

The Northern Illinois Conference OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Reporter

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3 Bishop Schwerin Installed



4 Tri-City Methodists working together



5 AC 23 Leaders and Speakers



7 Relief heads to Turkey

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Experiencing Lent and Holy Week with old and new traditions



Phyllis Melenas and Bonnie Holmgaard are two of the women who dedicate themselves to the Lenten Layette project at Christ UMC in Rockford.

Lent has always been considered an important time in the worship and discipleship life of a community of faith. Lent is a time for the church to journey together toward Easter and reaffirm their baptismal covenant. It is an opportunity for self-examination and reflection, as modeled by Jesus in Matthew 4: 1-11 when he prayed and fasted for 40 days before beginning his ministry. It can also be a time of great creativity and innovation, even while maintaining valued and sacred traditions. Many congregations and ministries across the conference are participating in tried and true traditions, as well as looking toward something new.

In the River Cluster (Ottawa, Marseilles, Seneca, Norway, Millington, and Serena), churches are coming together on Maundy Thursday to have a seder-inspired meal. A few pastors wanted to join their congregations to do something together. "After a successful history of carols service for Advent, we wanted to keep the momentum going and started planning for a joint Maundy Thursday Service," shared Rev. Megan Thompson from Seneca: First UMC and Marseilles UMC. The service features dynamic visuals that will include adding red paint on a doorway frame that later will be transformed into a cross during worship.

In Warren, the local churches are joining in another way. St. Paul's Lutheran Church recently hired a Sunday-only



Hungry patrons wait in a long line for the specialty pancakes at Warren UMC.

pastor. Anticipating they needed someone to help with Lent and Easter events, Rev. Matthew Smith at Warren UMC reached out to their Lutheran neighbors. The two churches are now working together throughout Lent and looking for ways to stay connected in the future. "Ecumenism and connectionalism are central to small-town ministry," said Rev. Smith. They started the partnership off with a Fat Tuesday Pancake Supper fundraiser to benefit both churches, which featured 9 different kinds of pancakes. Patrons could choose one full stack of a flavor or pick and choose between rainbow, Lucky Charms™, Fruity Pebbles™, German chocolate, chocolate peanut butter, snickerdoodle, Oreo™, Mardi Gras, and traditional buttermilk. The response was so great that people were lined up out the door, and seating was limited. The local Boy Scouts were on hand to help deliver and bus tables, while the Girl Scouts had a booth selling cookies. The joint Lenten activities are continuing with a weekly soup supper and Bible study, Maundy Thursday supper, Good Friday tenebrae service, and a Resurrection Easter egg hunt on Holy Saturday.

Joining in with the community is a way to take time to reflect on our faith outside of the church. Rockford Urban Ministries hosts an Annual Good Friday Walk for Justice that has been an annual Holy Week practice, celebrating its 38th year in 2023. The walk is open to anyone who wants to

continued on p. 3



Remembering Lent and Holy Week

We recently asked our readers, "What is the most meaningful or most moving part of your Lent observance? Why?" These are some of the answers we received. Submit your response to communications@umcnic.org and it will be added to the online list at umcnic.org/news/remembering-lent-and-holy-week

- On Ash Wednesday, at Chicago: Grace UMC of Logan Square in Logan Square, we have the sanctuary open all day for the imposition of ashes, and for prayer. The cold and quiet of being in the church early in the morning- preparing my heart and mind for lent. It makes me aware of my humanity and my need for grace.
- Rev. Hope Chernich, Chicago: Irving Park UMC and Chicago: Grace of Logan Square UMC.
- The most meaningful part of Lent is knowing there is a collective, intentional act of repentance beginning with the "marking" on Ash Wednesday. The 40 days of journey causes me to live differently as a Christian.
- Deaconess Catherine Insera, Manager of Faith & Community Relations at Kids Above All
- Ash Wednesday is the remainder that we began as dust, and dust we shall return. It is a reminder that we are only a part of this humble life for a short time. As we walk through the lenten season, we are reminded of the scarf made on the cross and the human feel behind it all. Helps me to remember to stay humble.
- Kim Emery, Certified Lay Minister, Rockford: Beth Eden UMC
- Maundy Thursday supper together is very intimate. You look around the table at the people you love in your community and know how hard it would be to lose one of your own. It allows you to feel that grief and sit with it.
- Emmy Gimple, member at Freeport: Faith UMC serving as Director of Children's, Youth, and Media Ministries at St. Luke's UMC in Dubuque, IA.
- The most moving aspect of my Lenten observance has been the reading of Mark 15 on Good Friday. The brutality of the narrative takes me to my center and reminds me that all of our days are drawn into and step toward the "yes" of Jesus. Yet, despite our suffering, we are Easter people in a Good Friday world.
- Bishop Dan Schwerin, Northern Illinois Conference



From Your Bishop: We are in a Holy Saturday Moment

This annual conference is amazing! There is so much potential here! Every day I hear a story of some creativity or investment in ministry that blesses not only the community and its people but makes Christ known in a new way. In late February and March, I was with the Institute for Congregational Development group, elders, local pastors, deacons, the Annual Conference Shepherding Team (ACST), and the District Strategy Committee training. I was amazed at the creativity and innovative spirit that characterized the laity session. From Greenstone to Oregon, I see Christ in you and through your ministry!

Sure, we are living in post-Christendom, days that the culture is not filling our churches with citizens who wish to make a missional contribution, but rather days our culture seethes with white Christian nationalism. We are facing powerful monied interests that seek to divide us for political gain, both in the culture and the mainline churches. We are living in a Holy Saturday period. We are people who know grief at the foot of the cross but also that resurrection hope is found on the road to Emmaus. I am praying that the One who can bring us hope will stay at the table with us because the night is near.

I encourage you to watch Bishop Tom Bickerton's

address, "Time to Reclaim, Revive and Renew." This message features an invitation to claim a moment of conversion, a metanoia toward beloved community. Read more below about the message that injects hope and kindness into your life of faith. (See "Time to move from rancor to revival" below.)

Watch with me and pray for the newness God would bring us in the name and hope of Jesus. Know that I am praying for you.



From Bishop Bickerton: Time to move from rancor to revival

By Heather Hahn*

◀ Amid the vitriol about rising church disaffiliations, Council of Bishops President Thomas J. Bickerton delivers a midterm State of the Church address. He called people who are staying United Methodist to change the conversation and reclaim God's calling on the church. Photo courtesy of United Methodist Communications.

In a highly unusual churchwide address, the Council of Bishops president urged fellow United Methodists to pivot away from the rancor around church disaffiliations to the work of church renewal.

"It is time — no, dare I say, long overdue — for us to go back to the heart of who we are, to use words once again like reclamation, revival, and renewal because we believe that those words lead to nothing less than a conversion of the heart," Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton said in the video address released March 2.

Bickerton, who also leads the New York Conference, delivered his midterm State of the Church address as the denomination is grappling with a mounting number of disaffiliations under a church law that allows U.S. congregations to leave with property if they meet certain procedural and financial requirements.

The denomination added the church law — Paragraph 2553 in the denomination's Book of Discipline — in 2019 after decades of intensifying debates over LGBTQ inclusion. However, the departures have accelerated since last year's launch of the Global Methodist Church, a theologically conservative breakaway denomination that has been recruiting United Methodist churches to join.

So far, a UM News review found 2,036 congregations — or about 6.6% of U.S. churches — have cleared the necessary hurdles to leave under the provision. Multiple annual conferences — the denomination's regional bodies — plan to take up more disaffiliation requests before the end of the year, when the church law expires.

In the meantime, Bickerton acknowledged, the rhetoric urging churches to exit has taken its toll — leaving many who want to stay United Methodist feeling bullied and sapped of energy.

"It's created a significant amount of fatigue in us," Bickerton said. "And it has clearly diverted our attention away from the real reason we have this church in the first place — to fulfill the mandate of loving God and loving neighbor through a mission to make disciples in order to literally change the world."

He urged United Methodists to reclaim that mandate and their evangelistic mission. He also shared a word of hope of United Methodists doing just that even in this time of anger and uncertainty.

Usually, the Council of Bishops president delivers an address at the bishops' twice-yearly meetings with a

message mainly directed at episcopal colleagues. But in this unusual time, Bickerton said he wanted to reach out to the whole denomination.

"In the midst of the current situation that the denomination is facing, I felt that it was important to provide the church with a word of motivation, hope and centering on the opportunity in front of us rather than the constant current narrative of decline and separation," he told United Methodist News.

One passage of Scripture he has focused on in recent days has been God's exhortation in Isaiah 43:19: "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."

Even before the recent church withdrawals, the denomination has dealt with decreasing U.S. membership for decades. That trend now is seen across Christianity in the United States, as the number of Americans not affiliated with any faith community continues to rise.

Bickerton preached that it doesn't have to be this way, and he attributed church decline in part to people letting the polarization of the wider culture divide the church. He urged United Methodists to discover once again what it means to be "a beloved community."

He suggested framework for building a beloved community could be found in an 1850 edition of the Book of Discipline — a far smaller volume than the Book of Discipline is today. Back before it became a book of legislation, he said, the Discipline mainly called Methodists to a lifestyle. The old Discipline contained a section with the title, "The Necessity of Union Among Ourselves."

The section urged Methodists to speak freely with and pray for each other, to defend each other's character, to never depart without prayer, and to not despise each other's gifts.

"The reality stated is simple, yet profound: If we are united, we are strong," Bickerton said in summary. "But if we're divided, we will destroy ourselves, kill the work of God we have been called to, and do irreparable harm to vulnerable souls."

He pointed to the Rev. Shuler Sitsch, a pastor in the Texas Conference, who is bringing together United Methodists who formerly attended congregations that disaffiliated.

"They are building a spirit of community out of their brokenness, and they're feeling like a new United Methodist family," Bickerton said.

Sitsch is not alone in building something new where once there was loss. The Texas Conference is being reshaped after seeing 294, or nearly half of its 598 churches, disaffiliate last year.

But the people who remain are reclaiming their presence in The United Methodist Church, said Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey, who has led the Texas Conference since January.

The conference is currently starting multiple new faith communities, she said.

"In most cases it is the laity who are planting their feet firmly and leading the way to faith communities meeting in schools, homes, event venues, churches that were previously closed and even barns," she said. "We have also been blessed by the generosity of ecumenical partners who have opened their church doors for United Methodist worship."

She said she is seeing holy moments and sacred surprises from small rural communities to larger cities.

Bickerton began his address sharing the story of his own conversion to Christianity at church camp after experiencing a season of bullying as a teenager. The experience found him forming relationships with peers who built him up, gave him a sense of hope and ultimately helped lead him to offer his life to Christ.

That kind of joy he found at church camp deserves to be shared, he said, and an old church camp song that's now in the United Methodist Hymnal shows the way. "It only takes a spark, to get a fire going," he recited. "And soon, all those around, can warm up in its glowing. That's how it is with God's love . . . You want to pass it on."

The hymn, he said, offers a simple statement of faith and a firm belief.

"God's not through with us yet," Bickerton said. "We can be the architects of a renewed, revived and reclaimed United Methodist Church."

The full mid-term address can be watched at umc.org/en/content/reclaim-revive-renew-the-necessity-of-union-among-us.

*Hahn is assistant news editor for UM News.

Bishop Dan Schwerin installed as Northern Illinois Conference's new episcopal leader

By Lisa Smith, NIC Communications Specialist



Photo captured by Rev. Alka Lyall of Bishop Dan Schwerin during the song "We Shall Overcome"



Rev. Mark Meyers presenting Bishop Dan Schwerin with a gavel crafted out of wood saved from the log cabin where the Rock River Conference started.



The choir from Victory UMC (a Swahili new faith community from Rockford) performed an anthem.



Filipino American Northern Illinois Choir performed "I Need Thee Every Hour".

The sunlight shone through the elegant stained-glass windows at First UMC in Elgin, Ill., on Feb. 26 for the installation service of Bishop Dan Schwerin. Rev. Alka Lyall caught a moment when a beam of light shone directly on the bishop during the song, "We Shall Overcome".

"The light falling on Bishop Schwerin as we sang gave me immense hope for our conference! It felt like an anointing from the heavens - the Spirit of the divine falling on him as he prepares to shepherd our conference during a very stressful season in the United Methodist Church," commented Rev. Lyall. "I look forward to having Bishop Schwerin as my pastor and episcopal leader."

Bishop Schwerin was elected to the episcopacy by the North Central Jurisdiction in November 2022. He began as the resident bishop of the Chicago Area in January.

The installation service included performances by the Filipino American Northern Illinois Choir, performing "I Need Thee Every Hour," an anthem performed by the choir from Victory UMC (a Swahili new faith community from Rockford); and organ hymns performed by Rev. Josiah Montgomery. It also included scriptures read in different languages spoken around our conference, including Korean, Spanish, Hindi, Tagalog, and English. It truly was a celebration of the diversity found in the Northern Illinois Conference.

During the installation service, Bishop Schwerin was presented with the "signs of episcopal ministry," including a bishop's crook, a baptismal pitcher, communion bread and cup, towel and basin, elder's stole, a Book of Discipline, and a gavel. The gavel held special meaning as it was crafted out of wood saved from the log cabin where the Rock River Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church started. (The Rock River Conference became the Northern Illinois Conference following the merger of The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church in 1968.) The stole, made by Elizabeth Judd of Big Mama Stoles, included an outline of the conference's geographical area and the date embroidered on the inside.

In his sermon, Bishop Schwerin reminded us that God needed to make room for creation and for

possibilities to exist. As people, agencies, and systems, we need help to make room.

"Relationships open us to revelations and transformations," he stated. Bishop Schwerin talked about the importance of relating, repeating, and reframing. He gave thanks for our Annual Conference and the work we have done. "Let's prayerfully (and musically) commit ourselves to make space for others, for possibilities, and for relationships," he urged. He ended the sermon encouraging those in attendance to join in singing "Lord, Prepare Me to Be a Sanctuary."

An offering was taken to help support children in the Northern Illinois Conference who have an interest in participating in the NIC Camps. Over two thousand dollars was collected for scholarships.

Retired Bishop Sharon Zimmerman Rader provided the dismissal and blessing. Bishop Rader is a mentor of Bishop Dan Schwerin, whom he credits for profoundly shaping his life. "Let's go forward into growing, changing, and living. Let's go forth relating, repeating, reframing," she reminded us. "Go in God's continuing presence, with the power to love and the strength to serve."

In addition to clergy and laity from the Northern Illinois Conference, the installation was attended by many episcopal and judicatory leaders from the Chicago area. Representatives from United Methodist schools and agencies were also in attendance. The full list can be viewed at umcnic.org/news/bishop-dan-schwerin-installed.

After the installation, attendees enjoyed cake and fellowship. In the receiving line afterward, Bishop Schwerin took the time to greet each person warmly and with joy. He lived into his preaching about creating relationships, seeking connections, and greeting others.

Gifts to the Bishop included a book from Sharan Kaur Singh about the Sikh community, a homemade matching friendship bracelet from Pedro Mayer, and other mementos.

The installation service was planned by the Episcopacy Committee.

A recording of the installation and photos can be viewed on

umcnic.org/news/bishop-dan-schwerin-installed.

Lent & Holy Week (continued from pg. 1)

join in prayers for the city. The participants carry an 8-foot, 50-pound wooden cross with them. It begins with a prayer against violence in the city and stops at places in the Rockford downtown, reflecting upon the stations of the Way of the Cross. "The 14 stations, or stops, go through the downtown area, most representing the community's assets, such as Luther Center and the Public Library," says Stanley Campbell, director of Rockford Urban Ministries.

Lenten community acts of service can help people put their discipleship into action. The women from Christ UMC in Rockford have been actively collecting for their Layette Project for over 40 years. They coordinate the sewing, purchasing, and collection of onesies, sleepers, socks, hats, bibs, blankets, and little fleece hoodies. Some of the women are even crocheting them personally. The

items are then donated to the Crusader Clinic, which helps at-risk mothers and babies as they start their lives together. "Extending love and care is important to our church," explained Deaconess Joy Hayag. "These women understand motherhood and love babies. This project warms and comforts both the mothers and babies in need."

Lenten meals are common in many churches as a way to fellowship and set aside time for study. During Lent, Bethany UMC in Aurora is reviving a weekly Lenten potluck titled "Dollar Dinners" on Wednesdays. Participants are asked to bring a dish to share, a dollar and/or a non-perishable food donation. First UMC of West Chicago is hosting Wednesday night Soup Suppers, focusing on the book *Lent in Plain Sight* by Jill Duffield.

Cantatas and concerts as also a way for many

congregations to honor Lent, Holy Week, and Easter. These musical celebrations provide a time for reflection, often including a portrayal of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

First UMC in Dixon is hosting the band Heirborn for an "I Am So Blessed" Lenten concert on Good Friday. Good Shepherd UMC in Oswego is featuring a cantata by their One A 'Chord choir on Easter Sunday.

No matter how you or your church chooses to participate in Lent and Holy Week, remember that spending these days in prayerful preparation can help enrich your celebration of Jesus' resurrection on Easter Sunday.

This monthly column highlights local church outreach ministries that are making a difference and transforming lives. We hope sharing these success stories ("it worked for us") will inspire and become learning tools for other churches. If you have a Ministry Makers story, email communications@umcnic.org.

Forming a place for welcome, expression, and support By Michelle Braxton, Laity, Friendship UMC*

Friendship UMC in Bolingbrook is partnering with Bolingbrook Pride to host a Youth Drop-In event once a month for young people ages 12-18 who need a place to feel welcome, be able to express themselves, and support each other as they explore their true identities. Many youth don't feel they need church, but seeing that a church can provide safety and support to them is significant. Suicide rates in youth 12 to 18 are at an all-time high, especially in the LGBTQ+ population. That rate drops to 50 percent for youth who have at least one supportive adult in their lives. Friendship's Drop-In Center is providing three supportive adults at sessions.

Wynter, one of the three counselors at the drop-in center and a member of Friendship Church since infancy, is a substitute teacher for grade school and middle school youth and has a personal and professional understanding with those who are feeling they are developing to be non-traditional. Guests and hosts at the drop-in events are able to express themselves and support each other. The sessions are not all serious: there is time for crafts, fun activities, snacks, and discussions to learn together. Wynter feels that having something like this before college would have been very helpful in their development as a person.

In speaking with other Friendship members, they know that youth are going through so many different experiences and appreciate that the church proves somewhere for them to go where they can feel safe and nurtured. They feel it's an important opportunity to offer a warm, loving environment where the young people are accepted and can communicate freely. They feel that it aligns strongly with the church's commitment to inclusivity and diversity. The allies who attend learn how to support the youth even if they don't identify as LGBTQ+. The youth are also seeing LGBTQ+ adults as successful and living 'normal' lives.

Jameson is a Friendship Church member who started attending Friendship in 2018 and became a member in 2020. He feels that, as Christians, Friendship Church is putting their words into action by helping to provide safety and shelter for all. The Youth Drop-In Center communicates to youth that our church supports the values we proclaim. He is a professional counselor with personal experience in this area and is grateful that his mental health practice, the Bolingbrook Pride organization, and Friendship Church are coming together with community support to show action, not just talk.

PFLAG (Parents, Friends, and Family of Lesbians and



Gays) meets at Friendship at the same time as the drop-in center and helps family members and allies learn how to support the youth.

Friendship Church is not just a building, it is a safe place with people who are supportive and loving and who put their words into action.

**Michelle Braxton has been a member of Friendship United Methodist Church since 1983. She has served on numerous committees, been a member of UMW, and has been an active leader and participant in the music ministry. She is currently part of the music ministry, worship planning, mission & outreach, and JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion).*

Sharing God's love in the community By Pastor Donna Hoffman



Members of Hanover UMC pose after the hard work of assembling love baskets.

At Hanover UMC, several church members and leaders gathered to assemble Valentine's baskets to deliver to folks in Hanover, Ill. The baskets contain fresh fruit, home-baked goods, and various snack items.

About 25 years ago, the Hanover United Methodist Women decided that since so many were remembered at Christmas time and then "forgotten" the rest of the year that we would do "Valentine Love Baskets" in February. The list of those receiving baskets includes those who are home-bound, the elderly, those who have lost loved ones in the past year, some of our church members in the nursing home, and assisted living in Elizabeth. Gift baskets are given out to those in need, not just members of our church community.

They took a two-year break due to Covid and

felt the urge to do this again. I was amazed at the precision with which the members worked at putting these baskets together. Like a well-oiled machine, each person has a job, from baking, shopping for the other food items, ordering pretty red paper to wrap the baskets, and making heart-shaped name tags for each basket. At the church, we all pitched in wrapping, tying, and tagging the baskets. About twenty baskets were assembled in about an hour. After they were assembled, we divided up geographically to deliver the baskets. I rode along with our Lay Leader, John McKinley. As I took each basket to the door, the look of joy, surprise and gratitude was a huge blessing to me.

The Hanover UMC is a small rural church with primarily older members who are still very active in ministry. They are very mission-focused, and they truly are the hands, feet and heart of Jesus.

More united than ever before: Tri-City Methodist group is reconnecting the connection

By Kimberley Larsen, Communications Assistant, United Methodist Church of Geneva

The Tri-City area of Illinois, comprising the cities of St. Charles, Geneva, and Batavia, has come to be seen as a community in and of itself over the years. The cities share a history of being three of the oldest in Illinois, they share borders featuring the Fox River, and have similar population sizes. Since 2020, for area United Methodists, this joint community has taken on a new connection in the form of the Tri-City Methodists: a trio of churches – Baker Memorial United Methodist Church of St. Charles, the United Methodist Church of Geneva (UMCG), and Batavia United Methodist Church.

The pastors serving these churches have informally collaborated for the past three years. "Our group started as a clergy support group helping us through the pandemic. We met on Zoom weekly to talk about how our ministry and how we, as clergy, were doing. We shared ideas for health teams, and ideas for worship and activities," explained Pastor Lisa Telomen, associate pastor at UMCG. This group quickly saw the benefits of this new connection and how the United Methodist value of "connectionalism" could be fostered among the three churches, benefitting them in numerous ways. The group has now worked together to take turns hosting joint worship services and outreach events, children and youth educational and social

events, as well as supporting some of their common missions.

This collaboration lines up perfectly with the United Methodist values: to be Methodist is to be connectional. United Methodist leaders often speak of the denomination as

"the connection." This concept has been central to United Methodism from its beginning. Today, our denomination continues to be organized in a "connectional" system, which "enables us to carry out our mission in unity and strength" (Book of Discipline, ¶ 701).

The largest joint effort of the Tri-City Methodists has been the education and formation of the confirmands across their three congregations. Each church hosts the class for a third of the year. "I think our shared confirmation program has been a blessing to students,



Youth gathered together at the Batavia Quarry for a fun day in the sun.

clergy, and churches alike. By joining together, we have the critical mass to make classes, field trips, and retreats possible. Together, we've been able to develop a curriculum that fits the specific needs of our Youth and is more robust and formative than I could do alone with a published curriculum," explained Pastor Rob Hamilton of UMCG. Batavia UMC's Pastor Cynthia Anderson added, "It's been wonderful to collaborate and teach with colleagues; we each have our strengths to share. In

continued on p. 6



Annual Conference Leaders and Speakers Announced

This year's theme for the 184th Northern Illinois Annual Conference is "Connected in Christ: Come to the Table," placing the focus on one of the core elements of our Christian faith: the sacrament of communion. The scriptural grounding for this year's theme is Luke 11:3, "Give us each day OUR daily bread." Bishop Dan Schwerin will preside and preach at the ordination service on Luke 11:1-8. Rev. Dr. Myron F. McCoy, Senior Pastor at Chicago: First (Temple) United Methodist Church, will preach on Psalm 23 at the Memorial Service. Dr. Rolf Nolasco, professor of spiritual formation and pastoral theology at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, will be leading Bible Study. The worship leader is Rev. Dr. Addison Shields, Jr., with musical accompaniment by Wanda J. Bishop.



Memorial Service Preacher

Rev. Dr. Myron F. McCoy

Rev. Dr. Myron F. McCoy has been serving as the Senior Pastor at the First United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple since July 1, 2014. He previously served as president of the Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City and Oklahoma City for eleven years. In Northern Illinois Conference, he served as co-chair of the Annual Conference Shepherding Team and chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry. Dr. McCoy holds a B.A. from Ohio Wesleyan University, an M.Div. from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, and a DMin. from United Theological Seminary. Dr. McCoy is also a recipient

of honorary doctorates from both Baker University and United Theological Seminary.



Bible Study Leader

Dr. Rolf Nolasco

Dr. Rolf Nolasco is the Rueben P. Job Professor of spiritual formation and pastoral theology at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and director of the Rueben P. Job Institute for Spiritual Formation. He is an experienced professor, trained in pastoral and counseling psychology, mindfulness and contemplative spirituality, and affective neuroscience. Nolasco is also a psychotherapist, published author, and has vast experience in cross-cultural communications from living and working across the world within varying social and cultural backgrounds.



Worship Leader

Rev. Dr. Addison Shields, Jr.

Rev. Dr. Addison Shields, Jr., retired July 1, 2014, as an Elder within the United Methodist Church after serving the denomination for 34 years. He served 6 congregations before his retirement. Dr. Shields served as the district superintendent for the former Rockford and Chicago Southern Districts. He is currently serving as senior pastor for Transformation Community United

Methodist Church in Harvey, Illinois. Dr. Shield's musical ministry started at a young age. He was the organist for many churches across the Chicago metropolitan area. He studied voice under the late Thelma Wade Brown at American Conservatory of music at Roosevelt University. Dr. Shields sings baritone as a member of the South Holland Master Chorale in South Holland, Ill.



Musician

Wanda J. Bishop

Wanda J. Bishop, aka Joy, is an accomplished educator, worship leader, keyboardist, songwriter, and vocalist, affectionately called "the little energetic lady with an infectious smile!" At present, Wanda is employed at Our Lady of Africa Catholic Parish and as music director for Maple Park United Methodist Church. She is adept at a broad range of musical styles and genres. Wanda is a member of the Chicago Music Association and sings with the Chicago Community Choir. She has professional experience in both spiritual and secular music. She is an established local and international artist. Wanda loves Christ and is committed to serve through her love for music and humanity.

Read the full bios and learn about our other leaders at umcnic.org/2023-annual-conference/speaker-and-leader-bios.

2023 Annual Conference registration opens April 3

Legislation

ALL historical documents and proposed legislation for the conference must be submitted by April 3, to JoAnn Ray through an online submission form. A link to the form can be found at umcnic.org/AC2023. No exceptions will be allowed for meeting the deadline or using the form. Legislation and Historical documents will be posted online by May 5.

Presenting at Annual Conference

Groups requesting presentation time during the annual conference, including media and videos to be projected onscreen, must fill out the request form available on umcnic.org/AC2023. Final decisions regarding scheduling are made by the Daily Proceedings Coordinator in conjunction with the Annual Conference Committee. We will do our best to schedule presentations as time and agenda permit. Most presentations will be shared as pre-recorded videos via the NIC website and/or possibly during breaks. All video and media requests and submissions are due May 9.

Distribution of print materials will be limited as we continue to be good stewards of the environment. The Annual Conference Secretary, Randy Hayes, must preapprove any material to be distributed on the conference floor. Only ushers may distribute materials. Groups may provide handouts at their display tables. Other handouts may be placed on the lobby table. Announcements during the conference will be projected on the screen after approval. Submissions can be sent to Randy Hayes at ra50h1y9s@comcast.net.

Childcare

We regret that there are limitations that prevent us from providing on-site childcare. Clergy and lay members are encouraged to make alternative plans for their children. Find a link for room reservations at umcnic.org/AC2023 or call the hotel directly at (888) 236-2427. Reservation deadline is May 17. Limited scholarships are available to offset registered clergy and lay members' childcare costs for children under age 12. The scholarship request form is available on umcnic.org/AC2023. Requests must be submitted by May 15.

Display Tables

Registration for Display Tables is open. The cost is \$50 per eight-foot table, and electricity is not available. Display tables will be open all three days in the Nirvana Threshold, and assignments will be made after May 25. The deadline to register for a display table is May 1. Guidelines and the link for registration can be found at umcnic.org/AC2023.

Group meals

This year we are pleased that we will be able to host group meals on-site. Please contact Bri Wadlington, Events Coordinator, at events@umcnic.org if you are interested in hosting a meal. Information about meals will be shared soon. Registration for meals will be included in the general Annual Conference registration.

Volunteers

We need ushers, plenary pages, legislative section leaders, greeters, secretarial pool members, and more to help Annual Conference run smoothly and efficiently. Please get in touch with Bri Wadlington, Events Coordinator, at events@umcnic.org if you are interested in serving as a volunteer for a day or even part of a day or if you have questions. No previous experience is necessary.

Blueprint for Wellness Screenings

Health Screenings will be offered June 9 and 10. More details and sign up coming soon. Make an appointment through your Health Flex/WebMD account.

Hotel Reservations

Room reservations will be available at the Renaissance Hotel in early April. The rate will be \$169 plus 11% tax. A link and code for phone reservations will be shared.

Please look for updates and details in the coming months through the Conference eNews and website at umcnic.org/AC2023.

Annual Conference 2023 Details

June 6 - 8, 2023

Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center at 1551 N. Thoreau Dr., Schaumburg, Ill.

Registration:

Early Bird (April 3 - 28) \$100/person

April 29 - May 28: \$125/person

NO on-site Registration

Services:

- Ordination: Evening, Tues. June 6
- Retirement: Morning, Wed. June 7
- Memorial: Morning, Thurs. June 8

Important Dates:

- April 3 - Registration begins
- April 3 - Legislation and Historical Documents due, full instructions at umcnic.org/AC2023
- April 29 - Registration cost changes to \$125
- May 2 - Submission of names and photos of AC lay members who have passed since May 2022 due. Send to communications@umcnic.org
- May 5 - Legislation and Documents posted online
- May 8 - Video and Media presentations due, full instructions at umcnic.org/AC2023
- May 23 - Clergy Session
- May 30 at 7:00 pm - Pre-conference Briefing, online
- May 31 at 10:00 am - Pre-conference Briefing, online

More details at umcnic.org/AC2023





New Communications Director Joins NIC Staff

Rev. Victoria Rebeck joined the Northern Illinois Conference staff as Director of Communications, effective March 15, 2023. She will oversee the communications strategy and execution for the conference.

Victoria was ordained a deacon in the Northern Illinois Conference in 2001. (She is now a member of the Minnesota Conference.)

"I am very pleased to be back in the Northern Illinois Conference and to be able to put my ministry gifts to work for Northern Illinois," she said. "I share the conference's priorities and mission. I am grateful to be part of making those a reality."

"The rural, suburban, and urban settings for ministry in the Northern Illinois Conference offer a wonderful diversity of contexts," she added. "This provides a breadth of opportunities to develop a helpful communications strategy that can solidify our shared identity and ministry

as United Methodists. One of my goals for the communications ministry is to support our United Methodist congregations in the ways they share God's love among their neighbors."

Before joining the Northern Illinois staff, Victoria offered consulting services in writing, editing, teaching, and clergy coaching. (She is continuing her coaching services). Her areas of expertise include strategy development, journalism, public relations, media relations, and clergy development.

She has a significant amount of connectional experience. From 2019 to 2023, she served as director of connectional ministries for the Susquehanna Conference. She has also worked for the General Board of Higher Education, the United Methodist Publishing House, and the Minnesota Conference. For the Minnesota Conference, where she remains a clergy member, she served as director of communication for 12 years.

Previously, she was an associate editor for the Christian

Century magazine for 15 years.

Some of her other ministry experience includes co-chairing the Minnesota Conference Board of Ordained Ministry and serving as a General Conference delegate in 2008. She has been vice-president of Associated Church Press and United Methodist Association of Communicators (not simultaneously).

Practicing her gifts and passions in other areas, she has volunteered for Tennessee Justice For Our Neighbors and the Tennessee Conference Creation Care Ministry. She is a certified Master Naturalist in Minnesota and Tennessee. Before she moved away from Chicago in 1999, she was a docent for Lincoln Park Zoo.

Her education at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary (M.T.S., 1989) and Northwestern University (B.S. Journalism, 1982) sharpened her gifts and leadership skills, she says.

She looks forward to meeting the Northern Illinois lay and clergy people in the coming months.

Display highlights the history of our conference

by Sally Gray, Laity, Disciples UMC in Mount Morris, Ill.



Sally Gray walks Bishop Dan Schwerin through the display she helped organize. Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Bold.



A section of the display organized by the DUMC history team.



DS Brian Gilbert, Bishop Dan Schwerin, and DS Fabiola Grandon-Mayer pose with their gifted copies of *Log Cabins to Steeples*, by J. Gordon Melton. The book, which was included in the historical display, chronicles the United Methodist way in Northern Illinois.

During the Laity Convocation 2023, one of the host churches, Disciples United Methodist Church (DUMC) in Mt. Morris, created a display about the rich history of the Rock River Conference that then became our Northern Illinois Conference. The church's history team hoped to share with guests, many of whom had never been in Mt. Morris, how our early Methodist settlers, ministers, and circuit riders followed a path of discipleship as they moved west from Maryland, Ohio, and Kentucky into the frontier of northwest Illinois. Supported by God's grace and love, along with the focused and persistent work of resident minister Rev. Thomas S. Hitt and the Illinois Annual Conference, they formed a Methodist Society on a rolling prairie in 1837. The Society then formed Methodist Classes. In 1839, they founded the first institution of higher education in northern Illinois, and in 1840 helped establish the Rock River Annual Conference.

DUMC history team's chronologically ordered history

exhibit included newspapers, articles, books, posters, photos, paintings, copies of seminary catalogues, and art. The first large poster boards showcased the Sesquicentennial Special Edition of the Northern Illinois Conference's *United Methodist Reporter* (Aug. 26, 1990). Its stories and photos featured the 150th anniversary parade and religious services in Mt. Morris celebrating the founding of the Rock River Annual Conference. The history of the church, seminary, and village was also shared.

Conference-related items on the display tables included a printed copy of the minutes from the first session of the Rock River Annual Conference and a preserved piece of the wooden shed where the event took place. Other conference items included a poster and booklet from the Rock River Annual Conference's centennial celebration in Mt. Morris and a copy of *The Methodist Movement in Northern Illinois*, authored by Dr. Almer M. Pennewill. The

focus of the historical exhibit transitioned midway to explore the lives and times of the conference, its ministers, seminary, attendees, and graduates during the antebellum and American Civil War eras.

The beautiful exhibit displayed highlights of the founding of the Methodist Society and Classes on nearby Illinois prairies in 1837, followed by the Rock River Seminary in 1839, and the Rock River Conference in 1840. It illustrated a path of discipleship taken by a vibrant and determined people led by and blessed with God's grace. They shared Christ's love and abiding strength through times of growth, trials, hardships, and pain, all the while developing lasting relationships over almost two centuries that continue to grow, change, and expand today.

Read more about the history of the Rock River Conference and the display at umcnic.org/news/display-highlights-the-history-of-our-conference.



Congregants from all three congregations participate in communion at a joint worship service.

Tri-City (continued from pg. 4)

addition, it's been great for students to have a larger number of other kids to interact with, and they've gotten to know people they otherwise wouldn't have encountered."

The joint collaboration has benefitted pastors and congregations alike; Pastor Kim Neace of Baker Memorial UMC commented, "I cherish and value each person on our team. I look forward to our Wednesday afternoon meetings. It has been a joy partnering, dreaming, and executing ministry together."

The feedback from congregations has been incredibly positive. The pastors recounted that each time they gather for shared ministry, energy and enthusiasm for the collaboration grows. At their most recent joint service led by all 5 clergy, the joy on faces as the sanctuary echoed with voices singing "The Church's One Foundation" was contagious. Worshipers gushed over how

powerfully the Spirit was felt. Fellowship time after worship lasted over an hour as people connected with new and old friends alike.

Pastor Hamilton described the connection well: "I recognize this kind of collaboration isn't new to United Methodism. Ethnically diverse, rural, and town-and-country churches have, over the years, more faithfully maintained the connection that defines the Methodist movement. In recent history, our three churches have been medium-large size program churches that had the affluence and luxury of working independently. I'm not sure that independence was ever all that healthy. Circumstances have helped us to return to our roots and strengthen our connectional DNA. I am humbled to be a part of this expanding collaboration within our three churches and hopefully beyond."

Black Teens Matter event encouraged students

By Sis. Sylvia Jo Oglesby on behalf of Chicago BMCR

Chicago Black Methodists for Church Renewal's (BMCR) Black Teens Matter held its 4th Annual Presidents' Day Holiday Hook-Up on Feb 20. Black Teens Matter is a component of the Rev. Maceo D. Pembroke, Sr., Memorial Institute, which is now in its 50th year. The theme was Guaranteed Scholarship > Guaranteed Success, based on the book entitled *Raise Your GPA: God's Way to Win @ School & Life*, written by Jonathan Banks.

Banks, an ordained minister, passionate educator, tutor, youth mentor, and trainer of youth leaders, led a lively discussion focusing on raising your God-Point Average in every area of life, as the key to a significant life that matters. The youth shared some of their concerns and challenges they face that are frightening and threatening. They seemed to

be inspired and encouraged by Banks's message and expressed interest in having these programs more often.

The attendance and presence of parents, youth leaders, and BMCR President Darryl D. Harris was a blessing, as well as the hospitality of the Phi Delta Kappa Sorority, Inc., Mu Chapter, and host Phyllis Donaldson (Hartzell Memorial UMC).

In 2021 and 2022, BMCR held a number of Retreats of Rest for youth, conducted by Julian Davis Reid, theologian and artist (and former Pembroke Institute student), and will continue to sponsor programs and contribute, in every way possible, at every opportunity, partnering with the Northern Illinois Conference, to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation the world, our number one priority.



Teens who attended the Presidents' Day event with their book *Raise Your GPA*.

First Midwest Mission shipment heads to Turkey

By Mallory Webster, Communications Manager, Midwest Mission

"Coincidences" seem to be a common occurrence around Midwest Mission, where the right items seem to show up at the right time in the right way. We call these "God Moments." In these moments, it seems God has perfectly orchestrated materials or situations or people in His perfect timing.

When a disaster strikes, we do not automatically send relief items. We wait for a call from a partner because we never want to assume what they need.

After the earthquake, David Fowler, a Springfield Rotarian and Executive Director of Computer Banc, informed us of a donation they had received and hoped to send to Turkey for earthquake survivors. Baja Bridges, an organization out of California, donated roughly \$500,000 worth of Meals Ready to Eat (MREs), a self-contained meal designed for military use. Rotary knew Midwest Mission would be able to help determine how to transport these donations.

But at that moment, we didn't have a route to get the meals into Turkey.

About an hour later, Brad Walton, Midwest Mission Operations Manager, called Inna Razmady, North Star Foundation Executive Director, to coordinate the details of their March 16 Ukraine shipment. Inna's sister Dina married a man from Turkey, and they had a contact in the Turkish consulate to get supplies into the country.

Within an hour, Midwest Mission and Springfield Rotary had a way to get the meals into Turkey. Plans were quickly made to get pallets of MREs from Arizona to Midwest

Mission.

We had the supplies, and we knew where they needed to go, but only God knew how they were going to get there.

Originally, the supplies were going to be flown to Turkey from O'Hare airport, but as plans continued to develop, there was an even better solution.

We have been working with North Star Foundation to get supplies into Ukraine for about a year. We have sent eight shipments so far. The supplies reach a port in Poland, where they are split up among different humanitarian aid organizations, and distributed to different people: some to Ukrainian refugees in Poland, others to Ukrainians on the front lines of the war. They have a well-functioning distribution center right there in Poland.

So, it was decided that the supplies for Turkey would take a similar route. The container would arrive in Poland, and supplies would be driven from there to Turkey.

This opened up a lot of opportunities. One shipment from Midwest Mission could help people in Poland, Ukraine, Turkey, and Syria.

The organizations receiving the shipments are able to distribute supplies as they know best. We are thankful to be able to contribute.

The first shipment of disaster relief left Midwest Mission on March 10.

Inna later mentioned to Brad that one of the top needs was basic hygiene items. They had collected supplies, but they had requested sizes to be more uniform and the different items be put in one bag to pass out to individuals.

Brad laughed because that is exactly what the Midwest Mission Personal Dignity Kit is, and why the kits are always ready for when a disaster hits.

Although the first shipment will contain solely MREs, Midwest Mission will fill future containers with Personal Dignity Kits. Each kit contains shampoo, a toothbrush, toothpaste, a bar of soap, a hand towel, a washcloth, deodorant, and a razor.

Your donations, volunteer hours, and prayer have allowed us to quickly respond to the call.

Through all of the destruction and chaos, we look for how God is working, and rely on the Spirit to guide us into action.

For more information on Midwest Mission, their needs and their work, visit midwestmission.org.



Midwest Mission Staff pack the truck full of MREs that will make their way to Turkey and other areas in the region. This is the 10th international shipment in 2023.



Opening space for discussion during the 2023 film series

The 2023 Anti-Racism Film Series, sponsored by the NIC Anti-Racism Task Force (ARTF), is focused on increasing cultural competency and dialogue as a means to increase advocacy and participation in the spaces around the contexts, causes, and impacts of racism. It consists of participants

viewing a documentary film or movie each quarter before the event, followed by a presentation and expert-led discussions. The goals of the 2022 Speaker Series were aimed at increasing our knowledge of cultural contexts while exploring the causes and impacts of racism and bias within these frameworks. Carrying these goals forward into the 2023 Film Series, the ARTF hopes that you will continue to learn and seek a greater understanding of how we, as Christians, can address issues identified as obstacles in our efforts to dismantle bias, racism, and hatred.

The first quarter event, held on March 25, was a docent-led tour of *The Negro Motorist Green Book* exhibit at the Illinois Holocaust Museum in Skokie, Ill. Visitors explored film, photographs, interactives, and oral histories from

travelers and "Green Book" business owners; compared "Green Book" sites then and now; and appreciated historical objects from the Smithsonian and a variety of "Green Book" sites. Lunch, a presentation by Dr. Richard Guzman, and a discussion followed with NIC and Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary panelists. A delicious sampling of desserts representing African-American history and culture was also provided by YoFresh Cafe.

Future events will include a meal, presentations, and panel discussions streamed into local churches. The second quarter event, on May 25 at 6 p.m., will focus on Asian history and culture with a presentation by Dr. Wonhee Anne Joh and a panel discussion. Attendees are encouraged to watch the documentary *Being Asian in America*, by the Pew Research Center, beforehand. The third quarter event, on Sept. 21 at 6 p.m., will discuss privilege, power, and race. *The Long Shadow* documentary, directed by Francis Causey, is encouraged to be watched beforehand as it digs into white supremacy and privilege. The fourth quarter event, on Nov. 30 at 6 p.m., will highlight the representation of Latinx in American motion pictures, with a presentation and panel discussing *The Bronze Screen*. The 2023 Film Series webpage also includes a list of resources to learn more about indigenous

communities, including their history, present work being done, and how we can be in solidarity as we prepare for the future.

To assist with the 2023 Film Series, the ARTF is looking for local churches in each district to host sessions for each of the second, third, and fourth-quarter events. The host churches will receive a small stipend to purchase food for the location related to the theme of the quarter. Each participant will be asked for a \$5 fee to help the host church offset costs above the stipend from the Task Force. The events will include a time for fellowship over the meals, then a panel discussion (streamed over Zoom) to review and comment on the film selected for the quarter and answer questions from the participants. Additional time will be allowed for the local group to "go deeper" in exploring the topic. The event is planned to last from 6 to 8:30 p.m. on a weekday evening. Interested churches may reach out to Tim Alexander Tim@osumc.org, for more details.

For more information about the 2023 film series and more details, visit umcnic.org/2023filmseries.



DYK DID YOU KNOW?

Life Together

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

When I was first introduced to the United Methodist Church following college, I was drawn in by John Wesley's balance of personal and social holiness. In our Wesleyan tradition, it is not enough to read the scriptures, pray and worship – we are called to live out our faith in witness to Christ's love through acts of mercy and justice. It has always been difficult to walk this fine line of spirituality and engagement, but today it has become even more precarious. Our world is polarized and suspicion and incivility are all too common.

It would be safe to turn inward and go deeper into our own spirituality, but John Wesley reminds us to bring our faith into society, into the world. Living out our faith can put us at odds with others.

The president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops, Bishop Tom Bickerton, delivered a State of the Church address on March 2 (see page 2 for a recap of the address). In his address, the bishop set forth some old wisdom for a new age. He shared a section from the 1850 Methodist Book of Discipline calling believers not to laws

and rules but to a lifestyle. The question posed was, "What can be done in order to achieve a closer union with each other?" The responses given were:

1. Convince yourself of the absolute need for unity.
2. Pray for one another.
3. Talk to, not at, one another.
4. Pray before you leave.
5. Don't despise one another.
6. Don't speak lightly of one another.
7. Defend one another's character.
8. Work hard so that you value someone else before yourself.

These are the directives shared almost 175 years ago to a people who suffered divisions. They are still a strong guidepost for today.

I am intrigued by the guidance of "talking to, not at, one another." Talking to one another requires that we also listen. How often have you formulated your response even before the person talking to you has finished their

comments? To talk to one another means to "listen." Listening requires patience, an open mind and heart and the space for others to speak.

I am particularly stuck by the admonishment to pray before you leave. I attend a lot of church meetings. We are good at beginning our gatherings in prayer. I cannot say that we are always as good at praying for and with one another after we have waded through our business. How important it is to close in Christ at the end of our encounters. To bless each other even when we do not always agree.

Finally, this lesson from the Methodist Discipline of 1850 reminds us of our basic commitment to be with and for each other. How do we live out our unity in friendships, families and even church committee meetings? Can we be listeners, defending one another, supporting each other and praying when we depart?

To watch the full video, go to: umc.org/en/content/reclaim-revive-renew-the-necessity-of-union-among-us.

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):

Esther Lee (Full Elder) to Glencoe: North Shore (Lake North District) from Deerfield: Christ. Esther follows Scott Himel who is appointed to Park Ridge: First (Lake North District).

Joel McClellon (Provisional Elder) to Freeport: Faith (Prairie North District) from Milledgeville/Colleta (Prairie South District). Joel follows Melissa Meyers who is appointed to Batavia (Prairie Central District).

Daniel Cochran (Full Elder) to Wheaton: Gary as an Associate (Prairie Central) from Wheaton: Aldersgate (Prairie Central). Daniel moves to this appointment following the merger of the two congregations.

Kurt Beystehner (Certified Lay Minister) to Alden (Prairie North District). Kurt follows Alex Lee who will continue serving at Harvard: First. (Prairie North District).

Brett Todd (Full Elder) to retirement from Rockford: Beth Eden/Aldersgate (Prairie North District). Brett was ordained a Deacon in 1992 and an Elder in 1994. During his ministry, Brett served at Esmond, Maple Park, Albany, Carol Stream: St. Andrew, Rochelle, Wilmette: Trinity, LaSalle: Grace and Rockford: Beth Eden/Aldersgate.

Tammy Scott (Full Elder) to Aurora: Wesley (Prairie Central District) from Sugar Grove (Prairie South District). Tammy follows John Bell who is moving to Kentucky.

Innis Miller (Full Elder) to Chicago: Kelly Woodlawn (Lake South District) from Chicago: Grace Calvary while remaining at Chicago: Grace Blue Island (Lake South District). Innis follows Andrea Davidson who is moving to the New York Annual Conference.

Christopher Druce Jones (Pending Licensure) to Rockford: Christ the Carpenter (Prairie North District). Christopher follows Steven Terrell whose ministry ended.

Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger (Elder) to Children's Defense Fund from Chicago Jobs Council. Effective February 20th.

Open Churches

Andrea Davidson (346.1) will be going to New York opening up Chicago: Kelly Woodlawn (Lake South District).

Dennis Oglesby (Full Elder) will be going to Minnesota opening up Evanston: Sherman (Lake North District).

John Bell (Full Elder) will be going to Kentucky opening up Aurora: Wesley (Prairie Central District).

Jungmi (Deborah) Kang (Full Elder) appointment to attend school opening up Carol Stream: St. Andrew (Prairie Central District).



Corrections...

We apologize to the churches we missed in the 100% apportionment listing. We want to acknowledge the following 100% Churches:

Chicago: South Shore	Downers Grove: First
Oswego: Good Shephard	Lombard: First

10+ year churches:

Buffalo Grove: Kingswood	Evanston: First
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Job Openings

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

Stay Connected

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

Submissions

Please submit items at least two weeks prior to publication date. Include your name, address, email, phone number and name of local church. Space is limited.

Electronic submissions are preferred with high-resolution attached jpegs. Submissions will be edited at the discretion of the Communications staff.

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