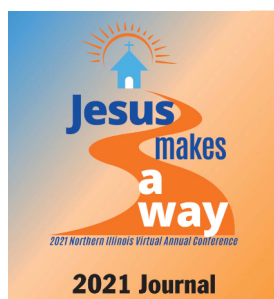
New discipleship book club kicks off in 2022



The NIC Discipleship Task Force is seeking 12 people from across the conference to participate in a pilot 4-session book discussion starting in early January. Participants will be reading and discussing "Kneeling with Giants" by Gary Neal Hansen. After the pilot, the Task Force will launch a conference-wide book club reading this same book. The intention is to deepen our prayer lives and our faith journey, as well as make connections and friendships with other United Methodists around the conference in person or via Zoom.



If you are interested in participating in the pilot, please email Amania Drane, NIC Strategic Initiatives Project Manager at adrane@umcnic.org by Wednesday, Dec. 22 or visit umcnic.org/Discipleship/NICBookClub



NIC 2021-2022 Journal Available

The 2021 Journal of the 182nd Northern Illinois Annual Conference held July 16 -17 and Oct. 1 - 2 is now available to purchase online through Amazon.com. The cost of the paperback is \$14. A free downloadable pdf is available on the Conference website. Visit umcnic.org/journal.

Job Openings

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

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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.

How to Contact Us

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 Communications staff.

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