

# The Northern Illinois Conference OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Reporter

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## Welcoming Bishop Schwerin to the Northern Illinois Conference



The 2023 Cabinet with Bishop Schwerin having a welcome lunch.



Bishop Dan Schwerin and spouse Julie

Bishop Dan Schwerin's first day serving as episcopal leader in the Northern Illinois Annual Conference was January 3. Bishop Schwerin grew up just north of us in Wisconsin, where he heard his call at Concord UMC, in the small town of Sullivan, near Waukesha. Prior to his election, he served in the Wisconsin Annual Conference office as Assistant to the Bishop.

Bishop Schwerin shares deep gratitude for the baptism that sustains our call forward. When he first learned he would be appointed to the Northern Illinois Conference, he remarked "I look forward to learning about your ministry and hearing about how you are transforming the communities God has given you to love. I look forward to this next season to get to know you and for us to be in ministry together."

For 35 years, Bishop Schwerin (rhymes with tangerine) has served in many ministry contexts, including urban and rural churches, a new church plant, and a multi-staff downtown setting that became a reconciling congregation. He loves the local church and looks forward to working together with the leadership of the laity and clergy colleagues in the ministry of the baptized. He believes we are all witnesses, bringing gifts to the body of Christ, and that we need each other to help make Christ known. During his daily scripture and

prayer time, he has been praying for our lives of discipleship, ministry vitality, and the shared ministry of justice and mercy.

Bishop Schwerin's first few weeks in the office have been full. After the first few days in Chicago, he met with the cabinet at their annual retreat. The cabinet used this time to build relationships, sharing about our conference, start discussions about appointment setting, and learn from one another as they develop best practices for Cabinet life and work. The next week, he was off to meet with all the newly assigned bishops. The bishops will learn about the role they play in the connectional church, their responsibilities in legal matters, and best practices for staying balanced in the work. This time will be followed by the North Central Jurisdictional College of Bishops meeting. This gathering includes the serving and retired bishops of the NCJ who meet twice a year for coordination of our ministries.

In February, Bishop Schwerin's time is no less busy. The District Superintendents have planned the Bishop's Days on the District which will provide time for introductions, reflection, and conversation in each of our 5 districts. (see below for specific dates and times) These events will provide an opportunity to get to know Bishop Schwerin as he begins serving, as well as for him to get to know our

people and districts.

There will be separate meetings with clergy and laity for these conversations. Clergy will assemble starting at 9:30 am with fellowship, worship, bible study, and dialogue together. Their time will conclude with breaking bread together in the sharing of lunch. During the afternoon, the District Superintendents will give the Bishop a brief tour of their areas. The day will end with a laity gathering, including an evening conversation.

You are encouraged to join in the gathering for your district, but should the one planned for your district not work for you, any gathering can be attended. Bishop Schwerin looks forward to meeting as many brothers and sisters as possible as he travels through the different areas. Registration is not needed for the laity gathering.

Bishop Schwerin will also be sharing a message at the Laity Convocation on February 11 (Find out more details on page 7).

On Sunday, February 26, the Episcopacy Committee of the Northern Illinois Conference invites you to a Service of Installation for Bishop Schwerin at First United Methodist Church in Elgin. The service will start at 3:00 pm. It will be followed by a time of hospitality.

## BISHOP'S DAYS ON THE DISTRICT



Clergy will gather with their district for fellowship at 9:30 am with the program beginning at 10:00 am. Concluding with lunch. Laity will gather with their district for an evening conversation from 7:00 to 8:30 pm (unless otherwise noted).

For further details, visit [umcnic.org/calendar/bishops-days-on-the-district](http://umcnic.org/calendar/bishops-days-on-the-district).

- **Prairie North** - Wed., Feb. 8 - Clergy: Rockford UMC: Christ, Laity: Freeport: Harmony UMC (6:00 pm)
- **Prairie Central** - Thurs., Feb. 9 - Clergy: Naperville: Grace UMC, Laity: Elgin: Journey of Hope UMC
- **Lake North** - Mon., Feb. 13 - Clergy: Chicago: St. Matthew UMC, Laity: Glenview UMC
- **Prairie South** - Wed., Feb. 15 - Clergy and Laity: Sycamore UMC

- **Lake South** - Thurs., Feb. 16 - Clergy: Hinsdale UMC, Laity: Chicago: Morgan Park UMC

**Bishop Schwerin Installation**  
Sun., Feb. 26, 3:00 pm  
**Elgin: First UMC**, 216 E. Highland Ave., Elgin, IL  
For further details, visit [umcnic.org/calendar/bishop-schwerin-installation](http://umcnic.org/calendar/bishop-schwerin-installation)





From Your Bishop:

# Getting to know Bishop Dan Schwerin

Here are 10 things that will help you get to know our new Bishop:

- 1. Early Life** - Bishop Schwerin was born in Waukesha, Wisconsin. He came from a family of farmers on one side and machinists on the other. He grew up playing ball, working hard, and fishing often.
- 2. Family** - Bishop Schwerin is married to Julie. He is the father of two, Rachel Schwerin Kuschewski and Andrew Schwerin, as well as four grandchildren. Dan and Julie love evening walks and labyrinths.
- 3. Call to Ministry** - He heard a call to ministry when he was seventeen at the Concord UMC, a few miles from where a Methodist circuit-rider in his family cast a shadow with his witness a lifetime before him. The call to ministry happened when a retired pastor preached on the body of Christ and how he had seen it work across fifty years of his ministry.
- 4. Education** - Bishop Schwerin holds a bachelor's degree from Carroll University (1985), and a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) from Perkins School of Theology (1989). He received his first exposure to Bowen Family Systems Theory during the Perkins School of Theology Mentor Program (1992-1994).
- 5. Ordination** - While serving as a student pastor in the Oklahoma Conference, he was ordained as a deacon by Bishop John Wesley Hardt (1987). After beginning his service in the Wisconsin Conference, he was ordained as an elder by Bishop David Lawson (1991).
- 6. Ordained Ministry** - June 9th, 1985, was Bishop Schwerin's first Sunday in the pulpit, after having been appointed as a student pastor to Stephens United Methodist Church in Duncan, Oklahoma. Following seminary, in 1990, he was appointed to the Parfreyville UMC in Waupaca, Wisconsin. In 1996, he was appointed as the founding pastor of Still Waters United Methodist Church in Jackson, Wisconsin, where he stayed through the chartering of the congregation. He was appointed in Wisconsin as a District Superintendent of the Metro South District in 2002 and then appointed to serve both the Metro North and Metro South Districts from 2004-2007. Following his time as a District Superintendent, Bishop Schwerin was appointed to First UMC Waukesha, Wisconsin from 2007-2021. After the General Conference of 2019, Bishop Schwerin was asked by Bishop Jung to lead a collaborative effort with Wisconsin Conference partners for Bishop Jung's vision to increase racial justice and radical inclusion. He was appointed as the Assistant to the Bishop in the Wisconsin Conference in 2021.
- 7. General Conference Work** - Bishop Schwerin was elected in 2019 as a delegate to General Conference and the North Central Jurisdiction. He has served on the General Conference Task Force on Funding Patterns in The United Methodist Church. Bishop Schwerin served as a member of the North Central Jurisdiction's Episcopacy Committee.
- 8. Episcopal Mentors** - Bishop Schwerin is blessed with episcopal mentors. He has learned from three bishops - two women and one Korean male. Bishop Sharon Rader (Retired) taught him that it takes courage to do God's new thing. Sabbath-keeping and a life grounded in spiritual disciplines were learned from Bishop Linda Lee (Retired). Bishop Hee-Soo Jung (Wisconsin) has shown him the interdependent thinking required for the global church. Each mentor led with kindness in the face of challenge.
- 9. Poetry** - Bishop Schwerin starts each day with a psalm and Lectio Divina. He is a published poet and writes every morning. His debut poetry collection, ORS, from red moon press, won the Haiku Foundation's Touchstone Award in 2016.
- 10. Three decades** in ministry have taught him - what we pay attention to grows. Pay attention to relationships, and relationships grow. Pay attention to healthy dynamics, and groups get healthy. Pay attention to vision, and vision grows. Over the years, he has paid attention to ministry—and has seen ministry grow. Bishop Schwerin has served on three cabinets and paid attention to how three pioneering bishops expanded the episcopal office. "We have a once-in-a-generation chance to pay attention to the identity of the United Methodist movement going forward."



## 184th Northern Illinois Annual Conference Comes to the Table

By Briana Wadlington, NIC Events Coordinator

The 184th session of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference is set to take place June 6th – June 8th, 2023. The Conference will return to the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center at 1551 N. Thoreau Dr., Schaumburg, IL, again this year.

Continuing with the theme, "Connected in Christ," the 2023

theme is "Connected in Christ: Come to the Table," placing the focus on one of the core elements of our Christian faith – communion. Communion brings us into the real presence of Christ on a regular basis. As we join at the table, we are nourished so that we might bring Christ into the world, ultimately forming community, from baptism to the communion table. By participating in communion and becoming a community, we are called in ministry and mission. This theme allows us to go outside of the temporal issues of the world into a deeper theological reflection and ideology of God's grace offered to us while also calling us into action.

Rev. Arlene Christopherson reminds us that, "[The] Annual Conference is a central element of our life together in the United Methodist Church. It is in this gathering that we celebrate, worship, plan, and learn. Last year we stepped back into an in-person conference relearning what it means to gather together. We look forward to expanding our numbers, and our activities in 2023. This year will also be the first of many years that our session will be led by

Bishop Dan Schwerin. We look forward to growing in community under his leadership."

Ordination and Commissioning will be held on the evening of Tuesday, June 6th. The conference will honor those retiring on Wednesday morning, June 7th. We will be remembering those who passed in the past year during the memorial service on the morning of Thursday, June 8th.

The cost of this year's meeting is \$100 for early registrations before April 28 and will increase to \$125. Registration will close on Sunday, May 28. There will be NO on-site registration.

The committee is diligently working on the arrangements for childcare for this year, and details will be forthcoming. Clergy and lay members are encouraged to begin thinking of alternative plans for their children in case childcare will not be provided.

As we prepare to fellowship again, the Committee will continue to monitor all state and local health and safety guidelines on large gatherings.

Please look for updates and details in the coming months through the Conference eNews and website at [umcnic.org/AC2023](http://umcnic.org/AC2023).



### Annual Conference 2023 Details

#### Registration:

Early Bird (April 3 - 28) \$100/person  
April 29 - May 28: \$125/person  
**NO on-site Registration**

#### Services:

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

#### Important Dates:

- April 3 - Registration begins
- April 3 - Legislation and Historical Documents due, full instructions at [umcnic.org/AC2023](http://umcnic.org/AC2023)
- May 2 - Submission of names and photos of AC lay members who have passed since July 2022 due. Send to [communications@umcnic.org](mailto:communications@umcnic.org)
- May 5 - Legislation and Documents posted online
- May 8 - Video and Media presentations due. Send to [ACMedia@umcnic.org](mailto:ACMedia@umcnic.org)

More details at [umcnic.org/AC2023](http://umcnic.org/AC2023)



## Statistics help answer how churches are doing

It's the time of year for local churches to enter their statistical tables from the previous year. Church statistics not only help answer the question of "How are we doing right now?" but also, "How are we doing in the long run?" A church's leadership can review this data to interpret underlying meanings and help the congregation assess the story being told. Not only is it a way to understand how you are doing, it is also important to report these numbers so that our Annual Conference and

Jurisdiction have an accurate understanding of how active we are. On a more local level, our cabinets use these statistics to identify churches enjoying extraordinary success in a certain aspect of ministry, as well as identify resources to help others build-up their ministry.

The NIC office also uses the statistics to calculate apportionments for your church, so it's very important that we have accurate, up-

to-date information. This way your apportionments accurately reflect your church's ability to contribute to the conference's connection.

2022 statistics can be entered at [umctables.org](http://umctables.org). The deadline is February 28, 2023. For resources and more information, visit [umcnic.org/statisticalreporting](http://umcnic.org/statisticalreporting). If you have questions, contact David Quinn at [dquinn@umcnic.org](mailto:dquinn@umcnic.org).

# Bishop announces two new Conference Leadership Appointments



Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer, Director of Connectional Ministries (DCM)

Bishop Dan Schwerin is pleased to announce two appointments, effective July 1, 2023. Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer to the role of Director of Connectional Ministries (DCM), and Rev. Arlene Christopherson to the role of Assistant to the Bishop.

Rev. Grandon-Mayer currently serves as the District Superintendent for the Prairie North District. Bishop Schwerin observed that “With the enormous potential to develop our Northern Illinois Conference capacity and impact, it is time to conceive of a strategic appointment to pick up the work of a full-time Director of Connectional Ministers with a special emphasis in developing conference leadership”.

“In addition to her organizational capacity and proven gifts in planning and development. Rev. Grandon-Mayer brings skill and experience that will help us as we continue to develop our Hispanic leadership, furthering our strategic goal of congregational vitality. I have been impressed with Fabiola’s leadership and am looking forward to the ways she will advance God’s kin-dom for the work of the church,” the bishop added.

“The last four years as Rockford/Prairie North District Superintendent has strengthened my appreciation for the variety of contexts where we serve the Lord, and I have grown in my understanding that every context (rural, suburban, and urban), and every church (big, mid-size,

small) are very important in our mission as a Conference. I give thanks to every clergy and laity of the Prairie North District who welcomed and accepted me as their Superintendent for the last four years. I’m looking forward to continuing the work that has been done so far and to look for new ways to strengthen the variety of ministries and programs in our conference” said Rev. Grandon-Mayer.

Rev. Arlene Christopherson currently serves in the role of Director of Connectional Ministries and Assistant to the Bishop. In 2016, when the roles of Director of Connectional Ministries and Assistant to the Bishop were combined, Rev. Christopherson was to serve as a bridge while a taskforce re-visioned program staffing. During that time, attention soon turned to the launch of the Annual Conference Shepherding Team in 2017 and the Conference Strategic Goals in 2019. With the retirement of Bishop Dyck and the onset of COVID this work was never pursued.

In returning to a full-time Assistant to the Bishop, Bishop Schwerin said “I am aware of all the ways an Assistant to the Bishop maintains the integrity of the episcopal office through their work. The assistant gives oversight to training new District Superintendents and, in this case, the new DCM. Rev. Christopherson has done the work of two people for a long time and for that we are grateful.”

“In her full-time position as Assistant to the Bishop, Arlene will continue to provide oversight for the disaffiliation discernment work in our conference and she will coordinate collaborative conversations related to the possibility of sharing an episcopal leader in 2024. She also works with clergy immigration, clergy recruitment, research into matters of church law, and the support of our Board of Ordained Ministry, among other important tasks for the good of the conference,” Bishop Schwerin added.

“I am grateful for the trust Bishop Schwerin has put in my leadership and skills. I will miss working closely with laity and clergy giving leadership in the program area of our conference. I look forward to diving more deeply into the work of Assistant to the Bishop as we position the NIC for the future. During my years in this combined role there has been much I could not address in either position. I am excited to work alongside Bishop Schwerin as our Episcopal leader and Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer as Director of Connectional Ministries. This new opportunity will allow for more intentionality in both positions,” said Rev. Christopherson.

An opportunity for saying “thank you” to Rev. Grandon-Mayer for her service as a District Superintendent of the Prairie North District will be publicized when details are made available.



Rev. Arlene Christopherson, Assistant to the Bishop



As humanity’s understanding and discussion of the concepts of race, racism, and antiracism have evolved over generations, so have the words and phrases we use as we continue the work of obeying God and advancing racial justice.

In this “What Is?” series, the General Commission on Religion and Race offers this compilation of concise definitions, examples, and Biblical/theological foundations to create common vocabulary for Christians as we engage in anti-racism work.

### What is Beloved Community?

Philosopher-theologian Josiah Royce first conceived the Beloved Community concept; later, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr popularized it during the Civil Rights Movement. Dr. King envisioned that the Beloved Community to be a global movement where the agape love of God would be the driving force to redemption and reconciliation and a place where all people can share in the abundance of wealth in the world. In the Beloved Community, all forms of discrimination, bigotry, and dehumanization are eradicated and countered by a more inclusive, interdependent existence of people who live in non-violent

harmony with one another.

### Biblical/Spiritual/Theological Framing or References:

According to Dr. King, the foundation of a beloved community is God’s agape love. He explains that agape is the “overflowing love which is purely spontaneous, unmotivated, groundless, and creative... It is the love of God operating in the human heart” (A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches, 19. HarperOne, 1991). King’s challenge to personify agape love looks like living into Jesus’ countercultural sermon on the plain in Luke 6:20-38, where he directs us to love our enemies, do good, and show compassion. It is also an invitation to acknowledge the humanity of all people, including those who would cause harm and perpetuate the oppressive evil forces of isms that divide us. Not to excuse this behavior or even accept it but to actively work towards not becoming what we are fighting against.

### Example(s) of Beloved Community:

Many organizations embody the principles of Beloved Community and try to live into its concept and bring about its reality in our world. From interfaith to grassroots organizations, people work together to counter the

oppressive systems that place groups of people on the margins of our society. Some movements work towards manifesting a liberating existence where their work centers on the sanctity of life for all people.

One example is the Baltimore Peace Challenge (formerly, The Baltimore Ceasefire). The Baltimore Peace Challenge is a movement in Baltimore city that challenges the city to cease violence and murder specific weekends throughout the year. During these times, communities and organizations provide events and resources that counter the city’s narrative and reality of violence. They create sacred spaces that honor the lives lost throughout the city and challenge the community to embrace and live in the real possibilities of thriving together in peace.

The NIC offers workshops on Becoming the Beloved Community for your church or district, and there are openings for 2023. Please contact Dr. Richard Guzman at [rrguzman@comcast.net](mailto:rrguzman@comcast.net) if you are interested in hosting a workshop. Learn more about the workshops by visiting [umcnic.org/calendar/becoming-beloved-community](http://umcnic.org/calendar/becoming-beloved-community)

\* information adapted from the What is Series on the General Commission on Religion and Race site. More information can be found at [www.r2hub.org/what-is-series](http://www.r2hub.org/what-is-series)



## Congratulations Carolyn Cook! By Rev. Chris Walters, President UM Foundation

After 42½ years of dedicated service to the United Methodist Foundation of the Northern Illinois Conference, Executive Assistant Carolyn Cook retired at the end 2023.

Carolyn began her career with the Foundation and the Northern Illinois Conference in 1980, and then she transitioned to full-time employment with the Foundation in 1992. She

has played a vital role in the Foundation’s success over the years by working tirelessly to support our mission of “encouraging lifelong generosity with God’s abundance” and by advancing the work of so many churches in the Conference. We will greatly miss her contributions.

We are grateful for Carolyn’s hard work and

commitment, and we wish her all the best and God’s joy, peace, and manifold blessings in her retirement. We will always remember her as a valuable member of the team and a true asset to our organization.

The Foundation welcomed new staff member Demetra Kidd, Client Relations Associate, in mid-October.

◀ Carolyn Cook holds a plaque celebrating 40 years of service at the 70th anniversary celebration of the United Methodist Foundation in Downers Grove, October 2019.



## Creating safer and more welcoming spaces

One of the goals of the Northern Illinois Conference for 2022 was to ramp up our Safe Sanctuaries training and increase the number of

volunteers who have gone through this valuable course. Online training through Safe Gatherings is an ongoing tool for this training. In addition, eight Safe Sanctuaries Trainings were held in 2022 throughout the summer and fall to train over 1,850 lay and staff. This brings our number of trained leaders in the past 2 years to over 2,790! These leaders are Sunday school teachers, choir directors, youth leaders, mission trip chaperones, camp staff, clergy, and even church office staff and ushers. Eighty percent of our churches in the conference have at least one person trained.

Why is this so important? Training in Safe Sanctuaries is not a sign that our church volunteers are not to be trusted; instead, it is a witness to our commitment to provide safe spaces for ministries and programs with those who have little voice and are easily exploited. It is a witness that the church is providing trusted adults who can prevent abuse and sometimes identify those who have suffered abuse at the hands of another.

Training equips our leaders in identifying predatory behavior and provides tools for recognizing signs and symptoms in those who have been harmed. When we have leaders well-trained in prevention, we deter bad behaviors. When we model good practices, we help others learn as well.

"I am grateful for the commitment of our local churches to creating safe spaces." Rev. Arlene Christopherson, Assistant to the Bishop, shared. "The growth in trained leaders has been phenomenal. With 2,793 trained adults reported, our conference has a 2.1 ratio of children to volunteers. This work is never completed and I hope we will continue to give this focus a high priority."

Thank you for your commitment to protecting the vulnerable groups we serve.

If you have not yet been trained in Safe Sanctuaries practices and you work with children whether in the church, in your community, in a music or sports program, or any setting, please take action today. Visit our website at [umcnic.org/safesantuaries](http://umcnic.org/safesantuaries) and click on the link for Safe Gatherings to find a self-guided online course you can take at any time to equip yourself to be an even better guardian of our future.

**CONGRATULATIONS!** 143 churches in the Northern Illinois Conference have met the highest level of commitment to provide safe spaces for worship! To receive this recognition, an organization must have at least four percent of average weekly attendance trained. In addition, churches must have at least 3 people trained, and this applies to the smallest churches.

Albany	Des Plaines: First	Lake Bluff: Grace	Plano
Algonquin: Christ	Dixon: First	LaMoille: Community	Princeton: First
Antioch	Dixon: Grace	Lanark	Prophetstown
Arlington Heights: First	Dolton: Faith	Lansing: First	River Forest
Aurora: First Nueva Vida UMC	Downers Grove: First	LaSalle: Grace	Rock Falls
Aurora: Wesley	Elgin: Cornerstone	Libertyville	Rockford: Beth Eden
Barrington	Elgin: First	Lombard: Faith	Rockford: Centennial
Barrington: Salem	Elk Grove: Prince of Peace	Lombard: First	Rockford: Christ
Bartlett: Good Shepherd	Elmhurst: Faith Evangelical	Machesney Park: New Life	Rockford: Grace
Batavia	Elmhurst: First	Malta	Roscoe
Belvidere: First	Erie	Marengo	Roselle
Blue Island:	Esmond	Marseilles	Sandwich United
La Gracia de Dios NFC	Evanston: First	Maywood: Neighborhood	Savanna: First
Bolingbrook: Friendship	Evanston: Hemenway	Mendota: First	Schaumburg: Our Redeemer's
Buffalo Grove: Kingswood	Fox River Gove Community	Mendota: Zion	Schaumburg: Our Saviour's
Carol Stream St. Andrew	Frankfort	Milledgeville	Skokie Central
Cary	Franklin Grove	Minooka	South Elgin: Community
Channahon	Franklin Park: First UMC	Morris: First	Sterling: Wesley
Cherry Valley	Franklin Park: Living Waters	Morrison	Steward
Chicago: Amor de Dios UMC	Franklin Park:	Mount Morris: Disciples	Stockton: Wesley
Chicago: Englewood-Rust	Living Waters O'Hare NFC	Mount Prospect: Trinity	Sugar Grove
Chicago: First Temple	Freeport: First	Naperville: Community	Sycamore
Chicago: Hartzell Memorial	Freeport: Harmony	Naperville: Grace	Waukonda: Federated
Chicago: Humboldt Park	Galena	Naperville: Korean	WellSpring
Chicago: Indo Pak	Genoa: Faith	Naperville: Wesley	West Chicago: First
Chicago: Kelly Woodlawn	Glen Ellyn: First	Northbrook: Northbrook	West Dundee: First
Chicago: Morgan Park	Glenview	Oak Park: First	Wheatland Salem
Chicago: Olivet	Good Samaritan	Olympia Fields	Wheaton: Aldersgate
Chicago: Ravenswood	Grayslake: United	Orangeville	Wheaton: Gary
Fellowship	Protestant Church	Oregon	Wheeling: First Korean
Chicago: St. Matthew	Harvard: First	Oswego Wellspring	Wilmette: Trinity
Chicago: Trinity	Hinsdale	Oswego: Good Shepherd	Wilmington: First
Chicago: Urban Village	Hunter	Ottawa: Epworth	Winthrop Harbor: North
Chicago: Wesley	Ingleside	Paletine: First	Prairie
Crete	Joliet: Grace	Park Forest: Grace United	Woodridge
Crystal Lake: First	Joliet: Hope	Protestant	Yorkville: Trinity
Deerfield: Christ	Kaneville	Pecatonica	Zion: Memorial



## What welcoming looks like in a crisis

The buses from Texas started arriving in September. Without notification or coordination, Border State

governors sent busloads of immigrants and asylees to northern cities like Chicago. Within a couple of months, almost 5000 people had been sent to Illinois.

Chicago and Illinois officials, local advocacy and immigrant assistance groups, and social service agencies jumped into action to provide shelter and resources for these newly arrived people. United Methodist congregations across the Northern Illinois Conference mobilized to gather clothing, hygiene kits, and other items and channeled the gifts through frontline organizations like World Relief, ICIRR, Refugee One, The Resurrection

Project, and Rincon Family Services.

Churches in every District contributed in-kind and cash donations. As just one example, DeKalb First UMC put out an appeal to church members in late September and within a month gathered hygiene items, first aid items, and clothes, with an estimated value of over \$2,000. The Church delivered these to World Relief Chicago. The DeKalb church also designated its annual Christmas Offering during the month of December (over \$6,000) for immigrant and asylee needs to The Resurrection Project's Texas Immigrant Rapid Response Fund.

Sara Aardema, World Relief's Church Mobilization Director, sent a note recently:

*I wanted to drop you a note to say thank you so much for connecting with us at World Relief the past few months to join us in welcoming asylum seekers to our community.*

*We've had some great new connections with UMC churches thanks to your help in spreading the word about the needs over the past couple of months. We're very excited that*

*Glenview UMC is planning to welcome an asylum seeker family through our H.O.M.E. program in the new year! This is such a blessing to have a new church partner sponsor a family through this program.*

While new arrivals have temporarily slowed down, the ongoing crisis of thousands of people seeking refuge and asylum at our southern border means that the need for resources to welcome desperate individuals and families will be a continuing imperative. There are still thousands of people living in shelters and hotels. The State has taken over the day-to-day needs. ICIRR member organizations such as World Relief have been providing case management support.

It's not too late for individuals and NIC Churches to provide assistance for "welcoming the strangers in our midst." For more information visit [umcnic.org/ChicagoMigrants](http://umcnic.org/ChicagoMigrants) or contact Rev. Jonathan Crail, NIC Refugee Coordinator [jrcrail@firstumc.net](mailto:jrcrail@firstumc.net).

*migrant*  
**I was a stranger**  
**and you welcomed me.**

Matt. 25:35

*Jesus*

## Ways to continue to provide assistance

Donate in-kind items or cash donations to frontline organizations directly assisting the families.

- Casa Michoacan: [fedecmiusa.org](http://fedecmiusa.org)
- World Relief: [worldrelief.org/chicagoland/bus-response](http://worldrelief.org/chicagoland/bus-response)
- Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON): [nijfon.org/donate](http://nijfon.org/donate)
- Access to Justice - The Resurrection Project: [www.classy.org/give/427067](http://www.classy.org/give/427067)
- Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) - [icirr1.secure.nonprofitsoapbox.com/donate](http://icirr1.secure.nonprofitsoapbox.com/donate)

# Local Church News



Kids Above All Vice President of Resource Development Zulma Colon and late Rev. Doug Williams with the toy cars in 2017.



Volunteer Pat Clankie of Aldersgate UMC adds the details to the firetrucks after they have been painted.



Freshly cut and sanded cars are waiting for their bright coat of paint and daisy details.

## A Toy Story that hits the road

The late Rev. Doug Williams brought the idea of making and distributing toy wooden cars to his congregation at Aldersgate UMC in Rockford in 2011 as a new ministry to children. Combining inspiration from a similar ministry in Florida and his woodworking hobby, it was Doug's dream for a life-giving impact. The congregation began the ministry and by the end of their first year had made and distributed 95 cars. Even after Rev. Williams' reassignment and later passing in June 2019, the ministry continues to make a lasting legacy. The toy ministry continues, and as of December 2022, the church had given away almost 15,400 cars.

In 2016, when Rev. Williams was appointed to Salem UMC in Barrington, he brought his toy ministry with him.

There is a team of 12 to 15 members of Salem UMC that have continued this ministry working throughout the year. To date, the Salem UMC volunteers have created and given away over 2,000 cars.

Kids Above All is one of the recipients of the brightly-colored "unplugged" toys, including firetrucks, tractors, race cars, a Batman car, and daisy-decorated cars, giving them to children in their early childhood program and foster care through their annual Holiday Gift Drive. This "assembly line ministry" takes many hands to cut out the car pieces, sand the pieces, assemble, paint and coordinate distribution. Doug's widow, Lisa Williams notes that a lot of people have partnered with the churches to serve in this ministry, from Boy Scout troops to Wesley Willows

retirement home residents (which is located next to Aldersgate UMC) to National Honor Society students. "Lots of different people, lots of different stages in life, everybody working together on this 'assembly line of a different kind' manufactures these beautiful, simple, non-electric cars," notes Deaconess Inserra.

Lisa agreed, adding that she wants people to know that "something so simple that many hands have contributed to can have such a profound impact in the life of a child—and to convey how it is such a unique and beautiful and fun way to show that so many people care and love others."

*\*Article contributed to by Deaconess Catherine Inserra, Manager of Faith and Community Relations, Kids Above All*

## Rev. Olu Brown helping churches find their call to action



16 Church leaders met with Rev. Olu Brown at the beginning of their visioning process.

Rev. Olu Brown first came to speak at the NIC Tending the Harvest Worship service in 2021, speaking about making disciples and asking churches, "What is your call to action?". Now, he is back in the Northern Illinois Conference, helping churches answer this question for the Institute for Congregational Development (ICD 3.1).

Olu is leading a cohort of 28 leaders in the ICD 2022-2023 Class. During their November 22 class, he challenged the members to answer questions about the state of their ministry. They then analyzed where the churches are in their lifecycle now and where they want to be in the future. The cohort is now working on strategies to get from point A to point B, encouraged by Olu Brown.

Rev. Olu Brown is also consulting directly with Hartzel Memorial UMC in Chicago to help them create a vision for the future. Hartzel Memorial is named after Bishop Hartzel and has been active in social justice movements going back to 1901.

Their first consultation meeting in November 2022 has made many leaders hopeful about their future journey. The congregation is working on the next session's homework with excitement and hope. With interim pastor Rev. Richard Mosely's encouragement and Lake South District Superintendent Rev. Jacques Conway's leadership, the congregation is dreaming God's dream for the future of the church.

## This I Celebrate! Reaching New People Rev. Martin Lee, Dir. of Congregational Development and Redevelopment

I thank God for all of our faithful church leaders, clergy, and laity, who are doing amazing things in their mission fields as we continue to navigate the uncharted territory of pandemic recovery and cultural transition. Our culture is less interested in organized religion than at any time in any of our lives. The Church is becoming marginalized in the cultural conversation. These are challenging days for everyone working in the mission field.

The day after Easter, earlier this year, Pastor Harriette Cross texted me saying that her congregation had even greater worship attendance now than it did before the pandemic. She attributed the increase to a culture of invitation that she and the lay members of the congregation have intentionally cultivated. I am so thankful for her leadership and resilience in the midst of all the challenges before her.

Wilmington United Methodist Church is one of the cohorts of churches in the How To Reach New People coaching program. The congregation is a shining example of what can happen when church members learn

the importance of personal invitation. Often, members believe that all of their friends and family already belong to churches. But we know, statistically, that is not true. All of us know someone who does not belong to any religious community. Often we know people who would greatly appreciate connection to a vital community. Personal invitation is one of the most effective ways to build a relationship with God and also with God's people.

According to Thom Rainer's article Ten Major Trends for Local Churches in America in 2023, "Local congregations will emphasize evangelism more than at any point in the past three decades. Church leaders understand they can't lead a church to grow with cultural Christians and transfer growth. If churches desire truly to make disciples, they must begin with evangelism." Indeed, we must focus on making new disciples who are not yet part of the United Methodist family.

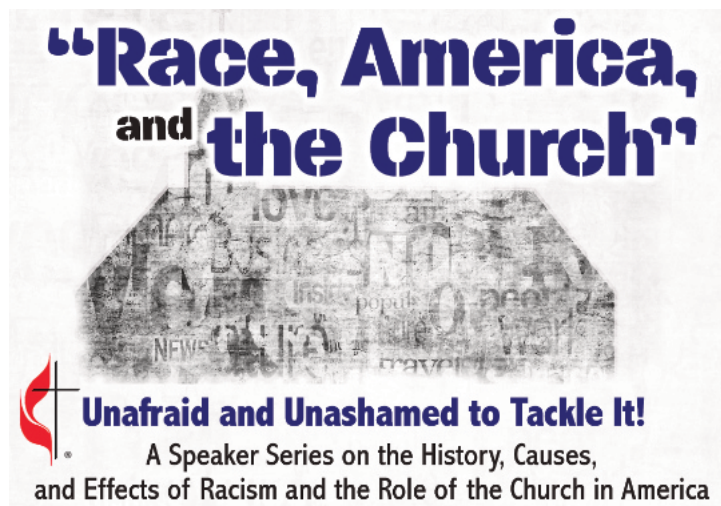
There is unlimited possibility in the people you have not yet met. So many people are searching for meaning and purpose in this post-pandemic world. And we in the UMC have truth and wisdom, hope and direction to offer

in abundance.

In order to invite your friends and neighbor, I encourage each one of you to come to an understanding of who your neighbor is. One tool I would like to recommend is the MissionInSite demographics program. With this tool, you will learn a lot about your community. If you would like to learn how to use MissionInSite, please email me at [mlee@umcnic.org](mailto:mlee@umcnic.org). In addition, I want you to ask yourself prayerfully, "Who is missing in your worship community?" One of the characteristics of a healthy congregation is that the church, its members, and its leadership are fully baked into the surrounding community rather than being the donut hole surrounded by the community.

As we are beginning the new year with a new bishop, may the Holy Spirit guide us to reach more people, more younger people, and more diverse people for the glory of God as the Kingdom movement throughout the Northern Illinois mission boundaries and beyond. We dream the ministry dream of John Wesley when he avowed, "The World is My Parish." Thanks be to God!

## 2022 Speaker Series concluded with a final event focused on the local church



The Anti-Racism Task Force (ARTF) of the Northern Illinois Conference and its partnering conferences and sponsors wrapped up its 2022 Speaker Series, “Race, America, and the Church: Unafraid and Unashamed to Tackle It.” The series concluded with a webinar featuring Dr. Andrew G. I. Hart, a theology professor and proponent for social change through Christian activism.

Dr. Hart’s webinar, “Called: Doing God’s Work for the Beloved Community,” was held online on December 1 and focused on what the local church can do to combat the continuation of racism in the church and in society.

Over the past year, the Speaker Series has covered the history, causes, and effects of racism and the church’s role in America. Webinars and live gatherings

presented other speakers ranging from a diverse panel of Christian authors sharing stories of how they were affected by racism, a panel of clergy addressing social justice issues, and an interview with the Executive Director of the UMC Native American Comprehensive Plan.

The ARTF looks forward to continuing this journey throughout its 2023 programming with additional opportunities for churches to learn prayerfully, engage, and tackle their personal and corporate role in addressing racism.

Visit the Speaker Series webpage at [umcnic.org/2022SpeakerSeries](http://umcnic.org/2022SpeakerSeries) to watch the recordings, learn from the resources, visit the sponsors, and find recommended books for further learning.

## 14 ways churches unintentionally send signs of unwelcome

By Eric Seiberling, contributor to ResourceUMC.org



Every guest visit is a chance to show the love of Christ.

It’s also key to

be mindful that visiting a new church can prompt some anxiety. It can liken the nervousness and uncertainty you’ve felt as you started a new job, attended a new school or moved to a new area.

In fact, a recent survey, conducted by the Barna Group on behalf of United Methodist Communications, of spiritual seekers found that the top motivator for considering a church was knowing that everyone will be welcomed.

### Let’s Do It!

Guest readiness and hospitality are more than being nice to newcomers. Familiarity can lead to a blindness toward the unintentional roadblocks in your church. Every real or perceived obstacle can make people bypass your church or not return after a first visit.

Make a new routine by occasionally reviewing how a visitor may experience your church the first time. Here’s a checklist of what to look for:

- 1. Outdated (or no) website.** According to writer Thom Rainer, seven out of 10 guests find a church to visit through a Google Search. Unfortunately, many church websites are out of date or lacking essential information for visitors, i.e. providing only a mailing (P.O. Box) address instead of a mappable one. Sometimes it’s easier to pass along information via social media instead of logging into the back end of your website, so the site becomes evergreen but dated. There are easy remedies:
  - Update your free “Find A Church” listing and find website help — from novice to advanced — in the UMCOM archives.
  - Take the time to update your Google map listing. Many churches fail to claim their listing and lose a significant opportunity to connect with people seeking a new church home.
- 2. Neglected church exterior.** Unless hidden by overgrown grass, shrubbery or trees, your property is a model of your church’s welcome. People may not know your church’s name, but they remember your building and grounds. Your ministry begins at the curb, so keep the hedges trimmed, the grass cut and the flowerbeds weeded. The parking lot needs to be sealed and clearly striped.

- 3. Inadequate exterior signage.** Many exterior signs are too small, too cluttered or too dimly lit for passersby to notice. Sometimes the signs focus on clever sayings rather than providing key information. Drive by your church at the posted speed limit with a passenger recording a video through the windshield. Show it to 10 people unfamiliar with your church; ask what they remember seeing. Signs should be limited to the most essential elements: church name/logo, service times, phone number and website.
- 4. Hard to find parking.** While regular attenders know the best times to navigate your lot and find legal overflow spots, visitors will not. (Nothing discourages a return visit than finding a grumpy note or parking ticket as you leave.) Install highly visible and readable directional signage at least 100 feet from the entries and within your lot(s).
- 5. No visitor parking.** A surprising number of churches I’ve visited lack designated visitor parking or inadequate signs leading people to the reserved spots. Try this test: Enter your parking lot five minutes before a service. If it’s unclear where a guest should park as soon as you enter the lot, you need to improve your signage or have parking ushers in the lot before services. If that’s your situation, immediately designate two to four highly visible spots for guests. (Some churches promote a second-time visitor parking spot to be intentionally welcoming to returning guests.)
- 6. Which door?** Entrances are often poorly marked, if at all. Don’t make visitors guess. The main door should be obvious by signage. Consider placing greeters outside the main door.
- 7. Cluttered, dirty interiors.** Interiors matter. Declutter your church immediately, and make sure all spaces (restrooms, classrooms, sanctuary, nursery) are clean. Set up systems/schedules to ensure that you stay decluttered and clean.
- 8. Unclear interior signage.** It doesn’t end at the parking lot. Guests don’t automatically know how to find the nursery, children’s area or the sanctuary. Signs inside your church must be visible, accurate and readable. Recruit people who have never been to your church and ask them to find key locations. If they can’t, you need to upgrade your signs.
- 9. Unsafe or unclean children’s area.** We may have Safe Sanctuary policies to keep our children safe, but how do we communicate the totality of our efforts to visitors? First impressions matter — everything from a nursery sign-in process to making sure the children’s area is well maintained and lit make an impact.

**10. Holy huddle of church members.** Members enjoy talking with one another and they should. Unfortunately, we’re often so caught up in our own conversations that we overlook new faces. To make sure guests feel seen and welcomed, create a strong greeter program to help visitors find their way. Consider taking it a step further and seating them with a host inside the sanctuary to help them make early connections with members and the church.

**11. Greeting time is awkward and unfriendly.** Thom Rainer shares that six out of 10 visitors AND members hate the meet and greet. It often runs long and is uncomfortable. Visitors can be overlooked or overwhelmed by people looking to check a participatory box. Instead, use a host family trained in how to engage visitors and make them feel welcome; it’s far more effective than “passing of the peace.”

**12. Poor lighting and sound.** If visitors have difficulty hearing or seeing what’s going on during a service, they’re less likely to return. Pay attention to the environment you’re creating in the sanctuary and be sensitive. Remember, services can be too loud or bright as well as too soft or dim. If you’re doing strobe lights or similar effects for special occasions and services, be certain to post signage at the entrances to warn those who are seizure prone.

**13. Insider language.** Whether it’s used for a location (narthex, MacArthur’s Hall) or ministries (Ignite, IHN), jargon excludes people, especially visitors. Use plain language to describe the locations and ministries of the church, particularly during the service and in the bulletin.

**14. No follow up.** Reach out to visitors within a week of them first attending your church. Be responsive to any questions they may have about membership and your various ministries. (Some churches have an information center to aid in facilitating this on-site.

Consider giving visitors a useful gift to remind them of their visit. It’s important to remember that you may not be able to meet the needs of all who visit your church. However, if you do your best to make them feel welcome, valued and listened to you’ll be on your way to communicating a warm church family environment.

For more tips, I recommend Thom Rainer’s “Becoming a Welcoming Church” as well as United Methodist Communications’ online welcoming resources to help you consider and eliminate the often unseen barriers that hinder your reaching new people and demonstrating the love of Christ.

## Dos and don’ts for welcoming visitors without smothering

We all want to welcome new visitors. Our brand promise: “Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.” – is our commitment to maintain a welcoming lifestyle in our churches. However, there is a fine line between being friendly and solicitous and invading newcomers’ space. Here are some ways to reach out and some dos and don’ts when welcoming visitors.



**Assume** a curry chicken casserole or fudge brownies will delight everyone.



**Be aware that many people have different food preferences and even food allergies.** Even offerings that sound neutral, like homemade bread, may be a bad

idea due to gluten allergies. Think outside the box; consider taking a mug with your church’s logo on it—stuffed with teabags or a special coffee packet and an issue of The Upper Room daily devotional guide. Another great offering may be a refrigerator magnet with your church’s phone number, address, Facebook address, website, and Twitter account.

*continued on page 8, see Dos and Don’ts*

# Leading the Laity

By Mark Manzi, NIC Co-Lay Leader



Happy New Year! As we welcome in a new year, many of the challenges of 2020 through 2022 are still with us. While the pandemic is more manageable, there are still concerns we must be aware of. The state of our national discourse, the war in Ukraine, gun violence, racism; you name the other challenges that are still with us. Yet, Christmas and the new year, also remind us of the hope that is

before us and that we must embrace. I pray that we look for opportunities as we follow the way of Jesus and that we accept the call and reach out to each other and our neighbors with grace, mercy, peace, and love.

We are also welcoming a new resident Bishop to the NIC in 2023. He began his residency with us on January 3rd and is now actively greeting, meeting, and working with the people of the Northern Illinois Conference.

We are excited as he becomes our new Bishop and for the gifts and talents, he will bring to us. At the North Central Jurisdictional Conference, November 3-5, I was able to hear Bishop Schwerin speak prior to and also in a small group setting as he answered delegates' questions as we worked to discern who would be the three Bishops who were to be elected to serve the North Central Jurisdictional Conference. I was impressed when he spoke of his relational theology and leadership style as well as his focus on dismantling racism and including all people in the church of Jesus Christ. Laity Convocation 2023 will be one of the first opportunities for the laity of the NIC to hear Bishop Schwerin speak as he will be giving us a welcome as we open.

Speaking of Laity Convocation, I hope that everyone has signed up to attend! This can be done at the NIC website - [umcnic.org](http://umcnic.org). This year we will be focusing on community ministry. The title of Laity Convocation is "Thinking Outside the Church, Making Community Ministry Happen." We are excited about being able to be in-person as well as online for this year's Laity Convocation. We are also thrilled to hear how we can get started and from churches in the NIC that are already actively engaged in community ministry.

Your three Conference Co-Lay Leaders, Connie Augsburg, Gene Williams, and I, are thankful for the opportunity to serve the laity of the NIC and support and provide direction for the ministry of the laity. We are eager to build and strengthen relationships and connections with the laity to help empower you for the ministry that you are doing in your local churches. Don't hesitate to contact us if you believe we can be of service to your local churches.



Laity Convocation 2023

**Thinking Outside the Church**  
Making Community Ministry Happen

## Making Community Ministry Happen

Sat., Feb. 11  
9:00 am - 12:30 pm

Hybrid event at three locations and online via Zoom:

1. Faith UMC in Orland Park
2. Barrington UMC
3. Disciples UMC in Mt. Morris

For more information, visit:  
[umcnic.org/calendar/laity-convocation-2023](http://umcnic.org/calendar/laity-convocation-2023).



## Civil Rights Pilgrimage April 26, 2023 - May 1, 2023

The Anti-Racism Task Force of the Northern Illinois Conference is excited to be able to offer the 2023 Civil Rights Pilgrimage. It will be a historical and educational tour designed with intent and discernment to help journey-goers take action against racism. It is intended for anyone interested in vital conversations about race, cultural diversity, and systemic equity leading to action. Youth and teens are welcome but must be accompanied by an adult. Due to reviving a grant to reduce cost, an expectation is that pilgrimage participants will participate in advocacy training activities before, during, and after the pilgrimage. This will include attending an orientation via Zoom prior to the pilgrimage, daily discussions while on

the pilgrimage, and 3 one hour Zoom sessions after the pilgrimage. The cost for the inclusive 6-day, 5-night trip is \$999 for a single room and \$599 per person for double occupancy. Other occupancy options are available. The cost covers transportation, accommodations, entrance fees, and meals as we visit sites in Nashville, Birmingham, Montgomery, Selma, and Memphis. A down payment of \$100 will hold your place. The remaining balance will be due and payable on March 15. Full refunds minus a \$25 processing fee can be made up until March 15, but no later. Seating is limited and will be on a first-come-first-served basis.

Find out more information at [umcnic.org/2023civilrightspilgrimage](http://umcnic.org/2023civilrightspilgrimage)

## NIC Camp Updates

**2023 J.O.Y. Camp**  
Sun. afternoon, June 18 through Sat. am, June 24  
Cost (same as 2022): \$569 full price for a solo camper.

Save \$20 per camper by registering:

- before May 1, 2023.
- through your local NIC UMC congregation.
- more than one child in a family

Save an additional \$40 by paying in full at the time of registration.

Registration will go live February 3.

**Elementary Aged Camp** is not scheduled at the moment due to a lack of previous registrations. If you have elementary-aged children in your family or

congregation who would like to attend Summer Camp, please send an e-mail [info@reynoldswood.org](mailto:info@reynoldswood.org), or text (815-494-0853), to Tristen Flory.

**New Program Committee**

At its January 10 meeting, the ORM Board appointed Lynn Pries as Chair of a new Program Committee to develop new Outdoor & Retreat Ministries Programs. To join Lynn's Team and/or offer suggestions, please send an e-mail to [exec@niccamp.org](mailto:exec@niccamp.org) - enter the subject as "New Programs".

Watch the Conference e-News and next month's Reporter for more detailed information.



## Happy Swimming!



Dedicated volunteers pose in front of the completed pool cover at Camp Reynoldswood

After 18 months and \$90,000, Camp Reynoldswood has a new pool that holds water--sans cracks and tripping hazards! In May and June of 2022, major repair work was completed on the aging pool liner, deck, and pool cover at the camp in Dixon, IL. Thank you all for your patience and prayers. We also wish to extend a hearty THANK YOU to the following volunteers who all came together to make this happen:

- J.O.Y. Camp Counselors
- Reynoldswood Staff
- ORM Board members
- Conference Trustees
- NIC congregations

- Dixon: First UMC
- Chana UMC
- New Lennox UMC
- the Sterling UM Churches

While this was a much-needed repair, it did delay other, needed repairs and maintenance through the site. The cost was not added to the registration of future camps, but donations are being accepted to offset the pool costs. Donations may be sent via PayPal to [orm@niccamp.org](mailto:orm@niccamp.org) (please reference RW Pool), or snail-mailed to Camp Reynoldswood, 621 Reynoldswood Rd, Dixon, IL 61021 (please write RW Pool in the check memo field).

## 2023 Events

### Order of Elders: And Are We Yet Alive

Tues., Feb. 28, 9:30 am - 1:00 pm  
Sycamore UMC, Sycamore, IL

Pastoral colleagues will speak in a TED Talk platform (short presentations) to share their ministry, followed by group conversations with a couple of questions. The Bishop will share a message about his vision with a short Q&A afterward. For further details and registration, visit [umcnic.org/calendar/order-of-elders-2023](http://umcnic.org/calendar/order-of-elders-2023)

### The Black Healing Collective 4 Hour Workshop

Sat., March 11, 9:00 am - 1:00 pm  
Friendship UMC in Bolingbrook

The content of this 4-hour workshop is for people of Black African heritage and will:

- Define racial trauma.
- Discuss the significant impact that racial trauma has historically had and continues to have within the Black community including the UMC.
- Discuss coping strategies that have been used within the Black community for healing our trauma.

For further details and registration visit [umcnic.org/calendar/becoming-beloved-community](http://umcnic.org/calendar/becoming-beloved-community)



# DID YOU KNOW?

## Practicing Hospitality

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



This month's NIC Reporter is filled with images of welcome. In the conference these days, we are driven by welcome. You only need to look at the conference calendar to see all the ways in which we are engaged in welcoming Bishop Dan Schwerin as our new episcopal leader. From an Installation Service (on Sunday, February 26th) to Days on the District (the first two weeks of February), to a card shower of notes and well wishes, we have extended a welcome to Bishop Schwerin.

While I have no doubt that the well wishes for our new bishop are greatly appreciated, Hospitality (welcome) is much more; it is a way of life for people of faith. Our Christian act of welcoming grows out of the scriptures and a theological understanding of hospitality. Jesus talked of care for the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and imprisoned. Diana Butler Bass observes, "The unanimous witness of the ancient fathers and mothers was that hospitality was the primary Christian virtue." We practice this ancient act when we reach out to the migrants who are coming to our communities offering food or clothing or financial support. We practice this ancient act when we make our church safe and accessible for all ages. We practice this ancient act when we decode our bulletin and

our worship language so the stranger can feel connected or when we send care packages to our college students or military personnel.

During the second week of Bishop Schwerin's assignment with us, the Cabinet gathered to work, pray, play, eat and grow in relationship with one another and our new bishop. It was a serious time of caring for our congregations and clergy, but it was also a fruitful time of building the community through hospitality. The cabinet gifted the new bishop with signs of appreciation, and Bishop Schwerin surprised the cabinet by gifting us with music bowls calling us to centering, deep spiritual reflection, and prayer.

Sometimes it takes a change in our environment to remind us of how important hospitality can be as a spiritual discipline. As we move deeper into the new year with its challenges and concerns, building our work on a foundation of hospitality will ground us in Christ and prepare us for those moments when the world seems more hostile than hospitable.

Be sure to check out those times and places where you can extend your welcome in person over the next few months.

### 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, 2023 (unless otherwise noted):

#### The following clergy are retiring:

**Cynthia Anderson** (Full Elder) to retirement from Batavia (Prairie Central). Cynthia was commissioned in 2004 and ordained in 2007. During her ministry, Cynthia served Itasca: Bethany, Barrington: Barrington and Batavia.

**Mary Zajac** (Full Elder) to retirement from St. Charles: Baker Memorial (Prairie Central). Mary was commissioned in 2006 and ordained in 2009. During her ministry, Mary served Plainfield: First, Minooka, and St. Charles: Baker Memorial.

**Noah Panlilio** (Full Elder) to retirement from Oak Park: St. John's (Lake North). Noah transferred from the Philippines Central Conference in 1990s. During his ministry, Noah has served Park Ridge: First, Plattville, Lemont, Sandwich: United, Lockport: First, Chicago: Elston Avenue, Malta, Malta: Northwest, Morrison and Oak Park: St. John's.

**Jonathan Singleton** (Full Elder) to retirement from Stockton: Calvary (Prairie North). Jonathan transferred from the Indiana Conference in 1998. During his ministry, Jonathan has served Mendota: Zion, Sterling: Trinity, Winthrop Harbor: North Prairie, Winthrop Harbor: Winthrop Harbor, Freeport: Embury, Sandwich, and Stockton: Calvary.

**Brian LeBaron** (Associate Member) to retirement from Polo: Faith (Prairie South). Brian was received as an Associate Member in 2008. During his ministry, he served Van Brocklin, Florence, McConnell, Lena, Davis: Calvary, Rock City, and Polo: Faith.

**Gary Peluso-Verdend** (Full Elder) to retirement from Extension Ministry as President Emeritus, Phillips Theological Seminary (Tulsa, OK). Gary became a probationary Elder in 1979 and was ordained in 1983. During his ministry, Gary served Western Springs: First, Arlington Heights: First, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary (Evanston, IL), and Phillips Theological Seminary (Tulsa, OK). Effective Feb. 1, 2023.

**Lisa Telomen** (Full Elder) to retirement from Geneva (Associate) (Prairie Central). Lisa became a probationary Elder in 1987, and was ordained in 1994. During her ministry, she has served Maple Park, Cortland, Reynolds, Morris: First, Mayfair, Lombard: First, Evanston: Hemenway, Naperville: Grace, LaGrange: First, and Geneva.

**Julie Bunt** (Full Elder) to retirement from Mount Morris: Disciples (Prairie South). Julie was commissioned in 2000 and ordained in 2004. During her ministry, Julie served Morrison, LaMoille: Community, Freeport: Trinity, Cedarville, Freeport: Embury, and Mount Morris: Disciples.

#### Having faithfully served, the following local pastors will be ending their ministry effective July 1.

**Gary Rich** (Local Pastor) will conclude his ministry at Freeport: Red Oak/Cedarville (Prairie North).

**Bruce Anderson** (Local Pastor) will conclude his ministry at Winfield: Community (Prairie Central).

### Dos and don'ts (continued from page 6)

**DON'T** **DON'T forget practical manners.** They never go out of style.

**DO** **DO keep the trip to a visitor's home short and sweet.** If you are bringing something, simply say "thanks for visiting" and leave the gift. Don't expect an invitation to come inside. Call before coming, if possible, and keep the visit brief.

**DON'T** **DON'T assume one communication method fits all.** Posting the potluck dinner only on Facebook may mean people who rarely check their Facebook account won't see it. On the other hand, someone constantly hooked up to technology may just toss a printed envelope.

**DO** **DO ask visitors how they prefer to receive information about events and news.** Encourage them to follow your Twitter feed and like your Facebook page. Ask them if they like to get text announcements.

**DON'T** **DON'T assume a visitor who may not be a regular churchgoer knows terms like Advent.** Also, don't assume a visitor even understands what it means when United Methodists say that Holy Communion is open to everyone.

**DO** **DO make it easy for newcomers to find answers to questions.** For instance, instead of saying, "Your daughter might enjoy UMYF;" say "Your daughter might enjoy our Sunday evening youth fellowship, which we call UMYF"

**DON'T** **DON'T take it personally if a family visits for weeks or even months without joining.**

You don't know what is happening in their lives and their faith journey, so don't be pushy.

**DO** **DO understand that part of being a welcoming congregation means being patient.** Be friendly and helpful. Let visitors know they are welcome at the level of involvement where they are most comfortable.

**DON'T** **DON'T assume that one welcoming method fits all.** Some visitors — especially older ones — might enjoy a phone call, while a busy family might consider it a nuisance.

**DO** **DO announce in church that your congregation likes to reach out to visitors.** Ask them to note on the registration pad if they prefer phone calls to home visits or email to snail mail. Reassure visitors from the pulpit that you do not intend to drop by unannounced.

**DON'T** **DON'T put all the responsibility on the shoulders of the head greeter.**

**DO** **DO enlist your congregants' help in making visitors feel welcome** through handshakes, smiles and light conversation in the pew.

Remember that welcoming visitors is the responsibility of the entire congregation. All members need to embrace welcoming strategies and behaviors. Challenge your congregants to ask themselves whether their actions, facial expressions and gestures say that their hearts and minds are truly open.

\*shared from ResourceUMC.org

### Job Openings

For the latest job openings in the Northern Illinois Conference and across the connection, visit [www.umcnic.org/jobs](http://www.umcnic.org/jobs).

### Stay Connected

Sign up for the weekly NIC eNews, Appointment Announcements and Sympathy notices. Visit [www.umcnic.org](http://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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