

The Northern Illinois Conference OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Reporter

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DO NOT DELAY. DATED MATERIAL

NIC's Lobby Day uses lessons of the past to change the present

by Rev. Dr. Norval I. Brown,
Cary UMC

Early in the morning of April 18, 2024, 22 members of the Northern Illinois Conference Anti-Racism Task Force, many of whom had participated in last year's Civil Rights Pilgrimage, boarded a bus or piled into cars to descend on Springfield to speak to state legislators about issues of racial injustice that concern us—with a focus on environmental justice, the school to prison pipeline, and immigration.

This Legislative Lobby Day is an outgrowth of last year's Civil-Rights Pilgrimage. Among the many lessons of the pilgrimage was the idea that visiting the past was not enough. The NIC statement that racism is incompatible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ also prodded the need for the lobby day.

There was excitement in the air as participants anticipated dialogue and collaboration with our lawmakers, learning something



A portion of the group about to tour the capitol building.

about the legislative process, and helping others to see the deep issues that affect our lives and the lives of those around us. Participants organized themselves into their conference district and met with legislators who represented portions of their district. They brought with them position papers and talking points. Pictures were taken; partnerships were forged; prayers were offered.

State senators and representatives seemed to appreciate not only the dialogue but also our asking how we could help them. Conference members also met support staff,



The NIC ARTF group met by the Lincoln statue in front of the Illinois State capitol before the prayer, march, and rally.

lobbyists, and other visitors. We exchanged business cards and other contact information intending to follow-up and establish more opportunities for collaboration.

Douglas Avenue United Methodist Church in Springfield hosted the group for lunch. Rev. Curtis Brown, director of connectional ministries for the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, and Rev. Meredith Brown, pastor of Douglas Avenue, offered a brief history of Methodism in Illinois—much of what was news to many in our delegation. Relationships built during table conversation with them help establish a collaborative relationship in advocating for racial justice with the state's lawmakers

As the group's closing action, they engaged in prayer, a public rally, and march around the statue of Abraham Lincoln that stands in front of the capitol building. Though a small group, they were seen and heard by passersby. In the words of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, the group was praying with their feet. The overall consensus of the day's work was, "It is good." But as God did on the eighth day, the group agreed to roll up their sleeves and go back to work the next day.

As a participant, I believe that there are moments in our lives when we are moved to remember, reflect, and reminisce about the past. Often these are good memories that help us to see where we have been and how we arrived at this present moment. Sometimes memories focus on some challenging moments in our lives that

again help us to see where we have been and how we have arrived at this present state.

Last year's Civil Rights Pilgrimage helped the pilgrims remember, lament, reconcile, and strengthen their resolve to end racism and to share with others what they learned and experienced. Those times of remembering, reflecting, and reminiscing are the impetus for affecting change in this present moment.

That is the essence of the Sankofa experience. Sankofa is an African concept instructing us to retrieve things of value from our knowledge of the past in order to define where we want to go. The Lobby Day helped us take what we learned from history into action toward changing the present.

Learn more about the NIC Anti-Racism Task Force at umcnic.org/antiracism.

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports the Anti-Racism Task Force.



District 7 State Senator Mike Simmons meeting with Lake North representatives, Richard Stevens and Marlene Morton. Simmons is the Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee.



What do United Methodist bishops do?

While Bishop Dan Schwerin is attending General Conference, we offer this in place of his regular column.

You probably know that United Methodist bishops oversee conferences. As Northern Illinois United Methodists transition toward becoming part of a new episcopal area (see story on this page), it's a good time to review what bishops are in the UMC and what they do.

Responsibility for the denomination

A bishop is considered a general superintendent of the entire UMC, providing general oversight to its worldly and spiritual interests. Our bishops are not "ordained" to the episcopacy (category of bishop). They are elders who are elected and consecrated to the office of bishop.

Area responsibilities

The Book of Discipline, in paras. 414-416, lists many responsibilities of a bishop. Overseeing "the worldly and spiritual interests of the church" includes, among many other duties:

- Strengthening local churches
- Giving spiritual leadership to lay and clergy
- Convening meetings of the order of deacons and the order of elders
- Teaching and proclaiming the apostolic faith and the theological traditions of the UMC
- Ensuring that the rules and regulations developed by General Conference are carried out
- Setting clergy appointments in the conferences they oversee

Bishops preside at annual, jurisdictional, and general conferences. They have no vote at these conferences. Most bishops also serve on a United Methodist general agency's board, often as the president.

How bishops are chosen

They are elected one of the five jurisdictional conferences, which are held every four years in the United States, and by the central conferences outside of the U.S. (The next jurisdictional conferences take place this July.) Here they are consecrated and assigned to an episcopal area, to begin that role on Sept. 1.

A bishop is consecrated to that position for life. Their terms in an episcopal area are four years, with the possibility of the term being extended up to two more times. (Three terms in one area is rare.)

Conference vs. Episcopal Area

An episcopal area is the geographic location to which a bishop is assigned. There are 46 episcopal areas in the U.S. and 20 outside of the U.S. Most often in the U.S., the boundaries of an episcopal area are the same as an annual conference. The name of an episcopal area are usually different from an annual conference's name. Northern Illinois Conference is in the Chicago Episcopal Area, for example, and the conference and episcopal area cover the same region.

Among UMC episcopal areas that comprise more than one conference are the

Dakotas-Minnesota Episcopal Area (two conferences) and the Greater Northwest Episcopal Area (three conferences). The assigned bishop oversees these separate conferences in her or his episcopal area.

Members of a council

The Council of Bishops comprises all active and retired UM bishop. They meet twice a year. The Book of Discipline says that they are "to speak to the Church and from the Church to the world and to give leadership in the quest for Christian unity and interreligious relationships" (para. 427.2).

How did the Methodist Church get bishops?

John Wesley, an Anglican priest and one of the founders of Methodism, sent Thomas Coke to America in 1784 as a general superintendent, a position considered on par with a bishop. Coke later chose to use the term bishop, despite Wesley's objections. In December of that same year, Francis Asbury also took the title of bishop in Baltimore.

Not all Methodist denominations have bishops. For example, The Methodist Church in Britain does not.

Find more information about bishops at unitedmethodistbishops.org and umc.org/en/who-we-are/structure/council-of-bishops.

Your giving to General Church apportionments supports the Episcopal Office.



Annual Conference Shepherding Team Refines Role Statement

by Rev. Victoria Rebeck, NIC Director of Communications

The Northern Illinois Annual Conference Shepherding Team—comprising leaders from various ministry areas and locations around the conference—has developed a new role statement.

Meeting March 7, the team completed a draft it has been working on for several months. It found that the description of the team passed at the 2017 annual conference session, while wide-ranging, did not specify the team's responsibilities and relationship to the conference as a whole.

"The role of the ACST will become even more vital," said Mark Manzi, co-chair of the ACST.



"Therefore, we want all people of the NIC to know who we are and what we do.

Its new role statement:

The Annual Conference Shepherding Team was created to advance the overall mission of the Northern Illinois Conference by ensuring the proper use and alignment of resources to achieve it. The ACST serves as a place for consultation, advice, and decision-making, and provides connections between conference administrative and ministry areas, the cabinet, District Shepherding Teams, and local churches. It serves to build trust, collaboration, and accountability in the conference's responsibility to live out its mission.

Specifically, the ACST is:

- A council of advisers to the bishop and conference leadership

- A decision-making body between annual conference sessions and for those items not requiring conference action
- A contributor to the overall budgeting process with final review prior to annual conference
- The oversight body for the District Shepherding Teams in collaboration with the district superintendents
- An adaptive learning organization that provides insights and teaching about effective leadership in the 21st century church

The team considered the possibility of holding listening sessions; times when people can bring to the team an area of concern and the team will listen. When appropriate, the team would help the person find the person or group who can address their concern.

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports the Annual Conference Shepherding Team.



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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.

Job Openings

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

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New episcopal area has a name; now it seeks an office

by Rev. Victoria Rebeck, NIC Director of Communications

As Northern Illinois Conference prepares to become part of a new episcopal area that would also include the Wisconsin Conference, task forces from both conferences have agreed on a name and have been discussing an office location for the area.

The name of the new episcopal area is the Northern Illinois–Wisconsin Episcopal Area. Northern Illinois and Wisconsin conferences are not merging. They will continue to govern themselves separately. However, they will be overseen by the same bishop and will have opportunities to partner in ministry.

Rev. Myron McCoy, the chair of NIL's Bishop Sharing Task Force, likens this to a two-point charge.

An episcopal area is the geographic location to which a bishop is assigned. Episcopal areas are distinct from annual conferences, though often the geographical boundaries of the two have coincided. East and West Ohio Conferences are also becoming part of the same episcopal area.

As office locations are considered, the two conferences' Bishop-Sharing Task Forces are looking closely at locations other than either conference's offices. They anticipate that the bishop and one of the executive assistants assistant to the bishop. The two would likely take on specific areas of responsibility and collaborate. The denominational Episcopal Fundwill cover bishops' salaries, benefits, and other essential costs.

"Establishing an area office that is distinct from either conference's offices is symbolic of our new relationship," said Rev. Steve Zekoff, chair of Wisconsin's Bishop-Sharing Task Force. "It will also provide the bishop independence from the still separately existing Wisconsin and Northern Illinois conferences."

Rev. Myron McCoy concurs.

"A new episcopal office will not only signal the new episcopal area but will allow the bishop to function without the encumbrance of being the day-to-day head of either annual conference office," he said. "It also prevents showing favoritism to either conference. And it would be the designated place where the bishop can be directly communicated with and receive mail.

"Although there will be an office, we foresee the bishop taking on a circuit-rider responsibilities in caring for the membership in both annual conferences."

Further, bishops have responsibilities across the connection. The group is considering locations that would be close to either or both O'Hare (Chicago) Airport or Mitchell (Milwaukee) Airport.

Rev. McCoy added that upholding a healthy lifestyle may prevent the bishop from attending as many congregational celebrations as was possible in a geographically smaller conference. Fortunately, video greetings from the bishop—Bishops Hee-Soo Jung and Bishop Dan Schwerin have been offering these for gatherings and church events—allows the bishop to have a presence at events.

Dedicated website

Both conferences can look forward to seeing one website for the episcopal area. Much of the bishop's work will apply to both conferences, and people in both conferences would be able to find shared information in the same place. Lisa Wink, Director of Communications for the Wisconsin Conference, will lead the building of the site. The two task forces approved entering into an agreement with

a website builder who has provided Lisa excellent results in the past. This consultant's fee is much lower than what competitors charge.

"An episcopal area web presence will also provide the bishop an important distinctive identity in this time of heavy reliance on electronic communications," Rev. Zekoff noted.

NIL task force members are planning to meet with groups, boards, and committees across the conference to explain the process and expectations for the development of the new episcopal area. They

will answer questions, address misunderstandings, ask others for their interests and concerns, and gather the questions most frequently asked about the arrangement.

A few members of the NIL task force will attend the Wisconsin Annual Conference session, June 7-10, in Green Bay. They will be present the day that Rev. Zekoff delivers a report on the joint task forces' work and will greet conference members.

In turn, representatives from the Wisconsin Conference will visit the NIL conference session, June 16-18.

"Each conversation among the joint task force members makes it evident that shared contacts across the Northern Illinois–Wisconsin Episcopal Area will enrich United Methodists in both conferences," said Rev. Zekoff. "Of course, some unknowns come with moving from being neighbors to being more intentional partners in ministry. I remain excited about this adventure of discovering how our two conferences can retain distinct identities while collaborating in episcopal oversight and other ministry efforts."

Your giving to General Church apportionments supports the Episcopal Office.



Staff changes in the Northern Illinois Conference



Rev. Arlene Christopherson, who has been serving the Northern Illinois Conference as assistant to the bishop since 2007, will retire on Sept. 1, announced Bishop Dan Schwerin.

Rev. Arlene Christopherson

"I give thanks for the leadership and dedica-

tion Rev. Christopherson has given to the life of the Northern Illinois Conference as the assistant to the bishop (2007-2024) and the director of connectional ministries (2016-2023) during the past 16 years," Bishop Schwerin said.

"Rev. Christopherson brought a rare mix of administrative skills, theological grounding, and pastoral heart to her work in the episcopal office," the bishop added. "During this season, Arlene worked with four bishops through an era of increased awareness of clergy boundary violations, an economic downturn, the tumult of the denomination's struggle with LGBTQ inclusion, a global pandemic, disaffiliation, and the changing landscape of the role of faith in society."

She will continue to serve until September to overlap and provide orientation and training for her successor, Rev. Anderson. After retirement, Rev. Christopherson will take on special projects for the office of the bishop.



Rev. Danita Anderson

and strengthen God's beloved community, worship experiences that relate to the current realities of life, as well as a love for children and young people.

Previously she served at Chicago: St. Mark (associate); Maywood: Neighborhood; Ingleside: Whitfield; Aurora: Bethany of Fox Valley; Aurora District superintendent; Glen Ellyn: St. Thomas; Homewood: St. Andrew; and Woodridge.



Elaine Moy

Rev. Danita Anderson will assume the role of assistant to the bishop beginning on July 1, overlapping with Rev. Christianson for two months.

She identifies her passion for ministry as racial inclusion to build

and strengthen God's beloved community, worship experiences that relate to the current realities of life, as well as a love for children and young people.

Previously she served at Chicago: St. Mark (associate); Maywood: Neighborhood; Ingleside: Whitfield; Aurora: Bethany of Fox Valley; Aurora District superintendent; Glen Ellyn: St. Thomas; Homewood: St. Andrew; and Woodridge.

Elaine Moy, who has over two decades of experience working for The United Methodist Church's general agencies, has been named treasurer and director of administrative services for the Northern Illinois Conference, the Confer-

ence Council on Finance and Administration has announced.

Ms. Moy connects the ministries of the general church to those of the local congregation, observed Rev. Tammy Scott, chair of NIC's CCFA.

The treasurer/director of administrative services directs the day-to-day work of the finance office. This includes maintaining the accountable recording of receipts and disbursements, monitoring receipt and expenditure levels, and following the conference's investments.

Additionally, this person is available to advise local churches in financial matters.

"I look forward to the heart for justice and ministry Elaine Moy will bring to her service in the Northern Illinois Conference," said Bishop Dan Schwerin.

Ms. Moy worked most recently as senior director of finance, development, and institutional equity for the United Methodist Church's General Commission on Religion and Race. Previously, she served the denomination's General Commission on the Status and Role of Women as associate general secretary—which included, for a time, responsibility for finance and administration.

Ms. Moy began work on April 15.

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports the conference office and appointments.



Annual Conference Reminders

The 185th Northern Illinois Annual Conference members are gathering from June 16 to 18 at the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center, under the theme "Yield."

Worship services and plenaries, including the Bishop's episcopal address, Bible study and reports, will be livestreamed on the NIC YouTube channel (youtube.com/c/AnnualConferenceofNorthernIllinoisUMC). Recordings will be posted online for later viewing. Display tables will be set up in the Nirvana Threshold all three days.

Registration

Registration for annual conference is open until May 29. All voting members and guests must register. There will be no on-site registration. Find the registration link at umcnic.org/ac2024.

The registration site allows lay and clergy voting members to sign up for annual conference session, clergy session, laity session, pre-conference briefings, and the optional meals. The fee for voting members is \$130 (after April 29).

Guests should use the same link and choose the guest option. There is no fee for registration, but we need to ensure that we can accommodate all guests. Guests may also register for the optional meals.

Blueprint for Wellness screenings

Health screenings are available June 17 and 18 for those on NIC health insurance. Make an appointment through your Health Flex account.

Hotel reservations

Reservations for the Renaissance Hotel are available at \$185 plus 11% tax per night. Find a link for room reservations at umcnic.org/AC2024 or call the hotel directly at (888) 236-2427.

See Conference up close as a volunteer

Annual Conference relies on volunteer ushers, pages, legislative section leaders, greeters, secretarial pool members, and more in order to run smoothly and efficiently. Please fill out the form at umcnic.org/AC2024. No previous experience is necessary.



Dates to note

- **Proposed legislation and historical documents posted:** May 16
- **Pre-conference briefings:** Online, June 12 (7 p.m.) and June 13 (10 a.m.)
- **Clergy session:** June 5 (location to be announced)
- **Laity session:** June 16, afternoon
- **Celebration of Ministry:** June 16, evening
- **Retirement Recognition:** June 17, morning
- **Global Ministries Lunch:** June 17
- **Memorial Service:** June 18, morning

Look for full coverage and photos in the July/August Reporter.

Find updates at umcnic.org/AC2024.



For 45 years, United Voices for Children (UVC), an organization related to the Northern Illinois Conference, has been advocating for children, youth, and families on behalf of its three affiliated agencies: Rosecrance, Kids Above All (formerly ChildServ), and MYSI (formerly Methodist Youth Services Inc.).

This year, UVC is the recipient of the Bishop's Appeal. Since 1979, UVC has been a catalyst generating support for and engaging congregations in advocacy and a conduit through which information and resources are exchanged between congregations and the agencies.

Today, UVC strives continuously to uphold its mission and build on its covenantal foundation—much like the United Methodist baptismal vows—in service to children and youth in need of God's love and mercy and who continue to suffer injustices, hardships, homelessness, trauma, and lack of vital resources needed to thrive and be whole.

Kids are at the heart of UVC! You can unite your voice with UVC by contributing to the Bishop's Appeal. Your gift will make a great difference in the lives of children and youth in Northern Illinois who most need compassion now and hope for their futures.

Invite your church to participate in this offering. Tell them what UVC's constituent organizations do and how people take part in



helping more children, youth and families. This is a great opportunity to inform them of three long standing, child-serving agencies and their impact throughout northern Illinois. Perhaps set aside a Sunday when you especially encourage worshipers to bring their gifts.

Bring a check for your church's donation to Annual Conference. These will be collected on the afternoon of June 17. For more information, visit umcnic.org/bishopsappeal2024. (This page includes a link for online giving.)

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports the Annual Conference Session.

185th Northern Illinois Annual Conference Fill the Truck Mission Challenge Collection Drive

Midwest Mission gathers and sends tangible resources to those affected by disasters and the loss and uncertainty that come with it. At Annual Conference every year, the NIC Board of Global Ministries and Midwest Mission bring a van to collect the most needed supplies. This year, your church again has an opportunity contribute.

Donations will be accepted on June 16 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and June 17 from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Bring your donations to the Midwest Mission truck, which will be located in the east parking lot outside the Schaumburg Convention Center.

Financial donations can be made three ways. Bring a check to Annual Conference written to the Northern Illinois Conference with Midwest Mission #50000150 in the memo section. Checks can also be sent to the conference treasurer (303 E. Wacker, Chicago, IL 60601). Online giving can be completed through the online portal, app.prosperumc.com to Midwest Mission #50000150.

More information is available at umcnic.org/2024MissionChallenge.

Most urgent needs:

- **Home Care Kits**
 - Liquid household cleaner, 54-80 oz. (no spray bottles)
 - Liquid dish soap, 42-64 oz.
 - Liquid laundry detergent, 100-150 oz.
 - Scrub brushes
 - 5-gallon round buckets with resealable lids
- **Personal Dignity Kits**
 - Hand towels (no kitchen towels)
 - Washcloths (no dishcloths)
 - Toothbrushes, individual
 - Bars of soap, 3-4 oz.
 - Shampoo Bottles, 12-19 oz.
 - Deodorant, 2-3 oz. (stick, roll on, or pump)
 - Lotion Bottles, 8-10 oz.
 - Gallon-size resealable plastic bags

Also wanted:

- Bleacher wood to make into student desks
- Fire-fighting equipment, including jaws of life
- Sewing machines
- Hand tools
- Blankets
- Medical supplies
- Adults' bicycles
- Other items in Midwest Mission Kits (midwestmission.org/kits)

Bulk Purchases

Make a bulk purchase to take advantage of competitive prices. Purchases from these sites will be shipped directly to Midwest Mission. Midwest Mission has wish lists at Dollar Days, Walmart, and Amazon. Find links at umcnic.org/2024MissionChallenge.



Series embraces the rich diversity of music, art and history

by Lisa Smith, NIC Communications Specialist

The art and culture of different ethnicities is the 2024 focus for the NIC Anti-Racism Task Force series. They will piece together a variety of experiences and learning in “The Quilting of America: Celebrating the Diversity of God’s Children.”

Quilts are a common household item. The image can help us connect the rich diversity of music, art, and history in our nation and world. Quilts have played a significant role in American culture for centuries and are as unique as the people who created them. Similarly, different ethnicities have distinctive art forms.

The first event was an immersion in Black culture. On April 19, a group met at Kathryn’s Soul at the French Market in Chicago to enjoy a buffet of quality comfort food. They then went to Orchestra Hall to hear the Gateways Festival Orchestra, with special guest Take 6, a Grammy-award winning musical group, and conductor Anthony Parnter. Comprising 100 musicians of African descent, Gateways Festival Orchestra has musicians from a variety of professional backgrounds.

“This was a great event to kick off our 2024 series,” said Tim Alexander, the chair of the ARTF Series. “It was inspiring to sit with full stomachs in the concert hall and be surrounded by the beautiful music.”

On July 27, the series features a walk through the Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford. Participants will learn about the art and culture of different Asian groups as they tour one of the highest-quality Japanese gardens in the world.

The series will feature Hispanic and Latinx art and culture at a Hispanic/Latinx ministry celebration on Oct. 5. Native American art and culture will be honored on Oct. 12 at Starved Rock State Park in LaSalle County. Joining with the participants from the 2023 Civil Rights Pilgrimage and the Conference Committee on Native American Ministries (CONAM), participants will engage in education and advocacy for our first-nations siblings.

To accompany the series events, the ARTF is organizing the making of a wall hanging quilt that will have contributions from around the conference. The team invites people to submit a quilt square for the project. The final product will be shared at the 2025 Annual Conference session. They will also prepare a booklet about the projects and those who contributed squares.

“From the moment I heard about the Arts and Culture programs for this year, especially the quilt project, I was immediately interested in supporting the project in any way I could,” said Ida VanBoven, the team’s volunteer quilting coordinator, who is from First United Methodist Church in Elmhurst. “The focus of the message surrounding the inspiration for the quilt—faith, culture, social justice, and

equality—all speak loudly to me and guide me through my actions and beliefs.”

Further details on events and the quilt project will be shared at umcnic.org/2024ArtsandCultureSeries.

Make a square for the Arts & Culture Quilt project



Help create a beautiful handmade quilt that will reflect the beauty of the many cultures that make up the Northern Illinois Conference by contributing a square.

An individual, church, or organization in the conference may provide a square, which should measure 8.5 inches by 8.5 inches. It should represent the maker’s culture, community, history, or art; the team encourages including a theme of racial justice and equity, which may be expressed by a phrase, title of a song, etc.

You need not be adept at sewing to make a square. Consider using fabric markers to draw a design on a piece of fabric.

The submitters will complete and quilt individual blocks. Each square must be quilted and mailed by Nov. 1.

Ida VanBoven, a member of First United Methodist Church in Elmhurst, will assemble the individual squares into the final quilt, adding sashing, borders, binding, and a hanging pocket on the back.

Visit umcnic.org/2024ArtsandCultureQuilt for more details about submissions, including a video tutorial.

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports the Anti-Racism Task Force.



Mentors and the lessons of humility

by Rev. Martin Lee,

NIC Director of Development and Redevelopment

As I begin my retirement from appointed ministry in the Northern Illinois Conference, I recall the mentors who gave me hope and encouraged high expectations.

I have pastored churches and, for the past 24 years, led the conference’s ministry of congregational development and redevelopment. I am grateful that I got to serve in these ways. It was friends, colleagues, and mentors who enabled me to see my gifts and exercise them for the glory of God.

One of my earliest experiences that taught me the important lesson of humility was my student internship at Trinity United Methodist Church in Wilmette. Senior Pastor Phil Blackwell gave me many opportunities to help lead various ministries, so I had many incredible chances to get lots of experience as a field education student.

After I finished the one-year internship, Rev. Blackwell asked me to stay for a second year. I thought he asked me to stay because of my excellent ministry work as a seminarian. However, during my second year, Rev. Blackwell, with his dry sense of humor, told me that he asked me to stay not so much because of my own performance but because they wanted to keep my wife, Grace—an

accomplished soprano—in the choir as a soloist. This was a lesson in humility! I also earned that the key to my ministry is my wife’s help. I have to give 51 percent of the credit to Grace. Thank you!

When I moved to serve in Freeport, I knew only one person: Rev. Gary Waters, who was a seminary classmate and in my ordination class. He was serving First UMC in that small town.

We built a great friendship and were able to share our joys and struggles with each other. Over the years, Gary has truly been one of my best confidants, someone with whom I can share everything with. I am so grateful for his steadfast friendship.

One of the covenants we made together as young, ambitious clergy was that we would pay 100% apportionment and grow our church wherever we served. I am proud to say that we have both been successful in following this covenant, especially Gary!

Twenty-four years ago, Bishop Joseph Sprague appointed me as director of congregational development and redevelopment.

When I attended my first national gathering for directors of congregational development, I immediately stood out. I was the only non-white male in the room, and I’m

sure some people assumed that I had accidentally walked into the wrong place.

Expectations for me were rock bottom. I didn’t have much of a budget, I was not well known, and I think my strongest credential at the time was the Quentin Nolte Prize for Promise in Parish Ministry that I won in seminary.

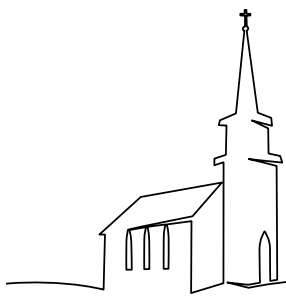
However, the low expectations were to my benefit. I was free to be creative and experiment. During the first few years of my appointment, I implemented the Institute for Congregation Development (ICD) and the Conference Academy for Faith Community Development, also known as the Hispanic Academy for Faith Community Development.

Twenty-four years later, I am here now, and I thank Bishop Sprague for taking a chance and appointing me to this role. I am of course also grateful to all the bishops I have served: Bishop Hee-Soo Jung, Bishop Sally Dick, Bishop John Hopkins, and Bishop Schwerin. And I want to thank all the people I have worked with and all the congregations I have served.

On the way to this new chapter of my ministry, God sent the Holy Spirit as my helper in the form of women and men, lay and clergy who love Jesus more than I do!

As Henri Nouwen has said, “In our society, so full of curses, we must fill each place we enter with our blessings. We forget so quickly that we are God’s beloved children and allow the many curses of our world to darken our hearts. Therefore, we have to be reminded of our belovedness and remind others of theirs.” Amen.





Local Church News

This monthly column highlights local church outreach ministries that are making a difference and transforming lives. We hope sharing these success stories ("it worked for us") will inspire and become learning tools for other churches. If you have a Ministry Makers story, email communications@umcnic.org.

Hope UMC re-dedicates historic building

by Rev. Catiana McKay, pastor of Chadwick: Hope UMC

Hope United Methodist Church's century-old building in Chadwick housed life-changing ministry over the years, so the church devoted April 7 to remembering its role in the community and rededicating it.



The re-celebration brought together family members of those who celebrated in the initial dedication

service of 1924 with many who have contributed to the life of Hope through the years. The day began with a 9:30 am worship service that followed the order of service in the 1924 bulletin. Rev. Dr. Hwa-Young Chong, Prairie North District superintendent, preached the sermon, reminding worshipers that the church and life must be built on the firm foundation of Christ.

The rededication followed, featuring reflections from the worshipers. Over lunch, participants got to know each other better and explored church historical treasures. Afterward, the reflections continued.

The stories varied but the constant was the sure foundation in Christ. Today's grandmothers and grandfathers spoke about the joy and assurance they had as children in the church, which was like their extended home. They named favorite teachers who encouraged them and assured them of Christ's love; the games they played and the mission trips they took as youth; their confirmation and baptismal vows; and always joy and a faith that continued to grow through their lives.

One couple joyfully reminded us that they had met in Sunday school as children. Their commitment to Christ and the church they love continues through their grandchildren.



The planning team uncovered items forgotten by time and displayed them throughout the church. These included pictures and articles that helped unlock the past. Linda Snider—who was born in Chadwick, raised in the church, and raised her children there—pulled the history together.

SPECIAL SUNDAY PEACE WITH JUSTICE SUNDAY

"Peace with Justice is a faithful expression of *shalom* in the Bible."
—2016 Book of Resolutions, #6139

May 26, 2024
resourceumc.org/pwjs

Simple acts of love shared from Christ UMC

by Taylor Greenland, Director of Communications Rockford: Christ

In a world often marked by division and uncertainty, even the smallest acts of kindness can bring light and hope. During this past Lenten season, Christ United Methodist Church of Rockford set out to touch their community with simple acts of love.

The congregation was challenged to spread kindness and positivity through everyday interactions. A Lenten Challenge Checklist suggest activities like "order pizza for your doctor's office" and "give a coffee-shop gift card to drive-through or store checkout employee." Even simple gestures can create a ripple effect of positivity within the community.

CUMC's children and family ministries carried out additional acts of kindness during Holy Week. Church staff and volunteers who

mentor students at neighboring schools made a special delivery of treats to the dedicated teachers and staff to thank them for their hard work. Later in the week, families showed gratitude and support to our postal workers and local police and fire stations with bottled water, snacks, and homemade cookies. Throughout the week, children were hard at work making fleece-tie blankets for youngsters at a local children's home.

Lent is a time of prayer, reflection, and personal spiritual growth. While the people of CUMC encouraged one another to pray, fast, and reflect, they also were encouraged to embody the spirit of compassion and kindness that lies at the core of their faith, reaching beyond the walls of their church to serve and show Christ's love to those in their community.

Leading the Laity Choose love over fear



by Eugene Williams,
Conference Co-Lay Leader
Grace and peace unto you, Easter siblings. As we revel in and appreciate the mighty acts of Christ during Holy Week and on Resurrection

Sunday, allow me to remind us all that Eastertide does not end until the book of Revelation. Though we celebrate the season of Lent anew each year as a reminder of the mighty acts of Christ, the fact is, Easter never ends. That is why we are called Easter People.

As Easter People, we do not operate from a base of fear, rather that of love and positivity. Easter People operate from a season of abundance and especially the abundance of love. Let's consider the following: Our bank accounts of love are plentiful and overflowing. These accounts will never become depleted, so let's spend some of it! Then you will see that the return on your investment is much greater than that of a soaring stock market. We must choose love and not fear.

With the ability to extend love being such an abundant commodity, why is it so difficult to share it? Maybe it's because it is easy to allow fear to creep into our mindset. But love, like God's grace, is so plentiful that we never have to worry about using up the most precious resource that we possess. Love is more precious than gold, silver, and rubies. We simply have to offer it freely to others.

When we give into fear, it causes us to be more judgmental and less compassionate. Christ has provided us with the answer in the two greatest commandments: First, "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all

your mind" and second, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt. 22:37-40).

There are approximately 800,000 words in the Bible. Love is mentioned approximately 600 times and fear is mentioned approximately 400 times. Choose love over fear! Emulate Christ and obey his commandment!

Though we are still in Eastertide, we are also facing many challenging situations that will test just how willing we are to share our abundance of love. At the United Methodist General Conference, delegates were faced with proposals for severe budget cuts and decisions on regionalization. In our conference, we are also working through the reality of sharing a bishop and all that entails, to ensure transparency and fairness for all. And we await the formal decision as to whom will be our bishop of the new Northern Illinois and Wisconsin Episcopal Area.

And then there are other polarizing distractions: our current political landscape, women's choice, the Supreme Court, wars and rumors of wars (Israel, Gaza, Iran, Russia, and Ukraine), and once again, another police-involved shooting that will test the community's trust in law enforcement. Indeed, it is so easy to give in to fear and retreat into our dispassionate corners of judgment.

But we cannot be afraid to show our love for one another; it costs us nothing. It may seem easier to give into fear and peer pressure, but it is truly an easy lift to share love abundantly.

Choose love over fear! It is what Christ expects of us. May God bless you and keep you as we continue on our Easter journey. And as with everything we do, to God be the glory. Amen!

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports the Board of Laity.



JOY Camp welcomes fifth-graders through high schoolers

by Payton Keithley, JOY Camp co-director

Young people starting fifth grade through newly graduated high-school students can participate in JOY Camp, June 23-29, a popular camp annually at Camp Reynoldswood, Dixon, IL. All are welcome, regardless of where they are in their journey of faith.

The camp delivers the message of God's love through fun, fellowship, nature, scripture, and worship. Its theme, "Jesus, Others, and Yourself," helps guide young Christians in their walk with Jesus Christ.

Each year, the camp alternates its focus on one of the JOY aspects of faith. This is an "Others" year.



Camp Reynoldswood features 170 acres of woods and meadows. With this much space, there is always plenty to do! Activities include canoeing, swimming, volleyball, arts and crafts, team building, and a talent show.

A typical day begins with a buffet-style breakfast, followed by morning worship led by a talented worship team. The rest of the morning is packed with exciting outdoor activities and a core Bible lesson tailored to campers' specific age groups. Another short worship time follows lunch, leading into an afternoon of even more fun. After dinner, there is a final "all camp" worship service and evening activities around a campfire.

Every one of JOY Camp's counselors and directors are passionately committed to the development of young Christians and those who are seeking to know the Lord better. They strive to make JOY Camp a safe space for young people to explore their faith, ask tough questions, and learn what it means to live in Christian fellowship with others.

Registration for JOY Camp is currently open on joycamp.org/registration. The fee is \$590; discounts are available for those who register by June 1 and sibling campers. If you have questions, contact the camp leader at registration@joycamp.org.

Stronger Together



by Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer, NIC Director of Connectional Ministries
When I was 22 years old, I was elected to be the president of the Youth and Young Adult Federation of the Methodist

Church (for people 18 to 30 years old) in Chile, a volunteer role elected by all the youth and young adult members of the church. I coordinated youth and young adult work across the country and represented them at the national and international levels in boards, conferences, and general assemblies.

This was an enormous experience for me as a young woman and an opportunity to grow in my leadership beside the strong adult church leaders in those days. The Bible verse I used in most of my reports was 1 Timothy 4:12, "Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity" (NRSVUE). The phrase that I also shared was

"young people are the 'today' of the church."

That phrase that I shared 25 years ago is something I still strongly believe. Young people are not and should not be considered only the future of the church; they are the TODAY. Ministries with young people are a vital part of The United Methodist Church and are as diverse as the global youth and young adults who connect with their community, their church, and God.

I'm encouraged to see the diverse ministries that churches in our conference are doing with the young people in their communities. Churches creatively offer different kinds of opportunities, such as confirmation classes, kids clubs, messy church, Sunday school, afterschool programs, cooking classes, vacation Bible schools, and camps, among others.

Every four years, youth from throughout the UMC gather for four days of discipleship, fun, and fellowship at Youth, an event orga-

Young people are the 'today' of the church

nized by the UMC's Discipleship Ministries. It includes interactive learning, worship, Bible study, service opportunities, and fellowship.

Here are some of the upcoming events for youth in our conference:

- **JOY Camp** (June 2024). A weeklong overnight camp focused on delivering the message of God's love through fun, fellowship, nature, scripture, and worship. This camp is organized by a group of clergy and lay in our conference who have extensive experience in youth ministry (See the article in this issue to the left.).

- **Fall Youth Retreat** (September 2024). This retreat is organized by youth leaders from different NIC churches who wanted to plan a special event for the youth in their congregations. Recently, they have invited all churches across the conference to send their youth to learn, get to know each other, and experience God in their lives. Watch the conference eNews and website for more information.



A couple of years ago, the Discipleship Task Force offered a series of resources called Youth Ministry Jumpstart. In one of the videos, Pastor Seamus Enright said, "Youth ministry is not about how cool you are, it is about showing up. . . Show up, listen and invite young people to follow Jesus." (Find more information umcnic.org/jumpstart.)

I celebrate the churches that are developing extraordinary youth ministries, and I encourage other churches to consider starting a ministry with young people or to partner with neighbor churches to do so. You don't have to have all the answers and all the ideas; just the desire to make a difference in young people's lives in your church and your community. Remember that all we do is not only for the future. Young people are the TODAY of the church!

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports Connectional Ministries.



Workshop equips youth leaders to teach anti-racism

by Al Benson

Chicago and suburban church youth leaders gathered at Wesley United Methodist Church in Aurora on April 13 to explore laying the groundwork for friendships and alliances to fight racism.

"Becoming the Beloved Community: Disciplining Anti-Racist Youth," a morning workshop, was presented by the Anti-Racism Task Force of the Northern Illinois Conference. It was developed specifically for leaders of youth based on the Becoming Beloved Community Workshop, which is offered to churches.

Rev. Matthew Krings, pastor at Berry UMC in Chicago and a task force member, welcomed participants. He said the workshop aims to provide a deeply reflective and contemplative

discernment about systemic racism and ways to address it.

Workshop facilitator was Richard R. Guzman, professor emeritus at North Central College in Naperville and a member of the conference ARTF.

"The workshop emphasizes engagement, not confrontation," Guzman said. "To make progress on race relations, we have to stay engaged, even with people we disagree with."

Trained facilitators led story sharing, helping people connect



personally with presentations. Small-group discussions followed presentations.

Guzman added that the program re-balances views of the personal vs. the systemic. "Though we talk about the harm personal racism causes, we also have to become aware of systems," Guzman said.

Relationships are paramount, he emphasized. Through friendships and alliances, people can unite to counter racism. The workshop is respectful while confronting hard issues.

Other churches hosting the workshop were Friendship UMC in Bolingbrook, North Shore UMC, First UMC in Glencoe, First UMC in Elmhurst, and First UMC in Elgin.

Learn more at umcnic.org/calendar/becoming-beloved-community.



What is a General Conference?

by Rev. Arlene Christopherson,
Assistant to the Bishop

United Methodists have heard the phrase General Conference tossed about frequently these days. Many of us are aware that there was a denomination-wide General Conference in Charlotte, NC, from April 23 to May 3, but what is a General Conference and why do we have one?

A General Conference is a representative gathering of laity and clergy who come together to set church laws, processes, budgets, elect committee members, consider resolutions on social issues, hear reports, and frame the work of the denomination for the coming four years.

The general meeting of the United Methodist Church can be traced back to John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, who hosted the first conference of Methodist preachers in London in 1744. The first conference of preachers in America took place in Philadelphia in 1773, three years before the U.S. became a nation. In 1784, the Christmas Conference took place in Baltimore, officially launching one of the early predecessors of the United Methodist Church, the Method-

ist Episcopal Church. By 1792, this gathering took on the name General Conference and began a four-year cycle of meetings. Other branches of Methodism that formed in the U.S. followed a similar pattern, with General Conferences taking place as frequently as every year to every four years. The tradition of convening a General Conference extends back 250 years and continues today.

There are some significant differences between those early General Conferences and the gathering that is taking place in Charlotte. Lay delegates were not part of the General Conference body until 1870. Every early branch of the Methodist movement in the U.S. hosted a gathering of preachers only on a routine basis. Those gathered preachers would . . . well, preach, teach, and work in good Methodist fashion on "ordering the life of the church." This included creating rules to live by, debating issues of social justice and taking stands on concerns such as slavery in 1800. Eighteen lay women were first seated as delegates at a

General Conference in 1922 and the first laity address was delivered in 1980.

In 1972, the first United Methodist General Conference took place in Atlanta. This quadrennial (every four years) gathering now includes a diverse body of delegates from across the globe: Africa, the Philippines, Europe, and the U.S. This year's conference comprised 862 delegates, an equal number of lay and clergy. Ten languages were spoken during the sessions.

Yes, this is the postponed 2020 General Conference, another first as we were prevented by the global pandemic from meeting for the past eight years (other than a limited, special called conference in 2019). There is much work to catch up on as the UMC's landscape continues to change. We are a denomination finding our way through secularization in the U.S., the loss of churches to disaffiliation, continued conflicts over human sexuality, the regionalization of denomination, and the questions of social justice that unite, challenge, and call us to debate and pray.



Your giving to General Church apportionments supports General Conference.

[Read what happened at General Conference at umcnic.org/news](https://umcnic.org/news) and umnews.org.



NIC General Conference delegates and reserve delegates receive a blessing at the Delegation Sending Forth Worship on April 7, 2024.

Clergy Appointments and Retirements

Bishop Dan Schwerin announces the following clergy appointments and retirements for the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church, effective July 1, 2023 (unless otherwise noted):

Rob Wandell (Superintendent Supply) to Capron (¼) (Prairie North). Rob follows Jay Hyesang Shin, who is moving to full-time at Belvedere: First Associate (Prairie North). Effective April 1.

Kelli Knight (Full Elder) to 346.1 as Associate at Catalina First (Desert Southwest Conference) from Extension Ministry

Dawn Gardner (Licensed Local Pastor) to Chicago: West Ridge Community (¼) while remaining at Evanston: Hemenway (½) (Lake North). Dawn follows Aaron McLeod, who will remain at Evanston: Sherman (¾) (Lake North).

Arnel Vasquez (346.1) to Lead Pastor at Chicago: Edison Park (¾) and Oak Park: St. John's (¼) (Lake North) from Magsaysay UMC in Tondo, Manila (Philippines Annual Conference). Arnel follows Victor Melad, who is appointed as the Lake North District Superintendent.

Ashish Singh (Full Elder) to Addison: Good Samaritan (Prairie Central) from Libertyville Associate (Lake North). Ashish follows Jeremiah Lee, who is appointed to Shannon: Bethel (Prairie North).

Cheri Quillman (Licensed Local Pastor) to Forreston/Leaf River (Prairie North) from Serena/Norway/Millington. Cheri follows Eddie Eddy, who has been supporting the congregation as an extension of his Freeport ministry.

David Profitt (DSS) to the new position Associate at Arlington Heights: First (¾ time) (Lake North).

Michael Hickock (Full Elder) to Princeton (Prairie South) from Boilingbrook: Crossroads of Faith (Prairie Central). Mike follows Ryan Sutton, who is appointed to Roscoe.

Praveen Raj Natarajan Lily (346.2 Student) ad interim to Melrose Park: Cosmopolitan (¼) (Lake North). Praveen follows John Sianghio, who is moving to Arizona State University to be the

Assistant Director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict, effective May 15.

Sam Park (Full Elder) to Mount Prospect: Trinity (Lake North) from Aurora: Bethany of Fox Valley (Prairie Central). Sam follows Wendy Hardin Herman, who is appointed Prairie Central District Superintendent.

Jonathan Grace (346.1) to Lead Pastor at Chicago: Urban Village Church Edgewater (Lake North) from 723 Ministries and Thrive at Lovers Lane UMC (North Texas Conference). Jonathan follows Christian Coon (as Lead), who is moving to Transitional Leave, and Lois Parr (in Edgewater), who is an interim.

DaeGyu Dave Yim (Full Elder) to Woodridge (Prairie Central) from Savannah (Prairie North). Dave follows Danita Anderson, who is appointed as Assistant to the Bishop.

Abby Holcombe (Provisional Elder) to River Forest (½) and Site Pastor Urban Village West (½) (Lake North). Abby follows Christian Coon, who is appointed to Transitional Leave.

Rick Carlson (Retired Elder) to West Dundee (½) (Prairie Central) from Interim Lead at Arlington Heights: First (Lake North). Rick follows Wendy Witt, who is retiring.

Richard Wagner (Full Elder) to retirement from Olympia Fields (Lake South). Rich was ordained a Probationary Elder in 1988 and became a Full Elder in 1992. During his ministry Rich served Morrison (Associate), Pierce, Cortland, Wilton Center Federated, Elgin: Wesley, Lake Villa, and Olympia Fields.

Fernando Candumbo de Castro (Licensed Local Pastor) to Savannah from Oak Park: St. John's/Chicago: Edison Park (associate) (½) (Lake North). Fernando follows DaeGyu "Dave" Yim, who is appointed to Woodridge (Prairie Central).

Lino Aragon (Licensed Local Pastor) to Lib-

ertyville (Associate) from Des Plaines: Nuevo Amanecer (Lake North). Lino follows Ashish Singh, who is appointed to Addison: Good Samaritan (Prairie Central).

Innis Miller (Full Elder) to Chicago: Englewood-Rust (½) while remaining at Chicago: Kelly Woodlawn (½) (Lake South). Innis is ending his service at Blue Island: Grace, which decided to close. At Englewood-Rust, Innis follows Grace Oh, who is appointed to Hinsdale (Lake South).

Matthew Smith (Provisional Elder) to Cedarville (1/4), while continuing at Warren (1/2) and Red Oak (1/4) (Prairie North). Matthew follows Gary Rich, who is retiring.

Payton "Buzz" Wheeler (District Superintendent Supply) to Lake Villa (Prairie Central). Buzz follows Jacques Manirikiza, who has concluded his student appointment. Effective May 1.

Sang Hun Han (Full Elder) to Aurora: Bethany of Fox Valley (Prairie Central) from Schaumburg: Salem Korean. Sang Hun Han follows Sam Park, who is appointed to Mount Prospect: Trinity (Lake North).

Jackie Moreno Salgado (Licensed Local Pastor) to Bensenville (½) (Prairie Central) from Franklin Park: First Associate (¼) (Lake North). Jackie follows Juyeon Jeon, who is appointed to Wheeling: First Korean Associate (Lake North). Effective June 1.

Chanje (CJ) Woo (Licensed Local Pastor) to Mundelein: Vision (¼), while remaining at Arlington Heights: Church of the Incarnation (¾) (Lake North). CJ follows Kun Sang Cho, who has been serving as an interim.

Dennis Langdon (Full Elder) to Olympia Fields (¾), while remaining at Chicago: Trinity (¼) (Lake South). Dennis follows Richard Wagner, who is retiring.

Your giving to NIC apportionments support clergy appointments, moves and retirements.

