

The Northern Illinois Conference OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Reporter

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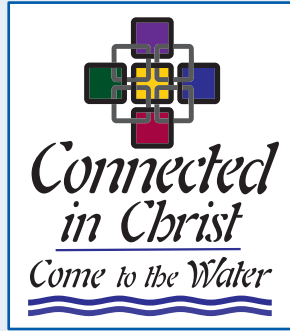
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United Methodists respond to invasion of Ukraine

Anne Marie Gerhardt, NIC Dir. of Communications



In 2015, Rev. Martin Lee, NIC Dir. of Congregational Development and Redevelopment, met in the region to train church planters including Revs. Oleg Starodubets, District Superintendent of Central Asia UMC in Ukraine and his wife Yulia, who is an ordained pastor and medical doctor.



NIC leaders connect with Revs. Oleg and Yulia Starodubets via Zoom to learn more about the challenges and perils of the war for their United Methodist churches and members in Ukraine.

Sounds of sirens warning of imminent shellings keep Rev. Oleg and Yulia Starodubets up at night and force them to huddle in their shelter's basement with their twin 9-year-old daughters. Rev. Oleg Starodubets is the District Superintendent of Central Asia UMC in Ukraine. His wife Yulia is an ordained pastor and medical doctor.

When Russia's invasion of Ukraine escalated, the couple and their children were forced to flee their home in Kyiv. They are sheltering in a secondary school in western Ukraine and helping several United Methodist Churches that are open as shelters and housing dozens of refugees, mainly women and children, who can't leave the country immediately.

"We meet people at the train station, provide the opportunity to rest, to have a home meal, and get clothes and other necessities," Rev. Oleg Starodubets wrote on Facebook. "After several days of hosting them, we transport people to the borders with Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania."

While the Starodubets have received offers to find safety in the U.S., Romania, Germany, India, and other countries, the Starodubets are determined to stay in Ukraine to watch over their flock.

"War is still in Ukraine and Russian forces aren't kicked out of our homeland," wrote Rev. Oleg Starodubets. "Here, we have a lot to do, to support people, and comfort those suffering."

In 2015, Bishop Eduardo Khegay, Resident Bishop of the Eurasia Episcopal Area, and the Moscow UMC Seminary President invited

Rev. Martin Lee, NIC Director of Congregational Development and Redevelopment, to help train new church planters. He met a wide assortment of pastors and church leaders from around the region, including Rev. Oleg Starodubets, who also serves Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.

"He is a man with a passion for growing Christ's church, and my prayers are with him and his family at this time, said Rev. Lee. "Seeing the children of God threatening and destroying one another in violent conflict is heartbreaking. I once saw the joy and communion of Russians and Ukrainians sitting at the table together, worshiping, sharing ideas and hopes and dreams. Now, I wonder how those friends and ministry partners are coping with all that is happening around them."

The Starodubets successfully planted a church called Lighthouse UMC, whose many members are students from other countries like Africa and India who are studying in Ukraine. Many church members have fled as refugees, but six church families are staying behind. Fortunately, they were able to worship online, Sunday, March 13.

"We gathered people who were able to come online," said Rev. Starodubets. "It was a time of sharing and prayer for Ukraine and each other."

Starodubets said they are praying for victory to Ukraine, the removal of occupants from their land and peace, and for one day for his church to gather together again in person for Sunday worship in Kyiv.

On Monday, March 15, the Starodubets joined on a Zoom call with the Northern Illinois

(continued on page 5, see from the cover)



From Your Bishop: Are United Methodists going to divide?

Recently in a small group, I was asked, "Are United Methodists going to divide?" They had read something on social media that prompted the question and were

concerned about the church they loved. The church where they were baptized, experienced Jesus, started in Sunday School, began to pray, learned the scriptures, celebrated communion, sang the hymns, were confirmed in Christ, joined the youth group, attended church camp, began to serve others, started to tithe, met their soul mate, exchanged their vows, buried their parents, and found support in grief.

Of course, their church had some challenging times and disagreements along the way. Occasionally, several families or some choir members got upset and left for what may have been good reasons. Most of them relied on each other and formed connections. None of them were perfect and their church was not either. It was a holy place where they encountered Christ, confessed their sin, found forgiveness, hope and direction. No wonder they were worried that the church—the people they love—might divide.

When Good News and the Wesleyan Covenant Association, two related caucuses, announced in March the start of a new denomination called the Global Methodist Church, people were surprised and concerned. Most people expected a General Conference would discuss this matter in a democratic assembly of our worldwide church. However, these caucuses discredited the decision by duly elected delegates to postpone General Conference and decided to separate.

Will my pastor or my church leave The United Methodist Church? Will I have to choose another congregation? What happens to the church building, the legacy gifts, the memorials, the cemetery? What happens to my pension funds? As you can see, things can be complicated. What are the answers to these questions? Only God knows. That is if God spends time on power and politics in the church.

In my almost 22 years of being a bishop, I have had many churches close and more than a few that have left The United Methodist Church to become independent. Fortunately, in our Discipline, we have a clear process for both a pastor who wants to leave and a church that wants to leave. In each case, we begin with sharing our faith journey, celebrating our ministry, appreciating those who

have built a foundation for us, and reviewing the reasons for separation.

A pastor who wants to leave surrenders their ordination credentials or license. We do not permit a pastor to hold credentials in two denominations simultaneously. The pension funds that have accrued will be vested, and the pastor is free to seek other employment. It is always helpful for the pastor to meet with the bishop or district superintendent to share their change of call, celebrate their service, and pray for their transition from our covenant community.

Although individual members may ask to be removed from membership of a local church at any time, a congregation must have an open conversation to ensure such a crucial decision is not driven by the pastor, a vocal minority, or even persons outside the church. Our Discipline has served us well over the years to honor the intent of donors who did not want their gifts misused and protect a church from authoritarian leaders who did not respect our democratic values of decision-making.

Therefore, a congregation that wants to separate will need to:

1. Engage in a congregational discernment process and fully understand the responsibilities of separation prior to any church conference to make an official decision.
2. Work with the Conference Trustees to meet obligations for apportionment payments, property, pension liabilities, and similar requirements.
3. Vote by a 2/3 majority of the professing members present at a duly called church conference to separate and assume the agreed-upon responsibilities.
4. Wait until the request for separation is approved at an Annual Conference session.

As you can see, a pastor can leave quickly, but it takes time for a local church. Since our conference has been meeting regularly for almost 183 years and many of our churches are over one hundred years old, we need to honor their heritage by taking time for information and discernment. At the same time, our heritage has respected democratic decision-making in official church

conferences.

I will regret having any pastor or church leave our conference. Our evangelism and mission will be diminished. We will be less inclusive and diverse. I am also concerned that a pastor may not find another church and a church that leaves may have difficulty calling a pastor. Most importantly, I am concerned that any separation will not reflect the heart and way of Jesus for us to grow in holiness.

On my desk, I have an 1832 edition of "The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church." The opening page gives a brief account of the rise of Methodism, both in Europe and America, using words from John and Charles Wesley: "In 1729, two young men, in England, reading the Bible, saw they could not be saved without holiness: followed after it, and incited others so to do. In 1727, they saw likewise, that men are justified before they are sanctified: but still, holiness was their object. God then thrust them out to raise a holy people."

The United Methodist Church introduced me to Jesus Christ, who called me to holiness—personal and social. I have vowed to uphold our church with my prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. The question of whether United Methodists are going to divide is too important to leave to any caucus group or conversation on social media. It is an individual decision each of us must make.



The 2022 Northern Illinois Annual Conference Bishop's Appeal special offering will go toward Ukraine assistance. We know our God stands with the oppressed and calls on us to support them. The conference Board of Global Ministries will distribute funds through UM support and relief organizations including Eurasia In Mission Together: Ukraine and Moldova Advance, and UMCOR: International Disaster Response - Ukraine. For more information and fundraising ideas, visit umcnic.org/bishopsappeal2022.

Lifelong Generosity through a Charitable Gift Annuity By George Gill



George and Sallie Gill.

My wife Sallie and I have been delighted to contribute to the Uplifting Young Methodist Scholarship program for minority and need-based high school graduating youth in the Northern Illinois Conference. In donating to an organization that we consider to be well managed and directed, we are confident that the funds will be effectively used as intended.

We were both raised in Methodist families, and this encouraged our decision. The church is very meaningful to us in our lives, and we wanted to provide a donation that would honor our forebearers and carry on for future generations.

The cash value from a life insurance policy we no longer needed was used to make this donation in the form of a charitable gift annuity, which provides fixed income payments for life. A significant portion of each payment is treated as a tax-free return for many years. It is expected to provide a six-figure charitable remainder to this scholarship program.

When the United Methodist Foundation created the Uplifting Young Methodist Scholarship program, we saw this as a golden opportunity to contribute to an endeavor close to our hearts ... the United Methodist Church, education of youth, and those in need. This was our opportunity to help others. "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you do for me."



Uplifting Young Methodists Scholarship

For many students, continuing education beyond high school is a challenging decision due to financial circumstances. The United Methodist Foundation wants to empower students to continue their education by providing financial assistance. This scholarship is designed to assist minority United Methodist students to attend a

trade school, community college, college, or university. Applications are due April 30. Visit umfnc.org/uplift for more information and to apply.

White church donates to reparations fund

By Jim Patterson*

The late Rev. Ernest Fremont Tittle, a white pastor who died in 1949, would be proud of his church in 2022, believes his successor, a Black woman.

First United Methodist Church of Evanston, Illinois, has donated \$50,000 to a fund set up to pay reparations to the Black community there. The church, started in 1854 by the founders of this city 20 miles north of Chicago, has a primarily white congregation. Blacks there are still suffering from the effects of redlining that barred them from living in some communities.

"I pastor this congregation that is 97% white," said the Rev. Grace Imathiu, a native of Kenya. "When we talk about reparations, it is not something new. It's something that Dr. Tittle started."

That's not true literally, but Tittle, who pastored the church from 1919 to 1949, was a progressive on race issues ahead of his time. Here's an example from a sermon he preached in 1944:

"We must speed up our efforts to do justice to our fellow citizens of the Negro race, who rightly contend that the question of social equality, in particular the question, 'Do you want your daughter to marry a Negro?' has nothing to do with the question of decent housing, of fair employment practices, of educational opportunity, or personal security against lynching and against outrageous abuse of police power."

The city of Evanston has earmarked the first \$10 million of sales tax from cannabis sales to fund reparations for its Black community, said community activist Robin Rue Simmons, a former alderman who helped pass the legislation, believed to be the first of its kind. The first \$400,000 is earmarked for grants to descendants of slaves to get \$25,000 to spend on housing. Sixteen out of 122 applicants selected randomly were awarded the grant on Jan. 13.

Further grants, possibly some focused on education, are planned with the money from the cannabis fund, the church and other donors.

"(First United Methodist Church of Evanston) is leading by example," Simmons said. "It is the white community who historically harmed the Black community, and it is the white community that has enjoyed privilege and access that the Black community has not. And so the white community has a responsibility and a role as an ally leader in the movement for reparations, and this church is modeling that with this important step."

The idea to raise money at First United Church began with discussions between Imathiu and lay leader Matt Johnson, who is white.

"I said the only way I'm going to join the stewardship committee is if we can have an emphasis on reparations, or start talking about that and raising a little money around that," Johnson said.

Imathiu said she thought it was important that a white man is a catalyst of reparations in her church.

"Matt is a lay person and Matt is steeped in United Methodism," she said.

There has been dissent against the program in Evanston. Dahleen Glanton, in a 2021 column published in the Chicago Tribune, said the program "is mostly a symbolic gesture with little of the substance the reparations movement hoped for."

Besides the 16 lottery winners, African Americans won't get anything at all for now, she said. And even the winners won't be getting money to use any way they choose, she pointed out. The money is earmarked for use to purchase or remodel a home or pay down a mortgage.

"It will have little, if any, impact on the lives of the other approximately 12,000 Black Evanston residents," Glanton wrote. "It probably won't even make a dent in addressing the economic disparities resulting from decades of neglect."

There are plans to raise at least \$10 million and it hasn't yet been decided specifically how the remaining money will be spent. The program so far is a repackaging as reparations of measures the city should already be doing to help disadvantaged residents, Glanton said. Johnson said that even though there is a viewpoint that this effort isn't "truly" reparations, he considers it a start.

"I feel the federal government isn't doing anything," he said. "There's been a bill sitting around for a long time to address reparations, but nothing has happened. I feel there needs to be a groundswell elsewhere in order to



Robin Rue Simmons, executive director of the non-profit organization FirstRepair, speaks to the congregation of First United Methodist Church of Evanston, Ill., about the impact of the city's initiative to make reparations for slavery and racial discrimination. Photo by S.E. Brick.

push this forward in some way, and that's why I was excited about what the city of Evanston is doing."

There are signs the movement is spreading, Simmons said.

"I've lost count of the amount of cities that I've heard from personally over the last three years," she said.

A December symposium in partnership with the National African American Reparations Committee drew 60 leaders, including representatives from 25 cities such as San Francisco, Detroit and Amherst, Massachusetts.

"We gave them a bus tour of (Evanston), detailing our historic segregation and showing where today in 2022 we remain racially segregated," Simmons said. In April, the group is set to reconvene in Washington to continue talks.

For First United Methodist Church, contributing to reparations "is not a big deal," Imathiu said.

"This is who we are," she said. "This is part of our DNA." Sometimes she thinks of herself, the Black pastor of a majority white congregation, as "Dr. Tittle's prophecy, in flesh and blood," Imathiu said.

"I wonder then, who am I dreaming for?" she said. "If they looked at my sermons 100 years from now, what should I have been dreaming and who should I have been dreaming about?"

*Patterson is a UM News reporter in Nashville, Tennessee.



Northern Illinois maintains strong support for AUF



The Africa University Fund (AUF) ended 2021 with an overall investment of 84.88 percent of the asking, thanks to the ever faithful and generous local congregations of The United Methodist Church. Congregations across all five United Methodist Church jurisdictions in the United States invested \$2,034,033 in the work of equipping leaders through Africa University.

"In what is arguably one of the most challenging periods ever experienced globally, United Methodist churches demonstrated their commitment to making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world through Africa University," said James Salley, Africa University's chief advancement officer. "It's been a shared effort from the beginning, and we thank the global United Methodist Church for staying the course. You never finish building a university."

Sixteen annual conferences met their budget commitments to Africa University at 100 percent or higher. Most notably, the Northern Illinois Conference achieved its goal of 100 percent, and the Western North Carolina Conference (110.64 %) and the Wisconsin Conference (100.23%) surpassed their goal of 100 percent support for the AUF. Four of the five U.S. jurisdictions of The United Methodist Church maintained their overall investment in the AUF at 86 percent or higher.

The Episcopal Fund achieved the highest percentage in overall giving, at 92.41 percent, making the AUF second among the seven general church funds in 2021.



General Conference further postponed to 2024

As the pandemic continues and the wait time for visas stretches to over two years in some countries, the Commission on the General Conference announced March 3 that the 2020 General Conference cannot be held in 2022 due to COVID-related and

governmental policies/constraints and will be further postponed to 2024s.

Commission members received a report based on conversations with multiple officials of the U. S. Department of State outlining the massive backlog of visa applications in some areas. This backlog has led to wait times up to 800+ days for scheduling an initial interview. In addition, commission members described an increasingly complex interview process in some areas requiring two or three interviews, which also creates a roadblock that would preclude participation by many delegates outside the United States of America.

Commission chairperson Kim Simpson said the decision to postpone once again was an exceedingly difficult one, with many factors to consider -- including visas and passports, the health and safety of delegates, volunteers and other attendees, vaccination rates, and the need for provisions for quarantine or medical care should any delegates contract COVID-19.

"We engaged in a fair, thorough, integrity-filled discussion of the alternatives," said Simpson. "The visa issue is a reality that is simply outside our control as we seek to achieve a reasonable threshold of delegate presence and participation. Ultimately our decision reflects the hope that 2024 will afford greater opportunity

for global travel and a higher degree of protection for the health and safety of delegates and attendees."

The Book of Discipline 2016 requires the Commission to take necessary measures to assure full participation of all General Conference delegates. Consistent with that guidance, the Commission determined that the physical attendance of as many delegates as possible at the General Conference is critically necessary.

A significant advantage of further postponing the 2020 General Conference to 2024 is that the Commission has already secured a venue for what would have been the regularly scheduled quadrennial event. An announcement about the location will be forthcoming as soon as the required logistical planning is complete.

According to Sara Hotchkiss, Business Manager of the General Conference, moving the legislative gathering to 2023 was an option that was discussed, but was not found to be feasible due to a number of reasons, including but not necessarily limited to the logistical challenges of planning, the remaining backlog of visa applications and interviews, and the proximity to the 2024 General Conference.

Secretary of the General Conference, Gary Graves, said the further postponement raises a number of additional questions not specifically addressed in *The Book of Discipline* 2016.

"As the postponed 2020 General Conference now enters the typical cycle of preparation for a General Conference that would have been held in 2024, we will need to look to the Judicial Council for clarity regarding which preparations and processes are based on the postponed 2020 General Conference and which would need to be enacted should this be seen as a new 2024 General Conference."

The NIC General and Jurisdictional Delegation said while they wait for details, they also support the decision to postpone General Conference again.

"There are so many folks in the world who have not seen the vaccine yet, so meeting in person seems a challenge, and virtual meeting of this magnitude would have been unfair to those who do not have, or have limited access to the internet," said NIC Delegation Chair Rev. Alka Lyall. "We all have many unanswered questions in light of the postponement."


In the meantime, more than 275 General Conference delegates and other church leaders, including NIC delegates released an open letter March 18 that shares their hopes for the denomination's future and their commitment to stay United Methodist.

"Ministry is happening now!" said the Letter to the Connection upon the Postponement of General Conference. "With each of you, we will do the work of Christ that will lead our church into Easter resurrection."

Rev. Lyall says the letter is an invitation to reaffirm, along with the Bishops, that we are "... one people, rooted in Scripture, centered in Christ, serving in love and united in the essentials."

Lyll added that the letter noted that our "United Methodist Church was founded on a Wesleyan theology of grace and the witness of Jesus Christ. Guided by the Scriptures, we are a people empowered and emboldened by the Holy Spirit."

The Council of Bishops has also tentatively set November 2-5, 2022 for Jurisdictional Conferences, pending the declaratory decision of the Judicial Council. You can read the complete press release from the Council of Bishops at unitedmethodistbishops.org.

The NIC delegation has also prepared a video report to share how the delegation has been preparing these past two years, and what they've been involved in. You are invited to take a few moments to watch the report at vimeo.com/689793085 and share your questions, comments or suggestions with them. Email the delegation at 2020-nic-delegation@googlegroups.com. 



United Women in Faith

United Methodist Women changes name, announces new branding

United Methodist Women is now United Women in Faith! The move is part of a refreshing of the organization that includes a new logo and an array of new and improved programs to nurture current members and welcome new women to join to put their love in action on behalf of women, children, and youth.

The organization announced the new operating name in the March-April edition of response, its bimonthly magazine for members, and launched the rebrand with a new website and Facebook event on March 3.

The new programs are fruits of research conducted over the past five years with more than 24,000 United Methodists and women of other Christian traditions participating in the surveys, focus groups and interviews. This input informed the prayerful discernment of staff and elected leaders.

The changes are designed to address the different needs and life stages of current members and new women and expand options for membership and engagement. The new name also aims to welcome current members whose local churches may choose to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church as well as women of other faith traditions who want to join.

New and innovative programs will be rolled out throughout 2022, including:

- **A new, easier to navigate website** with a homepage designed to pique new women's interest in United Women in Faith and a special portal set to come online later this year where members can log in to access additional resources.
- **A new "All-Access" National Membership Option** enabling women to join United Women in Faith via

the new website and participate online or in person at local units or larger events

- **Soul Care Retreats**, a pilot recruitment program for members and their nonmember friends and new women focused on nurturing women's bodies, minds, and spirits.
- **Innovations to Mission u**, the organization's longtime spiritual growth and transformative education program. Beginning in spring 2022, Mission u will introduce new curricula each year—one for children, one for youth and one for adults—all focused on a shared biblical theme. The new Mission u curricula will be more adaptable for use in small groups, local churches, vacation Bible schools, retreats, and other settings. Through these vibrant, relevant, justice-oriented, and biblically centered curricula, Mission u will continue its commitment to learning together for the transformation of the world and expand its impact.

"This is an exciting time for our organization!" said Harriett Jane Olson, CEO of United Women in Faith. "Looking back, we see the through lines for our organization—faith in God, love for each other and commitment to putting our faith into action supporting women, children, and youth. These commitments have been expressed in different ways at different times using different names, always calling women to world changing action. This combination of a new look, more accessible resources for members and new ways to participate, positions us for impact in our own journeys and in how we engage the world that God

so loves."

'Ainise 'Isama'u, United Women in Faith board president, said the changes express the organization's core values in ways that will excite current members and invite new women to join us.

"I'm confident our members will be excited about these changes," she said. "Together we are creating more opportunities for engagement with more women through new programs and updates of long-standing programs that embody our core values. Things change. People change. But God remains, and that continues to be the purpose behind everything that we do in this organization."

The organization remains incorporated in New York as United Methodist Women and is doing business as United Women in Faith. Learn more at uwfaith.org.

United Women in Faith seeks to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship, and education so that they can inspire, influence and impact local and global communities.

Registration for United Methodist Women Assembly 2022 is still open.



ASSEMBLY 2022

MAY 20 - 22, 2022
ORLANDO CONVENTION CENTER
WWW.ASSEMBLY2022.ORG

Come to Orlando to care for your spirit, worship with your sisters and celebrate the positive impact women create in the world. In person and virtual options available.

Vital Connections

~Message from your conference lay leaders

We are a connectional people. At least, that is what we say and hear. Conference leaders and clergy speak of "the connection" of the United Methodist Church. We believe our connection is something that has brought many people to our denomination. John Wesley recognized the need for an organized system of communication and accountability, which he called "connexion."

We still use an organizational structure similar to Wesley's ways with local churches, districts, annual conferences, and general conference. Sometimes, however, congregations don't feel connected. We hope we will seek out that connection because our connection is strong, knowledgeable, and available.

One example of our connection is the Board of Laity's annual Laity Convocation. Even though we have participated in Laity Convocation virtually for the last two years, we have still "connected" with each other to learn new ways to "Strengthen Our Spiritual Lives" and "Explore the Possibilities of Church in a Post-Pandemic World." You can connect with us to get information from all recent Laity Convocations by going to the Laity page of the NIC website at umcnic.org/laity.

Your conference lay leaders and Board of Laity believe that this connection will be even more vital and needed in the coming months and years as we move from pandemic to endemic. In this time soon to be upon us, we will need to work together to meet the challenges of change we will encounter.

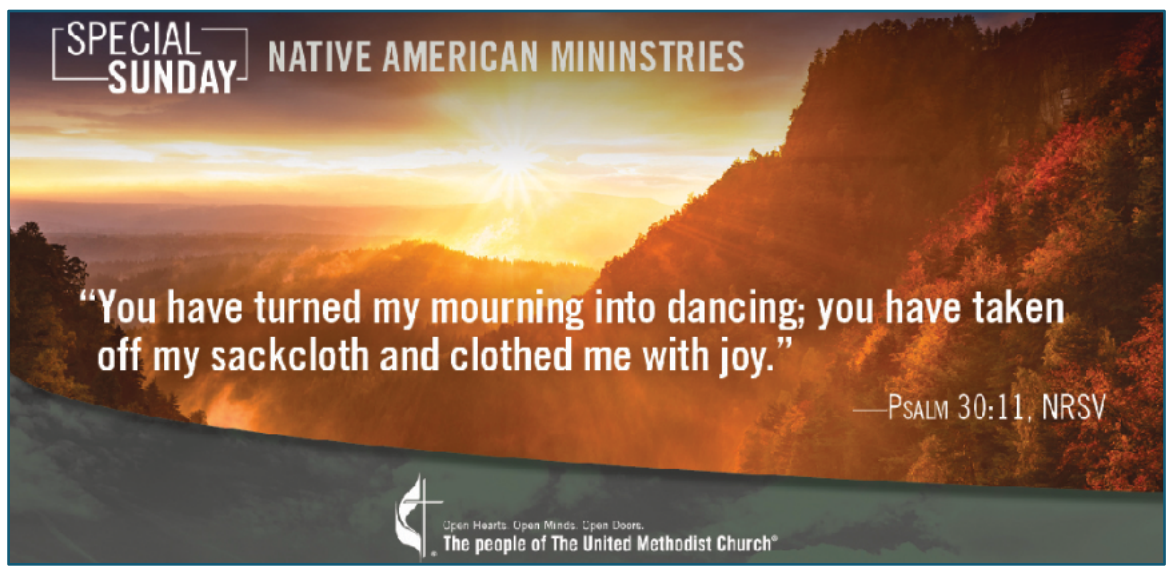
This "together" is not just with members of your local church, but also with people in United Methodist churches in surrounding communities, districts, and across the conference. Individually, we may not have the ideas needed to meet everything we will require for this new time that the COVID pandemic has brought, but together we can find ways to meet the changes and challenges.

Perhaps we will have to use our connection to receive a fresh pair of eyes to help us break free from what we have always done to solve problems. Remember, those fresh eyes may be just down the street, in your district, or across our conference. Our United Methodist connection is strong, knowledgeable, and available.

First Lady Abigail Adams said, "Great difficulties may be surmounted by patience and perseverance." I believe this is good advice, but great difficulties are also surmounted by people working together with patience and perseverance. If your church has not already begun to examine what church will look like as we move out of this pandemic, the time to begin is now. Your district and conference lay leaders, United Methodist men and women leadership, and Lay Servants are ready to help. Don't forget, you also have a district superintendent and conference staff willing to help you!

In this time of change, I believe we, the people of the United Methodist Church, can be the model as we work together to bring grace, mercy, justice, peace, and love to our neighbors and all we encounter.

~Connie Augsburg, Mark Manzi, Eugene Williams,
Conference Co-Lay Leaders



Celebrate Native American Sunday

Colonization is not over. Racism extends further than immigrants. Respect for one another includes respect for the land, the water, the air, and all creatures great and small.

You are invited to participate in Native American events through the Annual Conference with your local church. This year's Speaker Series "Race, America, and the Church" includes voices from indigenous Americans. Looking for a webinar on Native American history? The national Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA) is presenting a three-part series on "The Document of Discovery." Would an in-person experience be more helpful? Volunteers In Mission have ten Native American locations to choose from for your church's next mission. Opportunities are great to learn about life as a Native American.

Locally we encourage you to set aside one Sunday in April or May for Native American Sunday. The order of worship may include:

1. Start with a land acknowledgment. Find more information on how to do this and what tribes have crossed your church property at USDAC.us.
2. Host a guest speaker or having a book review. For ideas, ask a member of the Committee On Native American Ministry (CONAM). Visit umcnic.org/CONAM.
3. Sing the Heleluyan found in the United Methodist Hymnal #78 or playing recordings of Native American Music with acknowledgments.

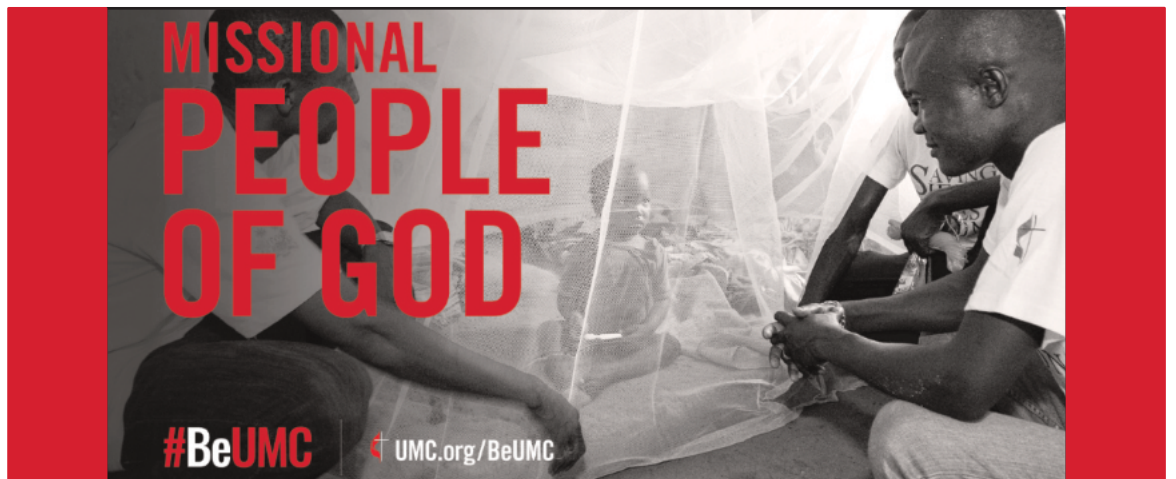
4. Decorate in the four colors of the medicine wheel: Black, Yellow, Red, and White.
5. Say prayers to the seven directions: East, South, West, North, up, down, and within.
6. Take an offering for Native American Ministry, proceeds from which are given in scholarships for Native Americans to attend college through the American Indian Association of Illinois and to support CONAM's Ministry of Presence in our Annual Conference.

Your openness to learning about the Native Peoples' experience is greatly appreciated. The Northern Illinois Annual Conference Committee on Native American Ministries leads training, calls for justice, and extends grace to Native Americans in northern Illinois on your behalf.

For more information, contact Rev. Dr. Michelle Oberwise Lacock at mlacock54@gmail.com, or Rev. Nancy Blade at Harvestlove2day@gmail.com.

Facts:

According to the American Indian Association of Illinois, American Indian people from many different tribes including the Ojibwe, Ho-Chunk, Potawatomie, Ottawa, Sauk, Fox, and Kickapoo have lived in Illinois and the Chicago urban area for over 10,000 years. Today, tribal members from over 150 different tribes reside in urban and rural areas of Illinois, including the Ojibwe, Potawatomie, Lakota, Dakota, Navajo, Zuni, Menominee, Oneida and Choctaw, Cherokee, and many others.



Refugees, mainly women and children, find shelter in several United Methodist churches in western Ukraine before being able to cross the border to neighboring countries. Photo courtesy Oleg Starodubets



From the Cover

Conference Secretary of Global Ministries Shirley M. Pulgar Hughes, Director of Connectional Ministries Arlene Christopherson, and reconnected with Rev. Lee to share the latest on the situation in Ukraine.

They shared that NIC churches will be raising money for Ukraine assistance through the 2022 Bishop's Appeal special offering at Annual Conference.

The Starodubets appreciate all the prayers and support during this extremely difficult and dangerous time.

"We have a special prayer request as the Russian army is trying to occupy Kyiv," said

Rev. Starodubets. "Support us in prayer that our capital stay. We want peace for our people. We want peace under the condition of freedom of occupants who are killing our people to leave our land. Pray for freedom of Ukraine."

Rev. Lee reminds us of John Wesley's words, "The World is my parish," and Christ's love knows no boundaries.

"It reminds us that we have more work to do in our mission to bring the world one step closer to God's Kingdom on Earth," said Rev. Lee. "We pray for the safety of Ukrainians and the end of this war."



Churches ditch plastic use

Find more ways for your church to go green and celebrate Earth Day at umcdiscipleship.org and search "creation care."

During Lent, some fast from many different things such as chocolate or sweets, certain foods or bad habits. But what about giving up that plastic fork at lunch?

Some churches across the Northern Illinois Conference are on a "plastic fast" for 40 days.

Dick Alton, member of the NIC Eco-Sustainability Task Force, said his church Euclid Avenue UMC in Oak Park began fasting from plastic on Ash Wednesday after Rev. Marti Scott preached on "These Ashes Ain't Plastic." "People were asked to join us during Lent in reducing plastic waste as well as continuing our discipline of lowering our carbon footprint," said Alton. "A calendar of ideas for reducing our plastic consumption appears in our announcements each week with suggestions such as skipping the single-use coffee cup that has a plastic lid and bringing a reusable mug."

At Kingswood UMC in Buffalo Grove, the church's Social Justice/Diversity team encourages everyone to honor God's creation and take positive steps this Lenten season to reduce single-use plastic, "one of the biggest threats to the planet."

"Some simple steps include using your own reusable water bottle and recyclable shopping bags, fasting from plasticware at home or from restaurants, and

recycling all allowable items in recycling bins," the team instructed.

Why Plastic?

- According to environmental experts, if we continue to produce and discard plastic at the expected rates, our oceans will contain more plastic than fish by 2050.
- As a byproduct of fossil fuels, plastics are the fastest growing and second-largest source of industrial greenhouse gas emissions (according to the Center for International and Environmental Law).
- Throughout its life-cycle-from production through the hundreds (if not thousands) years after its disposal-plastic harms wildlife and human health. Among humans, this harm is experienced first and worst by communities of color, low-income communities and other vulnerable populations.

Euclid Avenue is encouraging church members to consider passing along the savings from giving up plastic to the church's special Easter offering, which this year will go toward helping Ukraine refugees. Alton says the church also hopes the plastic fast will be more than a temporary exercise in deprivation and will help those participating make lasting changes in their everyday practices and mindset.



This I celebrate!

By Rev. Martin Lee, Dir. of Congregational Development and Redevelopment

A Korean Campus Ministry is a fully realized expression of church where Korean international students gather together for worship, discipleship, and fellowship and become a community of faith.

Every new school year, the Hyde Park Korean-American Campus ministry, which NIC apportionments support, sends student leaders to O'Hare airport. They welcome new students from Korea to assist them in settling into the campus at the University of Chicago and building new relationships. They call this their "Airport Ministry." It is a highly effective way to help the incoming students feel at home almost immediately in their new setting.

When Hyde Park Korean UMC was established as a Korean campus ministry, the community saw itself as a whole faith community, seeking to participate in every aspect of the life of the broader church, including mission participation with the broader UMC and the payment of an apportionment.

Most students receive financial assistance from scholarships and their families in Korea. Some students work while in school for the university or college they attend. This is often their only employment opportunity because their student visas do not allow them to work at



an off-campus business. But these ministries are faithful to the broader connection both in presence and in giving. This is one of the unique qualities of Korean campus ministries nationwide.

When taking leadership of the community, Rev. Woo Min Lee who serves as the Korean-American Campus minister and pastor of Hyde Park Korean UMC, emphasized the importance of responsible stewardship and faithful giving as a building block of a rich and full life of faith. He prioritized this message to help students cultivate lifelong habits of generosity. Full participation in the apportionment system is an important component of the community's discipleship program.

Rev. Lee said, "It has been a leap of faith during the

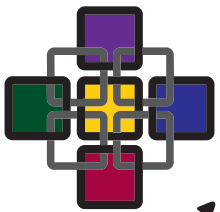
pandemic, and the students made a commitment to pay 100% apportionment."

The pastor and student leaders came up with an idea to raise funds two times a year to pay for apportionments in June and December. At the end of the school year in June, they gave thanks to God, and at the end of the year showed gratitude for the year. Hyde Park Korean apportionment payments went from 0% in 2019 to 100% in 2021.

"It worked for the year 2021," Rev. Woo Min Lee said as they look forward to growing in ministry in 2022.

This I Celebrate!





Connected in Christ

Come to the Water

1551 N. Thoreau Dr., Schaumburg, Ill.

Registration closes May 29.

This year's theme is "Connected in Christ: Come to the Water" with a focus on Matthew 3:13-17, the baptism of Jesus.

While the Annual Conference Committee will continue to monitor COVID-19 infection rates, health and safety guidelines have been put in place to keep the protection of attendees a top priority. Those attending are required to be fully vaccinated. Find the complete guidelines at umcnic.org/AC2022.

Details and Reminders:

- **Online registration cost:**
April 4 - April 29 Early bird registration \$80
April 30 - May 29 \$95
No on-site registration
*Active clergy who are not attending Annual Conference need to send their reason for absence in writing to Episcopal Administrative Assistant Marva Andrews either by e-mail at mandrews@umcnic.org or by postal mail at the following address:
Northern Illinois Conference
Attn: Marva Andrews, 77 W. Washington St. Suite 1820, Chicago, IL 60602
- Display Tables will be open to browse during Annual Conference. Applications for display tables are due April 25. Guidelines and an application form can be found online. Send questions to George Groves at groves101@comcast.net.

Northern Illinois Annual Conference members may register online for the 183rd session that will be held in person from June 8-10, 2022 at the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center,

- Submission of names and photos of AC lay members who have passed since July 2021 are due May 2. Please send to communications@umcnic.org.
- Legislation and documents will be posted online May 6.
- Clergy Session/Day Apart will be held in person at New Lenox UMC, 339 W. Haven Ave. New Lenox, IL 60451 on May 24 starting at 9 a.m. and will include lunch. Registration is included in the Annual Conference registration.
- Virtual pre-conference briefings will be held June 1 at 10:00 a.m. and June 2 at 7:00 p.m. Choose to attend one.
- Annual Conference check-in and badge pick up will begin at 12 noon on June 8.
- Annual Conference will open with the Memorial Service on June 8 at 1:30 p.m.
- Legislative Sections — June 8 at 7 p.m.
- Retirement Service — June 9 at 8:45 a.m.
- Ordination Service — June 10 at 1:30 p.m.
- Laity Session — June 8 from 11 a.m. - 12:00 noon before the conference starts.
- Volunteer Opportunities. If you would like to help as an usher, plenary page, greeter, secretarial pool member and in other ways to make Annual Conference run smoothly and efficiently, please contact Laura Lopez, Events Administrator, at llopez@umcnic.org. You can serve as a volunteer for a day or even part of a day. No previous experience is necessary.
- Hotel Reservations may be booked for the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center Hotel online or by phone. Cost: \$157 + tax and fees. Call 888-236-2427 or reserve online at book.passkey.com/go/UnitedMethodist2022.
- More updates and details will be posted in the NIC eNews and on the website at umcnic.org/AC2022.

*Times and agenda subject to change



Annual Conference Speakers and Leaders



Bishop Jonathan Keaton



Rev. Jane Eesley



Rev. Dr. Tércio B. Junker



Rev. Josiah Montgomery

Bishop John L. Hopkins is pleased to announce retired **Bishop Jonathan Keaton** will be preaching at the Ordination Service. Bishop Keaton returns to the Northern Illinois Conference where he served as Aurora district superintendent, as well as senior pastor at Broadway UMC in Rockford and St. Luke UMC in Chicago. He was elected to the episcopacy in 1996 and served the Illinois Great Rivers Conference as well as the Michigan and East Ohio Conferences. Bishop Hopkins will preach at the Memorial Service.

Also, **Rev. Jane Eesley** will be this year's Bible study leader. Eesley is the senior pastor of Christ UMC in Rockford. She served on the NIC Board of Ordained Ministry for 12 years and currently serves on the UM Foundation Board. She also chairs the Prairie North District Superintendency Committee.

The music coordinators will be **Rev. Dr. Tércio B. Junker**, pastor at Poplar Grove UMC and former Dean of the Chapel at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, and **Rev. Josiah Montgomery**, pastor at East Side UMC in Chicago and Assistant Director for Faith & Action at North Central College.

May/June Events

22 May: Asian/Pacific Heritage Month Celebration



A time to celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage

Worship and Program: 4-6 p.m.

Dinner: 6 p.m.

Location: First Korean UMC,
655 East Hintz Rd., Wheeling, IL 60090

No cost.

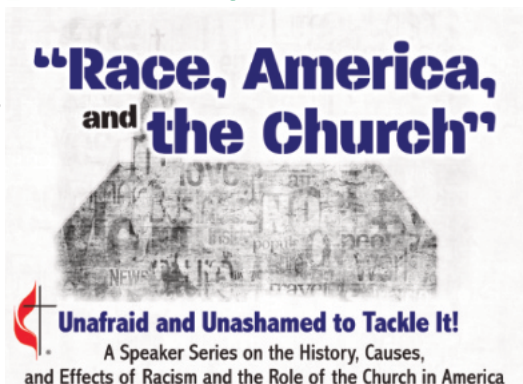
Register at:
umcnic.org/calendar/asian-pacific-american-heritage-month.

This event is in partnership with the Northern Illinois Conference Fellowship of Asian American caucus and the ACST Anti-Racism Task Force.

23 June: Unafraid: Stand up for social justice

Time: 12 - 1:30 p.m. (CT) via Zoom
Part of the NIC Speaker Series program. Representatives from different conferences discuss what the local church and their conferences are doing to address racism.

Speakers: Rev. Derrek Belase, Rev. David Lagos-Fonseca, Rev. Dana Neuhasuer, Rev. Brian Tillman, & Rev. Kathy L. Williams
Find registration for this event and future programs at umcnic.org/2022SpeakerSeries.



Wishing you a blessed Holy Week and Happy Easter.

Palm Sunday - April 10
Holy Thursday - April 14
Good Friday - April 15
Easter - April 17

KIDS ABOVE ALL

Kids Above All Diaper Drive
April 1 - May 15

Kids Above All's annual Diaper Drive is back! Donate diapers of all sizes and wipes so our parents, caregivers, babies, and toddlers have the essentials they need for a happy and healthy start to their lives together.

To schedule a drop-off time for your donation, Faith and Community Partners can contact our Manager of Faith & Community Relations, Deaconess Catherine Inserra, at 847-224-2870, or at cinserra@kidsaboveall.org.

Donation Drop Offs: Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
8765 W. Higgins Rd., Suite 450, Chicago, IL 60631



DYK DID YOU KNOW?

The connection in action

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

I have never been more proud to be a United Methodist than I am in this season.

Over the past few weeks, we have watched with increasing dismay as the people of Ukraine have come under attack. They have been driven from their homes into underground shelters and subway stations. Refugees are crammed into trains heading out of the country while dodging bombs and tanks, leaving villages and cities in ruins.

Millions of children have been displaced. The mounting death toll has led to mass graves. Hunger and hopelessness flash before our eyes each time we turn on the news. In the face of such stark realities, we can be dismissive, numbed by the magnitude, feel helpless, overwhelmed by the devastation, or find we can find ways to respond. As United Methodists, we respond.

We respond quickly, effectively, and generously because we are already present on the ground in Ukraine and the surrounding countries. The Ukraine-Moldova Provisional Annual Conference is small, with 500 members in 10 congregations located near or in major cities such as Kharkiv, Kyiv, Poltova, and Chernivtsi. Laity and pastors from these churches are working to bring comfort and aid to these communities.

Methodist work in present-day western Ukraine was founded by the Czechoslovak Annual Conference in the

1920s and continued to grow through World War II. This is one of the few places during the Soviet period where Methodist house churches continued to meet through the 1950s. In 1964 contact was made with Methodists in Tallinn, Estonia for pastoral training. Four congregations in 1989 contacted the Hungarian Annual Conference and remained in connection until 1992 when General Conference decided to make Eurasia an independent Episcopal area, including Ukraine and Moldova.

The people of Ukraine are our neighbors. Elsewhere in the Reporter and on our conference website, you can hear from pastors in Ukraine, Revs. Oleg and Dr. Yulia Starodubets. Through their witness, we feel the tension of war and the hope that comes with deep abiding faith.

Rather than tune out or feel helpless, we as United Methodists are connected. We have a means to respond through our General Board of Global Ministries advance offerings and United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). You can read more about our United Methodist response to the crisis in Ukraine at umcmmission.org/umcor/faq-the-crisis-in-ukraine.

UMCOR's work in Ukraine is being funded with gifts to Advance #982450, International Disaster Response and Recovery. Grants for immediate relief have been given to United Methodist partners in Ukraine and

neighboring nations—Poland, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia—to support those who remain in Ukraine and those who have fled the violence. These grants provide humanitarian assistance with food, water, clothing, shelter, and other necessary supplies. The situation in Eastern Europe is evolving and Global Ministries and UMCOR will continue to respond in the months and years ahead.

Each year, many churches take part in UMCOR Sunday by taking a special offering to underwrite the administrative costs of UMCOR. Because of your generosity in 2021, \$1,921,619 was given in support of UMCOR's work to alleviate human suffering and advance hope and healing.

I encourage churches to consider ways to fundraise for this year's Annual Conference Bishop's Appeal special offering that will go toward Ukrainian assistance, which includes UMCOR's International Disaster Response, as we continue to seek ways to respond.

Be it a flood in Texas, tornado in Oklahoma, or invasion in Ukraine, the United Methodist Church is there. We are there. We are bringing tangible assistance to those who suffer as a connectional church linking every congregation with needs across the globe.

We make a difference as The United Methodist Church.



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March 2022 Clergy Appointments and Retirements

Bishop John L. Hopkins announces the following clergy appointments and retirements for the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church, effective July 1, 2022 (unless otherwise noted):

Jin-Hee Kang (Full Elder) to Galena (Prairie North District) from Rock Falls (Prairie South District). Jin-Hee follows Catiana McKay who is retiring.

Michelle Oberwise Lacock (Full Elder) to retirement from extension ministry as Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Supervisor at Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center, Milwaukee, WI. Michelle became a Probationary Elder in 1984 and a Full Elder in 1991. During her ministry, she served at Lyndon/Leon, Freeport: Faith, Peoria University, Glasford/Kingston Mines & Banner, Genesis Medical Center, Alexian Brothers Medical Center, Rush Hospital, Advocate Health Systems, Rush Medical Center, Adventist Medical Center, Wesley Medical Center, and Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center. Effective August 1, 2021.

Sharon Engert (Retired Local Pastor) to continue at Millbrook (Prairie South District) upon retirement.

Jonathan Singleton (Full Elder) to continue at Stockton: Calvary (Prairie North District), upon rescinding his request for retirement.

Cal Haines (Full Elder) to Lake Bluff: Grace (Lake North District) from Morrison (Prairie South District). Cal follows Deborah Percell who is retiring.

Cherie Quillman (Licensed Local Pastor) to Serena, Millington, and Norway (Prairie South District) from Cortland (Prairie South District). Cherie follows Rich Fassig who is retiring.

Luis Reyes (Full Elder) to Sycamore: First (Prairie South District) from Lombard: First (Prairie Central District). Luis follows Dan Swinson who is retiring.

Jennifer Stephens (District Superintendent Supply) to Chicago: Parish of the Holy Covenant (Lake North District). Jennifer follows Kelli Knight (Full Elder) who is appointed to extension ministry at DIRA Partners. Effective March 1.

Michael Mann (Full Elder) to Lombard: First (Prairie Central District) from Carol Stream: St. Andrew (Prairie Central District). Michael follows Luis Reyes who is appointed to Sycamore: First (Prairie South District).

Derek Rogers (Full Elder) to Hinkley (Prairie South District) from Naperville: Flowing Forth (Prairie Central District) that has decided to close. Derek follows Sejoon Jang who is appointed to Rockford: Grace.

Sun-Ah Kang (Full Elder) to Morrison (Prairie South District) from Fairhaven, Chadwick & Hickory Grove (Prairie North District). Sun-Ah follows Cal Haines who is appointed to Lake Bluff: Grace (Lake North District).

Hannah Kardon (Full Elder) to a sabbatical year from Chicago: Urban Village Church.

Larry Dunlap-Berg (Full Elder) to retirement from extension ministry as Co-Coordinator of the Northern Illinois Conference Volunteers in Mission. Larry became a Probationary Elder in 1977 and Full Elder in 1980. During his ministry, he served at Chicago: Humboldt Park, Northeastern Illinois University, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, Tennessee Department of Labor, Cumberland Science Museum (Nashville, TN), and NIC Volunteers in Mission.

Job Openings

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

Stay Connected

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

Submissions

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

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

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