

The Northern Illinois Conference OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Reporter

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Connecting and forming relationships across the conference



Bishop Schwerin addressing the laity of Prairie Central at Journey of Hope UMC in Elgin, IL.



Korean clergy to celebrate the lunar new year with Bishop Schwerin.



Shaun Chapman, Project Manager for Irving Construction, explains the progress at the First UMC in Dekalb, IL construction site to Bishop and Julie Schwerin.



Clergy fellowshiping in Prairie North at Christ UMC in Rockford, IL.

Bishop Dan Schwerin, newly assigned episcopal leader for the Northern Illinois Conference, spent his first month focused on meeting key leaders within the conference and the denomination. A cabinet retreat and bishop training, locally and across the country, filled his calendar. Late January and February were set aside to work on forming relationships across our conference.

To celebrate the Lunar New Year, Bishop Schwerin met with the Korean Caucus on Thursday, January 26. They connected over scripture, words of encouragement, kimchi, and rice cake soup. According to Korean tradition, you have to eat the soup on the Lunar New Year to become one year older officially.

During the first two full weeks of February, Bishop Schwerin traveled across all parts of our conference to make connections and relationships. During the Bishop's Days on the District, organized by the District Superintendents, Bishop Schwerin shared about himself, our Wesleyan heritage, and the importance of relationships. "It was beautiful to experience Bishop Schwerin's desire to get to know people, places, and testimonies and celebrate the ministries of the clergy and laity," District Superintendent Fabiola Grandon-Mayer shared. "His presence in our districts benefited the clergy and laity as they had the opportunity to listen to reflections, thoughts, and vision of our episcopal leader for the next years." Prayers, music, and food were enjoyed in fellowship in each of the five districts.

"Relationship is the essence of creation, everything exists in relationship. Relationships are at the heart of everything: protons and neutrons, the sea and dry land, cheese and burger." Bishop Schwerin noted when he met with clergy and laity. "Relationships are made of sameness and difference, but only difference teaches. Maybe your greatest gift to me is your difference from me."

The time spent within the districts also provided an opportunity to discuss integrity and wholeness-making, especially as it relates to our past, the BSA harm over decades of child abuse, and the challenges of disaffiliation.

continued on page 2, see from the cover



 From Your Bishop:

The believers devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching

Siblings in Christ,

Let me begin with gratitude: thank you for the warm welcome you continue to offer Julie and I, particularly, your support of the Days on the District. I write today, moved by a conversation I enjoyed with some clergy in the Prairie Central District.

We discussed some of the challenges of forming faith communities these days. Online worship portals have been a gift—but then how do we introduce growth in faith and the development of deeper commitment to a faith community? Many of those who attended in-person worship four times a month a short time ago, may attend once a month now. How might we deepen community with these shifts in participation? Imagine someone attending worship online for perhaps six months and summoning the courage for in-person worship—how do

we welcome, affirm, and give stewardship to their growth in faith?

These pastors were asking a pivotal question, and a Wesleyan one: how do we go deeper than worship as we develop world-changing disciples of Jesus? Part of John Wesley's genius was not just field preaching but following up with small groups and formation in a faith community.

Luke notes in the Book of Acts:

'The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers.' (Acts 2:42 CEV).

Note the door to the deeper aspects of community: 'they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching.' I write today to invite you to a holy Lent, and as you consider moving from Epiphany into Lent, please consider your

own formation. Is there a group or class you would participate in—not only for yourself but for the development of a faith community in this strange and fractured moment? What might it mean for you to 'devote yourself to the apostles' teaching?'

More deeply, consider the third general rule, as Bishop Job states it: 'stay in love with God.' There is nothing as transformative as a relationship with Jesus. Your love of God in Christ is the ultimate blueprint for transformation. Imagine that each of us observes a Holy Lent by staying in love with God and committing to study and faith community development—we would surely grow discipleship communities that increase radically inclusive love and justice. I will commit to the same in my own life.

Know that I am praying for you.



2023 Annual Conference registration opens April 3

Committee members continue to plan for the 184th session of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference that will be held June 6-8, 2023 at the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center at 1551 N. Thoreau Dr., Schaumburg, Ill.

Things to Know:

- Online registration begins Monday, April 3, and will close Sunday, May 28.

There will be no on-site registration

- April 3 - April 28 - Early bird registration \$100/person
- April 29 - May 28 - \$125/person
- Clergy session will be held on May 23.
- In addition to the regular business of annual conference, we will celebrate all who are retiring in a Retirement Service on Wednesday morning, June 7. The Ordination Service will take place on Tuesday evening, June 6. We will honor those who have transitioned into eternal life in a Memorial Service on Thursday morning, June 8. Please remember to submit names of Lay Members to Annual Conference who have died since May 2022 to communications@umcnic.org. All families, friends, and congregations are welcome to attend all the services.

A few things to note:

- ALL historical documents and proposed legislation for the conference must be submitted by April 3, 2023, to JoAnn Ray through an online submission

form. The new form will help streamline submissions, and a link to the form can be found on umcnic.org/AC2023. No exceptions, please. Legislation will be posted online by May 5.

- Requests for presentations, including media and videos to be projected on the screens, will need to be submitted and preapproved. We will do our best to schedule presentations as time and agenda permit. Most presentations will be shared as pre-recorded video via the NIC website and/or possibly during breaks. The presentation request form is available on umcnic.org/AC2023. All Videos and Media are due May 9.
- The Annual Conference Committee has done an extensive investigation and exhausted options for providing safe and friendly childcare on-site at the 2023 annual conference. We regret the limitations that prevent us from providing on-site childcare. Clergy and lay members are encouraged to begin thinking of alternative plans for their children. If you needed or were depending on on-site childcare services, limited funds are available for Childcare Scholarships to help offset childcare costs. Families applying need to be registered members of Annual Conference and have children under the age of 12. Applications will be available online and are due May 15. The scholarship request form is available on umcnic.org/AC2023.
- Our onsite Accessibility Coordinators will be present to help with any needs (vision, movement, hearing, etc.), within our ability. Please be sure to indicate in your registration how we can extend welcome and hospitality to you during Annual Conference.
- We need ushers, plenary pages, legislative section leaders, greeters, secretarial pool members, and more to help Annual Conference run smoothly and efficiently. Please get in touch with Bri Wadlington, Events Coordinator, at events@umcnic.org if you are interested in serving as a volunteer for a day or even part of a day or if you have questions. No previous experience is necessary.
- Display Tables registration will be opening soon. The registration form will be made available by March 15 online at umcnic.org/AC2023.
- Pre-conference briefings will be held online on Tues. May 30 at 7:00 pm and Wed. May 31 at 10:00 am. A recording of the briefings will be available for watching online afterward.
- Hotel Registrations are available at Renaissance Schaumburg: The rate is \$169 plus 11% tax. The link for registrations will be posted in late March at umcnic.org/AC2023.
- More updates and details will be posted in the NIC eNews and on the website at umcnic.org/AC20223. Remember to sign up for eNews if you have not already done so at umcnic.org/communications/enews-archive.

From the Cover

Information was shared regarding disaffiliation, and the floor was opened for questions. "No one needs to leave the UMC," Bishop Schwerin reminded us. "There has been difference in the body of Christ since Acts 15, since Peter & Paul. There will always be relationships of sameness and difference in the church. There will always be theological diversity. This has long been a reconciling conference, an inclusive table is at the heart of the invitation from Christ. I will speak well of those with whom I differ and relate to all for building up the unity of the body of Christ. I will be your bishop." The NIC Cabinet is currently working with 15 churches exploring their future and the possibility of disaffiliation.

While Bishop Schwerin was visiting the districts, the District Superintendents took him around to meet church leaders and ministries in their areas. He met with the

mayor in Rockford, visited churches in Chicago, including St. Matthew and Grace of Logan Square, and prayed over the construction site for DeKalb: First. He also explored the work of three river town churches on the Prairie Central District working cooperatively, Geneva, Batavia and St. Charles: Baker Memorial, who are all partnering to bring ministries to their area.

Bishop Schwerin also shared a video message during Laity Convocation 2023, a hybrid event held in three different locations and on-line. He met in person and prayed with those gathering at Disciples UMC in Mount Morris. His video message reminded us that we are sent out to work in the community. Mark Manzi, Conference Co-Lay Leader, expressed his gratitude. "Bishop Schwerin understands our goal of making community ministry happen. His words were an inspiration to all those who

attended." The Bishop's time at Disciples UMC was also a time for him to learn about the rich history of the Northern Illinois Conference and the Rock River Conference with a beautiful display created by Sally Gray. (more information about Laity Convocation on page 6)

More time for building relationship is approaching as the Bishop joins the clergy at the Order of Elders meeting on Feb. 28, meets with Local Pastors, Associate Members, Certified Lay Ministers, and District Superintendent Supply during their spring meeting on March 25, attends a Congregational Development and Redevelopment planning day, and participates in the Annual Conference Shepherding Team Spring Retreat.

View a video gallery of snapshots of the Bishop's travels across the district at umcnic.org/news/connecting-and-forming-relationships-across-the-conference.

Bishop's Announces – New Prairie North District Superintendent



Rev. Dr. Hwa-Young Chong, Prairie North District Superintendent

Bishop Dan Schwerin is pleased to announce the appointment of Rev. Dr. Hwa-Young Chong as Prairie North District Superintendent, effective July 1, 2023. Rev. Chong currently serves at Naperville: Community and will follow Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer who has been appointed as Director of Connectional Ministries, effective July 1, 2023.

“In my time of prayer and discernment with the Northern Illinois Conference Cabinet, while

also listening to the Prairie North Superintendency Committee, I heard the need for a Superintendent with a hospitable and supportive heart. Someone who is theologically grounded and effective in ministry. Someone who can love the laity and clergy we are called to be in ministry with. I believe that person is Rev. Hwa-Young Chong. I am excited to work with Rev. Chong’s gifts in theological reflection and to see her gifts in pastoral ministry unfold as a superintendent of the whole conference, assigned to work with the faithful people of Prairie North” said Bishop Dan.

Rev. Chong was born in Seoul, South Korea, to a family that had been practicing Methodists for four generations. Faith has always been an important part of her upbringing.

Her education includes a B.A. in Christian Studies from Ewha Women’s University in Seoul, Korea, and M.Div. & Ph.D. in Theology from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois. She was ordained elder in the Northern Illinois Conference in 1995 and has served local churches in cross-cultural and cross-racial settings.

Rev. Chong shared her response to my invitation, “I am deeply humbled to be appointed by Bishop Schwerin to serve as the District Superintendent of the Prairie North District. I sense “fear and trembling” (Phil.2:12) in this new role. I have admired Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer’s leadership and hope to work with the pastors and laity of the 73 churches in Prairie North to build upon her fruitful ministry. I am excited to learn more about the churches and communities in Prairie North. I pray that God will use all my gifts and experiences to strengthen our common mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. I am grateful for Bishop Schwerin’s trust in my leadership and look forward to serving the Northern Illinois Conference as a cabinet member. I appreciate all your prayers in this time of transition.”

Hwa-Young is deeply grateful for her call to ministry. She grew up with several Methodist pastors in her family, including her grand-aunt, one of the first two clergywomen ordained in the Korean Methodist Church in 1956. Yet, she never anticipated becoming a pastor. While serving homeless children as part of her volunteer

work in college, she sensed her first call to ministry. She came to the United States to pursue advanced degrees in theology. It was while serving as a student pastor at Bethany UMC in Highland Park that she felt confirmed of her call.

She loves ministry and considers the church a dynamic movement through which all people of God partner to bring a positive transformation in the world. Serving local churches has been a blessing. Passionate about sharing Christ’s love and grace, she is committed to congregational vitality, spiritual practices, lifelong learning, peace and justice, and ecumenism. Deeply rooted in Wesleyan theology, Hwa-Young strives to practice personal holiness and social holiness in her daily life.

Her connectional leadership includes serving the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry and the Annual Conference Shepherding Team. She has taught courses in theology, spirituality, and leadership at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary as an adjunct faculty member. She also has led workshops and classes for pastors and laity on theology, spirituality, and leadership, including a 5-day academy of spiritual formation. She is married to Dr. Thomas Smith, a professor at Northern Illinois University. They have two adult children, Dahee and Minji. Hwa-Young’s family enjoys fine arts activities, cross-cultural engagements, and volunteer work.

Please hold Rev. Dr. Chong, her family, and everyone in an appointment transition in prayer.

Church leaders mourn Tyre Nichols, seek change

By Heather Hahn, Assistant News Editor for UM News.



The Rev. Deborah Smith, senior pastor of Centenary United Methodist Church, introduces Tennessee-Western Kentucky Bishop Bill McAlilly before his sermon at the Memphis congregation Jan. 29. The bishop chose “Love and Justice” as his topic, preaching to those grieving the death of Tyre Nichols, a Black man who died after being beaten by police. Screenshot courtesy of Centenary United Methodist via Facebook by UM News.

Centenary United Methodist Church’s regular Sunday worship service on Sun., Jan. 29 was anything but routine. The Memphis, Tennessee, church — where the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. met with striking sanitation workers just days before being assassinated — now gathered to mourn Tyre Nichols, another man whose brutal death has shaken the national conscience.

The Rev. Deborah Smith, the church’s senior pastor who had marched with King in Memphis,

opened the worship service by quoting King’s famous Letter from a Birmingham Jail: “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

That idea is a key part of how Centenary lives out its Christian faith, Smith said.

“Tyre faced a gross injustice,” she later told United Methodist News. “And he’s one of those who perhaps could be classified as somebody on the margins of society. ... Jesus came preaching love, justice and mercy. And here we are, we’re still doing that.”

The Centenary congregants are among the United Methodists joining in grief and calls for change in the days since the city of Memphis released body camera footage showing police kicking, pepper-spraying and punching Nichols after a Jan. 7 traffic stop. The 29-year-old Black man, who loved skateboarding and photography, died of his injuries three days later — leaving behind devastated friends and family including a 4-year-old son and a loving mother he cried out for in his pain. Nichols will be laid to rest on Feb. 1.

“There are absolutely no words to express the feelings attached to the death of Tyre Nichols,” said Council of Bishops President Thomas J. Bickerton, who also leads the New York Conference. “As a parent, it is heartbreaking to hear a young man cry out for his mother. As a pastor, it is

heartbreaking to imagine the grief felt by parents who know that this didn’t need to happen.”

But he added in the midst of heartbreak, it remains important to “not only lament but also continue to call all people to the standard of life established by Jesus and proclaimed by God’s church.”

The Rev. Antoine “Tony” Love said he thinks the church has a role to play in addressing the heartbreak. He is the chair of Black Methodists for Church Renewal, The United Methodist Church’s official Black caucus.

“I think the church has to really help us to reclaim our ability to see people,” said Love, who is also assistant to the bishop in the Baltimore-Washington Conference. “The world and the culture teach us how to see through people — looking at people without really seeing them. I don’t really understand how you can beat another individual unless you don’t really see them, you don’t see their humanity.”

Nichols’ death came nearly three years after George Floyd took his last breath under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer, sparking protests nationwide and a renewed commitment among United Methodist bishops to antiracism work.

Since Nichols’ death, five Memphis police officers have been fired and now face charges of second-degree murder. On Jan. 30, the Memphis Police Department confirmed it has suspended two more officers — one of whom used a stun gun on Nichols. The Memphis Fire Department also has fired three EMTs who, the department says, violated protocol at the scene.

Still, even in this pursuit of accountability, some have pointed to racial discrepancies. The five officers facing charges are Black and the officer who shot Nichols with a Taser, and is at this point only on suspension, is white.

The Rev. Dennis Blackwell, United Methodist pastor at Asbury Community Church in Woodlynne, New Jersey, noted that just because many of the officers involved were Black does not rule out systemic racism’s role in Nichols’ death.

The officers involved were the product of a system “laced with implicit bias against brown and Black people, against the poor, against the marginalized,” Blackwell said.

“When you socialize in the current context of that system, then you will carry out the system’s evil demands and evil expectations against people who the system has deemed do not have any value or self-worth.”

Blackwell also urges United Methodists to support federal action for police reform such as the proposed George Floyd Justice in Policing Act as well as support for voting rights.

But even amid prayers and advocacy, many are asking how to stop acts of violence at the hands of police — the people communities rely on to serve and protect. As many who watched the video footage observed, Nichols did everything he could to de-escalate the situation.

Many Christians are also wondering how they might make real the beloved community Christ modeled and King preached.

Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference Bishop Bill McAlilly, whose area includes Memphis, addressed those questions during his Sunday sermon at Centenary United Methodist Church.

“My prayer is that Memphis will become the catalyst for these senseless murders to end as we pursue this call for justice — justice for all,” he preached. “Might this city — this moment in time — be a wakeup call for the United States of America to say, ‘Enough. Enough is enough.’”

The bishop acknowledged he had mixed feelings as he stood in Centenary’s pulpit that morning. His nephew was a police officer who was killed in the line of duty, and like Nichols, his nephew was a father who left behind young children.

Nevertheless, McAlilly wanted to speak to God’s call for love and justice even in this dark time.

“God takes sides, and the church ought to be taking sides also,” he preached. “Somebody’s going to critique my sermon this morning and challenge me, saying, ‘Doesn’t God love everybody?’ Well, yeah, he does love everybody.”

“But a close reading of Scripture tells us that God has a track record for paying particular attention to those whom society has overlooked. God comes to the aid of the mistreated, and he prioritizes their care and their well-being.”

The bishop likewise wanted to offer support and comfort to a worshipping community where many have first-hand experience with discrimination and danger at the hands of police.

That includes Smith, Centenary’s current pastor and a former district superintendent.

As a college freshman, she joined what she expected to be a peaceful march led by King in solidarity with striking sanitation workers. But she saw Memphis police officers

continued on page 4, see Tyre Nichols

Chicken noodle dinner unites merged church to its past

By Pastor Ron DeBaun, Hope UMC in Joliet IL

This year marks the 107th event of a tradition that was started by Sharon UMC in Plainfield. Since 1914, the congregants of Sharon have joined together to make and serve their Chicken Noodle Dinner, on the Friday prior to Ash Wednesday. In the long and rich tradition of the German Evangelical Church, the congregants are farmers and cooks. In the early years, the farmers killed and cleaned the chickens which had been raised on the local farms. They were cooked, deboned, and prepared to be added to the homemade noodles made by the women.

This whole church event had been carried down through the generations and families and continued to be a vital ministry, changed up in recent years, by some modern techniques. Even when it became difficult in the last few years to pull it together, the congregation rallied to keep the tradition alive. Then like so many, Sharon UMC was negatively affected by the pandemic. This, coupled with an aging congregation, meant that the tradition was one of the things that we knew we would be losing. We thought 2020 was our last dinner.

In late fall of 2021, talk began about closing our venerable church. And the most wonderful thing happened, a chance to make a merger. We began the process of merging with Hope UMC in Joliet. Due to the connectional heritage of the United Methodist Church, we quickly understood that we were all part of God's church,

worshiping in different locations. We identified our "why", (why are we a church, why is God calling us to do this, why closing a building could be a step forward in our ministry, why are we better equipped to share the good news of Jesus Christ once merged), realizing that we were stronger together as ministers of transformation in God's kingdom. The predominant "why" was the opportunity to continue to be a church in mission, a body of faithful souls who could join forces with other like-minded Christian stewards who together could be a force for good in our communities. This merger was a lifeline, giving us the opportunity to use our gifts and passions to love and serve our neighbors.

The sadness of closing something you've known, perhaps all your life, is jarring; there is no denying that. Yet when you approach the change with Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors, always focusing on the "why," what you once thought you had lost is brought back to life tenfold with new friends.

The Friday before Ash Wednesday, 2/17, with complete commitment from our combined congregations, we hosted an Old Tradition in a New Location. It was a blessing to keep the connection to our past dinners looking forward



Members of Hope UMC in Joliet shred chicken in preparation for the chicken noodle dinner.

to our merged futures. And for this small church, big on mission, we are delighted that the proceeds of the sale will go back into the community to support those who may need a hand up.

If you or your congregation is interested in learning more about Vital Partnerships as a way to help your church thrive, reach out to Rev. Martin Lee, Director of Congregational Development & Redevelopment, at 312.346.9766 ext. 708 or mlee@umcnic.org.

Ashton UMC gives it a shot by Pastor Jan Shaulis



Ashton UMC volunteers ready to feed the student athletes.



Student athletes enjoying the fellowship at Ashton UMC.

The people of Ashton United Methodist Church really stepped up. For quite a while, many of them have been supporting the high school students by attending many of their events; true, some of these people are parents or grandparents of these students, but as we all know, life gets busy, and there are times when even parents or grandparents can't find the time to attend school events, but these people did; including their pastor, Pastor Jan Shaulis.

At one of the basketball games, Pastor Jan said to the coach, Mike Messer, "We need to find a way to honor these kids; maybe a breakfast or a pizza night." Coach Messer replied that they would be having a Saturday game in a couple of weeks, so breakfast would be nice before the game.

By the end of the game, word had been spread, and people had volunteered to bring the pancake mix, orange juice, and milk. A local farm store had even volunteered to supply all the sausages. "Wow!" was all Pastor Jan could say. That Sunday, she passed around a sign-up sheet and prayed she would be able to get 7 or 8 people to volunteer to help; she got 18.

They made invitations to give to each youth of the Jr. Varsity and Varsity teams of both boys and girls, their

coaches, and the cheerleaders, as well as a few guests; a total of around 75 people.

Again, Pastor Jan prayed, this time for 25 youth to show up; 65 came. The following Saturday, the youth were invited back for a movie and pizza night, 18 people showed up and had a really great time. They also spent time talking about what they would enjoy doing. Yes, some of the usual things were discussed, like bowling; but Pastor Jan was surprised when many of the youth brought up simple things like chess and monopoly.

This congregation has been working on the idea of redesigning a Sunday school room into a youth room. The parents of a young man, 15 years old, who died this past summer, have been helping with ideas for this room; they are using much of the memorial money to make this a special place where the youth of the community may come and be together. Pastor Jan has many dreams of making a second room for them where it will be a little quieter, and they can play chess or monopoly, have study groups, or simply talk.

By showing up at games, providing food, and openly listening, this is really a congregation that has accepted the challenge of being the hands of Christ to the community.

Tyre Nichols (continued from page 3)

"These are days for lament, and renewed commitment to justice. I lament the murder of Tyre Nichols at the hands of the officers in Memphis. I lament the stress officers are experiencing. I lament the loss of a son and father. We need to affirm that Black Lives Matter and our systems and relationships must act accordingly. May our actions produce equity that makes Christ known."
- Bishop Dan Schwerin

A Prayer of Lament for Tyre Nichols and A Call for an End to Police Brutality shared by Rev. Violet Johnicker Associate Director of Rockford Urban Ministries can be read at umcnic.org/news/a-message-from-the-bishop-tyre-nichols.

suddenly come in with batons to break up the march. Smith was able to escape to a telephone booth but watched as the police battered her fellow protesters.

She eventually was able to dodge through the crowd to reach the safety of her grandfather's shop. But nearly 55 years later, she was still shaken recalling the experience.

"That's an image I'll never forget because they were just recklessly hitting people," she told UM News.

The Rev. Cynthia Davis, a retired district superintendent who also attended Centenary's service, recounted her family's traumatic experience with law enforcement. She said shortly after the beating of Rodney King in the early 1990s, her brother was beaten by Nashville police — even

though he was a fellow officer.

Her brother was on an undercover sting and got pulled over because his police-issued vehicle had expired tags. Police officers pulled him out of the car, threw him on the ground, pinned him with their knees and began hitting him. Davis said she doesn't know what would have happened had her brother's supervisor not seen what had happened and intervened.

At a time of so much upheaval in The United Methodist Church, Davis said she would like to see church members act as a unified body of believers who say: "No more."

"This has to stop in every city, every town, every county," she said. "Everybody needs to say violence is not the way of God."



Apportionments paid help aid our connection

Because of your apportionment giving in 2022, the Northern Illinois Conference will be able to help fund the conference budget for programs and ministries both locally and globally. Apportionments denote an understanding that the purpose of the church is not just to care for its members, but also to reach beyond itself to engage with the world, minister to the world, and be in mission to the world. They are used to fund our church's global mission and witness, to help provide the necessary structure to respond in moments of crisis locally, nationally, and internationally, and to develop and nurture the leaders we need today and tomorrow.

"During a time of financial uncertainty, we are blessed and thankful for our many churches that fulfill their apportionments to allow the Conference to continue our mission as United Methodists," Lonnie Chaffin, Conference Treasurer, expressed. The Northern Illinois Conference is thankful to its many churches for their faithful apportionment giving and celebrates those who paid in full. In 2022, 173 churches paid 100% of their calculated apportionments compared to 198 in 2021.

"As I meet lay and clergy across the Northern Illinois Conference, I am excited about the deep faith, creativity, and missional heart I am experiencing. The 2022 report on apportionments is a witness to this strength and deeply

rooted understanding of God's abundance," commented Bishop Schwerin. "I look forward to our growth together in the years to come as we build on this work and strengthen our stewardship to reach discipleship of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We are more powerful together."

The Conference also celebrates the 35 churches that have consistently paid 100% for at least ten years. Grace UMC in Rockford is one of the churches that has paid their apportionments for at least the last 10 years. Rev. Sejoon Jang shared, "We believe it is a privilege to give to apportionments. We can do more & better together than we can alone. Together we can do things that a single individual church just can't do alone."

Because of generous and faithful giving in our local churches in 2022, the Northern Illinois Conference was able to pay \$1,366,179 to General Church apportionments and fully fund the conference budget. This payment represents a full payment of what our apportionment share would have been if the 2020 General Conference had been able to meet and approve the proposed budget for the next quadrennium (2021-2024). However, since the 2020 General Conference did not occur, Annual Conferences have been billed based on the budget passed for 2017-2020. The NIC apportionment share for 2022 was set at \$1,823,221. Our payment represents about 75% of this amount. "The Conference Council on Finance and Administration

(CCFA) is grateful for our local churches' continued generosity and faithfulness that allow us to be in ministry not only in Northern Illinois but worldwide through our general church apportionment giving," voiced Rev. Tammy Scott, CCFA chair.

In 2022, the NIC received \$4,305,601 in Conference apportionments and \$579,593 for General Church apportionments. The Conference apportionments received exceeded our estimates by \$259k. The amount we received for General Church apportionments represents about 37% of what was apportioned. So, how did we get \$1.3M for our General Church apportionment? We started with the nearly \$580k that was designated for the General Church. Then we added about \$660k from the Conference apportionment receipts and about \$100k from reserves that CCFA designated as available to reach 100% payment of the \$1.366M General Church apportionment.

"We appreciate the generosity and faithfulness to our shared ministry from the churches in Northern Illinois. Thank you for all you are doing to make disciples of Jesus Christ for transforming the world in your local communities, the NIC, and The UMC," said Scott. "Together, we are reaching new people, changing lives, and shining the light of Christ into the world."

For more information visit umcnic.org/apportionments.



Arlington Heights: First*	Chadwick: Hope	Chicago: Resurrection	Evanston: Emmanuel	Kingston*	Mount Carroll	Princeton: First*	Skokie: Jesus Loves Korean
Albany	Chana*	Chicago: South Shore	Evanston: First	Kirkland: First	Mount Morris: Disciples	Red Oak (Bureau)*	South Elgin: Community
Algonquin: Christ	Chemung	Chicago: Southlawn	Evanston: Sherman	Lanark	Mount Prospect:	River Forest	Sterling: First
Antioch	Chicago: Adalberto Memorial	Chicago: St. Mark	Evergreen Park: First	Leaf River	Sam Mool Korean	Rochelle	Sterling: Wesley*
Apple River	Chicago: Berry Memorial	Chicago: Union Avenue	Fairhaven	Leland	Mount Prospect: Trinity	Rockford: Aldersgate*	Stockton: Wesley
Argo Fay*	Chicago: Big Shoulders	Chicago: United Church of Rogers Park	Fenton*	Lemont	Naperville: Community	Rockford: Beth Eden	Sugar Grove
Aurora: Wesley	Chicago: Chicago Lawn	Chicago: Wesley*	Flowing Fourth (Closed)	Leon*	New Lenox*	Rockford: Centennial	Sycamore
Belvidere: First	Chicago: Clair Christian*	Chicago: West Ridge	Franklin Park: First	Libertyville*	Northbrook: Northbrook	Multicultural	Tampico*
Bolingbrook:	Chicago: Edison Park	Coleta*	Freeport: Harmony	Lockport: First	Norway	Rockford: Christ	Thomson*
Crossroads of Faith*	Chicago: El Redentor/ Redeemer of Calvary*	Creston	Freeport: Red Oak	Machesney Park: New Life UMC	Oak Lawn: First	Rockford: Evans*	Triumph*
Bolingbrook: Friendship	Chicago: Englewood/Rust	Dakota Rock Grove*	Galena	Malden	Oak Park: Euclid Avenue	Rockford: Grace*	Van Brocklin - Florence
Brookfield Compassion	Chicago: Faith	Davis Junction*	German Valley	Malta	Oak Park: First	Rockford: Harlem	Waterman*
Brookville	Chicago: First (Temple)	Deerfield: Christ	Green Garden*	Maple Park: Grace	Orland Park: Faith *	Roscoe	Waukegan: First
Buffalo Grove: Kingswood	Chicago: Hartzell Memorial	DeKalb: First	Hampshire: Zion	Marengo	Oswego: Wellspring	Roselle	Wheaton: Aldersgate
Burlington	Chicago: Humboldt Park	Des Plaines: First	Hanover*	McHenry: Mount Hope	Ottawa: First	Sandwich: United	Wheaton: Gary
Carol Stream: St. Andrew	Chicago: Hyde Park Korean	Des Plaines: Neuvo Amanecer Community	Harvey: Transformation	Melrose Park: Cosmopolitan	Palos	Scales Mound	Wheeling: First Korean
Cary	Chicago: Indo Pak	Dixon: Grace	Hebron	Mendota: First	Park Forest: Grace United Protestant	Schaumburg: Our Redeemer's	Willow
Cedarville	Chicago: Lincoln	Earlville*	Hinckley: First	Mendota: Zion	Park Ridge: First	Schaumburg: Our Saviour's	Winthrop Harbor: North
	Chicago: Morgan Park	Elgin: Journey of Hope	Hinsdale*	Millbrook	Paw Paw	Seneca: First	Prairie
	Chicago: Parish of the Holy Covenant	Elk Grove: Prince of Peace	Hunter*	Milledgeville*	Pecatonica	Serena	Woodridge
	Chicago: Ravenswood Fellowship	Elmhurst: Christ	Ingleside	Minooka	Plattville	Shannon: Bethel	Yorkville: Trinity
		Erie	Joliet: Grace	Morris: First*	Polo: Faith	Sheridan	Zion: Memorial
		Esmond*	Joliet: Hope	Morrison	Poplar Grove	Shirland*	
						Skokie: Central	*Notes 10 year + churches



Mission Links bridges churches and missions

The Northern Illinois Conference and the Conference Global Board of Ministries would like to thank the forty-three churches that went the second mile as 100% Mission Links churches. In addition to the apportionment dollars received for General Church and the Annual Conference, the NIC received over \$560,000 in 2nd Mile giving and almost \$100,000 in Special Sunday offerings.

To become a Mission Links 100% supporter (formerly Rainbow Covenant giving), apportionments (conference and general church) need to be paid 100%, and at least one project in each of the giving areas needs to be supported. "Mission Links giving is an amazing chance for churches to step up and support the projects that unite the Methodist faith in supporting those who need us," noted David Quinn, NIC Apportionments Administrator.

The Advance for Christ and His Church (The Advance) is the United Methodist program for designated mission giving through the NIC Mission Links program. As the accountable designated giving program of The United Methodist Church, The Advance serves as the leading conduit that allows churches, individuals, and organizations to support

missionaries and projects throughout the world in order to strengthen and sustain one another. Advance funds are specifically designated for particular projects or ministries, allowing the Church to advance the cause of Christ through new church development, disaster relief, missionary support, health services, and many other programs. "Each project in the Mission Links book connects to at least one of the beatitudes – and NIC's direct call to action in response to Jesus' words," recognized Shirley Pulgar-Hughes, Conference Secretary of Global Ministries.

Princeton UMC has been a long-time apportionment and Mission Links giving congregation. Rev. Ryan Sutton shared, "For Princeton First UMC, the understanding is that when you pay your apportionments, you support the greater church and provide for those in need - even those whom you may never meet. To this end, PFUMC has often had special offerings at the end of each year to ensure the apportionments are paid. And the extra mile giving provides the congregation with an extra helping of blessings - knowing they've gone above and beyond to provide what is needed."

Find a detailed listing of the missionaries supported by our Conference and choose the projects to support in our Mission Links booklet at umcnic.org/missionlinks.

Mission Links Churches

Antioch	Lockport: First
Argo Fay	Maple Park: Grace
Aurora: Wesley	Mendota: Zion
Carol Stream: St. Andrew	Millbrook
Cary	Milledgeville
Chicago: Morgan Park	Minooka
Chicago: Wesley	Morrison
DeKalb: First	Mount Morris: Disciples
Dixon: Grace	New Lenox
Earlville	Oak Park: Euclid Avenue
Esmond	Ottawa: First
Evanston: First	Princeton: First
Galena	Rockford: Beth Eden
Hanover	Roscoe
Hebron	Roselle
Hinckley: First	Sandwich: United
Hinsdale	Schaumburg: Our Saviour's
Joliet: Grace	Sterling: Wesley
Kingston	Triumph
Leland	Waukegan: First
Lemont	Woodridge
Libertyville	

Net Zero team seeks to Do No Harm to God's good creation

By Rev. Violet Johnicker, Pastor at Brooke Road UMC in Rockford, IL and Associate Director of Rockford Urban Ministries

"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," Bishop Dan Scherwin reflects. "The NIC Net Zero team will open conversations and help put new ways of stewarding the earth into action. This is the start of building and sharing long-term creation care efforts in our churches."

Bishop Schwerin's comments echo John Wesley's call to: do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God. Of all the areas in which living out these goals can be transformative, the one at the very center is the way we care for creation. Everything about how we live and every other issue we address is intertwined with the health of our planet. God gave us the beautiful gift of this Earth, and called us to be its stewards. Yet, we have used and abused that blessing in shortsighted ways, centering convenience and profits over people and all forms of life. (see UMC Social Principles paragraph 160.D United Methodist Book of Discipline.)

The Northern Illinois Conference has the vision to do no harm to our planet by reducing the emissions of our church properties as close as we can to zero. To work on

this goal, we are proud to announce the formation of the Net Zero Team, co-chaired by Richard Alton and Rev. Nancy Blade. On January 20th, leaders from all five districts gathered in Glenview to pray and plan together. The results of this meeting can be viewed in detail at econetnic.org/nic-net-zero-action-plan. Led by facilitators Bruce Williams and Samantha Sainsbury, five working teams were formed centered around the goals of creating educational resources, executing specific actions, sharing motivational communication, including nature in worship, and promoting conference-level activities.

"I have found so many things to celebrate as I learn more and more about the Northern Illinois Conference every day. The work of leaders in developing informational and actionable plans to care for creation is one of the gifts I celebrate," Bishop Dan Schwerin observes.

An ambitious work plan means that you'll be seeing much more from this team in the weeks and months to come, and we

encourage you to take this important work of being good stewards of God's good creation seriously. To learn more or get involved, follow the Net Zero Team Facebook page (search Eco-Sustainability Network) and visit the new website at www.econetnic.org.



The NIC Net Zero team met on Jan. 20, 2023 to begin planning NIC actions toward Net-Zero emissions goals

Laity Convocation 2023 focuses on community ministry



Three locations and online participation provided more opportunities for engagement. Barrington UMC (left), Orland Park (middle), and Mount Morris (right).

Laity Convocation 2023 was an opportunity to try something new. After two years of virtual gatherings, Co-Lay Leaders Mark Manzi, Eugene Williams, and Connie Augsburgberger decided that they wanted in-person participation at three locations. Being in three churches (Disciples UMC in Mt. Morris, Barrington UMC, and Faith UMC in Orland Park) provided the opportunity for fellowship and reduced the distance for participants to travel. Opportunities to attend virtually were also offered, and when connected at the three locations, all participants were able to learn together.

The theme for Laity Convocation was Thinking Outside the Church: Making Community Ministry Happen. The event started with a short worship experience, followed by a welcome and greeting from Bishop Schwerin. Reminding us that we are called to ministry in our own communities, Bishop Schwerin reflected on Luke 10:1-9 when he stated,

"We are sent on behalf of Jesus. In our relationships to make Christ known, the world is impacted. These are the ways that the kingdom of God delights and changes."

The day's Keynote speaker was David Teel, Director of Laity & Leadership at Discipleship Ministries. "Your call has a place, your place has a call, place your call," is one of the nuggets of wisdom supplied by David. Stories from visual artist Omari Booker and photographer Brandon Stanton of Humans of New York were shared as examples of people who reach out and pay attention. Breakout sessions were then held online and in the three locations for people to share and brainstorm about community ministry.

The program concluded with four Northern Illinois Conference churches sharing about how they reach out to their communities in ministry. Oregon UMC is working with the community to show God's love at the schools, the

fire department, Chamber of Commerce events, youth team community clean-ups, and more. Summer Youth Pop-ups lead into summer science and art camps and then flow into Wednesday night multi-generational gatherings at Wesley UMC in Aurora. Working with Chicago Methodist Senior Services, Berry UMC created dementia-friendly worship that has been blessing participants and worship leaders. Talking with small business leaders, First UMC in Franklin Park realized a need and created small business pop-up events that bring people into the church.

"We hope you have been inspired by what you've learned, and you'll be empowered to implement this information in your local churches and communities." Mark Manzi shared on behalf of his Co-Lay Leaders.

A recording of Laity Convocation and more information about the Board of Laity can be found at umcnic.org/laity.

UMCOR responds to earthquakes in Turkey and Syria

By Susan Clark, the Chief Communications Officer for Global Ministries and UMCOR



IBC staff serve meals to earthquake victims at Kilis Community Center. Photo: Courtesy of International Blue Crescent

A 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck southern Turkey at 4:17 a.m. on Monday, Feb. 6, 2023, the most powerful earthquake recorded since 1939. In the hours that followed, at least 78 aftershocks were reported, followed by a second earthquake of 7.5 magnitude.

The earthquake and aftershocks also impacted northwest Syria, where 4.1 million people depend on humanitarian assistance. Syrian communities, many of them women and children, are simultaneously facing an ongoing cholera outbreak and extreme winter weather, including heavy rain and snow.

Thousands have been killed in both countries, and deaths continue to rise as rescue crews seek survivors in collapsed buildings. The humanitarian response is

struggling to ramp up to meet the need among the devastation and winter weather.

UMCOR's longstanding humanitarian partner, International Blue Crescent (IBC), has multiple offices and project sites in Turkey. In IBC offices, people fill the halls as they seek shelter, warmth, and a hot meal. With the devastating damage to roads, transport and infrastructure, IBC has received hundreds of families in its Kilis Community Center for shelter, warm items, and hot meals since the first hours Monday morning. Kilis is serving as a major hub for coordination and relief efforts, including for cross-border response into Syria.

UMCOR has released initial solidarity grants to IBC and Forum for Development Culture and Dialogue (working in Syria) to

continued on page 8, see UMCOR Responds



Wed., April 26 - Mon., May 1

A historical and educational tour designed with intent and discernment to help journey-goers take action against racism. Each day will include a debriefing session, and advocacy training sessions will be conducted.

The cost will be \$999 for a single room (\$599 per person for double occupancy) for an inclusive 6-day, 5-night trip that will cover transportation, accommodations, entrance fees, and meals as we visit Nashville, Birmingham, Montgomery, Selma, and Memphis sites.

Other occupancy options are available. Full payment due on March 15. Please contact Amania Drane at adrane@umcnic.org for questions. Registration and more information at umcnic.org/2023civilrightspilgrimage.

EDUCATION & ACTION



Film series tackles issues head on

The Northern Illinois Conference Anti-Racism Task Force is pleased to present our 2023 Film Series. Last year, we journeyed together to prayerfully learn, engage, and tackle our personal and corporate role in addressing racism. For the 2023 Film Series, we are focused on increasing cultural competency and dialogue as a means to increase advocacy and participation in the spaces around the contexts, causes, and impacts of racism.

critical thinking about personal and systemic racism. We seek to do this by focusing on the challenges, issues, and perspectives of four diverse cultures that experience racism in unique circumstances. This year's Film Series consists of viewing a documentary film or movie each quarter, followed by expert-led discussions.

Discussions into the homes, centers, and our churches to discuss and have fellowship. Food and culture of that quarter's Table Discussion will be highlighted. Film plans and details can be found at umcnic.org/2023filmseries.

Our 2023 goal is for deeper growth and exploration of our commitment to reduce implicit bias and increase

We invite you to this year's Table

First Quarter Focus: Black History & Culture

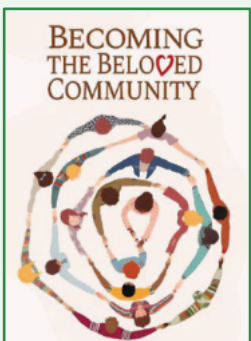
Illinois Holocaust Museum, 9603 Woods Drive, Skokie, IL

Docent led tour of *The Negro Motorist Green Book* exhibit and a discussion at the Illinois Holocaust Museum.

For cost and registration visit umcnic.org/calendar/23-film-series-the-green-book

Saturday, March 25, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

2023 Becoming the Beloved Community Workshops



The Northern Illinois Conference's anti-racism workshop Becoming the Beloved Community: How to Talk About Race in America announces its 2023 schedule:

- **April 15:** Rochelle UMC
- **April 29:** Special Youth Leaders presentation (location tba)
- **September 30:** Mt. Prospect: Trinity UMC
- **October 14:** Naperville: Community UMC
- **October 28:** Glen Ellyn: First UMC
- **November 11:** Hindsdale UMC

The workshop helps churches begin, re-energize, or re-focus their anti-racism journey. It not only

conveys essential information about race in America but also tries to encourage the process of forming relationships and alliances that will help us move towards more racially just and equitable churches and communities. Fighting the continuing scourge of racism was one of the three primary goals the Northern Illinois Conference set for itself in 2019. Hosting a Becoming the Beloved Community Workshop is one way a church can begin to fulfill that goal.

For more information about the workshop visit umcnic.org/calendar/becoming-beloved-community



Spring Lay Academies

Ministries is holding different Lay Academies across the conference:

- **Lake North - 2 courses offered:** Saturdays, starting March 18, or Thursdays, Starting March 2
- **Lake South - 5 courses offered:** Saturday, March 4 and 11
- **Prairie Central - 4 courses offered:** Sunday, March 5, 12, 19 and 26
- **Prairie South - 4 courses offered:** Saturday, March 11 and 18

Visit www.umcnic.org/calendar for more info and registration. More Lay Academies coming this Summer.



Forward and onward

By Deaconess Catherine Inserra, Manager of Faith and Community Relations, Kids Above All

When Rev. William Lenters (twice retired) joined the United Voices for Children (UVC) board near the end of 2021 as the new liaison for Rosecrance, he appeared on screen for the board meeting and stated, "I can't quit!" And this mantra stuck. This new year is one with multiple challenges facing our churches, agencies, and, most importantly, our kids. UVC can't quit!

It's surprising how many people do not know about UVC, how it came to be, and the impact it continues to make for the children and youth served by MYSI, Kids Above All, and Rosecrance, the three child-serving agencies founded by Methodists. If you missed last year's virtual event, Raising Our Voices through Resources - A Bridge for the Gap, visit the Events page of the UVC Website unitedvoicesforchildren.org.

This year, LaTonia Booth-Johnson, liaison from MYSI, expressed deep gratitude for how the 5th Sunday Appeals generate financial support to help young adults purchase essential resources for independent living. Did you know the 5th Sunday Appeal came into existence officially in 1979 because of the leadership of Rev. Coyd Taggart, Executive Director of the Lake Bluff/Chicago Homes for Children (Kids Above All)? It was during the 1979 annual conference when United Voices for Children (UVC) was officially launched! The mission was and is two-fold: a) to

be an advocate for children, youth, and families in need; and b) to foster financial support from local NIC congregations and individuals for our three child-serving agencies today.

Deaconess Catherine Inserra, the liaison from Kids Above All, shares, "UVC can shape the courage for people to act and advocate." For 45 years, UVC is a bridge for the gap for our kids who endure too much suffering. There are no shortages of critical needs for our kids, yet there is a shortage of individuals willing to serve on the board, and the 5th Sunday Appeal is less appealing. This year and moving forward, UVC believes its advocacy for our kids is crucial.

UVC is moving forward and onward. President Rev. Tim Biel, Jr. strives to lead the board using a framework consisting of four pillars to embrace the board's goals for advocacy and support: inclusivity, equity, justice, and accessibility. In addition to Rev. Biel's leadership currently, UVC is grateful for past presidents such as Rev. Robert Biekman, Kim Coffing, and Lois Moreland Dean. The list of board members serving during the last two decades, although not comprehensive, is a hearty one, including Rev. Pamela Pirtle, Ed Miner, Deacons Erin Simmons, Grant Swanson, Wes Dorr, and Christine Hides, Robbie Moultrie UMW), Jacki Bogolia, Deaconess Joy Hayag, Rev.



◀ UVC leaders at the 2019 Skin in the Game event on being Anti-Racist Back row left to right: Rev. Robert Biekman, Rev. Pamela Pirtle, Kinzie Taya, Dr. Marcus Campbell, Rev. Tim Biel, Jr., Deaconess Catherine Inserra, Mark Bowman Front row left to right: Deaconess Joy Hayag, Lois Moreland-Dean, Aracely Canchola, Deacon Wes Dorr, Walton Davis, Jr., Jacki Bogolia, Emily Lipinski.

Beverly Dukes (former Policy Coordinator), Diane Strezlecki (former Communications Coordinator), Mark Bowman (former Communications Coordinator), and Emily Lipinski (former liaison for Rosecrance Health Network); and the late Nellie Winters (UMW) and Walton Davis, Jr. for their faithful, excellent service.

Then and now, especially now, individuals who serve with UVC work diligently with local congregations, church-related efforts, and community partners like Children's Advocates for Change, with leadership from Dr. Tasha Green Cruzat, President, and Mitch Lifson, Vice President of Public Policy, to keep advocacy front and center for all kids served by these United Methodist-affiliated agencies.

UVC can't quit! Join us by:

1. Attending our event during Annual Conference and picking up a special gift. Stay tuned for more details.
2. Highlighting the 5th Sunday Appeals on April 30, July 30, Oct. 29, and Dec. 31. Donating can be done easily online. unitedvoicesforchildren.org/donate
3. Inviting a board member to speak virtually or in person during a service.

For info, contact UVC president Rev. Tim Biel, Jr. at revbiel@gmail.com



DYK DID YOU KNOW?

Returning to 3D

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

In "The Wizard of Oz" Dorothy lost and wandering in a strange world, has a mantra "there's no place like home, there's no place like home." Home can mean many things. Home is a place. Home can be a feeling of the comfortable or the familiar. Home can be a group or even eating comfort food no matter where we find ourselves.

For United Methodists in Northern Illinois, home is often those places where we gather to reconnect, reenergize and remember that we are in this together. As we turned the calendar to 2023, the Northern Illinois Conference welcomed our new bishop and launched more in-person gatherings than we have held for the last three years. During these first two months of 2023, we have hosted District Leadership Training Events, a hybrid Laity Convocation, five clergy gatherings, and five laity gatherings designed to meet Bishop Dan Schwerin.

Before the month is out, our Order of Elders will also have gathered in person for the first time since 2020, and we will participate in the Installation of Bishop Dan Schwerin. Upwards of 2,000 people will have participated

in one event or more related to the Northern Illinois Conference in the first eight weeks of 2023!

For the people called United Methodists, who thrive in connection and celebrate community, "there is no place like home" as we gather beyond our local church and connect in the district, conference, and beyond.

It feels good to be face-to-face, to see in 3 dimensions rather than a little square on the screen. It has been great to laugh and share stories and hear about the adventures of ministry in our congregations and communities. The energy has been wonderful, and joyful. There has been an eagerness to reconnect, learn together, and be one in Christ.

This reconnecting reminds me of the strengths of our Wesleyan heritage. John Wesley understood that we are better together and that personal spiritual disciplines without corporate worship cannot sustain us. That the balance of social and personal holiness is our strength.

There are many troubling things happening in the world. The death toll in Turkey and Syria following an

earthquake is staggering. The continued war in Ukraine brings us to our knees in prayer. Rising tensions between governments, spy balloons, and international threats create dis-ease. Churches leaving the United Methodist family over issues of human sexuality continue to be a topic of debate and a focus taking us away from our mission. Verbal warfare and incivility breed unrest. Racial violence breaks our hearts and challenges us to find a different way. As we name the challenges in our world, we might be tempted to join Dorothy in "The Wizard of Oz," wandering through a fantasy land rather than navigating reality. The yellow brick road sounds safer than the way of the cross.

As we prepare to enter into the Season of Lent, I am grateful for the reconnecting that is going on throughout our conference. Signs of life and hopeful ministry are all around us. In this Lenten Season, may we continue to ground ourselves in faith, listening for God's voice, and celebrating our spiritual home in community with one another.

Clergy Appointments and Retirements

Bishop Dan Schwerin announces the following clergy appointments and retirements for the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church, effective July 1, 2023 (unless otherwise noted):

Sharon Rice (Full Deacon) to Naperville: Community (Prairie Central District) from Belvidere: First (Prairie North District). Effective January 1.

Jay Shin (Local Pastor) to Belvidere: First Associate (1/2 time) (Prairie North District) while continuing ministry at Capron UMC/Chemung UMC (Prairie North District). Effective January 1.

Gary Rich (Local Pastor) to Cedarville in retirement (1/4 time) (Prairie North District). Gary currently serves both Freeport: Red Oak and Cedarville (Prairie North District).

Arlene Christopherson (Full Elder) to Assistant to the Bishop from the joint appointment as Director of Connectional Ministries and Assistant to the Bishop.

Fabiola Grandon Mayer (Full Elder) to Director of Connectional Ministries from Prairie North District Superintendent. Fabiola follows Arlene Christopherson who will remain as the Assistant to the Bishop.

David Aslesen (Full Elder) to St. Charles: Baker Memorial (Prairie Central District) from Park Ridge: First (Lake North District). David follows Mary Zajac who is retiring.

Melissa Meyers (Full Elder) to Batavia (Prairie Central District) from Freeport: Faith (Prairie North District). Melissa follows Cynthia Anderson who is retiring.

Karen Sersen (Local Pastor) will conclude her ministry at Fox River Grove: Community (Prairie Central).

Hwa-Young Chong (Full Elder) to Prairie North District Superintendent from Naperville: Community (Prairie Central District). Hwa-Young follows Fabiola Grandon-Mayer who is appointed to Director of Connectional Ministries.

Scott Himel (Full Elder) to Park Ridge: First (Lake North District) from Glencoe: Northshore (Lake North District). Scott follows David Aslesen who is appointed to St. Charles: Baker Memorial (Prairie Central District)

Jacob Tipantasig-Wolverton (Licensed Local Pastor) to Naperville: Community (Prairie Central District) transferred from the Indiana Conference. Jacob follows Hwa-Young Chong who is appointed to Prairie North District Superintendent.

Josiah Montgomery (Licensed Local Pastor) to Chicago: Hartzell Memorial (Lake South District) from Chicago: East Side. Josiah follows Richard Mosley (Retired 346.1) who is serving as the interim.

UMCOR Responds (cont.) from page 6

help provide tents, heaters, blankets, warm clothes, ready-to-eat meals, and first aid kits to those who have been displaced. UMCOR staff members are also in touch with other partners in the region. Additional updates will be provided as more information becomes available.

Please join UMCOR in prayer for the many people affected by these devastating earthquakes, including the rescue crews seeking survivors and those caring for the injured and displaced.

Support relief and recovery efforts for this and other international disasters by donating to Advance # 982450 at umcmmission.org/umcor.



Leading the Laity

By Eugene Williams, NIC Co-Lay Leader

Let us center ourselves as we begin this season of lent. These 40 days of Lent are meant to be a time of repentance. Indeed, these 40 days are especially set aside to praise and worship the Lord by reading the bible and praying even more than we usually do, so we can achieve a deeper intimacy with the Lord. Lent is not only a time for prayer, fasting, and alms-giving; it is also a time for us to work together in servant leadership.

As your Conference Co-Lay Leaders, Connie, Mark, and I encourage Laity to continue to be in an attitude of servant ministry, working hand-in-hand with our clergy partners and sisters and brothers in Christ for the building of His kingdom here on earth. As we continue on this journey to Easter, let us not get hung up on what we give up in terms of sweets, meat, smoking, or drinking, etc. Instead, let us repent, forgive and continue to focus on the word of God.

As we journey toward and reflect upon His mighty works at Calvary, we have an opportunity

for a new beginning; an opportunity for cleansing; a chance to see all things new; a chance to see how God is working in and through us in the here and now. Read and meditate on Psalm 51, where you will find the following, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love. According to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin."

Sisters and Brothers, in times like these, you need an anchor. In times like these, you need a Savior. So be very sure, be very sure that your anchor holds and grips the solid rock. That rock is Jesus Christ, He is the only one!

Thank you for your support of Laity Convocation, Lay Servant Academies, and our District Leadership Training events. Continue to be engaged in the life of the church, the district, and the conference to be fully informed and equipped to serve the church and the community.

May God continue to bless you real good!

Job Openings

For the latest job openings in the Northern Illinois Conference and across the connection, visit www.umcnic.org/jobs.

Stay Connected

Sign up for the weekly NIC eNews, Appointment Announcements and Sympathy notices. Visit www.umcnic.org and scroll down and click on "Sign up for our Newsletter" to enter your name and email.

Submissions

Please submit items at least two weeks prior to publication date. Include your name, address, email, phone number and name of local church. Space is limited.

Electronic submissions are preferred with high-resolution attached jpegs. Submissions will be edited at the discretion of the Communications staff.

How to Contact Us

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