



Navigating Uncharted Waters

Bishop Sally Dyck calls clergy and lay members to Annual Conference

The 179th regular session of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference will be held on Sunday, June 3 through Tuesday, June 5 at Pheasant Run Resort in St. Charles, Ill. I look forward to seeing you all there!

The clergy session will be held on Tuesday, May 15 at Rockford: Christ UMC. Check-in begins at 8:30 a.m. and our learning time at 9:00 a.m. The actual business of the clergy session will be after lunch but all clergy are strongly encouraged to be there all day for our time together in worship, fellowship, and learning. Victor Saad of the Experience Institute will be our morning speaker. Visit expinstitute.com/team/victor-saad/ for more information.

Our theme for annual conference this year is "Navigating Uncharted Waters" with a focus on Romans 5:3b-4: "trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope." We are all navigating many uncharted waters in our communities, churches and our denomination. How do we draw on our faith, pull together in love, and continue to share the gospel of hope in times of uncertainty?

Our opening worship will be the Commissioning/Ordination service on Sunday, June 3 at 4 p.m. We had outstanding attendance last year and hope that we will continue to come together as clergy and laity to participate in and welcome those new to our clergy covenant. At this service we will take the Ministerial Education Fund offering which gives financial support for the recruitment, credentialing and education of those going into ordained ministry. I urge both laity and clergy to come prepared to contribute to the offering.

Legislation will be presented throughout Monday and Tuesday's sessions, including Monday evening when we will also have a worship workshop led by Gary Rand and The Many, a diverse Christian band, who will be leading us in worship and music throughout our annual conference session.

We will be led in Bible reflections and learning a little differently this year with thematic studies. On Monday morning, Rev. John McCullough, President and CEO of Church World Service and a United Methodist, will lead us in understanding our biblical grounding for our contemporary reality regarding global migration and refugees. Following his presentation we will be taking the Bishop's Appeal Offering which is for Global Migration (worldwide 65.6 million people have been forcibly displaced).

75% of the offering will go to the Global Migration Advance (#3022144) to assist international migrants and refugees. Remember that even though our country isn't receiving as many refugees, United Methodists around the world are, especially in Europe, and they need assistance! 25% will go to local organizations in Northern Illinois working with immigrants and refugees, such as Refugee One and World Relief. Last year we raised over \$70,000 to help alleviate and prevent global HIV/AIDS. Let's bring hope to the many displaced persons around the world. Last year the Bishop's Appeal traveling award went to the Aurora District.

On Tuesday morning the General Secretary of Archives and History, Rev. Fred Day, will lead us in a Bible reflection and presentation on church unity; focusing on the 50th anniversary of the Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist Episcopal Church. We will recognize those who come from the EUB tradition and think about where we are as a church 50 years later!

The Retirement service will be on Monday afternoon and the Memorial service will be Tuesday morning.

The Mission Challenge this year will be for cleaning kits through the Midwest Mission Distribution Center. After a year of hurricanes and flooding we want to be certain there are adequate cleaning kits for ready access in the future. Last year the DeKalb District was recognized for collecting the most Dignity Kits, the Mission Challenge for 2017.

Since we keep our annual conference sessions as short as we can they will be packed full with information, decision-making, worship, Bible reflections and presentations, as well as legislation. Please come prepared (downloading or printing your materials ahead of time). All clergy are expected to be in attendance throughout the sessions.

Please watch our conference website (www.umcnic.org/AC2018) for registration, further information and legislation as it is available. Let's navigate uncharted waters together as the winds of the Holy Spirit keep us moving!

Again, I look forward to seeing you at Pheasant Run for Annual Conference (June 3-5) as well as the clergy at Rockford: Christ UMC for the clergy session on May 15.

~In ministry together,
Bishop Sally Dyck

For the Laity Call Letter visit www.umcnic.org/AC2018.

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A few reminders:

- A new pictorial directory is in the works. Look for sign-ups for your photo session at Pheasant Run coming soon.
- Legislation will be posted at www.umcnic.org/AC2018 by May 4.
- Offsite childcare will be available for those attending the Annual Conference for children 12 years old and under at Geneva UMC. May 19 is the last day to register. June 1 is the last day to cancel childcare, no-shows will be billed \$20 an hour.
- Cokesbury Bookstore and Display tables will again share the space (selected rooms of the St. Charles Ballroom). Registration for Display Tables is open and the link can be found at www.umcnic.org/AC2018. The cost is \$30 per 8ft table and \$50 if electricity is needed. The deadline to register is May 10.
- Our onsite Accessibility Coordinators, Kathy Wellman and Violet Johnicker and assistant Susan Harkness will be present to help with any needs (vision, movement, hearing, etc.), within our ability. Please be sure to indicate in your registration how we can extend welcome and hospitality to you during Annual Conference.
- If interested in ushering, greeting or volunteering during plenaries and worship services, please email Alka Lyall at pastoralkalyall@gmail.com.
- For updates check back here and bookmark www.umcnic.org/AC2018.

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From Bishop Sally Dyck: **Living in liminal times**

A few weeks ago, a well-known and respected church consultant, the Rev. Susan Beaumont, came to train our newly emerging Annual Conference and District Shepherding Teams in adaptive leadership (you will find more on this meeting on page 6). The night before the training, the Annual Conference Shepherding Team had dinner with

her and she shared some observations and thoughts that she has on where the Church in the U.S. is—not just The United Methodist Church but all Christian denominations.

She said, “The church is in liminality!” Huh? Liminality is a word from the Latin, meaning threshold. It’s a time of being betwixt and between, acknowledging that what has been is dying away or disappearing but what will be is not yet clear. She used the example of when her son and his wife were pregnant with their first child. They knew that life as they had known it was about to end but they didn’t really have a sense of what life would be like when this new life emerged. They knew that they would lose some things, like spontaneously going to dinner or a full night’s sleep. But they were eagerly anticipating this new life—already loving this child and eagerly awaiting its arrival.

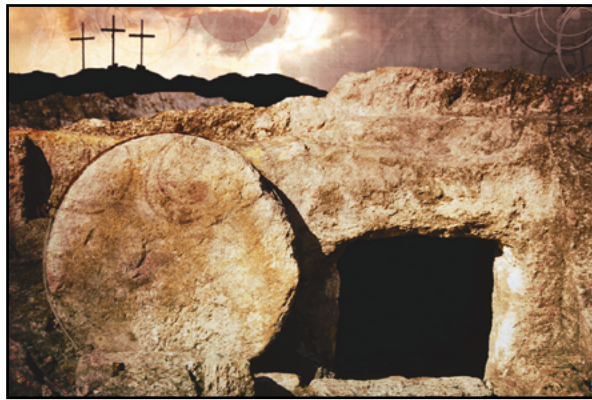
Elsewhere I have read that a liminal time is like “God’s waiting room,” where we are parked, maybe preparing, earnestly seeking as to what yet shall be. In God’s waiting room, there is no certainty about what the future will be and how it will be different from now or what has been in the past. We don’t know what the Promised Land will look like but we have to leave Egypt and even wander around in the wilderness to get there.

Whatever is dying away or disappearing may or may not be a good thing but the uncertainty of not knowing the future is agonizing for us! There is grief at the loss of whatever was good about the past way of being and doing even if it wasn’t all good. It helps, Susan said, when we have some kind of image or sense of what might yet be. An expectant couple has all kinds of expectations of their child but also wonder at the difficulty of the changes the child will bring!

The children of Israel had visions of milk and honey but also of giants in their minds. Liminal times contain hope and also anxiety; joy and also grief.

The celebration of Easter is the celebration—and assurance—that God is in the liminal time. With Easter we affirm that who Jesus was—a physical man in a specific time and place—had died and now is so different from how he looked and acted just three days ago that even Mary Magdalene took him for the gardener! Truly celebrating Easter means that we must acknowledge that what we have known in this life will one day die away but trust that we will become something new. It’s not about being who we have been again; it’s about being new. I always like The Message’s image of this:

Some skeptic is sure to ask, “Show me how resurrection works. Give me a diagram; draw me a picture. What does this ‘resurrection body’ look like?” If you look at this question closely, you realize how absurd it is. There are no diagrams for this kind of thing. We do have a parallel experience in gardening. You plant a “dead” seed; soon there is a flourishing plant. There is no visual likeness between seed and plant. You could never guess what a tomato would look like by looking at a tomato seed. What we plant in the soil and what grows out of it don’t look anything alike. The dead body that we bury in the ground and the resurrection body that comes from it will be dramatically different. (1 Corinthians 15:35-38)



Navigating the liminal times in this life is difficult; the children of Israel had a tough time navigating the liminal time in the wilderness. They made some serious mistakes but learned to trust God even for food and water. They were shaped by the wilderness experience into the children of God; without it they would have remained enslaved to what had been. But I don’t think they particularly liked living in the wilderness or in the liminal time. It’s hard because we don’t always know what to do. It’s what has been called the “terrible cloud of unknowing” (mystic Evelyn Underhill). I like to know what I’m doing and where I’m going and how to navigate, don’t you? But a liminal time means that we have to acknowledge that we’re not in control, that we don’t know what we don’t know, and we must let go and trust in God who will lead us through.

Can you see that the Church is in a liminal time! That it’s changing—yes, dying and disappearing in many ways and places—but that we don’t yet see what it will become? “It does not yet appear what we shall be,” as it says in 1 John 3:2.

But we are not without direction as to how to live in this liminal time. Mary Magdalene went to the tomb “while it was yet dark” . . . there’s a liminal image! She couldn’t imagine what she would find there but because of her faithfulness, service and love, she put herself in the position to be in the presence of the risen Christ.

We’re called to faithfully do what God has called us to do: to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. But we’re also called to trust in the mystery which is the liminal gospel of Easter: walking by faith and not by sight, letting the light shine through where it exists in the darkness, and navigating uncharted territory! (Anybody recognize some liminal annual conference themes?)

Celebrate Easter in the spirit of Mary Magdalene—under the cloud of unknowing but trusting that God is yet revealing what we shall be!

SIGNS OF EMERGENCE: **Religion and Race** convenes board in Chicago



Members of the Northern Illinois Conference’s Chicago Urban Strategy engaged in group conversations at the GCORR spring board meeting.

The international board of directors and staff of the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) traveled to Chicago on February 26 – March 3 to hold its 2018 spring board meeting. Chicago’s South Side, an area long troubled by gun violence, is developing innovative ways for the church to engage diverse and changing communities. GCORR was there to listen, learn, and understand how crucial urban ministry is for the mission of the church in making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

General Secretary Erin Hawkins opened the meeting with scripture from Isaiah 43:19, “Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you know? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.”

Hawkins noted that the passage is sometimes used for magnanimous proclamations in the church. Yet, as she led the board through the priorities and competencies of the agency and posed questions around what people in the church actually need to reach their communities, it became abundantly clear that the Isaiah text applied most especially to this season of Religion & Race as the agency marks its 50th Anniversary in 2018.

Hawkins shared, “We are imagining the church that has not yet come into being but is showing signs of emergence.

We are also listening to people who are ready to do or are already doing the next thing that God is calling them to do as they engage the diverse neighborhoods of their community. As we listen, we hear that people want to convene in dynamic grassroots networks, share the challenges and the blessings of bridging differences, and create an authentic community.”

As a part of that listening and learning, the board and staff engaged with faith and civic leaders of Chicago’s South Side in an immersion experience at Wesley United Methodist Church. Wesley’s lead pastor Rev. Biekman and Bishop Sally Dyck welcomed the group.

“Opportunities for general agencies of the church to connect, learn and be in conversation with urban ministry practitioners enriches the Body of Christ,” shared Rev. Biekman.

“The diversity represented by the board and staff of GCORR made a distinct impression on the non-United Methodist Chicago immersion team leaders who have become accustomed to a monochromatic and monotheistic church,” Biekman continued. “Most times those closest to the problem have the solutions. Restorative Justice practices facilitate partnerships like the Chicago Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) Collaborative that bring faith/community

continued on page 3, see Signs

Mission Challenge - Cleaning Kits

Following a very active, destructive hurricane season in 2017, the Northern Illinois Conference Board of Global Ministries has chosen cleaning kit buckets as this year's Annual Conference Mission Challenge.

Each District is being challenged to collect designated cleaning kit items to be distributed through the Midwest Mission Distribution Center (MMDC). MMDC, a 501c (3) organization, provides disaster relief kits and resources as well as educational and medical supplies to those in need locally and internationally located in Chatham, Ill. It is related to the North Central Jurisdiction and is a cooperating depot in the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) Relief Supply Network.

Districts are challenged to bring the following items:
(goal is 300 of each unless noted otherwise)

Aurora

- 5 Gallon Bucket with re-sealable lid (Buckets can be reused if cleaned except those that have stored chemicals i.e. paint or pool supplies)
- 1 scrub brush (no long handle)
- 1 Pair of work gloves (cotton with leather palm or all leather)

Chicago Northwestern

- 1 insect repellent spray (6 to 14 oz. can)
- 18 cleaning wipes (Handi Wipes - NO terry cleaning towels) - Goal 100
- Liquid laundry detergent (one 50 oz. bottle or two 25 oz. bottles)

Chicago Southern

- Clothesline, cotton or plastic (100 ft/two 50 ft)
- Liquid household cleaner (12 to 16 oz. bottles - no spray bottles)
- Dish soap (16 to 28 oz. bottle)

DeKalb

- 1 can air freshener (aerosol or pump)
- 7 sponges (NO cellulose sponges due to mold issues)
- 50 clothespins

Elgin

- 24 heavy duty trash bags rolled (33-45 gallon)
- 5 scouring pads (no stainless steel or pads with soap built in like SOS Pads)

Rockford

- 18 cleaning wipes (Handi Wipes - NO terry cleaning towels) - Goal 200
- 5 dust masks - Goal 200
- 2 pairs of kitchen dishwashing gloves (good for multiple uses)

When you arrive in St. Charles for Annual Conference on June 3, please bring your donated items, copies of receipts for any direct donations to MMDC or UMCOR and a completed donation form which can be found at www.umcnic.org/AC2018, to the collection site outside the Mega Center. We will be available to assist you until 4 p.m. on Sunday and until 1 p.m. on Monday.



Signs (continued from page 2)

and system stakeholders together to effectively address and implement community-based solutions."

The group engaged in a morning of presentations, peace circles and panel discussions that included members of the Northern Illinois Conference Chicago Urban Strategy. The Urban Strategy is an initiative born out of the Urban Summit of 2013 organized by Bishop Dyck that is increasing the capacity of urban congregations through relationship building (collaborating with community and system stakeholders), community engagement, effective community organizing, and leadership development.

Board President Bishop Earl Bledsoe said, "As this nation experiences tragedy after tragedy as a result of gun violence, we felt it was important to be with the people of Chicago's South Side who are working every day to alleviate the root causes and resulting harm experienced by neighbors in this area affected by systemic poverty and inequity. As United Methodists and Christians, we are called to live out the mandates of the Social Principles with regard to this issue."

Chicago's South Side was GCORR's third immersion experience designed to appreciate and understand cultural differences this quadrennium. The first was a border crossing at Tijuana/ San Diego in February of 2017, and the

second was a cultural immersion with the Lumad tribes of the Philippines in August of 2017. Each of these immersion experiences is designed to give the board and staff a first-hand understanding of cultural differences and how to bridge these differences as we live out our call as Christians.

"I am grateful for the opportunity to go to the South Side of Chicago with the General Commission on Religion and Race," shared board member and Chicago area pastor Rev. Alka Lyall.

Lyall was a part of the panel discussion and helped facilitate a closing activity after the panel.

"The experience helped me see the possibilities that are always right around us. The partnership with the police department and community organizations was impressive. I am most grateful for the experience of 'peace circles,' a simple yet powerful tool for respectful communication where each person is valued and seen."

The General Commission on Religion and Race is building the capacity of The United Methodist Church to be contextually relevant and to reach more people, younger people, and more diverse people as we make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.



2018 Bishop's Appeal Global Migration Advance

65 million people are displaced in the world today. That's more than at any other time since World War II. In response to his global migration crisis, the Bishop is encouraging churches to bring an offering \$\$ to the 2018 Annual Conference (June 3-5) to help affected families around the globe and locally. 75% will go to the Global Migration Advance for international assistance to refugees and migrants. 25% will stay in Northern Illinois to support organizations like Refugee One and World Relief that work with local immigrant and refugee families.

How to Help:

- Learn more about the Migrant Crisis
- Plan a Fundraiser
- Volunteer with local refugee and immigration organizations
- Hold a Global Migration Sunday
- Bring an offering to Annual Conference in June!

Resource Links:

www.umcmigration.org
(Global Migration Sunday)

www.unhcr.org
(Updates on the worldwide crisis)

www.umcor.org
(UMC work around the world)

www.umcnic.org/bishopsappeal
(NIC Info)

For more information, contact Rev. Jonathan Crail by email at jcrail@firstumc.net or 630-956-2368.

2017 Journal

The 2017 NIC Journal is available online to download for free at www.umcnic.org/journal.

A print edition is available to purchase through Amazon. Search Northern Illinois Conference Journal. The cost is \$11.

2017 Journal of
The Northern Illinois
Conference of the
United Methodist
Church



Light Shines
Through...



Dr. Samuel C. Kormoi (right) talks with a walk-in patient at the Henry Kormoi Memorial Community Hospital in Moyowa Jong, Sierra Leone.



Ministry celebrates 10 years serving Sierra Leone By Linda Hendelman*

Pan-African Rural Health and Social Services, Inc. (PRHeSS) is celebrating its 10th Anniversary and while much has been accomplished, founder Dr. Samuel C. Kormoi says there's much more to do to provide health and social services to the under-served, rural areas of Sierra Leone.

PRHeSS ministry is supported through the Northern Illinois Conference's Rainbow Covenant second mile giving and was a previous member of The Advance. It also partners with the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) Global Health Unit and the Sierra Leone UMC Conference, which is responsible for day to day running of a hospital PRHeSS ministry opened in May 2017.

The Henry Kormoi Memorial Community Hospital in Moyowa Jong, Sierra Leone, is a 30-bed hospital facility with an outpatient department and surgical unit that serves about 10,000 and the only functional facility in the area. The hospital is named for the Kormois' teenage son, who was very active in the PRHeSS ministry, but was killed in gun violence in Chicago.

In addition to the hospital, PRHeSS has built an academic and a vocational school, four wells, indoor plumbing for the hospital, and outdoor toilets. PRHeSS also built a cassava processing factory (cassava is a food staple in Sierra Leone) and bakery. The organization's poultry project was designed to provide a balanced diet for community residents who were malnourished for many years following the civil war in Sierra Leone.

Locally, PRHeSS ministry works with Christian Community Healthcare services to provide free healthcare screening in Chicago's south suburbs, conducts an annual winter coat drive to benefit those who attend Transformation UMC's hot meal ministry, the homeless, and those at a battered women's shelter. It also provides free toiletries, donated clothes, shoes, bags, and school supplies to Harvey residents in need as part of Suburban Access Inc.

Background

Dr. Kormoi, a native of Sierra Leone and a high school biological sciences teacher there, came to the United States to study medicine. He served at Chicago's Norwegian American Hospital, Illinois Psychiatric Institute, and Cook County Hospital, prior to his current appointment at St. Elizabeth Hospital. His wife Mary, who taught English in Sierra Leone, joined him and decided to go into nursing.

After eleven years of civil war in Sierra Leone, the Kormois returned to "unimaginable devastation and great need for basic life necessities," Dr. Kormoi said. "Because of our blessings, we felt a very strong spiritual and moral obligation to help make a difference in the lives of our village community," he added. "After three years of prayers seeking wisdom, vision, strength, and direction," he explained, "I

was inspired to launch PRHeSS ministry in the pews of the-then First Wesley Academy UMC (now Transformation Community UMC)."

The importance to Dr. Kormoi of first establishing a hospital in Sierra Leone arose from a personal tragedy. His 30-year-old pregnant niece went into labor while traveling to a neighboring village. Because she had no prenatal care, she did not know her due date. She delivered twin boys on the roadside but bled to death because she had no help. Passersby discovered the hours old boys and their deceased mother.

The Kormois adopted the boys who are now 8-years-old and doing well in private school in Sierra Leone, but Dr. Kormoi swore not to let something like that happen to a woman in the area ever again.

Future plans are to build a "United Methodist Women's House" where pregnant women can stay on the hospital grounds a month before delivery and then be stable before returning to their distant villages. Maternal death is a common occurrence in rural Sierra Leone, Dr. Kormoi explained, because women travel long distances on the backs of others, in hammocks, or on motorcycles to get help.

Mission Trip

Dr. and Mrs. Kormoi accompanied ten PRHeSS volunteers to Africa in December 2017 to serve the Fallay Wujah community, which now has grown from three to ten villages. Yvette Harris-Black, the new president of Transformation UMC's United Methodist Women and Chicago Southern District United Methodist Women, became a member of PRHeSS a few years ago. She volunteered to help any way she could, including obtaining auction items, food, and donations for the annual fundraiser.

When Dr. Kormoi expressed a desire to add a women's wing to the hospital in Sierra Leone, which required about 3,000 bricks at 50 cents each, Harris-Black felt it was a right fit for UMW's goal of helping, women, children, and youth whenever and wherever there is a need. They raised the dollars needed through fundraising efforts. Dr. Kormoi provided updates of the hospital's construction progress and pictures upon completion. Harris-Black explained that Transformation Community UMC has always been supportive of Dr. Kormoi and PRHeSS through school and medical supply drives and individual sponsors of a child or two or even three.

Harris-Black herself sponsored a young girl in Sierra Leone, Hannah Sesay, and was excited when the Kormois organized the first mission trip to Sierra Leone in December. "I jumped at the opportunity to see the work being done first hand," she said, and "to meet Hannah for the first time."

"The experience was life changing," Harris-Black said; it

made us aware "up close and personal" of how the things we take for granted are either in little supply or not available at all to millions of people all over the world, not just in Sierra Leone. She explained, "there are places where the local stream is used for drinking by both people and animals. It is also where they wash clothes and pour garbage. And if there is a well, it can mean walking miles to get there and then walking miles back carrying a bucket of water."

But along with poverty and disease, Harris-Black said she met giving, hopeful and loving people and said the hospital and Dr. Kormoi are an answer to many prayers.

"They told us when we arrived that we were proof that God had not forgotten them," said Harris-Black. "How could one not be affected by these people and their faith?"

Future of PRHeSS

Sierra Leone is a struggling nation managed by corrupt leaders, Dr. Kormoi says, "and the ultimate victims are the common people, especially the rural community residents." PRHeSS's immediate goal is to secure an efficient diagnostic facility for the hospital to serve not only patients but for the nation of Sierra Leone as a whole. The small lab at the hospital can diagnose common local infectious diseases, but the facility needs improvement and additional diagnostic imaging equipment. In the future, he would like to develop a healthy community and to duplicate the effort in other Sierra Leone communities and in neighboring countries.

"I hope to continue trusting in God's promises, showing and telling people and institutions about what we do and asking for a helping hand to extend this healthcare opportunity to many in need," Dr. Kormoi said. PRHeSS ministry is "an agent of change driven by love and a passion to help mankind in need to the glory of God," he explained.

*Linda Hendelman is a freelance writer and editor, a lifelong United Methodist and Lay Servant in the Chicago Northwestern District.

PRHeSS 10th Anniversary Prayer Luncheon and Silent Auction

Saturday, April 14, 2018, 11:00 a.m.

St. Andrews United Methodist Church, 18850 Riegel Rd., Homewood, IL

Speaker: Rev. Charles A. Woolery, Sr.

To attend, RSVP dial 708-668-6020 or purchase tickets at PRHeSS's website www.africanhopeanddignity.org.

ChildServ CEO puts children first

By Anne Marie Gerhardt

When former Illinois State Senator Dan Kotowski decided to leave the political life for the position as President and CEO of ChildServ in October 2015, he hit the ground running working to help at-risk children and families in the Chicagoland area.

Editor of the *Northern Illinois Conference Reporter* Anne Marie Gerhardt recently sat down with Kotowski to talk about his first two and a half years at the helm of the 123-year-old nonprofit agency and his hopes for the future.

AG: What are some of your goals and accomplishments as President and CEO of ChildServ?

DK: The goal we have is to become a world-class, premiere human services agency and I think we are getting there with each day. One of the major challenges we faced when I took over is we had a lot of struggles financially. We had a deficit of close to \$2.1 million and a turnover rate close to 70%. In many cases, we were waiting months upon months for money from the state to support services we provide to children. When I look back on our accomplishments, in a couple of years we went from a very significant deficit to now we are close to being balanced and we've reduced our turnover rate significantly. We have a board of directors that is incredibly active and raised close to a quarter of a million dollars last year. We've doubled the amount of money we've brought in from private fundraising sources including churches, corporations, foundations, and individuals.

AG: How has ChildServ handled the state budget crisis affecting nonprofit children and family services?

DK: A lot of organizations struggling in Illinois had to either close their doors or reduce ... even eliminate their programs. We didn't. We didn't lay off massive numbers of people or reduce our programs. In fact, we grew our programs. We fought tooth and nail to do so and believe wholeheartedly in the value proposition that all children deserve the same opportunity to achieve their full potential. We have a mission to protect, heal and educate children and families who are at-risk so they can build better lives. One of the ways we do that is by having a strong, solid continuing partnership with the faith community, especially The United Methodist Church. As you know, we were founded by Lucy Rider Meyer, a Methodist Deaconess, but this relationship we have with churches led by Kim Coffing, ChildServ's Director of Faith and Community Relations, is outstanding. United Methodist churches have really

stepped up their engagement and involvement. Our 2017 holiday toy drive brought in nearly \$70,000 in-kind gifts for 1,100 children, which vastly came from United Methodist churches. They're also very involved in our back-to-school drive for children in our early childhood education and foster care programs. We receive offerings weekly and people volunteer their time.

AG: How is ChildServ making a difference in children's lives every day?

DK: We are trying to bring resources to children that many people may not be thinking about who have been neglected in their own lives and neglected by society at large. It's our role as a community based, mission-driven, non-profit organization to step up. We've helped place clients who were formerly homeless and living in a shelter in housing. One ChildServ client named William who was homeless and then got housing became a security guard. He then became a bbq chef at Food Life at Water Tower Place and now he's the head chef at Cooper's Hawk in Oak Park. When you give children access to opportunity and the devotion necessary to make sure they feel supported, recognized, affirmed, and validated for the worth they have as individuals, extraordinary things happen.

AG: Reflecting back on leaving the Illinois Senate, what are your thoughts?

DK: I feel good about it because ChildServ presented a wonderful chance to be involved in a direct and meaningful way in the lives of children and families so they could build better lives. To me, sometimes in the political arena, there's too much distance from the people you're making decisions about. Being an elected official, you got a chance to work on legislative measures and long-term advocacy, but this work at ChildServ is short-term with immediate impact that's going to transform and make a difference in people's lives for the rest of their lives.

AG: What other ways can United Methodists support ChildServ?

DK: One of our campaigns right now is encouraging each United Methodist Church to adopt one child. If we can get one member of the congregation to decide to

be a foster parent and make that commitment, that would be transformative. We need more foster parents. If we can get one person in the congregation to make a decision to be a mentor with a teenager in one of our DuPage County group homes, that would help them reach their potential. We need more mentors.

AG: What are your future plans for the agency?

DK: We want to be on the forefront of providing housing for homeless young adults because there's a long waiting list of kids who are homeless in the city of Chicago. We provide housing for 20 kids but we want to double and triple that so they can get off the streets and into a positive direction. We also want to expand our early childhood programs. We want to make sure that children living in poverty reach developmental milestones and they're ready to succeed in kindergarten. The culture we seek to create at ChildServ is one that we treat all the children we serve as if they are our own children and family members. We don't compromise on that. A lot has been done but we have many things to do in the future!

To find out how you can support ChildServ visit www.childserv.org.



ChildServ President and CEO Dan Kotowski (right) congratulates families from the agency's in-home, early learning program for children ages 3-5 on Chicago's West Side at a recent End-of-the-Year Celebration.



Melissa Rau

one-day workshop for clergy, lay people and church staff on April 28 from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. at Glenview UMC, 727 Harlem Ave., Glenview, IL.

We've asked the presenter to answer a few commonly asked questions about this event.

What are some of the challenges you see facing churches today? How does this workshop address them?

Churches are facing a number of challenges today. Though this training doesn't address all of them, it will address how too few churches have the systems and structure in place to help them reach their greatest potential. It will

Sustainable Youth and Children's Ministry Workshop

Youth and children's ministry can be challenging – but we are not alone! A group of NIC youth leaders in conjunction with the NIC Youth Committee has teamed up to host Melissa Rau from Ministry Architects for an affordable, local,

help churches understand how to implement the changes necessary to achieve a sustainable youth ministry.

How do you define "sustainable"?

Sustainability, in our context, means that the success of the ministry isn't fully dependent upon the superstar, magnetic personality. In other words, there are things in place to ensure when the paid staff person leaves, the church won't be forced to start all over again (as is too often the case, especially in youth ministry).

Who should come to this workshop? Just youth and children's ministers?

EVERYONE!! In fact, though youth ministers are certainly welcome, it's probably even more important for the non-youth minister to come so they can partner with their youth minister to establish a sustainable youth ministry—they can't do it alone. Pastors, parents, youth leaders, Sunday school teachers, confirmation mentors, small group leaders...you name it. They should seriously think about coming!

Do you have a brief success story about a church you have worked with?

Goodness. Ministry Architects has worked with over 700 churches, many of whom can celebrate their own success story. Every one, however, is unique. Those with whom Ministry Architects worked and celebrate success trusted a process and gradually affected positive change among their ministries. It's not easy work or a quick fix; it takes a lot of energy, time, and effort. Those who have stepped up to the challenge were always surprised how God has shown up throughout the process. I wonder. What does God have in store for you?

Registration is open for morning and/or afternoon, with babysitting available as requested. The morning session will focus on "the Anatomy of Stuckness" and "the 411 on Sustainable Ministry." The afternoon will cover "Working Together: Building Teams that Win" and "You Are Here: Assessing Your Own Ministry."

To register visit www.umcnic.org/calendar/sustainable-youth-and-childrens-ministry.

Thanks to First UMC Arlington Heights, First UMC Evanston, First UMC LaGrange, Glenview UMC and Northbrook UMC for sponsoring this event.



"I have found a beautiful home within the Inclusive Collective."

Matthew Adams

Inclusive Collective weekend retreat inspires students

The Inclusive Collective (IC) is a vibrant and active faith community for university students from universities and colleges throughout Chicagoland based at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Each spring, we hold a Justice Retreat to equip and inspire our students to pursue equity, inclusion, and human flourishing as they follow Jesus. Hear about our retreat from Matthew Adams, a senior at Wheaton College and member of the IC:

"Feeling alone and without a home is certainly a feeling not foreign to me. Fortunately, I have found a beautiful home within the Inclusive Collective. Growing up, the only spaces where I engaged in topics of activism, community development, and racism were in debate and the classroom. Talking about these issues within the church is a brand new experience for me. The 2018 Spring Justice Retreat was a refreshing and informative weekend that pushed me in the pursuit of justice.

I firmly believe that the center of the Gospel is justice. This plain and simple fact was emulated within our retreat. One of the most poignant examples of justice was shown to me when we visited Reesheda Graham-Washington at LIVE Cafe located in Oak Park. This cafe is actively developing community through funneling its profits back to the people of the Austin neighborhood to create jobs for those in great need. Reesheda's love for Christ fuels her passion for justice. She showed me how important it is to use your academics and accolades as tools in your toolbox instead of weapons. We need to constantly use our wide array of tools to engage with our communities.

Moving forward, it is incredible to think of the vast amount of ways we can push for justice. Even though there are many ways to push for justice, we do not have the luxury to have decision paralysis. It is imperative that we constantly take steps forward in justice. Even in the little day-to-day battles against microaggressions, we are fighting for justice in dismantling stereotypes that dehumanize people into tropes. This retreat was incredibly life-giving and will inform how I engage with justice."

For more information on the Inclusive Collective visit www.letsgetinclusiveuic.org.



The Inclusive Collective holds a spring justice retreat where students pursue social justice issues.

Shepherding Team

Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church

Consultant Rev. Susan Beaumont leads a full day workshop on adaptive leadership for the Annual Conference Shepherding Team and members of the six District Shepherding Teams.



Shepherding Teams learns adaptive leadership By Anne Marie Gerhardt

You may have heard the buzzwords, "adaptive change" and "adaptive leadership", floating around, but what do they mean exactly? According to authors Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow and Marty Linsky, "adaptive leadership is the ability to mobilize people to tackle tough challenges and thrive."

On Mar. 10 the Annual Conference Shepherding Team (ACST) and members from the six newly formed District Shepherding Teams (DST) came together as a group for the first time to mobilize and tackle the task of learning about adaptive leadership. Consultant Rev. Susan Beaumont led the group's full-day workshop at Barrington United Methodist Church to introduce how to lead through adaptive change.

"Most adaptation occurs out on the fringes of the organization or institution," said Beaumont. "Truly adaptive leaders have attuned themselves to pay attention to what's happening on the fringes, to protect it and bring it to the center so we can learn from it."

Beaumont outlined ten principles of adaptive leadership based on the work of Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky who wrote the book, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, and encouraged the group to think of ways to shift from technical solutions to adaptive work that requires "holding steady, and self-awareness with the capacity to observe, interpret and intervene."

Beaumont provided the team members with exercises in diagnosing and understanding an adaptive challenge in their own contexts and then designing an adaptive intervention. She used the metaphor of a pot of water on the stove and said adaptive leadership involves keeping organizational disequilibrium at a tolerable level of discomfort; hot enough to invite adaptation (to cook), but not so hot that the system boils over.

"My hope in this coming together is to think about a different way of approaching leadership as we call ourselves to pay more exquisite attention to what's happening right in front of us in our midst instead of trying to squelch it and to let it birth into whatever it needs to be to take us into the next chapter," said Beaumont.

ACST Chair Rev. Myron McCoy thanked Beaumont and acknowledged the teams have much work to do. McCoy opened and closed the day with this "Prayer to Accept Change" – a prayer he has adapted.

Just when we thought we had it all figured out, Lord, things change again.

When will we be able to rest

in the comfort of knowing what comes next?

*You, who transcends all time,
who created the stars and set them in place,
you, who are ageless yet known in every age,
grant us the grace to accept
the changes that are happening.*

*Empty our hearts of anxiety,
and fill it instead with wonder and awe.
Release us from the chains of complacency,
and bind us to your ever-moving Spirit.
When the things we believed to be permanent and
stable*

*are left by the wayside,
enfold us in your undying love
that we may remember in whom all things are bound.*

*When fear of something new paralyzes us,
and grief cripples us with anger
over the loss of what had been,
send your angels to give us a gentle push
over that frightening edge into the unknown,
so that we may learn to trust in you.*

For you alone are eternal.

You alone are enduring.

You alone are the everlasting Lord.

And in you alone will this restless world find peace.

Amen.

The ACST will come together again April 14 in Rochelle to begin to focus on strategic planning. Helen Chang, a member of Urban Village Church who has 28+ years of experience in healthcare strategic development and implementation as well as organizational design and management alignment, will lead the meeting as the ACST Strategic Planning Consultant. Chang said it will be an initial gathering to get to know each other better and to begin the process of setting goals as well as long-term planning for the Conference's new structure.



Helen Chang will serve as the ACST Strategy Planning Consultant.

Northern Illinois Conference
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

REPORTER

awarded first place at UMAC

Each year, the United Methodist Association of Communicators (UMAC) recognizes excellence in communication across the denomination through a dynamic awards program.

This year judges reviewed more than 200 entries in 10 classes of communication which include print, photography, visual design, video, audio, digital publications, writing, media presentations, and publicity.

The awards were presented during the closing banquet at UMAC's annual meeting on Mar. 9 in Philadelphia with the theme "Embrace Change."

The *Northern Illinois Conference Reporter* took 1st place in the Print Publication - Newspaper category. The judges said in their comments that the newspaper had a "very attractive layout and good photography." Graphic Designer Natalie Rowe was also recognized for her work on the paper.

"It's such an honor to be recognized among some of the most talented and inspiring communicators working to tell the story of The United Methodist Church daily," said Anne Marie Gerhardt, NIC Dir. of Communications and Editor of the *Reporter*. "As our denomination faces change and challenges in the next year, the *Reporter* will continue to share the important news, stories, and events to inform and engage our congregations across the Conference."

Visit www.umcommunicators.org for a complete list of the awards and more on UMAC.

Camps & Outdoor Retreat Ministries News



Summer Camp

Registration remains open for summer camps at both Wesley Woods and Camp Reynoldswood. For registration and details visit www.niccamp.org/summercamps.

Confirmation Retreats (Youth)

Cost: \$75 (1 night's lodging, 2 meals, 1 snack)
Confirmation Retreat is an excellent team-building experience for participating confirmands. Through Bible studies, group activities, team building and worship, we will explore who we are as individuals, as a community of faith, and as Christians in an ever-changing world. We work with local pastors to ensure that the weekend experience complements and enhances your home curriculum.

2018 Dates:

Reynoldswood	Wesley Woods
April 13-14, 2018	May 11-12, 2018
November 16-17, 2018	November 2-3, 2018

Registration forms are available on the Outdoor & Retreat Ministries website: www.niccamp.org/retreats

Or contact each respective Camp Office via telephone or e-mail:

Reynoldswood:	Wesley Woods:
815-284-6979	262-245-6631
info@reynoldswood.org	info@lakeretreats.org

Summer Jobs @ Camp!

Camp Reynoldswood and Wesley Woods Retreat Center need Summer Associates to fill the following paid positions:

Lifeguards, Waterfront Director, Shift Cook, Kitchen Assistants, and Maintenance Helpers.

We need committed youth to encourage guests, one another, and to build friendships. These are Summer JOBS, not vacations – candidates will be expected to work all summer long, including holidays–June 1 through August 12.

APPLY ONLINE: www.niccamp.org/employment.

APRIL/MAY CALENDAR

Shift Training Series

April 11

Location: The Augsburg Room at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American (ELCA) Churchwide Ministries Center, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago

"Membership to Discipleship"

Discover the tools and methods to move your congregation into healthy church systems that create a new way of doing life together.

Registration Fee: \$20 per workshop (includes lunch and workbook)

For more information visit www.umcnic.org/calendar/shift-membership-to-discipleship.

Questions contact: Laura Lopez 312-346-9766 ext. 724 email: llopez@umcnic.org

Sponsored by the NIC Office of Congregational Development and Redevelopment.

Mental Health Workshop

April 14

Time: 8:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m.

Location: First UMC Downers Grove, 1032 Maple Ave, Downers Grove, IL

Cost: \$10 which includes refreshments

The presenters are experts at assisting clergy deal with the stresses in being there for your congregations. SPRC Chairs and members should plan on attending as well.

For more information and registration visit www.umcnic.org/calendar/mental-health-workshop.

Teamworks: Equip Leaders

Over the course of four weekends, from April to July, TeamWorks training will be offered in three Districts (Chicago Southern, DeKalb, and Elgin.)

1st Session: April 21-22

Spiritual Life of the Leaders

2nd Session: May 19-20

Connecting with Your Community

3rd Session: June 9-10

Creating a Discipleship System

4th Session: TBA

Futurecasting

Registration fee: \$10 (includes the guide-book) each session.

TeamWorks is a comprehensive learning experience designed to equip and support leadership teams in local churches.

For more information and locations visit www.umcnic.org/calendar/teamworks or contact Martin Lee at mlee291@gmail.com.

44th Annual John Wesley Theological Institute

April 15 -16, 2018

Location: Sycamore UMC, 160 Johnson Ave., Sycamore, IL

Theme: The Deaconesses: "A Quintessential Embodiment of the Wesleyan Vision"

Registration Cost: \$150 - includes Sunday evening dinner and Monday lunch

Questions? – Contact Fernando Siaba, Registrar 630-414-2429 · fsiaba48@yahoo.com

Presenter: Dr. Priscilla Pope-Levison Associate Professor of External Programs Perkins School of Theology, Dallas, TX

Native American Ministries Sunday

April 15

When you support Native American Ministries Sunday, you equip seminary students who will honor and celebrate Native American culture in their ministries. And you empower congregations that are finding fresh new ways to minister to their communities with the love of Christ. For resources please visit www.umcgiving.org/NAMS.

Earth Day Green Fair

April 21

Time: 2-4pm

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

Keynote Speaker: NIC Bishop Sally Dyck, co-author of *A Hopeful Earth*.

Workshops:

- Forming Green Teams
- Doing Energy Audits
- Composting/Waste Management will be held.

To register visit www.umcnic.org/calendar/cnw-earth-day-green-fair.

Sustainable Youth and Children's Ministry

April 28

Time: 9am-3pm

Location: Glenview UMC, 727 Harlem Ave., Glenview, IL

Cost: \$30 for morning, \$10 for lunch, \$20 for afternoon, so \$60 for everything.

Join fellow clergy, volunteers & staff for a day of training presented by Melissa Rau of Ministry Architects.

This workshop is delivered in four parts.

- The Anatomy of Stuckness
- The 411 on Sustainable Ministry
- Working Together: Building Teams that Win
- You Are Here: Assessing Your Own Ministry

For more information and registration visit www.umcnic.org/calendar/sustainable-youth-and-childrens-ministry

Peace with Justice Sunday

May 27

As one of the six churchwide Special Sunday offerings of The United Methodist Church, Peace with Justice Sunday helps support advocacy work through the General Board of Church and Society and right here in the Northern Illinois Conference.

Half of the offering receipts remain within the conference for the local Board of Church and Society and its work to address issues of injustice.

For resources and more information visit www.umcgiving.org/givePWJS.

DYK???



Did You Know? "We are hosting history!"

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

In the spring of 1968 after many years of prayer, exploration, negotiation and planning, several branches of our Wesleyan family merged. The Methodist Church and Evangelical United Brethren became a new denomination - The United Methodist Church. The uniting conference was held that spring in Dallas and the first meeting of this new denomination's "Council of Bishops" took place in November 1968 in Chicago.

The Council of Bishops is made up of the active and retired Bishops of the denomination from around the world. They give leadership to 12 million persons in a broad range of settings on four continents, including North America, Europe, Africa and Asia.

Historically, bishops play an important leadership role in ordering the life of the church and helping set the direction to fulfill its mission in the world. All bishops share in teaching, equipping, and encouraging mission and service. They serve as shepherds of the entire church, providing a prophetic witness for justice and unity. All bishops are members of the Council of Bishops, which collectively is charged with the general oversight and promotion of the temporal and spiritual interests of the entire church.

The work of this Council of Bishops is to "speak to the Church and from the Church to the world and to give leadership in the quest for Christian unity and interreligious relationships." (The United Methodist *Book of Discipline* ¶427.2.)

For the first time in 50 years, later this month, the Council of Bishops will return to Chicago at another historic moment in our denomination's life. We do not know why Chicago has been bypassed for this biannual meeting these past 50 years. I'm certain Chicago was a wonderful host in 1968, but after a long hiatus we are honored to be the site for the 2018 spring meeting., April 29-May 4.

Planned by the general church and led by the Bishops themselves, most of the working sessions are not open to the public. Northern Illinois will however provide airport greeters, hotel hosts and support while the bishops are in our area. In addition, some local church musicians from Geneva United Methodist Church and Urban Village Church, as well as the youth choir from Chicago: St. Mark, Sounds of Judah, will participate in the opening worship. We will also be given a few minutes on Sunday evening to share stories of our conference's work with the gathered bishops featuring the ministry of Urban Village and Latino/Hispanic development.

Many eyes will be on this session of the Council. Since a difficult and divisive General Conference in 2016, bishops have been working with the Commission on the Way Forward to study and recommend ways to reconcile denominational differences on human sexuality. The commission, a 32-members group, has been meeting for two years and will bring a final report to the council this month.

They are focused on suggesting a way forward through the differences that exist in our denomination. The Chicago Council meeting is the final gathering of the bishops where they will decide on a report to present to the Special Session of General Conference called for February 23-26, 2019 in St. Louis, Missouri, which will be voted on by the delegates.

Many people from around the world will be focused on this Council of Bishops meeting as we await their recommendations. A final report will be released in early July.

All of Northern Illinois Conference is invited to hold the bishops in prayer as they deliberate and discern the way forward for our denomination.

March Announcements: Appointments and Retirements

Bishop Sally Dyck announces the following clergy appointments for the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church, effective July 1, 2018 (unless otherwise noted):

Eun-Hye Choi (Elder) to Glenview (Chicago Northwestern District) from Plainfield: First (Aurora District). Eun-Hye follows Hwa-Young Chong who is appointed to Naperville: Community.

Richard Wisdom (Elder) to Plainfield: First (Lead Pastor) (Aurora District) from Aurora District Superintendent. Dick follows Eun-Hye Choi who is appointed to Glenview (Chicago: Northwestern).

Katie Voigt (Elder) to Erie (DeKalb District) from Pecatonica (Rockford District). Katie follows Rod Dye as he retires.

Patricia Bonilla (Deacon) to Deerfield: Christ (Chicago Northwestern District) as Director of Family Ministries ½ time from Leave of Absence, effective 3/16.

Mary Bohall (Elder) to Mendota: First (DeKalb District) from Chadwick: Hope, Hickory Grove, Fairhaven (Rockford District). Mary follows Kent Svendsen as he retires.

Mark Gilmore (Local Pastor) to Pecatonica (Rockford District) from Chicago: Riverside (Chicago: Southern District). Mark follows Katie Voigt who is appointed to Erie.

Daniel Lee (Local Pastor) to Rockford: Christ (Associate)(Rockford District) from Cary (Elgin District). Daniel follows Scott Himel who is appointed to Glencoe: North Shore.

Tammy Scott (Transitional Deacon, pending Local Pastors License) to Sugar Grove (Aurora District) from Naperville: Grace (Aurora District). Tammy follows Cheoni Oh who has accepted an extension ministry position with UMCOM.

Mark Harkness (Elder) to Cherry Valley (Rockford District) from Walnut (DeKalb District). Mark follows Vickie Hadaway who moves to Leave of Absence.

Anna Voinovich (Provisional Elder pending approval) to Downers Grove: First (Aurora District) as Associate Pastor from Barrington (Elgin District) as part-time Local Pastor. Anna follows Jim McDonald (Co-Pastor) as Jim retires.

Jeremiah Lee (Elder) to Naperville: Community (Associate)(Aurora District) from Glen Ellyn: St. Thomas (Aurora District) as the church merges with Glen Ellyn: First.

To find the complete listing online which is updating each Monday visit www.umcnic.org/2018appointments.



Commission on a Way Forward will present recommendation at Chicago meeting

The 32-member Commission on a Way Forward met in Los Angeles March 19-22 to prepare a final report to be submitted to the Council of the Bishops for consideration by the bishops at their April/May meeting in Chicago.

"The Commission is focused on suggesting a way forward that pays attention to our public mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, especially with those who are not yet a part of our churches," said Bishop Ken Carter, resident bishop of the Florida Area. "We are also focused on contextuality in a global church, and our continuing call to learn from each other and listen to each other."

Bishop Carter, who is the incoming president of the Council of Bishops, is one of the three moderators of the Commission, together with Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball of West Virginia Area and retired Bishop David Yemba from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In preparing for the final report, the Commission will continue to work with traditional, contextual and progressive values drafted in the sketches of models that were presented to the Council of Bishops at their November and February meetings.

In the report given to the Council at the February

meeting, the Commission shared with the bishops two sketches that carry forward many of the values and principles of the three sketches presented to the bishops at the November meeting.

The bishops offered feedback but did not vote on the revised sketches, instead asking the Commission to continue working on a final report to be presented at the April/May meeting. At that meeting, the bishops, in collaboration with the collective work of the Commission, will decide on a report to be presented to the Special Session of the General Conference called for February 23-26, 2019 in St. Louis, Missouri.

About the Commission: The 32-member Commission on a Way Forward was appointed by the Council of Bishops to assist the bishops in their charge from the 2016 General Conference to lead the church forward amid the present impasse related to LGBTQ inclusion and resulting questions about the unity of the church.

For more info on the Commission on a Way Forward, visit umc.org/wayforward

Facebook: www.facebook.com/umcforward

Twitter: @UMCForward

Instagram: www.instagram.com/umcforward

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