

HISTORICAL REPORTS

Document 400.01 - Committee on Accessibility Ministries

The NIC Committee on Accessibility Ministries supports local churches in making their buildings and congregations more welcoming to people of all abilities. We do this by awarding annual grants to churches working on accessibility projects, consulting with congregations exploring improvements and connecting them with resources, hosting workshops on accessibility topics, focusing on neurodiversity and authentic welcome and inclusion of people living with mental illness, coordinating information about accessible churches and parsonages, and advocating for fully physically accessible buildings.

When churches request our services, committee members visit a church and meet with the pastor, trustees chair, and/or other interested people. We complete an assessment for them of accessibility issues and work to recommend possibilities for improvement based on the national UMC Committee on Disability Ministries audit. The majority of our budget each year goes to grants for specific projects we have endorsed, such as making areas accessible for people in wheelchairs or with limited mobility, adding equipment for people with visual or hearing impairments to assist them in fully participating in worship, or purchasing products such as large print hymnals. Our grants only ever fund a portion of the project – the local church and other funding entities cover the rest.

In 2022, we worked with Davis Junction United Methodist Church as they updated a ramp on the front of their building. In addition, we met with and wrote reports for several other churches and continue to be available for consultation or discussion with any churches interested in doing accessibility projects. We encourage churches to contact us for site visits, more information about resources, and support in improving their church or parsonage accessibility.

Document 400.02 - Annual Conference Shepherding Team

The Annual Conference Shepherding Team (ACST) and its counterpart organizations at the district level were formed by legislation in 2017 in response to the need for a conference wide central leadership body. The ACST brings the administrative and programmatic bodies of Northern Illinois Conference together for the purpose of strategic planning and overall coordination of the conference's life. The team further connects the work of the conference through the leadership at the district level.

During 2022-2023 the ACST continues to focus on the following areas found in its organizing legislation:

- 1) Guiding the NIC in the event of a significant shift in the denomination or jurisdictional realignment of conferences.
- 2) Facilitating communication and healthy relationships between districts, NIC leadership, staff, committees, and ministries.
- 3) Focusing NIC resources to equip local churches and ministry settings to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
- 4) Advocating, monitoring, and celebrating diversity at every level of leadership throughout the NIC.

With the easing of COVID, the team held its first in person meeting in more than two years during the fall of 2022. Included in that meeting, the team heard a presentation from the Northern Illinois Conference Board of Trustees concerning the relocation of conference offices from the Chicago: Temple to a new location as yet to be determined. While the ACST had no final authority in this decision making, it was an opportunity for this broader organization to offer perspective and feedback to the Board of Trustees.

During the winter months the ACST looked at the makeup of the table to better consider size, diversity and function. Following debate, the decision was made to hold with the current structure and membership.

In the spring the ACST welcomed Susan Czolgosz, an Organizational Psychologist, to lead a workshop looking at the role and function of this body. Susan returned to work with this group, having also served as consultant to the Landscape Taskforce in 2015.

During the 2022 Annual Conference session we bid farewell to one of the founding co-chairs of the team, Reverend Myron McCoy and welcomed Rev. Hwa-Young Chong as the new Shepherding Team co-chair. Rev. Chong joined Elizabeth Gracie in the role of Co-Chair.

This spring, we give thanks for the faithful service of Elizabeth Gracie who will rotate off the team after serving as one of our founding co-chairs. We were surprised, but pleased to celebrate the appointment of Hwa-Young Chong to North Prairie as the District Superintendent. The blessings of Hwa-Young's move to the superintendency found the team with the need for two new co-chairs.

Bishop Dan Schwerin has appointed Mark Manzi, current conference co-lay leader and Rev. Anna Shin, pastor at Bolingbrook: Friendship into the roles of Annual Conference Shepherding Team co-chairs.

We look forward to their leadership as we carry on the work of the NIC.

The ACST also continues to serve in support of the NIC strategic goals of (1) making disciples, (2) working against racism and (3) creating vital congregations. These strategic goals were adopted by the annual conference in the summer of 2019. This work is carried out by three task forces and shared in their own historic reports. We celebrate the dedicated members of our task forces who have offered education, resources, inspiration and information to local congregations as they live out their ministry and mission. Their energy, creativity and commitment has helped the NIC live out its mission.

The ACST will continue to work closely with Bishop Schwerin as we prepare for an anticipated change in episcopal configuration following the Jurisdictional Conference in 2024.

In Christ Service,
Elizabeth Gracie and Hwa-Young Chong

Members of the ACST 2022-2023

Barry, James - Age Level Ministries
Blade, Nancy - Trustees Chair
Bonnell, Karen S.- Prairie South dST
Brown, Norval - BOOM Rep.
Chong, Hannah Hwa-Young - Co- Chair ACST
Cox, Britt - Justice and Mercy Ministries
Dangerfield, Deborah - AC Session Chair
Gracie, Elizabeth - Co-Chair ACST
Hardin Hermann, Wendy - Lake North dST
Harris, Darryl - BMCR Representative
Jones, Leonard - Prairie Central dST
Manzi, Mark - Lay Leader Rep

Mariari, Matthew - Prairie North dST
Pendergrass, Nancy - Nominations
Price, David - Lake South dST
Samson, Ayla - Asian American Fellowship
Scott, Tammy - CCFA Rep
Smick, Megan - Dev. And Revitalization

Ex-Officio
Bishop Dan Schwerin
Arlene Christopherson - DCM/Asst. to Bishop
Victoria Rebeck - Director of Communications

Document 400.03 - The Anti-Racism Task Force

The Anti-Racism Task Force (ARTF) has a committed and engaged leadership team. Led by Nadia Kanhai, the members include Rev. Jarrod Severing, Yvette Harris-Black, Rev. Hong-kien Jeremiah Lee, Rev. Matthew Krings, and Rev. Luther Mason. Project Manager Amania Drane and Consultant Dr. Richard Guzman are instrumental in our work. We lack Latino/Hispanic voice and representation on our task force, which hurts the conference as a whole.

ARTF initiatives have been successful largely due to our passionate all-volunteer Champion Team. These lay and clergy from across Northern Illinois continue to help lead these anti-racism programs and initiatives both in the conference and their congregations. In 2022, we were able to meet in person after meeting virtually in 2020 and '21.

New initiatives this year included a collaboration between the Anti-Racism and Discipleship Task Forces with a focus on youth, specifically research and supporting local Youth Leaders in sustaining and strengthening their work. Discipling Anti-Racism Youth (DAY) is hosting events such as working with Kids Above All and hosting training events. The two task forces have also collaborated when selected members attended resource training with the General Board of Church and Society (GBCS) and General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) in Washington D.C. over the summer.

2022's quarterly Speakers Series paved the way for 2023's Film Series, which provides more hands-on and in-person opportunities, while still keeping these events accessible whenever possible through Zoom. Enthusiasm continues for knowledgeable speakers and resources, and these series have been a collaborative effort with the Indiana Conference and GBCS, among others. More information is available on the NIC web site.

Another new initiative for 2023 is the Civil Rights Pilgrimage to Nashville, Memphis, Montgomery, Selma, and Birmingham. 36 people have signed up for this life-changing pilgrimage, made possible by a GCORR grant and other connectional collaborations.

We continue to refine other initiatives. The Clergy Peer Reflection & Engagement Series (CPRES) continues to hold an annual retreat and follow-up sessions. The Becoming Beloved Community educational initiative has been hosted at several churches with more on the list for 2023. These two premier training and engagement experiences are geared toward adult learning for clergy and lay, along with post-event continued engagement.

Mandatory clergy anti-racism training is available through options. This is in line with the North Central Jurisdiction's covenant to Build Beloved Community.

This is just a snapshot of our work over the past year. More is featured on our conference web page. In 2023, ARTF is meeting jointly with the Conference Commission on Religion & Race (CCORR) as our objectives are the same. Our hope is that Conference leaders will be empowered in the way ARTF has been and that one day, each entity will be anti-racism in nature.

Submitted by Nadia R. Kanhai, ARTF Chair, lay member, Naperville: Grace UMC

Document 400.04 – NIC Commission on Archives & History

The Northern Illinois Conference Archives, housed at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, re-opened in August 2022 after being closed since March of 2020 due to the pandemic, mold abatement, a remodeling project, etc. During the lengthy period when we were unable to access archival materials, we answered research requests as best we could, relying on Conference journals, personal recollections, and online resources.

A major issue/problem when we regained access to the archives, which had been moved to another section of Styberg Library, was the re-arrangement of virtually the entire archival collection, rendering the 100+ page finding aid nearly useless. This is despite what we are confident was a good faith effort on the part of the library staff to keep materials in the same order. The new shelf units are both shorter and more shallow, so that after the top row of the first shelving unit, all subsequent shelf locations are progressively further 'off.' And since the compact shelving units are more shallow, boxes can be stored only one deep, i.e., only one side of each unit can be used. It now takes much, much longer to find materials in order to respond to research requests, if indeed we can find the materials at all.

One project we have undertaken that is not in response to research requests is updating the archival boxes containing the 'master files' for churches located within the boundaries of the Northern Illinois Conference. We have created a new, parallel collection of files for churches that have closed, merged, changed names, or been discontinued. To date that has resulted in more than 225 new files. To aid future researchers, we have kept 'place-holder' files in the master file boxes, with a single sheet in the file indicating where the church's records are to be found. We anticipate using this system if and when NIC churches choose to disaffiliate with The United Methodist Church. In addition, we hope to create master lists of all EUB, Evangelical Association, Central Conference, and ethnic congregations to aid researchers.

Beyond that, the following are some research requests and projects we have undertaken since re-opening:

1. March 2022: Followed up on request from Ivo Misur for information regarding Boze Milosevic, who was on staff at Lincoln Street Methodist in the early 20th century. He was probably the first Croatian Methodist minister.
2. August 8, 2022: Corresponded with Elise Alabbas of Dayton, Ohio, regarding the papers of the Rev. Guy Chester Jones, former minister in the Rock River Conference. Eventually we received and cataloged the papers & documented the transfer of materials.
3. September 9, 2022: Dick Wang and Daniel Smith (Library staff) followed up on a request from Carol Slattum of Oslo, Norway, regarding information on ancestors who came to America, including Carl A Andersen, a 1900 graduate of Garrett Seminary.
4. September 30, 2022: While updating the master files, Carol Noren found a newspaper article from 1940, describing the ministry of Count de Sherbin, who served the French Methodist Church on the north side of Chicago.
5. October 25, 2022: Marilyn Steenwyk responded to a request from Deb Mungrove, who wanted to find a record of her mother's baptism at a Methodist Church in Maywood or Melrose Park.
6. November 28, 2022: Carol Noren and Dan Swinson responded to a request for information on the Metropolitan Church Association of Chicago, from Rev. Dr. Sarah Elewononi of the New England Annual Conference.
7. November 28, 2022: Carol Noren responded to a request from Kenneth Schoon of Munster, Indiana, who wanted information about his mother's confirmation at Bethel Norwegian-Danish Methodist Church in Chicago.
8. December 9, 2022: Carol Noren spent over an hour in a search for the archival box containing records from Bethel Norwegian-Danish Methodist Church, and came up empty-handed.
9. December 9, 2022: Dan Swinson brought in boxes of materials from Cortland United Methodist Church.

10. December 9, 2022: Marilyn Steenwyk had been corresponding with Bruce Greene of the recently-closed Epworth United Methodist in Chicago, and on December 9 we received about half the materials he had been storing in his apartment. We anticipate receiving the rest in early 2023.
11. January 13, 2023: The NIC-Commission on Archives & History (CAH) had its first meeting since the pandemic at United Church of Sandwich in Sandwich, Illinois. Marilyn Steenwyk hosted, and others present were Kimberly Davis, Dick Wang, Dan Swinson, and Carol Noren.
12. January 15, 2023: Dan Swinson prepared a written request so that NIC CAH can properly learn and employ steps for retaining records in the event of church disaffiliation.
13. January 27, 2023: Using the recently-found box for Bethel Norwegian-Danish Methodist Church, Carol Noren resumed working on Mr. Schoon's inquiry from Nov. 2022. Unfortunately, the records for baptisms and weddings were only from the mid-1900s and did not satisfy the original request.
14. January 27, 2023: Marilyn Steenwyk brought in 120 full-tab, letter-size, archival-grade file folders, along with multiple materials for United Women in Faith/UMW for later organizational work. After a review of the website for Gaylord Archival, a list of supplies was developed; Dick Wang will order 1/3- tab letter-size folders and archival boxes (36 count) in three different sizes.
15. First Quarter 2023: Carol Noren dedicated many hours to updating the NIC 'master files' by moving files for now-closed churches into separate boxes and leaving a reference slip in the 'master box'. Carol then consolidated materials so as to free up more boxes/space, relabeling as needed. After consultation with Daniel Smith, work was begun on the Augean task of setting up a new inventory of NIC's archival holdings, a multi-step project: 1) list where various boxes actually are in the new shelving system; 2) review unprocessed material so we know what we have; 3) determine where things should be, including which should be donated elsewhere or discarded; and, 4) put the completed inventory online through the Styberg Library website.

Four members of our Commission attended the North Central Jurisdiction CAH Convocation July 11-14, 2022, hosted by the Michigan Conference CAH and held in Norway and IronMountain in the Upper Peninsula. The Michigan CAH had planned to host in 2020; however, the pandemic postponed the in-person meeting until Summer 2022. One presentation during the gathering was made by our own Rev Dr Carol Noren, retired elder in NIC and active volunteer in the archives. Carol presented a summary of the history of Scandinavian Methodism in the Upper Peninsula. Dr Noren recently authored a book, "On to Perfection: Nels O Westergreen and the Swedish Methodist Church," and, on July 28, 2022, she was honored with the 2022 Saddlebag Award of The Historical Society of The United Methodist Church. The HSUMC meets annually and honors the author who published the most significant book on UM history, biography, theology or polity during the preceding year. Congratulations to Dr Noren!

Document 400.05 - Chicago Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Inc. of Northern Illinois

Continuing to align its programs and offerings with the mission, goals and priorities of the Annual Conference, Chicago BMCR carried out the following:

Highlights of 2022 Programs and Events

January-March

- Three (3) Youth Coordinators, from Chicago Faith, Hartzell Memorial and Resurrection United Methodist Churches, participated in a January- through- March training experience offered by BMCR collaborative partner, Urban Outreach Foundation.
- Promoted Annual National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day and HIV Testing
- Presented the Pembroke Institute Third Annual Black Teens Matter Holiday Hookup on Presidents’ Day; focus was a retreat entitled Notes of Rest, created specifically for youth by Theologian, Julian Davis Reid, in partnership with the United Methodist Foundation.
- Kicked off the 2022 Convocation Worship Renewal Series entitled “The M.O.V.E.” (Mission, Optimization, Vision and Edification), Rev. Albert Shears was preacher.
- Promoted Annual National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS.
- Participated in National BMCR 55th Annual Virtual General Meeting; theme: “We Are Strong, We Are Relevant, We Are Here!”
- Conducted the Second Quarterly M.O.V.E. Service with Rev. Darneather Murph-Heath preaching.
- Offered an “Hour of Power,” to encourage and inspire pastors - a retreat led by Julian Reid with the support of the United Methodist Foundation.
- Held 1st Quarter Virtual General Membership Meeting.

April-June

- Held the Maundy Thursday Ecumenical M.O.V.E. Service, featuring seven (7) dynamic Pan Methodist clergy expounding on the 7 Last Words of Jesus Christ.
- Hosted 26 persons from BMCR churches to attend the Asian American and Pacific Islanders Heritage Month Celebration. Transported them by the St. Mark bus (BMCR Care-O-Van) and provided lunch and beverages. This was a first experience for most of our attendees.
- Celebrated 50 years of the Pembroke Institute at the Annual Conference with an informative display of photos of many alumnae who attended the program through the years. Commemorative souvenir/gifts were given to display guests.
- Commemorated the 2nd Annual Juneteenth National Holiday in combination with the Annual June Worship Service, celebrating Seven (7) Confirmands from St. Mark UMC, Rev. Pamela Pirtle and Rev. Megan Dean Tobola as Ordained Elders and Rev. Michelle Taylor Sanders, Retiring Elder. After the worship service, a community festival was held outside with entertainment, food and fellowship.
- Highlighted Annual National HIV/AIDS Testing Day, promoting awareness, information and involvement to stop the spread of HIV, a continuing threat to the health and wholeness of persons in minority communities.

July-September

- Sponsored a group of members to attend the Timeless Gifts Talented Youth Show. Several youth from our local churches were featured artists and performers.
- Held a Back-to-School Send-Off for elementary, high school and college students. Julian Reid provided the blessing and encouragement of young people on their journey. Students responded to a post-evaluation with valuable feedback on their concerns, which was shared with the United Methodist Foundation, co-sponsor.
- The 3rd Quarter General Membership Meeting took place at Chicago Faith (the first in-person gathering since pre-COVID).

October-December

- The next M.O.V.E. Worship Service was held and the preacher was President of the Chicago Theological Seminary.
- Eleven NIC BMCR members traveled to Ohio for the North Central Jurisdiction B.M.C.R. 50th Anniversary Annual Meeting. Rev. Dennis M. Oglesby, Jr., was celebrated for his leadership, as President of the jurisdictional caucus, ending at this meeting. Attendees rejoiced in the election of new young adult leaders of NCJ.
- Greenstone UMC hosted the October M.O.V.E. Worship Service, featuring Rev. Charles Woolery as preacher and honoring pastors during Pastors' Appreciation Month.
- The 31st Laity Awards Celebration was held honoring 28 laity from 15 congregations who Made the Difference by rendering outstanding service in ministry. More than 300 persons attended the event. The celebration also recognized Pembroke Institute alumnae in attendance and a surprise appreciation of pastors. Persons expressed joy and happiness to gather in person and fellowship with each other.
- Partnered with McCormick Theological Seminary, to implement the WORLD AIDS DAY, 18th Annual Clergy and Lay Leadership Summit for HIV/AIDS Community Outreach, founded by Sylvia Jo Oglesby, BMCR Keeping Hope Alive HIV/AIDS Ministry and Program Coordinator. The virtual event featured Bishop Yvette Flunder as preacher and again drew local and national participation.
- Celebrated, in person, the 54th BMCR Annual Meeting and Founders' Day event, honoring the legacy of our ancestors, BMCR Founders and those whose memories we cherish in our hearts.
- The culminating M.O.V.E. Service was a Jazz Musical event at Morgan Park UMC. Post reviews were raving, reporting tremendous renditions by performers and a rousing receptive audience expressed by numerous standing ovations. It was remarkable to see multiple generations displayed among the talented artists.

As we continue to face the myriad challenges to the ministry of Jesus Christ, we pledge to be ever faithful to our Charge to Keep and God to Glorify!

~ Our Time Under God Is NOW! ~

Document 400.06 - NIC Trustee Board Historical Report

The work of the Trustee Board is to manage all Annual Conference properties, leases, holdings, closed churches, and risk management under the direction of the Bishop appointed to the Episcopal Area. We consist of laity and clergy from each district and two Conference Staff persons. The first challenge of the 22/23 year was onboarding new members and saying goodbye to long term members. Martha Rudy, Harry Nichol and Constance Augsburgers finished their maximum term of 12 years mid-year and then our faithful friend Walter Davis passed. With intentional onboarding and reliance upon our Treasurer/DAS we were able to navigate closures, lease changes and define the Trustee role in disaffiliation.

Our closed church sales in 2022 were Lisle Faith UMC & parsonage, Ringwood UMC, Beach Park; York House UMC and parsonage. In March of 2023 we sold Cortland UMC.

For missional properties we funded the completion of the repairs to the Camp Reynoldswood pool and at Camp Wesley Woods worked on solutions to the water runoff and shoreline problems. Our mission to Northwestern Campus is to provide a house at the crossroads of student activity for spiritual care and life coaching. Because the building is over 100 years old it continues to need significant repairs, \$17,000 in 2022 and possibly \$12,000 in 2023.

We sold the Elgin District parsonage which rebalanced an old account for managing conference owned parsonages and we closed that account. We continue to struggle with providing adequate housing and office space for our district superintendents given the recent redistricting and closing regional offices. We thank Rockford: Christ UMC for temporary space for the Prairie North office.

In 2022 the Trustee portion of the Annual Conference Budget shifted to an accrual accounting to distribute larger capital expenses for the properties over seven years. The Boy Scouts of America settlement was completed with a survivor fund and the NIC amount was approved in January at \$754,348.00. Trustees have consulted with CFA on a three-year fund drive to contribute to this amount. The Safe Sanctuaries training was increased, and we now have most of our churches covered. We continue to work closely with the Insurance Board to provide coverage for all local churches and conference properties.

The Conference Office lease ended on August 31, 2022 and, though usually renewed for 10 years, the Trustee Board decided a review was needed. We returned to the Chicago: Temple building at 77 W. Washington 20 years ago after working from the Lutheran Building on Cumberland for many years. We judged the current space on accessibility, usage, quality, and management practices. We factored in historically low leasing rates in Chicago and whether other churches were prepared for our space and security needs. With much back and forth, and with appreciation for all that Chicago: Temple UMC has provided for many generations, we decided to move to a Class A building at 303 E. Wacker. This move set in motion a series of changes in storage (paper to digital), furniture (free with the move), and staff (location & other factors). We commend our Conference Staff for accepting this itineracy even as they adjust to their new reality.

We started work on a disaffiliation process in the Spring of 2022. Our understanding of the Trustee role is described in part by paragraph 2553 of the Book of Discipline but it also allows space for context and needs of mission in our local setting. Foremost in our work is allowing the inquiring local churches to answer questions of call – “Would their ministry of making disciples for Jesus Christ be better served by not being United Methodist?” Until a church wrestled with the facts and sorted out the propaganda, our work did start. We had a rough draft of the process completed in 2022 but could begin implementation until 2023. Our disaffiliation process differs from many Conferences in the denomination in that we are being relational to the inquiring churches and not offering a blanket formula to be judged in the public forum. This Trustee work will continue through disaffiliation dates as described in the appropriate legislation.

The intense nature of our work in the last six months of 2022 and the first half of 2023 have made the Trustee Board a strong team, interdependent with the Bishop, Conference Staff, and Annual Conference Shepherding Team and unified in making Trustee decisions that affect the entire Annual Conference.

Humbly submitted by Rev. Nancy Blade, Chairperson, on behalf of the Trustee Board - Executive Members: Mr. Daniel Saavedra (VC), Rev. Violet Johnicker (Sec’y), Mr. Jim Loeppert, Pastor Jeff Brace; Board Members: Ms. Sabrina Bermingham, Ms. Karen Doty, Rev. Sarah Hong, Mr. George Wentworth, Mr. Bob Wood.

Document 400.07 - Cabinet Report

There is no better way to begin a cabinet report than to give my sincere gratitude for the clergy and laity, elders and deacons, local licensed pastors, DS supply pastors, CLMs, lay servants, lay speakers and the thousands of United Methodists in this conference who have worked so very hard to bring God’s peace, love, hope and joy from Stockton to Freeport, from Blue Island to Evanston, from Joliet to Antioch and all places in between. Thank you!!!!

As a cabinet we once again recognize the great challenges and changes we all are experiencing, but we also are witnesses to something in the midst.

My father is a retired United Methodist clergy from the Wisconsin annual conference. Like any good father, he helps keep me in check and humble. I remember, early on in my ministry, I would call him excited about a new workshop that had new and exciting ideas. He would calmly tell me that he remembered the same ideas back in the 70s. Recently, I called him lamenting about all the changes in the church, in the denomination, and in my current role. Once again, he recounted stories of similar issues decades ago. He always reminds me of something that we as a cabinet have realized and continue to celebrate: God is PRESENT and is the foundation in all that we do, in all that is changing and in every corner of our lives. Moreover, we are not alone, we are a connectional church that stands together, helps one another and seeks to unite our prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness for the greater glory of God in the world.

This year, we, as a cabinet and as a conference, have experienced the following together:

- We welcomed in a new District Superintendent, Hwa-Young Chong, who brings administrative skills, kindness, calm and deep theological expression to the Table.
- We said goodbye and then hello again to Fabiola Grandon-Mayer as she leaves the position of DS but comes back to the table as the new Director of Connectional Ministries, freeing up Arlene Christopherson to increase the work needed as the Assistant to the Bishop in the possible future of our conference as we may need to explore a more connected relationship with another conference.
- We struggled with what it is to be United Methodist and to journey with those who have been discerning whether the denomination was the right fit for them. At the time this report was written, we are happy to report that very few of the 350+ churches in our conference have decided to discern disaffiliation and even fewer will leave the denomination. We are coming out of this not only mostly intact but I believe stronger as we all are more free to live with integrity and in the fullness of how God is calling us.

I am not saying the challenges are difficult and real, but we live as people of hope and that will NEVER change.

By the way, did you notice that I did not mention COVID? I am just tired of talking about it. We know it is still a challenge!

With all of these changes the constant work of supervision, appointments, dispersing emergency funds to churches in need, administration of the various boards and agencies of the church, providing learning experiences for lay and clergy and keeping a high morale in our districts and conference has not stopped.

Oh, I guess there is one more change the cabinet and we as a conference have been given. A new Bishop! Bishop Dan Schwerin is our third Bishop in four years and each one is VERY different. I have whiplash trying to figure out the styles of our Bishops.

However, I am so very pleased with this Bishop's assignment to us. For those of you who are Bears fans, you will understand this. You are all excited about the possibilities of Justin Fields as your quarterback, and we as a cabinet are as excited about the possibilities of Dan Schwerin as our Bishop. However, as the Dean of the Cabinet, I consider it even deeper...it is more like he is a proven winner...like Aaron Rodgers! Come on, he is from Wisconsin after all! Bishop Schwerin brings kindness, direction, vision, administration, thoughtfulness, listening, team-playing, poetry writing, and so many more gifts that we are learning. Welcome Bishop, we are blessed that God has granted us at least four years with you...but after the past few, could you make it eight?

Submitted by Rev. Jeffrey Bross, Dean NIC Cabinet

Document 400.08 - Clergy Fund, United Methodist

The United Methodist Clergy Fund is an independent, Illinois, not-for-profit, corporation. It is organized to “procure, invest, and manage money and property, the income from which shall go toward the support of superannuated ministers, and the widows and dependent children of deceased members.” The fund is related to the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church because its bylaws limit its contributions to this conference.

Founded on October 27, 1885, it was one of the first funds established to provide income for retired pastors and their dependents. In fact, it was one of the first funds in the United States to provide such assistance, and was a forerunner to the concept of pension funds. In existence for nearly 140 years, The Clergy Fund intends to continue providing significant levels of support for retirees of the Northern Illinois Conference.

On December 31, 2022 the fund totaled \$28,999,738. As with many other entities with investments in the stock market, the Fund’s portfolio value fluctuates. This past year saw significant losses. In spite of those fluctuations, through the stewardship of its Board of Directors, and the investment management team at Wespeth, the Fund honored its commitment to the Northern Illinois Conference for the benefit of its retirees.

The Clergy Fund contribution significantly funds the health benefits that the retirees receive from the conference. Because of this contribution, the Northern Illinois Conference is able to be one of the few conferences, if not the only conference, to continue providing health benefits to its retirees, and is among the last of the conferences to continue this practice.

The Clergy Fund Board of Directors is comprised of five lay members and two clergy members. These persons are nominated and elected by the current board of directors. They serve for terms of four years. Five retired honorary Directors, the Chair of the Conference Board of Pensions, and the Conference Treasurer and the Conference Benefits Manager are regularly invited to attend the quarterly meetings of the Board.

The Clergy Fund has made annual gifts of approximately \$1 million toward retiree health insurance and retiree benefits of the Conference for more than 20 years. A policy of using a percentage of the three-year rolling average of the year-end fund value guides the Board’s annual contribution to the Board of Pensions. The Board contributed \$1,400,000 from the fund for 2021.

The Fund is a 501(c)(3) registered charitable organization, and welcomes contributions and bequests. Either the Conference office or I can provide information as to the process of making a contribution to the Fund and joining in our mission.

- Rev. Chris Pierson, United Methodist Clergy Fund, President
- Steve Nailor, United Methodist Clergy Fund, Vice-President
- Rev. Jamison Geiger, United Methodist Clergy Fund, Secretary
- Edward Andersen, United Methodist Clergy Fund, Treasurer
- Dr. Kwang P. Chung
- Jocelyn R. Vinluan
- Kristina Gaughan, United Methodist Clergy Fund

Document 400.09 - Congregational Development & Redevelopment Committee

As we continue navigating unprecedented challenges stemming from COVID-19 and a culture where the church is becoming more and more marginalized, we give thanks for the opportunity to serve over 350 congregations through planting new churches and aiding existing churches as a team called Congregational Development and Redevelopment (CodeRed).

We are grateful for Bishop Dan Schwerin's passion for reaching new people with the gospel through the new church planting movement and for his interest in empowering every congregation in its unique context. The Congregational Development and Redevelopment Committee held a retreat with the Cabinet, District Strategy Committee and Vital Congregations Task Force on March 4, 2023. In the retreat we shared the best practices for congregational development and studied demographics for each district. Those studies illuminated population trends by zip code that enabled us to begin answering questions about who is not in our faith communities yet.

The day after Easter 2022, Pastor Harriette Cross shared with us, saying that her congregation had even greater worship attendance than before the pandemic. She attributed the increase to the culture of invitation she and the lay members of the congregation have intentionally cultivated. I am so thankful for her leadership and resilience in the midst of all the challenges before her. She serves a predominantly white community as an African American clergywoman. Her success energizes us and gives us hope for the work of the Office of Congregation Development and Redevelopment.

The Wilmington church is one of the cohort churches in the "How To Reach New People" coaching program. Starting in October, we launched a 5-congregation cohort to be part of developer Rev. Dr. Paul Nickerson's coaching process that led to the development of the "How to Reach New People" system. The Chicago Temple is one of the five congregations, along with Naperville: Community UMC, Rockford: Christ UMC, Schaumburg: Our Saviour's UMC, and Belvedere: First UMC. Our strategy is that after they have practiced the process in order to gain some experience with the system, they will share their experience with other congregations in a multiplication process.



In September, we launched a Fresh Expressions event in every district. We are preparing to launch a new cohort and we have about a dozen congregations so far who have expressed interest. The Conference is provided a \$500 micro-grant to each church that applies to the Fresh Expressions cohort.

In terms of redevelopment, we are pursuing ministry in new ways. For example, the City of Chicago approved the development of the former Michael Reese Hospital site, and the developers will be investing \$3.8 billion. Hartzell Memorial UMC is 3 blocks away from the site, therefore we invited Olu Brown to come as a consultant to train laity in a visioning process over the year.



Olu Brown is also teaching the Class of 2023 in the Institute for Congregational Development (ICD) using his book, *Normalizing Next*. There are 31 participants who are learning together in that program.



In terms of reaching new people, we are also evangelizing by planting new churches. We planted a number of new Hispanic congregations in Chicagoland. We also planted Victory Swahili New Faith Community in Rockford.

Amid this challenging time, DeKalb First raised \$1.2 million within 10 days for constructing a new building. This was in addition to the \$3 million they already had available. They had considered



pausing building because construction costs had increased by 40%. But faithful members of the congregation stepped forward with a sacrificial commitment. Bishop Hopkins, church members, and community leaders gathered to celebrate the groundbreaking on July 24th. The DeKalb congregation expects to occupy the new facility this summer.

We also held a second Vital Merger workshop on December 3rd. We have to remind ourselves that, while the Church is not a building, the church building is an important tool for the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ.



We are deeply invested in marginalized communities. After a 13-year-old Hispanic boy was shot by a police officer just outside Amor de Dios UMC, Bishop Hopkins visited the community and prayed on his knees. In addition, we celebrated Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month and raised awareness about anti-Asian violence. Over 300 people attended the event with a half dozen speakers, including Rev. Jesse Jackson. I am so grateful that BMCR leadership joined in solidarity.

In conclusion, it has been a great joy and privilege to work with Bishop Dan Schwerin. His passion and especially his focus on relationships with fellow sojourners of the gospel. We thank God for his leadership in such a time as this as we navigated the challenges of the past year, especially in the area of congregational development and redevelopment. With Bishop Dan Schwerin, we are repositioning how we think and are planning strategically on the ground, district by district. Thanks be to God!

Rev. Jonathan Crail, Chairperson of the Congregational Development and Redevelopment Committee
Rev. J. Martin Lee, Director of Congregational Development and Redevelopment

Document 400.10 - Report of the Order of Deaconess/Home Missioner (DHM)

Celebrating 135 Years of Love, Justice & Service

Our movement

The earliest known usage of the term deaconess comes from Paul's letter to the Romans, when he wrote: "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchræe, that you may receive her in the Lord as befits the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a helper of many and of myself as well" (Romans 16:1-2). The Methodist deaconess movement in the United States began when Lucy Rider Meyer and her husband started the first deaconess training school in Chicago in 1885. In 1888, the Office of Deaconess was officially recognized by the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the office has remained active ever since. Methodist deaconesses in the late 19th and early 20th centuries are credited with starting schools and hospitals in communities where they did not previously exist, and the need for such ministries was great. Deaconesses often worked under harsh conditions and in cutting-edge ministries of social service on behalf of women, children and youth. They were courageous and set the path for many institutions in social service around the country today. Deaconesses and Home Missioners continue this legacy of serving in cutting edge ministries of love, justice and service today. We serve in a variety of ministry settings including health/wellness, law, education, advocacy and social service.

At the General Conference in 1988, when the category of home missionary was eliminated in The United Methodist Church, there was no place for laity who identify as men to live out a recognized calling to lifetime service. This led to the establishment of the home missionary category of service, the equivalent to deaconesses at the 2004 General Conference. Legislation was passed at General

Conference 2016 to make the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner an official order within The United Methodist Church. The Order of Deaconess and Home Missioner is one of three orders of ministry in The United Methodist Church serving alongside the orders of Elder and Deacon and is the only order for laity. Deaconesses and Home Missioners feel called by God to a full-time vocation in service with those who are marginalized and in need in the world today.

“Deaconesses and Home Missioners function through diverse forms of service directed toward the world to make Jesus Christ known in the fullness of God’s ministry and mission, which mandate followers to:

- a) Alleviate suffering
- b) Eradicate causes of injustice and all that robs life of dignity and worth
- c) Facilitate the development of full human potential
- d) Share in the building global community through the church universal.”

Our Ministries Vary. Our Call to Service Binds Us.

The Order of Deaconess/Home Missioner is continuing to grow! Our current numbers as of February 1, 2023 are:

Deaconesses: Active – 206, Retired – 116
 Home Missioners: Active – 16, Retired - 1
 Home Missionaries: Active – 5, Retired - 47
 D/HM Candidates – 67 (Home Missioner – 17, Deaconess – 50)

As of the writing of this report, in April, we will welcome 16 new DHM and 5 transferring DHM to our Order!

The Northern Illinois Conference has 6 active Deaconess/Home Missioners serving under appointment and . We serve in a variety of ministry settings including health/wellness, law, education, advocacy and social service. Our ministries vary but our call to love, justice and service binds us as a covenant community.

Catherine Inserra, Joy Hayag, Martha Lundgren, Christina Meyer, Amy Reimer and Geraldine Men-
 cias are part of the NIC with voice and vote deaconesses. Our goal is to get more called lay people to be part of the order.

In October of 2022 the order convened its bi-annual convocation with the National Association of Deaconesses, Home Missioners and Home Missionaries in San Antonio, TX and will gather with its ecumenical diaconate body (Diakonia of the Americas and the Caribbean- DOTAC) in Minneapolis in August of 2023 for study, spiritual renewal and fellowship. The order met weekly for spiritual support, convened a racial justice summit, facilitated intersectional justice education training events, met for advent and Lenten studies and convened a Building Global Community dialogue with the deaconess movement in the Philippines.

Is this the Call for you?

Is this a Call for you? If so, there is an opportunity to be a part of a supportive community in relationship with The United Methodist Church as a deaconess or home missioner. Discernment Events are held at various times throughout the year. The Deaconess/Home Missioner Discernment event is an opportunity to explore God’s call to vocational ministry. You can register for the upcoming event taking place on Saturday, August 12, 2023 at <http://tinyurl.com/dhmaugust2023>. If this calling is for you or someone you know, we want to hear from you!

Website: <https://uwfaith.org/what-we-do/deaconess-and-home-missioner/>

Email: deaconess@uwfaith.org, Call: 1-332-240-3898

Respectfully Submitted, Joy D. Hayag, Deaconess, Commissioned 1995

Document 400.11 – Office of Connectional Ministry

The work of the Director of Connectional Ministries (DCM) is defined in the United Methodist Book of Discipline. The DCM is charged with stewarding the vision of the annual conference, and includes the development, clarification, interpretation, and embodiment of the vision, and serves as the leader of the continuous process of transformation and renewal necessary for the conference to be faithful to our Christian identity in a changing world. The DCM ensures the alignment of the total resources of the conference to its vision, and connects the local, district, annual conference, and general church ministries for the purpose of networking, resourcing, and communicating their shared ministry.

I have served as DCM for 7 years during which we launched a new coordinating structure (ACST), consolidated program and administrative offices, faced the uncertainty and fallout of General Conference 2019, journeyed through a pandemic, launched three major strategic goals, transitioned from a compliment of fulltime program staff to a ½ time director, shifted from 6 districts to five, relocated the conference offices, saw a rotation in the persons filling our 3 connectional ministry staff roles, dealt with the tragedy of Boy Scout abuse, ramped up our training for Safe Sanctuaries, addressed the process of disaffiliation, worked for two years with interim Bishop John Hopkins and now have moved to the leadership of our newly assigned Bishop, Bishop Dan Schwerin. In the coming year we face the task of preparing for the possibility of a shared episcopal assignment in 2024. This past summer we held our first in person annual conference following the pandemic. Everyone was blessed by a time of fellowship and “in the flesh” conversations. The staff and Annual Conference Committee acknowledged a learning curve as we reacquainted ourselves with what it means to gather in person and evaluations offered strong support for all that was accomplished.

This year also brought additional transitions in our staffing. We celebrated 6 years of service with Laura Lopez as our events planner and welcomed Bri Wadlington into the role. We also gave thanks for 11 years of Anne Marie Gerhardt’s leadership as our Director of Communications and just this spring welcomed Rev. Victoria Rebeck into this role. Through all these transitions I give thanks for the dedication and talents of Lisa Smith who filled in one gap and then another keeping us humming along through her gifts and hard work.

Since writing the 2022 historic report last spring we coordinated over 80 events with participation of thousands of people over the course of 12 months. This work has aided all our areas in their efforts as we provide branded promotion and well managed registration for participants of our events. Our communications staff provides us with the weekly e-news, bi-weekly district e-news, monthly Reporters, a constantly updated website, videos and special announcements, while also tending to the communications needs of over 50 committees, taskforces, conference staff, district interests and groups in our conference. They produced over 200 touch points for telling our story during the last 12 months while also using social media to convey our work.

As I write this report we continue to be in transition. After 7 years of supporting our ministries ½ time, we are moving back to a full-time Director of Connectional Ministries this July 1. I am excited to be working alongside Reverend Fabiola Grandon-Mayer as she prepares to step into this role. I know Fabiola will bring strong organizational skills and a passion for the work and witness of the church. Our work will be strengthened as we expand this role back to full-time and I know all our hardworking leaders will benefit from this decision.

The expansion of the Director of Connectional Ministries role also comes at a critical time in our organizational life as we anticipate and plan for the sharing of an episcopal leader with another annual conference following the jurisdictional conference in July of 2024.

I have been honored to work with so many passionate people during my years in this role. I am grateful for their patience and understanding as I did my best to offer support under limited circumstances. May God continue to empower us in our witness and mission.

In Christ Service,
Reverend Arlene W. Christopherson

Document 400.12 - Discipleship Task Force

The second Conference-wide Fall Worship Service was held November 13, 2022. Revs P Devon Brown and Heewon Kim were the organizers. It was hosted by Journey of Hope UMC in Elgin. The music was rich. Choirs from Journey of Hope, Flossmore Korean, and Chicago: St Mark's Gospirational Choir inspired us and fed our souls. The message was given by Rev Dr Mai-Anh Le Tran, VP for Academic Affairs and Academic Dean of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. Her call-to action preaching stressed "redemptive community that is unafraid of the life-changing challenges and life-giving possibilities of skin-to-skin contact with those who are profoundly other to us." She herself was no stranger to that way of life. What a great time of worship!

Our second selection for our NIC Book Club was *Soul Reset* by the late Rev Junius Dotson. Our book club facilitators were Buzz Wheeler, Tennielle Powers, Karen Bonnell, Caleb Hong, Becky Nicol, and Matthew Krings and groups met throughout the fall and winter. We had DVDs of Rev Dotson. If you missed participating in the book club, it's not too late to obtain a copy and read it. We were so fortunate to have the author here in the Northern Illinois Conference only a few years ago as our keynote speaker for Laity Convocation and also our Annual Conference Bible Study leader. He has quite a story and it can strengthen your well-being going forward. The third selection for the NIC Book Club is Bishop Kenneth Carder's *Living our Beliefs: The United Methodist Way*. It will be offered early in the fall.

Our Youth Leaders team has combined with some leaders from the Anti-Racism Task Force. They are calling themselves DAY—Discipleship Anti-Racism for Youth. Their goal is "providing resources to equip youth leaders for anti-racist discipleship by providing opportunities to gather quarterly in person to create community and learn how to involve youth in the future." So far they have met with Catherine Inserra and Kids Above All, Violet Johnicker and Rockford Urban Ministries, and Kris Aves and UVMIM. They look forward to a youth version of *Becoming the Beloved Community* led by Dr Richard Guzman.

Intentional Discipleship Systems team continues to offer training sessions to help grow disciples in Northern Illinois Conference churches. Prairie North, Prairie South, Lake South Leadership Training events and the NIC Candidacy Retreat in October received training recently. They also offer a quarterly Zoom session to anyone who would like to brainstorm ideas for IDS or just receive support. The NIC Prayer Network systematically offers monthly devotions by NIC writers, and a prayer guide that lifts up clergy, churches, NIC leaders, and NIC advances. It can be found at umcnic.org/prayernetwork. The NIC Prayer Team meets monthly and prays for that week's prayer focus from the prayer guide as well as events in the Northern Illinois Conference. They have started offering the Zoom link through eNews for easy access to anyone who wishes to pray along. Our task force and some prayer team members held days of fasting and prayer on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

A Discipleship Survey was sent to clergy in March to see if NIC clergy were aware of our services and to find out what other services we could help provide.

We are thankful for all the contributions of Rev P Devon Brown to Discipleship Task force, who rotated off at the end of the year. We welcome G Morris Jarkloh Jr to our team and continue with Rev Sharon Rice, Rev Seamus Enright, Ellen Feliciano, Rev Ayla Samson, and Connie Schweitzer.

Rev Caleb Hong and Karen Bonnell, Co-chairs.

Document 400.13 - Eco-Sustainability Task Force

One of the deceptive aspects of the mind is to give us the illusion of being distinct from and over against but not a part of nature. It is but a single leap thus to regard nature as being so completely other than oneself that one may exploit it, plunder it, and rape it with impunity.
Howard Thurman (adapted)

Created as a Bishop's Task Force in 2015 the Eco-Sustainability Task Force has brought creation care concerns to the Annual Conference for eight years. In much of that time we have provided Green Summits for local churches and statewide agencies, supported the UMC Earthkeepers movement with a training and networking, supplied mission booths at in person Annual Conference sessions, connected with the growing UMC Creation Justice movement and passed green legislation at the 2017 and 2018 Annual Conference. The 2018 legislation encouraged local churches to form green teams, complete energy audits and to stop using Styrofoam.

At the 2021 Annual Conference the NIC United Women in Faith completed a Sustainable Events Survey on the Annual Conference Session in Schaumburg at our request. Focusing on six of the thirteen principles of sustainability, they observed the venue providing recycling containers, keeping water conservation measures, and complying with labor laws. Accessibility to elevators was responded to on the second day. Healthy food and child welfare could not be measured. There were no stretching and breathing exercises offered at the breaks.

In 2022 we began a new strategy for addressing our creation care concerns. Following the path laid out for us with the UMC interagency commitment of 12 boards and agencies in the general church and with Council of Bishops' statement "Climate Crisis Response," we launched a Net Zero carbon emissions movement.

Our first task was to finish our 2021 plan for a Renewable Energy Summit in September. Rev. Jenny Phillips (Environmental Sustainability at Global Ministries) and Mr. Jake Barnett (Wespath Investments) presented a compelling case on the critical work our churches can do to bring our conference in line with the goals of the International Energy Agency of reaching net zero emissions globally by 2050.

The follow up to the 2021 Summit was monthly meetings on the second Saturday and a call to strategize for Net Zero 2050 in January 2023. Twenty-five people answered that call and met with a strategic planner, Mr. Bruce Williams, to form our concerns for the environment into a one-year plan for moving our local churches and the Conference to reasonable commitments.

Those commitments are: Church Conference pledges, completed energy audits, promotion of "nature in worship" tools, a trustee training on Net Zero for the Districts, and a Conference committee to administrate metrics and report to the 2024 Annual Conference session.

The Eco-Sustainability Task Force is changing their name to Net Zero Task Force and will send two people to the Conference Board of Global Ministries meetings.

Presently, the new Net Zero Task Force of the NIC would like to hear from local churches about the efforts they are making to become more sustainable. With permission, these stories can be shared in Conference publications so other churches have resources and inspiration to make net zero progress. Please submit your local church story at <https://tinyurl.com/NICNetZeroStories>.

We invite every United Methodist in Northern Illinois to pledge, partner and advocate for reduced carbon emissions in an equitable and just manner.

Signatures:

Rev. Nancy Blade, Co-Chair

Mr. Richard Alton, Co-Chair

Document 400.14 - NIC Council on Finance and Administration (CCFA)

We have seen many changes since our last historical report. We have emerged from a COVID pandemic that forced us to create alternate plans for worship and limited our gatherings. In the past year, many of our church, district, and conference events have returned to pre-pandemic "normal". However, we have learned from our time of social distancing and many of our conference meetings continue to utilize online meeting platforms, provide hybrid options or satellite locations to reduce the amount of travel needed across the conference.

Our Conference ended 2022 having received \$4,305,601 in Annual Conference apportionments from Northern Illinois Churches and an additional \$579,593 from local churches for General Church apportionments. In 2022, 173 churches paid 100% of their calculated apportionments compared to 198 in 2021. Because of generous and faithful giving in our local churches in 2022, the Northern Illinois Conference was able to pay \$1,366,179 to General Church apportionments and fully fund the conference budget. This payment represents a full payment of what our apportionment share would have been if the 2020 General Conference had been able to meet and approve the proposed budget for the next quadrennium (2021-2024). However, since the 2020 General Conference did not occur, Annual Conferences have been billed based on the budget passed for 2017-2020. The NIC apportionment share for 2022 was set at \$1,823,221. Our payment represents about 75% of this amount. In order to get to the payment of \$1,366,179, CCFA allocated about \$660k from Annual Conference Apportionments that were not spent and took almost \$100k from reserves along with the nearly \$580k received for General Church apportionments.

Additionally in the past year, CCFA participated in discussion with the NIC Trustees and conference staff as plans were coming together to move the NIC office from 77 W. Washington to 303 E. Wacker.

Our Conference Treasurer, Lonnie Chafin, has kept CCFA abreast of the moving parts in terms of churches who have entered the disaffiliation process and we have discussed the financial realities that disaffiliating churches will place on our conference budget over the next few years. We are prepared to respond and make adjustments in the coming years as needed.

CCFA, Trustees, and conference staff worked to craft the Repair the Harm Campaign which is our plan for funding the NIC obligation to the Boy Scouts of America Survivor Fund. Our portion of the \$30M is \$754k. We are asking local churches to prayerfully consider a contribution spread over the next three years to help us raise the needed funds to provide financial repair to the harm that has been caused in the lives of many young people.

CCFA continues to be grateful for the support of local churches in carrying our vital ministry across Northern Illinois and seeks to be the best stewards possible of our resources.

Respectfully Submitted,
CCFA Executive Team

Rev. Tammy Scott, President; Kim Emery, Vice-President; Rev. Cynthia Zolk, Secretary;
Lonnie Chafin, Treasurer/Director of Administrative Services

Document 400.15 - Global Ministries Committee

Members: Shirley Pulgar-Hughes, mission secretary, Larry Dunlap-Berg and Kris Aves, UMVIM coordinators, Amos Oladipo, Karen Messley, United Women in Faith representative, Mary Ann Burson, committee secretary, Susan Johnson, and Arlene Christopherson

Churches and individuals responded generously to support Ukraine through Global Ministries relief efforts. A total of \$275,000 was raised! Thanks to Rev. Keck Mowry for organizing t-shirt sales during the conference to support the offering. 150+ shirts were sold totaling \$2,370!

Thanks to the 60+ churches who donated to the AC mission challenge. We collected over 4,500 pounds of items for the Midwest Mission! An additional \$700 was donated. We thank the youth and adult volunteers from Our Redeemer's UMC, Schaumburg who helped take in donations.

We thank New Lenox UMC, Lanark UMC, Neighborhood UMC, Maywood, Glenview UMC, and Community Church of Fox River Grove for their willingness to be permanent sites. Go to the MMDC website for more information.

We were able to give out 3 grants last year. Two were for local churches to purchase insurance through the NCJ UMVIM program and one was for tools for the Rockford work camps/RUM.

Hear from one of the groups receiving a grant: An 18-member UMVIM team from Illinois (Euclid Park UMC, Oak Park), Kansas, North Carolina and Ohio participated in a one-week mission journey starting Dec. 26 in Manos Juntas [Hands Together] (Advance #3020527), Rio Bravo, Mexico.

Landing in Texas, the team traveled three miles to Manos Juntas in Mexico. Their mission was to prepare a construction site for future teams to finish while strengthening relationships with each other, the Manos Juntas staff, the community and Christ.

During July, a scouting team learned Manos Juntas had recently received four buildings of a partially constructed school. A community survey determined child-care was critically needed and the best use for the buildings. The goal is to open the center during the first half of 2023.

The group broke into four teams. One team pulled thousands of weeds and removed a truckload of trash from an area that had become a community dump site. Two teams mixed concrete to build a new wall, improve existing concrete-block walls and increase accessibility by connecting the buildings with new sidewalks. Another team prepared safe spaces for a children's garden, a flower garden, and a playground by removing 20 large stumps from already-cut trees.

For team leader, Rev. Tammy Kuntz, this was the 20th consecutive Christmas-to-New Year mission journey with Manos Juntas [Hands Together] in Rio Bravo, Mexico. She coordinates UMVIM for the North Central Jurisdiction.

Several UMVIM trainings have occurred in 2022. These trainings are useful for everyone, whether you are leading, a member of a team, going to an UMVIM or a non-UMVIM site, new to mission or an old hand. Contact Kris or Larry to discuss training for your group in 2023.

Finally, 2022 was quiet due to lingering COVID issues, but look for missionary itineration to begin again in 2023!

Document 400.16 - Board of Laity

The Board of Laity welcomed new member, Barb Farley. We will be saying good bye to longtime member, Karen Bonnell, who leaves to participate in the Renovare Institute for Christian Spiritual Formation, and our 2-term Co-Lay Leader, Mark Manzi, who was tapped to serve as Co-Chair of the Annual Conference Shepherding Team. We honor and thank Karen for her years of service, and her faithful commitment to our Board and our Conference. We honor and thank Mark for his tireless leadership and his daily example of faith in action. We offer each our heartiest congratulations – we wish you well in your new endeavors.

The Board of Laity supports the Annual Conference’s vision of making and supporting Christians in vital congregations. The Board, comprising the Conference Co-Lay Leaders, District Lay Leaders and Members at Large, meet monthly throughout the year to discuss conference programming that aims to educate and empower our lay members to not only live the mission of our faith, but to communicate it to the communities in which we live and work. Our main focus throughout the year is planning our Annual Laity Convocation.

Since the spring of 2020, we have utilized virtual meeting technology for our monthly meetings, and, while we have come to appreciate the efficiency and economy of virtual meetings, we also long for the warmth and nourishment that can only come from the human contact we experience during face-to-face meetings. Thus, our innovation for Laity Convocation 2023 – a hybrid event that incorporated online attendance with live in-person conferencing hosted by three local churches across our conference: Barrington UMC; Faith UMC, Orland Park, and Disciples UMC, Mt. Morris. Over 200 attended this year’s event at our live locations and online. Our attendees included laity, clergy, District Superintendents, Annual Conference staff members, and our Bishop.

Our theme, “Thinking Outside the Church: Making Community Ministry Happen,” was well –received by conference attendees. We were honored to include opening remarks from our recently appointed Bishop, Dan Schwerin. Our keynote speaker, David Teel, Director of Laity and Spiritual Leadership for the United Methodist Church, is based in Nashville, Tennessee, and he delivered his discussion via video recording. We broke into discussion groups, both in person and online to consider David’s inspiring message. The morning wrapped up with video presentations from four local congregations who have taken to heart the value of reaching outside their church buildings with their faith and enthusiasm. Their presentations demonstrated beyond doubt the joy and the value of making community ministry a reality and of providing, as so eloquently expressed by Karen Bonnell: “hope, love and light to their neighbors.” The presenting congregations came from: Berry UMC, Chicago; First UMC, Franklin Park; Oregon UMC; and Wesley UMC, Aurora.

Videos and written materials for Laity Convocation 2023, as well as for past years, can be found on our webpage: www.umc.nic.org/laity. This page is included on the NIC website under the Congregational Life subheading.

The Northern Illinois Conference is currently served by these Co-Lay Leaders: Connie Augsburger, Mark Manzi, and Eugene Williams. Connie is a former longtime member of the Conference Board of Trustees and its Executive Committee, as well as the Conference Insurance Board and the

Episcopacy Committee. Mark continues to serve the Conference as a member, and now co-chair, of the Annual Conference Shepherding Team and as a member of the Annual Conference Committee. Gene's Conference commitments include: The Board of Ordained Ministry; the Episcopacy Committee; The United Methodist Foundation; the Nominations committee; and the Board of Church and Society. Gene also chairs of the CSD Committee of Ordained Ministry and is the Treasurer of the Conference UMM.

We appreciate the honor to serve the Northern Illinois Annual Conference.

Respectfully submitted,
Connie Augsburg, Mark Manzi, and Eugene Williams, Co-Lay Leaders.

Document 400.17 - NIC Committee on Lay Servant Ministries

Lay Servant Ministries continues to serve and lead in the Northern Illinois Conference! The Conference Committee continues to meet regularly via ZOOM to support the districts and all laity through the continued education of all laity and the certification of Lay Servants, Lay Speakers and Lay Ministers. District Committees continue to meet, plan for lay academies and support the certification process.

The districts are committed to holding Lay Academies and continue our ministry of education and leadership development. Each district has been flexible in their planning while listening to laity within their districts. Some of the districts have only offered virtual sessions, some have offered a combination of virtual and in-person at different times. Some districts hope to be able to hold virtual and in-person simultaneously in the future. We have come to realize that virtual offerings are here to stay and meet the needs of some of our laity.

It is important that the process of bringing new members of the laity into lay servant ministries continues as the Basic course is frequently offered. Additionally, members of the laity can move along their faith journey because districts continue to offer courses that follow the Certified Lay Servant and Certified Lay Speaker curriculum. Additional advanced courses are offered to address the areas of individual devotional life, leadership development, and stewardship. We are working to offer courses in Spanish so more laity can participate in Lay Academies and become better leaders in their local congregations. While we currently only have one course text available in Korean, we hope to expand offerings in the future.

We are pleased to offer new courses in our districts that have been developed through Discipleship Ministries and the Training Committee of the Annual Conference Directors of Lay Servant Ministries. New courses offered in 2022 included: "Teaching Biblical Faith: Leading Small Group Bible Studies" based on the text by Dr. Jack L. Seymour; "Ministry with the Forgotten: Dementia Through a Spiritual Lens" using the book by Bishop Kenneth L. Carder; "Soul Reset: Relearning the Rhythms of Grace Through Daily Life with God" based on the book by Rev. Junius B. Dotson; and "La Evangelizacion Transformadora: La manera wesleyana de compartir la fe" the Spanish version of Transformative Evangelism. We're looking forward to additional new courses being offered so members of our laity can proceed with the continuous learning advocated by John Wesley.

Northern Illinois Conference, know that Lay Servant Ministries will continue to hear God's call for the laity to be in ministry, as knowledgeable leaders in their local churches, communities and across the conference. We urge all laity to become engaged in the process and network of Lay Servant Ministries, as this is the way that all of our congregations will become more vibrant! Blessings and safety to each of you!

Submitted by Peggy Hansen, Conference Director of Lay Servant Ministries

Document 400.18 - Conference Committee on Native American Ministries

Our Native American Ministry of Presence served the community through Bill Buchholtz who coordinates this ministry. He provided ministry through his music and presence with the Kateri Center, the American Indian Center, the Indian Health Service, the American Indian Association of Illinois (AIAI) and for funeral services. He played with Lanialoha Lee, an Indigenous Hawaiian traditional singer and ukulele musician. He served on the Board of Women & Water, based at the Lac Courte Oreilles reservation, played at U of I Champaign with three other Native Americans and performed at De Paul University. He assisted in a fundraiser for the Potawatomi Trails Pow Wow, performed at the Zion Pow wow, and had the honor of performing at the Goodman Theatre program with other Indigenous artists.

The committee partnered with NIC Anti-Racism Task Force in their speaker series: Race, America, and the Church: Unafraid and Unashamed to tackle it on the History, Causes and Effects of Racism and the role of the church in America. Our chair, Rev. Dr. Michelle Oberwise Lacock, spoke with a panel (Tim Alexander, Rev. Sandy Harlan, Dr. Betty Hart), on Unsilenced: Our Stories, Our Voices. We shared in the leadership for the event held at Our Redeemer's in Schaumburg, titled: Undenied: No Longer Willing to be Unheard. The speaker was Rev. Chebon Kernell, Executive Director of the UMC Native American Comprehensive. We supported the MidWest SOARRING 26th Harvest pow wow through our presence and financial support. The members of CONAM have spoken at and celebrated with churches observing Native American Ministries Sunday, provided pastoral care with Native Americans, and offered learning opportunities about Native culture within the local churches.

We sponsored a scholarship for Native American college students who are part of the American Indian Association of Illinois, (AIAI) an urban-based nonprofit dedicated to transforming American Indian education. This year, AIAI had an exhibit at the Field Museum where their executive director Doreen Weise received the Field & MacArthur Award recognizing 10 "diverse leaders from communities affected by Chicago's history of structural racism, discrimination and disinvestment" (Chicago Tribune, June 6, 2022).

"Friend do it this way-that is, whatever you do in life, do the very best you can with both your heart and minds. And if you do it that way, the Power of the Universe will come to your assistance, if your heart and mind are in Unity. When one sits in the Hoop Of The People, one must be responsible because All of Creation is related. And the Hurt of one is the hurt of all. And the honor of one is the honor of all. And whatever we do affects everything in the universe. If you do it that way-that is, if you truly join your heart and mind as One-whatever you ask for, that is the Way it's Going to be."
Lakota Instructions for Living passed down from White Buffalo Calf Woman

With Gratitude,
Rev. Dr. Michelle Oberwise Lacock, Chair Committee on Native American Ministries

Document 400.19 - Older Adult Ministries Council

The Older Adult Ministries Council met via Zoom to review the previous year's activities and to plan for the new conference year. For most of the time during this pandemic, the council refrained from in-person gathering. OAM has utilized the Internet to communicate with its constituents. The OAM Facebook Page has been a helpful device for visual and audio presentations and sharing of information.

Pursuing one of its objectives, the OAM gathered representatives of NIC-related senior care centers for lunch during the 2022 annual conference session to acknowledge their service to the older adult population in the conference. The senior care centers included Bethany Methodist Communities in Glenview, Chicago Methodist Senior Services in Chicago, Oak Crest Retirement in DeKalb, and Wes-

ley Willows in Rockford. This was also an opportunity for conversation among OAM board members and the management and workers of the centers. The traditional presentation of monetary awards to deserving workers for extraordinary efforts in the care of their patients especially in the midst of the pandemic highlighted the gathering. The awards came out of the Golden Cross Sunday Offering, a conference-designated offering fund.

The Discipleship Ministries (GBOD) and the United Methodist Association of Health and Welfare Ministries (UMA) have maintained communication with NIC through OAM.

Document 400.20 -Outdoor & Retreat Ministries

The Outdoor & Retreat Ministries continued to fulfill its mission to transform and nurture guests and neighbors into principled and passionate Christian Disciples.

Reynoldswood offered J.O.Y. and Woodland Camps for youth, and hosted three weeks of Illinois Lions Camps, two weeks of Cedarbrook Boys and Girls Camps, and St Paul Chong's annual weekend youth retreat.

Reynoldswood continued its Summer Day Camp partnership with the Dixon YMCA—hosting 10 weeks with 80+ children per week.

Wesley Woods returned to an almost-full summer schedule—with only one week open due to consolidating smaller NICUMC retreats into the same week, but most summer weekends remained open. This accidentally worked to our benefit due to the difficulty in finding/hiring housekeepers in 2022—affording two days to clean the whole camp each week, instead of 5 hours.

All of the churches and guests mentioned in last year's report returned, and Wesley Woods picked up two new weekend groups who are retuning as regular guests.

Looking Ahead

At the end of 2022 both camps had already expanded 2023 reservations through new weekend guests, a couple of whom have grown to week-long stays, and nine-month bookings of once-per-month retreats at both sites.

Both sites continue to diversify revenue sources to ensure that future pandemic measures do not shut either camp down: enabling ORM to hire more qualified employees in light of employee concerns regarding recession, pandemic, and not providing Unemployment Insurance.

Reynoldswood continues to expand its relationship with the Dixon YMCA and expects to serve 125 children each day during 2023 Summer Day Camp.

We are also exploring new off-season programs with the Dixon YMCA to expand mid-week ministry to local families. The programs are so new that we cannot yet mention specifics, but we are excited about the expanded and diversified ministry opportunity.

Wesley Woods is enhancing its slip and mooring leases, and introducing the same concept to a new Cabin Adopter program—pending approval by local regulatory agencies.

Both sites are also adopting and implementing Active Shooter (prevention and response) Plans in light of increasing incidents throughout the country, and our Methodist passion to provide Safe Sanctuaries. These plans require various infrastructure modifications around site access and supervision.

Finally, 2023 is the quinary inspection for American Camp Association Certification of professional standards (facilities, food, health, program, and safety [risk management]), at both sites—tying in nicely with the above programs and enhancements.

Thank you all for your continued support of the NIC Outdoor & Retreat Ministries through Reynoldswood and Wesley Woods.

Document 400.21 - NIC Chapter of PAUMCS 2023

National PAUMCS

The Professional Administrators of The United Methodist Connectional Structure (PAUMCS, <https://paumcs.org>) is a national United Methodist organization that focuses on the unique ministry of those who work in a United Methodist church office, be it in the local church, district, conference, episcopal or general agency. The mission of the Professional Administrators of the United Methodist Connectional Structure is to provide administrative professionals a supportive base for unity and fellowship and to promote individual growth, professional development, continuing education, and spiritual enrichment. PAUMCS members provide essential administrative support that brings organization and continuity to their ministry. United Methodist church administrators are the critical support throughout the denomination and are the vital link for the connection.

Under the authority & guidance of the General Council of Finance and Administration (GCFA), PAUMCS provides outstanding advanced professional training and enrichment for United Methodist church administrators through the PAUMCS Certification Institute and National PAUMCS Annual Conferences. (§1807.19 UM Discipline 2016)

There are currently 14 National PAUMCS members from the NIC PAUMCS, nine of whom have completed the Certification program, and three of whom have completed the Advanced Certification program. The 2023 PAUMCS Conference “Refresh, Renew, Restore” took place in person at Lake Junaluska, NC from April 21-23.

Northern Illinois Conference Chapter of PAUMCS (<https://nicpaumcs.wixsite.com/mysite>)

The membership of the Northern Illinois Conference Chapter of PAUMCS (NIC PAUMCS) consists of all secretaries, administrative assistants and staff, paid and unpaid, who serve in a Northern Illinois Conference church, district, conference, episcopal or general agency. The program and budget are administered by the NIC PAUMCS Steering Team, who are chapter members. There are no chapter dues: programs are provided through event registration fees and donations.

The NIC PAUMCS meets regularly for an hour via Zoom every month to receive training and to share our insights around topics that are relevant to our work & ministry in the church office. Meeting once a month via zoom has been an instrumental way for us to consistently meet our mission of providing “a supportive base for unity and fellowship and to promote individual growth, professional development, continuing education, and spiritual enrichment.”

Topics covered during this Annual Conference year were “Tools to Reconnect and Recharge,” “Jurisdictional Conference,” “Self-Care During the Holiday Juggle,” “Statistical Reports & Lay Leadership Portal,” “L.O.V.E. Our Volunteers” “The Q’s and A’s of Our Property & Casualty Insurance,” “An Introduction with Bishop Dan,” “Constant But Changing,” and “Table Talk - NIC Annual Conference Recap.”

In addition to the monthly Chats, the NIC PAUMCS Steering Team presented “Developing Effective Working Relationships with Your Staff” to the NIC Provisional Clergy at their November 2022 Residency Session.

In ministry with you and respectfully submitted, NIC PAUMCS Steering Team
Deb Evans (Wheaton: Gary, Prairie Central) Diane McGarel (Crete, Lake South) Wendy Miller (New Lenox, Lake South) Ronda Rathje (Savanna: First, Prairie North) Debbie Rogers (District Administrative Assistant, NIC) Doris Tropp (Roscoe, Prairie North) Sara Williams (PAUMCS Steering Team)

Document 400.22 – Program Ministries

The vision of the Northern Illinois Conference is “making and supporting vital Christians in vital congregations that engage with their communities and the world for peace, justice and mercy.” This sums up the work of our Program Ministries.

Program Ministries were restructured in 2021 and are divided into three primary areas: Vital Congregations Ministries, Discipleship Ministries and Justice and Mercy Ministries. These umbrella areas are represented at the conference Shepherding Team table by connectors, persons who bring the interest of the work to the larger body. With transitions in the 2022 conference year, the Nominations Committee, following procedures set forth in the standing rules, recruited James Barry (Discipleship Ministries), Brittany Cox (Justice and Mercy Ministries) and Megan Smick (Vital Congregations Ministries) into these roles.

The conference budget and our energies reflect the tangible ways we support our strategic goals which were established in 2019 and focus on Discipleship, Anti-Racism and Vital Congregations. These goals are at the heart of our efforts. We could not have done all that we have in these areas without the efforts of committed co-chairs and taskforce members. Behind all this thoughtful, energetic work is our Project Manager, Amania Drane. Amania has been a powerhouse giving framework and context to the efforts while also connecting us to the wider United Methodist community. Reports from these groups can be found elsewhere in this historic section of the journal.

During the past two years the Conference Board of Higher Education and Ministry has revived their work and are strengthening connections with our five campus ministries across the conference. In the coming years the work of this area will become increasingly important as we develop young, principled leaders and balance the program ministry budget to do all that we can do in our conference. Special attention is being given to our connections with North Central College as we strengthen our relationship with this historic Methodist institution.

In addition, our Outdoor and Retreat Ministries continue to do all they can to regain their footing following the shutdowns and slowdown in camping programs throughout the pandemic. This hard-working board is supported by the dedicated efforts of Jeff Casey, our Director of Outdoor and Retreat Ministries.

There continues to be keen interest in continuous learning from the laity and clergy of the Northern Illinois Conference. Much of the leadership development for clergy is addressed through the programs of Congregational Development and Redevelopment reported elsewhere in these historic reports. The Board of Laity has developed a strong tradition through the laity convocation and each year a faithful following of laity attend this event. In addition, the Lay Servant Ministries Board and chairperson Peggy Hansen have equipped countless leaders in our churches including the development and implementation of our Certified Lay Ministers program.

This year, our five districts hosted leadership training events with outstanding participation. The energy and eagerness to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” is alive and well in our annual conference. Events managed through the conference office included almost 10,000 participants as we move back into a reawakened season of hybrid resourcing.

All of the work to connect our churches with resources could not be possible without the tireless efforts of countless conference committees. I continue to be inspired by the vision and commitment of those who lead us.

In Christ,
Reverend Arlene W. Christopherson

Document 400.23 - Conference Commission on Religion and Race

The Conference Commission on Religion and Race (CCORR) has responded to the “Covenant to Build Beloved Community” endorsed by delegates to the November 2021 Special Session of the North Central Jurisdiction (NCJ) by commissioning a Race and Ethnicity Audit of the Northern Illinois Conference (NIC). The audit was conducted by Elaine Moy (Senior Director – Finance and Institutional Equity, General Commission on Religion and Race [GCORR]), with input data provided by NIC staff. The audit examined the demographics of the conference membership, clergy, and leadership, and revealed important issues for the future of the NIC that require significant attention. The results are currently being shared with the NIC cabinet and conference leadership for discussions on follow-up actions. A companion audit to provide a racial analysis of local churches’ total budgets, clergy salaries, new church starts/revitalizations, and church closures is planned for next year.

CCORR has continued to support the work of the NIC Anti-Racism Task Force (ARTF) in pursuit of the NIC goal “to live out the conviction that racism is incompatible with Christian teaching.” To that end, CCORR members now formally participate in meetings of the ARTF. Nadia Kanhai, Co-chair of CCORR, also serves as chair of the ARTF, while Lennox Iton, CCORR Co-chair, is active in the ARTF Champion Team’s Curriculum and Training Committee, as well as participating in the Black Healing Collective (BHC). The Curriculum Committee continues to conduct *Becoming the Beloved Community Workshops*, led by Dr. Richard Guzman, at local churches; six of these anti-racism training workshops, developed by the committee, are scheduled for 2023. The BHC conducted a successful workshop in March 2023. CCORR member Rev. Tennille Power, also a member of both the Curriculum and Training Committee and the BHC, is active in trauma training, and leads conversations on *Becoming a Church That Heals*.

Beyond the NIC, CCORR participated in the NCJ Mission Council meeting in October 2022. This group is monitoring anti-racism activities in the annual conferences, preparatory to holding a discussion on the subject at the Jurisdictional Conference in 2024. Nadia Kanhai will be an NIC delegate to the conference. The Mission Council has reserved \$5,000 to support racial audits in the Annual Conferences (ACs). A working group was designated to coordinate the production of a report to be presented at the conference. NIC CCORR representatives also participated in a GCORR Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Gathering in January 2023, held to share guidance with AC representatives on implementation of DEI strategies in organizations.

In the coming year, CCORR will be endeavoring to pursue implementation of policies designed to respond to the findings of the first phase of the NIC Racial Audit. CCORR also plans to conduct Phase Two of the Audit, and will continue the support of the activities of the NIC ARTF and the BHC. CCORR also plans to reinvigorate its support for clergy and congregations in Cross-Racial Cross-Cultural appointments.

Submitted by Lennox Iton, lay, Hinsdale UMC, and Nadia Kanhai, lay, Naperville Grace UMC.

Document 400.24 - Northern Illinois Retired Clergy Association

The Retired Clergy of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference began our year with a lunch during Annual Conference 2022. This is an opportunity for us to welcome the new retirees and connect with each other. We are always grateful to the Board of Pensions for making this event possible.

In October, we gathered at Barrington United Methodist Church and were warmly welcomed by Pastor Chris Winkler. Our lively worship was led by Normalee Barnhart. Harry Nicol introduced a program about clergy finances during retirement in an era of some economic inflation. Bob Burkhart made a presentation about creative ways to make financial gifts to missions locally and globally. It once again was a wonderful way to connect with long time clergy colleagues.

Document 400.25 - Conference Treasurer

Local churches in the Northern Illinois Conference emerge from the limitations of the pandemic finding new, lower plateaus in attendance. One suspects that frequency of attendance is a major driver of these quantifiable losses. And, all the while, the expense structures of a meeting and worshiping congregation have returned. While few congregations have disaffiliated in Northern Illinois, we do hear reports of members, weary from the constant warring, using re-entry from the pandemic as an opportunity to explore other local church situations. Our clergy continue to adapt to ever-shifting paradigms and challenges. None but a conviction to the true God and a love for the UMC will explain their remarkable and consistent dedication to the causes of serving our churches.

Spending in the annual conference continued to be impacted by the pandemic. There were several ministries that deferred until 2023, when full conference spending is expected.

The Conference Council on Finance and Administration (CCFA) remains dedicated to the goal of full payment of the general church apportionments. The requests from GCFA have remained high, about a third of conference apportionment collections, because of two factors. First, the 2020 general conference did not meet and did not act on a proposal to decrease the general budget by 17%. Second, disaffiliations in other parts of the connection have caused our relative share of the UMC to increase. CCFA decided to add about \$100,000 from reserves to the funds collected specifically for general church apportionments and as much as we didn't spend from the conference share of apportionments on conference expenses. Though the payment of \$1,366,179 was about 75% of the total asked from the general church, it represents 100% of the amount GCFA had estimated would be our share if general conference had approved their reduced allocations. In this way the Northern Illinois Conference joined a majority of conferences using the proposed apportionments rather than the actual apportionments in setting their payment goals.

The Red Door Fund created by an April 2013 Special Session of the annual conference has continued with no deficiencies and no delinquencies. In 2019, when a 10-year extension to the program was inked, the Red Door Fund purchased an interest rate cap and an interest swap for the loans underlying the program. The spike in interest rates experienced at the end of 2022 had limited effect for the Red Door loan because of the existence of these risk limiting derivatives. We are well served by the bankers and lenders on the board who participate in guiding the program.

The property insurance program, because of reduced claims, ended the year with significant revenue to meet all costs.

The Conference is making significant contributions to the pre-82 defined benefit pension program, (\$1,041,057 in 2021), and we will make another contribution of \$1,725,021 in 2022. There is no contribution due in 2023. We are forecasted to be 98% funded after the December 2022 payment. Funds are being drawn from the Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits reserves, which we forecast will be depleted by 2023. Should market instability cause a loss in assets, the undesignated Conference reserves will need to be used in 2024. Wespath has proposed changes to the pension program for elders, which will require us to adapt how we assess local churches for pension and provides an opportunity to rebuild the reserve for potential future obligations without an increase in costs to local churches. Wespath has approved the Conference's benefit funding plan as documented on the attached.

We are blessed with a talented and church-loving Treasurer's staff. I am thankful for the opportunity of serving as Conference Treasurer and apologize broadly to all who are still waiting on a return phone call.

Grace and Peace,
 Lonnie Chafin
 Conference Treasurer

**Northern Illinois Conference (110)
 2022 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan**

This funding plan incorporates, to the best of our understanding, the plan sponsor's obligations and funding of the benefits provided to clergy and laity, as noted below.

It is understood by the signees that defined benefit plan liabilities [Pre-82 Plan, Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP) and Clergy Retirement Security Program Defined Benefit (CRSP DB) and other sponsored defined benefit plans] continue until the last benefit is paid to participants and their surviving spouses regardless of the funding level of the plan. That is, even if the assets in the plan are larger than the liabilities in the plan, the plan sponsor still has a liability (obligation) and potential future contribution due to the plan.

**Benefit Obligations Summary
 Plan Contributions for 2022**

Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) DB	\$1,478,785
Clergy Retirement Security Program (CRSP) DC	\$490,000
Ministerial Pension Plan (MPP)	\$0
Pre-82 Plan (Pre-82)	\$1,725,021
United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) Lay	\$118,856
United Methodist Personal Investment Plan (UMPIP) Clergy	\$0
Other Defined Contribution (DC) Obligations	\$0
Other Defined Benefit (DB) Obligations	\$7,650
Health—Active Participants	\$3,984,848
Health—Additional Sponsored Coverage	\$74,909
Post-Retirement Medical (PRM)	\$1,538,157
Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP)	\$501,000

Ongoing Funding Contributions

Pre-82 Plan (Pre-82)	\$0
Post-Retirement Medical (PRM)	\$1,482,306

Conference Benefit Officer (or equivalent)	Lonnie Chafin	12/02/2021
Conference Treasurer	Lonnie Chafin	12/02/2021
Conference Board of Pension Chair	Approved By E-Mail	12/22/2021
Council on Finance and Administration Chair		



Opinion on Northern Illinois Conference 2022 Comprehensive Benefit Funding Plan

The funding plan meets the standards for a Pre-82 funding plan as established by Wespath Benefits and Investments and the favorable opinion requirements for a funding plan. Note: The statement above and any written opinion provided by Wespath do not imply any representation as to the ability or probability of the applicable plan sponsor to fulfill the obligations included in the funding plan.

Wespath Benefits and Investments

Wespath Benefits and Investments
 1901 W Chestnut Ave
 Glenview, IL 60025

Church Support

	Church	Conf. Support	Health Grants	Health & Pension Write-Offs	Property Insurance Write-Offs	Closed Church Fund	Total:
1005	Chicago: Adalberto Memorial UMC	600			1,343		1,943
1007	Chicago: Berry Memorial		1,600				1,600
1012	Chicago: Edison Park			9,000			9,000
1013	Chicago: El Redentor del Calvario		1,600				1,600
1016	Chicago: First Vietnamese UMC	6,000					6,000
1017	Chicago: Grace of Logan Square	24,000			4,815		28,815
1020	Chicago: Indo Pak UMC	5,500					5,500
1021	Chicago: Mandell UMC	3,500					3,500
1022	Chicago: Olivet UMC	10,000			3,908		13,908
1023	Chicago: Parish of the Holy Covenant	1,500	1,600				3,100
1024	Chicago: Ravenswood Fellowship	10,000	3,200				13,200
1026	Chicago: United Church of Rogers Park		1,600	2,743	10,534		14,877
1027	Urban Village		1,600				1,600
1029	Chicago: West Ridge UMC	5,000					5,000
1030	Deerfield		3,200				3,200
1031	Des Plaines: First		1,600				1,600
1035	Evanston: Hemingway	5,000					5,000
1036	Evanston: Sherman		1,600	8,948			10,548
1041	Highland Park: Galilee	9,000	3,200				12,200
1044	Maywood: Neighborhood		1,600				1,600
1045	Melrose Park: Cosmopolitan				6,911		6,911

	Church	Conf. Support	Health Grants	Health & Pension Write-Offs	Property Insurance Write-Offs	Closed Church Fund	Total:
1046	Melrose Park: Red Door NFC	6,000			2,508		8,508
1048	Mt. Prospect: Sam Mool	9,500	1,600				11,100
1051	Northbrook: North Northfield		1,600				1,600
1055	Oak Park: St. John's		1,600				1,600
1060	River Forest: Urban Village NFC	6,000					6,000
1069	Chicago: Elston Ave Hispanic NFC	3,000					3,000
1071	Melrose Park: UVC Hispanic NFC	1,500					1,500
2003	Blue Island: La Gracia de Dios NFC	6,000					6,000
2004	Brookfield: Compassion NFC		1,600				1,600
2005	Chicago: Amor De Dios				3,941		3,941
2006	Chicago: Lawn	3,000					3,000
2008	Chicago: East Side	2,500					2,500
2009	Chicago: Englewood/Rust	6,000	1,600	12,227	5,769		25,596
2010	Chicago: Faith			6,673			6,673
2012	Chicago: Great Englewood				3,404		3,404
2013	Chicago: Gorham			15,289			15,289
2014	Chicago: Grace Calvary				6,217		6,217
2015	Chicago: Greenstone UMC	2,000					2,000
2018	Chicago: Ingleside-Whitfield		1,600	20,453			22,053
2019	Chicago: Kelly Woodlawn		1,600				1,600
2020	Chicago: Lincoln UMC	2,500			4,629		7,129
2022	Chicago: Morgan Park		1,600				1,600
2023	Chicago: New Gresham				5,820		5,820
2025	Chicago: South Shore		1,600				1,600
2027	Chicago: St. Mark		1,600				1,600
2029	Chicago: Union Avenue UMC	2,500					2,500
2036	Dolton: Faith				4,000		4,000
2037	Downers Grove		1,600				1,600
2040	Flossmor: South Suburban Korean		1,600				1,600
2043	Harvey: Transformational Community			7,533	12,327		19,860
2046	Homewood: St. Andrew		1,600				1,600
2049	Lemont		3,200				3,200
2056	Olympia Fields		1,600				1,600
2060	Park Forest	1,000	1,600				2,600
2064	Tinley Park	2,000	1,600				3,600
2066	Wilmington			5,391			5,391
3005	Aurora: First Nueva Vida UMC	6,000					6,000
3006	Aurora: Flowing Fourth sale					(367,307)	
3012	Bensenville: First		3,200	17,810			21,010

HISTORICAL REPORTS

	Church	Conf. Support	Health Grants	Health & Pension Write-Offs	Property Insurance Write-Offs	Closed Church Fund	Total:
3018	Elgin: Cornerstone		3,200				3,200
3020	Elgin: Journey of Hope				1,317		1,317
3022	Elk Grove: Prince of Peace		1,600				1,600
3023	Elmhurst: Christ	5,000	1,600				6,600
3024	Elmhurst: Faith Evangelical	4,500	3,200				7,700
3031	Itasca: The Center		1,600				1,600
3032	Joliet: Cristo Es El Camino NFC	3,000					3,000
3036	Joliet: Trinity				6,452		6,452
3037	Lake Villa		1,600				1,600
3049	Oswego: Wellspring NFC	12,000	3,200				15,200
3052	Ringwood					(250,108)	
3053	Roselle		3,200				3,200
3062	West Dundee: First		3,200				3,200
3063	Wheaton: Aldersgate		3,200				3,200
3067	Wood Dale: The Center	12,000					12,000
3071	Shorewood NFC	30,000					30,000
4006	Belvidere: Emerge Hispanic	15,000					15,000
4012	Chadwick/Fairhaven/Hickory Grove			4,566			4,566
4017	Davis: Calvary			11,550			11,550
4021	Forreston		1,600				1,600
4022	Freeport: Faith		1,600				1,600
4023	Freeport: First		1,600				1,600
4025	Galena		3,200				3,200
4026	Genoa: Faith		3,200				3,200
4028	Hampshire: First	1,500					1,500
4029	Hampshire: Zion	1,500					1,500
4039	Lena		1,600				1,600
4042	Machesney Park: New Life NFC	12,000					12,000
4045	Mount Carroll/Argo Fay/Thomson		3,200				3,200
4049	Pecatonica		3,200				3,200
4050	Poplar Grove		1,600				1,600
4056	Rockford: Christ the Carpenter	12,000					12,000
4060	Rockton		1,600				1,600
4073	Rockford: Emerge Rockford NFC	6,000					6,000
4074	Rockford: Brook Road NFC	6,000	3,200				9,200
5009	Cortland UMC sale					(213,954)	
5027	Leland		3,200				3,200
5043	Oregon			30,621			30,621
5045	Ottawa: Epworth	12,000					12,000

	Church	Conf. Support	Health Grants	Health & Pension Write-Offs	Property Insurance Write-Offs	Closed Church Fund	Total:
5048	Paw Paw		3,200				3,200
5056	Rochelle		1,600				1,600
5057	Rock Falls	6,000					6,000
9999	Holding costs for closed churches awaiting sale					58,303	
	TOTALS	278,100	113,600	152,805	83,894	(773,066)	628,399

Document 400.26 - United Methodist Foundation of the Northern Illinois Conference, Inc.

The Foundation was organized in 1949 and functions as an independent 501(c)(3) public charity with the mission of “encouraging lifelong generosity with God’s abundance.” The Foundation carries out its mission by partnering with many individuals, churches, and organizations to provide several services:

- Investment Management
- Endowment Genesis and Growth
- Trustee & Custodial Services
- Planned Giving Programs
- Donor Consultation
- Stewardship Development
- Financial Best Practices
- Ministry Grants & Scholarships

According to the Foundation’s bylaws, “All corporate powers shall be exercised by, or under authority of, and the business and affairs of the Foundation shall be managed by, the Board of Directors.” Directors serve three three-year terms. The current Board of Directors with full voice and vote are the following 17 individuals:

- Lisa Butler, Morgan Park UMC, Chicago
- Ergeline Calimlim, First UMC of Chicago Temple
- Brad Colby, First UMC of La Grange, La Grange
- Rev. Kimberly Lewis-Davis, Chaplain
- Sach Diwan, Holy Covenant UMC, Chicago
- Rev. Jane Eesley, Christ UMC, Rockford
- David Foster, Irving Park UMC, Chicago
- Gill George, Barrington UMC, Barrington
- George Groves, Community UMC, Naperville
- Debbie Gruetzmacher, Faith UMC of Orland Park
- Denny Hackett, First UMC of Morris, Morris
- Rev. Violet Johnicker, Brooke Road UMC, Rockford
- Rev. Grace Oh, Englewood-Rust UMC & Thornton UMC
- Marta Rodriguez, Humboldt Park UMC, Chicago
- Jim Stoddard, Sycamore UMC, Sycamore
- Tom Sumner, St. Mark UMC, Chicago
- Eugene Williams, South Shore UMC, Chicago

According to the bylaws, there are three ex officio Board members (voice but not vote): the Foundation’s president, the resident bishop, and the conference treasurer.

The officers of the Foundation are:
 Board Chair, George Gill
 Vice Chair & Secretary, David Foster
 Treasurer, Sach Diwan
 President, Rev. Chris Walters

The full-time staff members of the Foundation are Rev. Chris Walters, President, and Demetra Kidd, Client Relations Associate.

HISTORICAL REPORTS

The Foundation offers three funds for long-term investment: Conservative, Moderate, and Aggressive (and three corresponding “Climate Solutions” funds that divest from public companies that own fossil fuel reserves). All portfolios are broadly diversified among major asset classes and all sectors of the economy but in different proportions to reflect each fund’s objectives. The Foundation retains SouthCol Advisors, LLC as its investment consultant. The investment opportunities available through the Foundation offer churches and UMC-related organizations professionally managed, well-diversified accounts, invested according to the guidelines for socially responsible investing outlined in The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church. In addition to screening out objectionable companies, the Foundation also screens in companies that rate more highly than their peers in the areas of Environmental, Social, and Governance, always optimizing asset allocation and performance.

The investment policies of the Foundation provide for a disciplined approach and to meet a variety of investment objectives. Net of all fees, the returns of the three fund models are (up to the most recent reportable month, as of this historical report, March 31, 2023):

As of 3/31/2023	1 st Qtr 2023	Last 1 Year [†]	Last 3 Years [†]	Last 5 Years [†]	Last 10 Years [†]
Aggressive Fund	7.46%	-3.96%	14.68%	8.16%	7.72%
Agg. Climate benchmark*	8.78%	-5.68%	n/a	n/a	n/a
	6.75%	-4.95%	14.43%	7.35%	7.82%
Moderate Fund	5.65%	-3.51%	9.55%	6.13%	5.79%
Mod. Climate benchmark*	6.49%	-4.25%	8.16%	n/a	n/a
	5.38%	-3.77%	9.76%	5.78%	6.14%
Conservative Fund	4.05%	-2.53%	4.43%	3.69%	3.57%
Con. Climate benchmark*	4.41%	-3.06%	3.70%	n/a	n/a
	4.04%	-2.60%	4.75%	3.81%	4.24%

[†]The rates of return in these columns are annualized, net fees.

As of March 31, 2023, the Foundation had approximately \$89.0 million under management through nearly 700 accounts, owned by 120 local churches and several agencies and organizations. More than 200 of the accounts benefit several dozens of annuitants, trust income beneficiaries, and the charitable interests of donor advised funds.

Since 1999 the Foundation has provided several grants each year, totaling more than \$1,000,000. The Foundation continues to participate in Dollars for Scholars (DFS), operated by the United Methodist Higher Education Foundation. DFS matches support from a student’s church, UMHEF, participating United Methodist-related schools, and participating Conference Foundations. By participating in this scholarship program, the Foundation completes the matching of some local church scholarships to magnify \$1000 into \$4000.

Starting in 2022, the Foundation began sponsoring a “Fresh Expressions” field education cohort of five Garrett-Evangelical students to receive \$4500 each. Field education is a critical component of the students’ seminary degree requirements. Fresh Expressions church communities are filled with people who would not ordinarily find themselves in a traditional church setting.

In the spring of 2022, the Foundation launched the Uplifting Young Methodists Scholarship to assist minority United Methodist students to attend a trade school, community college, college, or university, granting four \$2500 scholarships to undergraduates in the fall of 2022.

Honoring the memory of Foundation benefactor, Mildred Vannorsdall, the Foundation launched “Mildred’s Stories” in May 2022, a storytelling ministry through high-quality videos of personal witness to the meaning and importance of church in the lives of diverse individuals by bringing together younger and older generations of Methodists.

In the summer of 2022, the Foundation hosted leadership and cultural renewal training through three workshops, “Platinum Rule Leadership for Changing Times” with Rev. Rebekah Simon-Peter using DiSC® Personality Types to recruit, encourage, and empower leaders through deeper and more resonant awareness of emotional intelligence.

Starting in the fall of 2022, the Foundation is sponsoring three NIC clergy and their local churches in three-year intensive “Cultivating a Culture of Renewal” journey with leaders across the country. The Foundation and Horizons Stewardship partnered toward the end of 2022 to provide on-demand generosity coaching to Northern Illinois Methodist churches at no cost and no obligation to churches.

In November 2022, the Foundation office moved to 155 North Wacker Drive, Suite 4250, Chicago, IL 60606.

Sincerely,
Rev. Chris Walters President

Document 400.27 - Northern Illinois Conference United Methodist Men (NICUMM)

The year 2022 had the NICUMM recovering from COVID shutdowns within our new districts organization while reaching out in ministry and mission to help others to know and grow in Christ. At the NICUMM annual meeting the new General Secretary of the GCUMM, Greg Arnold, delivered a video message on the new United Men’s Ministry Products and changes to the UMM. Our Spiritual Congress and our mission efforts continue to be focal points for our men. Spiritual Congress 2022 was the first in-person retreat since 2019 and the theme was Sustainability in life, church, and the environment. Though the group was smaller than normal, God was with us all weekend. Our speakers included: Rev Dr. Norval I. Brown; Rev Char Hoffmann, Rev Chris Walters, President of the NICUMC Foundation, Rev Nancy Blade, Rev Mark Lubbock, Deployed Staff GCUMM and Ken Hudgins. Special music was supplied by the Alleluia Quartet.

The GCUMM launched a new brand and website at UnitedMensMinistry.com. There are three primary, effective resources GCUMM has designed or partnered with to offer every man and church worldwide. United Men’s Ministry platform: Designed for the men in each church with additional deeper levels for ministry leaders. Adventure Men app: Designed as a small group study tool in any setting. Live Bold app: Designed for any man who is faith-curious, de-churched, or seeking a new step toward living out a life of faith in Jesus Christ. These programs were presented at NICUMM conference, district and local unit meetings, as well as, at the NICUMM display at the annual conference. Many men started using the Live Bold app as part of their individual spiritual journey.

District Activities are reaching men for Christ. Some of our 2022 highlights for the conference and common in all districts are:

- The Conference and District UMM began having in-person meetings coming out of the COVID shutdown. Some ZOOM meetings continued.
- Districts made necessary changes to their constitutions and held elections to account for the re-districting activities in 2021.
- Continued the 2018-2021 plan of work for the NICUMM, with minor changes for 2022.
- Held the 62th Spiritual Congress at Williams Bay, Wisconsin in September.
- Men's Ministry Specialist: NICUMM have four men certified as MMS.
- EMS/Legacy Builders & Charters were a major emphasis to invite men to become involved in Men's Ministry, especially past due memberships.
- Meals for Millions/Society of St. Andrews continues as a major Mission Program and the NIC was recognized again as the 2022 Top Conference for donations to SoSA.
- The NICUMM collected \$1075 for UMCOR US Disaster Response and Recovery.
- Scouting Ministries Programs and Reaching out to younger men and women. The United Methodist Men Supports, with National Memorandums of Understanding, Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of the United States of America, Big Brothers Big Sisters, and Campfire, USA. As the BSA was working toward a settlement of its bankruptcy case, Our Conference Scouting Coordinator worked to develop a new relationship that could still involve our churches in serving the youth and young adults in our community with Scouting and other youth serving organizations. We developed an SSPCC, NFP which is a Small, Single-Purpose, Community Corporation as a Not-For-Profit corporation. This corporation would charter 3 to 10 units from various churches and sign Facilities Use Agreements for meeting space and storage with the individual church. A special feature of this program involved intentionally meeting with the churches 4 times a year to review and improve our relationship with churches to benefit both organizations.
- The conference Prayer Advocate is working with the District Presidents to establish district Prayer Advocates in the effort to build a team to establish Prayer Advocates in churches. We have reached the point of realizing that helping men learn to pray and to seek to become a disciple of Jesus, is every man's responsibility and not the province of a special few.
- The Society of John Wesley award was presented to Jim Simmons of the Lake South District by his Church and United Methodist Men Unit.

Lake North District: President, Open

- The district has 4 Chartered churches and 11 EMS members.
- The Lake North District has no district UMM officers with the redistricting efforts in 2021 and the COVID shutdown.

Lake South District: President, Jim Simmons

- Constitution & By-Laws for the district were approved at the January Zoom Meeting. The election and installation of officers for the district was completed at the February Meeting.
- Continued a Monday evening District Men's Bible Study.
- A District Celebration Dinner Event was held in August to Honor Rev. Dr. Norval Brown and the Bible Study Program.
- Ten District meetings including the Celebration event were held in 2022.
- Thirteen churches have active United Methodist Men Chartered Units in the District with an additional 9 churches with nonactive Charters. 51 Men have active EMS memberships in the district with an additional 15 Men with nonactive EMS memberships.
- A Special Event was held in October that included a Potato Drop sponsored by the New Lenox Men.
- Men of Faith of Orland Park Faith UMC and Transformation Community UMC of Harvey celebrated United Methodist Men Days at their churches.

Prairie Central District: President, Jim Nelson

- Continued to re-establish an Executive Committee
- Many of the men's groups are struggling to get back to normal since the pandemic. They are slowly returning to a "new normal".
- The district has 14 Chartered churches and 42 EMS members.
- Developed Faith ministry through bible studies.
- Supported SoSA, through Potato Drops, fundraisers and donations, and collected vegetables for a food pantry. Produce from a church garden used to feed the hungry.
- One men's unit mans the USO facility at O'Hare International Airport routinely.
- UMM unit participates in the local community by donating time material and talents in the form of handy man jobs for the homeless shelter program for women and children. The men are also involved in mission work through the Appalachia Service Project (ASP) in Tennessee.

Prairie North District: President, Dave Hilton

- The Prairie North District hosted the NIC Annual meeting and worship at Grace UMC Approximately 50 attending with more online.
- Held the Harmony for Hunger Concert raising \$3,000 for the Society of St Andrew Meals For Millions.
- Hosted the District Fall Communion Service at Harmony UMC, in Freeport IL. The guest speaker was Dr. Norval Brown with 60 in attendance. Offering raised \$5,335.20 for Society of St Andrew Meals for Millions.
- The Prairie North District will be sent a total of \$8,335 this year to Society of St. Andrews Meals for Millions program. The Society of St. Andrews noted that the Prairie North District would have been second on the list of conferences for contributions to the Society in 2022.
- The district has 7 Chartered churches and 14 EMS members.

Prairie South District: President, Open

- The district has 8 Chartered churches and 8 EMS members.
- Distributed tons of potatoes through Society of St. Andrews
- Continued to provide hunger relief through various pantries and gleaning sweet corn, and countless garden vegetables.

With the shutdown of our churches in March of 2020, most of our Men's events that were based on meetings, fellowship and/or group missions were put on hold at our local churches. During this time many church charters and EMS memberships lapsed. Men have dropped away from the UMM organizations and our churches. In 2022, our churches got back to normal, however many of our UMM units lost momentum, leadership and members. For 2023 we are looking to reestablish, renew and/or replace our men's ministries with the use of the new United Men's Ministry products. For the NICUMM,
George Groves Conference UMM President

Document 400.28 - United Methodist Women

It was a whirlwind year: everything seemed to change - new name, new logo, new colors and, for us in the NIC, new districts with new names, too! 2022 opened with ongoing COVID-19 concerns and closed with many of us feeling more adept at managing those concerns via hybrid gatherings!

New Name: United Methodist Women d/b/a United Women in Faith was launched, via Facebook and a new website, on March 3, 2022, during Women's History Month - history-making changes for the then-153-year-old organization! The organization, for legal and corporate purposes, remains United Methodist Women and retains our affiliation with the United Methodist denomination. However, the changes were "designed to address the different needs and life stages of current members - and

new women - and expand options for membership and engagement. The new name also aims to welcome current members whose local churches may choose to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church as well as women of other faith traditions who want to join.”

New logo/colors: The softer colors reflect our historical diversity and are shaped to form the outline of a cross.

New Districts names and borders: United Women in Faith of NIC adopted the new districts of the NIC as of January 1, 2022, to align with our calendar-year operation. District and conference officers led the way, gracefully engaging with new leadership teams. The “Prairie” and “Lake” names - and which church/Unit belongs where - felt more familiar by year-end.

January found us “Zooming” our way through MISSION u during a Friday evening and a Saturday, being thankful for technology and the avoidance of winter travel.

February through April brought us opportunities to get acquainted within our new district groups. Leadership update and/or training sessions, along with Days of Spiritual Renewal and Spring meetings, were held in all five districts - again, technology played a large role in these traditional gatherings.

The 2022 ASSEMBLY in Orlando, Florida, May 20-22, was a joyful, in-person or virtual gathering. “Turn It Up” celebrated all things new and exciting and reminded everyone of our connectedness.

VISION STATEMENT: Turning faith, hope and love into action on behalf of women, children, and youth around the world.

June’s Annual Conference found many of us sharing “the new” with United Methodists across Northern Illinois. In August, we participated – as a choral group-plus-friends - in the annual Praise Night with our Korean sisters, relishing in the beautiful music. August also brought us back together for MISSION u. We celebrate that the summer sessions were innovative, collaborative and unique, due to hybrid formats at four sites, yielding strong participation (even as COVID-19 lingered). Making HIPPIY Kits for Kids Above All was a Mission u highlight.

Our new MISSION STATEMENT: United Women in Faith seeks to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship, and education so that they can inspire, influence, and impact local and global communities.

In September and October, using both Zoom and in-person settings, districts re-energized with their own annual meetings, confirming our adaptability in the face of change. The October 22nd United Women in Faith NIC Annual Meeting was a joyous, sunshine-filled, hybrid event at Sycamore UMC. There was an amazingly-generous response to the collection of socks, underwear and personal care items for asylum-seekers who had recently landed in Chicagoland. The keynote speaker, Ms Shannon Priddy, reminded us to cherish our heritage of 150+ years, knowing that our foremothers crossed boundaries, innovated, raised funds, planted and harvested, started over, raised more funds, and persisted in service in God’s vast kin-dom.

Our unchanged PURPOSE: United Women in Faith shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.

Respectfully submitted, Marilyn Steenwyk, President, UWFaith of NIC

Document 400.29 - Vital Congregations Task Force

Thank you. Here is the historical report for the Vital Congregations Task Force on what has happened in the last year.

The Vital Congregations Task Force has completed its work of creating a tool to measure the congregational vitality of congregations by focusing on 7 factors for spiritual vitality and four factors for financial sustainability that give an overall measure of congregational vitality. The 7 factors for measuring spiritual vitality are 1) communal prayer, 2) worship attendance trends, 3) baptisms, 4) professions of faith, 5) weekly small group and Sunday school attendance, 6) mission giving excluding apportionments, and 7) people sent out weekly serving in mission and social justice. The 4 factors for measuring financial sustainability are 1) funds spent on maintenance and capital improvements, 2) cost of providing UMC ministry that includes basic costs for pension, health insurance, property insurance, and apportionments, 3) the ratio of expenses to income, and 4) the largest income source for the church as compared to total income. The information on how to use this congregational vitality tool has been made available to all churches at our conference website at: <https://www.umcnic.org/shepherdingteam>

The Vital Congregations Task Force has now become part of the Northern Illinois Conference Church Development and Redevelopment (CODRED) Team to continue helping congregations become more vital in their ministries.

Thank you,
Pastor Mike Jones
815-499-1943, pastormikejones@gmail.com

Document 400.30 - Africa University

United Methodists worldwide celebrated an ‘Ebenezer’ moment in the ministry of Africa University in 2022, marking 30 years of faithfulness, generosity, growth, and impact within and beyond The United Methodist Church.

The Northern Illinois Conference continues to lead and sustain its investment, delivering 79.76 percent of its share of general church giving to support the day-to-day operations of Africa University in 2022. Thank you! At 83.7 percent overall in 2022, giving to the Africa University Fund (AUF) remained resilient in all five jurisdictions of The United Methodist Church in the United States.

Supported by Northern Illinois United Methodists and others across the denomination, Africa University embraced new opportunities as it emerged from pandemic-related restrictions in 2022.

- **Enrollment:** Africa University achieved a total enrollment at 2,791 students in August 2022. Female students comprised 58 percent of the student population and 23 African nations were represented.
- **Academic Growth:** Africa University launched its first new academic unit in almost twenty years—The School of Law—with a pioneer cohort of 20 students pursuing the Bachelor of Laws (Honors) (LL.B.) degree program. The institution is preparing to launch five new undergraduate and graduate programs with the approval of the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE), the national accreditation and quality assurance agency.
- **Infrastructure expansion:** A new residence hall for female students at Africa University is under construction, funded by the East Ohio Conference’s \$1.5 million Teach * Reach * Bless campaign. Once completed, the facility will boost the available on campus housing for students to around 1200 beds.

- **Outcomes:** 712 graduates from 18 African countries became Africa University alumni in June 2022. Africa University’s almost 11,000 graduates to date are making vital contributions as clergy, educators, agriculturalists, health professionals, entrepreneurs, and innovators. Faculty and students are undertaking and sharing research to reduce deaths from malaria and tuberculosis, protect the rights of children, and increase food security in African communities.

Africa University’s year-long 30th anniversary program culminated in October 2022 with a gathering of more than 3,000 people at its main campus in Mutare, Zimbabwe. Amidst the commemoration and joyful thanksgiving livestreamed to the world, the Rev. Dr. Peter Mageto was formally installed as the fifth vice chancellor (president) of the institution.

HISTORICAL REPORTS

Mageto, a Kenyan and academician specializing in theological ethics, echoed the gratitude of the students, faculty, staff, trustees, and alumni of Africa University for the many answered prayers represented in the Africa University story. His inaugural address highlighted the optimism and commitment to purpose that drive the university’s unfolding vision.

“Today, Africa University turns thirty. The number 30 is a blessed figure. Thirty was the age of our Lord Jesus Christ when he commenced his ministry here on earth. It gives us great faith to be walking resolutely towards the fourth decade,” Mageto said.

God’s presence and provision in the life of Africa University are evident, thanks to the prayers and generous support of the Northern Illinois Conference. Thank you, Northern Illinois Conference, for nurturing change leaders and building an enduring legacy through the ministry of Africa University. Let us continue to journey together—learning, leading, and serving God, all the time, everywhere.

James H. Salley, President and Chief Executive Officer, Africa University (Tennessee) Inc. & Associate Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement Africa University

Document 400.31 - Boston University School of Theology

I am profoundly grateful for your partnership, prayers, and support in these challenging times. A year like 2022 makes even more relevant BUSTH’s historic and ongoing commitments to peace and justice in equipping transformational leaders. We remain hopeful and vigilant in our continued partnership with you.

BREAKING NEWS:

- **Students:** Our academic year 2022-23 entering class was among our most diverse, with 88 new students enrolling, 34% of whom are international students.
- **Faculty:** In September we welcomed three new faculty members: James McCarty, Assistant Clinical Professor of Religion and Conflict Transformation; Eunil David Cho, Assistant Professor of Spiritual Care; and Peng Yin, Assistant Professor of Ethics.
- **New Online Degree First Cohort:** BUSTH’s first fully online master’s degree—the Master of Religion and Public Leadership (MARPL)—welcomed its first students in fall 2022. MARPL seeks students who wish to be prepared for leadership roles that creatively engage the challenges of public life. Learn more at bu.edu/sth/marpl.
- **Faculty Research:** Prof. Filipe Maia was awarded a Louisville Institute book grant in April, and Prof. Luis Menéndez-Antuña was awarded a grant from the Catholic Biblical Association in August. Other large grants continue to move forward, including the Trauma Responsive Congregations Project led by Prof. Shelly Rambo and supported by the Lilly Endowment, and the Positive Psychology and Formation-Based Flourishing grant led by Prof. Steven Sandage and supported by the Peale Foundation.

- Scholarships: This year, we announced free tuition for all residential master's candidates. We continue to offer free tuition to UMC-registered candidates for ordained ministry and leadership fellowships that support students in ethnic, gender, and sexuality studies. New funds include the Research & Teaching Fund and Affirmation & Empowerment Fund as well as the following endowed funds: DEI, Theology & the Arts, and Doctor of Ministry.
- Accreditation Visit: BUSTH just welcomed the United Methodist University Senate Review team on February 1-3 for our re-accreditation visit.
- Online Lifelong Learning: BUSTH offers online courses for professional and spiritual enrichment of religious leaders. Recent offerings include "Ethics and Video Games," and "Spiritual Mending for Helping Professionals." To learn more, visit bu.edu/sth/oll.
- Development: Recent accomplishments include endowing the Faith and Ecological Justice Fund, and new funding for student scholarships and academic programs.

COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE and COMPASSION:

- BUSTH's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion offers webinars on timely inclusion efforts, such as "Increasing Participation of Students of Underrepresented Backgrounds."
- This year's Lowell Lecture topics explore the spiritual dimension of artistic expression. This fall, Dr. Emmett G. Price III highlighted the brilliant resilience and demonstrative hope of Black folk through the lens of two exceptional spiritual beings: Nina Simone and John Coltrane. A diverse panel response fostered rich conversation.
- Work continues to improve accessibility, sustainability, and responsible investing. BUSTH is the first certified Green School at BU and is active in the Green Seminary Initiative.

With faith and gratitude,
G. Sujin Pak, Dean

Document 400.32 - Candler School of Theology

Since 1914, Candler School of Theology at Emory University has educated faithful and creative leaders for the church's ministries throughout the world. An official seminary of The United Methodist Church, Candler holds true to the Methodist value of ecumenical openness, enthusiastically welcoming students from more than 42 denominations, with nearly half of Master of Divinity students coming from the Wesleyan tradition, including United Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Wesleyan, Free Methodist, Church of the Nazarene, and others. Our student body reflects the diversity and breadth of the Christian faithful, with an enrollment of 417 from 16 countries and 33 states, and 43% persons of color. This diversity is a blessing, enriching our life together and providing a "learning laboratory" for ministry in the 21st century—ministry that cultivates community across difference, welcomes all to contribute and belong, and embodies Christ's love in and among us.

Candler offers six single degrees and ten dual degrees, most of which are available in hybrid or online formats so students can remain rooted in their home communities as they pursue their degrees. Our new hybrid Master of Divinity blending online classes and in-person intensives launches in Fall 2023, and our successful Doctor of Ministry—with its high 87% completion rate—is 90% online. Hybrid and online options are also available in the Master of Religious Leadership and the Master of Religion and Public Life programs. Plus, Candler's Teaching Parish program allows student pastors to earn contextual education credit as they serve their churches. We are excited that these flexible learning formats make a first-rate Candler education possible for even more people who are called to ministry.

Alleviating student debt through generous financial aid is a top priority for Candler. In 2021-2022, we awarded \$7.3 million in scholarship support, with 100% of MDiv students receiving aid. All MDiv students who are certified candidates for ordained ministry in the UMC receive full-tuition schol-

arships, and all MDiv, MTS, MRL, and ThM students receive a scholarship covering at least 50% of tuition. MDiv students also complete a financial literacy program to strengthen their financial and budgeting skills and reduce debt.

Candler was recently honored as one of 16 theological schools to receive a “Pathways to Tomorrow” grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. The \$5 million grant will support Candler in establishing a set of initiatives to create an interconnected continuum of offerings for the education of pastoral leaders. This will position Candler as a hub of theological learning with multiple entry points, including The Candler Foundry, our innovative program to make theological education accessible to the public, the United Methodist Course of Study, undergraduate classes, and a new venture, La Mesa Academy for Theological Studies. Set to launch in Fall 2023, La Mesa Academy will offer diplomas in pastoral leadership via a two-year hybrid program with courses in Spanish and English. An optional third year of study will be offered to those aspiring to continue to a graduate professional degree at Candler.

This year, we welcomed the Rev. Dr. Brett Opalinski as Assistant Dean of Methodist Studies, a position made available by the retirement of the Rev. Dr. Anne Burkholder. Brett is an elder in full connection in the Florida Annual Conference and most recently served for nine years as senior pastor of Christ Church United Methodist in Ft. Lauderdale. In addition to other pastoral appointments, he has held a variety of leadership roles in the Florida Conference, including chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry. He is deeply committed to working with students in discerning their call, spiritual formation, and guiding them through the commissioning and ordination process.

Candler’s ability to fulfill our mission to provide the church with the faithful and creative leaders it needs depends upon your prayers, partnership, and support. Thank you for the countless ways you advance this essential ministry in the life of our denomination. We invite you to visit us online at candler.emory.edu.

—Jan Love

Mary Lee Hardin Willard Dean and Professor of Christianity and World Politics, Candler School of Theology, Emory University

Document 400.33 - Drew University Theological School

Edwin David Aponte, Dean

Drew educates and mentors pastors, preachers, deacons, activists, teachers, thought leaders, and change agents. In Fall 2022 Drew welcomed 77 new students, and as of February 2023 Drew has a total enrollment of 408 students. Many Drew students are just beginning their ministry, while others come to graduate theological education with substantial ministry experience. The latter reflects a growing trend among all theological schools in the United States and Canada. During 2022, Drew classes met on campus in Madison, New Jersey, but also some classes met exclusively online, while other met in hybrid fashion, i.e., partially online, partially in-person. This was also the case with chapel worship. This reflects both our ongoing emergence from the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, but also Drew leaning into what it means to be a global school with a global student population. With 35% of students coming from 28 different countries Drew Theological School is truly global and diverse in theology, vocations, age, as well as racial, ethnic, national, and international identities. Drew’s interdisciplinary degree programs foster out-of-the-box thinking, provide real-world apprenticeships, promotes adaptive leadership skills, and encourages innovation through a team-taught core courses reflecting the integration of the theological disciplines and practices characteristic of the life of faith. The faculty articulated shared values are infused across the teaching and learning at Drew: a commitment to anti-racism; gender and sexual-identity equality; eco-sustainability and environmental justice; and interfaith understanding and cooperation. The Theological School has

seen an increase in United Methodist students. Moreover, Drew has many United Methodist Global Fellows who chose to pursue education for ministry at Drew. UMC graduates are serving in conferences across the United States as well as in our regional conferences in Greater New Jersey, Eastern Pennsylvania, and New York Annual Conference.

Document 400.34 - Duke Divinity School

Duke Divinity School has continued its commitment to form ministers of the gospel who will seek God's justice and mercy. Our faculty have been leaders in the Duke Climate Initiative participating with colleagues from the Nicholas School for the Environment in the event "Pastoral Care for Climate Change: Weaving Together Science and Theology for Justice," at the Duke University Marine Lab. DDS faculty also co-taught "Let's Talk about Climate Change," and welcomed 30 young faith leaders from various religious traditions to understand better how to engage their faith communities in the fight for our climate.

The Office of Black Church Studies, commemorating its 50th anniversary, hosted "Justice Ministry Reimagined: Reentry Simulation" for pastors, students, and lay leaders to learn more about supporting people reentering the community after incarceration. We launched the Prison Engagement Initiative with the Kenan Institute for Ethics. Divinity faculty taught a "Trauma Engaged Duke" seminar and led the team Developing Best Practices for Trauma-Informed Teaching and Learning.

This fall, we welcomed 226 entering students from 35 different states and eight other countries. The Master of Divinity program gained 88 residential students and 42 in the hybrid program. The Master of Arts in Christian Practice enrolled 13 new students; the Doctor of Ministry, 28; Master of Theology, six; Master of Theological Studies, 22; the Doctor of Theology welcomed six. The Certificate in Theology and Health Care welcomed four residential students and 16 in the hybrid program. Across all degree programs, 30 percent of the incoming class identified as a race or ethnicity other than white. Fifty-seven percent of students in the incoming class are female.

The school continued its rich tradition of ecumenical engagement, with Dean Colón-Emeric participating in the Methodist-Roman Catholic International Commission Dialogue meeting with Pope Francis. Student Eliza Love, M.Div.'23, was awarded the \$10,000 Bossey Institute scholarship from the UMC Council of Bishops to attend the World Council of Church Ecumenical Institute.

Three new associate deans have accepted appointments: Daniel Castelo as associate dean for Academic Formation; Jung Choi as associate dean for Global and Intercultural Formation; and Sangwoo Kim as associate dean for Vocational Formation. Linda Coley has also joined as the executive director for the Ormond Center.

The Ormond Center launched the Community Craft Collaborative to create resources for equipping lay and congregational leaders. The Certificate in Conflict Transformation and Reconciliation provides an opportunity for pastors and other church leaders seeking theological and practical skills to foster reconciliation in their congregations and communities. We expanded our connection to UMC colleges through a partnership with Wesleyan College in Macon, Ga., to enable qualified undergraduates to take courses through the Duke Accelerated Pastoral Formation Program. The Clergy Health Initiative supports healthy practices for vibrant ministry.

Convocation & Pastors' School returned to an in-person format for the first time since 2019 with the theme, Creativity & Courage: From Trauma to Tough Hope. Professional dancers, visual artists, musicians, and scholars guided participants in facing brokenness and sin honestly and offered glimpses of "the beauty of holiness."

Document 400.35 - Gammon Theological Seminary

Gammon Theological Seminary is the Interdenominational Theological Center's United Methodist constituent member in Atlanta, Georgia. The Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) is a Christian Africentric ecumenical consortium of seminaries and fellowships that educate students to commit to practicing justice and peace through a liberating and transforming spirituality to become leaders in the church and local/global communities. Gammon was founded in 1883, bearing the name of the Rev. Elijah H. Gammon, a generous clergyman, businessman, and philanthropist. Rev. Elijah H. Gammon invested and endowed the founding of Gammon Seminary in partnership with Bishop Henry Warren and the Freedman's Aid Society. Gammon has educated Black Clergy for almost 140 years, with graduates serving every level of the church, including Bishops, Superintendents, General church leaders, Conference staff, and Clergy in every jurisdiction. Today, Gammon Theological Seminary is the only predominately Black Seminary of the thirteen approved United Methodist-related Theological Institutions. The ITC's accreditation is with the Association of Theological Schools and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. Gammon/ITC offers the following degree programs: the Master of Divinity, the Master of Arts in Religion and Education, and the Doctor of Ministry. The support given to The United Methodist Ministerial Education Fund by United Methodist Conferences continues to enable Gammon students to be grounded in the Wesleyan tradition of theological education. Our 17th President/Dean, Rev. Dr. Candace M Lewis, is the first woman to lead the Seminary in our 139-year history. Dr. Lewis and the Gammon staff team continue to lead innovatively in chartering a "Brand New Day" for Gammon's recruitment, retention, research and resources, fund development, and scholarship endowments in her first two years of service. Our new initiatives and celebrations this year, 2022-2023, at Gammon include:

- We established The Rev. Walter H. McKelvey Endowed Scholarship Fund with the South Carolina Methodist Foundation. Dr. McKelvey was Gammon's 14th President/Dean, serving from 1997-2010. Under Dr. McKelvey's leadership, Gammon's enrollment and graduation rate increased, and buildings were renovated. Our initial goal is to raise \$100,000.00. We have already received a matching fund pledge of \$50,000.00 from Dr. Loretta F. McKelvey (wife of the late Rev. McKelvey).
- Spring 2023 – International Student travel. Gammon students traveled to Belfast, Ireland, with the North Georgia Conference as a part of the Rethinking Conflict experience. Gammon students also traveled to Johannesburg, South Africa, on the Doctor of Ministry Immersion experience.
- Commissioned two National Research Projects, the first one related to the Impact of COVID on UMC BIPOC Clergy in partnership with Wespeth Benefits and Investments – CFWI – Clergy Financial Wellbeing Initiative. The second research project is "Perspectives" The Future of Blacks in the United Methodist Church—public release of research reports of the Gammon Research Institute scheduled for Summer 2023.

The greatest challenge facing Gammon Seminary is the rising cost of theological education and the significant debt our students incur as they answer their call to full-time ministry. Therefore, Gammon is committed to raising a million dollars in the next two years to offer full-tuition scholarships to students called and committed to full-time ministry in the United Methodist Church. We are grateful to this Annual Conference for your support of theological education and your commitment to ensuring pastoral leadership is theologically trained to lead us forward in the Wesleyan tradition.

Respectfully submitted, Rev. Dr. Candace M. Lewis, President-Dean

Document 400.36 - United Theological Seminary

United Theological Seminary celebrated rising enrollment in the 2022-2023 academic year. In the previous year, 464 students were enrolled at United; in 2022-2023, the seminary is serving 541 students, a 17% increase. A diverse community of many denominations, races, and nationalities, United welcomed students from 36 states, 21 countries, and 43 denominations, with 42% of students identifying as United Methodist.* The Seminary prepared 103 Course of Study students** and served 10 students through the Hispanic Christian Academy, a 3-year online course of ministry program for Hispanic/Latino lay pastors and leaders serving United Methodist congregations.

Houses of Study

In large part, this enrollment growth is a result of the seminary's House of Study initiative, which is supported by a \$1 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.'s Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative. As of 2022-2023, the Seminary has established five Houses of Study that are equipping master's students for the unique ministry needs of the communities, movements, and denominations in which they serve:

- Fresh Expressions, directed by Dr. Michael Beck;
- Full Gospel Baptist Fellowship, directed by Bishop Lisa Weah;
- Global Methodist, directed by Rev. Gregory Stover;
- Global Pentecostal, directed by Dr. Cheryl Bridges Johns; and,
- Hispanic, directed by Dr. Jorge Ochoa.

The largest of these communities is the Hispanic House of Study (Casa de Estudios Hispana), which is meeting a need for Hispanic/Latino pastors and church leaders ready to pursue a Master of Divinity in their native language. Nearly 50 students from across the United States and Latin America, including students from Mexico, Cuba, Columbia, and Peru, started in the online program in the 2022-2023 academic year.

As United continues to expand its offerings to support church leaders, it is preparing to launch three new Houses of Study in the 2023-2024 academic year: a Korean House of Study, taught 100% in Korean for Korean-speaking students, led by Dr. Seok Jae Jeon; an African Methodist Episcopal Zion House of Study led by Bishop Eric Leake; and a Global Lutheran House of Study led by Dr. Richard Blue, Dr. Tom Thorstad and Dr. Dan Landin.

Doctor of Ministry

The Seminary is also seeing growth in its Doctor of Ministry program. In 2022-2023, the Doctor of Ministry program has grown to 250 students, an increase of 32% over the past five years.* Doctoral students at United are actively engaged in ministry and seeking to become more effective leaders for the Church through a Doctor of Ministry degree. Students identify a need within their congregations or communities and, with the support of a peer group, mentor, and United faculty, they develop a model of ministry to address the challenge.

Bishop Bruce Ough Innovation Center

Launched in Fall 2021, the Bishop Bruce Ough Innovation Center, directed by Rev. Sue Nilson Kibbey, is connecting with pastors, ministry leaders, and congregational members hungry to bring God's renewal to their faith communities. In the past year alone, the Innovation Center has engaged more than 1,000 participants through more than 40 live webinars, training events, and courses. The Innovation Center has also partnered with The Center for Spiritual Formation, a connectional ministry of the Susquehanna Conference of The United Methodist Church, to offer a two-year online training course for those called to the ministry of spiritual direction. In addition, the Center is partnering with two United Methodist conferences to provide its Breakthrough Prayer Initiative training for all clergy in these conferences. Through these and other new opportunities, the Innovation Center seeks to set the stage for the increased vitality of leaders and congregations everywhere.

Dr. Kent Millard, President

* Student data represent 2022-2023 headcount enrollment, as of March 1, 2023. Denominational figures represent those who responded.

** Course of Study figures represent the most recent four terms.

Document 400.37 - St. Paul School of Theology

Educating tomorrow's leaders by offering on-campus, online, and hybrid learning courses at a FLEXible schedule, Saint Paul School of Theology is a seminary serving a diverse community committed to the formation of people for innovative, creative ministry through rigorous academic life. Grounded in the academic study of faith and ministry, theology is practiced in a traditional classroom and in remote spaces. Our contextual curriculum features Ministry Collaboration Groups, Practicum, Spiritual Formation Retreats, and Seminars. Students learn from dedicated faculty, experienced pastors, and community leaders about best ministry practices leaving our graduates with the tools and first-hand experience necessary to meet the needs of a changing world.

Saint Paul welcomed over 30 new students for the 2022-2023 academic year. Enrollment remained solid for the Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree program with promising growth on our Oklahoma campus. With COVID-19 restrictions lifted yet monitored, prospective students returned to in-person visits on both campuses, experiencing community meals, worship, and the newly implemented "Hammock ministry" on the Oklahoma campus. The Admissions team continues to expand travel to meet new students, including the Carolinas, Washington, D.C., and various parts of Texas.

This year we have focused on strengthening the Master of Arts in Christian Ministry by creating two specializations: Women, Society, and Church; and Social Justice and Advocacy. In each case, the student takes 22 hours of MACM required courses, and then the remaining 12 hours of the degree are comprised of courses focusing upon the specialization. The two existing specializations, Prophetic Witness and Service; and Deacon Ministries, will continue to be offered as well. The Women, Society, and Church Studies specialization is also available in the MDiv program, as is a specialization in Wesleyan Studies.

Saint Paul Board of Trustees changed leadership this year as long-time faculty and board member Rev. Dr. Tex Sample concluded his term as chair of the Board. Dr. Amy Hogan, Professor of Education and Dean of the School of Education at Ottawa University, has succeeded him as chair. Dr. Hogan possesses a deep reservoir of experience in teaching, research, and accreditation. In response to President Neil Blair's announcement that he will retire on December 31, 2023, Dr. Hogan appointed a search committee composed of faculty, staff, students, and trustees charged with identifying Saint Paul's next president. The search committee is currently conferring with Saint Paul's constituent groups to prepare the position prospectus that will describe Saint Paul's needs and aspirations to candidates.

In September 2022, Saint Paul School of Theology hosted a review team from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), one of Saint Paul's primary accreditation agencies, as part of the Seminary's regular reaffirmation cycle. On November 18, 2022, the Higher Learning Commission notified Saint Paul that the Commission "continued the accreditation of Saint Paul School of Theology with the next Reaffirmation of Accreditation in 2028-2029."

Saint Paul School of Theology is blessed to be your partner in ministry and help those seeking to discover more and answer the call.

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