



Members of Trinity UMC in Wilmette gather on the church's lawn for an outdoor worship service while practicing social distancing and wearing masks to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

Returning to church in phases

Anne Marie Gerhardt, Dir. of Communications

The COVID-19 pandemic took no vacation this summer and continued to bring more uncertainties and changes for United Methodist congregations and pastors across the Northern Illinois Conference.

As the state of Illinois entered the Revitalization Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois Plan in June, church leaders took a closer look at their own plans to safely return to their buildings and in-person services.

The NIC ReTurn plan's Phase 4 guidelines allow gatherings of up to 50 people, but accommodations should be in place to ensure the safety of vulnerable individuals and requirements for face coverings and social distancing practices are a must.

Bishop Sally Dyck said even with these guidelines, gathering in person may still not be the best thing to do for all congregations.

"Let the standard for us as United Methodists be: Do no harm!" Bishop Dyck said. "Each stage of reopening should be tested against the question of what harm can this do, particularly to those with compromised immune systems. This may include congregants, staff, visitors, and clergy. We also recognize that each church must consider its own context, location, and physical constraints. The virus affects each community in different measures."

The ReTurn Plan strongly recommended each church form a Health Team or designate a group that will be responsible to decide and implement specific return plans for each congregation.

The Rev. Calvin Culpepper at Court Street UMC in Rockford said in June they formed a COVID-19 task force to consider all the necessary procedures to return to an in-person service.

"We discussed best practices around communion, the offering, taking temperature checks, masks, gloves, and tracing information, etc.," Culpepper said. "We also prepared the sanctuary by removing hymnals, offering envelopes, pencils, attendance pads, and taped off sections in the pews for personal distance."

Court Street first held outdoor worship in the parking lot in July. They shifted indoor services with 50 people or less in attendance for a couple of Sundays after. Even with all the precautions in place, plans can quickly change.

"I received a phone call from a member who attended the July 19 service saying that they had been in contact with someone that possibly had COVID-19 symptoms," Culpepper said. "Both persons got COVID-19 tests and went into quarantine. After prayer and discussion with staff members, I cancelled in-person worship until further notice."

While the member and those they were in contact with all tested negative, Culpepper said with all the best intentions the nature of COVID-19 requires church leaders to make difficult decisions and be able to shift plans quickly.

"This 'COVID-19 work' like all of the challenges of life encountered by the Body of Christ, requires all of our God-given gifts combined with constant prayer," said Culpepper. "This climate of physical, mental, financial, and spiritual instability shakes the very core of our faith and calls us to action."

At Faith UMC in Orland Park, the Rev. Caleb Hong said when the CDC and Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker offered reopening guidelines, the church formed a reopening team and sent out a survey to its members.

"We received feedback on when people would want to return to in person, willingness to worship at different times, and technological literacy," said Hong. "Once reopening guidelines were established, they were reviewed and adopted by our Trustees and Church Council, which then set our reopening date for the weekend of July 18-19."

Faith UMC offered three worship services in hopes of spreading out the number of people in attendance and Hong says the biggest step was communicating expectations to the congregation.

"Our congregation has (slowly but surely) become accustomed to pre-registering for services, getting our temperatures checked, spreading out in the sanctuary, not singing songs, and wearing masks," said Hong. "The challenge is to keep reminding members to wear masks, not sing, not hug each other, not do all the things we're so accustomed to doing together."

The Rev. Brian Smith at Trinity UMC in Wilmette said the church relied heavily on the NIC ReTurn Team Plan and until Phase 5, Trinity is not performing the sacraments of baptism and communion. For worship, they have been holding outdoor services on the church's lawn for up to 50 pre-registered attendees. In case of inclement weather, the service is held in the sanctuary.

"This plan has worked because our lawn and sanctuary allow for ample social distancing," said Smith. "Attendees bring their own lawn chairs and masks. The challenges have been switching procedures from outside to inside worship and doing both video and in-person worship has increased the workload for clergy and staff."

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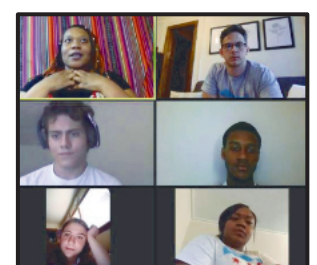
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FROM THE BISHOP: **Following the Rule of Christ**

We've all been social distancing now for at least five and a half months and counting. COVID-19 has limited our social circles (or should have), it's cut short our opportunities for fun and recreation, and has dashed many of the plans we've had for ourselves. The pandemic has raged around the world and has become politicized in our country (to the detriment of us all). Strong emotions and accusations are hurled between strangers and neighbors—even friends and family members.

No one is surprised that emotions of hurt, anger, grief, loss, frustration, and even hate should spill over into our churches through good Christian, United Methodist folks like us! In the beginning (can you remember back to March?), some expressed disagreement about whether to have in-person worship or any other regular church programming, despite State and CDC guidelines.

As people within our churches angrily disagreed about whether to have in-person worship, pastors were frantically trying to balance keeping people safe with keeping people "happy." That juggling act is, in my estimation, a major reason many of us are so exhausted at this point in this journey!

Most churches halted in-person worship for several weeks. Then when we moved into Phase 4 of the Restore Illinois Plan, a carrot dangled that made parishioners and clergy alike think and plan for when we could "all get together; what a day of rejoicing that would be!" Certainly, it would be a day of rejoicing, but clergy and laity alike realized how hard it is to apply sound guidelines (given by the state, CDC, and our own NIC ReTurn Team) to each situation.

Arguments ensued in some places, sometimes flying into my inbox; with questions about just how these guidelines were supposed to be applied. For instance, the guidelines speak to developing a plan for restrooms, but it matters whether the restroom in the church is the size of a large classroom or a "one-holer" (in effect). One size doesn't fit all!

But that doesn't even address the interpersonal dynamics that are always a part of church life because church life is filled with human beings with their own

fears, anxieties, opinions, resentments, etc. Disagreements erupt throughout our churches on a regular basis on a good day (i.e., a non-pandemic day). Now they have created many opportunities to dust off and polish up our Rule of Christ practices!

If your church has had a change of pastorate in the last six years, Staff-Parish Relations Committees (SPRCs) have been asked to have Rule of Christ training in order to start off well with a new pastor, with good communications in order to reduce conflict. Most churches do the training, but it takes intentionality and regular practice. The Rule of Christ is not meant for the best of times, the *kumbaya* times—the times when everyone lives together in harmony and one accord. It is for the times when we disagree and find ourselves in conflict. Jesus calls us to the discipleship of peacemaking. It's not "nice-making," but staying in healthy relationships with each other as clergy and laity together.

The Rule of Christ is based on Matthew 18:8-20 (and was developed for SPRCs by the late UM Deacon Terry N. Gladstone). The Rule of Christ begins with self-reflection; for instance, by asking ourselves why the situation is so difficult and putting ourselves in someone else's shoes. It challenges us to go to the person(s) we are in conflict with and resist the temptation to talk to everyone else about it, especially those who agree with us because they're our friends!

More often than not, conflict becomes an avenue of blessing. A relationship deepens and a new understanding grows, even if we are often on different pages or sides of something. But sometimes it doesn't work to clear the air or restore a right relationship. Then the Rule of Christ (per verse 16) calls us to involve a few others. In a local church setting, especially if the conflict is between the clergy and a layperson or two, the SPRC is the place to have this hearing of perspectives and feelings. Hence, that's why we do the Rule of Christ training with SPRC.

Many of the conflicts that churches are experiencing now are related to trying to work out what in-person worship will look like. Everyone has a different level of comfort in terms of returning to in-person worship: some

don't want to abide by social distancing and wearing masks, much less no singing or many of our cherished traditions that can compromise our health. Communications are often via email or Zoom video conferencing at best, instead of in person where we can better share our feelings. After these months of virtual relationships and conversations, our relationships may be a little frayed or we feel emboldened to say and do things that we wouldn't normally say or do if we were in person with each other.

Now more than ever, we need Rule of Christ training in our churches and for more than just SPRCs! However, now is not a good time to have our trained trainers go to in-person training in each church. So we are strongly urging every church that has a new appointment this year to take the online training available on our website that we have developed with the help of a few of our trainers. But we also invite every SPRC or even every church council to view the online training that's being produced and use it to talk about some of the difficulties you have had as a congregation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would also invite every clergyperson to preach and/or teach on Matthew 18 and the Rule of Christ. Now is the time to work on restoring right relationships and the joy of Christian fellowship—even before we fully resume in-person worship and programming.

A simple way to sum up Rule of Christ comes from Romans 12:18: "in so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." Others around you may be blaming, yelling or bad-mouthing you or each other. But "in so far as it depends on you," our spiritual practice of these days may well be to learn how to speak and act so as to "live peaceably with all."

The Rule of Christ is a method that helps us to practice our discipleship in Jesus Christ, especially when we're angry with someone. The Rule of Christ isn't complicated; it's just hard. But through Christ, and a supportive community that learns and practices the Rule of Christ, we can do all things—even that!

For Rule of Christ resources, visit umcnic.org/CongregationalLifeForms.

~Bishop Sally Dyck



Northern Illinois Annual Conference moves to webinar format on November 14

This has been a season of changes and new learnings,

as we all figure out ways to do things differently. The Annual Conference Committee is also working through these changes.

Last time we communicated, we shared that the 2020 Annual Conference session would be held using a telephone platform. However, as the committee heard from other Annual Conferences using the same technology, we learned of their challenges and started to look for other options.

Researching other Annual Conference plans, we found a different platform that would accommodate all our needs. Good News TV (GNTV), a video ministry related to The United Methodist Church, will be able to serve us through the webinar format via Zoom video conferencing. A dial-in option will be available. Observers will also be able to follow on Facebook Live.

The session will be held on the same date, Saturday, November 14, 2020, for a maximum of four hours. Online registration will open October 12.

Other details:

- GNTV will offer training sessions to help us become familiar with the format the week of Annual Conference. They will also provide technical assistance the day of the session.
- Online registration will be similar to the in-person session process, and each person registered will get a unique ID number that will be used to vote. Even if several people are participating at one location or connection – each will be able to vote. GNTV has created software that enables safe voting and can give us results within a few minutes.
- To help the credentials committee, please ensure that the correct names of your church's lay members to Annual Conference and alternates are entered in the lay leadership portal.
- We still will take care of only necessary actions and business, which means fewer reports and legislation. Everything that is not essential for 2020 will be acted upon at the 2021 AC session.
- Worship, including a retirement and memorial service, will be recorded and premiered for viewing online. The Worship Committee is preparing a timeline.
- Webinars/Zoom meetings will be scheduled the week before Annual Conference to discuss the budget and legislation.

- Historical reports and legislation will be available on the conference website by **Oct. 14**.
- Pre-Conference online Bible studies will held on three Thursdays in October with Rev. Junius Dotson, General Secretary for Discipleship Ministries, focusing on the conference's three strategic goals. Mark your calendars for **Oct. 1, 8 and 22 at 10 a.m.** and look for more details and registration soon.

We know that it is not easy for us to navigate these changes but your Annual Conference Committee is trying their best to offer the best possible platform that will accommodate all our needs and have the least challenges. GNTV knows the United Methodist proceedings, so we feel cautiously confident.

Please continue to refer to the website at umcnic.org/AC2020 and the NIC eNews for dates, deadlines and details on all of these plans as they are finalized. And once again, thank you for your patience and your support in these very uncertain times.

~Rev. Alka Lyall, Chair of Annual Conference committee and Rev. Katie Voigt, Chair of Daily Proceedings

Hopkins to serve at interim bishop



Bishop John Hopkins

Bishop Sally Dyck was initially scheduled to retire on September 1, 2020, but with the onset of the coronavirus and its disruption of General Conference, Jurisdictional Conference (where bishops are elected), and our own annual conference, she delayed her retirement to be effective January 1, 2021. That way Dyck can see through our virtual annual conference session, scheduled for November 14.

The North Central Jurisdictional Conference (NCJ) was rescheduled to November 10-12, 2021, at which time bishops will be appointed. Subsequently, the NCJ College of Bishops in consultation with the NCJ Committee on Episcopacy, the NIC Committee on Episcopacy, and the NIC cabinet, recommended a retired bishop to provide coverage in the NIC.

The College of Bishops began to contact many retired bishops in both from and outside our jurisdiction; men and women, bishops of color and white, and a variety of theological perspectives. With the approval of the Council of Bishops, retired Bishop John Hopkins (former episcopal leader of Minnesota and East Ohio) was asked, and accepted, to become the interim bishop for the NIC.

Hopkins was born in Montgomery, Alabama, and his childhood was spent in Montgomery, Houston, Atlanta, and Ft. Wayne, Ind. After marrying Elaine M.

Smithson in 1964, he attended Indiana University, receiving a B.A. with Honors in Psychology. He graduated from Yale Divinity School and was selected for the two-year Wheelock Residency at the Church of Christ at Dartmouth College where he practiced hospital, campus, and parish ministry. During this residency, he served as the Protestant Chaplain at Mary Hitchcock Memorial Hospital in Hanover, New Hampshire. He was ordained deacon and elder in the North Indiana Conference.

After serving a two-point charge in LaPorte, Indiana, Hopkins was appointed in 1976 as Wesley Foundation Director at Ball State University. In 1983 he became Director of the Council on Ministries in North Indiana and, in 1989 was appointed in South Indiana as Senior Pastor at The Methodist Temple in Evansville. He was elected to the episcopacy in July 1996 at the North Central Jurisdictional Conference and assigned to the Minnesota Area for eight years. In September 2004, Bishop Hopkins was assigned to the Ohio East Area until retirement in 2016.

Bishop Hopkins was appointed by the Council of Bishops from 2004-2012 to serve as the first Chair of the Connectional Table, which provides a forum for the understanding and implementation of the vision, mission, and ministries of the global church. During this time, Hopkins helped lead The Call to Action effort focused on increasing vital congregations around the world.

He has served on the Executive Committee of the Council of Bishops, the United Methodist Publishing House Board, the General Board of Church and Society, the

General Council on Ministries and the Committee for the Advance for Christ and His Church.

His episcopal responsibilities have included serving on the trustees of Hamline University, Ohio Wesleyan University, Mt. Union University, Baldwin Wallace University, and The Methodist Theological School in Ohio.

Bishop Hopkins was instrumental in the formation of Operation Classroom in Sierra Leone and Liberia. His mission travel has included Angola, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Korea, China, Japan, Mexico, Bulgaria, Germany, Philippines, and Vietnam. Currently, he serves on the board of Educational Opportunities, Inc. that provides scholarships for clergy to study in the Holy Land.

Bishop Hopkins and Elaine live in Indianapolis. They have three sons and seven grandchildren. Bishop Hopkins enjoys exercise, technology, kite flying, music, and guitar jams.

You will be learning more about Bishop Hopkins and we hope to have him say a few words at our virtual annual conference session this fall. Due to other commitments, he will not be available, nor receiving calls or inquiries, until January 1, 2021, when he will begin.

Under his interim assignment, Hopkins will not be doing all the things that a resident bishop does, but will focus on making sure that our strategic work through the Annual Conference Shepherding Team continues its momentum, provide episcopal leadership to the extended cabinet, and keep the commitments of this conference in relation to human sexuality as having been addressed and approved at the 2019 Annual Conference.

From the cover: *con't from page 1*



Geneva UMC church members decorated the parsonage's front lawn with dozens of signs to wish Rev. Esther Lee well on her new appointment at Christ UMC in Deerfield.



An usher at Trinity UMC in Wilmette takes the temperature of a church member before attending a Sunday morning in-person worship service.



Faith UMC in Orland Park prepared an instructional video outlining guidelines before attending an in-person service, including mask wearing, reservation instructions, bathroom protocols, and sanitization efforts.

Clergy on the move face challenges

For clergy who made an appointment change to a new church in July, the pandemic created more than the usual stress a move can bring.

"This is my fourth change of appointment and by far most difficult logistically speaking," said the Rev. Esther EunJin Lee, who moved from Geneva UMC to Christ UMC in Deerfield this summer. "I worried about cleanliness, my family's health with two young children, scheduling, and how everything was going to work out. From trying to make sure the kids were not near the movers and keeping hands sanitized at all times to making sure we were all masked—these were just the 'tip of the iceberg'."

Saying farewell and welcoming their new pastors also was unconventional for many churches this appointment season. The Rev. Amos Oladipo who moved from Blue Island Grace UMC to First UMC in Oak Lawn and Grace United Protestant in Park Forest said it was less celebratory this year.

"I had a separate virtual welcome and an introduction during online worship on the first Sunday," said Oladipo. "On the day that we moved to the parsonage, representatives of the church welcomed us with flowers, food, and a few kitchen needs."

Geneva UMC decorated Pastor Lee's front lawn of the parsonage with signs saying 'thank you' as they wished her well in her new appointment and the Staff Parish Relations Committee at Christ UMC in Deerfield dropped off meals, gift cards and groceries to Lee's new home. They also held a parking lot 'meet and greet' and are holding smaller gatherings on the church lawn and via Zoom. But Lee said making connections with her new congregation is a challenge for everyone.

"I think because we hunger for community and gathering, which we have been missing through the quarantine, many of us have realized how we took them for granted and now have welcomed, felt gratitude, and even treasure the small interactions we have these days," Lee said. "As difficult as this move has been, and as difficult it

has been in our nation with matters of politics, social injustices, and changes in school reopening, I believe that the work of the church and the need for the church to step up is becoming clearer, and ever more important."

From the cancellation of many church events and fellowship opportunities to the weekly challenges of putting together safe in-person services as well as producing online worship, the pandemic has shifted the terrain of ministry, which will look much different even after the virus loosens its grip on the nation and world.

"During the last few months, even when our efforts totally failed (like some of our livestreamed services) folks recognized our efforts and encouraged us along the way," said Hong. "The church can share the message of Jesus during these difficult times and be an example of flexibility and humbleness. While we cannot do what we've always done, we can find new ways to love and connect with each other. We can serve and care for our neighbors differently."

To read the ReTurn plan, visit umcnic.org/returnteam.



Bishop's Appeal update

Since the Bishop's Appeal offering will be unable to be collected in person at Annual Conference this year, Global Missionary Rev. Young Seon (Christina) Kim reminds churches donations are still welcomed for the Global Mission Secondary School with The United Methodist Church in Tanzania, a co-educational boarding school being built in the outskirts of Dar es Salaam City. Construction for the school is currently in stage two with the goal of opening to students, ages 13-18, by January 2021. But the school still needs more than \$230,000 to meet the target date.

Rev. Kim, whose plans to visit the Northern Illinois Annual Conference in June were thwarted by the COVID-19 pandemic, was overjoyed with news from the Korean United Methodist Women (KUMW) in the NIC, who are selling boxes of Korean acorn noodles and honey to support the 2020 Bishop's Appeal.

Rev. Kim says they've already raised more than \$21,000 for the offering from sales of the products, individual donations, and nine KUMW members who gave their \$1,200

pandemic relief government checks toward the school construction.

"I was deeply moved and empowered by their love, generosity, and dedication," said Rev. Kim. "KUMW and I have a long relationship since my seminary years at Garrett-ETS. They've supported me wherever I have served in the NIC, even in Tanzania."

If you are interested in buying a box of acorn noodles, which cost \$30 for 8.5lbs, to support the Bishop's Appeal, contact Jung J. Kim, President of KUMW of Chicago by email at jjkim78@gmail.com.

Bishop Appeal's checks may be mailed to:
Northern Illinois Conference
PO Box 5646
Carol Stream, IL 60197-5646
Write "Bishop's Appeal" in the memo line.

Learn more about how your church can support the Bishop's Appeal at umcnic.org/bishopsappeal.



Rev. Kim thanks everyone who is supporting the Global Mission Secondary School in Tanzania, which will give teenage boys and girls educational opportunities.

Apportionment dollars equip Hispanic leaders

Each Saturday in August, the Northern Illinois Conference Academy for Faith Community Development teamed up with the National Hispanic Plan to pilot an online version of the Lay Missionaries program. Twenty-four students (note: from the class of 2021 there were 45 participants before COVID-19) were part of this process as we all adapt to social distancing but continue to do the work of leadership development.

The program requires 18 hours of training within a month, including three webinars and participation in small groups while also learning from videos, new materials, and homework. Those taking part are a dedicated cadre of local church leaders.

The Northern Illinois Conference has been a trailblazer in the development of programs to equip Hispanic laity and clergy for leadership in the church. For 15 years our apportionment dollars have financed the Academy, providing the site, staff support, trainers, and hospitality. Out of this program we have deployed leaders in existing local churches and in the development of new faith communities. Some of these leaders have gone on to become licensed Local Pastors and ordained clergy.

The Academy has become a model across the United Methodist Church for the work of leadership development.

The Northern Illinois Conference staff and leadership are taking a fresh look at the use of our apportionment dollars in a season of renewed reflection. As we work to address racism, support congregations of color, and develop a diverse pool of leaders, we can name bright spots in the budget and identify ways in which we can do better.

In the last decade apportionment funds have been used to undergird the establishment of 16 ethnic new church starts. A growing focus of these church starts is the Latinx community. One of the challenges in the work was a lack of trained United Methodist Latinx clergy. The academy was designed to address this need.

When a New Faith Community launches, it is financed in part by the assets of the closed church fund, a restricted fund. This fund is built from the proceeds of churches that close, thus paying it forward to the development of new congregations with legacy resources. These funds are supplemented by apportionment dollars invested in missional sites.

Over the next few months, we will continue to reflect on

the use of our apportionment support for the work of expanding our diversity. Today we celebrate the dedicated work of our Director of Congregational Development and Redevelopment, the Rev. Martin Lee, as he visions new ways to expand our reach in making disciples of Jesus Christ.



Students in the NIC Academy for Faith Community Development pose for a photo at a training pre-COVID-19 and began meeting online this summer due to the pandemic.

ChildServ name change puts Kids Above All



After 34 years as ChildServ, the Chicago-based child welfare agency officially announced that it has changed its name and visual identity to Kids Above All. The transition, which took effect on June 15, 2020, marked the fifth time in history that the agency has rebranded and marked the culmination of a two-year process to examine how best the organization can expand its impact in and around Chicago. With this transition, the agency retains its 126-year mission to protect, heal and educate children and families so they can build better lives.

"Kids Above All is a statement of priority and principle. It's a defiant and powerful call to action, challenging every member of the community to place the safety, well-being and education of all kids above everything else," said Kids Above All President and CEO Dan Kotowski. "We are the forward momentum behind our kids, and we need to, once and for all, stand up for them so they can rise above their challenges and achieve their potential."

Kids Above All is also an agent for increased advocacy for equal justice, equal rights and equal opportunity for all kids, in every community. The organization is drawing a line in the sand—saying 'enough is enough!' Too many children, especially children from black and brown communities, endure the daily trauma of racism, poverty and violence, and suffer or die as a result. Kids Above All will continue to call out and take on centuries-old injustices that plague our country, consciously working to affect positive change.

In addition, Kids Above All will expand its home-based early childhood and daycare programs to address a growing need in communities across the Chicago area. Those services – along with its work in foster care and adoption, housing for teens and formerly homeless young adults, and counseling – help kids, youth and families who are at risk in Cook, DuPage, Kane and Lake counties to have the best life possible.

Kids Above All was founded in 1894 as the Methodist Deaconess Orphanage, in Lake Bluff, Illinois. Throughout its history, the organization has enjoyed a strong mission partnership with the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church and its congregations, which has improved the lives of more than 145,000 kids and families. Last year, 34 churches contributed and volunteered during Kids Above All's annual Back-to-School Backpack and Holiday Gift drives.

In 2019, Kids Above All served 2,617 children and families in and around Chicago so they can live long, productive and happy lives. To learn more and connect with Kids Above All, visit KidsAboveAll.org or contact Manager of Faith and Community Relations Catherine Inserra, Deaconess, at cinserra@kidsaboveall.org or 847-224-2870.

**Catherine Inserra is a Deaconess in the NIC and Manager of Faith & Community Relations for Kids Above All*



ANTI-RACISM TASK FORCE
of the Northern Illinois Conference

The NIC Anti-Racism Task Force is now rolling out

Phase I of their online presence—and they are excited about their webpage and Learning Path! Their work began in late 2019 and now more than 250 lay and clergy across the conference have engaged with the task force through online panel discussions, participated in the Champion

Team, and volunteered on various subcommittees, and there's much more to come!

Stay in touch with the Anti-Racism Task Force by visiting umcnic.org/antiracism. But don't stop there: you are invited to do more! Anyone can begin the journey of learning and growing to understand racism better and learn how to be anti-racist. You are also invited to take a journey on their Anti-Racism Awareness and Learning Path by

visiting umcnic.org/learningpath. There are various entry points to start praying, learning, and growing in your understanding of racism and how to be anti-racist. Be sure to register when you start the journey and complete a tracking tool at the end of the journey to measure your progress. Join the movement today!

Churches respond to call to denounce racism

By Rev. Violet Johnicker, NIC Anti-Racism Task Force Member*

Four years ago at General Conference, Bishop Sally Dyck preached a powerful sermon. She challenged us with these words reflecting on our doctrine: “Why is racism not declared incompatible with Christian teaching? How does it exist within the Gospel of Jesus Christ?” For too long, in so many of our churches and communities, racism has been willfully ignored—and even perpetuated.

The Bishop's message, building on generations of anti-racism work in the church, inspired the Northern Illinois Conference (NIC) to formally adopt the goal of living out the conviction that racism is incompatible with Christian teaching. In 2019, the Annual Conference Shepherding Team (ACST) established the Anti-Racism Task Force and today the task force members and Champion Team are working to implement policies and programs to move this goal from belief to practice.

Anti-racism efforts are not new in churches, but they are especially urgent now as momentum continues to build for real, systemic change. In early August 2020, pastors gathered to pray at Rockford's City Hall, to support the local call for a Community Accountability Board, a version of a citizens review board that many cities have implemented across the country and something Rockford's branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has long been advocating for. Review boards provide community oversight of police misconduct complaints and can help to build trust between police departments and residents.

Many NIC churches are responding to the conference goal and are striving to live out the conviction that racism is incompatible with Christian teaching. The Rev. Mark Harkness of Cherry Valley UMC says he regularly includes racism in sermons as an example of things offensive to God and which we need to overcome.” For my July newsletter article, I submitted a four-page letter explaining the difference between racism, bigotry, and prejudice in order

to help people understand that they don't have to be (or see themselves as) a bigot to participate in racism,” Harkness said.

The Rev. Pam Rossmiller (Grace UMC in Rockford) shared that her church has launched small groups around the theme of anti-racism to educate each other, challenge one another on our implicit biases, and unite to find our place to be a voice and partner to fight racism. “Our baptismal vows include a promise to accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves,” said Rossmiller. “They have presented themselves in the structure in our church, our workplace, neighborhood, and families that have allowed people of color to be oppressed. We desire to know better and then to do better.”

The Rev. Uziel Hernandez Martinez (Centennial Multicultural UMC in Rockford) said that the congregation believes everyone is a beloved child of God. “As human beings, we have the right to have access to basic human rights such as freedom, healthcare, education, etc. As a church we do not support any type of oppression or racism towards any human being,” he said. “The Black Lives Matter movement has brought into light what has been happening in this country for decades, and as a church we oppose any evil structures that take the lives of people. We believe that it is our responsibility to educate ourselves, learn our history in order to create a space of growth, and participate in intentional discipleship with our hands and feet.”

In response to the NIC goal, the Rev. Cal Culpepper of Court Street UMC in Rockford succinctly shared the words of Christian podcaster Phil Vischer: “Care, Listen, Learn,” and then Culpepper went on to say, “and I am adding, “Respond Responsibly.”

Lay Leader Brent Holman-Gomez of Berry UMC in Chicago said his church has used its weekly newsletter to promote anti-racist trainings and the experience of its

pastor on the Task Force. “Located in Chicago's Lincoln Square neighborhood, the church has participated in civil disobedience during worship in the name of Black lives by blocking a street, publicly calling for justice for Laquan McDonald's murder, and it uses its church sign to witness that Black Lives Matter,” said Holman-Gomez. “The Anchors Covenant Group, made of up former and current members of Berry UMC, is using its meetings (which have shifted from in-person to Zoom), Facebook group, and email for awareness-raising, and establishing specific resources for members to watch, read, and listen, then discuss as a group.”

It is important to educate ourselves about racism, injustice, and our complicity in systems that perpetuate these evils, but the common theme among many NIC churches right now is taking action. We can read all the anti-racism books in the world, but unless we change our actions, programs, budgets, and policies to reflect that wisdom and the testimony of United Methodists of color who have been sharing their lived experiences and calling for change, we are not living out our calling to do justice.

The Anti-Racism Task Force would love to hear from you: what is your congregation doing to be actively anti-racist? Send us an email at antiracismTF@umcnic.org to share your story.

**Rev. Violet Johnicker is the senior pastor at Brooke Road United Methodist Church in Rockford, Ill.*



United Methodist clergy gather for a prayer walk Aug. 5 around Rockford's City Hall to support a Community Accountability Board.

Rockford young adult commissioned as Global Fellow to help serve the homeless

By Anne Marie Gerhardt, Dir. of Communications



For her next chapter in life, recent college graduate Emily Palm had her mind set on serving in the Peace Corps overseas.

“In January before the coronavirus pandemic, I had my placement in the Peace Corps. I applied for my visa and I was all set to go to Mongolia to teach English for two years,” Palm said. “I was ready and I thought it was what I had been called to do.”

What Emily wasn't expecting was an allergy would raise a red flag. “The Peace Corps did the second medical check and since I'm allergic to penicillin, they didn't want to send me to a developing country.”

Emily, a lifelong member of Christ UMC in Rockford, remembered her pastor Rev. Jane Easley sharing stories of her

personal experience in the United Methodist General Board of Global Missions (GBGM) former Mission Intern (now called the International Track) program serving the Palestinian-Christian community in Jerusalem. So Palm started applying for the International Track through GBGM, as a Global Missions Fellow. But due to the pandemic, GBGM isn't sending anyone abroad this year.

“I was really determined to take the International Track because I thought that was what I was supposed to do at first,” said Palm. “But I started hearing more about the US-2 Track and how it would be closer to what I want to do, which is direct social work with homeless individuals.”

The Global Fellows US-2 Track is for those authorized to work in the United States (including citizens and those who qualify under DAPA and DACA). The track is a 24-month service program that includes training, transition into the new affiliate site, and intentional/community living.

Emily has been placed with the NOAH Project in downtown Detroit, which is located at Central UMC and offers lunch, social

services, physical health counseling, and emergency needs for homeless individuals. NOAH stands for Networking, Organizing and Advocating for the Homeless and aims to empower low income and homeless people in Detroit to achieve stability by serving as the first step on the journey to self-sufficiency.

The unexpected placement aligns perfectly with Emily's skills, experience, and mission outlook.

“I am passionate about missions and helping people in need,” Palm said. “I have experience working with youth and at-risk populations, as well as extensive mission work. When faced with stress or adversity, I have learned to use mindfulness, meditation, and prayer, which have helped me to take care of myself better and, ultimately, become a better leader.”

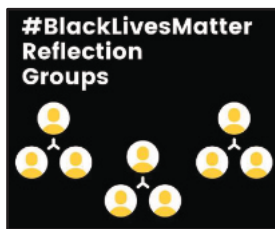
Emily's most recent job experience was with Rockford Work Camps in summer 2019, when she led out-of-town mission teams in the completion of various community projects in the

Continued on page 6, see Global Fellow

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Campus Ministries connect students despite pandemic separation

By Diane Strzelecki, NIC Communications Specialist



Fall 2020 doesn't look like a typical college experience for most students, whether they're returning to campuses under health and safety guidelines or continuing online learning because of COVID-19 concerns.

Since March, NIC's five Campus Ministers have been reaching out to college students who left for spring break under the cloud of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the infection spread, most students were told to retrieve their belongings from their dorms and return home.

NIC campus ministries moved quickly to adapt to a "new normal" as students finished their academic year virtually. Kaitlyn Franz, Site Pastor for The Inclusive Collective at Northern Illinois University (NIU), describes their work this spring as "response."

"For two months our ministry was creating strategies to quickly respond to the needs of our students," Franz said. "We instantly transitioned our community group and monthly worship online. We also added spiritual practices like noon prayer and contemplation three days per week."

Prior to Illinois' Stay-At-Home order, Korean American Campus Ministry (KACM) at Chicago: Hyde Park Korean was preparing for online worship service and meetings. After the first order was issued, they quickly moved to an all-online platform.

Typical campus ministry outlets, like spring activities fairs, were either cancelled or moved online. At Northwestern University, University Christian Ministry (UCM) participated in a virtual activities fair featuring video clips of students speaking about their involvement, as well as printed material and slides.

Campus ministries also had to reevaluate outreach. Rich Havard, Campus Pastor at IC at the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC), says that IC's Sunday evening "dinner parties" for people experiencing homelessness transitioned to an in-person event with the meal provided in a "grab-and-go" format, which will likely continue this fall.

Pastoral care essential

UCM Campus Minister and Executive Director Rev. Julie Windsor Mitchell continues to provide pastoral care for current students via phone and video conferencing platforms. "I'm doing what I can with the relationships I have built," Mitchell said, adding that UCM is also supporting local students with necessities.

Franz does a lot of one-on-one checking in with her NIU students, which she plans to continue.

"In terms of our current students, I anticipate getting to spend more time with them—whether online or socially distant—to really go deep, perhaps developing them as IC leaders," she said. "We have two new interns who are excited about growing the ministry even in the midst of a drastically different setting."

As the University of Chicago (UOFC) locked down their facilities, both KACM and university leaders were concerned about students' mental health under isolation. KACM responded by expanding their counseling programs.

"Since late March, we've had online meetings with students at least twice weekly and online counseling every Wednesday morning with additional meetings upon request," Lee said. He notes that some students and staff stayed to continue their work after UOFC facilities closed, so KACM set up meetings to help students deal with the stress. Lee expects counseling programs to continue when students return to campus this fall.

In addition to prioritizing virtual pastoral care; the IC at UIC also started a COVID relief fund for students who lost jobs or who come from low-income families with parents who lost jobs.

New—and different—school year

As students face the 2020-2021 academic year, NIC campus ministries are preparing to help them navigate unusual circumstances.

"As for new students, I'm going to make an extra effort to really build those relationships so that they know they have some support here on campus," Mitchell said.

Franz feels that the IC at NIU is more prepared than ever for ministry. "We are creating strategies to connect with students, and as much of our ministry has transitioned to online, our evangelism will too," she said.

Woo notes that their current ministry keyword is "hybrid" – a mix of online and offline ministries. "We are planning a hybrid welcoming event in mid-October," he said. KACM is also moving forward with virtual and socially distant, limited attendance in-person meetings several times a week and on weekends.

Proceeding with caution, Mitchell notes the best-case scenario for UCM would be good weather this fall so they can incorporate some in-person meetings into their activities.

"Of course everything we do will comply with state and university guidelines, but I hope for outdoor services and small groups meeting in our outdoor space, weather permitting," Mitchell said. "Then maybe transition to online worship and small groups, and, depending on gathering requirements, continue small group meetings in person."

Franz hopes for good weather and has a plan for the colder months when they will reevaluate and go back online if necessary. "Our worship will remain online, and we are investigating how to hold our annual Fall Retreat to offer both community and spiritual renewal," she said.

Woo anticipates continuing the hybrid model indefinitely. "Our church would create an 'online community' and 'offline community' within this new paradigm," Woo says. "One of the possible ministry concerns would be how to help these 'two' communities feel that they are 'one' community as church."

Havard says flexibility will be key. "What I'm telling my staff and our leaders is when we get to do things in person it'll be more like a treat rather than a normal part of our rhythm," he says.

Moving forward in hope

UCM has been around for a while – more than 80 years – but it has never done ministry in the midst of a global pandemic.

"There have been challenges, but we've also never had this capacity for technology and connection," she says. "Those things combined make it really different – there are opportunities for creativity."

As IC navigates the new year, Havard is grateful for his staff, the IC board of directors, and the support of local churches across the conference. "There's a whole community of people meeting this moment with faithful and innovative responses," he said.

"No matter what the situation is, it will be 'open hearts, open minds' for UCM," Mitchell said. "That's who we are and nothing about that is changing."

Franz remains hopeful as well. "I know God is with us, helping us to be flexible, sitting with us in our grief of what could have been, and celebrating with us in our moments of joy!"



Global Fellow continued from page 5

Rockford area. This opportunity, she explained, offered "insight on the workings of nonprofits." As a teen and young adult, she participated in various mission journeys across the United States, where she learned construction, teamwork, and interpersonal skills. Interning at Christ UMC in 2018, Emily planned and led mission experiences and assisted with youth ministry and worship. Volunteering is also high on Emily's list of accomplishments, including tutoring at-risk children and youth at a nonprofit for homeless individuals and families.

Rev. Eesley said Christ UMC strongly supports youth mission work. "I knew Emily had a heart for mission—this has been true through her work with our youth group and volunteering with a homeless outreach center in Rockford," Eesley said. "When Emily asked about different ways of serving, I told her about the Global Missions Fellow program. When she started talking about the Peace Corps, I just prayed that she be led to the right program."

Emily said the GBGM staff was extremely helpful in making her decision. "They were so kind," Palm said. "They prayed when we started the interview and prayed when we closed. I was still

sad about the Peace Corps but it was so touching how loving and supportive they were in this process."

Bishop Sally Dyck said it's important people know that these GBGM programs are supported by apportionment dollars and are developing young leaders in our denomination and beyond.

"This is going to be an inspiring experience for Emily," Bishop Dyck said. "The lessons she will learn along the way might result in a strong calling but you don't always know what it will look like in the end. You just need to trust the process. Regardless, it's going to have a wonderful imprint on who she is and who yet she will become."

Rev. Eesley said this is one opportunity where congregations, whether adult lay people, youth leaders or church staff, can play an important role in supporting young adults in their sense of calling.

"Emily and I had lunch and talked about her plans," Eesley said. "It's important to give young adults some private space to explore their calling and give them that space to think through different options."

Eesley said the US-2 program gives an important hands-on experience and a chance to "serve with your heart and learn" especially for young adults who are still trying to figure out a vocation to pursue.

Emily said she may still be trying to find her place in this world but this feels like where she is supposed to be. She encourages other young adults to consider becoming a Global Mission Fellow.

"It doesn't matter what your major is," said Palm. "If you feel a calling to mission, go for it! It doesn't matter what your background is—that was something I was stuck on. I felt it wasn't qualified and wondered how I was going to do it—but GBGM will help you along the way."

If you would like to financially support Emily, give to Advance #3022618 at advance.umcmmission.org.

Learn more about the Global Mission Fellows program at umcmmission.org/serve-with-us/global-mission-fellows.



Rev. Hope Chernich (right) delivers a check to the Hands to Help ministry, a recipient of Irving Park's tithing from the sale of the church's building.

Berry United Methodist Church's building served the Chicago Lincoln Square neighborhood for more than 100 years.

Tithing transforms NIC congregations and communities By Anne Marie Gerhardt, Dir. of Communications

In 2019, the congregation at Irving Park United Methodist Church in Chicago made one of their most difficult decisions in the church's more than 130-year history. Facing mounting repairs, costly renovations, and dwindling membership, the congregation sold their building on Keeler Avenue and held their final worship in the space in November 2019.

"It was a long journey discerning what to do with the building," said Rev. Hope Chernich. "We worked with the Conference and talked about redeveloping or merging with another congregation, but it came to the point where selling and closing doors was the best option. However, we committed to staying in the community to start something new."

Chicago Northwestern District Superintendent Rev. Brittany Isaac encouraged Irving Park and other congregations that have sold buildings to tithe the money made on their sales to build up other United Methodist Churches and ministries in the Conference.

"We ask each congregation to follow the biblical practice of giving by sharing 10% of the proceeds from the sale of their buildings" said Isaac. "It should be given out of a spirit of joy, generosity, and abundance and rooted in a deep spiritual understanding that the money comes from God."

Irving Park divided up 10% of their proceeds by giving \$10,000 to the Irving Park Food Pantry, which was founded by a former member, housed in the church building and subsequently displaced by the sale. Another \$10,000 went to Hands to Help, a neighborhood organization that local churches partner with by providing financial assistance for housing and utilities. The congregation also wanted to give \$60,000 to United Church of Rogers Park where Berry Members frequently would volunteer. The money will go toward much-needed repairs to the church's front steps and entrances and improve accessibility.

"When you have such great loss in selling your building and facing difficult realities with declining numbers, this was an amazing opportunity to turn around and find a way to celebrate in the midst of that," said Chernich. "It also helps us to understand our connection. We found ways to use a portion of the funds in a positive way. The Conference has supported us in many ways, and we were finally able to give back, when for many years we haven't been able to."

Irving Park also was able to give \$20,000 to a new church start in Melrose Park. The Red Door Church is an LGBTQ inclusive Hispanic ministry and hopes to launch worship in 2021.

"Our mission is to create an inclusive place of worship, to accompany Latinx people in their journey of faith and struggle, and to make disciples of Jesus Christ," said Red Door Church planter Shalamar Molina. "We thank Irving Park UMC for thoughtfully gracing us with this gift. This

donation not only aids us in our mission and help with the expense to launch a new faith community, but it is a prophetic transference of a mission they began in the 80s with the Reconciling Ministry Network."

Berry UMC in Chicago sold their 110-year-old building in Chicago's Lincoln Square neighborhood February 2020. They plan to distribute their tithe of the sale over three years to other United Methodist churches in the conference and various ministries.

The congregation decided to give money to smaller NIC churches struggling amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and offer technology grants to help connect members with online meetings and worship. Berry gave nine grants totaling more than \$24,000 to help pay for items such as Chromebooks and laptops, as well as recording, audio, and livestreaming equipment.

"All tithes from the land, whether the seed from the ground or the fruit from the tree, are the LORD's; they are holy to the LORD." Leviticus 27:30

"I would say to other congregations asked to tithe: it's the right thing to do," said Jeanne Mervine, Administrative Chair at Berry. "I would say find something your congregation has always wanted to support. I can't tell you how good it feels to give this much money this year when so many organizations are struggling during the pandemic. I feel our little congregation really is making a difference in so many lives."

Humboldt Park UMC, a bilingual Spanish/English congregation in the Logan Square neighborhood, received \$2,000 to provide Internet, tablets, and basic laptops to help families connect both to worship and church ministries and to help families who need access for school remote learning.

"We will be using part of the grant to enhance access to our current virtual ministry for the members of our church community who have no access to technology or internet in their homes," said Rev. Paula Cripps-Vallejo, Humboldt Park's senior pastor. "Overall, we are grateful for this funding to help bridge the divide/gap in technological literacy and access to the Internet that is, unfortunately, a big part of systemic injustice that we experience as a majority Latino/Hispanic congregation."

Resurrection UMC in Chicago needed recording equipment that the congregation could not afford to produce its online services and received \$5,000 from Berry.

"The members of Resurrection UMC extend their humble gratitude for the technology grant awarded to us," said Resurrection's pastor Rev. Delian Stone. "As God continues

to do a new thing in the life of the church, you have blessed us tremendously and because of your generosity we are able to enhance our church technology and ministries."

Berry also gave to several ministries supported by Lincoln UMC in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, including the Youth Health Service Corps, low-cost exercise and nutrition classes, and the Sin Fronteras Immigration Ministry. The rest of the tithe will go toward two other ministries the congregation has long supported: The Night Ministry and Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors (NIJFON).

Rev. Isaac said paying it forward is a testimony to our United Methodist connection and evokes the vision of the ancient church found in Acts 2. "I have asked churches to invest mainly in other UMC congregations but also acknowledging that there are sometimes historic ties to organizations that they also want to support," said Isaac. "Gratefully, this is starting to become a regular practice in our district and other churches in the past have given back from the sale of their buildings, including St. Matthew and New Hope."

Berry UMC's pastor Rev. Matthew Krings said the congregation's plans to tithe were already in motion when he came on as their new pastor in July. "I'm really thankful that we have leadership that cares enough to want to invest and give back to other churches and causes in our community to further God's plan for northern Illinois," said Krings. "When we talk about stewardship, we talk about the fact that everything is God's and nothing we have is ours. Tithing was our congregation's way of acknowledging that."

While Berry and Irving Park no longer have a physical building, both congregations are continuing to worship and grow their churches. Berry is renting and renovating a storefront on Western Avenue and hopes to be worshipping there by November. Irving Park purchased a thrift store in Portage Park as an outreach ministry while finding new ways to worship and be active in the community.

Irving Park also received a new pastor on August 1: the Rev. Erin James-Brown, who is embracing the congregation's generous spirit. "While a building is gone, the people, their memories, and their heritage of faithfulness join with our efforts to create this new act of worship," James-Brown recently wrote to the congregation. "While we don't yet know what our new community will look like, we know people need to hear more about what God is up to and how a relationship with God and following Jesus can transform one's life."

A building is sold; a new chapter in the life of a congregation begins—and through the transformative work of tithing, the NIC UM connection strengthens and communities experience God's love in a new way.



DYK???

Your vote counts

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

In mid-March, at the dawn of the COVID-19 pandemic, I struggled with an important decision. Illinois was conducting a primary election, it was too late to cast a mail-in ballot, we were on the verge of the state's Stay-at-Home Order, but I wanted to vote. I may be one of more than 8 million eligible voters in our state, but exercising my right to vote and expressing my voice at the ballot box is a precious responsibility. I went to the polls that morning just as they opened. The precinct had taken precautions—the voting booths were distanced and hand sanitizer was available—and I felt good that I had exercised my civic responsibility.

The 19th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States was ratified on August 18, 1920 – 100 years ago. The amendment granted American women the right to vote and ended a 75-year campaign for suffrage. The 15th Amendment was adopted into the U.S. Constitution in 1870, 150 years ago, giving African American men the right to vote. Both these amendments came with great sacrifice and dedicated persistence.

Women suffragettes spent 75 years working for the right to vote. Most of the early leaders in the movement did not live to see the victory. Brutal beatings, imprisonment, hunger strikes, forced feedings, demonstrations, marches, rallies,

and political campaigns all culminated in the 19th Amendment.

The right to vote did not come easily and has not always been secure. After the Civil War granted freedom to slaves, new, subtler forms of racism evolved. The 15th Amendment's intentions were thwarted by state and local discriminatory practices: poll taxes, literacy tests and a variety of barriers that kept African American men from exercising their rights.

It was almost another 100 years before the federal government passed the Voting Rights Act in 1965 to ensure that the voting amendments in the U.S. Constitution were applied equally from state to state. The Voting Rights Act was a direct outcome of the civil rights movement.

As far as we have come, even now exercising our right in voting at the polls is fragile and at times threatened. As recently as 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down portions of the Voting Rights Act. Legislation to address the gaps in our voting rights has not yet been ratified.

In an article published after his death in July, Congressman John Lewis, a tireless advocate for civil rights who helped pave the way for the Voting Rights Act, reminded us "The vote is the most powerful nonviolent change agent you have in a democratic society. You must use it because it is not guaranteed. You can lose it."

I am making my plans now to cast my ballot in the November 3 elections. None of us knows what the polls will look like in three months, so I am casting a ballot by mail. I vote out of duty, out of respect for those who fought and sacrificed to give me this right and responsibility. I vote out of a grounding in faith that calls me to give voice through my actions to the greater good of humankind.

Join me in making your plans now. Register to vote by October 18; you can do so online. Plan your trip to the polls; put it on your calendar or sign up to vote by mail to ensure your voice—your vote—counts.



Women march in the 1913 Women Suffrage Procession in Washington. Methodist women played a significant role in the ratification of the 19th Amendment. Photo from the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Appointments - June/July Announcements

Bishop Sally Dyck announces the following clergy appointments for the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church effective July 1, 2020 (unless otherwise noted):

Amos Oladipo (Elder) to Oak Lawn: First (1/2 time) (Chicago Southern District) from Blue Island: Grace (Chicago Southern District) while also remaining at Park Forest: Grace United Protestant (1/2 time) (Chicago Southern District). Amos follows Colleen Norman who is appointed to Chicago: South Lawn (Chicago: Southern District).

Abraham Moller (Local Pastors License Pending) to Ottawa: Evangelical and Leland (DeKalb District). Abraham follows David Yim who is appointed to Savanna: First.

James Fu (Provisional Elder Pending) to Villa Park (1/2 time) (Elgin District) while also remaining at Elmhurst: Christ (1/2 time) (Elgin District).

Rod Benavidez (District Superintendent Supply) to Brookville and Elkhorn (1/4) (DeKalb District). Rod follows Jerry Martz who is retiring.

Krista Paradiso (Elder) to Northbrook (Chicago Northwestern District) from Chicago: Elston Avenue and Chicago: Berry Memorial (Chicago Northwestern District). Krista follows Sherrie Lowly who is retiring. Effective September 1.

Kelly Davis (District Superintendent Supply) to Red Oak and Wyand (DeKalb District). Kelly follows Ji Eun O (Mori) who is appointed to Chicago: Ravenswood.

Tennille Power (DSS) to Hazel Crest: Community (1/2 time) (Chicago Southern District). Tennille follows Colleen Norman who is appointed to Chicago: South Lawn (Chicago: Southern District).

Josiah Montgomery (DS) to Chicago: Eastside (1/4 time) (Chicago Southern District). Josiah follows Beverly Dukes who is appointed to Homewood: St. Andrew (Chicago: Southern District).

Irene Taylor (Retired Elder) to Ingleside (1/4 time) (Elgin District). Effective September 1.

Innis Miller (Local Pastor) to Blue Island: Grace (1/4 time) (Chicago Southern District) while also serving Chicago: Grace Calvary (Chicago: Southern District). Innis follows Amos Oladipo who is appointed to Oak Lawn: First and Park Forest: Grace.

Donald Wright (Local Pastor) to retirement from Chicago: Olivet where he served for 15 years (Chicago NW District).

Nick Joyner (District Superintendent Supply) to Chicago: Olivet (1/4 time) (Chicago Northwestern District). Nick follows Don Wright.

Vinay Pathak (¶ 346.2) to Chicago: Indo Pak (Chicago Northwestern). Vinay follows Ernst Singh who died earlier this spring.

Patricia Bonilla (Deacon) to appointment to attend school from Deerfield: Christ (Chicago Northwestern District).

Tyler Ward (Provisional Elder) to Transitional Leave.

Tura Foster Gillespie (Provisional Deacon) to Teaching Cultural Compassion (Ministry Beyond the Local Church).

Betsy Evans Ingstrup (Provisional Deacon) ¶ 346.1 to West Virginia serving in the Raleigh Shared Ministry of the West Virginia Southern District.

Cheryl Magrini (Deacon) to Leave of Absence from Woodland Spiritual Retreats for Women in Ministry, Woodstock.

September/October Calendar Items

UMM Spiritual Congress

Sept. 19

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

"Get Your Sandals Dusty" is the theme for this online event. Speakers will address how Christian men can be a part of the permanent solution to racism, violent crime, intolerance, and social unrest. To pre-register, email your name, church and district to ElginDistrictUMM@aol.com Visit nicumm.org for more information.

Stewardship Workshops

The United Methodist Foundation is holding four stewardship workshops on Saturdays this fall. The workshops, beginning Sept. 19, focus on how to make practical changes in the area of stewardship in partnership with Rev. Dr. Michael Piazza with Agile Church.

Cost: \$125 for each local church - inclusive of multiple persons.

Visit umfnic.org/summit for more info.

The Foundation's annual grants program is also now taking applications. Annually the Foundation offers funding of \$500 - \$2,000 to local churches and church-related agencies.

Visit umfnic.org/grants for more details and apply by **September 15**.

Leadership Institute

Sept. 24-26

Cost: \$69

Clergy, church staff, and lay leaders are encouraged to join virtually.

Keynote speakers include Rev. Adam Hamilton and Bishop Michael Curry, Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church. To register and for more information, visit li.cor.org.

"I Am Her" Women's Leadership Summit

Oct. 8-10

Hosted by the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, this virtual event is a movement of women coming together to **Be Inspired, Be Empowered, and Be Equipped**.

Keynote speaker: New York Times best-selling author Nadia Bolz-Weber. For more information, visit gcsrw.org.

Intentional Discipleship Systems

(identical presentations)

October 14 from 7 - 8:30 p.m. followed by a 30 minute Q&A

October 15 from 10 - 11:30 a.m. followed by a 30 minute Q&A

Registration coming soon.

Sponsored by the NIC Office of Congregational and Redevelopment

Job Openings

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

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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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