

HISTORICAL REPORTS

400.01 Annual Conference Shepherding Team 2024 Historical Report

Khung-Hae Anna Shin, Mark Manzi, Co-Chairs ACST

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.

2023 - 2024 started with a new leadership team for the ACST. Lay Co-Chair Liz Gracie cycled off of the leadership team and was replaced by Mark Manzi. The clergy Co-Chair was also replaced due to the fact that Rev. Dr. Hwa-Young Chong, was appointed the District Superintendent of the Prairie North District and could not function in both capacities. Rev. Anna Shin took her place as the new Clergy Co-Chair of the ACST.

With new leadership and new members coming on to the ACST, a review of the responsibilities of the ACST in this new post-pandemic liminal time to provide clarification and understanding of the role of the ACST, building relationships and learning how to build trust were the important foci. The ACST worked diligently during the year with Susan Czolgosz, a church and organizational development consultant, who guided us in conjunction with the new co-chairs to create a role statement for the ACST (please find our new role statement at the conclusion of this report), along with building relationship and trust within the team. This information will be put into practice as we work to build relationships and trust among leaders, committees and groups of the NIC with whom we interact. We also prioritized understanding of what our specific role will be as we begin to share a Bishop with the Wisconsin Annual Conference beginning in September of 2024.

Along with our work with Susan Czolgosz, we were involved in the effort to resolve a concern over the moving of the NIC offices from the Chicago Temple building to new offices at 303 E. Wacker Dr. in Chicago. This concern between the NIC Trustees and people of the Chicago: First UMC has been resolved in a restorative manner that has maintained the connection we have as United Methodists.

The ACST collaborated with Bishop Schwerin to continue to support the three strategic goals of the NIC, approved in 2019, namely growing and reaching new disciples, living out the conviction that racism is incompatible with Christian teaching and increasing the number of highly vital congregations. This work is carried out by two task forces and in conjunction with the congregational development and redevelopment team. We celebrate the dedicated members of our task forces who have offered the people of the NIC education, resources, inspiration, information, and ways to put what has been learned into action as they live out their ministry and mission. Their energy, creativity and commitment has helped the NIC live out its mission.

ACST Role Statement

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

Specifically, the ACST is:

- A council of advice to the bishop and conference leadership;
- A decision making body between annual conference sessions, and for those items not requiring conference action;
- A contributor to the overall budgeting process with final review prior to annual conference;
- The oversight body for the District Shepherding teams in collaboration with the District Superintendents;
- An adaptive learning organization that provides insights and teaching about effective leadership in the 21st century church.

400.02 The Anti-Racism Task Force

Nadia Kanhai and Amania Drane

The current members of the Anti-Racism Task Force are Nadia Kanhai, the chair; Rev. Matthew Krings; Rev. Jarrod Severing; and Rev. Dr. Addison Shields. Their work is done in collaboration with the Conference Commission on Religion & Race (CCORR) and critical support from the Champion Team, the Advocacy Partners, volunteer leaders and support and guidance from Project Manager Amania Drane.

The Champion Team holds a critical role due to its support and willingness to help spread the word about our anti-racist events. The Advocacy Partners are focused on activism in and outside the church. They held a “Keep the Dream Alive” Rally and March commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the March on Washington. They are planning a Bridging the Divide workshop and an Interfaith/Ecumenical racial justice luncheon. This group is led by Lisa Rogers of Elmhurst: First United Methodist Church.

The Anti-Racism Series is holding an Arts & Culture Series in 2024. Four events will be held to focus on the art and culture of various ethnic heritage groups. This team is led by Tim Alexander of Schaumburg: Our Saviour’s UMC.

The Clergy Peer Reflection & Engagement Series (CPRES) Retreat was not held in 2023. However, plans are being discussed about the possibility of a retreat in the fall of 2024.

Discipling Anti-racist Youth (DAY) is a collaboration between the Anti-racism and Discipleship Task Forces to support youth leaders. Several events, including a Becoming the Beloved Community workshop in May, were held to learn about and share best practices to engage youth about anti-racism were held. This team is led by Rev. Matthew Krings of Chicago: Berry UMC, who is on the Anti-racism Task Force, and Sharon Rice of Naperville: Community UMC, who is on the Discipleship Task Force.

The Becoming Beloved Community has done workshops at more than 10 churches. These opportunities provide guidance and action steps to live out the conviction that racism is incompatible with Christian teaching. This group is led by Dr. Richard Guzman.

The Civil Rights Pilgrimage Team continued its advocacy work by holding a Lobby Day in Springfield, IL with over 20 people on Thurs., April 18. They plan to partner with the Antiracism Series Team and the Committee on Native American Ministries to hold an event honoring Indigenous Peoples on Sat., Oct. 12, 2024. This team is led by Rev. Toni Lucas of Albany UMC.

We began a “What’s Going On” newsletter in February 2024 to provide regular updates about racial justice events in the local church and surrounding communities.

We continue to work toward moving our programmatic successes into systemic and structural changes with our members, churches, and the conference. We hold joint meetings with CCORR and our lead volunteers as we prepare to transition our work at some point in the future to the CCORR. A few of our programs have not continued due to a lack of leadership and we continue to seek leadership in all ethnic groups.

400.03 Board of Laity Historical Report

Eugene Williams

The Board of Laity supports the Annual Conference's vision of making and supporting Christians in vital congregations. The Board is comprised of the Conference Co-Lay Leaders, District Lay Leaders and Members at Large from (UMM, UWFaith, Lay Servant Ministries, Scouting, Director of Connectional Ministries and Clergy Representative). We meet 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 also to communicate it to the communities in which we live and work. Since our last Laity Convocation Bishop Dan Schwerin has appointed Conference Co-Lay Leaders to the Extended Cabinet and the Shared Bishop's Task Force. We have now been further empowered to carry a "first-hand message" to the Board of Laity and to all Laity across the Conference. We were involved in the preparation for the yoking (not merging) of the Northern Illinois and Wisconsin Episcopal Area with our Siblings from the north.

Nevertheless, we remained focused on the planning for our 2024 Laity Convocation. Since the spring of 2020, we have utilized technology for our virtual gatherings. In 2023, our Laity Convocation was a hybrid event that incorporated online attendance and in-person conferencing hosted by three local churches across our conference. And while we have come to appreciate the efficiency and economy of virtual meetings, we still had a strong desire for the warmth and nourishment that can only come from the human contact we experience during face-to-face meetings. So for our 2024 Laity Convocation, we endeavored to return to our faceto-face; in-person format. We were blessed by the generosity of our host, Reverend Jim Bell and the beloved congregation of First UMC of Belvidere. Our theme was, "Growing Together in Love – Learning to Have Courageous and Respectful Conversations." Attendees included Bishop Dan Schwerin, Laity, Clergy, District Superintendents, and Annual Conference Staff.

We were honored with opening remarks by Bishop Schwerin and were then served communion by Bishop Schwerin and Reverend Char Hoffman. Our keynote speaker was Mrs. LaToya Redd-Thompson who hails from Mississippi. Latoya has served at the District, Conference, Jurisdictional and Global United Methodist Church level. Latoya currently serves as the President of the Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders. We then enjoyed a special presentation by Mrs. Henrieta Ribeiro who discussed how we might better engage in "Courageous and Respectful Conversations." Henrieta is a co-founder of International Energy 3; a company that specializes in retreats and workshop to inspire, connect and educate individuals and communities. Henrieta also serves as the Lay Leader at St. Andrews UMC in Carol Stream, IL. After Henrieta's presentation, we moved to several break-out rooms to consider and discuss the messages from Bishop Schwerin, Latoya and Henrieta.

Videos and written materials for Laity Convocation 2024, as well as for previous years can be found on our webpage: www.umd.nic.org/laity. Go to the NIC website under the Congregational Life sub-heading.

The Northern Illinois Conference is currently served by Co-Lay Leaders: Connie Augsburger and Eugene Williams. Connie is a member of Disciples UMC in Mount Morris, IL. She served many years on the Conference Board of Trustees and its Executive Committee; as well as the Conference's Insurance Board. She currently serves on the Episcopacy Committee.

Eugene is a member of Chicago South Shore UMC. He serves on the Board of Ordained Ministry; the Episcopacy Committee; the Midwest Methodist Foundation and the Nominations Committee. Eugene is also Chair of the LSD Committee on Ordained Ministry and was recently re-elected as Treasurer for the NIC UMM. Connie and Eugene appreciate the honor to serve the Northern Illinois Annual Conference and partner with our Siblings from the Wisconsin Conference, in the newly established Northern Illinois-Wisconsin Episcopal Area.

Respectfully submitted,

Connie Augsburger and Eugene Williams, NIC Co-Lay Leaders.

400.04 Cabinet Historical Report

Brian Gilbert

¶1424 of The Book of Discipline assigns 7 tasks to the work of the Cabinet. It is important to note that in all of ¶1424 the Cabinet is described as the work of the whole, not as individual members or District Superintendents. So, it is important to begin this report celebrating the spirit of unity and collaboration that is prevalent among the NIC Cabinet. Under the leadership of Bishop Schwerin, we have one of the most diverse Cabinets within the whole of the United Methodist Connection. Each member brings their own unique experiences, wisdom, gifts, and cultural identities with them to work for the greater good of the whole of our Conference, and all the people that live within our conference boundaries. We laugh, cry, dream, and sometimes have moments of “intense fellowship” all together. There is a profound respect and dedication to working as a team for the good of the whole Annual Conference that has been modeled and taught by Bishop Schwerin. And I give God my thanks and praise for the collegiality that I have experienced from this Cabinet.

If you haven't noticed there have been a lot of changes in our churches and communities the past few years. This year has presented multiple changes within the life of the Cabinet as well. Two members of the Cabinet, Rev. Arlene Christopherson and Rev. Martin Lee are entering into retirement. Their ministry and work on the Cabinet spans across decades. They have innovated, worked, and sacrificed countless times in order that our faith communities and clergy might be empowered in their ministries. I know my own ministry is stronger due to their faithfulness and I wanted to honor and thank them for their work and ministry. We also have two District Superintendents returning to the local church. Rev. Brittany Isaac and Rev. Jeffrey Bross have each contributed so much over the past 6 years of their ministry on the Cabinet. They have helped create a culture of respect, inclusion, and zeal for discipleship. I thank them for their service and envy the local churches that will receive the pastoral care that they have brought to the Cabinet table.

¶1424.2 reads that the Cabinet “is expected to speak to the conference and for the conference to the spiritual and temporal issues that exist within the region encompassed by the conference.” While reading over this particular passage a few days ago I was reminded of a quote from Thomas Aquinas “If the highest aim of a captain were to preserve his ship, he would keep it in port forever.”

We all know that the world, and that the church is changing. Oftentimes bureaucratic institutions are crumbling faster than we can fix them. But we must remember this wisdom from a 13th century theologian.... Our highest aim isn't to preserve the past, a building, or an institutional memory. Our highest aim is to serve Jesus Christ, by making disciples that transform the world. We cannot do that if we only stay where it has always been safe. Or, to put it another way, we cannot explore where God's grace will lead us if we continually sit in the port of “we've never done it that way before.”

We must remember that God has called us to the grand adventure that is discipleship. We are explorers sent to discover new wonders of God's love as we meet our neighbors and serve them as Christ has served us.

Your Cabinet is dedicated to this adaptive task even when we are sometimes scared to lean into it. We ask you to continue to support your church and your Annual Conference with your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness. And together, we will keep Christ's call to discipleship as our highest aim and to work toward building the beloved community.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Brian Gilbert Dean NI Cabinet.

400.05 Northern Illinois Conference Commission on Archives and History (CAH)

Marilyn Steenwyk May 2023 – April 2024

The Northern Illinois Conference Archives, housed in the basement of Styberg Library at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, have dealt with several challenges as well as opportunities during the last Conference year. The two newest –and most significant—issues are questions about the future of the archives and incorporation of materials from closed, discontinued, and disaffiliated churches.

The first issue came into sharp focus on May 24, 2023, when we received an email informing us that Daniel Smith, our primary contact at Styberg Library, was no longer employed at G-ETS. His was just the latest diminution of library staff, leaving us to wonder about plans for the library as a whole and, by default, the archives. We are aware of similar issues in other conference archives both within and outside the North Central Jurisdiction, particularly those housed in seminaries embedded in larger universities. For example, a library under the administration of a university rather than the seminary may be vulnerable to staffing and policy changes that may have a negative impact on conference archives housed there. Some annual conferences have chosen to move their archives off-site, usually to a closed church. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer, NIC Director of Connectional Ministries, met with our commission several times to discuss our concerns. We also attended a Zoom meeting of NIC trustees on January 25, 2024 and shared our questions about this as well as the present shortage of storage and work spaces.

The second issue we have worked with is incorporation of new materials, particularly from closed and disaffiliated churches. Arlene Christopherson and Dan Swinson did a lot of work in ensuring that the appropriate records from disaffiliating churches were secured and brought to the archives. The use of the word ‘appropriate’ is deliberate; we’re required to do far less weeding out of non-archival materials from disaffiliating churches than from closed ones. Even so, we have overflowed our allotted shelf space. At the end of January, we had nearly one hundred banker’s boxes of materials yet to be sorted. As a result, we spend most of our work days in going through materials rather than responding to research questions. An additional influx of materials occurred when the NIC office moved to its present location on Wacker Drive. We received literally thousands of photographs: many undated and without any identification of the persons pictured. There are also several boxes with back issues of *The United Methodist Reporter*: we cannot discard these (because newsprint is highly acidic and will degrade the materials around it) until we learn whether GCAH has digitized them. As for digitization of the rest of the archives, which was suggested at the NIC trustees’ meeting, there are several reasons this is unadvisable. First, the cost would be prohibitive –and CAH has no budget for even a part-time archivist. We’re all volunteers. Second, digital copies are not considered valid for legal purposes. Third, GCAH advises not to discard any hard copies after digitization except for newsprint.

There were several other opportunities we have dealt with in the last twelve months. One that has some urgency is the sixtieth anniversary of the merging of the Rock River and Lexington Conferences in June 1964. We are hoping the NIC leadership, BMCR, and Annual Conference planning committee will mark and celebrate this historic event at the June 2024 Annual Conference session as well as at St. Mark UMC in Chicago (date to be determined). We recommend that Donald and Betty Lusk be asked to serve on any committee planning the celebrations.

In December 2023, Styberg Library’s director, Jaeyeon Lucy Chung, received an email from Chris Walters of the Midwest Methodist Foundation concerning possible disbursement of funds from the John J. Wang Fund for Archives and History.” She forwarded the email to CAH members. This fund was established by the Rev. Richard Wang and family, and it does not come under the administration of Styberg Library or the NIC per se. We need to have continued discussions of the CAH budget, decision-making regarding the Wang Fund, the possibility of a PayPal account for reimbursement of expenses we incur in making photocopies and mailing research materials, etc.

Four members of our commission attended the NCJ CAH Convocation, “Lincoln Among the Methodists,” July 10-13, 2023, in Springfield Illinois, hosted by Illinois Great Rivers Conference CAH. We hope to participate in the 2024 convocation, but have not yet received registration information.

The following is a sample of other work and research requests to which we responded during this last Conference year:

- We processed many boxes of materials from United Women in Faith (UMW).
- We received and processed several boxes of materials from Wesley Westerberg, former president of Kendall College, and from now-closed Cortland and Lisle: Faith UMCs.
- We corresponded with Kelly Morse concerning her grandparents’ marriage at Englewood MEC.
- We responded to Laura Lorenzo regarding her research about Benoni Harris, a circuit rider in Illinois who died in 1845.
- We handled an information request concerning the marriage of Oskar and Eva Hansen, members of (Evanston) Covenant MEC 1914-1925.
- We responded to requests for documentation of baptisms at Worth UMC, St. Thomas UMC (Glen Ellyn), First UMC Aurora, and Hermosa UMC.
- We responded to a request for photos of former pastors at Orland, Midlothian, and Goodings Grove Methodist Churches for a historical display at Orland Park’s Faith UMC.
- We received from Mr. Thomas Munz a panoramic photo of EUB ministers outside Community (Naperville) UMC, taken in 1915.

Our hopes for the coming Conference year:

- Higher visibility of CAH through the Reporter, Conference website, district newsletters, etc.
- Offer workshops in several districts for local churches to learn about maintaining their own archives.
- Recruit more members for NIC CAH. As it is, nearly all our participants are exofficio, our terms having expired long ago.

400.06 2023 Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships (CCUIR) Historical Report

Catiana McKay

The 2023 Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships is chaired by Rev. Lynn Pries with the support of Ecumenical Officer, Rev. Catiana McKay. Members include John George, Jessie Cunningham, Rev. Eunbae Doh, Rev. Tura Foster Gillespie, Rev. David Poust, and Vicky Power Bass.

The Book of Discipline par. 642, mandates the work of CCUIR to provide representation of NIC and the Bishop in ecumenical and interreligious spaces including councils and dialogues; to foster ecumenical and interreligious relationships; to equip and encourage the building and strengthening of ecumenical and interreligious relationships between congregations and their neighbors. This work is in cooperation with the Bishop and the Council of Bishops. Our work is discipleship strengthening, rooted in humanizing, and understanding the “other” and encouraging active engagement in our local churches and communities, often creating new opportunities that increase knowledge and strengthen vitality.

Our work encourages cooperation thus bringing together people and groups in facing similar humanizing concerns with people within and beyond the connection as well as within and beyond Christianity. We closely partner with other conference and UMC groups (WMC), likewise, with ecumenical (WCC, NCCC), and interreligious bodies on community, city, state, national, and global levels. We partner with other conference commissions and committees through supporting joint efforts where there is overlap, and cross promotion of events and initiatives.

We share training opportunities, resources, and other official information from COB and the ecumenical and interreligious world. As we continue to invite participation and provide resources for this work in our

churches and communities, we have been able to offer scholarships to Methodists (and Methodist affiliated persons) in our conference with opportunities to join in ecumenical, and interreligious dialogue, mission, and social activism. Our goals for 2024 are to strengthen and expand the outreach of our conference CCUIR Team and our engagement in Ecumenism Metro Chicago's Christians United for the Care of Creation Team; Illinois Conference of Churches; UMEIT (United Methodist Ecumenical and Interreligious Training) through the Council of Bishops (monthly zoom trainings for CCUIR Team), rotation for participation with the National Workshop on Christian Unity, and a renewal and strengthening of our Interreligious partnerships, especially with the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago (CIOGC).

The sharing of peace, justice, and mercy ministries, strengthens the knowledge and vitality of our conference, congregations, and communities. Our renewal work continues.

400.07 Chicago Black Methodists for Church Renewal Inc. of Northern Illinois Historical Report – 2023

Eugene Williams

The year 2023 presented many challenges to our being able to carry out our mission and purpose to advocate for the unique needs of Black people in the Northern IL Conference, support local churches, develop leaders, make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and be the light of Jesus Christ in every situation. We were unable to be bold leaders capable of responding to every request from every which way seeking solutions to problems for which we had no answers nor even responsibility. We faced the reality that we lack the capability to meet all the expectations, the capacity to be everywhere requested, have the solid leadership and cohesion; therefore, we need to STOP, STAND STILL, STEADY OURSELVES AND REGROUP. SO THAT IS WHERE WE ARE AND THAT IS WHY WE MUST REBUILD FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS. However, our work continued and we continued our work as reflected in the following highlights of our programs, events, relationships and connections.

January – March

- Attended and supported Celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. worship service at Chicago – South Shore
- 33rd Annual PUSH for Excellence Scholarship & Program Breakfast MLK Celebration at Chicago - McCormick Place
- Shared in King and Chicago service of worship commemorating the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
- Participated in Church Women United Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 36th Annual Prayer Breakfast at Oak Lawn Hilton
- Promoted National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day and HIV Testing
- Organized and carried out the Pembroke Institute Fourth Annual Presidents' Day Black Teens Matter Holiday Hook-Up, hosted by the National Phi Delta Kappa Teachers' Sorority Mu Chapter at their headquarters with the workshop led by Jonathan Banks of Urban Outreach Foundation
- Attended the Installation of Bishop Schwerin at Elgin - First
- Attended the Lake South District Laity Session with Bishop Schwerin at Chicago – Morgan Park
- Promoted and shared in the Balm In Gilead National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS
- Held the First Quarter General Membership Meeting hosted by Chicago – Faith. Rev. Michelle Taylor Sanders presented a powerful meditation from Nehemiah on Rebuilding
- Elected Rev. Robert E. Biekman as new President and Installed leadership team committed to a Covenant, led by Rev. P. Devon Brown
- Supported and attended Youth Sunday Worship of Chicago – Hartzell Memorial, 5th Sunday in Lent

April – June

- Held Welcome and Get-Acquainted Session for Rev. Robert E. Biekman, as newlyelected BMCR President at Chicago – Maple Park
- Attended Palm Sunday Worship Celebration at Chicago – St. Mark

- Supported Caleb Bunton, St. Mark youth actor, in role of Short Film “I’m Not Powerless” sponsored by Timeless Gifts at IIT Galvin Tower
- Sponsored participation of seven (7) members as representatives to the 56th General Meeting of National BMCR in Pittsburgh PA
- Shared in Maundy Thursday Service at Chicago - Hartzell Memorial
- Attended Good Friday Service of the 7 Last Words by Laity and Clergy preachers at Chicago - Faith
- Joined in presentation of the 7 Last Words Cantata at Chicago - Hartzell Memorial
- Attended “I’m Not Powerless” Film Screening and Panel discussion with Caleb Bunton and teen actors along with adult production leadership at Chicago – St. Mark
- Attended Mothers’ Day Luncheon at Chicago – Maple Park
- Held Second Quarter General Membership Meeting at Chicago – Wesley. Host Pastor Woolery gave a stirring meditation on Rebuilding from Isaiah
- NIC Annual Conference participation included a video featuring Bishop Tracy Smith Malone and Julian Davis Reid, Pembroke Institute alums
- A BMCR display focused on 54 years of continuous mission and ministry emphasized by photos of programs and events throughout the years
- NIC HIV/AIDS Task Force award presented to Sylvia Jo Oglesby for service and leadership locally and nationally in HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention and founder of McCormick Seminary Clergy & Lay Leadership HIV/AIDS Summit now in its 19th year
- Shared in Farewell Worship Celebration for Rev. Dennis M. Oglesby, Jr., at Evanston – Sherman returning to Minnesota for appointment to St. Paul - Camphor Memorial UMC
- Presented trophy to Rev. Dennis M. Oglesby, Jr. in appreciation for 52 years of commitment and service to local BMCR caucus, NCJ BMCR, National BMCR, Northern IL Conference and at General Church levels
- Juneteenth was recognized but no special event was carried out due to the conflict with Father’s Day
- Annual June Worship Celebration, held at Chicago - Ingleside-Whitfield, included Confirmands from 8 local churches in the Lake South District, a Provisional Elder, an Ordained Elder and a Retiree
- Three (3) Youth were sponsored to attend the SEJ BMCR 2023 Youth Harambee at Claflin University in South Carolina
- Several Elementary and High School Graduation celebrations, prom sendoff and trunk party supported
- Acknowledged Annual National HIV Testing Day and encouraged testing

July – September

- Received the resignation of Rev. Robert E. Biekman as BMCR President
- Supported Timeless Gifts Review event at South Shore Cultural Center
- Attended African Day Worship and Celebration at Oak Lawn - First
- Students’ Back-to School Sendoff and Blessing conducted by Julian Reid, co-sponsored by Midwest Methodist Foundation
- Attended and supported Friends and Family Sunday at Chicago - South Shore
- Supported and attended Installation of Rev. Innis Miller as Pastor of Chicago – Kelly Woodlawn
- Supported and attended Installation of Rev. G. Morris Jarkloh, Jr. at Lansing – First
- Participated in Wesley-Kelly Woodlawn United Women In Faith Weekend Prayer Breakfast at Chicago – Wesley
- Third Quarter General Membership Meeting hosted by Chicago – Englewood Rust; Pastor Grace Oh shared words of meditation and grace

October – December

- NCJ BMCR 51st Annual Meeting Hosted by IL Great Rivers in Springfield IL – 8 representatives from Chicago attended
- Celebrated Installation of Lake South District Superintendent
- Celebrated Church Anniversary of Chicago - Maple Park
- Celebrated Church Anniversary of Chicago - St. Mark
- Celebrated Church Anniversary of Chicago – Gorham

- Celebrated Church Anniversary of Hazel Crest Community
- Attended Resurrection Youth Worship Service
- Carried out 32nd Laity Awards Luncheon with youth from Maple Park, Resurrection and Transformation serving as program leaders
- Created and developed the Laity Awards Souvenir Ad Book to include special listing of all known local church ministries
- Representation at Garrett's Center for the Church the Black Experience Celebration of 50 years, honoring several NIC clergy including Rev. P. Devon Brown, Rev. Harlene Harden, Rev. Dennis M. Oglesby, Jr., Rev. Pamela Pirtle and Rev. Megan Dean Tobolah
- Completed planning and implementation of 19th Annual Clergy & Lay HIV/AIDS Leadership Summit in partnership with McCormick Seminary at Trinity UCC
- Celebrated 55th Annual Meeting and Founders' Day Celebration at Chicago – Hartzell Memorial
- Sponsored Families in a group of 10 from several local churches to attend and participate in the Timeless Gifts Holiday Mentoring Concert at University of Chicago Logan Center
- Acknowledged eight (8) elderly members who are ill, or no longer physically active, by sending Christmas bouquets to remember and appreciate them In Loving Memory

The following BMCR members departed our midst and are greatly missed. However, they faithfully served their local churches and broader communities, BMCR and touched many lives.

May their legacies ever remind us to be faithful as we serve this present age.

- Useni Eugene Perkins – Hartzell Memorial
- Rev. Dr. Calvin S. Morris – South Shore
- Charles Hobson – St. Mark
- Vickie Powell-Bass - Wesley
- Rev. Dr. Gessel Berry, Jr. – Retired Elder

Always to remember; never to forget those with whom we shared in the ministry of Jesus Christ to Make Disciples for the Transformation of the World!

Special Acknowledgement

Chicago BMCR expresses a debt of gratitude to the following members serving and providing leadership in the Northern IL Conference:

- Deborah Dangerfield – NIC Program Chair & Nominating Committee
- Darryl D. Harris – Representative to Shepherding Team
- Rev. Dr. Addison Shields, Jr. - NIC Worship Committee Chair
- Eugene Williams – NIC Co-Lay Leader

Our Time Under God Is Now!

400.08 Church and Society Historical Report

Elisa Gatz

The Conference Board of Church and Society maintains the connectional relationship between the General Board of Church and Society and the conference, district and local church. As part of its task, the Board of Church and Society relates the gospel of Jesus Christ to the members of the Church and to the persons and structures of the communities and world in which they live. It shall seek to bring the whole of human life, activities, possessions, use of resources, and community and world relationship into conformity with the will of God. It also acts to show the members of the Church and the society that reconciliation that God effected through Christ involves personal, social and civic righteousness.

This year, several of the members will be rotating off of this committee including it's chair, and during transitions such as this, it is important for those who are interested in justice work to get involved. There is a lot of work to do and many hands and voices are needed to work toward a more just world for all.

One of the focus areas of this board is to award Social Justice Grants. We had four very deserving recipients this year: Pan-African Rural Health Care and Social Services, Rockford Urban Ministries, St. Mark Justice Ministry, and Peconica United Methodist Church. Education is also important to the members of this board. This past year we put out articles for the eNews and the Reporter related to the legislation that we submitted at the last Annual Conference. We also tried to disseminate information for various rallies and gatherings around the conference. We helped to support JFON and United Methodists for Kairos Response. We have also appreciated the support of legislation from C&S that has come before this conference. Northern Illinois is known for its commitment to justice, and we applaud those that go beyond support of the words and actually implement the actions. There is much more to be done.

400.09 Clergy Fund, United Methodist Historical Report – 2023

Chris Pierson

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, 2023 the fund totaled \$32,280,228. As with many other entities with investments in the stock market, the Fund’s portfolio value fluctuates. This past year saw an 11.3% increase following a year of loses. Even with those fluctuations, through the stewardship of its Board of Directors, and the investment management team at Wespath, 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 lay members and clergy members. These persons are nominated and elected by the current board of directors. They serve for terms of four years. 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. That amount has increased over the past few years. A policy of using a percentage of the three-year rolling average of the year-end fund value, in addition to other factors guides the Board’s annual contribution to the Board of Pensions. The Board contributed \$1,700,000 from the fund for 2023. The Board has requested, from the Northern Illinois Conference, necessary information and data to better determine current and future need with the potential to increase the amount of our quarterly and annual gifts for retiree benefits.

The Fund is a 501(c) (3) registered charitable organization, and welcomes contributions and bequests. 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
- Robert Martin, 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
- Rev. Michael Mann

400.10 Congregational Development and Redevelopment (CodeRed) Committee

Jonathan Crail

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). This year Code Red and the Director of Congregational Development supported several cohorts of pastors and lay members, held workshops around the Conference, and developed metrics to help congregations make strategic decisions about buildings and ministries.

“How to Reach New People” Workshop

Last October 21st, we held the Nickerson Coaching workshop with 84 people from 42 congregations participated and were empowered to build relationships with their friends and neighbors in order to make new disciples. This year, five congregations have gone through monthly coaching sessions.

Vital Mergers/Adoptions Workshops

Knowing that the current ministry environment is different than what it has been over many years and decades, 28 people from 18 congregations participated in this workshop. Together, we are seeking new possibilities with what we already have at hand. We have seen some positive results, including:

- 1) Buffalo Grove/Deerfield: Kingswood Multi-Campus Ministry through Adoption
- 2) Elgin/Bartlett: Journey of Hope Multi-Site through Adoption
- 3) Joliet: Hope through Merger
- 4) Paw Paw through Merger
- 5) Wheaton: Gary and Aldersgate Merger
- 6) New Lenex, Mokena, and Frankfort Merger

A roundtable conversation on what we have learned through vital mergers and adoptions was held December 13, leading to the creation of resources and toolboxes for future congregations interested in pursuing adoption. We will also create video clips of testimonies, especially from the viewpoint of laity who often start fearful but gain hope when seeing the possibilities through vital mergers and adoptions.

New Church Planting

During the pandemic, we launched Wellsprings New Faith Community in Oswego. They have doubled their in-person attendance and have become financially viable. They are dreaming of perhaps relocating to a new worship site because they have outgrown their current space.

This year we planted New Hispanic Faith Communities in Harvard and at Shorewood NFC. We are also in consultation about starting a Hispanic New Faith Community in Chemung. The Chemung congregation donated their church building to the Conference when they merged with Capron UMC. A fourth new Hispanic New Faith Community is planned for Melrose Park area after some building repairs are completed.

We are engaging in Intentional Congregational Redevelopment at:

- 1) Chicago: Hartzell Memorial UMC on Martin Luther King Drive anticipated changes in the community as a result of the City of Chicago's pre-pandemic approval of a 3.8 billion redevelopment of the former Michael Reese Medical Center which is within walking distance of the church. They went through Olu Brown's consultation and monthly training sessions for revisioning.
- 2) Oak Park: First UMC is engaging in intentional redevelopment, prioritizing community outreach.
- 3) DeKalb: First UMC broke ground in June 2022 and on September 10th 2023 celebrated the building dedication with Bishop Dan Schwerin and welcomed their new neighbors. Since then, they have received nine new members. It took 20 years to secure the land (16 acres) and construct the building, but because of the faithful leadership of the laity and clergy, they finished the building without debt.
- 4) Chicago: Albany Park Ministry Center

In partnership with CPR (Church Properties Reimagined Inc, formerly known as Chicago Home Missionary Society) we are creating a ministry center in Albany Park using the First Vietnamese church building, which was almost destroyed by flooding during the pandemic. We are renovating to create a ministry center for multiple congregations to use. We are experimenting with creating a space that churches can use without having to worry about one of the biggest challenges for congregations: building maintenance. With this, the congregations can focus on their worship, mission, and ministry. The building repairs are expected to be finished by the end of this year.

Equipping Lay and Clergy

ICD (Institute for Congregational Development): Olu Brown's cohort hosted 27 laity and clergy for monthly sessions over the last year. There was an emphasis on revisioning and alignment with their mission field. There was also an emphasis on stewardship.

In January 2024, we started a Doug Anderson cohort with 24 pastors recommended by their District Superintendents. This cohort will have monthly training sessions over the course of two years.

The Conference [Hispanic] Academy for Faith Community Development is a portal to recruit, develop, and deploy Christ-like servants for the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ. Some participants became licensed local pastors and serve existing congregations while others are starting new faith communities.

Our current environment is different than it was years ago. We face incredible challenges in a polarized society: people don't listen to each other, and hatred is felt everywhere, even in the painful disaffiliation process we experienced from some of our Congregations. However, as Bishop Dan Schwerin said in a recent Reporter column: "God continues to call us to make disciples of Jesus, baptizing and teaching all that Jesus commanded. Despite the pain that surrounds us, the focus of our mission is healing". We look forward to God's healing power and presence as we continue to faithfully innovate, empower, and encourage our communities of faith around the Northern Illinois Conference.

Rev. Jonathan Crail, Chair, Congregational Development and Redevelopment Committee (Code Red)
Rev. J. Martin Lee, Director of Congregational Development and Redevelopment

400.11 Committee on Lay Servant Ministries Historical Report

Peggy Hansen

Lay Servant Ministries is committed to serve and lead in the Northern Illinois Conference! Lay Servant Ministries' mission is comprised of three words: "Caring, Leading, and Communication." Members of the laity that are educated and well-read contribute to the vitality of their local congregations. It is through the coordinated work of the the Conference Committee on Lay Servant Ministries and the District Committees on Lay Servant Ministries that all laity can receive education, development for leadership and faith development. The Conference and District committees offer education through semi-annual lay academies and oversee the process of certification of Lay Servants, Lay Speakers, and Lay Ministers.

It is important that the process of bringing new members of the laity into lay servant ministries continues so 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, stewardship, and elements from the social principles. 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 2023 included: "Loving People and Planet in God's Name", "Exploring a Culture of Care for a Caring Congregation", "Mission Possible 3: Lay Servants Leading and Governing Congregations with Simplified Accountable Structure", and "Sacraments: Means of Grace". We are looking forward to additional new courses being offered such as "Fresh Expressions of Faith" and "The Millennial Narrative: Sharing a Good Life with the Next Generation" 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, this is the way that each of our congregations will become more vibrant!

Blessings and safety to each of you!

Submitted by Peggy Hansen

Conference Director of Lay Servant Ministries

400.12 2023-2024 Conference Committee on Native American Ministries

Historical Report

Michelle Lacock

Our Native American Ministry of Presence served the community through Bill Buchholtz who coordinates this ministry. He provided an inspiring ministry through his music throughout Northern Illinois. His ministry has been with the St. Kateri Center, the American Indian Center, the Indian Health Service, the American Indian Association of Illinois (AIAI), Mitchell Museum, local UMC churches for worship services and for funeral services. He played for Midwest SQARRING (Save Our Ancestor's Remains) PowWow, performed at U of I Champaign, Aurora University, Illinois State University, for International Peace Day, at the Peace School of Chicago. He performed at the birthday tribute to Jean Baptiste duSable, at the Parliament of World Religion Annual Conference, at Lewis University and at a benefit for Maui with other indigenous performers at the Old Town School of Folk Music.

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 for the musical program entitled, "The Sweetest Season" which featured local Native American artists. He was then asked to perform Christmas Carols prior to the premiere night for "A Christmas Carol".

Bill played flute on Sunday March 10 for a nationwide UMC prayer vigil for Nex Benedict who was a Two-Spirit (nonbinary), 16-year-old student who was a member of the Choctaw Nation. The student died Feb. 8, 2024, after a one-day physical altercation inside a school bathroom in Oklahoma. Event co-sponsors the UMC New England Conference, multiple CONAM's and the Native American International Caucus.

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. Assisted Midwest SOARRING (Save Our Ancestor's Remains) PowWow both financially and by being in attendance. The committee members promoted Native American Ministry Sunday in their local churches as well as participated or led services throughout the annual conference. We also participated in the monthly NCJ CONAM committee meetings where we partnered with a variety of activities that are happening in NCJ.

"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 effects 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 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

400.13 Historical Report for Communications Ministry Area – 2024

Victoria Rebeck

The director of communications, Rev. Victoria Rebeck, completed her first year in the position in March 2024. It's been a year of re-learning the conference culture (Victoria was a NIL member until 2021). Because of additional needs from the communications ministry area, we needed to adjust our regular tasks. The NIC Reporter is now published every other month. We also updated the layout for readability. There is more white space between articles. The text font is larger and more readable. We hope to receive higher-resolution photos so they can be printed at a larger size.

Lisa Smith works as the managing editor of The Reporter, starting a draft list of scheduled articles, following up with authors, working with the printer, and designing the layout. Victoria Rebeck writes a few articles and proofreads the content in the entire edition.

We have also learned that readers want more denomination-wide stories, so we are including more in the print newspaper and the eNews. Analytics for the electronic newsletter show that these stories are often receiving the most clicks, suggesting that indeed, readers are very interested in stories from across The United Methodist Church.

We are also transitioning the conference to adapt to the way information has been shared for the past 40 years. The website will be the primary repository of information, and the conference and district electronic newsletters will link to the online stories. This makes better use of communications technology and makes content easier to find, unlike our dependence on the posted Reporter files. The postponed United Methodist General Conference, which could not be held in 2020 due to international outbreak of SARS-CoV20, ("Covid"), took place in Charlotte, N.C. Both Victoria and Lisa attended. It was a valuable opportunity for Lisa to see the behind-the-scenes processes that are part of General Conference. Lisa also worked on gathering photographs and developing videos. Victoria published daily summaries via special editions of the eNews. Analytics show that readership was high for these special issues.

The communications area contracted with Big Heart Creative to design a new conference website. The proprietor, Matthew Carlisle, is experienced in both local-church and denominational web development. This will be a complete makeover of the site, including a completely different navigation. Watch for the site to be launched the summer of 2024.

Bishop Schwerin has been providing video greetings to churches and groups that have invited him for special events that he has not been able to attend in person. When a bishop is assigned to the new Northern Illinois–Wisconsin Episcopal Area this year, that bishop will have much more area to cover and will need to create more video greetings. This is one of the factors that creates the need to shift the workload and expectations.

Submitted by Rev. Victoria Rebeck, director communications, Northern Illinois Conference

400.14 Conference Commission on Religion and Race (CCORR)

Nadia Kanhai and Lennox Iton

The results of the Race and Ethnicity Audit of the Northern Illinois Conference (NIC) commissioned by the Conference Commission on Religion and Race (CCORR) in 2022 have not yet been discussed at the cabinet level, so we await a strategy for the implementation of actions to address several worrying concerns that the audit revealed. This is the most pressing concern for CCORR at this time.

CCORR has continued to support the work of the NIC Anti-Racism Task Force (ARTF). 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. The Curriculum Committee continues to conduct Becoming the Beloved Community Workshops at local churches led by Dr. Richard Guzman. An alternative format for the workshop is now also offered as an option.

CCORR members are also involved in the Advocacy Partners Group led by Lisa Rogers. This group's first major activity was the Keep the Dream Alive event, a service and public demonstration celebrating the 60th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington that featured Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I have a Dream" speech. CCORR members served on the planning committee that was chaired by Susan Wakefield Dal Porto. The service was held at First UMC, Chicago, on August 27th, and was followed by a "Stand Up for Justice!" rally and march at Daley Plaza.

CCORR members were instrumental as members of the team, led by Rev. Dr. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer (NIC Director of Connectional Ministries), that planned the 2024 Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration Event. The event, which consisted of a service and reception held at St. Mark UMC, Chicago, had to be postponed from its originally scheduled date (January 14th) because of bad weather, and took place instead on March 3rd. Rev. Dr. Iva E. Carruthers, General Secretary of the Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, was the featured speaker.

NICCRR leaders served on the planning committee for the North Central Jurisdiction CORR annual meeting in October 2023. The meeting was held as a virtual workshop in conjunction with the annual meeting of Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR). Elaine Moy (Senior Director – Finance and Institutional Equity, General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR)), reported on racial analyses of local churches and annual conferences in the NCJ that she was conducting. The Mission Council had reserved \$5,000 to support racial audits in the Annual Conferences. Nadia Kanhai will be an NIC delegate to the Jurisdictional Conference in 2024. The meeting was also addressed by Rev. Dr. Giovanni Arroyo (General Secretary of the General Commission on Religion and Race) who reviewed some of the resources made available by GCORR, including planned mental health resources for pastors in Cross Cultural/Cross Racial (CC/CR) appointments. GCORR organized the Facing the Future Conference in November that focused on the issue of CC/CR appointments.

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 continue the support of the activities of the NIC ARTF. CCORR also plans to reinvigorate its support for clergy and congregations in Cross-Racial Cross-Cultural appointments.

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

400.15 Office of Connectional Ministries Historical Report

Fabiola Grandon-Mayer

The vision of our 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.”

The Office of Connectional Ministries is responsible for stewarding the vision of the Annual Conference, and based on ¶ 608 of the Book of Discipline, the office has six responsibilities:

1. envisioning the ministries necessary to live out the mission of the church in & through the annual conference.
2. creating and nurturing relationships and connections among the local, district, annual conference, and general Church ministries.
3. providing encouragement, coordination, and support for the ministries of nurture, outreach, and witness in districts and congregations for the transformation of the world.
4. ensuring the alignment of the total resources of the annual conference to its mission.
5. developing and strengthening ethnic ministries, including ethnic local churches and concerns.
6. providing advocacy and monitoring functions to ensure that the church is consistent with its stated values.

In July 2024, I began my appointment as a full-time Director of Connectional Ministries. This role was combined with the Assistant to the Bishop for seven years under the leadership of Rev. Arlene Christopherson, who worked hard to connect the work of the Annual Conference and launch a new structure through the ACST (Annual Conference Shepherding Team).

As I write this report, it has been nine months since I started this full-time position. It has been an intense learning process and time to connect and get to know the work of the different boards, teams, and committees.

Last fall, I coordinated the Hispanic/Latinx Pastors to attend the National Gathering “Entre Nos” in Phoenix, AZ, organized by the National Plan for Hispanic Latino Ministries, which allowed our Pastors to bond, have fellowship, and reflect on the state of our Hispanic communities. I was also able to coordinate, in partnership with the Board of Ordained Ministry, a group of 15 cross-cultural/cross-racial clergy nominated by their District Superintendents to attend the event “Facing the Future” in Atlanta, GA, organized by the General Commission on Religion and Race to listen and voice the concern of the cross-cultural/cross-racial clergy in our connection.

Our conference was represented at the Global Ministries Consultation in November by our Bishop Schwerin, Rev. Shirley Pulgar Hughes (Global Ministries Secretary), Collin Monk (Disaster Response Coordinator), and me as DCM. This consultation was a time for Global Ministries to hear the different voices and ideas of how we can move forward in our mission together in this current reality.

I have supported the work of various events in our conference, including Martin Luther King’s Worship Celebration, Laity Convocation, Hispanic/Latinx Clergy Retreat, events planned by our Discipleship Task Force and Anti-Racism Task Force, among others.

One of the big tasks under the office of the Connectional Ministry is staffing the annual conference committee, including site research, budget oversight, and all aspects of implementation. It has been a

great learning experience to work with the Annual Conference committee and see the commitment of members who know the work and do their best to organize a good annual conference.

I am thankful to the Program and Communication team, who work hard to coordinate and communicate everything going on at our conference, including setting up registration links, flyers, reminders, district newsletters, conference E-news, etc.

As I conclude my first report as Director of Connectional Ministries, I thank God for the opportunity to serve him and get to know committed people across our conference who serve God with passion and love. We are a rich conference in diversity, gifts, and talents, and I pray that we can continue to grow in trust and commitment to do our best to live out the mission we have been given.

In Christ love,

Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer
Director of Connectional Ministries

400.16 NIC Council on Finance and Administration (CCFA) Historical Report

Tammy Scott

The past year has seen many changes in the NIC that have directly related to the work of CCFA. In September 2023, we learned that Lonnie Chafin, NIC Treasurer/DAS for 24 years, had accepted a new position with the NYAC. This meant that much of the work done by the T/DAS fell to Conference Staff including Rev. Arlene Christopherson, Assistant to the Bishop, David Quinn, Office Manager, Nicole Minter, Accounts Payable, and Lameise Turner, Benefits Administrator. Others who stepped in to fill gaps with the T/DAS vacancy were Rev. Tammy Scott, CCFA Chair, and Rev. Pamela Pirtle, Chair of Personnel.

We began the work of hiring a new T/DAS in October 2023. We contracted with GCFA to provide support throughout the process of posting the job, screening and interviewing candidates, and negotiating a contract with our chosen candidate. The process took several months, but an offer was given and accepted in late March 2024. Elaine Moy began serving as T/DAS of NIC on April 15, 2024. We are excited for the wealth of knowledge and experience that Elaine brings from several decades at General Church Agencies.

Our Conference ended 2023 having received \$4,366,937 in Annual Conference apportionments from Northern Illinois Churches and an additional \$612,450 from local churches for General Church apportionments. This represents a relatively flat income base compared with 2022 when we received \$4,305,601 in Annual Conference apportionments and \$579,593 for General Church apportionments. In 2023, 195 churches paid 100% of their apportionments compared to 173 in 2022. Because of generous and faithful giving in our local churches in 2023, the Northern Illinois Conference was able to pay \$1,034,680 toward our General Church apportionments and fully fund the conference budget. This payment represents about 63% of our General Church apportionment share. NIC's 2025 General Church apportionment share is \$1,395,514. This means that we are in a good position to be able to pay all General Church funds in full in 2025.

CCFA and conference staff have continued to work hard on the Repair the Harm Campaign which is our plan for funding the NIC obligation to the BSA Survivor Fund. In April 2024, we sent in the full payment of \$742,429, which is our portion of the \$30M. In order to do so, we used \$98,321 that had already been collected/pledged by individuals/local churches, \$100k from the Closed Church Fund authorized by The Cabinet, and borrowed the remaining \$544,108 from the Closed Church Fund, which will be paid back as additional gifts/pledges come in from individuals/local churches. If you/your church has not yet made a contribution, we are asking you

to prayerfully consider a contribution to help us cover 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

400.17 The Discipleship Task Force

Karen Bonnell and Caleb Hong

The current members of the Discipleship Task Force are Rev. Seamus Enright, Ellen Feliciano, Katherine Howell, Rev. G Morris K Jarkloh, Jr., Rev. Heewon Kim, and Rev. Sharon Rice. The Project Manager is Amania Drane.

The Discipleship Task Force continues to prioritize “making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” If local churches are interested in learning about and/or developing Intentional Discipleship Systems, they are encouraged to contact Project Manager, Amania Drane, for further information.

Discipling Anti-racist Youth (DAY) is a collaboration between the Anti-racism and Discipleship Task Forces to support youth leaders. Several events including a Becoming the Beloved Community workshop on April 13 and May 18 were held to learn about and share best practices to engage youth about anti-racism were held. This team is led by Rev. Matthew Krings of Chicago: Berry UMC who is on the Anti-racism Task Force and Rev. Sharon Rice of Naperville: Community UMC who is on the Discipleship Task Force.

Katherine Howell is leading a team to develop a support group focused on nurturing mind, body, and spiritual practices and available resources. The name of this ministry opportunity is Disciple Nurturing Action or DNA.

The 2023 NIC Book Club was led by Rev. G Morris K Jarkloh, Jr. *Living Our Beliefs, the United Methodist Way* by retired Bishop Kenneth Carder was the book that was read. There were at least 6 study groups reading this book.

A Leading Change Cohort for clergy began in the fall of 2023. This cohort is focused on differentiated leadership Clergy seeking to learn, grow, and be in community together began in October 2023. The cohort incorporates videos, readings, and discussion groups. The planning team includes Rev. Seamus Enright, Ellen Feliciano, and Amania Drane, with Rev. Libby Rutherford and Rev. Marcus Tabb as group co-facilitators.

400.18 General Board of Higher Education Ministry Historical Report

Greg Bergquist

The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) embraces the ministry of learning and leadership formation in the Wesleyan and United Methodist tradition, stewarding the intellectual life and educational mission of the UMC. Our mission is to bring people together to discern, learn, and lead for the Church and the Academy, creating a world where everyone is living fully into God's call on their lives.

GBHEM programs - like Course of Study, Exploration, Journey Towards Ordained Ministry (JTOM) and Passage UMC - support the development of transformative leadership in The United Methodist Church. We remain committed to building and sustaining collaborative cross conference networks that foster collegiality and guide credentialing for licensed and ordained ministry.

Alleviating student debt through financial support remains a priority for GBHEM. The GBHEM Office of Scholarships awarded over \$3.9 million in scholarships to 2,100 students in 2023. Scholarships were awarded to students all over the world including 54 annual conferences and two central conferences. In addition, GBHEM stewarded the distribution of roughly \$20,000,000 in grants and scholarships to United Methodist ministries.

Because of your generous support, each year approximately \$10 million is apportioned for the 11 historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) related to the church through The Black College Fund. The funds are utilized for enhancing capital improvements, providing scholarships to students in need, and providing resources for faculty, staff, and students.

GBHEM also supports the next generation of critical thinkers and leaders through the University Senate peer-review and evaluation process for church-related educational institutions. The UMC is related to 107 educational institutions across North America, the largest cohort of protestant educational institutions in the USA. Similarly, 52 educational institutions representing 25 countries formed the Africa Senate for Methodist Education (ASME) this past year providing culturally appropriate standards for the evaluation of Methodist education throughout the African continent.

Among its various activities, GBHEM is also responsible for two initiatives approved by General Conference: The Methodist Global Education Fund for Leadership Development (MGEFLD), which includes the Grants and Scholarships Program (GRASP); and the Central Conference Theological Education Fund (CCTEF). The CCTEF advances theological education in all central conferences by strengthening theological institutions, creating networks among these schools, and increasing access to theological education.

Since 2008, GBHEM has established 11 regional Leadership, Education and Development Hubs (LEAD Hubs) around the world. Each LEAD Hub is a part of the agency's strategic plan to connect with The United Methodist Church worldwide through collaboration with Pan-Methodist and Ecumenical leaders in Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, and Eurasia, Latin American and the Caribbean, and North America.

For the past two years, GBHEM and the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) have been moving toward greater collaboration and strategic alignment, attending each other's consultations, and bringing together program ministry staff in the areas of scholarships, granting, regional work, shared services, theological reflection, and leadership formation and training. Last October, the board of directors announced that my colleague and friend, Roland Fernandes, would become general secretary of both agencies when I retire in June of 2024.

We celebrate our partnership with your Annual Conference and thank you for nurturing and supporting United Methodist lay and clergy leaders throughout the UMC world-wide connection.

Respectfully Submitted: Rev. Greg Bergquist, General Secretary (GBHEM)

400.19 Global Ministries 2023 Historical Report

Shirley Pulgar Hughes, Larry Dunlap-Berg, and Kris Aves

- In 2023, the eNews highlighted monthly a different mission link, allowing churches around the conference to familiarize themselves with the work we support around the conference and the world. *As a reminder, churches must give at a 100% apportionment level. The Mission Links online booklet breaks out the different areas of giving necessary to be recognized as a Mission Links Church. Those churches are recognized at the annual Global Ministries Mission luncheon during Annual Conference.
- The Annual Conference "Fill the Truck Mission Challenge" focused on Midwest Mission's collecting items for personal dignity kits.

- The Bishop's Appeal focused on migrant needs. \$36,371.89 was raised at Annual Conference. The funds went to Justice for Our Neighbors, World Relief, Refugee One, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), and local NIC Churches which provide for immediate needs like hygiene kits, temporary shelter, and food.
- In September, we called the local churches to support the people of Morocco affected by a 6.8-magnitude earthquake and those devastated by severe flooding in Libya.
- In August, we called churches to support the Gulf Coast after hit by hurricane Idalia.
- In October, Bishops of the Congo Central Conference received sport utility vehicles, thanks to financial support from UMs around the world, including the NIC, through the UM Board of Global Ministries.
- We were happy to host Cristian Schlick, a UM missionary who serves migrants from Central America and Mexico, who itinerated from October 24th-November 1st.
- Each year, the church with the highest per-capita contributions receives the John Wesley Award, which this year, 2024, goes to Triumph United Methodist Church. The church with the highest total amount of financial support receives the Phillip Otterbein Award, which, this year goes to the United Methodist Church of Rockford Christ.
- Mission journey training was conducted for groups going on UMVIM trips. Training is available to schedule at your group's convenience. Training shouldn't be limited to those groups just going to UMVIM approved sites. It is important for any group going on a mission journey. Contact: Kris Aves at aveskris0@gmail.com to schedule a time. Also, please refer to the NCJ UMVIM website to find places to travel, forms, and other related items. Don't forget to register your trip on the NCJ UMVIM site as well. *The information for scholarship funds is available on the NIC website.
- We would be remiss if we didn't thank Lisa Smith for her help in developing and publishing marketing and information material for us!

400.20 Hispanic/Latinx Ministry Historical Report

Noemi Meza and Lino Aragon

The 2023-2024 appointment year has been a time to revive our conference's Hispanic/Latinx Ministry under new leadership. Rev. Patricia Bonilla was the Hispanic/Latinx Ministry Chair for four years. Rev. Noemi Meza and Rev. Lino Aragon are Co-Chair now.

It has been a tradition to celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month. Last fall, we held a big celebration at Franklin Park UMC on October 5, 2023. Around 100 people gathered to worship the Lord and celebrate our heritage, and Bishop Dan Schwerin was the guest preacher. For the Leadership Training afterward, Rev. Lydia Munoz, Executive Director of the National Plan for the Hispanic Latinx Ministries, was the main speaker.

With the help and support of the Director of Connectional Ministries, a delegation of 15 Hispanic/Latinx Clergy, of our Conference, attended the National Hispanic Clergy Gathering "Entre Nos" ("Among Us") last October (the larger delegation). Hispanic Clergy from the whole country gathered to have fellowship and reflect on the effect of the pandemic and disaffiliation in our Hispanic/Latinx communities. It was a wonderful time of camaraderie and appreciation of the connexionalism in our denomination. Last spring, we organized a Hispanic/Latinx Clergy Retreat in Racine, WI, with the theme "Mental Health in the Pastoral Ministry." Bishop Dan Schwerin and GETS President Javier Viera were with us the first night and presided over communion. The main speaker was Rev. Dr. Irving Cotto, who provided several tools to deal with the daily challenges in the pastoral ministry.

Despite current challenges, the Hispanic/Latinx churches and pastors continue to be faithful, serving the Lord with all our hearts, souls, strengths, and minds. While we lament the departure of some Hispanic pastors from our denomination for various reasons, we remain hopeful for the emergence of new pastors whom God is preparing to continue His work in His Kingdom.

To God be the Glory!!

Rev. Noemi Meza, Co-Chair & Rev. Lino Aragón, Co-Chair

400.21 Midwest Methodist Foundation Historical Report

Chris Walters

Organized in 1949, the Foundation 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 14 individuals:

- Lisa Butler, Morgan Park UMC, Chicago
- Ergeline Calimlim, First UMC of Chicago Temple
- Rev. Avani Christian, New Hope UMC, West Chicago & Hope UMC, Naperville
- Brad Colby, First UMC of La Grange, La Grange
- Rev. Kimberly Lewis-Davis, Chaplain
- Sach Diwan, Holy Covenant UMC, Chicago
- Gill George, Barrington UMC, Barrington
- George Groves, Community UMC, Naperville
- Denny Hackett, First UMC of Morris, Morris
- 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, Marta Rodriguez
- Secretary, Lisa Butler
- 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.

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, 2024):

As of 3/31/2024	1 st Qtr 2024	Last 1 Year [†]	Last 3 Years [†]	Last 5 Years [†]	Last 10 Years [†]
Aggressive Fund	5.84%	18.32%	6.48%	10.69%	8.36%
Agg. Climate benchmark*	6.95%	19.90%	5.94%	n/a	n/a
	7.16%	20.66%	6.44%	10.49%	8.43%
Moderate Fund	4.27%	13.96%	4.31%	7.88%	6.28%
Mod. Climate benchmark*	5.10%	15.59%	4.35%	7.02%	n/a
	5.00%	15.41%	4.43%	7.87%	6.67%
Conservative Fund	2.32%	9.24%	2.02%	4.73%	4.09%
Con. Climate benchmark*	2.73%	9.59%	2.00%	n/a	n/a
	2.76%	9.87%	2.17%	4.87%	4.65%

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

As of March 31, 2024, the Foundation had approximately \$97.4 million under management through nearly 700 accounts, owned by 123 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 grant \$1000 into \$4000.

The Foundation annually sponsors a field education cohort of five Garrett-Evangelical students to receive \$4500 each. Field education is a critical component of the students’ seminary degree requirements. These field education students seek placement beyond the traditional church setting.

The Foundation is in its third year of granting the Uplifting Young Methodists Scholarship to assist minority United Methodist students to attend a trade school, community college, college, or university, granting three \$2500 scholarships to undergraduates in the fall and \$3500 to one Carolyn J. Cook Scholar.

In February 2023, the Foundation hosted an in-person Clergy Tax Seminar at First UMC of DeKalb. The Foundation is currently sponsoring five NIC clergy and their local churches in a three-year intensive “Cultivating a Culture of Renewal” journey with leaders across the country.

The Foundation and Horizons Stewardship partner to provide on-demand generosity coaching to Northern Illinois Methodist churches at no cost and no obligation to churches through the Generosity Hotline. In November 2022, the Foundation office moved to 155 North Wacker Drive, Suite 4250, Chicago, IL 60606.

Sincerely,
Rev. Chris Walters President & CEO

400.22 Historical Report for NetZero

Harriette Cross

In 2021 the Council of Bishops and the eleven general agencies of the UMC pledged to achieve net zero gas emissions by 2050 as gas emissions are dangerously warming the planet. In 2022, the Northern Illinois Conference (NIC) hosted an Earth Summit to discuss what this meant for the Conference. Following the Summit, the Bishop called for a Net Zero Task Force that met on January 20 of 2023 with 26 people spread across all the 5 Districts. Bishop Scherwin attended this initial meeting and opened with a statement: "As a church, we are called to take care of creation. The United Methodist Church and now our own Net Zero Team, offer us countless ways to practice stewardship that increases care of the planet. The NIC Net Zero Team will open conversations and help put new ways of stewarding the earth into action".

What has happened over the last year?

The task force met February 8th, 2024 to review what Net Zero has accomplished and set goals for 2024. In 2023, The Net Zero joined the Conference Global Ministries and have a budget. At the 2023 Annual Conference, we hosted a table and presented a Net Zero video. We have published 4 articles in the Reporter that have focused on what is Net Zero; How Have Churches Dramatically Reduced Energy and Budget; How Does Community Solar Work and How Measure energy Usage. The Task Force spoke to District Superintendents about Net Zero and identified congregations that could consider solar. Congregation discussions have led to 20 solar proposals written.

The committee started out having quarterly in person meeting at Wespath. During those meetings, we had work areas of communication, education, working with the conference and executing specific actions. The coordinators of those teams meet via zoom monthly. We have decided to have monthly zoom meetings in order to include people who are working and cannot make day meetings. We have a core of dedicated members who are working, but we would want to have participation from every district and element of the conference. So we are working to have meetings at times that can accommodate the needs of the most people. Currently we having monthly meetings on zoom.

Piloted the new Loving People and Planet in God's Name (LPPGN) course, both online at BeADialogue and in person at Prairie Central Lay Academy. Updated the design of the econetnic website to include more success stories. Also created and posted a two-session "Intro to Net Zero" curriculum for small groups. Net Zero presented at District Building and Location Committees; Tabled at Bishop Laity Gathering and held District Net Zero Lay Leadership workshops. We will be presenting legislation to insure that every church has a green advocate.

Net Zero has built partnerships with 3 organizations to help congregations analyze and reduce energy usage:

- Unity Solar Group: Works with Illinois Solar for All to make solar affordable and accessible. Vira Dubkova vira.d@unitysolargroup.com
- Faith in Place: Faith in Place is an environmental non-profit that works with communities of faith on energy audits and referrals: RaymontRay@faithinplace.org
- ComEd: ComEd will provide free Energy Assessments that will identify energysaving opportunities and available instant incentives. Catherine Allen: catherine.allen@comed.com

2024 goals: Continue strong Annual Conference presences; 10 congregations with solar; 20 congregation with Community Solar; Develop Net Zero events in all 5 Districts; make Net Zero Task Force available to more people by having night zoom meetings during the week; Focus on District meetings with Net Zero workshops; Have Advocates Network up and running. Expand and promote LPPGN

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.

Submitted by Rev. Harriette Cross, NetZero Committee Chairperson

400.23 NIC Chapter of Professional Administrators of the United Methodist Connectional Structure (PAUMCS)

Debbie Rogers

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 17 National PAUMCS members from the NIC PAUMCS, ten of whom have completed the Certification program, three of whom have completed the Advanced Certification program, and two who serve in the National PAUMCS leadership. The 41st National PAUMCS Conference “Bind Us Together” took place in person in Memphis from April 4-6, 2024 during which they learned about church history/recording keeping, StrengthsFind, MIL/Civil Right and the Black College Fund.

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 is no chapter dues; programs are provided through event registration fees and donations.

The NIC PAUMCS meets regularly together 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.”

HISTORICAL REPORTS

Chat topics covered during this Annual Conference year were "Annual Conference Highlights & Opening to a New Awareness," "Getting Ready for Church Conferences," "The 5W's and H of Safe Sanctuaries," "Making our Life Easier during Advent," "A Meeting of the Minds: Mentoring a New Church Employee/Volunteer," "Statistical Reporting 2024," "Branding & Communication for Local Churches," and "Bind Us Together in Memphis."

In addition to the monthly Chats, the NIC PAUMCS Chapter met in-person for the morning workshop "Worship Through Brushstrokes: How Art Heals." The gatherings took place in 3 locations at the same time, and were led by Diane McGarel, an artist and member of the NIC PAUMCS Steering Team.

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)

400.24 Historical Report for Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors (NIJFON)

Claudia Marchan

Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors mission is to provide free high-quality immigration legal services to low-income immigrants throughout Northern Illinois. Each year we provide free legal services to hundreds in immigrant communities with a focus on Rockford, Aurora, Crystal Lake, Buffalo Grove, and Chicago areas where there are little to no immigration legal services and resources available. Most clients are under 150% of the federal poverty level and at risk of fraud. The majority of funding is dedicated to legal services with a focus on escape from violence and humanitarian cases like asylum, U-Visa, VAWA, TPS, as well as family reunification and removal defense. With the focus of continuing to provide the highest quality of service, NIJFON works with existing clients to renew and file applications as they are on their path to legal relief and a successful close of their cases.

In 2023, NIJFON opened 30 cases, closed 31 cases, served close to 300 cases in the year, and ended the year with 268 active cases. We continue to find ways to bring immigrant communities together with volunteers and local clinic coordinators and board members. Our volunteers came out to support our immigrant family support program with partner ICIRR and helped us provide over 2,500 immigrant families with over \$2 million in emergency funding to immigrant families that were excluded from the government stimulus package simply for not having a social security number. Clinic coordinators and volunteers took the time to get trained and have been processing applications for immigrant families in Rockford, Aurora, Chicago and in Bridgeview serving immigrant families in need.

Furthermore, NIJFON and local churches have extended our support to recent arriving immigrant families over the last 2 years. Many have volunteered at shelters, hotels, bus stations and have had the opportunity to gather from a community of those seeking to help. This has been an amazing effort, and we are thankful to have a beautiful partnership with the United Methodist churches and pastors.

Our work consists of legal referrals, understanding of the asylum system as well as Know Your Rights workshops for recent arrivals as well as providing basic needs, housing, and emergency needs. In September of 2023, NIJFON and Brooke Rd. United Methodist Church in Rockford opened the Rockford Welcoming Center. Since then, local Rockford staff have served Latino immigrant and Swahili immigrant communities, serving over 150 individuals to date with various immigration resources including Know Your Rights workshops, legal referrals and accompaniments.

Together with our partners and volunteers we are committed and re-committed to our vision of a world where immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees are welcomed supported and live without fear.

400.25 Outdoor & Retreat Ministries Historical Report of 2023 for 2024 Annual Conference

Jeff Casey

Like our local congregations, Outdoor & Retreat Ministries are steadily returning to a pre-COVID normal.

All five year-round staff were actually paid-in-full for their services in 2023, AND we added a second, full-time maintenance role at Reynoldswood.

Reynoldswood continued to host the extremely popular J.O.Y. Camp, and the non-denominational Cedarbrook Boys and Girls Camps. St Paul Chong's annual weekend youth retreat and the Rockford Stake Boys Camp rounded-out the Reynoldswood Summer.

In April of 2023, the beautiful old oak tree in front of Manor House fell into the left/east wing of Manor—preventing us from marketing it in 2023. Staff continue to work with the insurance company to bring it back online in time for the summer 2024 season.

Reynoldswood expanded its Summer Day Camp partnership with the Dixon YMCA to more than 100 children per day for the full summer.

Wesley Woods was able to return to pre-COVID summer bookings in 2023, and hope to fill-in the off-season weekends in 2024.

Both camps stabilized their summer staffing with local talent, and look forward to the majority of 2023 staff returning for summer 2024.

Nationally Certified

Both sites passed their quinary American Camp Association Certification inspections (national professional standards for facilities, food, health, and safety [risk management]).

While our mission is to transform and nurture guests and neighbors into principled and passionate Christian Disciples, we also recognize our fiduciary responsibility to our local congregations who comprise the Annual Conference. With that in mind we manage the resources entrusted to us to achieve sustainable growth of about \$100,000 per annum. In 2023 we brought in \$500,000 cash, and \$50,000 in work party repairs to help offset the Trustees' maintenance obligations at both sites.

Looking Ahead

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 is building a relationship with a small, family-operated Tree Harvesting company to generate intentional revenue streams while maintaining sustainable forestry practices, and removing unsafe trees.

Wesley Woods obtained permission to further grow it's slip rentals from 18 to 22 slips, while retaining 4 buoys. We made very little progress on last year's reported Cabin Adopter program, but did finally obtain acceptable parameters from the Village of Williams Bay so that we can pursue architectural concept plans in 2024.

THANK YOU ALL for your continued support of the NIC Outdoor & Retreat Ministries through Reynoldswood and Wesley Woods.

400.26 Program Ministries Historical Report

Fabiola Grandon-Mayer

Program ministries were restructured in 2021 and are divided into three primary areas: Vital Congregations Ministries, Discipleship Ministries, and Justice and Mercy Ministries. There are approximately 50 boards, committees, and caucuses that are under these three areas, and are represented at the Annual Conference Shepherdling Team by a person who brings their interests and concerns to the Table. The three area representatives since 2022 have been Rev. Megan Smick (Vital Congregations), Rev. Britt Cox (Justice and Mercy), and James Barry (Discipleship). James Barry stepped down because of health issues and the nomination committee is working to fill out this slot.

The work of the three areas and the program budget continues to support the three strategic goals as approved in the 2019 Annual Conference session:

- To grow and reach new disciples of Jesus Christ.
- To live out the conviction that racism is incompatible with Christian teaching.
- To increase the number of highly vital congregations.

Three Task Forces were created to support the three strategic goals. The Vital Congregation Task Force reported in 2023 that they became part of the Northern Illinois Conference Church Development and Redevelopment (CODERED) Team to continue helping congregations become more vital in their ministries. The Discipleship Task Force and Anti-Racism Task Force have continued to work hard to create and plan different programs and events for the conference. The Program Manager, Amania Drain, has worked hand in hand with these two task forces and has been crucial in the success of the programs developed. There are current conversations among the two task forces to transition into conference permanent committees.

I want to highlight the work of the Older Adult Ministries Council, which is in the process of revitalizing its work and strengthening its connection with our affiliate health organizations.

The Conference Board of Higher Education and Ministry continues its dedicated and intentional work connecting and strategizing with the five campus ministries.

The Conference Commission on Unity and Interreligious Relations has reactivated its work and was able to coordinate a dialogue with the Council of Islamic Organization of Greater Chicago, as well as, to have a great representation at the Annual Ramadan Muslim-Methodist Interfaith Dinner last March with our Bishop Dan Schwerin as one of the speakers.

The Outdoor and Retreat Ministries continue working hard to improve their facilities so that they can host diverse groups and programs from the conference and beyond.

The Board of Laity organized a successful Laity Convocation in February under the theme “Growing together in Love: Learning to have courageous conversations.” Laity from all over the conference gathered to be trained and to participate in fellowship. It was a very wellattended and very well-organized event.

Lay Servant Ministries continues to be a strong lay leadership development program that equips and empowers lay people to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ and serve in their context. The five districts offer Lay Servant Academies and continue to be creative in offering opportunities in person, online, and hybrid.

Ethnic ministries and caucuses continue to be important spaces for advocacy and opportunities for leadership development. We have strong ethnic and multiethnic/multiracial leaders who serve in our conference and are recognized leaders across the denomination.

None of this work would have been possible without the committed and faithful work of many volunteers, lay and clergy, who invest their gifts and talents to live out our vision of “making and supporting vital Christians in vital congregations that engage with their communities and the world for peace, justice and mercy.”

It is an honor to work directly with each of these program ministries.

In Christ service,

Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer, Director of Connectional Ministries

400.27 Shared Bishop Task Force

Arlene Christopherson and MyronMcCoy

The North Central Jurisdiction at a Special Called Session on January 23, 2024 took action to establish a new Episcopal Area effective September 1, 2024 combining the current Chicago and Wisconsin episcopal areas. At the same session, combining the Ohio East and Ohio West areas was also approved. September 1 is the date that new episcopal area assignments for the 2024 – 2028 quadrennium go into effect. The number of bishops that each jurisdiction may elect and assign is calculated by formula specified in The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church. Effective with the new assignments, the North Central Jurisdiction will be reducing the number of active bishops from nine to seven, hence the combination of four existing episcopal areas into two.

Bishops Jung and Schwerin named task forces of clergy and laity from the Wisconsin and Northern Illinois conferences respectively to work out details on how one bishop will now provide supervision of two separate annual conferences. Staff from each conference were designated to support the work of the task forces. Chairing the Northern Illinois team is Rev. Dr. Myron McCoy, Senior Pastor of First United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple. Rev. Steve Zekoff, retired Wisconsin Conference Elder, chairs the Wisconsin Team. Myron and Steve co-chair the joint team.

Extended cabinets from both conferences gathered in Racine in early fall 2023 to begin discussions. Subsequently, the joint task force met and built on those discussions, gathering in Rockford, Kenosha and by Zoom. Several key decisions have emerged from the work of the joint task force.

- The recommendation is for the area to be known as the Northern Illinois – Wisconsin Episcopal Area. The North Central Jurisdiction will formally act on the recommendation at its July, 2024 session.
- The Area Office will be located at Wespeth, the United Methodist denominational pension, benefits and investment agency in Glenview, Illinois. Operating expenses for the office will be covered by the denominational Episcopal Fund grant to the Area. This separate location will establish a distinct identity separate from either of the two continuing conference offices.
- Each annual conference will maintain funding for an Assistant to the Bishop, based in the respective conference offices in Chicago and Sun Prairie.
- Two Executive Assistants will be continued, with one located in the Chicago office and the other in Sun Prairie.
- The Wisconsin Conference Director of Communications will take the lead on establishing an internet presence for the new Northern Illinois – Wisconsin Area, distinct from the continuing individual conference web sites. Information common to the Area and its two conferences will be posted on this site, providing the Episcopal Area a separate identity within the connectional United Methodist structure.
- The bishop assigned to the Northern Illinois – Wisconsin Area will be offered the option of a housing allowance. The current episcopal residences in Chicago and Sun Prairie will be sold, with the funds held by each conference's Board of Trustees to provide their conference's share of the housing allowance. A portion of the housing allowance will be covered by designated funding from the denominational Episcopal Fund.

Additional administrative and shared resource decisions will be made as both conferences live into this partnership relationship. We celebrate what the future will bring to this new Episcopal Area under the leadership of a single bishop. New opportunities to strengthen ministry in both Northern Illinois and Wisconsin lie ahead.

400.28 NIC Trustee Board Historical Report

Nancy Blade

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 directors. This year we added two Trustees and invited the Conference Secretary to our meetings.

The summer challenge of the 23/24 year was revisiting the 2022 lease change with the Chicago Aid Society of Chicago: First, and to say goodbye to our Treasurer/DAS of 25 years. There was much we didn't know about the work the treasurer manages for the Board, but with tenacity to manage both negotiations and discovery we ended 2023 with a deeper appreciation for the connective and collaborative nature of the United Methodist Church.

The 2023 Annual Conference gave us four closed churches (Chicago: Grace Calvary, Sterling: Trinity, Malden, and Chemung). We are working with Conference Archives, Foundry Commercial, and former local church trustees to manage these assets. We continue to manage contract issues from sold churches in Rockford and Lindenhurst. We gave Chicago: Epworth to Church Properties Reimagined, who used the money to redevelop the Albany Park: Little White Church for mission. This mission site is a testimony to what strategic planning can do to save our buildings.

In late May of 2023, we became the trustee for the Naperville Korean UMC buildings and assets. The Bishop, Assistant to the Bishop and Chancellor negotiated with a breakaway segment of the church who claimed the buildings, and by April of 2024 we were able to return this asset to the ministry of Korean United Methodists. Because this congregation is now a new faith community the Trustees will shepherd them through this restart. The court proceedings for the Trust Clause will be finished in the coming months, and a new vision for NKUMC will be realized.

The Conference owned parsonages were managed well by the residents and the assigned trustee liaisons. In June 2023 we purchased a new house in Schaumburg for the new Director of Connectional Ministries bringing our total houses to seven plus one Episcopal Condominium.

With changes to the cabinet, we negotiate housing arrangements for each clergy member. The Lake South and Prairie Central parsonages will be sold. A new Prairie Central parsonage is being purchased in Hoffman Estates. The sale from the Lake South parsonage will be put into an endowment for a future residence in the district. Per recommendation from the Shared Bishop Task Force the Episcopal Condo will be sold and put into an endowment to fund the bishop's housing allowance. In 2023 we managed a big remodel of the Prairie North parsonage and may face similar remodel or selling of the Lake North parsonage. The Prairie South parsonage is receiving new appliances and will be evaluated next year. In March of 2024 the Board met with the Bishop and his Cabinet to discuss concerns about our local churches and how to better support them. Together we updated the Housing Covenant, found in the policy section of the Journal, to include current practices of cell phones, hardwood floors, and privacy. We worked through ideas about the next Conferencewide Trustee Workshop and how we can better present our insurance program.

In closing I offer a few notes of appreciation. The administrative staff, Nicole Minter and David Quinn, have gone above and beyond their job description to manage Conference funds in the absence of a

Treasurer. The Director of Communication, Rev. Victoria Rebeck, patiently brought conflicting opinions to a unified message. Trustee George Wentworth has been tireless in his work on the board for the past 10 years and continues to have the energy to buy and sell houses for us. Rev. Martin Lee through his generosity and can-do spirit gave us a vision for reclaiming buildings. Bishop Dan Schwerin brought new life into the structure of the Conference. Our tireless A-2-B, Rev. Arlene Christopherson, filled in gaps and kept the faith when it all could have fallen apart. I am grateful for these and all our Trustees who intuitively know when to speak and when to hold up.

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, Mr. Mark Dunham, Mr. Grant Bailey.

400.29 United Methodist Men (NIC)

George Groves

The year 2023 had the NICUMM continuing to recover from the 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 Lenten annual meeting, the Rev. Britney Isaac, Lake North District Superintendent, shared her message - Living by Faith and Mark Dehority, North Central Jurisdiction UMM President, discussed the District Summit meetings, a system being developed to re-energize the men's leadership in the districts (and churches). A beta version District Summit was hosted by the Prairie South district in May.

Our Spiritual Congress and our mission efforts continue to be focal points for our men. The topic of Spiritual Congress 2023 was "Relevant Conversations". Our keynote speaker, Major General John L. Borling (USAF ret.) was a highly decorated fighter pilot, POW at the Hanoi Hilton, served 33 years in high-level command and staff positions, is an author and public speaker. Other noted speakers for the weekend included Mark Dehority, NCJUMM JP, Rev Fabiola Grandon-Mayer, Rev Char Hoffmann, Ken Hudgins, Rev Mark Lubbock, Deployed Staff GCUMM, Gene Williams, and Mark Manzi. Dan Holmes provided us with special music Saturday evening. There was an undertone of Small Group ministry as the Mighty Men of Prayer study was started for the entire group, and some men continued with the study after the retreat.

Over the last few years, the GCUMM launched a new brand and website at UnitedMensMinistry.com. These new 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. With the resignation of the General Secretary of the GCUMM in late 2023, these programs have been put on hold. The NICUMM is awaiting outcome of these changes.

District Activities are reaching men for Christ. Some of our 2023 highlights for the conference and common in all districts are:

- o The Conference and District UMM are having in-person meetings, with some ZOOM or lives-treamed meetings.
- o Continued the 2018-2021 plan of work for the NICUMM, with minor changes for 2022 and 2023.
- o Held the 63th Spiritual Congress at Williams Bay Wisconsin in September.
- o Men's Ministry Specialist: NICUMM have four men certified as MMS.
- o EMS/Legacy Builders & Charters, were a major emphasis to invite men to become involved in Men's Ministry, especially past due memberships.
- o Meals for Millions/Society of St. Andrews (SoSA), continues as a major Mission Program and the NIC was recognized again as the 2023 Top Conference for donations to SoSA,.

- o 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, and Big Brothers Big Sisters. 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.
 - o The Conference Scouting Coordinator worked with the conference insurance broker to submit the BSA Youth Protection Training program to the Conference Liability Insurance Carrier, Philadelphia for evaluation. The result is that our Conference and our Churches can consider Adult Members of BSA as Youth Protection Trained and that there should be no need to require additional Safe Sanctuary of Safe Gatherings training.
 - o The Scouting Coordinator met with Bishop Dan Schwerin twice during the year to discuss Scouting in our churches. At the Bishop's request the Scouting Coordinator has formed an Ad hoc Committee to provide resources to those churches and individuals requesting help in discerning the amount that they should pledge to the Conference for the BSA Survivors Fund,
 - o The conference Prayer Advocate is working with the District Presidents to establish district Prayer Advocates in the effort 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 Mighty Men of Prayer small group study is being pursued by men in the conference.
 - o At Spiritual Congress 2023, Herb John, NICUMM Prayer Advocate and past Aurora District President, received the Jean Bush Award for leadership in men's ministry. His family members were present for the awards ceremony.
- Lake North District: President, Open
- o The LN district hosted the NICUMM Annual Meeting on March 25, 2023 at the Kingswood UMC in Buffalo Grove, IL.
 - o The district has 6 Chartered churches and 12 EMS members.
 - o The Lake North District has no district UMM officers.
- Lake South District: President, Jim Simmons
- o Continued a Monday evening District Men's Bible Study.
 - o A District Celebration Dinner Event was held in August to honor three men and one woman, plus 31 years of the Bible Study Program.
 - o Seven District meetings including the Celebration event were held in 2023.
 - o Thirteen churches have active United Methodist Men Chartered Units in the District and across the district 54 Men have active EMS memberships.
 - o A Special Event was held in October that included a Potato Drop sponsored by the New Lenox Men.
 - o The New Lenox Men Gleaning ministry in conjunction with the Westmont Farm and Garden Center distributed 1131 crates of various vegetables and 127 bins of sweet corn (approx. 70,000 ears) to various local food pantries. Additionally they distributed the surplus from the New Lenox Food Pantry to local pantries.
- Prairie Central District: President, Jim Nelson
- o Continued to re-establish an Executive Committee
 - o Many of the men's groups are struggling to get back to normal since the pandemic. They are slowly developing a "new normal".
 - o The district has 15 Chartered churches and 44 EMS members. o Developed Faith ministry through bible studies.
 - o Supported SoSA, through fundraisers and donations, and collected food for a food pantry. Produce from a church garden used to feed the hungry.
 - o 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

- o March 22 The Prairie North District had their Spring Communion and worship service hosted by Grace UMC Approximately 30 attending. The guest Speaker was DS Rev. Fabiola Grandon Mayor. During this session the district Constitution and By-laws were voted on and accepted.
- o March 17 2023, they held the Harmony for Hunger Concert raising \$3,472 for the Society of St Andrew Meals for Millions. They also raised \$13,000 for local food pantries in the Prairie North District.
- o October 28th Prairie North District and Grace UMC hosted a Potato drop. Distributing 40,000# of potatoes in 90 minutes, o November, Grace UMC, hosted the District Fall Communion Service. The guest speaker was the new DS Rev.Dr.Hwa-Young Chong. There were 40 in attendance. The offering raised \$3964.23 for Society of St Andrew Meals for Millions.
- o The Prairie North District will be sending a total of \$7,500 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.
- o The district has 8 Chartered churches and 16 EMS members.

Prairie South District: President, Open

- o The district and Rev Brian Gilbert, DS hosted a beta version of the NCJUMM District Summits on May 13 at Trinity UMC in Yorkville IL. Approx. 20 men, laity and clergy, attended.
- o The district has 8 Chartered churches and 8 EMS members.
- o 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 and 2023, our churches got back to normal, however many of our UMM units lost momentum, leadership and members. For 2023 we worked to reestablish, renew and/or replace our men's ministries with the use of the new Men's Ministry products.

For the NICUMM,
George Groves, Conference UMM President

400.30 United Women in Faith of Northern Illinois Conference

Marilyn Steenwyk

During 2023, we found it necessary to develop a "new normal", post-pandemic. The October 2022 Annual Celebration/Meeting had been held in person [Sycamore UMC] and it served as a launching pad toward re-connecting during all of 2023. While online meetings are convenient in some ways (no travel time or traffic jams), we know that community and "in person" are beneficial in many more ways! In '23, our national organization recognized its 154th birthday on 3/23/23; we here in Northern Illinois celebrated our 50th gathering at the October 2023 Annual Celebration [1974 thru 2023].

U = United Methodist Women, d/b/a United Women in Faith and United Women in Faith Digital.

N = “Nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship, and education...”

I = INNOVATE – January 2023’s innovative schedule for MISSION u allowed participants flexibility as sessions were just 2 hours each and spread across 4 weeks of the month.

T = TELL OUR STORY – develop your own “elevator speech” to invite a new someone to a local or district event.

E = ENERGY - - ENTHUSIASM - - Emails from our national level alert us to email our legislators to “make a difference” by voicing our support for specific legislation (priority issues: climate justice and racial justice.)

D = DEACONESS and HOME MISSIONER Office - in NIC: Joy Hayag, Catherine Inserra, Martha Lundgren, Joann Melad, Gigi Mencias, Christina Meyer & Amy Reimer. “Our Ministries Vary. Our Call to Service Binds Us.”

W = Worldwide outreach via regional missionaries/country teams in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

O = OPEN a door to our organization - ask someone younger to explore UWFaith.org with you!

M = MISSION u in January via Zoom and in July, in person, at Carmelite Spiritual Center, Darien, IL.

E = ENDOWMENT/Legacy Endowment Fund – many ways to give. Gather – as a Unit/local church/cluster – to share legacy stories of the mighty women who have gone before us...we each know someone in our family or in our local church who “led by example” or “worked tirelessly!”

N = NEW-ness all around us: website, national membership option, The Daily Prayer Guide, Mighty Networks platform, and “community conversations”, Soul Care Retreat and new Soul Care Manual, (targeting new members!) and UWFaith Digital.

I = IMPACT via a local community’s needs: contact schools, child-serving entities, nursing homes, hospitals.

N = National Mission Institutions: Cunningham Children’s Home, Urbana, & nearly 90 others featured in our monthly E-news/response magazine/Voices From the Field (online).

F = Faith Talks are monthly conversations with UWFaith staff and other professionals, exploring themes and resources that empower us to put faith, hope, and love into action. Discussions range from ending gun violence in society to caring for the soul in solitude. Stored as podcasts and available to re-listen or share.

A = ALL are welcome! ASK in your community so you learn what is needed for women, children and youth.

I = INSIGHT, our own monthly E-news - - INFLUENCE - - INNOVATE - - INVITE.

T = TEAMWORK – form a task force or short-term team to address a need, complete a project (plan a “Day of Giving” fundraiser?); educate your Unit by sharing the many resources & articles from the national level; join a District leadership team.

H = HOPEFULNESS, via prayer, via Mission Giving (supports places/projects beyond an individual’s reach!), via feedback from those we serve!

Our 2023 District Annual Meetings were all held in person, as was the Annual Celebration at the conference level at Cary UMC. We celebrated our traditions and pledged to rebuild loving communities at each level: local unit/church, cluster, district, conference, jurisdiction, world, and digital. United Women in Faith of NIC continue to re-connect with each other because we comprise an awesome community of women committed to being a blessing where we are and to many around the world we’ll never meet in person!!

May God bless all our efforts as UWFaith in NIC.

Respectfully submitted with THANKS to EVERYONE for the support during my term in office,
Marilyn Steenwyk, President, 2022-2023

400.31 Candler School of Theology—2024 Report

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 Wesleyan value of ecumenical openness, enthusiastically welcoming students from more than 40 denominations, with nearly half of Master of Divinity students coming from the Methodist family, 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 419 from 12 countries and 38 states, and 44% 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 degrees (Master of Divinity, Master of Theological Studies, Master of Religion and Public Life, Master of Religious Leadership, Master of Theology, Doctor of Ministry) and ten dual degrees, most of which are available in hybrid or online formats. Response to our new hybrid-format Master of Divinity, which launched in Fall 2023, has been strong: 65% of 2023's MDiv entering class chose the hybrid model, blending online classes and in-person intensives. Plus, around 20% of MDiv students participate in Candler's Teaching Parish program to earn contextual education credit as they serve as student pastors in local churches. Our proven DMin program—with a near 90% completion rate—is 90% online as well. These flexible options plus Candler's recognized academic excellence and hands-on learning opportunities are opening possibilities for even more people to follow God's call to ministry.

Reducing student debt through generous financial aid is a top priority for Candler. In 2023/2024, we are on track to award \$6.3 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 scholarships, and all MDiv, MTS, MRL, and ThM students receive a scholarship covering at least 50% of tuition. MDiv students also receive financial coaching and complete a financial literacy program to strengthen their budgeting skills and reduce debt. That knowledge will serve them—and the ministries they serve—well into the future.

Candler is growing in exciting directions as it creates avenues to bring high-quality theological education to a wider audience. It is a hub of Christian learning with multiple entry points. Those who aren't seeking an advanced degree can engage in learning through The Candler Foundry, our innovative program to make theological education accessible to the public through short courses, events, and related activities; the United Methodist Course of Study to educate licensed local pastors; the new Candler Center for Christian Leadership to refine business-related skills of United Methodist leaders; and La Mesa Academy, offering diplomas in pastoral leadership via a two-year hybrid program with courses in Spanish, English, and Korean.

One of the biggest news items of the year for Candler is the announcement that after nearly 18 years, Dean Jan Love will step down from Candler's deanship in the summer of 2024. Through Dean Love's transformational leadership, Candler has expanded to offer three new degrees, five new dual degrees, and more online and hybrid options, including the highly successful hybrid MDiv and DMin degrees. She has increased the diversity of Candler's faculty and student body, continued the school's tradition of world-class scholarship in hiring 75% of the current full-time faculty, and grown the number of endowed professorships. Her efforts have enhanced Candler's ability to fulfill its mission in a rapidly changing environment, and she leaves the school in a strong position. The next dean of Candler is expected to be named by early summer.

Candler 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.
—Office of Communications, Candler School of Theology, Emory University

400.32 Drew University Theological School Report

Drew University Theological School Rev. Edwin David Aponte, PhD, ThD (honorary) Dean and Professor of Religion & Culture December 10, 2023

Drew University Theological School educates and mentors pastors, preachers, deacons, activists, teachers, thought leaders, and change agents for ministry and service in the church and society. Drew Theological School is diverse in theology, vocations, age, as well as racial, ethnic, national, and international identities. Many Drew students are just beginning their ministry, while others come to graduate theological education with prior ministry experience. The latter reflects a growing trend among all theological schools in the United States and Canada. Drew holds in-person classes in Madison, New Jersey, several classes meet exclusively online, while other meet in hybrid fashion, i.e., partially online, partially in-person. This is also the case with chapel worship which originates in Seminary Hall, but also is live-streamed so that students around the world participate. Drew Theological School is a global seminary with a global student population serving the worldwide church.

In Fall 2023 Drew Theological School welcomed 104 new students in all degree programs, with total student enrollment (by head count) growing from 364 students in Fall 2021 to 407 in Fall 2023 semester. Enrollment of international students at Drew increased from 120 students in Fall 2021 to 169 students in Fall 2023. This number includes students who are studying full-time in the U.S.A. on a student Visa, students who are studying online from their home country, and students in the South Korean Cohort of the Doctor of Ministry program.

Drew's interdisciplinary degree programs provide real-world apprenticeships, promotes adaptive leadership skills, and encourages innovation through team-taught core courses as well as a variety of electives that integrate theological disciplines and faith practices. The Drew faculty's shared values are infused across all aspects of the teaching and learning: 1) a commitment to anti-racism; 2) gender and sexual-identity equality; 3) eco-sustainability and environmental justice; and 4) interfaith understanding and cooperation. Drew Theological School has an increase in United Methodist students, additionally, Drew has many United Methodist Global Fellows pursuing further education for ministry. UMC graduates are serving in conferences across the United States, and especially within our nearby regional United Methodist conferences of Greater New Jersey, Eastern Pennsylvania, and New York Annual Conference.

400.33 Gammon Theological Seminary - 2024 Report

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. 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, 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, 2023 – 2024, at Gammon, include:

- In May 2023, Gammon held our 1st Annual Student Scholarship Fundraiser Golf Tournament, receiving \$70,000 in donations to assist students with their tuition, which also helped Gammon build more relationships and partnerships.
- In June 2023, The Rev. Walter H. McKelvey Endowed Scholarship Fund was launched by Dr. Loretta F. McKelvey (wife of the late Rev. McKelvey) and Dr. Walter Kimbrough with a \$50,000.00 matching gift in partnership with the South Carolina United Methodist Foundation.
- In June 2023, The Florida Conference raised and donated over \$ 60,000.00 to the Rev. Geraldine McClellan Endowed Scholarship Fund, which is now fully endowed by the Florida United Methodist Foundation.
- In July 2023 and December 2023, Gammon hosted the Ebony Exploration Event for 75 young adults under 35, increasing participation and forming strategic partnerships with external organizations to enhance the program's reach and impact.
- In December 2023, we celebrated our 140th Founders Day Event/Pastors and Leaders Conference, with over two hundred persons attending workshops (in person and virtual) and our Scholarship Gala Dinner, hosted at IMPACT Church in Atlanta, GA.

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

400.34 Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary Report - 2023-2024

For 170 years Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary has been in service to the Church and the Wesleyan/Methodist connection through the formation of Christian leaders in ordained and lay ministries. As the result of a new strategic planning process that seeks to position the seminary more fully and purposefully in service to the global church, Garrett adopted a new mission and vision that will focus our work to this end: Forming courageous leaders in the way of Jesus to cultivate communities of justice, compassion, and hope...for the thriving of the Church and the healing of the world.

During this past academic year, Garrett also welcomed its largest entering class in over a decade, with 124 new students, and a current enrollment of 314 students representing 37 states and 21 nations from across the globe. We have experienced particular growth in students from the African continent and the Indian subcontinent, adding to an already richly diverse student body. While our denominational diversity also continues to grow, we also proudly welcomed growth in our United Methodist students who constitute more than 50% of our student body.

Of particular importance in the past year has been the partnership we have entered into with Phillips School of Theology of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME). Phillips students are now also fully Garrett students and together we are preparing the next generation of CME leaders in a robust pan-Methodist/Wesleyan context alongside UMC, AME, and AMEZ students. Phillips President, Dr. Paul Brown, is now also affiliated with our faculty, teaching CME History, Doctrine, and Polity, as well as spiritual formation and organizational leadership courses. It is our hope and intention to continue to grow this partnership and foster a truly panMethodist/Wesleyan ethos which includes our growing global Methodist partners in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. Additionally, last year, all Garrett degree programs were made truly hybrid so that students can study with us and earn their degrees either on our Evanston campus or in virtual learning spaces around the globe. This has added an amazing breadth of experience and contexts to our classrooms, where we seek to address real-world challenges with gospel inspired solutions or responses.

Garrett's world-class faculty continue developing curricular innovations that are responsive to the church's growing needs, while also contributing a significant body of scholarly work to their respective fields. Our faculty are also at work developing The Garrett Collective, an online platform of theological learning and resources for churches and partner organizations inspired by our faculty's research and/or strategic partnerships. Finally, at this critical juncture in the history of United Methodism, faculty leaders are providing essential guidance to UMC students, while also continuing to envision with hope the next expression of Methodism that is responsive to the Spirit's call for such a time as this.

400.35 Saint Paul School of Theology Report

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 remote spaces. Our contextual curriculum features Ministry Collaboration Groups, Practicums, 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.

In 2024, we are launching two exciting new programs to revitalize current pastors and preachers and prepare seminary students for music ministry. First, with the help of Lilly Endowment's Compelling Preaching grant and the leadership of Dr. Casey Sigmon, Assistant Professor of Preaching and Worship and Director of Contextual Education and Pause/Play Center for Preachers, Saint Paul School of Theology is creating the Pause/Play Center for Preachers that addresses the risk of losing heart and prophetic imagination as a preacher in this divided world. Second, for Fall 2024, as part of our Master of Arts in Christian Ministry (MACM) degree program, we will launch a first-of-its-kind specialization in Modern Worship Music. Saint Paul will partner with The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection and their COR Worship Collective to prepare students to write, produce, and perform modern worship music. Lastly, we recently completed the (Theo)Logic Studio on our Oklahoma Campus. The Studio serves as a dedicated space for creating, recording, and editing digital media resources tailored to the ministries of students, staff, faculty, and alums, encompassing content development ranging from podcasts and video resources to digital graphics.

For the 2023-2024 academic year, we brought 41 new, faithful theologians from across the world to our learning community. International students from South Korea, Belgium, and Mexico added to the global learning environment on both campuses and online. Twenty-seven percent of incoming students identified as a race or ethnicity other than white, and 53 percent identified as female.

The 2023-2024 Fiscal Year brought a change in leadership to the Seminary. Rev. Neil Blair '80 retired as President on December 31, 2023, and President Jay Simmons, formerly Vice President of Institutional Advancement, took the helm at the start of 2024. In addition, Saint Paul Board of Trustees' Chair Dr. Amy Hogan stepped down as Board Chair, with Ms. Sharon Cleaver assuming the position until the end of June 2024.

Saint Paul School of Theology is blessed to be your partner in ministry and help those seeking to discover more and answer the call. Your advocacy for the Seminary and generous financial support have been vital in realizing our accomplishments. Many thanks for the innumerable ways you have helped Saint Paul. Your prayers and actions on behalf of the Seminary are a blessing to all of us.

Jay K. Simmons, President
spst.edu - Where Theology Meets Life

400.36 Wesley Theological Seminary

Rev. Dr. David McAllister-Wilson, President

The mission of Wesley Theological Seminary (WTS) is to equip persons for Christian ministry and leadership in the church and the world, to advance theological scholarship, and to model a prophetic voice in the public square.

Despite the challenges posed by the global landscape, WTS continues to flourish, driven by our commitment to excellence in theological education and community engagement:

Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, Master of Theological Studies Degrees: We offer pathways to meet the needs of a variety of students. Whether traditional, brick and mortar, in-person study or a flexible, online, hybrid model (Wesley FlexMA), WTS is committed to curating space for theological reflection, academic inquiry, and practical application. <https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/study/>

Doctor of Ministry Degree: WTS is a leader in DMin education offering specialized tracks of study for scholars going into parish ministry, global missions, or military chaplaincy. <https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/doctorofministry/program/>

Wesley Innovation Hub: WTS received a \$1.2M grant from the Lilly Endowment and will embark on groundbreaking initiatives that harness the power of technology, entrepreneurship, and interdisciplinary collaboration. <https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/wesley-innovationhub/>

Center for Public Theology: WTS received a generous grant from the Trinity Wall Street Foundation to launch “The Public Theology Fellows Program,” an innovative initiative to bridge gaps between faith communities and political action. <https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/ice/programs/public-theology/>

Community Engagement Institute: WTS received a generous grant from City Seminary in NYC for the innovative, immersive study and praxis of urban ministry. <https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/ice/about-us/overview-2/>

The Henry Luce III Center for the Arts and Religion: WTS is thrilled to share two new exhibits, Sacred Ground, which focused on the intersection of community-engaged art and spirituality; and Paradise Lost, a captivating exhibition highlighting transcultural, multicultural, and interreligious narratives. <https://www.luceartsandreligion.org/>

Lewis Center for Church Leadership: The Lewis Center conducts leading edge research for the local church. WTS is pleased to report a growing demand for transformative leadership training within religious communities. <https://www.churchleadership.com/>

Call us: (202) 885-8659 Email us: admissions@wesleyseminary.edu. Follow us:
Facebook/IG: @WesleySeminary and LinkedIn: @WesleyTheologicalSeminary

Submitted by Lyvonne Briggs, Director of Strategic Communications and Marketing