

# The Northern Illinois Conference OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Reporter

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## United Methodists walk alongside Hurricane Ian survivors By Joey Butler\*



Members of a volunteer team from the North Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church clean out a home in Fort Myers, Fla., that was flooded by Hurricane Ian. Photo by Mike DuBose, UM News.

In the first weeks following Hurricane Ian striking southwest Florida, pastors and church volunteers sprang into action to assess need and provide comfort.

Ian brought 150-mph winds to Florida on Sept. 28, and there have so far been more than 110 storm-related deaths in Florida alone, as well as fatalities in Cuba, North Carolina and Virginia. The storm also knocked out power to 2.6 million homes and businesses, with long-term recovery estimated in the tens of billions of dollars. It is the deadliest storm to hit Florida in almost 90 years.

Florida Conference Bishop Kenneth H. Carter Jr. spent several days following the storm visiting pastors in areas that were hardest hit.

“We were just there to listen and pray, to try to be a visible sign of the

connection,” he said. “It helps us to visually see how people are doing. Everyone we met was very exhausted, as are we.”

The Rev. Debbie Allen, superintendent of the South West District, which includes Fort Myers, said that of the 75 churches and missions in the district, at least two-thirds suffered some kind of damage.

“I think the community here got hit harder in a lot of ways but the churches seem to have been more fortunate in terms of damage, so you see them already out there trying to engage and work with their communities to offer help and hope,” Allen said. “It’s what we do. We’re United Methodists; we take our faith and put it into action.”

The Rev. Arlene Jackson, pastor of the Fort Myers Central campus of Grace United Methodist Church,

said that they held worship in the sanctuary the Sunday after Ian hit, even with limited electricity and no running water. Jackson reports they had a full house, sang hymns a cappella and celebrated Holy Communion together. Members of the 12-step recovery community, with whom the church has a strong partnership, brought grills to feed both the church and utility workers trying to restore power. A local DJ even brought a sound system to play music.

Jackson’s home took on three feet of water and she said she’s basically lost all her worldly possessions, “but we’ve got each other, we’ve got God and our faith.”

When asked how she juggles ministering to her congregants while dealing with her own loss, Jackson laughed out loud.

(continued on page 3, see From the Cover)



### How to Help

Midwest Mission, located just outside Chatham, Ill., is working to provide disaster relief to those affected by Hurricane Ian and is in critical need of donations.

“Our cleaning kit supplies have been depleted. After sending relief to 14 U.S. disasters this year, including the most recent flooding in Kentucky and St. Louis, we need help replenishing so we can get supplies to our partners who are ready to deploy the requested supplies,” said Executive Director Chantel Corrie.

#### Three Ways to Help

1. Donate money so Midwest Mission can buy the supplies needed to fill the Cleaning Kits. Donate by texting “Donate” to 855-589-1314 or go to [midwestmission.org/donate](http://midwestmission.org/donate).
2. Collect supplies and bring them to Midwest Mission at 1001 Mission Dr. Pawnee, IL 62558. Or take supplies to a Permanent Collection Site near you listed at [midwestmission.org/donate/permanent-collection-sites](http://midwestmission.org/donate/permanent-collection-sites).
3. Buy supplies online and have them sent directly to Midwest Mission. Walmart and Dollar Days are good resources for volume and discounts. Find more information at [midwestmission.org/hurricane-relief](http://midwestmission.org/hurricane-relief).



## From Your Bishop: Passing the baton

*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake*

*of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.”* Hebrews 12:1-2 (NRSV)

Faith in Christ is something to pass on to others. It is like a baton in a relay race that we receive from someone and pass on to another runner. It is having an experience with Jesus, knowing that God has changed your life, and sharing it with someone who will carry the message forward.

When I arrived in Northern Illinois by Zoom on January 1, 2021, I was surrounded by “so great a cloud of witnesses.” The baton I received from Bishop Sally Dyck was full of heartfelt love and service. Her faith and your faith warmed my heart. I wanted to honor those who came before me in the faith and this conference. Like many of our pastors, I had to quickly learn how to shift to listening and leading online. “Lights, camera, action” replaced “can

we talk for a moment.” Despite the limitations imposed by the COVID pandemic, we built trust, learned together, shared our faith, and relied on each other.

It has been an honor and a blessing to serve with you over these past two years. At first, I thought I would be your interim bishop for one year. However, like many of those who came before us, the race we run is often longer than we anticipate. Hebrews 12:1 encourages us to “run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.” We do not run the race alone. We keep running by focusing on Jesus. Our goal is to pass God’s love in Jesus Christ on to others.

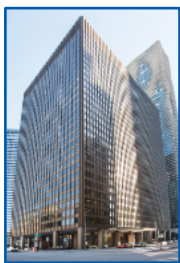
I thank you for sustaining me in my leadership among you. Your prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness kept my eyes upon Jesus when some members sought to divide our church to save it. My faith journey began in a Methodist Church when I was 12. I continue to keep the vows I made to Christ and his Church when I was 13. I wholeheartedly believe, *“The Church is of God, and will be preserved to the end of time, for the conduct of worship and the due administration of the Word and Sacraments, the maintenance of Christian fellowship and discipline, the edification of believers, and the conversion of the world. All, of every age and station, stand in need of the means of grace which it alone supplies.”* (The Book of Worship for Church and Home, UMPH, 1964, 1965)

I received the baton of spiritual leadership in the Northern Illinois Conference from Bishop Dyck, who received it from Bishop Jung, who received it from Bishop Sprague, who received it from Bishop Duecker, who received it from Bishop Dewitt. Now it is time that I pass the baton to another bishop.

This month on November 5, a new bishop will be named at the North Central Jurisdictional Conference to follow me on January 1, 2023. That bishop will look back at me with an outstretched arm as I hand off the spiritual leadership of the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church. Like all runners, I will take a deep breath from temporary exhaustion and smile that someone continues to pass on faith in Christ to a new generation.

Your ministry is not to applaud those running but to be in the race yourself. Praise God for the “cloud of witnesses” who have passed Christ on to you. Keep running with perseverance as a sign of your trust in Jesus. Reach out and support those who run the race with you. Most of all, honor and support your next bishop as you have supported me. I will always remember you in my prayers as you follow the leadership of a new servant of Christ.

To find the announcement of the Northern Illinois Conference’s new bishop, visit [umcnic.org/news](http://umcnic.org/news).



ATTENTION PLEASE

# WE'VE MOVED

## Conference office relocates in Chicago Loop

The Board of Trustees announced in October that the Northern Illinois Conference office would move to a new location in Chicago’s East Loop to a 30-story building along the riverfront at 303 E. Wacker Drive, Suite 2020, effective November 1.

When the Conference’s current lease at 77 W. Washington St. at the Chicago Temple came up for renewal this summer, the Trustees took the opportunity to reassess office needs and survey many other factors in whether to stay or go.

“The Trustee Board heavily considered the needs of the Conference staff for space, environment, security, amenities, and purpose for coming into the office, and decided not to renew at 77 W. Washington,” NIC Board of Trustees Chair Rev. Nancy Blade said. “The move-in ready office at 303 E. Wacker will help us downsize and think creatively about how we resource our local churches.”

Blade added the new office will also better equip the Episcopal needs and help the Conference be well prepared to welcome a new bishop who will arrive in January.

Since moving to the Chicago Temple building from Higgins Road in 2002, a lot has changed, from staff size to better technology.

“In 2002, we needed dedicated office space for 32 persons and five part-time offices,” NIC Treasurer Lonnie Chafin noted. “Today, in 2022, we need dedicated office space for ten people. We have eight hybrid positions in the office weekly, and District Superintendents now work fully remote.”

With the move, Conference office space will decrease from 9,400 square feet to 7,100 square feet. The board explored smaller footprints with 77 W. Washington building management, but those options required costly renovation and construction.

Chafin said the new office lease contract is a deal almost too good to pass up.

“With a great number of companies abandoning office space or moving to smaller offices now that hybrid and work from home has become the norm, Loop commercial

real estate is cheaper than it’s been in a long time,” said Chafin. “Consequently, landlords are providing unprecedented incentives to new tenants.”

Chafin said the Conference is subleasing space from a marketing company that has decided to go fully remote. He said we’ve signed a ten-year agreement and will receive 13 months of free rent, 40 months at half price, and 500 square feet for free the entire period. It also comes fully furnished.

The Board of Trustees considered input from many conference leaders and the Annual Conference Shepherding Team, including suggestions to relocate outside the city and concerns about distance and accessibility to staff.

“We have heard clearly the desire for connection between the Conference staff and the local church and will continue to make that available and improve services wherever we are located,” said Blade.

Bishop John L. Hopkins added the high level of customer service will stay the same since the staff and Episcopal offices are primarily administrative, and we use local churches and Zoom for training, conferences, and other events.

“I am grateful to our Conference Trustees, especially Rev. Nancy Blade and Lonnie Chafin, for vetting their decision with the Annual Conference Shepherding Team, the Conference Council on Finance and Administration, and the Cabinet,” said Bishop Hopkins. “The staff team will benefit from having a better place for collaboration and service.”

Postcards with the new address will be mailed to local churches later this month. Apportionments and benefit payments should continue to mail to the same post office box. Property Insurance payments will have a new post office box. All other communications with the Conference should be sent to the new address.

While the Conference has enjoyed being housed at the Chicago Temple for over 20 years, the new office accommodates current changes in reduced staff and

### Things to Note:

- **Change of address effective Nov. 1:**  
303 E. Wacker Dr., Suite 2020  
Chicago, IL 60601
- **All phone extensions and email addresses stay the same.**
- **Send Apportionment and Health Insurance/Pension checks to the same PO Box address:**  
Northern Illinois Conference  
PO Box 5646, Carol Stream, IL 60197-5646.
- **Property Insurance Checks may be sent to:**  
Northern Illinois Conference  
PO Box 8246  
Carol Stream, IL 60197-8246

increased online ministry connections, plus it provides the flexibility to adapt to a rapidly changing working environment.

### United Methodist Foundation announces move

The United Methodist Foundation of the Northern Illinois Conference has also decided to move to a new location in the west end of Chicago’s Loop at the intersection of Wacker Drive and Randolph Street on November 1. Their new address is 155 North Wacker Drive, Suite 4250, Chicago, IL 60606. Their contact information stays the same. The phone number is 312-334-0704, email [contact@umfnic.org](mailto:contact@umfnic.org) and website is [umfnic.org](http://umfnic.org).

The **General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW)**, which shared space with the Conference on the 19th floor, also moved out of the Temple in October. While the staff will be working remotely, correspondence may be mailed to the new NIC address at 303 E. Wacker Dr., Suite 2020, Chicago, IL 60601. The agency’s phone number stays the same, 312-346-4900 or toll-free 800-523-8390. Their email is [info@gscrw.org](mailto:info@gscrw.org) and website is [gscrw.org](http://gscrw.org).



# North Central Jurisdictional delegates to elect up to three bishops

By Paul Black\*

With the theme "We Press On," delegates from 10 annual conferences across the Midwest will gather in Fort Wayne, Ind., Nov. 2-5 for a regular session of the North Central Jurisdictional Conference, where up to three new bishops will be elected.

In a quadrennium marked by postponement of 2020 jurisdictional conferences due to a global pandemic and a special NCJ session held in November 2021, delegates will gather for several business items. They will handle two of its major responsibilities – election of bishops and approval of a jurisdictional budget for the quadrennium.

## Election of bishops

The first order of business will be consideration of a joint recommendation of the NCJ Committee on Episcopacy and the NCJ College of Bishops to elect three new bishops, which will assume office on Jan. 1, 2023.

A second recommendation is to have a single episcopal leader for the Dakotas and Minnesota conferences, as it was between 2016 and 2020 before retirements forced a temporary reshuffling of episcopal assignments.

Due to declining membership within the jurisdiction, it was anticipated that the NCJ College, comprised of nine episcopal areas, would be reduced to eight for the 2020-2024 quadrennium. Normally, those numbers are announced at General Conference before the start of jurisdictional conference.

When the November 2021 special session was held, delegates voted to fill only one vacancy of the two left by the retirements of Bishops Sally Dyck of the Chicago Area (Northern Illinois Conference) and Bruce Ough of the Dakotas-Minnesota Area, who both were assigned to duties with the Council of Bishops.

Bishop Laurie Haller of the Iowa Area also announced earlier in August that she will retire, effective Dec. 31, allowing a third bishop to be elected.

Since then, the Judicial Council has ruled that since General Conference did not meet and since no announcement was made, jurisdictions could use the 2016 formula for number of bishops as a guideline, meaning NCJ would maintain nine bishops through 2024.

Another factor that has led to the recommendation of three elections instead of one is that two and possibly three bishops will retire in 2024, leaving the flexibility for the jurisdiction to downsize the College of Bishops through attrition.

## Candidates for bishop

Ten persons have announced their candidacy for bishop. The field of 10 includes the following:

- Rev. Todd D. Anderson, West Ohio
- Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai, Michigan
- Rev. Dr. Curtis Brown, Illinois Great Rivers
- Rev. Jacques Conway, Northern Illinois
- Rev. Cara E. Stultz Costello, East Ohio
- Rev. Dr. Aleze Fulbright, Indiana
- Rev. Dr. Lanette Plambeck, Iowa
- Rev. Jonathan Priebe, East Ohio
- Rev. Luis Felipe Reyes, Northern Illinois
- Rev. Dan Schwerin, Wisconsin

Balloting will be in the morning session on Nov. 2, beginning at 10 a.m. EST and continuing throughout the plenaries each day until the number of persons elected matches the number of vacancies. To be elected, a candidate must garner 60 percent of the vote on any one ballot.

## Future episcopal areas

Delegates will hear a report from the Committee on Episcopacy about future episcopal areas. Due to the membership decline and an anticipated reduction brought about by churches disaffiliating, the committee is making the following recommendations:

- The Northern Illinois and Wisconsin conferences and East and West Ohio conferences begin conversation with one another about sharing a bishop.
- All annual conferences begin conversation about sharing episcopal areas in the future.
- A Role of Episcopacy in the NCJ Task Force be formed and charged with bringing its findings and proposals to the 2024 jurisdictional conference.

## Other services and highlights

A retiree recognition for Bishops Dyck, Ough and Haller will be held at 4 p.m. EST Thursday with a special offering for the United Methodist Committee on Relief's Migration Project.

The Service of Consecration will take place Saturday, at 10 a.m. EST, with Bishop Dyck preaching. Assignments of bishops to areas beginning Jan. 1, 2023, will then be announced. A reception will follow at 11:45 a.m.

For more information and to watch the livestream of the conference, visit [ncjumc.org](http://ncjumc.org).

*\*Paul Black is the Dir. of Communications and delegate for the Illinois Great Rivers Conference*



## From the Cover

"I'm not juggling this at all. Are you out of your mind? All the plates are on the ground! We're just all helping each other get through it."

For Lara Martin, director of U.S. Disaster Response for the United Methodist Committee on Relief, this storm hit home — literally. A Florida native, Martin said that rather than numbers, she sees "the faces of cousins, aunts, uncles, my own pastor, and places where I've grown up — probably changed forever."

Martin said that UMCOR has been partnering with the Florida Conference for years on the plans that are now in action.

"While the situation is chaotic and the emotions are raw even for me, we know what the next steps are going to be, and we know this conference has the capacity to change everything," she said.

The Rev. Marcus Zillman, senior pastor of Cypress Lake United Methodist Church in Fort Myers, is concerned about the long-term psychological needs of his community. Because Ian was predicted to land further north, many in the Fort Myers area didn't evacuate, including families with young children who may now be dealing with the trauma of going through such a deadly storm.

"Over the next few months, people will need to grieve and tell their stories," he said.

His church didn't sustain much damage, so it's serving as a collection point for supplies like water and tarps, and will soon be ready to host work teams.

Though it's still early for widespread mobilization of work teams, a crew from the North Georgia Conference did make it to Fort Myers a few days after Ian struck.

Mark Brown, a disaster response team leader from Northside United Methodist Church in Atlanta, said he'd been scheduled to deliver a truckload of supplies to the Florida Conference office in Lakeland when he got a call from his conference disaster relief coordinator, asking him instead to assemble a team and travel to Fort Myers as soon as possible. Brown said that within 15 hours, he had 11 volunteers.

"Jesus told us we're supposed to do this, and it may seem like we're serving a lot of people. But we get a lot of service out of it as well," he said. "We go home full of God's spirit, and fellowship and love we've inherited from the homeowners."

Homeowner Sandy Smart was among those relieved to see the North Georgia team, which cleaned out his house after it took on six feet of water.

"It's a blessing," Smart said. "They've done an awesome job."

Smart said he has no idea how long it will be before his house will be in good enough condition to live in. Like many affected by the storm, he said it's going to be a long and slow process. Zillman, Cypress Lake's pastor, agreed.

"There's gonna be needs here for the next six, eight, 12 months," he said. "I hope everyone doesn't forget about us once we're off the front page because it's gonna be a long recovery."

*\*Joey Butler is a multimedia producer/editor for United Methodist News.*



United Methodist leaders pray with the Rev. Juan Ramos (in checked shirt) outside Tice United Methodist Church in Fort Myers, Fla., following Hurricane Ian. Photo by Mike DuBose, UM News.



Members of a volunteer team from the North Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church clear storm debris and damaged kitchen items from a home that was flooded by Hurricane Ian in Fort Myers, Fla. Photo by Mike DuBose, UM News.

## Skokie church welcomes migrants as their neighbor

Submitted by Rev. Sun Hyung Jo, Jesus Love UMC

After hearing the news of hundreds migrants from Central and South America being bused to U.S. cities from Texas, Jesus Love UMC in Skokie put into action a way to help those arriving in their community. Since August more than 1,500 migrants have been bused to Chicago and they're now staying in temporary shelters and hotels (near O'Hare and in the suburbs). It's expected that buses with those seeking asylum will continue to arrive every week for the next several months—many with just the clothes on their back and without access to essential supplies necessary for survival.

In early September, NIC's Refugee Coordinator Rev. Jonathan Crail requested a meeting with all churches to find ways to offer assistance to the migrants arriving in Chicago, including setting up donation locations and working with World Relief to organize volunteers.

After an emergency meeting with the church's "Love Your Neighbor" team, Jesus Love's congregation decided to serve in two ways: collecting donation items in the church and preparing one hundred \$20 gift cards. Although it may not be a large amount, we thought our new neighbors might need the gift cards for purchasing feminine products, first aid supplies, etc. By doing this, we wanted to help our new neighbors feel a sense of relief.

On September 25, our congregation came together to prepare the various donation items. We also made welcome cards with warm messages to go along with the gift cards. Each member of our church, including the children, had time to learn about who our "neighbors" are and how we should care for them.

After hearing that most of those who have arrived in Chicago this time around are from Venezuela, we wrote our messages in Spanish. Planning these projects and putting them into practice always reminds us that "serving others" comes back to us as a blessing.

A few days after we made the welcome cards, one of our church members let me know that 43 migrant children had enrolled in her children's school and that her children and the new students would be taking classes alongside each other. I'm sure that this served as an important reminder for her family to always "love your neighbor as yourself."

Lake North District Superintendent Brittany Isaac celebrated Jesus Love's act of kindness.

"All of these migrants who are finding a new home in the Chicago area will shape our city and suburbs for generations to come," said Isaac. "The better support we can give them now, the better our future will be collectively."

The congregation was eager to help in a tangible way. Leaving aside the political debate on what is right or wrong, the church's job is to show God's love and goodwill to these wanderers, our neighbors who have lost their home. It is our job to make them feel loved, as they have been created as the image of God, just like us.

For more information on how to help with migrant assistance, visit [umcnic.org/ChicagoMigrants](http://umcnic.org/ChicagoMigrants).



Children at Jesus Love UMC in Skokie help decorate and write messages in cards for migrants who are finding a new home in the Chicago area after being bused from Texas.



## Young adult mission opportunity

Are you looking for an opportunity to fight the root causes of injustice in the United States through deep engagement with a local community? Are you between the ages of 20-30?

The Global Mission Fellow US-2 Track could be the perfect opportunity for you! Global Mission Fellows seek to combat systemic oppression and alleviate

suffering while serving in partnership with their new community.

They serve for two years as a cohort across the United States working in public health, migration issues, poverty situations, and much more. Applications are open for serving in 2023. Learn more and apply at [umcmision.org/become-a-fellow](http://umcmision.org/become-a-fellow).



# Packing up helps Philippine ministry

When Rev. Arlene Christopherson, NIC's Assistant to the Bishop and Director of Connectional Ministries, began packing up her office on the 18th floor of the Chicago Temple, she rolled up her sleeves to sort through dozens of books and resources she's collected through the years. It was a library dating back to her seminary days filled with a wealth of wisdom.

Knowing she couldn't move loads of books to the new Conference office space, Arlene contacted Aquilino "Pong" Javier, the NIC's chair of Older Adult Ministries.

What started as a mission project for the 2018 National Association of Filipino American United Methodists (NAFAUM) convocation in Manila, Javier continues to ship books, sheet music, hymnals, songbooks, and much more to help supply churches in the Philippines.

With mixed emotions, Christopherson boxed up the sentimental books that served her and the conference staff over the years, and Javier made a special pick-up at the Chicago Temple on October 19 filling his trunk with the literary donation.

"A little piece of my heart goes with those resources, and I hope they mean as much to

someone in the future as they have meant to me over the years," said Christopherson.

Javier said he's already contacted the president of the Wesleyan University Philippines (WUP), Judge Benjamin Turano, who pledged to sponsor the shipment cost.

"He is excited about this prospect," said Javier. "The collection will be in the Wesley Divinity School Library of WUP. I have already helped enhance other WUP department libraries."

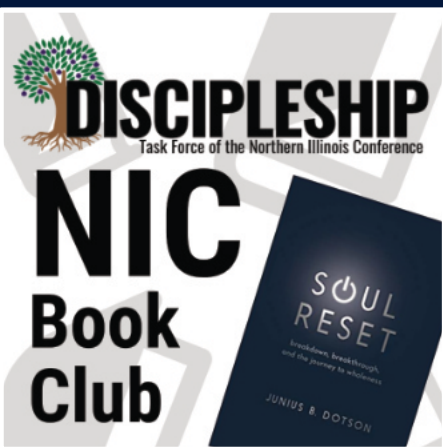
Javier said he's lost count of how many shipments he made to the Philippines over the last four years, but he guesstimates about 160 cargo boxes.

"One cargo box can fit 3.5 of the Office Depot size-copy-paper-box," Javier said. "I must have sent 200 United Methodist Hymnals to WUP when I found out that as a UM institution, it did not have a UM Hymnal. WUP now is using NIC donated used-hymnals."

Javier appreciates the many generous donations to his ministry that continue to bless our ministry partners in the Philippines. If you have a donation, please contact Aquilino "Pong" Javier at 708-268-7003 or email at [abjavierjr@gmail.com](mailto:abjavierjr@gmail.com).



Rev. Arlene Christopherson parts ways with books she's collected since seminary to give to Aquilino "Pong" Javier, who will ship them to United Methodist partners in the Philippines.



## Reset your soul with the NIC book club

The fall groups are well underway! The Discipleship Task Force has been engaging in some great discussions on hard topics like burnout, depression, grief, or just over-extension. It's time for a reset! The late Rev. Junius Dotson walks us through his experiences and daily spiritual practices that put that reset in motion in his book "Soul Reset." Our gaze changes from our daily planners to the omnipotent, all loving, holy God.

It is not too late to join our Fall 2022 NIC Book Club! You may register for the group who will be meeting during Advent, or one of the two groups meeting at the beginning of 2023. You may read it on your own or gather your own small group. Copies may be purchased at Cokesbury, Upper Room, Amazon, or other bookstores.

For more information, registration and resource videos, visit [umcnic.org/Discipleship/NICBookClub](http://umcnic.org/Discipleship/NICBookClub).



## NIC Hispanic/Latinx ministries celebrates with worship and learning



Saturday, October 15 marked the last day of Hispanic Heritage Month, and the Hispanic/Latinx people of our Northern Illinois Conference came together to celebrate their heritage and diversity and to thank God for the opportunity to serve Him in this country with resilience and hope.

Around 80 people came together for worship and communion for the first conference gathering in person since 2019.

Rev. Dr. Javier Viera, originally from Puerto Rico and President of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, was the guest preacher.

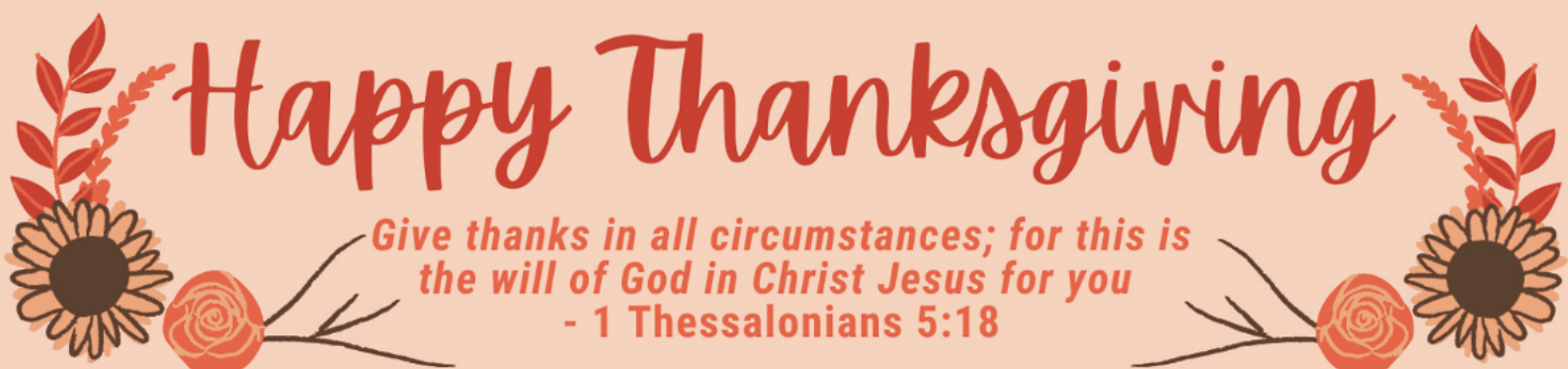
"We are peregrines, people in constant movement," said Dr. Viera, who also shared about the challenges of being immigrants in this country and the opportunities for our Christian communities to be the hands, feet, and lips of Jesus. "The church must be a prophetic voice in such times as these," said Dr. Viera.

The second part of the day was led by Paola Márquez, born in Colombia and a first-year Ph.D. student at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, whose presentation was about "Immigration and the youth."

The morning concluded with a delicious Hispanic/Latinx lunch for all the attendees. Follow [facebook.com/NICHispanicMinistries](https://www.facebook.com/NICHispanicMinistries).



◀ Participants enjoy fellowship following a day of worship and learning with an authentic Hispanic/Latinx meal at First UMC in Des Plaines.



# Native American leader discusses threatened cultures

By Klaus Ulrich Ruof, Translated by Jacqueline Rohmann

## November is Native American Heritage Month

In former times, the Rev. Glen Kernell would have been called an “Indian.” His name in the language of his tribe is Chebon.

As European settlement of North America expanded westward, the indigenous population with cultures going back hundreds and thousands of years was overwhelmed, oppressed and massacred. Families were split up and children re-educated.

Kernell said only 0.004% of Native Americans in North America survived after the relocation and dispossession period when Native Americans were forcibly removed from their lands and taken from their families. Today’s Native population are the descendants of those survivors. “I’m one of them,” he added.

During the 11th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held Aug. 31-Sept. 8, Kernell talked with UM News about what it’s like for threatened cultures consigned to life on the sidelines. The ecumenical gathering is characterized by colorful diversity — not just in terms of culture, but also with the issues that move participants and the challenges they face. Around 3,000 people from 120 countries attended.

Kernell is a member of Seminole Nation of Oklahoma. He is also of Muscogee Creek ancestry. The U.S. federal government recognizes 574 such nations of North America’s indigenous population spread out across what today is the territory of the United States.

He has been working as a United Methodist pastor in churches in Oklahoma for more than 10 years. Oklahoma is today home to members of multiple tribes, who were relocated from their original territory in the U.S. Southeast.

Kernell studied politics before getting a master’s degree in theology. For the past three years, he has been executive director of the United Methodist Native American Comprehensive Plan, which aims to give a voice to the concerns of the Native American people and to find ways of carrying out their aspirations. These include preserving the individual languages of the groups, acquiring an understanding for their very original spirituality and advocating to prevent violence against Native American women and children.

He said that one explicit objective of the plan focuses on the ever-growing efforts for climate justice.

This is why he doesn’t agree with the biblical phrase normally used in the church that describes people as stewards who have been given responsibility to take care of the land. In fact, he said, it should be the other way around.

“It’s not that the earth belongs to us and we take care of it. Instead, we belong to the earth and it takes care of us,” he said. “For countless generations, it has given us everything we need — air, water, fruit — and never kept anything from us.”

Kernell said that Methodism founder John Wesley was another European faith leader who failed in his approach to reach the Natives he encountered in the U.S.

In 1736, Wesley arrived in Savannah, Georgia, on a mission in the American colonies to evangelize the Indians. Those he met there belonged to the Muscogee tribe — Kernell’s ancestors. As Wesley wrote in his diary, he failed “to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity.”

This state of affairs forced him to think about “conversion” during his return journey to London. Kernell described Wesley’s failure by drawing attention to the fundamentally incorrect approach: Wesley had a “very simple concept of conversion,” but it was one that didn’t work. He didn’t understand that these were people who had their own “widespread culture with its own wisdoms for understanding the world,” a culture that existed long before the Europeans came.

“He failed to appreciate the people he met,” Kernell said. Instead, the focus was on achieving the fastest possible success, without being interested in the conditions in which these people are living and showing any respect for their needs, he added.

So, has the situation changed at all today?



Richard Guzman interviews Rev. Glen “Chebon” Kernell (right) at the Sept. 22 Speaker Series event at Our Saviour’s UMC in Schaumburg sponsored by the NIC Anti-Racism Task Force. Kernell shared his insights and learning related to indigenous communities’ history, present work being done, and how we can be in solidarity as we prepare for the future. To watch a recording of the event, visit [umcnic.org/2022SpeakerSeries](http://umcnic.org/2022SpeakerSeries). See pg. 7 for information on the upcoming December Speaker Series event.

“No, not really,” Kernell said.

The dramatic land seizure that destroys livelihoods has been going on for centuries and still continues to this day in the Amazon region, Indonesia, the Pacific islands and in the northernmost parts of Northern Europe as well as North America.

“In the end, it’s going to reach ‘us’ too, and it’ll destroy our living space,” he said of the Western world.

Kernell is driven by the need to change this, and all the more so because time is short.

“I want my church to understand that ‘we’ have our insights, knowledge and understanding of God and people’s well-being, something that is still waiting to be given its due respect today, even in the church.”

*\*Ruof is public relations officer and spokesperson for The United Methodist Church in Germany.*



## Fundraising Ideas for YOUTH 2023

By Ken Sloane, Discipleship Ministries Director of Stewardship & Generosity



Every four years, youth from throughout The United Methodist Church have gathered for four days of discipleship, fun, and fellowship at the YOUTH event.

Come and let us help amplify your voice and demonstrate the good that gathering together can bring!

- Worship with Thousands
- An Amazing Experience
- Engaging Speakers
- Impactful Service Opportunities
- Life-Changing Fun
- Interactive Learning
- Bible Study
- and Much More!

SCAN THE CODE TO LEARN MORE AND REGISTER!

FOLLOW YOUTH2023UMC

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

YOUTH 2023, July 25-28 in Daytona Beach, Fla., has been planned to be the most amazing, impactful event in the lives of young people, while also being accessible for churches to be able to send their youth and adult leaders. It’s a wonderful investment in your church’s ministry, and these folks will bring blessings back to your church upon their return! Below you’ll find a breakdown of the major costs for attending the event and ideas on how to raise money to cover those costs.

### Estimated Costs for Attendees

Registration cost is \$375 per person; includes all events and programs, as well as lunch and dinner on Wednesday and Thursday. Breakfast is on your own.

- Lodging: \$145 per room night, with up to 4 staying in a room. For 3 nights with 4 persons in a room, the lodging cost per person is \$108.75.
- Transportation: For each church to determine, based on distance and mode of travel.
- Total cost: About \$500/attendee, based on 4 in a room, plus transportation.

### How can your church fund sending youth?

1. Identify what size group your church might send to YOUTH 2023 and how transportation might happen. Plan funding into your 2023 budget to help send young people and their leaders to this life-changing event.
2. Explore whether there is a family (or a couple of families) who would be willing to match, dollar for dollar, money donated by the congregation to underwrite these costs (or to match youth fundraising efforts).

3. Find undesignated funds (reserves, etc.) that could be used to help.
4. Many churches have memorial funds that include smaller, undesignated amounts. Check with families if a whole or partial grant for a youth to attend this event might be an appropriate memorial.
5. Designate Giving Tuesday as the day to fund YOUTH 2023 Grants. Set a goal and remind folks by text, email, and/or social media. Invite them to use the #GivingTuesday to announce their gift.
6. Invite folks in your church to make a gift to the YOUTH 2023 fund in honor of a pastor, Sunday teacher, or youth leader who was influential in their lives. You might even consider setting up a bulletin board with names and pictures to recognize these special people.
7. Provide your congregation the opportunity to give a grant as a Christmas gift to people on their gift lists who don’t really need or want any more stuff. Provide a memento that could be wrapped and given to represent the gift. (This could be the most meaningful gift they receive!)

To register and learn more, go to [youth2023.org](http://youth2023.org).



# Leading the Laity

Words of encouragement, insight & inspiration from lay leaders



## Connecting church and community

By Mark Manzi, NIC Co-Lay Leader

In his new book "We Need To Build, Field Notes For Diverse Democracy," Eboo Patel includes a chapter on the Genius of Religious Institutions. He asks, "What would happen if all the houses of worship in your neighborhood disappeared tomorrow?" His answer is, "The social consequences would be at least as devastating as the spiritual ones," meaning it would be terrible for all of us who attend these houses of worship, but it would be just as awful for society. Think about that for a moment. Do we understand the profound effect our churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques have on society? Is your church a part of the social network of your community?

Brad Fulton, an associate professor of non-profit management at Indiana University, says, "There is some upside to organized religions that has very little to do with religion. They have a great mechanism for bringing people together."

In their book "The Upswing," Robert Putnam and Shyly Romney Garrett write, "Religious institutions have long been the single most important source of community connectedness and social solidarity in America." As we look at our churches, do we see that? The optimists among us say, "Yes!" They see it happening daily in their churches and around them. They grasp the true nature of following the way of Jesus and see it happening. The pessimists among us might not be so sure. We need to look around. We need to remember who and whose we are. We can't forget that this is our call.

Eboo Patel says this: "At their best, religions are a network of institutions that seek to make real an inspiring vision that adherents believe was set forth by God, a vision that makes everyone sacred. The church is the mystical body of Christ, organizing itself to engage the world the way Jesus would."

We are not a private club. We are Disciples with a vision and a mission for our neighborhoods, countries, and the world. We need to see those around us in our churches, but we must be ready to see beyond the walls of our churches and into our community. The late Rev. Junius Dotson preached this with his mantra, "See All The People."

Laity Convocation 2023 might be a way for us to re-energize. "Thinking Outside The Church, Making Community Ministry Happen" is our theme. David Teel, Director of Laity and Leadership at Discipleship Ministries, will be our keynote speaker. We will take time to share ideas in breakout groups. We will also hear from churches in our conference who are already working and partnering in their communities. Participants can join in person at three different locations or online. Put Saturday, February 11, on your calendar!

## Save the date Laity Convocation 2023

"Thinking Outside the Church"  
Making Community Ministry Happen

**Feb. 11, 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.**

Hybrid event at three locations: New Lenox UMC, Barrington UMC and Disciples UMC or online via Zoom  
Speaker: David Teel, Director of Laity and Leadership at Discipleship Ministries

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



◀ Youth groups from churches across the conference collaborated for a fall retreat in Lake Geneva with a focus on finding JOY in fellowship.

## Joyful youth fall retreat

Over 65 youth and adult youth leaders came together the weekend of Sept. 23 - 25 for a fall youth retreat in Lake Geneva. The retreat theme was JOY (Jesus, Others, and You) with a focus on joy in fellowship as reflected in scriptures in Philippians 1—2 and Psalm 133. Rev. Josiah Montgomery, Pastor of East Side UMC in Chicago and Asst. Director of Faith and Action at North Central College (Naperville) was the retreat's guest speaker.

The planning team consisted of eight churches (Belvidere: First UMC, Bolingbrook: Friendship UMC, Buffalo Grove: Kingswood UMC, Chicago: Urban Village Church, Hinsdale UMC, Machesney Park: New Life UMC, Mendota: Zion UMC, and Wheaton: Gary UMC), led by Daniel Lee, Director of Youth Ministries at Gary UMC in Wheaton.

Daniel started sharing this vision with other adult youth leaders over a year ago and said he was, "grateful that we're one church and can share joys

and struggles. Hopefully, this is the beginning of something the conference can work together on for years to come."

Youth and adults shared their excitement of being in connection and getting to know youth from other churches. Rev. Jeremiah Lee, Pastor of Good Samaritan UMC in Addison and a member of the Anti-racism Task Force, shared that his students enjoyed it so much that he's planning to get his youth together with youth at Hinsdale UMC in the future. He said, "they really connected and loved the community effort."

For more photos and a link to a survey for those interested in future retreats and events, visit [umcnic.org/news/joyful-youth-fall-retreat](http://umcnic.org/news/joyful-youth-fall-retreat).

The Northern Illinois Conference Anti-Racism Task Force, the Discipleship Task Force, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, and North Central College co-sponsored the retreat.



## Kids Above All Holiday Gift Drive - Nov. 28 - Dec. 13



### Sponsor a Child

- Make the holiday wishes of a child in one of Kids Above All's programs come true with a \$50 purchase of toys, books, and clothes.

### Donate a Toy

- The drive needs new, unwrapped toys, games, or books for youth of various ages. Online wishlists from Amazon will be available soon to help guide the gift selection process for our children and teenagers. Visit [kidsaboveall.org/holiday-gift-drive](http://kidsaboveall.org/holiday-gift-drive).

### Volunteer in the Toy Room

- The 2022 Toy Room will be at Kids Above All's new "A Better Life Distribution Center," located at 1801 E. Oakton St., Des Plaines, IL 60018. Health and safety measures, including masks, may be required.
- Contact Catherine Inserra at [cinserra@kidsaboveall.org](mailto:cinserra@kidsaboveall.org) to learn more and set up a time to volunteer as an individual or group.



## Fall 2022 Events

### November



### United Methodist Student Day - You support education!

**November 27**

This year, the official date for United Methodist Student Day is Nov. 27, 2022, but you're encouraged to celebrate on a day that works best for your church. Without your generosity, this ministry could not be achieved! In 2021, churches gave \$272,159 toward ministries funded by the United Methodist Student Day Special Sunday offering. Your gifts support over 70 loans and scholarships for undergraduate and graduate United Methodist students. For a Sunday pastor and leader kit, visit [resourceumc.org](http://resourceumc.org).

### December



### Speaker Series: Race, America and the Church

**Called: Doing God's Work for the Beloved Community**

**December 1, 12:00 - 1:30 p.m.**  
Online via Zoom

**Speaker:** Dr. Drew G.I. Hart  
Drew G. I. Hart is an author, activist, and professor in theology in the Bible and Religion department at Messiah University with ten years of pastoral experience. He will address what the local church can do to combat the continuation of racism in the church and in society.

For registration and more information, visit [umcnic.org/2022speakerseries](http://umcnic.org/2022speakerseries).

### December



### Vital Partnership Workshop

**Dec. 3, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.**

**Location:** The Center United Methodist Church, 400 N. Walnut Street, Itasca, IL

**Speaker:** Dirk Elliott, Dir. of Congregational Vibrancy and Leadership Development for the Michigan Conference  
Churches come in all forms of health: some are healthy and growing, others are maintaining the status quo, and some are declining. But they all have one thing in common – they want to be fruitful and healthy. Attend this workshop and explore new ways your church might become healthier through a merger.

To register, visit [umcnic.org/calendar/vital-partnerships-winter-2022](http://umcnic.org/calendar/vital-partnerships-winter-2022).



# DYK DID YOU KNOW?



## How Tall is He?

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

For the last two years, the Northern Illinois Conference has been led by interim Bishop John L. Hopkins. As we move into the last couple of months of the year, our attention turns to the announcement of a new bishop and the transition into a new era. Before that transition takes place, I want to celebrate the leadership of our interim bishop and invite you to reminisce on this two-year journey.

One of my favorite questions, circulating before the beginning of the 2022 in-person Annual Conference, was, "How Tall is He?" For the first 18 months of Bishop Hopkins' time with us, most of us only saw him on Zoom, in a preaching video, or through his leadership during our virtual annual conference session. With no benchmark for height when someone sits in front of a computer monitor, we've all learned that shoulder-up views are limiting.

As we finally gathered in person, people's curiosity peaked. I heard the question repeated through the

hallways, "How tall is he?" We finally had the answer when the bishop stood in front of the session live for the first time. (Answer: Bishop Hopkins is 6 feet tall)

Called out of retirement to lead us in January 2021, Bishop Hopkins came to the conference with 20 years of episcopal experience. Stepping into a new context during a pandemic cannot be easy. Moving from retirement into active service required some juggling of priorities. With a primary residence in Indianapolis, we had our first taste of being led by a commuting bishop.

Bishop Hopkins has been part of many unprecedented events these last few years. Two hybrid ordination services in 2021, two virtual annual conference sessions. Appointment making via Zoom. Clergy sessions online. Meeting clergy and leaders throughout the conference and giving leadership all via Zoom. Recording sermons, greetings, and messages rather than gathering in person. There has been very little over the last two years that one would categorize as normal. Even for a bishop who

served actively for 20 years, there were new experiences.

Last month when Bishop Hopkins met in person with our Conference Lay Leaders, Connie Augsburger, Mark Manzi and Eugene Williams, for the last time, he celebrated their gifts and leadership and their wisdom and energy. They thanked Bishop Hopkins for his prophetic voice, call to connectionalism and calm, stabilizing demeanor in this time of change.

Unlike the celebration and sendoff we hold when a bishop has served us in a "normal" season, Bishop Hopkins will come and go in a flash. I invite you to take time to write an email, send a card, or offer a word of appreciation to someone who left the comfort and routine of retirement to step into this unique moment in time. We give thanks to Bishop Hopkins for offering a foundation for our witness, mission and service to our communities, our conference, and the world.

## Clergy Appointments and Retirements Fall Announcements

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

**Jane Bradford** (Retired LP IGRC) to Rockford: Christ UMC (Prairie North District) as Visitation Pastor.

**Anthony Clausell** (District Superintendent Supply) to Chicago: Mandell (Lake North District). Anthony follows Dawn Gardner who remains at Evanston: Hemenway (Lake North District).

**Arnold Hoskins** (District Superintendent Supply) to Chicago: Freedom (Lake South District). Arnold follows Robert Houston who is appointed to Chicago: Faith (Lake South District).

**Donna Hoffman** (Retired Licensed Local Pastor) to Hanover UMC (Prairie North District) from retirement. Donna follows Rich Ottens who concludes his ministry. Effective August 1.

**Rene Bello** (District Superintendent Supply) to Aurora: Nueva Vida (Prairie Central District). Rene follows Martin Lopez (Licensed Local Pastor) who concludes his ministry. Effective August 1.

**Cesar Pichardo** (District Superintendent Supply) to Joliet: Christ (Prairie Central District). Cesar follows Ivan Sarabia who is assigned to Belvidere: Iglesia Cristiana EmERGE (Prairie North District). Effective August 1.

**Darrian Adkins** (District Superintendent Supply) to Bartlett: Good Shepherd (Prairie Central District). Darrian follows Becky Nicol (Retired Elder) who will return to retirement. Effective September 1.

**Gavin Brandt** (Retired Elder) to German Valley and Winnebago (Prairie North District) from retirement. Gavin follows Donald Plock who died while serving. Effective September 1.

**Robert Biekman** (Full Elder) to Transitional Leave from Evangelical Lutheran Church of America Chicago Synod (Appointment Beyond the Local Church). Effective September 1.

**Wes Dorr** (Full Deacon) to Oak Park: First (Lake North District) from West Cook YMCA (Appointment Beyond the Local Church). Effective September 1.

**Robert Houston** (Licensed Local Pastor) to Chicago: Faith (Lake South District) from Chicago: Freedom (Lake South District). Robert follows Tom Rawlinson who remains as an associate at Chicago: St. Matthews (Lake North District).

**Pamela Pirtle** (Full Elder) to Transitional Leave from Commission on the Status and Role of Women (Appointment Beyond the Local Church). Effective October 1.



## This I Celebrate! Fresh Expressions

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



Michael Beck, Director of Re-missioning with Fresh Expressions, presents at First UMC in Dixon, Ill., on September 19 at one of six teaching offerings in each district across the Conference. Watch a recording of the presentation at [umcnic.org/calendar/fresh-expressions-2022](http://umcnic.org/calendar/fresh-expressions-2022).

The word Fresh [Expressions] was borrowed from The Declaration of Assent which is made by deacons, priests, and bishops of the Church of England. The Church of England and British Methodist started Fresh Expressions to revitalize existing churches and to start new forms of churches.

My recent experience of taking the Fresh Expressions experience with Michael Beck, Director of Re-Missioning with Fresh Expressions, to every district in the annual conference was a great joy to me. This project involves bringing practical tools for delivering the ministry of the Church to people not currently connected to any church. Those congregations that have committed to Fresh Expressions have witnessed many different forms of renewal.

Ministry is difficult. In the midst of the challenges, the Holy Spirit is making disciples. Discipleship is happening in small, rural towns, in the suburbs and in major cities. There is something in Fresh Expressions that speaks to every congregation.

Our next step in this project is to create small cohorts of congregations that will meet to walk with one another through the process of transformation, learning and listening and helping one another on the way.

God uses every gift in the Church to further the good and pleasing and perfect will of God in the world.

If you are interested in learning more about Fresh Expressions, email [mlee@umcnic.org](mailto:mlee@umcnic.org).



## 2022 Journal

The Journal of the 183rd Northern Illinois Annual Conference held June 8 - 10, 2022, is now published. A free downloadable pdf is available on the conference website at [umcnic.org/journal](http://umcnic.org/journal). It is also available to purchase online through Amazon. The cost of the paperback is \$14.

### 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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