

The Northern Illinois Conference OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Reporter

December 2022/January 2023 Volume 168 | Issue 8 umcnic.org

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2 Bishop's Final Column: Hearing the call



4 Spanish Safe Sanctuaries training



5 Editor's last assignment



6 Bringing hope to hurricane disaster relief

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Welcome Bishop Schwerin to the Northern Illinois Conference

By Anne Marie Gerhardt



Rev. Dan Schwerin reacts as his name is announced as the third elected bishop at the North Central Jurisdictional Conference in Fort Wayne, Ind. Photo by Lisa Wink.



Retired Bishop Sharon Rader places the stole on newly consecrated Bishop Dan Schwerin.



Delegates, clergy, laity and staff gather with Bishop Schwerin at a reception after the consecration service on Nov. 5.

As his name was read, Rev. Dan Schwerin humbly bowed his head and placed his hand over his heart, almost taken aback by the announcement he was elected bishop on the sixth and final ballot at the North Central Jurisdictional Conference on Nov. 3.

"Those first moments after the election were not my most gathered moments," Schwerin admitted. "Not mindful of the crowd, I just prayed, 'thank you,' giving thanks to my maker and guide."

Schwerin hadn't prepared a speech since he never thought he would be elected. But as he addressed the room of delegates and visitors in the Grand Wayne Convention Center in Fort Wayne, Ind., he proclaimed his joy, gratefulness, and hope for the call received at baptism.

"I am so thankful for my baptism. Because in every baptism is the power and presence of Jesus Christ. In every baptism is a calling," said Schwerin. "Part of the baptismal call is a call forward to step out. In that stepping forward, we discover our utter reliance on Jesus Christ. By faith in that discovery, we discover the newness of God."

For 35 years, Schwerin (rhymes with tangerine) has served in many pastoral ministry contexts, including urban and rural churches, a new church plant, and a multi-staff downtown setting that became a reconciling congregation. He also launched a beloved community of non-profits to benefit persons with disabilities and children.

In the Wisconsin Conference, he most recently served as the Assistant to the Bishop and was a district superintendent. Bishop Hee-Soo Jung selected Schwerin to lead a collaborative effort with conference partners to increase racial justice and radical inclusion.

"People who know my ministry would tell you I'm grounded. I start the day in the scriptures and try to stay grounded throughout the day," said Schwerin. "People who know my ministry would also tell you I've been innovative. I've started new churches. I've helped churches reconnect with their neighborhoods in ways that have found transformation."

He was elected in 2019 as a delegate to General Conference and the North Central Jurisdiction and served on the General Conference Task Force on Funding Patterns in The United Methodist Church. Schwerin served as a member of the North Central Jurisdiction's Episcopacy Committee.

In 1991, Schwerin was ordained as an elder in the

Wisconsin Conference. He graduated from Perkins School of Theology in Texas and completed post-graduate Bowen family systems theory work there.

Schwerin is a published poet and writes every morning. In 2019, he received the Haiku Foundation Touchstone Award for Distinguished Books.

Humble and Grateful

At the consecration service, Bishop Schwerin learned he would be assigned to the Northern Illinois Conference effective Jan. 1, 2023, for which he expressed his gratitude.

"I've been your neighbor for many, many years. I am so grateful to be assigned to the Northern Illinois Annual Conference," said Schwerin. "You have a history of justice-seeking ministry that humbles me and makes me grateful to be called to be assigned to you."

Northern Illinois Conference delegate Rev. Brian Gilbert said he's known Bishop Schwerin for some time and is excited he will be the NIC's next Bishop.

"Dan is a real gift, and he's someone who has a true pastoral heart for God and the church," said Gilbert. "We are so blessed to have him coming to us."

Rev. Hwa-Young Chong, a clergy jurisdictional delegate and co-chair of the Annual Conference Shepherding Team, also expressed her excitement.

"I look forward to working with Bishop Dan Schwerin along with my co-chair Liz Gracie on our strategic goals," said Chong. "I feel hopeful for the future of the conference as we continue to collaborate with all our conference leaders."

Chair of the NIC delegation, Rev. Alka Lyall, who introduced a joint statement with the Wisconsin delegation to explore the possibility of sharing one Bishop for both conferences (see pg. 3), said this assignment is a good match. "Because of the possibilities of partnering with our conference, Bishop Jung knows us, and Dan knows Wisconsin," said Lyall. "I think this will be a good partnership and a beginning of a new episcopal area."

NIC Dir. of Congregational Development and Redevelopment Rev. Martin Lee acknowledged Schwerin's gifts of building up churches. "He has planted a new church start and transformed a multi-staff setting," said Lee. "He knows Wisconsin, so when the time comes for our annual conferences to possibly become one episcopal area, we will

(continued on page 3, see From the Cover)



From Your Bishop: **Hearing the call**

"I will whistle for them and gather them, because I have ransomed them."
Zechariah 10:8 (CEB)

When I think of being called into ministry, I think of my father. Oh, he wasn't a pastor. He was a mechanic who quit school in the eighth grade and was mostly a "home" Baptist. That means he did not go to church very much. He was "spiritual" but not "religious" long before those were sociological categories.

I was born about nine months and two weeks after my father came home from WWII, where he served in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. He must have loved me a lot because he always wanted me to come home when he whistled. That was the signal!

I can remember him whistling like it was yesterday, even though my father died in 1983. Sometimes he would use two fingers in his mouth; other times he didn't need to. In either case, his whistle was a shrill sound that traveled through the neighborhood and beyond.

On more than one occasion, when I was out playing several blocks away at a neighbor's house, or nearby park, I would hear that whistle, and I knew what to do. There was no hesitation—I was on my way home!

I could be at bat in the sand-lot championship. The game could be tied in the bottom of the 9th inning. The count could be three balls and two strikes. The pitcher could have started his windup, but if I heard my father's whistle, I would drop the bat and run home.

Oh, it wasn't that I wanted to, but I knew from experience I had better! Often, I was upset at having to drop everything and go home. Sometimes I would arrive to find my father angry because I hadn't completed yard work or taken out the trash. Sometimes I would see him smiling and ready to hop in the car to go on a spur-of-the-moment fishing trip.

I always did a lot of thinking and praying on that double-time trip home, trying to figure out what Dad wanted. That could be how I learned to pray on the run. But I always knew what that whistle meant.

As I reflect on God's call in my life, I think of my father's calling me home. Even when the call meant going to places and people that were new to me, I knew what to do. It must be normal to have anxiety about the work that needs to be done. This is certainly true for clergy ordained to serve wherever Jesus and his Church need you.

Ordination requires a call from God, a relationship with Jesus, and a love of the Church. It also requires sacrifice for the mission. So, when I was baptized in 1960, ordained an Elder in 1974, and later consecrated as a bishop in 1996, I vowed to serve God whenever and wherever the church called me to serve. "I could not separate Jesus from his Church and its mission."

Therefore, when I received the call to serve as Interim Bishop of the Northern Illinois Conference starting January 1, 2021, I left retirement, packed my bags, and

headed for Chicago. I also started praying on the run. And what a run it has been.

- I began in the middle of the COVID pandemic, just before the January 6 attack on the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., the inauguration of President Joe Biden, amid continued racist attacks on people of color, especially Blacks and Asian Americans.
- I presided over a virtual and an in-person Clergy Session.
- I conducted three sessions of the Annual Conference, including two virtually.
- I ordained and commissioned three classes of clergy and recognized clergy retiring after many years of service. A total of 42 candidates and 30 retirees.
- I worked with the Cabinet and appointed 100 pastors to local churches and extension ministries. I issued many local pastor licenses.
- I greeted Laity Convocations, United Methodist Men, Women of Faith, the Renewable Energy Summit, and training events.
- I Zoomed with individuals and many small groups of clergy and laity.
- I met with a variety of program and administrative committees as well as the Annual Conference Shepherding Committee.
- I shared sermons online and wrote over 20 articles for *The Reporter* and *eNews*.
- I reached out as a pastor, made calls, and sent notes to clergy and lay members struggling with illness, grief, or despair.
- I rejoiced with Northern Illinois paying all of its apportionments in 2021 and raising over \$250,000 for ministry in Ukraine through the 2022 Bishop's Appeal.
- I have tried to be honest in sharing the good and bad realities confronting our Church.
- I have prayed and dreamed about what is possible when we focus on the work in our local churches in order to have a strong Conference.
- I have imagined every church with baptisms, new members, mission outreach, and a balanced budget paying all apportionments.

Of course, I leave with some regrets. Most of all, I regret not preaching more in local churches and districts. Worship in local churches fuels our ministries and builds up the body of Christ. I had hoped to have a tour of the conference and join David Price playing guitar in his band to raise money for UMCOR. It would have also been wonderful to play tennis with Jeremiah Lee!

It is impossible for a bishop to serve effectively without the support of others. Although I cannot single out every committee and task force leader, I am grateful for our Lay Leaders Eugene Williams, Connie Augsberger, and Mark Manzi. The Co-Chairs of our Shepherding Team, Liz Gracie, Myron McCoy, and Hwa-Young Chong, have provided steady visionary leadership.

Special thanks go to the Extended Cabinet: Jeffrey Bross,

Arlene Christopherson, Jacques Conway, Brian Gilbert, Fabiola Grandson-Mayer, Brittany Isaac, Martin Lee, and Darneather Murph-Heath. Our District Superintendents support our pastors and churches as an extension of the bishop's office. Their pastoral, administrative, and personnel support is crucial to keeping our connection vital.

Arlene Christopherson, serving half-time as Director of Connectional Ministry, coordinated the work of our boards and agencies and staffed the Annual Conference Shepherding Team, the Annual Conference Program Committee, the Nominating Committee, Safe Sanctuaries Training, and many more groups.

Lonnie Chafin, Treasurer/Director of Administrative Service, has led us to pay apportionments in full in 2021, spent countless hours on the Boy Scouts of America settlement, secured support from the Paycheck Protection Program during the COVID pandemic, and worked with the Trustees to relocate staff offices to 303 E. Wacker Dr.

Martin Lee, Director of Congregational Development, kept us focused on making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. His academies, workshops, and training events have equipped pastors and church leaders for the work of evangelism and outreach. He has also served as my personal chauffeur, driving me in heavy traffic to meetings around the conference.

Anne Marie Gerhardt walked me through the virtual world, helping me with many videos, *eNews* updates, and Reporter articles. Her joyful spirit and enthusiasm for telling the stories of our ministries will be missed.

Finally, Marva Andrews, my Executive Assistant, provided daily assistance with phone calls, correspondence, speaking requests, scheduling, and tending to the Episcopal Residence when I was in Indianapolis. She has provided concierge services for everything challenging and fun in Northern Illinois.

As you can see, responding to the call to be your interim bishop has blessed Elaine and me with an abundance of relationships and significant service. Thank you for memories that will last a lifetime.

When Jesus called his first disciples to follow him, he went to people who were wounded from sin, sorrow, and brokenness. He preached good news to the poor, release to the prisoner, recovery of sight to the blind, and liberation to the oppressed. His followers were called to give witness to a Resurrected Christ who forgives sin and heals all that is broken.

God still calls people to carry on the ministry of Jesus. Can you hear that call? Are you willing to follow Jesus and give witness to a living, loving, healing Lord? I have been with you to bear witness to Jesus Christ so you can respond when God calls you.

Even after two years, there is so much more to share, but I must go now. I think I hear my father's whistle!

Visit umcnic.org/news/bishops-column-hearing-the-call to view the Bishop's farewell video.

North Central Jurisdictional delegates elect three bishops, celebrate retirees, address challenging topics

By Liz Winders*



Nearly two years after officially retiring, Bishop Sally Dyck, who served the NIC from 2012-2020, was celebrated at the retirement service at the North Central Jurisdictional Conference on Nov. 3.

Clergy and lay delegates from conferences across the North Central Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church convened November 2-5 in Fort Wayne, Indiana, for Jurisdictional Conference 2022.

In his opening service message, "God Has Us Right Where God Wants Us," retired Bishop Bruce Ough spoke from Ezekiel 37:1-14, The Valley of Dry Bones.

"Ezekiel ponders, can something be too far gone? Is it too late? In the context of constant warfare, hunger, and death in Ezekiel's landscape, he ponders if the people can be restored; if they can know healing?" Ough said. He then added, "God has us right where God wants us. The word is that the dry bones in our lives and our United Methodist Church will live again."

During business sessions on the first day, delegates elected two new bishops: the Rev. Kennetha Bigam-Tsai,

who became the first bishop in the NCJ to be elected on the first ballot, and the Rev. Dr. Lanette Plambeck.

On day two of the Conference, East Ohio Conference Bishop Tracy S. Malone preached from 2 Corinthians 4:7-18, stating that God's grace and endless mercy empower us to remain faithful and hopeful even amidst trials.

"It is this power that keeps us sustained in the midst of separation and disaffiliation. It is this power that helps us to remain steadfast in the midst of the many political and cultural wars. It is the Christ in us, living and working through us, that is the hope of glory. And guess what? We can claim it even while we're suffering," Malone shared.

In his Episcopal Address, NCJ College of Bishops President Bishop David Bard stated that The United

(continued on page 3, see *Jurisdictional delegates*)

Northern Illinois and Wisconsin Delegations encourage talks of shared episcopal area

By Anne Marie Gerhardt and Lisa Wink*



The extended cabinets of Northern Illinois and Wisconsin collaborate in Sun Prairie, Wis., at a half-day retreat in September.

Looking at the possibility of a shared episcopal area, Rev. Alka Lyall and Rev. Krysta Deede, delegates from Northern Illinois and Wisconsin conferences, brought forth a joint statement at the North Central Jurisdictional (NCJ) conference during the last afternoon session. The statement is in response to the challenges facing the United Methodist Church and how it will best continue to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Both conferences are open and committed to dialogue and collaboration to explore the possibility

of sharing an episcopal leader after General Conference in 2024. The NCJ Committee on Episcopacy recommends Northern Illinois and Wisconsin conferences and East and West Ohio conferences, especially Area Committees on Episcopacy, Extended Cabinets and Conference Directors, begin similar conversations about sharing an episcopal area (not merging), if the idea is approved by the NCJ beginning as soon as 2024. In fact, the Episcopacy Committee recommends all Annual Conferences begin these conversations.

(continued on page 4, see Delegations statement)

Jurisdictional delegates (continued from page 2)

Methodist Church is in an odd space that is rooted, magnanimous, evangelical, and disciple-making.

“The space we create moving into the future ... must be rooted in the history of our Christian faith, rooted, and grounded in Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience, with Scripture as the constitutive witness to Jesus as the Christ. When it is so rooted, it will allow for creativity and curiosity,” Bard said.

During business on the second day, the day concluded with the long-delayed Service of Recognition of Retirement honoring Bishop Sally Dyck, Bishop Bruce Ough, and Bishop Laurie Haller.

Bishop Dyck reflected on life living in Napa, California with her husband Ken Ehrman and the joy of hiking and getting back to playing piano. Still busy as the Council of Bishops Ecumenical Officer and Interim bishop for the California-Nevada Annual Conference, she reflected on her years of ministry.

“In addition to providing administrative and governance to the annual conferences that I’ve served, my passions, I’ve tried to squeeze into the cracks of time and influence have been to help local churches think about using what they do have instead of wishing that they had something else,” Dyck said. “Holy, healthy habits, holy comfort and care of creation, whatever seeds have landed in whatever fertile places, I simply rejoice.”

On day three of NCJ 2022 in Fort Wayne, Indiana, host Bishop Julius Trimble exhorted the body of delegates to stand up with the good news because Jesus is real.

“We can press on – or be a footnote in the annals of history, so I stopped by to tell you that Jesus is real! You may consider yourself left-leaning or right-leaning, but we all better be leaning on the everlasting arms!” he said.

Having completed the election of bishops, delegates focused on how we are called to live as the Church and stand up with the good news in terms of gun violence and homophobia. Rev. Angelo Mante shared of losing a cousin to gun violence in 2016, which prompted him to start a ministry directed toward peacemaking. Rev. Angie Cox talked about being deferred by the Board of Ordained Ministry multiple times because of her sexual orientation. Kiri Anne Ryan Berezna spoke of being an autistic, non-binary, trans woman with a long pedigree of experience in The United Methodist Church and yet not being fully accepted.

Rev. Mary Ann Moman recounted her experience with heterosexism in presiding at a wedding of two men and the objectification they experienced in the press after the story of the wedding went public.

Delegates then passed the resolution “Queer Delegates’ Call to Center Justice and Empowerment for LGBTQIA+ People in The UMC.” They also approved the 2023-24 Jurisdictional budget and passed several resolutions.

During her Consecration Service sermon on the final day of the Jurisdictional Conference, Bishop Sally Dyck spoke directly and personally to the three newly elected bishops saying, “You must always claim that first and foremost you are a child of God.” She added, “Being a bishop isn’t about having power. It’s about empowering others to be who they are and to look at what Jesus did over and over again.” Finally, she told the three, “You were not elected to save the church ... you are called to help inspire and equip and bring new life into our beloved United Methodist Church.”

At the conclusion of The Order for the Consecration of Bishops, North Central Jurisdiction Committee on the Episcopacy Chairperson Sara Isbell announced these episcopal assignments for the shortened quadrennium that begins January 1, 2023 and ends August 31, 2024:

- Dakotas-Minnesota Conferences: Bishop Lanette Plambeck
- East Ohio Conference: Bishop Tracy Smith Malone
- Illinois-Great Rivers Conference: Bishop Frank Beard
- Indiana Conference: Bishop Julius C. Trimble
- Iowa Conference: Bishop Kennetha Bigham-Tsai
- Michigan Conference: Bishop David Bard
- Northern Illinois Conference: Bishop Dan Schwerin
- West Ohio Conference: Bishop Gregory Vaughn Palmer
- Wisconsin Conference: Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

The next NCJ Jurisdictional Conference is scheduled for July 10-13, 2024, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

General Conference will be held April 23 – May 3, 2024, at the Charlotte Convention Center in Charlotte, North Carolina.

*Liz Winders is the Iowa Annual Conference Director of Communications



Jurisdictions see shift in bishops

UMNews - The five jurisdictional conferences — meeting simultaneously across the U.S. — elected a new class of 13 United Methodist bishops that includes a higher percentage of women and people of color than previous election cycles and many firsts. This year saw the election of:

- Bishop David Wilson, the denomination’s first Native American bishop, by the South Central Jurisdiction. Wilson is Choctaw.
- Bishop Carlo A. Rapanut, the denomination’s first Filipino American bishop, by the Western Jurisdiction.
- Bishop Héctor A. Burgos-Núñez, the first Hispanic/Latino bishop in the Northeastern Jurisdiction.
- Bishop Delores “Dee” Williamston, the first Black woman bishop in the South Central Jurisdiction.
- Bishop Cedrick D. Bridgeforth, the denomination’s first openly gay and married Black male bishop, by the Western Jurisdiction.

Other firsts:

- The South Central Jurisdiction made history by electing three bishops — Williamston, Wilson and Bishop Laura Merrill on the first ballot. According to the United Methodist Commission on Archives and History, only twice before have U.S. Methodists elected more than two bishops on the first ballot — both times in the 19th century before the current jurisdictional election system.
- Of the 13 U.S. bishops elected at the 2022 jurisdictional conferences, seven are women and eight are people of color. Bishop Kennetha Bigham-Tsai, the first bishop elected this year, is a Black woman and the third Black woman elected to the episcopacy by the North Central Jurisdiction on the first ballot.
- With the election of seven women bishops this year and seven in 2016, about 44% of U.S. bishops are now women.
- The Rev. Ruby-Nell M. Estrella, treasurer of the Philippines Central Conference, was elected the first female bishop in The United Methodist Church’s Philippines Central Conference during its meeting Nov. 26 at Wesleyan University-Philippines in Cabanatuan City.



Newly elected Bishop Ruby-Nell Estrella receives her episcopal pin from College of Bishops President Thomas J. Bickerton (right) during the Philippines Central Conference. Photo by Gladys P. Mangiduyos, UM News.

From the Cover

create some synergy and something we never dreamed of before. Thank God, this is an amazing time.”

Bishop Schwerin said he loves the local church, clergy colleagues, and the leadership of laity and is looking forward to working together.

“We need each other to make Christ known. We cannot do that alone,” said Schwerin. “I’m going to need your prayers. I’m going to need your wisdom. But together, we’re going to make Christ known in our steps.”

He also said this is a hopeful time and these are days full of opportunities to get clear about who we are.

“We are a Wesleyan, biblical, grace-centered, mission-focused, justice-seeking, global body that makes known Jesus Christ as we make disciples of Jesus for the transformation of the world,” Schwerin said. “I look forward to learning about your ministry and hearing about how you are transforming the communities God has given you to love. So I look forward to this next

season to get to know you and for us to be in ministry together.”

Bishop Dan Schwerin grew up in Wisconsin and comes from a family of farmers and machinists. He is a dad, grandpa, and husband to his wife, Julie. He proclaims Jesus is the “gold in his life.”

The NIC Episcopacy Committee is working on plans for an installation service for Bishop Schwerin in early 2023.





Safe Sanctuaries Training offered in Spanish

On Saturday, Nov. 19, participants with the Conference [Hispanic/Latinx] Academy for Faith Community Development received the Safe Sanctuaries training in Spanish thanks to the Northern Illinois Conference program staff. Safe Sanctuaries aims to ensure congregations are safe places where children, youth, and elders may experience the abiding love of God and fellowship within the faith community.

Rev. Arlene Christopherson, Ass't to the Bishop and Dir. of Connectional Ministries, presented the training with Pastor Auderine Rochet interpreting, which was well received.

"I planned to have 30 people, but altogether 46 people came, said Rev. Martin Lee, Dir. of Congregational Development and Redevelopment. "They learned a lot. In the current culture, it is important to not only create a welcoming congregation but intentionally build a safe space for all."

Over the summer, more than 100 congregations participated in safe sanctuaries trainings around the Conference. Nearly 300 lay and staff were trained and 77% of NIC's churches have at least one person trained. Christopherson says she's excited the Hispanic/Latinx

leadership has made the commitment to providing safe spaces for working with children, youth and vulnerable adults.

"Statistics tell us that children on the margins, faced with language barriers, immigration status and isolation, can be greater targets for abuse," said Christopherson. "Our Hispanic congregations are heightening their awareness and that of their members so they can spot signs of abuse and predatory behavior and truly be a safe space for everyone."

Rev. Lee said it was a great learning day, and he is inviting Rev. Christopherson to teach Korean Sunday school teachers and leadership about safe sanctuaries' practices in the spring of 2023.

Visit umcnic.org/safesantuaries to learn more.

Participating Hispanic/Latinx Churches

- Franklin Park: First UMC
- Franklin Park: Living Waters O'Hare NFC
- Franklin Park: Living Waters
- Blue Island: La Gracia de Dios NFC
- Chicago: Amor de Dios UMC
- Aurora: First Nueva Vida UMC
- Oak Lawn: Potential Church Planter
- Joliet: Cristo Es El Camino NFC



Participants with the Conference [Hispanic/Latinx] Academy for Faith Community Development learn about Safe Sanctuaries during a recent training at First UMC in Franklin Park.



'Ghosts' actress is a lifelong United Methodist By Jim Patterson*



The story of Flower, the hippie ghost with scars from a bear mauling, is incrementally coming together on the CBS sitcom "Ghosts." United Methodists will also want to know the story of Sheila Carrasco, the actress who plays Flower. She's a lifetime United Methodist and the daughter of the Rev. Oscar Carrasco, a retired pastor and former Northern Illinois Conference District Superintendent.

"My parents have been really devoted to the Methodist church my whole life," said Sheila during an interview with United Methodist News. "They set a really wonderful example for me of what it means to be a member of the community, what it means to help people and lend an empathetic ear."

The premise of "Ghosts," now in its second season, follows a couple who buy a country home with a bunch of ghosts who formerly resided there. Sheila said that "Ghosts" is a "dream job" for her.

"I'm used to big ensemble work, coming

from the theater and coming from sketch comedy," she said. "I've always wanted to be in a big ensemble, kind of a workplace comedy. That's really what this feels like to me."

Growing up, Sheila was the classic youngest child, working to get attention from her parents and brother and sisters.

"All of my siblings are incredibly accomplished and hilarious," she said. "But I also was very in my own world. ... I had an imaginary friend. I preferred to play alone in my own imagination."

The seemingly contradictory traits of attention-seeking and living in her own world worked together to help shape her into a performer, Sheila said. Growing up in her father's churches in the Northern Illinois Conference also presented opportunities to perform.

"We would be the acolytes if an acolyte didn't show up or sing the solo if we needed a soloist that week," she said. "It really got us used to

(continued on page 8, see Ghosts)

◀ Actress Sheila Carrasco in character as the hippie Flower on the CBS show "Ghosts." She is the daughter of the Rev. Oscar Carrasco, retired Northern Illinois Conference pastor and district superintendent. Photo by Bertrand Calmeau/CBS.

Delegations statement (continued from page 3)

The extended cabinet of both Northern Illinois and Wisconsin conferences had the forethought and gathered in Sun Prairie, Wis., for a half-day retreat on September 13 to meet one another, share ideas, and contemplate how the two conferences might become one episcopal area.

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung of the Wisconsin Conference emphasized that this would be one bishop serving two conferences – not a merger.

"There is amazing life-giving work that we are doing in the Northern Illinois and Wisconsin conferences," Bishop Jung said. "We have lots of common threads. We hope that God will bless us during this time of exploration."

"I'm encouraged that leaders from our neighboring conferences are looking toward a shared bishop in the future," said interim Bishop John L. Hopkins of the Northern Illinois Conference. "Building relationships will open up possibilities we cannot yet imagine."

The Episcopacy Committee also recommends the NCJ form a Task Force to study the "role of the episcopal in the NCJ" to imagine ways to make sharing episcopal leadership manageable, sustainable, and fruitful. The Task

Force's findings and proposals will be brought to the 2024 session of the NCJ.

Full statement from the delegations:

"As we all know, the United Methodist Church faces unique challenges in how it will best continue to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. This includes declining church membership and the reduction in the size of annual conferences due to church closures.

This shift in reality challenges annual conferences to be creative in how we maximize the impact of our resources. We must continue to be good stewards of the apportionments, offerings, and financial gifts entrusted to our care.

In accordance with that, and as suggested by the North Central Jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy, the Northern Illinois conference and Wisconsin conference delegations stand to make this statement:

- We have enough in common that a shared episcopal leader would allow both our conferences to be fiscally

responsible without hindering the goals of our ministries.

- Our conference leadership teams have begun conversations and will continue to do the work of exploring the possibility of becoming one episcopal area.
- The two extended cabinets and our delegations have also had meetings.

Going forward, in consultation with our newly appointed Episcopal leaders, we envision:

- Our conference treasurers to converse,
- Our trustees to meet, and the two committees on episcopacy to confer with one another.
- We encourage and invite all Wisconsin and Northern Illinois conference members to prayerfully consider the benefits and possibility of sharing a bishop. We will ask this body to support a motion at the 2024 Jurisdictional Conference to make WI/NIL one episcopal area."

*Wink is the director of communications with the Wisconsin Conference.





Farewell from your editor

By Anne Marie Gerhardt

As I look back to April 2011 and my first day on the job as the new NIC Director of Communications,

my first introduction was to the monthly print Reporter and the process of publishing it.

I remember looking over former NIC Media Resource Director Susan Gieseler's shoulder as she made edits to the final proof to be sent off to UMR Communications in Dallas to be printed. This would be my first task and now my last assignment.

Eleven and half years later, I'm turning in my NIC "press credentials" and starting a new chapter at a non-profit trades association as a communications manager.

Through the years as the NIC's roaming reporter, I've covered lots of conference news, events and happenings under three bishops (close to four), publishing more than 100 issues of the Reporter and dozens of online articles.

When UMR Communications stopped the presses in May 2013, ending a publication covering Methodism since 1847, we scrambled to find a new printer. Without missing a deadline, we kept a NIC Reporter edition rolling. I'm proud the Reporter has won several awards, including first place in the newspaper category at the 2022 United Methodist

Association of Communicators Awards Ceremony.

The Reporter wouldn't be possible without Natalie Rowe's dependable assistance, whose graphic design skills have brought a fresh look to the paper over the last nine years. Thank you, Natalie!

I enjoyed evolving with the ever-changing digital and social media platforms and increasing the Conference's presence firstly on Facebook. I remember celebrating and posting the NIC's 1,000th "like" on our timeline. Today, we have hundreds more followers on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. We've played with Snapchat filters, and I've watched pastors gain followers on TikTok. Now, reels and stories are the attention-grabbers.

I helped roll out two major website redesigns and increased our video presence on YouTube and Vimeo, which became critical during the pandemic. Pastors became like TV producers overnight and Zoom became a household word. Who would have thought we would be participating in Annual Conference and Ordination services from the comfort of our homes or conducting business in our pajamas?

Moving out of my office at the Chicago Temple, I packed up my saved name badges from each General and Jurisdictional Conference I covered from Tampa, Portland,

St. Louis, Akron, Peoria and Fort Wayne. I reflected on the challenging times and reasons to celebrate the church I love.

I am grateful for the UM Association of Communicators and my time on the leadership board. Our annual meetings took me to Albuquerque, Washington D.C., Savannah, New Orleans, and Portland for times of learning, collaborating and fellowship. We also hosted a meeting in Chicago showcasing local ministries. UM Communications continues to provide dynamic resources, and I encourage local churches to take advantage of them at ResourceUMC.org.

I will miss telling the faithful, unique stories of churches, laity, and clergy making a difference in their communities across the Northern Illinois Conference. I've traveled the Conference from urban to rural areas and continue to be inspired by the many congregations who continue to be in ministry to reach new people in new ways.

While a lot has changed in church communications, our mission remains the same: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world! I hope churches will continue to tell their story in whatever format, whether here in the Reporter, on your website, on social media, livestreaming, or the next exciting trend. See you in the Metaverse?



Demetra Kidd

Company in various roles both within Treasury Management and Asset Management. Her most recent role was a Vice President, Senior Consultant on the Client Administration team within Asset Management whereby

UM Foundation welcomes new staff member

Please help us welcome Demetra Kidd to the Northern Illinois Conference United Methodist Foundation staff as the Client Relations Associate. She officially started on October 17, 2022.

Demetra joins the Foundation after a successful twenty (24) year career with the Northern Trust

she was responsible for ensuring that all the Institutional clients were onboarded and tested successfully within the (BPM) Business Process Management System.

"Demetra brings to the Foundation tons of experience in the business world," said Rev. Chris Walters, Foundation President & CEO. "She is learning the various systems employed by the Foundation, and then Demetra will grow into the new role of expanding client relationships with Foundation ministry partners and service providers to benefit local churches and other clients of the Foundation. She brings a deep commitment to the local church and the mission of spreading the Good News of Christ!"

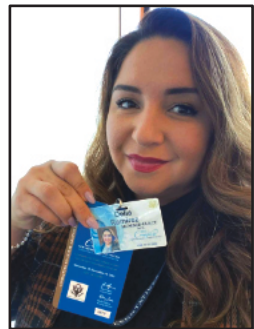
She attended Langston University in Oklahoma where she

obtained a degree in Business Administration. After graduating, she worked as the Office Administrator for the City of Tulsa Fire Marshal's office for six years.

Demetra is a member of New Life Covenant Church. She enjoys teaching, reading and volunteering within her community.

She has two adult children: Khadijah and Marcus Kidd along with a four year old grand-daughter Ameera.

You can reach her by phone at (312) 803-4801 or email at dkidd@umfinc.org. Please note the UM Foundation's new address is 155 North Wacker Drive, Suite 4250, Chicago, IL 60606.



Delia Ramirez shows off her new congressional credentials, one of the youngest in Congress and the first Latina to represent Illinois. Photo courtesy of Delia Ramirez.

representative of Illinois' 4th House District. However, Delia is more significantly known for her leadership and testimony of faith and service in The United Methodist Church.

Born in the city of Chicago, Delia is the daughter of María Elvira Ramírez Guerra and Luis Antonio Ramírez, who emigrated from Guatemala and have dedicated their lives to serving their community and church, according to Delia. In 2021 she married Boris Hernández, who accompanies and supports her political career serving the communities she represents.

"Since I was three months old, I got to know the United Methodist Church in Humboldt Park - an area where a large Puerto Rican community traditionally lived," said Delia who lived above the church in an apartment with her family. "In this church, my parents have shown my siblings and me that being a Christian is much more than words and, certainly, much more than participating on Sundays. Being a Christian is a way of living, a way of treating people, and showing God's light through our actions."

Delia Ramirez becomes first Midwest Latina congresswoman

By Rev. Gustavo Vasquez*

Delia Ramirez became the first United Methodist of Latino origin to reach the United States Congress on November 8, 2022. She won Illinois' newly redrawn 3rd Congressional District, making her the first Latina elected to Congress from Illinois and the first Guatemalan-American to achieve a position of this level in U.S. political history. Also, she is one of the youngest representatives in Congress. Since 2018, she's served as the state

The church as a school of vocation and inspiration

Delia recognizes the church is where she found her calling and developed the abilities and talents she received from God to serve others. Currently, as a leader in U.S. politics at the congressional level, she recognizes that the seeds that the church's teachings planted in her have borne prosperous fruit for the benefit of many poor people and needy families in the city of Chicago.

She became the executive director of what would become the Center for Changing Lives to provide job training and placement, housing assistance, and financial coaching to the Logan Square neighborhood. At the conference level, she served on the Hispanic/Latinx Ministry Team and NIJFON Board of Directors. She also volunteered with MARCHA, the Hispanic-Latino caucus of The United Methodist Church, and served as a chaperone on the youth Plumline Tour in New York City.

In her tenure as a state representative, Delia has excelled in proposing laws that have benefited the most impoverished sectors of the city of Chicago.

"In the church, I was formed in the faith, there I found the call to serve my community, there I developed as a leader and learned how to lead my life as a Christian," said Delia. "Humboldt Park UMC has been a beacon for me, a fortress. That church founded a home for homeless people in the 80s. Perhaps because of their humility, God called that small congregation to serve thousands of people".

At barely 27 years old, Delia became a member of the Executive Committee of the National Plan for the Development of the Hispanic-Latino Ministry thanks to the efforts and organized work of the youth of MARCHA.

"These experiences were a school for me on how to relate, how to find common ground, how to build coalitions, which allow the church to be a force that advocates for all those in

need, based on love of neighbor, without differences," Delia said.

Moved by her convictions of faith, the training she has received from her family and her church, her vocation to serve has led her to accept entering the political arena, convinced that it is a real way of doing more for people and of generating changes that help to transform the world as stated in the mission principles of the church.

A message to United Methodists

"A message that I want to leave to my beloved church is that we stop talking about the church, let's focus rather on being a church," said Delia. "Let's be a church supporting people when they are victims of injustice, let's demand that political representatives fulfill their responsibilities. I invite you to help fulfill the mission of transforming the world not only through words but with our actions."

Watch and read a digital report on Delia in Spanish at umnews.org/es/.

*Rev. Gustavo Vasquez is the Hispanic/Latino Director of United Methodist News.



Delia Ramirez (left) helps lead a conference gathering and learning day on immigration April 22, 2017 at Our Saviour's UMC in Schaumburg.



Jack Wilson from the Michigan Conference helps repair a roof damaged by Hurricane Ian in Florida.

An eye-opening first experience helping hurricane victims

By Jack Wilson*

As a recently certified ERT (Early Response Team), I got the opportunity to join a group from the Northern Illinois Conference to help with the cleanup from Hurricane Ian in Port Charlotte, Fla. I worked alongside members from First UMC in Morris and Kingswood UMC in Buffalo Grove. Even though I have participated on several mission trips abroad and

through our mission team at the First United Methodist Church of Northville, Mich., what I was about to witness up close was devastating and heartbreaking.

Seeing the destruction of a Category 4 hurricane up close is not like seeing it on YouTube or TV. Debris lined the streets everywhere with twisted metal roofs and siding, drywall, cabinets, insulation, appliances, and furniture piled high. We saw trees uprooted randomly while the ones still standing were tilted from the wind's powerful directional force. In some areas, it reminded me of snow drifts up north, piled as high as 6 feet and as long as the property allowed.

Over one million homes were affected, many with significant flood damage and/or wind and water damage. Besides all of the damage and destruction we saw, those who lived in these homes were uprooted from their normal lives. Their personal items were strewn along the streets and they were unable to live normally due to lack of so many amenities. It will never be the same for any of them. Once we had conversations with them, we learned that some would be unable to rebuild because of the costs involved. Some would be leaving the area and never coming back, for the risk far exceeded the benefit of living there. They had formed a community of friends, and it seemed like that community was already fracturing. Could they get back to what it was like before the hurricane?

The Port Charlotte United Methodist Church hosted our group and gave us a place to sleep, a kitchen to cook in and a shower trailer for daily use. It worked well for us, but I questioned why the church would bring us in when they had their own significant issues caused by Hurricane Ian. The sanctuary's roof was severely damaged, making it

unusable and it could take 1-2 years to rebuild. Additional water-damaged areas forced them to constantly move church functions into suitable spaces, including Sunday services. The staff worked hard making those changes, but you knew they were struggling from the additional tasks Ian had put on their shoulders.

Our morning started early on the first day as we drove out to a home that experienced over three feet of water in the house. It's incredible how mold can grow so quickly: drywall, insulation, cabinets, and even flooring needed to be removed. The pile of construction debris on the side of the street grew wider and longer. Three generations, including a daughter and her son, lived there. They stayed in their home during the hurricane and evacuated in a boat due to the flood water. Their story of the pounding wind and torrential rain was unthinkable. We spent the entire day removing drywall and cabinets, repositioning sinks on frames, and installing plastic material for privacy and water protection in the bathrooms. Last, we made sure the appliances worked before we left. When we said our goodbyes, the mom requested a picture of us with her. Then came a constant flow of appreciation for each of us from the entire family.

For the next few days, we worked on various mobile homes, tarping roofs and removing flooring, drywall and insulation, taking it to the side of the road. Furniture and personal items were already out on the street except for small appliance items and kitchen dishes left by the homeowner for any of her neighbors to take. The homeowner made it very clear to us that she was done living in Florida and was moving up north with her children. We continued working at her home for a few days and met some of the neighbors who came over to share their appreciation of all we were doing.

Most homeowners we worked with were retirees living off their nest eggs with fixed incomes and, in most cases, uninsured. Flood insurance is even more expensive if you could get it.

Our duty was to make their home safe to live in and put some order back into their lives without them having to pay for it. Some had families helping them make

decisions, coordinating living quarters and contacting FEMA, but so many others did not. Unless you have gone through a hurricane before, it can be extremely confusing and frustrating. They needed an on-site advocate to help them sift through the process of gaining access to work crews, temporary shelter and funds available through FEMA. Most of all, they needed help in communicating their actual needs. Our group leader, NIC Disaster Response Interested in ERT? Contact NIC's Disaster Response Coordinators at monks5@comcast.net. Coordinator Colin Monk did an exceptional job listening to individuals and giving them information about the process of our mission of assessing the damage.

Our ERT deployment in Port Charlotte was not only about the work that needed to be done but the connections we made with our team members and the homeowners. It's hard to look for God when you are surrounded by such devastation. Perhaps, God brought us not just to help with tasks but help instill some hope in people's lives.

My first deployment with an Early Response Team was a great experience. It brought fellowship and the message of Jesus Christ to those who needed it most at such a difficult time.

I am grateful for our leader and all the individuals I worked with during the week. Not only did we bring some hope to those in need, but we also strengthened our own hope. We made a difference, and because of that, I will be back for more.

Interested in ERT? Email monks5@comcast.net.

*Jack Wilson is a member of First UMC of Northville, Michigan.



A nine member ERT team led by the NIC Disaster Response Coordinator takes a break after helping homeowners in Port Charlotte, Fla., from Nov. 10-19.

Conference-wide service brings song, praise and conversation

By Amania Drane, NIC Project Manager/Implementation Consultant



The choir from Journey of Hope in Elgin sang "The Church is an Ark" during the conference-wide worship service held at their church.

What a joy it is to be in the house of the Lord to hear the Word and sing songs of praise to God. For the second year, the NIC Discipleship Task Force held a fall conference-wide worship service on Nov. 13. This year's service was held at Journey of Hope UMC in Elgin. The service was also available via livestream.

Rev. P. Devon Brown of St. Mark UMC (Chicago) and Rev. Heewon Kim of Evans UMC & Harlem UMCs (Rockford) and New Life UMC (Machesney Park) led the worship service planning.

Rev. Dr. Mai-Anh Le Tran, VP for Academic Affairs and Academic Dean and Associate Professor of Religious Education and Practical Theology at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, was the preacher. She delivered an inspiring call-to-action message on what the church should be as a "redemptive community that is unafraid of the life-changing challenges and life-giving possibilities of skin-to-skin contact with those who are profoundly other to us." Her message

was clear that for the church to thrive, it must have an "unshakable vision that the suffering and brokenness of this world is repairable, redeemable, and changeable."

Garrett-Evangelical is a United Methodist seminary in Evanston, Ill. Participants gathered for a reception following the worship service and joined in conversation about ways in which the NIC and Garrett-Evangelical can continue to work together in ministry and mission, and theological training and advocacy work.

The Discipleship Task Force work includes Intentional Discipleship System coaching, an NIC Prayer Team, an NIC Book Club (currently reading the late Rev. Junius Dotson's book, *Soul Reset*), Youth Leader Support, and other discipleship-supporting events and resources. If you are interested in growing and/or working in any of these areas, we invite you to contact us at discipleshiptf@umcnic.org.

To watch a video recording, visit vimeo.com/770929382.



Leading the Laity



Thank you Bishop Hopkins from the Board of Laity

By Connie Augsburger, NIC Co-Lay Leader

“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, value others above yourselves.” Philippians 2:3 NIV

“Choose some wise, understanding and respected men from each of your tribes and I will set them over you.” Deuteronomy 1:13 NIV

I was honored to introduce Bishop Hopkins to our online audience attending the 2021 Laity Convocation. Although I didn't know him well then, I was already struck by how he embodied these words of scripture.

In mid-2020, when it seemed like the entire world was in chaos, Bishop Hopkins was comfortably retired in his Indiana home, with no need to venture far or travel while the virus was in charge. He nevertheless answered a call to service – he agreed to step out and step up – to serve our Conference as interim bishop following the retirement of Bishop Sally Dyck.

Our interim bishop arrived in the nick of time – and he brought with him many gifts: patience; practicality; compassion; realism; experience; perspective; personal warmth; a lively sense of humor; a desire to communicate; and a passion for our Lord. We learned early that his warmth and compassion could transcend electronic communication. His natural enthusiasm was irresistible, and his warmth was undeniable.

Bishop Hopkins agreed to be our spiritual leader for our denomination and our country at a difficult time. That he stands firmly on the ground and thinks before he speaks has served him and us well. We needed a leader who was both strong and loving, a teacher who was both creative and rational, and a pastor who was both inspired by faith and grounded in scripture.

Bishop Hopkins did not so much as “take charge” as take stock. He did not accept the interim appointment for personal glory – over the course of his long and varied career; he's earned accolades to spare. He did not take the position to impose a personal agenda or draw lines of division. Neither did he agree to be our interim to serve as a placeholder or to merely mark time.

Instead, Bishop Hopkins embarked on an interesting and challenging journey to keep our Conference headed toward perfection. He came at a particularly fractious time in our denomination's history and during a worldwide health emergency that necessitated huge and traumatic changes in our daily lives and upset the very way we “do church.”

He encountered a warm yet wayward community of believers who are trying hard to manage our local churches and conference administration financially as nationwide trends of shrinking church attendance and giving, coupled with rising prices and inflation, force Christians everywhere to make difficult choices in church closings, staff reductions and the downsizing or even elimination of programs and events.

Instead of pushing a panic button or sounding a strident alarm, Bishop Hopkins offered steady and calm counsel; he noted our gifts and did not deny our problems. He described our situation with neutrality and suggested approaches we might never have thought of or considered. He never judged, and he did not blame. He did not insist on his way; rather, like a father, he guided us in a positive direction and counted on our impetuosity and energy to provide the winds to fill our sails. Bishop Hopkins' job here was not to rock our boat but to try his darnedest to see we didn't all fall out of it!

We offer these words of thanks to a humble servant who does not seek them yet deserves them. Bishop John Hopkins: we are grateful you agreed to come out of retirement (a second time, no less!) to be our interim Bishop 2020-2022. We imagine that serving the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church as our bishop these past two-plus years has been a challenge – we hope it was also a joy!



Educate to advocate: Walk a mile in their shoes

September 15, 2023, will mark the 60th anniversary of the bombing of 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., which killed four young Black girls. That church is just one of the places we will visit on the NIC 2023 Civil Rights Pilgrimage from April 26 – May 1.

We will visit important sites in the struggle for civil rights in Nashville, Birmingham, Montgomery, Selma, and Memphis. This is not a sightseeing tour. It is a historical and educational tour designed with intent and discernment to help journey-goers take action against racism. Seating is limited and will be first come, first served. Each day will include a debriefing session. The expectation is that participants will educate and advocate in their churches and communities. Advocacy training sessions will be conducted.

The NIC Anti-Racism Task Force is seeking grants to help fund a portion of the cost of the trip. Look for additional information at umcnic.org/calendar/civil-rights-pilgrimage.



January 2023 Events



Winter Mission U 2023

January 8 and 29

All are Welcome!

Register: on or before - January 4 (discount for early registration by December 15)

Cost: \$35 (early - \$25) Checks payable to NIC-UMW (legally still: United Methodist Women)

Scholarships:

Available - Contact Your District President

Register online:

winter-mission-u.cheddarup.com

Register by mail:

Betty Erickson, 39W265 Osage Dr., St. Charles, IL 60175

Register by email:

NILUMW.registrar@gmail.com.

Find the form and more info. on classes and schedules at umwnic.org.



Human Relations Sunday

January 15

United Methodists celebrate Human Relations Day on the Sunday before the U.S. observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday to recognize his vision of “the beloved community.”

Join other UMC congregations in this special offering to support neighborhood ministries through Community Developers, United Methodist Voluntary Services and Youth Offender Rehabilitation Programs.

Give through your local church or donate online at UMC.org/SSGive. Make checks payable to your local church and write “Human Relations Day offering” in the memo line.

Save the Date: District Leadership Training Events

Jan 21

Prairie South:
Dixon: First

Jan 28

Prairie North:
Freeport: Faith

Jan 28

Lake North:
Buffalo Grove: Kingswood

Feb 4

Prairie Central
Wheaton: Gary Memorial

TBD

Lake South



For times and details, visit umcnic.org/calendar.



LAITY CONVOCATION 2023



Thinking Outside the Church

Making Community Ministry Happen

SAVE THE DATE: FEBRUARY 11, 2023

umcnic.org/calendar/laity-convocation-2023



Thank you for making wishes come true



In their 128th year, Kids Above All's mission continues to help children, youth and families build better lives to reach their potential in life. Their Holiday Gift Drive is looking to be a wonderful success because of the generosity of so many local churches, the United Women in Faith, agencies, and many individuals who stepped up for their kids.

“We are blessed to have the support and friendship of all are mission partners who embrace and practice the mission of the United Methodist Church, on which Kids Above All was also founded,” said Catherine Inserra, Deaconess and Manager of Faith & Community Relations. “Thank you again for partnering with us as we strive to improve the lives of the children, youth and families in our care.”

Kids Above All wishes everyone a Merry Christmas and blessed New Year.





DYK DID YOU KNOW?

Reflecting on change

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



Staff from the NIC say goodbye to the Chicago Temple before moving to a new location about a mile northeast on Wacker Drive.

At the end of October, on our last day in the Northern Illinois Conference offices at the Chicago: Temple, while packing boxes and sorting through years of materials, I found the memories of that space bubbling up and sat down to capture a few of those images. This month's article is my reflection at that moment of change.

So many clergy, laity and staff have come and gone through the doors of the Chicago: Temple, where the conference has had a presence in one form or another over the 99 years this building has stood. Newly ordained pastors, confirmation classes, youth groups, lay leaders, missionaries, and even cabinets have used this space. Bishops have led from here. More bishops have roamed these halls than I can name. In the early days, annual conference sessions were held in the Temple sanctuary.

I remember my excitement as a young clergy the first time I was invited to the conference office for a meeting. I was awed by the sanctuary's beauty, stained-glass windows and the church's history. Rev. Charles Chacour, the first treasurer I knew, was a gregarious man who would tell visitors stories of how our church funds were changing the world. He would show off the big walk-in safe where church donations were kept. (No electronic money transfers in those days.)

During my first appointment, I recruited my mother (a non-United Methodist) to drive around the block while I ran my church's final apportionment check up to the


conference office to be sure we paid 100% before the deadline. The staff was waiting, cheering on those who came in with their hand-delivered contributions.

I never dreamed I would have the honor of working in this building for 15 years. It has been more than an office space; it has been a place of mission, witness and community. On any given day, in the elevator, you could bump into a Methodist from around the world who took time out while in Chicago to visit this iconic church building. We've hosted press conferences, international exhibitions, and witnessed demonstrations in Daly Plaza, sometimes joining in. We celebrated in the streets when Chicago sports teams brought home their trophies. I've heard the drumbeat of marchers around city hall and the sirens when demonstrations got out of hand.

We've been a window on the world from our vantage point, kitty-corner from city hall, next to the county building and the courts. The Chicago: Temple is the church on the corner – and the Northern Illinois Conference has been a partner in the work of seeing Christ in the city.

Next week we will be at 303 E. Wacker. A new day, a new place with new opportunities. Today I remember, celebrate and shed a tear for what has been. Tomorrow, we start all over again.

~Written October 26, 2022



*In the highest heaven, glory to God!
And on earth,
peace among people of good will!*
- Luke 2:14 CEB

Wishing everyone a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year
~From Bishop John L. Hopkins, the Cabinet & the NIC staff

Ghosts (continued from page 4)

public speaking and not being afraid of being up in front of people. It definitely helped me a lot."

Her mother, Joyce Carrasco, said that Sheila would sing along to records as a child, and when she got older she began writing scripts for her siblings to perform. Sheila started performing publicly very young, said Joyce. She starred in "Annie" twice in community theater productions and also in a production of "Oliver!"

"I remember very distinctly when Sheila was in the middle-school theater program, a secretary at the school came and told me that I had a phone call," said Joyce, who worked at the school. "It was a casting agent in Chicago that had seen Sheila ... and they were interested in representing her to be in 'The Untouchables.' I had to step away from the phone to get a breath."

Sheila would earn her first professional acting credit (except for commercials) as a guest star on two episodes of the short-lived 1993-94 "Untouchables" television series. She studied at New York University and Harvard and staged a one-woman show called "Anyone But Me" last year at the Pico Playhouse in Los Angeles. She has guest starred on many television series, including "Life in Pieces," "Jane the Virgin," "The Good Place" and "American Housewife." She landed industry powerhouse Creative Artists Agency to represent her, and ultimately the role on "Ghosts."

A native of Curacautín, Chile, the Rev. Oscar Carrasco retired after serving several churches and eight years as the superintendent of the Elgin District in the Northern Illinois Conference. He had hopes that Sheila would

become a doctor.

"Each one of our children were gifted, in my view, and we did not know exactly what the gifts were," said the Rev. Carrasco. "One of the things I mentioned to them when they were very little, was that I wanted them to be happy in life."

When Sheila declared that she wanted the life of an artist, he had to keep his word. "Well, I have to be true to what I said," he said. "What I love about what she's doing now is that she is a happy person. Now, I have a sense of peace in my heart, and a happiness that I did not push her to be something that I wanted her to become. It's all about how good God has been, and I'm grateful."

*Patterson is a UM News reporter in Nashville, Tennessee. Contact him at 615-742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org.

Job Openings

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

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

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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