

NIC Laity Convocation 2024



*Growing
Together
in Love*

**LEARNING TO HAVE COURAGEOUS
RESPECTFUL CONVERSATIONS**



Northern Illinois Conference
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Board of Laity

Welcome to Laity Convocation 2024

LEARNING TO HAVE COURAGEOUS RESPECTFUL CONVERSATIONS



To develop today's event, the members of the Northern Illinois Conference Board of Laity met via Zoom many times, exchanged innumerable emails, and even had phone conversations! We knew we wanted to offer both support and a challenge to our Laity. Our topic this year: "Growing Together in Love." Doesn't it sound lovely and completely non-controversial? Hmmm . . . We took as our guiding scripture, Ephesians 4: 1-15, in particular verses 2-3 and 15, and these exhortations of Paul's led us to our challenging subtitle: "Learning to Have Courageous and Respectful Conversations."

These days, one can hardly read an article, listen to the news, or even have a chat with an acquaintance without discerning the heat and passion of a firmly held opinion just below the surface. It seems that antagonizing each other with hard, even offensive statements, has become almost fashionable. But if we dare to call ourselves Christians, no matter how invested we are in our own opinions on the news of the day, it is critical that we appreciate one another's points of view, that we consider each other's outlooks, that we respect there are many angles to perceive the world.

If we are to equip ourselves to serve our faith and our God, we must be humble, gentle, patient, and "bear with one another in love." This striving, however, doesn't mean we're required to abandon what we believe or to ignore or even accept malice, cruelty or spite just to get along with each other. Instead, we are called on to speak the truth in love and to grow in every respect -- to become mature in the body of Christ.

We hope today's speakers and the breakout session discussions alight in you a desire to learn how to engage in difficult but necessary conversations and to honor those with whom you speak by your respect, and that you are equally able to receive their respect as we bear with one another and speak the truth in love.

Please visit our webpage, umcnic.org/laity for more information and resources. Also, please complete your evaluation of this event. We want to hear from you and hear your suggestions, ideas, criticism. You help us plan for the future by letting us know what your concerns are, and what you want to and need to learn.

Thank you for sharing your day with us!



SCHEDULE



8:00	Registration	Hallway
8:45	Praise Music	Sanctuary
9:00	Opening Welcome and Worship see worship bulletin on page 4	Sanctuary
9:45	Speaker: LaToya Redd Thompson President, Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders (AACLL)	Sanctuary
10:05	Guided Stretch Break see words on page 5	Sanctuary
10:10	Speaker: Henrieta Ribiero founder of Intentional Energy 3	Sanctuary
10:35	Announcements	
10:40	Breakout Conversations see questions on page 8	Various Rooms, see page 5
11:40	Break/Return to Sanctuary	
11:45	NIC Nominating Committee	Sanctuary
11:50	Closing Remarks and Prayers	Sanctuary
12:05	Lunch Lunch is available for those who purchased a meal ahead of time. Others are invited to stay for fellowship and conversation.	Fellowship Hall

Thank you for attending Laity Convocation 2024!
Please fill out and submit the evaluation.



OPENING WELCOME AND WORSHIP



** Call to Praise and Prayer

Leader: O, Lord, open our mouths,

People: **And we shall declare your praise.**

** Opening Song

** Prayer

Note - Inhale = raise arms; Exhale = lower arms

Inhale We inhale the breath of life Creator God

Exhale **that we might love and serve you, our neighbor, and this world by our words and deeds.**

Inhale We inhale the gift of love precious Jesus

Exhale **that we might bring healing, peace, and new life by our words and deeds.**

Inhale We inhale the power of the Holy Spirit

Exhale **that we might be instruments of dignity, justice, and compassion by our words and deeds.**

** Scripture

Leader: We hear God's words for us today from Ephesians 4: 15 (NRSV) speaking the truth in love,
we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ

People: **May the words of our mouths, the meditations of our hearts, and the actions of our bodies be acceptable to you, O God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. Amen.**

Conversation with Bishop Dan Schwerin

Holy Communion

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

** Please rise in body or in spirit.

GUIDED STRETCH BREAK

Laity Convocation 2024

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and compassion by our words and deeds.**



BREAKOUT ROOMS

- White = Sanctuary
- Pink = Perry Hall
- Red = Parlor
- Blue = Adult classroom
- Yellow = Esther classroom
- Green = Moses classroom
- Purple = Mary classroom
- Orange = Alpha classroom

A NOTE OF APPRECIATION FROM THE NIC BOARD OF LAITY:

An event as big and with as many moving parts as an in-person seminar cannot succeed without the work of many people. NIC Laity Convocation 2024 is no exception.

We are deeply grateful to the staff, congregation, praise band and pastor of our host church, First United Methodist Church of Belvidere. These wonderful folks opened their spiritual home to us and extended themselves cheerfully.

We are also very much indebted to the dedicated and caring staff at the Conference Office: Nicole Minter, Accounts; Bri Wadlington, Event Coordinator; Lisa Smith, Communications Specialist; and Rev. Victoria Rebeck, Director of Communications. These professionals are adept, versatile, and, probably most importantly, they are patient!

Last, and certainly not least, a special shout-out to our colleague in Christ and former Co-Lay Leader, Mark Manzi, for pitching in when we needed him most.



Co-Conference Lay Leaders

- Connie Augsburger, Disciples UMC, Mt. Morris, IL
- Eugene Williams, South Shore UMC, Chicago, IL

District Lay Leaders

- Lake North District
 - Ellen Feliciano, Urban Village Church, Edgewater, Chicago, IL
 - Chester Lacey, Olivet UMC, Chicago, IL
 - Bonnie Lill, United Methodist Church of Libertyville, IL
- Lake South District
 - Lisa Butler, Morgan Park UMC, Chicago, IL
 - Dawn Shires, Tinley Park UMC, Tinley Park, IL
- Prairie North District
 - Kris Aves, Faith UMC, Genoa, IL
- Prairie Central District
 - Leonard Jones, Friendship UMC, Bolingbrook, IL
- Prairie South District
 - Chad Abell, Leon UMC, Leon. IL
 - Tom Weber, First UMC, DeKalb, IL

Members by Virtue of Office

- Peggy Hansen, NIC Director, Lay Servant Ministries - St. Andrew UMC, Carol Stream, IL
- George Groves, NIC President, United Methodist Men - Community UMC, Naperville, IL
- Barb Farley, NIC President, United Women in Faith - St. Andrew UMC, Carol Stream, IL
- Marilyn Steenwyk, NIC Rep., United Women in Faith - United Church, Sandwich, IL
- Jim Loeppert, NIC Director of Scouting - Our Saviour's UMC, Schaumburg, IL
- Rev. Dr. Char Hoffmann, NIC Clergy Representative, Hebron UMC, Hebron, IL
- Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer, NIC Director of Connectional Ministries

Bishop Dan Schwerin

Bishop Dan Schwerin, Bishop of The United Methodist Church, is serving as the resident Bishop in the Northern Illinois Conference since 2023. Bishop Schwerin was elected to the episcopacy at the North Central Jurisdiction gathering in November 2022.

Bishop Schwerin (he, him, his) is husband to his wife, Julie, and a father, grandfather, and poet. He is a graduate of Perkins School of Theology and did post-graduate Bowen family systems theory work. He has enjoyed many contexts for pastoral ministry, including urban and rural churches, a new church plant, a Superintendent of two districts, and an Assistant to the Bishop in the Wisconsin Conference.



SPEAKER BIOS



LaToya Redd Thompson

LaToya Redd Thompson served as a district lay leader in the Mississippi Annual Conference for 8 years before being elected as the Conference Lay Leader for the Mississippi Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church in 2016, which places her on several annual conference committees, including the Extended Cabinet, the Nominations Committee, the Board of Laity, the Vital Congregations Committee, the Episcopacy Committee, and the Mississippi Annual Conference Leadership Team. LaToya was also honored to be elected to the 2020 General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference delegation for the Mississippi Annual Conference. She also serves as a member of the board of directors of the General Council on Finance and Administration for the global United Methodist Church and she is a board member of the Jackson area Christian Legal Society. In 2022, LaToya was elected as the President of the Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders for the global United Methodist Church. LaToya has hosted a segment from 2010 - 2020 devoted to lay ministry on "The Methodist Hour," a TV show that is broadcast throughout Mississippi and other select areas.



LaToya Redd Thompson

LaToya obtained a bachelor's degree from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, with a dual degree in Political Science and Psychology. She then earned a juris doctorate with honors from the University of Mississippi Law School. LaToya earns a living as an attorney and enjoys advocating for the rights of others and has enjoyed being an active United Methodist most of her life.

LaToya and her husband Rev. Dr. Marcus Thompson live in Jackson, Mississippi. They have three children – Kaelyn, Jessica, and Marcus, Jr.

Henrieta Ribeiro

Henrieta Ribeiro grew up in Bratislava, Slovakia. She came to the United States as a student at Wheaton College in Wheaton, IL, where she received her BA in psychology. She went on to receive her MA in Marriage and Family Therapy from the Adler School of Professional Psychology (now Adler University) in Chicago, IL. She is a trained Stephen Ministry leader and has facilitated the Stephen Ministry program at First Presbyterian Church in Wheaton, IL, since 2002. Henrieta has also worked as a national workshop presenter for Stephen Ministries in St. Louis. She is a Restorative Justice practitioner and trainer for restorative circles, having partnered with Restore: Carol Stream Peacemakers and the Carol Stream Police Department for several years.



Henrieta Ribeiro

Henrieta is a co-founder of Intentional Energy 3, a company specializing in delivering workshops, retreats, and educational programs tailored for non-profit and faith-based organizations. The company's aim is to inspire, connect, and educate individuals and communities.

Drawing on her family systems experience and her Server/Helper Enneagram Type-2 perspective, Henrieta engages with teams, leaders, and communities of various sizes and types.

Henrieta holds growth as her top value. In her free time, she enjoys design, gardening, and watercolor art. She is currently serving as lay leader at St. Andrew United Methodist Church in Carol Stream, IL, where she lives with her husband, three daughters, and two cats.

BREAKOUT SESSION QUESTIONS:

Laity Convocation 2024



1. Are you naturally a talker or a listener?

- What can you do better as you listen to others?
- What do you do well?

2. How do you establish boundaries in a conversation?

- How do you speak up if the conversation goes off the rails?

3. Think back on a courageous conversation you had that went well:

- Why do you think it went well?
- What did you do well during the conversation?
- What did the other person do?
- What did you learn about yourself?

4. Think back on a courageous conversation that you struggled with:

- What happened during the conversation?
- What did you do well?
- What do you think you could have done better?
- What did you learn about yourself?

5. What is the difference between these conversations?

- What did you learn about yourself?
- What do you hope to do less of going forward?
- What do you want to do more of?

6. How do you see courageous conversations as an expression of hope in the world?