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## EQUIPPING DISCIPLES: Prepare your people and celebrate the work

By Jeff Campbell\*



First UMC in Oak Lawn reaches out to the community with an Easter Egg Hunt for children in the neighborhood.

*"If the mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, then every interaction with members of the community is an opportunity to plant seeds for future fruit."*

I think it's important to celebrate. I'm all for it. Celebrations indicate something is special, be it a birthday, a holiday, and in the case of First United Methodist Church in Oak Lawn, Illinois, every small victory that leads to other victories. For this church, its commitment to Discipleship began with recognizing their need to reach out to the community.

If the mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, then every interaction with members of the community was an opportunity to plant seeds for future fruit.

The Rev. Jonathan S. Crail, who served as church pastor until August 2017 and is currently serving First UMC in DeKalb, said that if the mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, then every interaction with members of the community is an opportunity to plant seeds for future fruit. How right he was!

In 2015, Crail and the church members had to admit they didn't know the neighbors living just a few blocks away from

the building. So, they put their heads together and decided to host an Easter Egg Hunt for the neighborhood children in the nearby park. They thought having the Easter Egg Hunt on "neutral ground" (a city park) instead of on the church grounds might be more appealing to the unchurched neighborhood families.

They promoted the event through the neighborhood and on social media. On the morning of the event, small groups of families began to show up. Then, more came. The trickle began to grow. Crail and the church were surprised and thrilled when not 60, not 100, but 160 children came! Counting the children's parents and others who came, they had almost 300 people show up.

Of course, not everyone who came to the Easter Egg Hunt came back for the worship services, but the reputation and rapport the church began to build in the community led to some of the people choosing to visit.

The church has realized they can reach out in new and

unexpected ways. Getting outside the building and off its own property can make the church more accessible to its unchurched neighbors.

While an Easter Egg Hunt is certainly nothing new for churches, an event such as that can be used effectively if your people are ready to meet the unchurched people who come. Consider a training class for your people on how to engage with new people. Teach them how showing an interest in the lives and stories of others can become an opportunity to share the gospel and invite them to your church services.

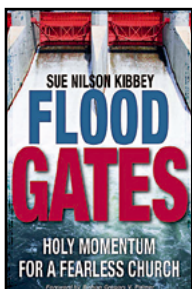
Conversations like that can be a useful discipleship tool. Authentic interest in a person's life is powerful.

Find more resources from Discipleship Ministries at: [blog.umcdiscipleship.org/category/leadership/intentional-discipleship](http://blog.umcdiscipleship.org/category/leadership/intentional-discipleship).

\*Jeff Campbell joined Discipleship Ministries in 2013 and serves as the Executive Director of Conference Relationships.

## Looking for a new way of being the church?

By Mark Manzi, Co-Conference Lay Leader



Are you ready to break through to a new way of thinking and leading in your church? Are you ready to say yes to new ideas for changing the culture in your church and lead the way to creating disciples who are focused on new ways to be the church following the way of Jesus? The Rev. Sue Nilson Kibbey, staff in the West Ohio Conference and leader of the Missional Church Consultation Initiative, can guide church leaders, both clergy and lay, on a journey that is disciplined and focused for getting your church off of the plateau and on to becoming a more fruitful and vital church.

Rev. Sue will be your coach on a voyage of change that helps break through the log jams and storms and on to discipleship, caring community

outreach, and a pervasive practice of invitation. The journey begins with coach ability and prayer. If you are ready, take time to read Rev. Sue's new book Flood Gates - Holy Momentum for a Fearless Church.

I have read this book and find the ideas stimulating. Leaders who are ready to change the status quo and shepherd a congregation into a new way of being the church need to read this book. The process takes commitment, but the reward is a church ready to live into a new spiritual momentum.

A bonus for our conference is that the Rev. Sue Nilson Kibbey will be the keynote speaker at Laity Convocation 2019 on **Saturday, February 9** at New Lenox UMC. Put this date on your calendar today!

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## BISHOP'S COLUMN: HOW WOULD JESUS VOTE?

In Matthew 16, Jesus asked his disciples who they said he was. Peter responded by saying, "You are the Christ!" Peter confessed with his lips but he hadn't yet lived it with his life; following Jesus is more than confessing with our lips!

As we approach the midterm elections, I wonder if Jesus would flip the question on us, asking, "Who are you? Are you my follower? Or are you a Democrat first and Christian second? Or a Republican first and Christian second?" Where is my allegiance? And how have I gotten my political opinions and perspectives? From a faith perspective? From my party perspective? From the siloed news cycle I live in?

The scriptures don't clearly spell out for us just how to vote on all the complex issues of our time. But the scriptures do point out how to be with one another in our differences. Throughout most of my ministry, people would balk at the idea that they had enemies. I wonder if that's still true in our hyper-polarized culture as we have demonized each other in our nation as well as our church.

Jesus did tell us clearly how we are to act! "You have heard that it was said, 'You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who harass you...if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing? Don't even the Gentiles do the same?'" (Matthew 5:43, 47, CEB) I guess he meant we are to love those across the political aisle and even the center aisle of our churches!

A few weeks ago most of us watched the funeral of the U.S. statesman, John McCain. Whether you are Democrat or Republican, I would be surprised if you weren't moved at some point in the viewing of the memorial services. Among those who spoke about McCain's life and character was former Vice President Joe Biden who gave witness to how John McCain was his friend as well colleague.

Biden and McCain were from opposite sides of the aisle throughout their years together in the Senate. Then they ran against each other on their respective presidential tickets in 2008, still preserving their relationship. Biden told how in the 1980s and 90s, he would cross the aisle to go sit next to McCain or McCain would mosey over and sit down next to him to chat. They'd just sit there and talk about everything from politics to family. But around the mid-90s, one day they both had party caucus meetings at the same time. And both of them were approached by their caucus leaders that very day, saying, "It doesn't look good, you talking to him all the time." They were urged to knock it off.

But in fact, that is exactly what government and anyone calling themselves leaders should look like. We need examples of people who have different ideas, opinions and perspectives who are friends and able to disagree with each other on policies and politics, sharpening each other's thoughts. Biden went on to say that when people's motives, intentions, and even faith are questioned rather than ideas, policies and opinions, conversation ceases and a relationship is impossible.

In the church, especially in this time before the specially called General Conference in February 2019, if we say to another, "you're not really a Christian if you believe that way" then differences become personal. When differences become personal, that stops the conversations and the relationships. Biden said that it erodes the effectiveness of government. I would suggest that it also erodes the body of Christ and its witness to the world.

Biden didn't say that he ever changed his mind or McCain's but in order for there to be a strong democracy, we have to be able to talk to each other and live with each other in our disagreements. Biden went on to say in his eulogy that things have gone seriously downhill since he and McCain were asked not to spend so much time together. And that's not the best of who we are as a nation-state or for that matter a church.

In the course of writing this article, I reached out to a relative whose remarks on Facebook were diametrically opposed to mine on what was happening in the Brett Kavanaugh hearings. I don't know this relative very well but given the rawness of her remark, I decided to reach out with concern. Her husband had been falsely accused of harassment about 20 years ago. It was a devastating time for her family. Through a couple of exchanges, I acknowledged that it's pretty devastating if someone is accused falsely but it's also pretty devastating if one is assaulted or abused.

Every word I wrote was carefully weighed in order to connect without betraying my own beliefs but also honoring her experience and feelings. It was hard. I was never sure how she would respond. I didn't want to alienate her. I know it was important to connect; not change her mind, not chastise her, not ridicule or deny her experience, but connect. Whether I succeeded or not, it was just a good thing to do.

Jesus didn't specifically say who to vote for on every candidate and issue. We can certainly apply some of his teachings to our ballot as well as what we hope for in The United Methodist Church in February. But he was pretty clear about how we live with each other in the midst of our hyper-polarized environments.

~Bishop Sally Dyck

## Local Church News *Ministry Makers*

"Ministry Makers" highlights local church outreach ministries that make a difference and transform lives. If you have a Ministry Makers story, email [agerhardt@umnic.org](mailto:agerhardt@umnic.org).



Volunteers at First UMC in Lansing serve refreshments to students from a nearby high school as they get out of class for the day.

### Church reaches 'thirsty' students

In 2013, a "who is your neighbor" ministry started at First United Methodist Church of Lansing to greet the Thornton Fractional (TF) South high school students as they left for the day and to offer a refreshment because the high school is our closest neighbor.

For the next nearly 200 Thursdays, (while school was in session) the pastor and a small group of church members would prepare lemonade or hot chocolate (depending on the weather) and fill cups with lids into coolers. The coolers were loaded onto a cart and rolled to the entrance of TF South high school to wait for the dismissal bell. Then, for the next 10 minutes, drinks and smiles were freely given to every willing student until the coolers were emptied. Thirsty Thursday started with 180 cups every Thursday, and grew to 450 cups with the addition of more coolers and more volunteers in 2017.

Before break last year, the joy of advent season was shared by adding 450 Christmas cookies to the hot chocolate and loaded on a wagon pulled alongside the cart. Thursdays became special to the students and the volunteers. Weekly, more and more students ran out of the building making a beeline to the church's corner to accept the neighborly offerings.

Simply passing out beverages, created a foundation for a relationship between the students and the church, but they knew that to reach the students for Christ, they would need to take the relationship to the next level. Strategies to reach the students were discussed and tried.

One Thirsty Thursday volunteer, jokingly proposed moving the location incrementally (10 feet every week) until the students were actually in the church. Over the years (and through the sun and snow) their faithfulness earned the trust of the students and principal. During a conversation with the principal, he mentioned concern for his students because of the schedule. The school has an early dismissal every Wednesday at 1:40 p.m., which creates a hardship for students whom needed to return or wait until 3 p.m. for their athletic or academic activities. The committed group of volunteers used this information to propose to the church a new program, W. O. W. (Walk Over Wednesdays).

Last April, with prayer and an idea, the church leadership sat down with the principal and a group of TF South students to ask if they would be interested in dropping over to our church on Wednesdays and spending some time. The church offered to provide music, games and refreshments for the students between 1:45 and 3 p.m. The students gave an enthusiastic "YES!" For the first W.O.W., the church hoped 25-35 students would

come but were amazed and overjoyed when over 125 students came and were laughing, dancing and interacting with the volunteers. The church knew that they had something – a God given opportunity.

Running every Wednesday since school started, First UMC Lansing averages over 250 students stopping over for W.O.W.. The church provides a safe space with games and offers food as a DJ (and pastor) spins music intermixing Gospel and Christian artists while continually reminding the students that they are welcomed into the church. The lemonade continues to be gifted, but for \$1 or less, volunteers grill burgers or hot dogs (weather permitting) or have local pizzas delivered for the students.

Some theorize that modern technology—especially smartphones and social media contribute to students experiencing loneliness even in a group because they lack real connections. W.O.W. offers First UMC the opportunity to make a real connection with young people. Moreover, they are committed to showing Christ's love through service and fellowship. It took 60,000 cups and fifty individual volunteers, but the posters are going up inviting the student to "Walk-over Wednesday and come back on Sunday to worship". Additionally, the church is planning an Advent Concert/Worship service on Dec. 2nd at 7 p.m. that invites the students to participate in the music programming hoping to motivate the entire family to attend.

Lansing's demographics are changing, which can be challenging for outreach--especially when the new residents are much younger than the average age of the church members. However, W.O.W. provides an opportunity for First UMC to break down barriers.

"The students (and their parents) are a demographic needed in the church, and we are seeing such positive results. Parents whom I have never met (yet) are posting on social media and sharing our posts. It is fantastic to read posts from parents or the community commenting or discussing First UMC as a friendly neighbor to the students or expressing gratitude for caring for their children," said Rev. Dave Price.

#### About First United Methodist Church Lansing

First United Methodist Church of Lansing is located in the southern suburbs bordering Indiana. Our missions statement is: We "Reach up" to God. We "Reach out" to others. We "Reach in" to grow closer to God as we grow closer to others. Our United Methodist Church's Mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Visit them at [fumclansing.org](http://fumclansing.org).



Participants in the Mission Academy RoundUP put together school kits for delivery by Midwest Mission Distribution Center.



## Volunteers in Mission gather for biennial event By Tammy Kuntz

Volunteers from around the North Central Jurisdiction gathered August 9-12, 2018 at Wesley Woods Camp and Retreat Center in Williams Bay, Wisconsin for Mission Academy RoundUP. This event, held every other year, brings together volunteers from around the North Central Jurisdiction for sharing, learning, and networking on many aspects of serving God's kingdom in mission.

Trainings included "Connecting Neighbors" led by Lynnette Jordan (Wisconsin) and UMVIM Team Leader training, led by the Rev. Melissa Bracht-Wagner (Iowa).

Three plenary sessions were scheduled with follow-up sessions.

- Rev. Dr. F. Willis Johnson (West Ohio) shared his experience and thoughts on responding to systemic racism in mission work.
- Sabrina Rogers and Kathleen Griffith (Global Ministries) discussed the Abundant Health Initiative of Global Health and ways local churches can work to promote the physical health of the congregation.
- TeachUM mission opportunities were shared by Cherie Minor (Iowa), director of Mobile United Methodist Missionaries, a group taking Vacation Bible School to many places around Iowa; Dr. Carol Meynen (Northern Illinois), community health team leader; and Dewey Miller (Indiana), director of Kunadaa International.
- Discussions specific to mission projects were led by:
- Chantel Corie, Illinois Great Rivers, executive director, Midwest Mission Distribution Center
- Rev. Sue Pethoud, Michigan, Cass Community Social Services
- Marj Evans-de-Carpio, Dakotas, director, Solar Oven Partners

Thursday afternoon began with sessions on the Discover...Mission journey to China. This young adult mission journey is planned for July 17-31, 2019 led by Bishop Jung (Wisconsin) and David and Christy Newhouse (Michigan). Una Jones (Global Ministries) shared conversation on using A Mission Journey: A Handbook for Volunteers before, during, and after the mission journey. Kathy Dickriede (East Ohio) led discussions on Cultural Competency as teams prepare to serve in places very different from their home.

Bishop Sally Dyck officially opened the event with Thursday evening worship and communion.

Friday and Saturday sessions included Rev. Dr. Susan Jennys (Dakotas), who offered a crash course in Native American cross-cultural awareness. Rev. Lyndy Zabel (Minnesota) shared ways to help teams grow spiritually while in the mission field. Transformation

Youth Mission led by Rev. Lenore Robinson (East Ohio) focused on building youth leaders in the midst of planning the mission journey. Rev. Kathy Dickriede (East Ohio) shared a Puerto Rico team experience from a team leader prospective. Session rounded out with Issues in Immigration, led by Tony Burrell (Indiana) of The Welcome Network. Jane Dunn (Florida) offered connections with community health and UMVIM journeys.

An evening campfire discussion included a question and answer session around the campfire about missionary opportunities facilitated by Steve and Gail Quigg, NCJ Mission Advocates.

The group spent one evening building school kits for delivery by Midwest Mission Distribution Center.

Thoughts from attendees:

*The location was wonderful and the food was great! I learned so much! ~ Rev. Kathryn Adams, East Ohio*

*The Puerto Rico Update was especially helpful – so much information to take home to my church. Connecting Neighbors training was well done. I enjoyed the fellowship time and networking with so many people. ~anonymous*

*I'm so glad I participated in the Mission Round Up. It was a very good experience for me. It was good to begin to know you as part of the experience! ~Marj Evans-de-Carpio, Dakotas, director, Solar Oven Partners*

*Thanks for all the work putting this together. The sessions were informative with knowledgeable presenters. Bishop Sally Dyck's worship included a great message. A real plus to have her. The Abundant Health program was helpful for the direction our local church is going. ~Jane Dunn, Florida*

*I liked Lyndy Zabel who was extremely articulate and offered excellent ideas and materials. Jane Dunn offered a great workshop. I would have liked if someone from JFON could have attended as this immigration issue is a focus in the UMC. ~Bev Nolte, Iowa*

*Thank you for the opportunity to be at the round-up. I have talked about it so much since I have been back I don't think at the time I even fully understood what all I was getting out of it and how it impacted me. Thank you for always advocating for Midwest Mission. ~Chantel Corrie, Illinois Great Rivers, executive director, Midwest Mission Distribution Center*

Find more information on the North Central Jurisdiction United Methodist Volunteers in Mission at [umvimncj.org](http://umvimncj.org).

## Immigration ministry honors champions for justice



NIJFON Board Chair Judy Siaba presents Bishop Sally Dyck the 2018 Champions for Justice Award for her ardent support and advocacy for Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors. Photo courtesy Tom Nicol



Nestor Gomez shares his story and long journey of immigrating from Guatemala to becoming a U.S. citizen at the NIJFON fundraiser. Photo courtesy Tom Nicol

About 160 people attended the annual Northern Illinois Justice For Our Neighbors (NIJFON) fundraiser on Oct. 14 to support the ministry's ongoing work to provide high quality, free legal services for immigrants. The event was held at the Two Brothers Roundhouse in Aurora with food, fellowship and a silent and live auction. Many also had the opportunity to meet NIJFON's new executive director Claudia Marchan.

This year, NIJFON honored and recognized Bishop Sally Dyck with the 2018 Champion of Justice Award. Since its founding, Bishop Dyck has been an ardent and generous supporter of NIJFON. She and her husband, Ken Ehrman, have generously provided financial resources to support JFON. In addition, her advocacy has also encouraged many Northern Illinois UM churches and individuals to support JFON.

"She's been a champion for the underdog and leader and worker for justice," NIJFON chair Judy Siaba said as she introduced Bishop Dyck and presented her with the award.

Bishop Dyck said it was a real honor to receive the award but thanked everyone for attending the fundraiser saying they are the champions for justice.

"You continue to give generously and work for justice in a variety of ways – sometimes to educate people about our broken immigration system and sometimes to actually go and be with people who are in the midst of trying to sort out their lives," Dyck told those gathered. "I think this is one of the wonderful ministries of the Northern Illinois Conference and we need to help support it now more than ever."

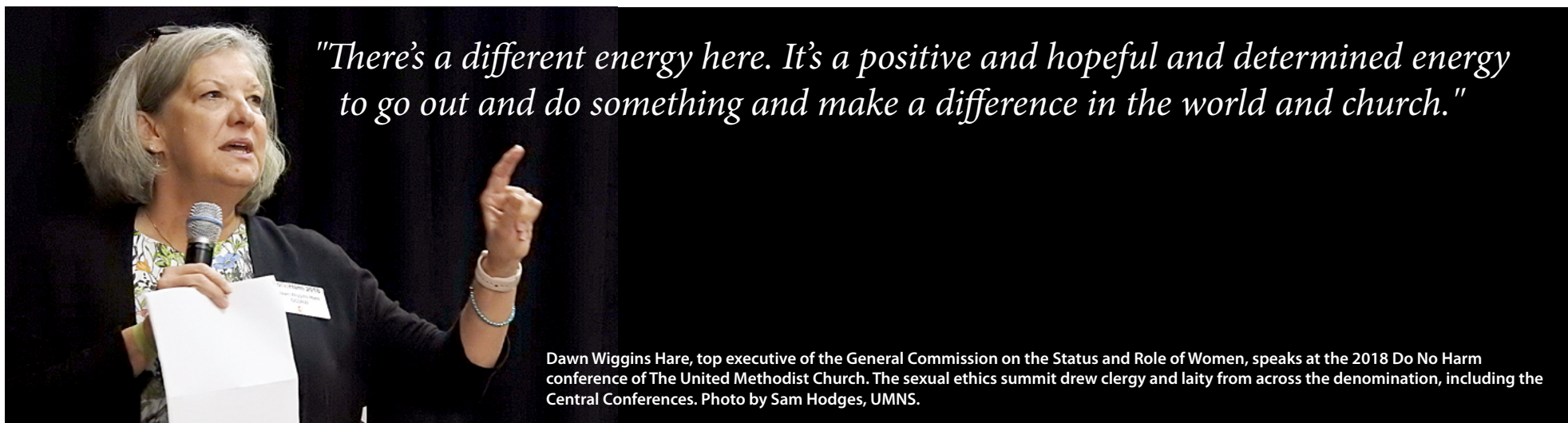
Highly acclaimed storyteller, Nestor "the Boss" Gomez, was the evening's guest speaker and shared his story, struggles, and journey of becoming a recent U.S. citizen. Nestor Gomez, an undocumented immigrant from Guatemala, came to the U.S. in the mid-1980s with his brothers to be with his mother.

"I didn't grow up wanting to be an immigrant or refugee," Gomez said of his aspirations as a young boy in Guatemala. "I had dreams to be a reporter, teacher or lawyer."

Gomez said for many years he blamed and resented his mother for his immigration experience but now realizes she was only fighting for and trying to provide a better life and opportunities for him and his siblings. "The day I became a U.S. citizen (a few months ago), I called my mom to give her the good news and also thanked her for all her hard work. I told her I was sorry. I know I would have not been better off in Guatemala as a reporter, teacher or lawyer because of the Government there."

The NIJFON Board of Directors is extremely grateful for the generous donations from individuals and churches in the NIC which topped \$17,500 from the event. For more information on NIJFON and how you can support this ministry visit [nijfon.org](http://nijfon.org).





*"There's a different energy here. It's a positive and hopeful and determined energy to go out and do something and make a difference in the world and church."*

Dawn Wiggins Hare, top executive of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, speaks at the 2018 Do No Harm conference of The United Methodist Church. The sexual ethics summit drew clergy and laity from across the denomination, including the Central Conferences. Photo by Sam Hodges, UMNS.

## Summit addresses prevention of and response to sexual misconduct By Sam Hodges\*

The United Methodist Church holds a sexual ethics summit every few years, but the most recent one in San Antonio gained urgency from the #MeToo Movement, the Kavanaugh hearings, the Bill Cosby sentencing and yet another round of sex abuse-related scandal in the Catholic Church.

Those events were only passingly referenced at Do No Harm 2018, coordinated by the Commission on the Status and Role of Women and the United Methodist Interagency Sexual Ethics Task Force.

But they charged the atmosphere.

"There's a different energy here," said Dawn Wiggins Hare, top executive of the commission. "It's a positive and hopeful and determined energy to go out and do something and make a difference in the world and church."

This year's Do No Harm, held Oct. 11-13, follows summits by that name in 2006, 2011 and 2015.

Some 280 people, mostly clergy and conference staff, attended this time, crowding the main conference hall of an airport Holiday Inn, as well as smaller meeting rooms for breakout sessions. From the Northern Illinois Conference, Rev. Arlene Christopherson, Rev. Jeffrey Bross, Irma Clark and Rev. Anne Hampson attended.

"The Do No Harm Conference in San Antonio was excellent," said Rev. Hampson. "Inspired to do the work of education, prevention and healing, I received new skills and resources that will enhance my work with pastors and congregants as a pastoral counselor, mentor, Response Team member and on the COSROW committee of NIC.

The Rev. Ruth Marston-Bihl came from the First United Methodist Church in Olympia, Washington.

"There's no way I could not be here," she said. "Women are no longer keeping quiet about what's happening to them. In the past three weeks, seven women have come forward to talk to me about their sexual assault or rape."

The Rev. Idda John Ngowi, of the North Katanga Conference in the Democratic Republic of Congo, came to gather ideas for addressing sexual harassment and abuse in Africa, including in the church.

"We need help on this subject," the United Methodist pastor said through a translator. "The response is not there."

In January, the Council of Bishops joined the Commission on the Status and Role of Women in issuing a statement supporting the #MeToo and #ChurchToo movements and strongly encouraging reporting of sexual misconduct, including within the church.

Many bishops sent cabinet members to the San Antonio gathering, and seven bishops attended.

"Persons' lives are changed by boundary crossings and sexual misconduct," said Bishop LaTrelle Easterling of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. "Everybody should be

prioritizing this (response) work."

The Rio Texas Conference's Bishop Robert Schnase preached at opening worship, listing warning signs for conferences insufficiently attentive to clergy sexual misconduct and calling for a "conversion of imagination" to see the problem more clearly.

He also referred without specificity to recent news events.

"I thought we would have been farther along by now," Schnase said.

Clergy sexual misconduct is a focus of Do No Harm, and this year's conference featured a short play by the Rev. Walt Frazier, a Mississippi Conference deacon and licensed counselor.

In the fictional skit, acted by clergy and laity of the Mississippi Conference, the pastor of the aptly named Wilderness United Methodist Church ends up romantically involved with a church member who comes for counseling about her unraveling marriage.

*"Inspired to do the work of education, prevention and healing, I received new skills and resources that will enhance my work with pastors and congregants as a pastoral counselor"*

That he crossed the line is clear, but the question-and-answer period yielded plenty of questions and comments about how the matter was reported and how the church and conference responded.

The Rev. Sally Beville, pastor of Hawkins United Methodist Church in Vicksburg, Mississippi, played the woman who sought counseling. She noted that the troupe had performed the same skit for the Mississippi Conference, but got a much stronger reaction at Do No Harm.

"The people gathered in this conference are so aware of what's going on," Beville said.

Hare describes Do No Harm as a "train the trainer" event, and much of the discussion went to preparing conferences and churches for dealing effectively with reported misconduct. For example, conference response teams shared best practices for helping congregations reeling from reported abuse by clergy or church staff.

The conference also offered a detailed explanation of church law and policies, as well advice from insurance company experts.

Schnase and others suggested conferences vary widely in their sensitivity and commitment to dealing with sexual misconduct.

"We pat ourselves on the back a lot in the Methodist Church. We say we're really far ahead of the Baptists. ... And yet, we're still light years away from where we need to be," said Bill Waddell, lawyer for the Council of Bishops.

Plenary speakers included Jennifer Freyd, a psychology professor at the University of Oregon who has researched and written extensively about sexual harassment and assault, and institutions' failure to address it.

Though she has focused on colleges and universities, Freyd offered a range of suggestions for how other institutions, including the church, can better respond.

"Bear witness, be accountable and apologize," she laid out as crucial steps for leaders.

There was discussion too of how the church can better assist members or visitors who report sexual harassment or assault in family or workplace settings.

"As a pastor, I have had the privilege to bear witness to these stories, and to hold women in a place of empowerment and encouragement," said the Rev. Rebekah Solar, a licensed local pastor in the Upper New York Conference.

One workshop dealt with how the church can better support clergy accused of sexual conduct. The Rev. Scott Campbell led the session, drawing on his experience representing accused clergy in church trials.

"To have a venue at which people are being exposed to the concerns, the needs, the rights of people who are victimized, but to also talk about the converse of that, in human terms, is a major thing, and I'm grateful," Campbell said.

The Virginia Conference's Bishop Sharma Lewis, preaching in closing worship, asked that The United Methodist Church become a prophetic voice regarding sexual misconduct. She urged more of a financial commitment, too.

"There's not enough money in this Commission (on the Status and Role of Women) to do the work that they are called to do for this denomination," Lewis said.

The commission has a website for sharing sexual ethics resources at [umsexualethics.org](http://umsexualethics.org) and Hare said planning is underway for building on the momentum of Do No Harm 2018.

\*Hodges is a Dallas-based writer for United Methodist News Service.





## Make spirits bright with a community, seeker-friendly Christmas outreach event

By Elle Turner \*

What does it take to throw a good party? Good friends, tasty treats, great location, maybe even fun activities. Right?

You got it!

And that's also how your church can host a successful Christmas event to attract visitors from your community — including people unaffiliated with a church. Christmas is a magnet, cozily attracting the lukewarms and even (sometimes) the stone-colds!

OK, let's back up a little. Yes, hosting an event that invites people from outside your congregation doesn't have to be complicated or intimidating. Your church, whether there are 20 or 20,000 of you, can host a simple, festive and successful seeker event.

Last year, United Methodist Communications partnered with local churches to host 21 events across the U.S. during Advent to invite visitors to their local UMCs. "The True Meaning of Christmas Tour" unwrapped the true meaning of Christmas through holiday cheer, free hot cocoa and support for local church mission and outreach initiatives. After its 2017 success, the tour will continue this Advent season.

Your church can host a similar fellowship event in your town to extend the same warm invitation that the denomination will be extending on this year's tour. Breaking this idea down will help your church plan and execute a successful event.

- **Where?** Choose a very visible area for your event, such as a booth in a community holiday festival, Christmas market, outdoor ice skating rink or along a holiday parade route. (You may need a permit or permission to be at specific locations, so be sure to research this in advance.) Seek places that attract high foot traffic and passersby.
- **When?** Nights and weekends are best (obviously) because that's when most people are free from the obligations of work or school, which means they may be more willing to stop and chat. Plan for your volunteers to stay on-site for at least a few hours to visit with as many people as possible.
- **Who?** Any of your church congregants can participate, regardless of age. A kind and welcoming attitude is all that's needed to greet passersby (especially families). Your greeters can wear shirts or buttons featuring your church's name, if you have them.
- **What?** Extend an offer to those you greet, whether it's a free cup of hot cocoa, an invitation card to your Christmas services or Christmas stickers for kids. Extra tips: Make sure to have an insulated dispenser to keep cocoa hot! Set up a table and a few chairs, so visitors (and volunteers) can take a break. Don't be offended if not everyone wants to chat. They aren't expecting to run into you,

although you're anticipating them. Relevant but neutral conversation ideas: What Christmas means to them or what Christmas plans they have.

- **Why?** So people in your community will see the church as part of the community, not as a separate entity that ignores people outside its doors. If your faces and logo are seen outside your church property frequently, people are more likely to look you up online and consider getting to know you better.
- **How?** As in...how can you call this event successful? It's a great idea to count the number of invitations or cups of cocoa you've given out. That way you know how many people have received your marketing message. You could also provide prayer cards for passersby to complete, asking for their name, contact info (phone number or email) and how your church can pray for them. Two or three days after your event, contact these people to say something like, "Hey John, it was nice to meet you at the Holiday Market on Saturday. I've been praying for your big presentation at work. How did it go?" or "Hi Jane, thanks for chatting with me at the Christmas parade last week. My church is praying for your health to improve. How are you doing?"

### Here are more great tips to make your event a success.

- Get the word out! Whether you buy Facebook ads, spread the word through your church and church members' social media accounts organically, or hang fliers around town, let people know the details about your event at least a week in advance. This will not only boost awareness of your church's creative outreach efforts but also your foot traffic during your event.
- Write a press release and email it to local media outlets (newspapers, radio and television stations) to tell them about your event and other activities and worship services throughout Advent.
- Consider using Facebook Live during your event to broadcast your outreach to a wider audience. If you do this at the beginning of the event, people may still have plenty of time to attend.
- Submit your event to community calendars to be a visible option for those looking for activities in the area.

No matter the type of event you host, your church will be in the community where your neighbors are — as Jesus was with his community, hanging out with all people. Make the most of your time, and after evaluating how your event went, consider hosting another using what you've learned from the first one.

*\*Elle Turner is a former marketing manager at United Methodist Communications*



Pictured from left to right: Back row - The Rev. Marclair ParTEE Carlsen, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Ferguson, Mr. Richard Mammana (staff), The Rt. Rev. David Rice, Rev. Dr. James Howell, the Rt. Rev. Dr. C. Franklin Brookhart, Bishop Gregory V. Palmer; Front row - Rev. Dr. Robert Williams, the Rev. Margaret Rose (staff), Rev. Dr. Kyle Tau (staff), Rev. Dr. Pamela Lightsey, Dr. Deirdre Good. Photo courtesy Maidstone Mulenga

## United Methodists, Episcopalians perfect Full Communion document

The United Methodist-Episcopal dialogue committee held a meeting recently to continue its conversations about a proposal for full communion between these churches entitled "A Gift to the World: Co-Laborers for the Healing of Brokenness." The committee met at the Nicholas Center of St. James Cathedral in downtown Chicago October 1-2, 2018.

After receiving reports on the proposal from The United Methodist Committee on Faith and Order and the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith, and Order (IASCUFO), members of the committee discussed and implemented a final round of edits to "A Gift to the World" in response to input from these bodies and other public conversations surrounding the document.

The document is now in its definitive form and will be going before The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church for preliminary action the first week of November 2018. The updated document can be found online at [www.episcopalchurch.org](http://www.episcopalchurch.org).

The timeline calls for the proposal to be acted upon by The United Methodist General Conference in 2020, and the General Convention of The Episcopal Church in 2021. Before consideration by the churches' respective assemblies, the document will be translated into Spanish, French, Portuguese, and Kiswahili—official working languages in which the proposal will be reviewed.

In addition to finalizing the text of the proposal against a background of common worship and fellowship, the dialogue committee continued making plans to gather local groups of United Methodists and Episcopalians to discuss shared mission and the prospect of full communion. The committee encourages neighboring local churches, area clergy and lay leaders, diocesan convention and Annual Conference leadership and staff, and other appropriate groups to gather to build relationships, learn, discuss the proposal, and cast a vision for shared mission into the future as our churches continue to work towards unity.

The committee also called for continued prayers for the United Methodist Church's Special General Conference February 23-26, 2019 in St. Louis which will be deliberating the denomination's coming direction regarding human sexuality.



## Retreat explores prayer

The Inclusive Collective (IC) is a vibrant, growing, and diverse campus ministry in Chicagoland, and one of the NIC's ministry partners. Their hub is the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), but they have students involved from several colleges in the city.

Currently in their seventh semester, the IC is a relaunch of a ministry that was known as Agape House. They recently held their fall retreat at Wesley Woods, where 25 young adults spent the weekend building community, worshiping and exploring prayer.

Sarah Bonilla, an IC member offered a reflection on prayer one evening

during worship. "God knows me in a way I am aching to know myself. And prayer is the ongoing conversation I have with God where everything that I know and don't are unimportant," Bonilla shared. "God is waiting to have a conversation with you, through every question, through every doubt, for the rest of your life." To read the full text of her reflection visit [www.umcnic.org/news/campus-ministry-retreat-explores-prayer](http://www.umcnic.org/news/campus-ministry-retreat-explores-prayer). For more info on this campus ministry visit [LetsGetInclusiveUIC.org](http://LetsGetInclusiveUIC.org) or Instagram ([@LetsGetInclusiveUIC](https://www.instagram.com/LetsGetInclusiveUIC)).





# Clergywomen launch new podcast series

For 30 years, the WellSprings Journal has been a community for United Methodist clergywomen – a place to connect and exchange information and ideas, speak grace and compassion, and reclaim the essence of the Gospel as revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Readers have found comfort and inspiration in the pages of the Journal, from the time it was distributed on paper through the online format we've enjoyed since 2010. Today, we're excited to introduce a new way you can experience these powerful and uplifting stories.

The WellSprings Journal Podcast is now available on all major podcast networks, and at [www.wellspringspodcast.org](http://www.wellspringspodcast.org).

We've launched with the first three episodes from the 2018 season, which has the theme, Claim Who We Are in Christ. New episodes will be added weekly. Here's what's currently available:

1. **What's in a Name?** – Jacqueline Rose-Tucker (North Georgia Area of the United Methodist Church).
2. **Reflections on Native Christian Identity and the Longing for Coming Home** – Lisa A. Dellinger (Oklahoma Indian Missionary Area of the United Methodist Church.)
3. **Claiming My Identity, Walking My Truth** – Bishop LaTrelle Easterling (Resident Bishop, Baltimore-Washington Area of the United Methodist Church).

More and more people are discovering podcasts as a convenient way to get information and entertainment on-demand. You can listen on a computer or with a smartphone, in the car or on a treadmill in the gym – wherever and whenever you want!

At [www.wellspringspodcast.org](http://www.wellspringspodcast.org), you'll find time-stamped transcripts of each episode that are perfect for sharing, and there's a place for comments and discussion. There are also links to iTunes, GooglePlay, Stitcher, and other sites where you can have each episode downloaded to your device.

We hope you'll try this new way to stay in touch with other UMC clergywomen. In the meantime, we'll continue to provide a print version each month at [www.wellspringjournal.com](http://www.wellspringjournal.com).

## NOVEMBER CALENDAR NEWS

### Delegation Listening and Conversation

Nov. 10

9:00 a.m. Elgin District

Location: Barrington UMC, 98 Algonquin Rd., Barrington, IL.

1:00 p.m. Aurora District

Locations: Bethany Fox Valley, 2200 Ridge Ave, Aurora, IL

Final two sessions with the NIC Delegation to talk about the One Church Plan and the future of The UMC leading up to the February Special General Conference Session in St. Louis. The General Conference clergy delegates are Rev. Alka Lyall, Rev. Gregory Gross and Rev. Chris Pierson. The lay delegates are Lonnie Chafin, Irma Clark and Elisa Gatz (Chair). After all of the sessions are completed, the questions asked will be summarized and answered to be shared on the NIC website. For more resources visit [www.umcnic.org/wayforward](http://www.umcnic.org/wayforward).

### Day of Call

Nov. 18

On behalf of Bishop Sally Dyck and the NIC Board of Ordained Ministry, we'd like to invite you to celebrate our 2nd "Day of Call."

The "Day of Call" is an opportunity to celebrate God's call in the Church – for clergy and laity. It's also part of our ongoing effort to nurture a culture of call in our Northern Illinois Conference.

Rather than setting a single Conference-wide date for 2018-2019, we'd like to offer three options: November 18, January 13, or February 17. We hope you will choose one of these dates to share your personal call to ministry with your congregation. You could invite others (clergy or laity) to share their call stories. Another possibility is to preach on God's calling on all of our lives and utilize one of the Call stories we've posted on our NIC website at [www.umcnic.org/ordainedministry](http://www.umcnic.org/ordainedministry).

The purpose of this Day is to encourage each other to listen and respond to God's call on our lives. We hope you'll join us as we celebrate and cultivate God's call on our lives.

Once you've chosen a date and celebrated a Day of Call, we hope you'll share your stories with us. We'd love to hear your testimonies of how God is calling the people in your community to ministry as the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. Also, if you need resources for this day, you can reach out to us, as well. Share your questions and testimonies (written or video) with Jim Bell at [srpastor@fumcbelvidere.com](mailto:srpastor@fumcbelvidere.com) or Eun Young Ko [pdkoey@mail.com](mailto:pdkoey@mail.com).

### Nationally renowned writer and urban activist to visit Hinsdale UMC

Nov. 18

Time: 9:30 a.m. during Christian Education Hour and during 10:30 a.m. worship service.

Location: Hinsdale UMC, 945 South Garfield, Hinsdale, IL.



Dr. Robert Lupton is a nationally renowned writer, urban activist, and Christian community developer. His most recent book *Charity Detox* builds upon the ideas introduced in his book *Toxic Charity*. Drawing on his many decades of experience, Lupton outlines how to structure programs

that actually improve the quality of life of the poor and disenfranchised. He introduces many strategies that are revolutionizing what we do with our charity dollars, and offers numerous examples of organizations that have successfully adopted these groundbreaking new models. You're encouraged to come and learn more about the application of Biblical principles to increase and expand the impact of our stewardship.

### United Methodist Student Day

Date: Nov. 25

Think about the young people in your congregation. Maybe some are venturing away from home for the first time as college freshmen. Perhaps others are pursuing graduate studies. Put names and faces to those students as you prepare for United Methodist Student Day on November 25.

By promoting generosity on this special Sunday of The United Methodist Church, you nurture tomorrow's Christian leaders.

Now is the time to share this message with your congregation and church leaders so that they, too, have the opportunity to ensure a brighter future for United Methodist students.

Download the United Methodist Student Day pastor's kit at [www.umcsgiving.org](http://www.umcsgiving.org) for all the tools you will need to celebrate on November 25. You'll find sermon starters, social media images, e-books, videos and much more to inspire your congregation about this special day.

To enhance your observance, order leaflet offering envelopes and posters call 888-346-3862 or visit [www.umcsgiving.org/ss](http://www.umcsgiving.org/ss).

Together, we will enrich the lives of United Methodist students as they continue on their faith journeys. You may observe United Methodist Student Day on a date that is convenient for your congregation.



The Annual Conference Shepherding Team meets and outlines goals at Hampshire UMC at their October meeting.

## Annual Conference Shepherding Team works toward goals

The Annual Conference Shepherding Team (ACST) met for their fifth day-long meeting on Oct. 13 at Hampshire United Methodist Church. The diverse team with representatives from each of the six districts has been working toward setting strategic goals for the conference, a charge developed from the Landscape survey and restructuring legislation passed at the 2017 Annual Conference.

The ACST has been looking at facts and information using a data-driven approach to gain a better understanding of the issues and to develop critical strategic goals into actionable objectives. ACST Strategic Planning Consultant Helen Chang has led the team in the strategic planning by helping to facilitate the conversations, frame priorities and develop drafts of the end goals. "We are at a pivotal stage. Over the last four sessions we shared a lot of background info, data and tools," Chang said to the group at the beginning of the meeting. "Today, the work gets real as we start to set real goals and move toward the Conference's vision."

The themes defined so far include: cultivate culture of trust, resource local churches, enhance clergy resources, re-vitalize churches, and equip leaders and churches.

The team will meet again Nov. 17 at Belvidere UMC to draft final goals to be presented by the end of the year which will include high-level priorities and timelines for the next one to two years. If you would like to reach the ACST chairs, email [shepherding@umcnic.org](mailto:shepherding@umcnic.org).



# 'Long road' for recovery from Hurricane Michael

By Jim Patterson\*

The Early Response Team (ERT) from Morris UMC drove to Panama City, FL on Oct. 20 to help victims of Hurricane Michael after just returning from North Carolina to volunteer in Hurricane Florence disaster relief. "Some areas looked like a war zone. A majority of the trees are snapped into pieces, bent over or ripped out of the ground," said ERT leader Colin Monk of the Panama City areas they surveyed. The team has been busy and resources are running low. If you would like to help, please send donations to First UMC Morris, 118 W Jackson St., Morris, IL 60450



United Methodist congregations in the Southeastern U.S. are beginning a massive rebuilding job after being damaged by Hurricane Michael, buoyed by their work ethic and the support of neighboring conferences.

"All the help is an emotional lift as well as the labor people need," said Bishop R. Lawson Bryan of the South Georgia Episcopal Area. "It's telling them that 'You are not alone.'"

Damage from the Oct. 11 hurricane was worst in the panhandle of Florida, Georgia and Alabama. Many areas were not quite ready for volunteers to arrive, though they hope the help will still be available after conditions improve a bit. Getting power and water back are the biggest priorities right now.

"All of the main affected areas have been able to send in teams for assessments," said Greg Ellis, program manager for U.S. Disaster Response at the United Methodist Committee on Relief. "We're not quite ready yet for volunteers to help. We will put out the information about that when ready."

Most congregants were well-prepared for the disaster, said Bryan, who credited years of Bible studies, sermons and support for missionary works around the world.

"They were spiritually more ready than we realized," he said. "All that mission work really builds up compassion and strength over time."

Up to 75 percent of the damage was to agricultural land, which means that many lost their livelihood for at least a year.

"We're talking huge areas of pecan trees and cotton destroyed," Bryan said. "But these are hard-working people.

When faced with a catastrophe, they rise to the occasion."

Friendship United Methodist Church is located in the town that was "ground zero" for Hurricane Michael in Georgia, said the Rev. Nate Lehman, pastor. Miraculously, the Friendship church building was unharmed; a tree did fall in its playground.

"It's almost like God put a protective dome over our church," he said. "Compared to the damage around us, it's very little."

Some tangled telephone lines and posts formed in the shape of a cross near the church.

But the general area will take years to rebound, Lehman said.

"This is a rural farming community with low income levels," he said. "Lots of the other jobs are minimum wage and those people are unable to work because things are closed down."

Currently, relief teams in southern Georgia are concentrating on chainsaw work and putting tarp over damaged property, said Scott Parish, missions specialist for the North Georgia Conference.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief already has distributed two \$10,000 emergency grants to the Alabama-West Florida and Florida conferences.

*\*Patterson is a Nashville-based reporter for United Methodist News Service. News media contact: Vicki Brown at (615) 742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org. To read more United Methodist news, subscribe to the free Daily or Weekly Digests.*

## UMCOR: Offering care in times of disaster

In the aftermath of Hurricane Michael, Catherine Earl heard a CNN interviewer ask a woman who lost her house in Mexico Beach, Florida, what survivors needed the most.

The woman's answer — understanding, hugs and prayers — impressed Earl, who leads U.S. disaster response for the United Methodist Committee on Relief. While basic practical needs are important, she pointed out, so is the feeling that someone cares.

The church can provide both in times of disaster. "I really think that when churches open their doors and at least give them (survivors) a place to connect with another person who might be able to understand, who certainly can offer comfort and hospitality, I think that's the niche for us," she said.

Even before a disaster strikes, UMCOR works with the denomination's conferences on preparation and training. Immediately after, initial grants of \$10,000, what Earl calls a "solidarity grant," are provided.

"In short order, we start looking at how we resource for the next phase and perhaps for long-term recovery," she said.

Donations can be made to the U.S. Disaster Response Advance #901670 for the United Methodist Committee on Relief at [www.umcor.org/donate](http://www.umcor.org/donate).

— Linda Bloom, United Methodist News Service

## CONTINUING EDUCATION GRANT



The NIC Office of Congregational Development and Redevelopment hosted Paul Nixon from the Epicenter Group on Oct. 17 for a learning day on ways to mobilize your church for a better ministry story. The event qualified for .5 CEUs.

Did you know that every clergyperson is required to meet 10 CE (Continuing Education) credits every quadrennium? But don't worry! We're here to assist you financially.

Every clergyperson (elders, deacons, probationary members and local pastors) who is actively serving as members of the Northern Illinois Conference has an opportunity to request

the continuing education grant (maximum \$500) every two years.

The application form and guideline are available online at the conference website at [www.umcnic.org/ClergyLifeForms](http://www.umcnic.org/ClergyLifeForms).

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Rev. Sejoon Jang at [bom.ce.grants@gmail.com](mailto:bom.ce.grants@gmail.com).

## OUTDOOR AND RETREAT MINISTRIES



### SPRING CONFIRMATION RETREATS:

- Wesley Woods, 1st Fri. of May
- Reyonldswood, 3rd Fri. of May

Confirmation students explore the Bible, the Methodist faith and the foundations of intentional Christian community. Participants will be challenged to answer the question of how they experience God's Grace, Comfort and Will in their daily lives.

**Cost:** \$75/person - includes Friday night Snack and lodging, Saturday breakfast and lunch and all supplies for activities.

### REGISTRATION FORM

Please access the Group Registration form via [www.niccamp.org/retreats](http://www.niccamp.org/retreats).



DYK???

## Did You Know? "Conversations that Count"



By Rev. Arlene Christopherson, Assistant to the Bishop/Dir. Connectional Ministries

More reports are released every week about the influence social media has on our impressions and decision making. Our online communications tools can be used constructively or destructively. I recently attended a workshop on framing the church's story, where we were reminded that social media is a powerful tool with which we can champion our faith story, capture hearts and empower lives. Churches are growing through their communications savvy. Yet, at the same time our trust in what we read in this "instant information age" is eroding with every report of misuse, abuse and even malicious intent around the postings and images that bombard us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

These reports remind us that there is no substitute for finding trusted resources and engaging in good conversation. Conversations are hard. Really listening can be difficult. This summer, my husband Gary and I hosted a birthday dinner for a member of our family. We welcomed some out-of-town relatives we only see every few years. We hadn't even made it to the dinner table before the conversation became very awkward. One relative is deeply imbedded in beliefs that did not align with others in the room. She was not afraid to share her passion. We were respectful but found her so embedded in her own truth that there was no room to allow others to share their alternative understandings.

With Thanksgiving coming I'm sure many of you are nodding your heads, understanding that when families gather there is often a tension around beliefs, sometimes leading to heated conversations.

Our United Methodist community is in such a time. We are moving rapidly toward the 2019 Special Session of General Conference with uncertainty. Good people with differing beliefs and understandings are working to find ways to learn and listen, as we try to determine how/if we can live with one another.

As I write this we have only had two of six scheduled District Listening and Conversation Sessions across Northern Illinois, hosted by our General Conference Delegation, to help us understand the work of the Special Session. Those two sessions went well. It was clear that not everyone is on the same page but there was maturity in the sharing, even as participants felt free to share their passion and pain. These sessions are just the tip of the iceberg in the work of "Conversations that Count".

We need to talk in our local churches about issues that matter to us as well. We need to find ways to stay in the conversations about racism, sexual harassment, and even the future of The United Methodist Church.

There are a number of good articles, videos, reflections and guides coming out to help us with this conversation. A list of these can be found at [www.umcnic.org/wayforward](http://www.umcnic.org/wayforward) on our website with links to the resources. On this list, I would like to recommend the Discipleship Ministries resource called "Courageous Conversations". This project is aimed at helping us move from skepticism to curiosity and even openness to encounter God's grace. "Courageous Conversations" is a toolbox that local churches can use to inspire and encourage the church and individuals to stay at the table when the anxiety and emotional turmoil is painful. Listed on our website you will find tools for leaders, outlines for conversations, a prayer guide and videos.

Now more than ever we need to model a community that can lean into our differences, listen to and share with one another, and discover the places that we hold in common. In a world where tension and conflict escalates toward dire consequences, we are a people called to offer a better way with "conversations that count".



# #GIVEUMC

## November 27, 2018

### Advance hope, love and healing around the world on November 27!

United Methodists will come together to support vital ministry projects and missionaries around the world on #GivingTuesday as they generously #GiveUMC.

Giving through The Advance empowers hundreds of dedicated project leaders and missionaries to share the love of Christ in meaningful, life-saving ways. As always, 100% of all giving will support the designated Advance ministry.

How will you #GiveUMC? Find a project you are passionate about and make a donation.

Further support #GivingTuesday by inspiring others to #GiveUMC! Resources are available to build awareness of this day of generosity, such as social media graphics and a toolkit full of communication tips and fundraising ideas.

Visit [www.umcmmission.org/giving-Tuesday](http://www.umcmmission.org/giving-Tuesday).



### Stay Connected

Sign up for the weekly NIC eNews & Appointment Announcements and Sympathy notices.

Visit [www.umcnic.org](http://www.umcnic.org) and scroll down to enter your email and name under "Sign up for our eNewsletter".

### Job Openings

For the latest NIC job openings, visit [www.umcnic.org/jobs](http://www.umcnic.org/jobs)

### Submit News

Please submit items at least two weeks prior to publication date. Include your name, address, email, phone number and name of local church. Space is limited. Electronic submissions are preferred with high-resolution attached jpegs.

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