

Practicing social distancing, Bishop Sally Dyck and Assistant to the Bishop Rev. Arlene Christopherson stand by for the first-ever virtual Northern Illinois Annual Conference held via a Zoom webinar.

## A different kind of Annual Conference

By Anne Marie Gerhardt, Dir. of Communications

The 181st Northern Illinois Annual Conference with the theme “Y Church” was marked by some firsts and lasts. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and efforts to keep members safe and healthy, the first-ever virtual conference was held as a one-day webinar on Nov. 14.

More than 630 members participated in the five-and-a-half-hour interactive session through Zoom video conferencing. Annual Conference members viewed pre-recorded messages and music videos, and voted on key legislation. The Annual Conference approved a requirement for anti-racism training for clergy, a \$4.4 million 2021 budget, and a redistricting plan to reduce the number of districts from six to five.

This was also Bishop Sally Dyck’s last annual conference session as an active bishop and eight years as the NIC’s episcopal leader. With the postponement of the General and Jurisdictional conferences, Dyck shifted her retirement date to December 31, 2020, in order to see the conference through the Annual Conference meeting.

“It was over a year ago that I proposed the theme “Y Church” to help us focus on what it means to be the church in our challenging times—and then the times just got more and more challenging!” Dyck said. “Not being able to gather in person has forced us all to think about what the church means to us and what’s most important in being church in the world today. Sure enough, during the pandemic, some churches across our conference have focused on their ‘why’ and found new ways of ‘how’ to be church!”

In her last Episcopal Address, delivered socially distanced behind cameras in the Barrington United Methodist Church sanctuary, she reflected more on the theme “Y Church.”

“Our theme is based on the scripture 1 Peter 3:15b: ‘Always be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks you why you have hope in Christ Jesus.’ We may feel that our hope is flagging from day to day, but yet it’s exactly for times like these that we need not only a personal response to why church, but a community of faith that can answer that question,” Dyck said. To read and watch her Episcopal Address, go to [umcnic.org/news/episcopal-address-why-church](http://umcnic.org/news/episcopal-address-why-church).

### Laity Address

The Laity Address was also delivered virtually through a prerecorded message. This was NIC Co-Lay Leader Elisa Gatz’s last year in this role. Gatz along with Jessie Cunningham are rotating off the Board of Laity after serving four years. Gatz challenged all of us to take some time to consider how to be God’s hands and voice in your church, your community, and your world.

“We are in unprecedented times. Let it be the time we respond in unprecedented ways,” Gatz said.

The Annual Conference approved Connie Augsburg and Eugene Williams as the next two Co-Lay Leaders joining Mark Manzi for the next quadrennium. An amendment brought forward for discussion was approved to send the nominations for the annual conference secretary and annual conference committee chair back to the nominations committee to select a layperson to fill each position in order to alternate clergy and laity each quadrennium.

### Legislation

The Annual Conference approved legislation requiring all active clergy to participate in an anti-racism training

workshop at least once per quadrennium. This includes local licensed pastors, deacons, and elders. The Board of Ordained Ministry (BOOM) will determine appropriate trainings each year and publicize them to clergy, designating an existing in-person or online training through an organization outside the UMC, or the conference may organize its own training. The Anti-Racism Task Force (ARTF), created in 2019 to support the conference goal “to live out our belief that racism is incompatible with Christian teaching,” recommends continual learning of best practices in anti-racism for all clergy so that they might more effectively lead their congregations in this work. See more on page 5.

The ARTF said the legislation is only a first step. “There is much work to be done now, and we need your input,” the ARTF said in a statement issued after the Annual Conference session. “We heard your concerns about the development of the training and are committed to a transparent process of creating a meaningful and impactful curriculum based on best practices from both secular and denominational organizations. Our sincere prayer is that this training, as part of the entire work plan of the Anti-racism Task Force, will be for the glory of God and move us closer to being the beloved community.”

### Redistricting

The Annual Conference also approved reducing the number of Districts and the number of District Superintendents (DS) by one, going from six to five, effective July 1, 2021. The recommendation was made given the changes in population/demographics, decline in church membership, number of churches within the Annual Conference, and downward financial trends. Also,

Continued on pages 3 and 4, see From the Cover

DO NOT DELAY. DATED MATERIAL.

Northern Illinois Conference  
of The United Methodist Church  
77 W. Washington St. Suite 1820  
Chicago, IL 60602

Non Profit Org  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit #130  
Homewood, IL

## INSIDE THE ISSUE

**Bishop’s Column:**  
*Thanks for the  
Memories . . . 2*



**Churches Rise  
to Mission Challenge . . . 2**



**Thanksgiving  
Traditions Continue . . . 3**



**Virtual Youth  
Mission Trip . . . 8**





Bishop Sally Dyck delivers her final Episcopal Address as an active bishop and with the Northern Illinois Conference during the virtual Annular Conference Nov. 14.

As of January 1, 2021, I will be retired after 43 ½ years of active ministry in The United Methodist Church. My ministry in Northern Illinois began on September 1, 2012 and due to the postponement of General and Jurisdictional Conferences, I extended my time in Northern Illinois until the end of 2020. I have already begun my post-retirement ministry as the Ecumenical Officer for the Council of Bishops/The United Methodist Church. Retired Bishop John Hopkins will be the interim bishop as of January 1, 2021. I know that you will welcome him into your midst!

For this last Reporter and website article, I want to give “thanks for the ministries.” I’m the kind of person that doesn’t look back much but always forward. Hopefully, I spend a fair amount of time in the present, too! So looking at the sendoff videos both at annual conference and recently from churches throughout the annual conference was a good exercise for me in “looking back.” Thanks for the memories of ministries and thank you to all who put those together!

I have seen and been a part of many wonderful memories of the ministries in the Northern Illinois Annual Conference (NIC). From “the blessing of the tractors” to the Urban Strategy summits in Chicago (where some lifelong Chicago United Methodists went to the South Side for the first time in their lives!) to serving children and youth as well as preaching and teaching in the various congregations and ethnic gatherings. I averaged between 60 and 70 presentations, sermons or teachings a year until the COVID-19 pandemic hit and then I tried to connect with as many people as possible through Monday video messages. I have rejoiced in new faith communities and given thanks for congregations who have been faithful through the ages but now provide a legacy for the future as they close or merge. Thanks for the memories of ministries, Northern Illinois Annual Conference!

I have tried to keep you all informed about the changes happening in the denomination and to NIC itself. I leave you with a strong Cabinet that is accustomed to working together and will, help you navigate these changes along with Bishop Hopkins.

## FROM THE BISHOP: Thanks for the memories and ministries

However, leaving the NIC causes me to reflect upon some of the concerns I have for you as you go forward. One of those concerns is the effect of how individualistic we all have become—and that includes local churches and clergy. The strength of our mission, witness and outreach comes through a strong mutual covenant among us as our connectional system in United Methodism assumes.

But more and more the relationship has become increasingly contractual. In other words, local church and clergy attitudes and actions increasingly reflect these questions: What will you do for me? What will you give me? On the one hand, the annual conference has much to give to local churches and clergy. A few good examples of that support include help for churches in navigating the health insurance for their pastor, assistance from the NIC Treasurer for churches applying for the Paycheck Protection Program, one-on-one guidance for a Staff-Parish Relationship Committee (SPRC) chair talking through difficulties with their district superintendent, and a variety of NIC-sponsored trainings including safe boundary trainings and leadership trainings. The list goes on and on in terms of what you should expect (and take advantage of) from the annual conference.

But the annual conference needs your support, too! That includes paying apportionments but it’s more than that. It’s to work for its common good and strength. As our denomination goes through this difficult time, heightening in anxiety and tension as we approach (maybe) General Conference, it’s tempting to pull apart the fabric instead of helping to strengthen it. Former (and recently deceased) Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks of Great Britain wrote a book entitled “Morality.” His concern for humanity itself is that we are becoming more “I” and less “we” in our interactions with each other. England survived during World War II because people pulled together as “we,” not fragmented as a bunch of “I’s.” COVID-19 has aggravated and even escalated this individualism, as we have become more polarized and isolated from each other. This could have been a time when we pulled together as “we” but the fact that surges continue reveals that we have not.

Sacks describes the difference between a contractual and a covenantal relationship:

*Contracts are about “I.” A covenant generates a different kind of relationship altogether...what makes it different is that in a covenant, two or more individuals, each respecting the dignity and integrity of the other, come*

*together in a bond of love and trust, to share their interests, sometimes even to share their lives, by pledging their faithfulness to one another, to do together what neither can achieve alone. Unlike contracts, which are entered into for the sake of advantage, covenants are moral commitments sustained by loyalty and fidelity, even when they call for sacrifice. They are about you and I (sic) coming together to form a “We.” A contract is a transaction. A covenant is a relationship. A contract is about interests. A covenant is about identity. That is why contracts benefit, but covenants transform. (Sacks, Jonathan. Morality, p. 313, Basic Books. Kindle Edition.)*

One of the reasons that I am ready to retire is because ministry is more contractual than I have ever experienced it before and I think that has a “wear and tear” on clergy leadership—my own and the clergy that I have served—that is spiritually damaging to all when a contractual relationship seeps into church. It damages laity, too, because the church becomes a consumer-oriented endeavor instead of a people who are grounded in a covenant with God, our faith in Jesus Christ, our church and each other.

In order to navigate the changes ahead—from continued days/weeks/months of COVID-19 to post-COVID, changes in districting and episcopal leadership, and whatever it is that The United Methodist Church will yet be, a covenantal relationship is essential.

In fact, in the spirit of sharing one’s pronouns, I would suggest that you make sure that “you” is always plural! If we were southerners, it would be y’all! Thanks for the ministries, Northern Illinois, and may God bless y’all and keep y’all! For in y’all, y’all will rise or fall.

Last but not least, a special thank you to Anne Marie Gerhardt, Director of Communications, for her support during my years in the NIC with the Reporter and

website articles, especially through all the videos she helped produce for annual conference and my Monday messages this year alone! And thank you to Rev. Martin Lee and Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer for their translation of the Monday messages.

As a parting gift, the NIC Committee on Episcopacy is asking for donations made in honor of Bishop Dyck to the Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbor’s Berry UMC Matching Campaign. Visit [nijfon.org](http://nijfon.org) to donate online or send a check payable to NIJFON with “Bishop Sally Gift” in the memo line to NIJFON, 77 W. Washington St. Suite 1820, Chicago IL 60602.

## MISSION CHALLENGE



The Midwest Mission Distribution Center picks up donations at Wesley UMC in Sterling, one of the more than a dozen NIC churches that served as a drop-off location for the Mission Challenge to collect disaster relief supplies.

The NIC Board of Global Ministries congratulates the Midwest Mission Distribution Center (MMDC) on its 20th Anniversary celebration and thanks them for their invitation to celebrate its two decades of ministry by sharing financial donations and in-kind supplies like those usually collected during the Annual Conference Fill-the-Truck Drive.

In partnership with MMDC, the NIC will reach many people around the world and around the corner with our prayers, a message of hope, laundry detergent, dish soap, household cleaners, toothpaste and other items to help them through a disaster or humanitarian crisis.

In 2019 due to the tremendous generosity of NIC churches, MMDC graduated from a trailer to a real truck that was completely packed with a new record of more than 50,000 items or 5,271 pounds!

In response to this year’s pandemic, economic downturn, virtual annual conference and other challenges, MMDC helped us adopt a new 2020 vision and adapt to our changing circumstances by

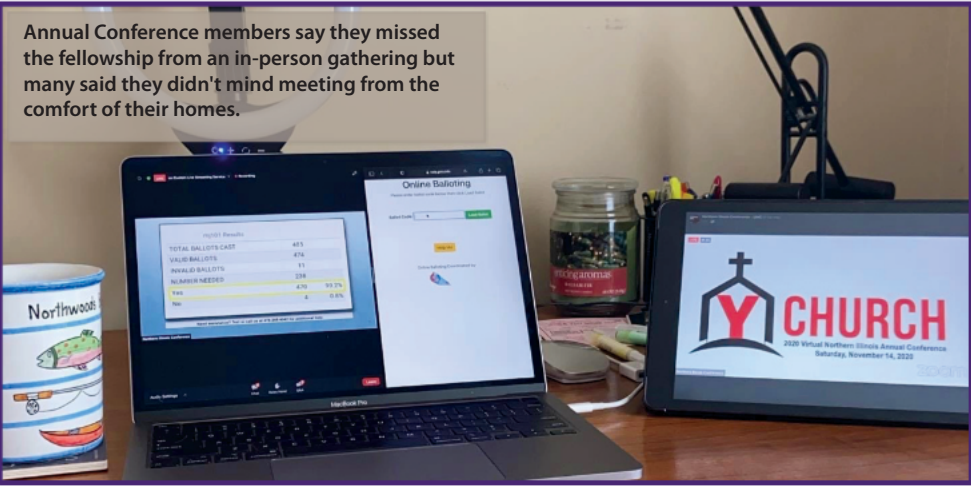
sending a fleet of trailers to more than a dozen collection sites in churches across the conference. Because of this year’s numerous challenges, we anticipated a significant drop-off in items collected.

However, we are excited to announce that this year NIC churches donated an amazing 5,020 pounds of items and nearly \$1,000 for this year’s Mission Challenge! We came within 250 pounds of last year’s record-breaking collection amounts.

Two drivers, Ramon Ortiz, Operations Assistant at MMDC, and Ray Trent from New Lenox UMC drove 686 miles over 13 hours picking up our donations!

We thank MMDC, the churches that served as collection sites, the volunteers who staffed those sites and everyone who contributed to the 2020 Mission Challenge. Through your participation, you have helped all of us look higher, see a vision of God that is greater than our current circumstances and be encouraged in our journeys to spiritual maturity. To learn more about MMDC and how you can contribute, visit [midwestmission.org](http://midwestmission.org).





DSs are able to conduct their work more efficiently thanks to advances in technology.

“Our aim is to maximize ministry and stewardship within the NIC that will help us be more effective and efficient as we continue to focus on the Conference’s three strategic goals,” said Rev. Darneather Murph-Heath, Dean of the Cabinet.

The Cabinet announced the proposed redistricting plan shortly after Annual Conference. There will be about 70 churches per district and will be divided North and South instead of East and West. The names of the districts are Lake: North, Lake: South, Prairie: Central, Prairie: North and Prairie: South. The Bishop will set the realignments by Dec. 31, which will go into effect July 2021. Rationales or requests for reconsideration from churches can be made to the DS thought January 15 and the Interim Bishop and Cabinet will make a final determination by January 31.

To read more and for a list of the districts and churches, visit [umcnic.org/news/redistricting-announcement](http://umcnic.org/news/redistricting-announcement).

2021 Budget

For the second straight year, CCFA presented a conference budget showing a reduction of approximately 5%. The 2021 budget of \$4.4 million includes estimated conference apportionment receipts of \$4.17 million and takes into account the half-year reduction in District Superintendent compensation of \$76,300. Additionally, the 2021 budget reflects the full-year reduction from downsizing district administrative staff, closing district office locations in 2020 and eliminating two part-time programming positions that are currently vacant.

CCFA will continue to monitor the conference’s income and adjust expenses as was done during 2020 when the conference was able to reduce expenses through less meeting, travel and program ministry costs (primarily for programs that were unable to happen due to the pandemic). During this anxious and difficult time, CCFA will continue to do their best to be faithful stewards of conference resources, keeping conference expenses within apportionment funds. CCFA greatly appreciates the continued faithfulness of our local churches in supporting our connection and shared ministry.

In addition under the Consent Calendar, the Annual Conference approved the 2021 equitable compensation, which includes a 3%

increase to the minimum salary for full-time clergy to \$36,359 in an effort to move the NIC closer to the North Central Jurisdiction average.

A special thank you to Good News TV (GNTV) for helping in the production and voting platform to help make the NIC’s Annual Conference run smoothly.

Bishop’s Appeal Offering

The Bishop’s Appeal offering raised a total of \$36,837 for the Global Mission Secondary School in Tanzania, which will help fund the final phases of construction. “Words cannot express enough my gratitude to Bishop Sally Dyck and churches in the Northern Illinois Conference,” said Global Missionary Rev. Seon Young (Christina) Kim, whose vision to build this school began in September 2016. “Every single dollar became more than a donation to build the Global Mission Secondary School. It became a sign of God’s faithfulness and a big encouragement to me because the COVID-19 pandemic really messed up all financial and construction plans. Your love-in-action will be remembered by me forever and the people in the UMC of Tanzania generation after generation. May God bless you!”

Construction on the co-ed boarding school began in September 2019 and the goal is to open to students in 2021.

Worship Services

The Memorial Service opened annual conference with a Nov. 12 video premiere on the Conference Facebook page and YouTube channel. NIC Director of Benefits and Human Resources Woody Bedell prerecorded his message, “Listen: God is Talking,” prior to his passing on Nov. 1 after a long journey with cancer.

“As I have journeyed with cancer over these eight years, what I thought would be a handicap has become a blessing,” Bedell said in his message. “Being handicapped physically, I learned to listen, learned to ask for help, and learned the value of a simple touch. And, I found the true church. Not the buildings that I am so comfortable with, but I found a community that cared for, supported and loved not just me, but my whole family.”

A retirement service closed the Annual Conference with a video premiere on Nov. 14 honoring 22 retired clergy and local pastors with a combined 422 years of ministry. After 30 years in ordained ministry, Rev. Irene

Annual Conference members say they missed the fellowship from an in-person gathering but many said they didn’t mind meeting from the comfort of their homes.

Taylor was one of several retirees who delivered a video message and answered the question to the theme “Y Church.”

“Why church? Because the church holds the key of salvation for all,” said Taylor. “It’s been my magical place where I can envision a world filled with love, hope, peace and justice. The church equips and prepares people to become agents of transformation in their community and the world.”

In producing several music videos for both services and the AC session, Worship Leader Rich Rubietta brought together a variety of musicians from across the Conference in several different settings while highlighting their many talents.

At the Clergy Session held in June via Zoom, 12 candidates for elders in full connection and three deacons in full connection were approved. Also approved were seven provisional elders and three provisional deacons for commissioning.

An in-person Ordination and Commissioning Service that was planned with social distancing, masks and safety precautions had to be postponed after a new rise in COVID-19 cases in the state. A new date will be scheduled in 2021 when it’s safe to hold the ceremony.

Statistics

- 2019 membership in the NIC stands at 76,458, down from 77,496 in 2018.
- Worship attendance stands at 24,430, down from 26,059.
- Church school attendance stands at 5,814, down from 6,531.
- Number of professions or reaffirmations of faith was 858, down from 979.
- Adults and young adults in small groups totaled 24,567, down from 26,812.
- Worshippers engaged in mission totaled 14,594, up slightly from 14, 551.

The year 2021 will likely deliver more firsts for the NIC, including interim leadership with Bishop John Hopkins, who will begin Jan. 1. While there’s no guarantee of the last of Zoom meetings and COVID-19 restrictions, the Annual Conference will continue to assess and monitor the safest way to gather and will announce information for the 182nd Annual Conference when more information is available.

To follow more news, information and videos from the 2020 Annual Conference, visit [umcnic.org/AC2020](http://umcnic.org/AC2020).



In memoriam

Active Clergy

- Paul E. (Nick) Nicholas, April 15, 2020
- Wanda Y. Parker, October 22, 2019
- Ernest Singh, May 25, 2020
- Douglas Albert Williams, June 11, 2019

Retired Clergy

- Samuel Batt, September 29, 2019
- Jack William Bremer, April 30, 2020
- Frederick C. Eisenhut, August 22, 2020
- David Kirk, February 14, 2020
- William Glenn Kirk, April 20, 2020
- Don C. Leo, March 9, 2020
- Ewald Albert Lieske, September 16, 2020
- Wm. Omar Logan, Jr. July 22, 2020
- Guy V. Martin, September 16, 2019
- Wayne Edward McArthur, April 13, 2020
- William Alexander Nicoll, February 2020
- Emery A. Percell, December 2, 2019
- John Franklin Smith, August 5, 2020
- Susan M. Wessels, May 5, 2020
- Billie Jean Westmoreland, July 19, 2019
- Preston D. Woods, October 5, 2019
- Carl John Zager, October 14, 2019

Spouses of Active Clergy

- Geoffrey S. Kruse-Safford, July 3, 2020
- Weejin Park, July 11, 2020

Spouses of Retired Clergy

- Patricia Cantwell, August 20, 2020

Surviving Spouses

- Marianna Bailey, August 9, 2020
- Minerva M. Batt, September 6, 2020
- Mary A. Calame Cook, May 31, 2020
- Adeline DeGraaf, April 4, 2020.
- Adeline Ina Erwin, August 13, 2019
- Mary Lynn Gilmore, July 25, 2020
- Miriam Priscilla Huff , August 20, 2020
- Bernice M. Klosterman, May 25, 2019
- Enid Ruth Morrison-Bell, December 13, 2019
- Elizabeth R. Rankin, May 10, 2020

Lay Members of the Conference

- Joe Bankhead, July 7, 2020
- Kathy Dickerson, June 25, 2020
- Clifford “Cliff” Hill, February 19, 2020
- Sandra Jones, August 21, 2020
- Gilbert Mitchell, June 1, 2020
- Margaret Phillips, May 5, 2020
- John E. “Jack” Ryder, June 26, 2019
- Lee Schreiner, January 2, 2020
- Kathryn A. Welk, July 4, 2019



From the Cover:



Retiring Class of 2020 - Years of Service

- Rev. Frederick Bartels (12)
- Rev. Rosalee T. Blake (11)
- Rev. Richard T. Carlson (33.5)
- Rev. Jan Parsons Comerford (31)
- Rev. Raney K. Good (19.5)
- Rev. Anne Cowick Hampson (19.5)
- Rev. Cecelia L. Harris (26)
- Rev. Thomas Hay (10)
- Rev. Charlette J. Hoffmann (24)
- Rev. Gladys King-Lucas (4)
- Rev. Kolleen Klemmedson (23.75)
- Pastor Jerry L. Martz (6)
- Rev. Linda A. Misewicz-Perconte (33.25)
- Rev. Sung-Ja Lee Moon (32)
- Rev. Lawrence Alan Paris (6)
- Rev. Lois McCullen Parr (18)
- Pastor Mary H. Steinwandt (6.75)
- Rev. Irene Taylor (23)

New NIC Co-Lay Leaders elected



**Connie Augsburger** and Eugene Williams join Mark Manzi as the three NIC Co-Lay Leaders for the next quadrennium.

Augsburger is a member of Disciples UMC in Mt. Morris where she served a trustee and sang in the choir. She is a Certified Lay

Speaker and has been on the NIC board of Trustees for eight years. She is also a liaison to the Episcopacy Committee. She and her husband founded a law firm in Mt. Morris and she helped establish the Mt. Morris Community Library Foundation.



**Eugene Williams**, who recently retired after 36 years with the Chicago Police Department, has been a member of Chicago South Shore UMC for 55 years where he served in many leadership positions, including (but not limited to) Council Chair, Lay Leader

and Lay Member to Annual Conference. He has served on the NIC Board of Ordained Ministry, United Methodist Men and the United Methodist Foundation.



Bishop Jess R. DeWitt Child Advocacy Award

*While serving as our bishop from 1980 to 1988, Bishop Jesse R. DeWitt led by example as he participated, represented and spoke out for children, youth and families who did not have a voice. One of his greatest passions was speaking out to educate and inform local churches about legislation and issues impacting the lives of children.*



**Presented to: Rev. Gregory Gross, The Night Ministry**

The Rev. Gregory Gross was the Director of Mission Fulfillment for the Night Ministry in Chicago. In that role Gregory provided

housing, health care, spiritual care and social services to families and individuals experiencing poverty and homelessness, particularly youth. His work with “The Crib” is particularly notable. This overnight emergency shelter for young adults, ages 18-24, many of them LGBTQ, has become a model for youth shelters across the city and state. In addition, Rev. Gross has worked as a youth minister in several congregations in Northern Illinois and has served faithfully on conference committees. Throughout his ministry he encouraged and lifted young voices, working to create a church that is as welcoming to young persons as it is to older, lifelong members.

Gregory uses his many gifts and graces to ensure that programs that serve the most vulnerable among us—from youth who are homeless and also experiencing racism or discrimination because of their sexual and gender identities, to adults and families with significant unmet needs due to housing and financial insecurity—

2020 Annual Conference Awards and Recognitions

create opportunities for human connection and fulfillment. He is currently the Executive Director for Care for Real.

**Katherine Greene Child Worker Award**

Katherine B. Greene was a past president and founding representative of United Voices for Children who put forth tremendous efforts in promoting child advocacy, working faithfully against child abuse advancing and supporting children with unmet needs across the Northern Illinois Conference. She reminded and challenged us to step up, step forth and speak out for children.



**Presented to: Rev. Dr. Barbara Javore, Glencoe: North Shore (Co-honoree)**

The Rev. Dr. Barbara Javore has served as Director of Children and Family Ministries at North Shore UMC

for 26 years. Deacon Barbara demonstrates remarkable passion for serving children and youth, particularly by thinking of new ways to “meet the youth where they are.” She recently created a confirmation curriculum drawing on Biblically-based and progressive theology. She designed the curriculum so that the confirmands gathered once a month for an intensive and richly-rewarding time of education, service and fellowship. Every quarter Deacon Barbara designs a unique worship experience for children and youth that pulls in many young families that engage more peripherally in the congregation and keeps them connected to the congregation. A highlight is the annual Christmas Pageant that plays to a capacity crowd. Deacon Barbara creatively uses liturgy and visuals to enable children to learn the timeless Biblical

narrative of Christ’s birth and to grow in their faith. Through her ministry, children that have remarkable talents are able to shine; those who may have learning disabilities or mental illness find confidence and recognition; and parents who struggle each day to motivate their children receive care and encouragement.



**Presented to: Michelle Barton, Mt. Prospect: Trinity (Co-honoree)**

Michelle Barton provides extraordinary leadership and support for refugee families seeking asylum in this country through her

affiliation with the Facebook Group “6,000 Moms.” Michelle has been a mentor for refugee families, provided assistance with housing, food, employment and transportation as well as assisting families needing to obtain authorization to stay in the U.S. Michelle regularly lifts up the 6000 Moms group and their efforts in her congregation and offers prayers for families being assisted, so that the names and faces of these families are made real.

Michelle is a public-school teacher who advocates for children and families in many arenas. She has advocated for the Early Childhood Education program at the College of DuPage; worked on behalf of children in need of domestic adoption; spoken up for children at most risk in her school district as well as for children that are separated from their parents at the Mexican border. Michelle hears of a need and opens her arms to embrace the person with joyful, welcoming warmth and meet the need. Michelle gives to others selflessly, regardless of the financial or time commitment, and makes a difference in the lives of many children and families.

Remembering Woody Bedell



NIC Director of Benefits and Human Resources Woody Bedell passed away Nov. 1, 2020, at age 70 after a courageous eight-and-a-half-year journey with cancer. Woody joined the NIC staff in March 2015 bringing extensive experience in wellness and benefits services.

Previously, Woody had been the Pensions and Benefits Officer for the Virginia Conference, Chief Strategic Relations Officer at Wespeth and Director of Benefits for the Reformed Church in America. NIC Director of Administrative

Services Lonnie Chafin said Woody helped clergy and staff navigate health and pension benefits with personal care.

"Woody truly loved his work with the Conference," said Chafin. "It was his generosity of spirit that was truly a gift to all of us."

Woody, along with his wife Joyce, was a member at the United Methodist Church of Libertyville, where he taught adult classes and played the drums in the contemporary band for more than 20 years. He was an Ironman competitor and

avid swimmer. For the last 20 years, he enjoyed exploring and living a program called HeartMath, an approach to life that enabled him to indulge a passion for helping others, especially in dealing with stress and anxiety. Woody enjoyed spending time with his family, including his three adult sons, daughter-in laws, and two grandchildren.

A recording of the virtual memorial service may be seen on the UMC Libertyville YouTube channel.



# Anti-Racism turns to development of curriculum



At this year's Annual Conference, the Northern Illinois Conference (NIC) passed legislation submitted by the Anti-Racism Task Force (ARTF) that will require anti-racism training for all active clergy every four years. So what will this training look like? That's the next step that the Task Force will begin work on in partnership with the Board of Ordained Ministry (BOOM).

In the coming months, a process will begin to develop a meaningful and impactful curriculum based on best practices from both secular and denominational organizations. The reason for writing broad legislation empowering BOOM to determine an appropriate training rather than specifying exactly what it will look like is that we want the NIC to be as current as possible in the work of anti-racism, which is continually evolving. If you would like to be involved in the process of creating the training or have suggestions, questions, or concerns, please send them to [antiracismTF@umcnic.org](mailto:antiracismTF@umcnic.org). The ARTF is committed to transparency in this process and all of their work, and will keep you posted on who is involved in the curriculum development and how a budget request will be proposed in 2021.

Throughout the pre-conference briefings, there were many excellent questions raised about the broader work of the task force, including how the members are selected, how to get more involved and how we can ensure that this work reaches more of our congregations. While you may only be familiar with the ARTF legislation, there are many more programs and resources available at [umcnic.org/antiracism](http://umcnic.org/antiracism). Here are a few highlights of how your church can connect with this work:

- Sign up for the Anti-Racism Awareness and Learning Development Path, which invites NIC lay and clergy to self-select their learning route based on their current awareness level and where the Spirit is guiding them. There are suggested resources for the entry points along the learning path, and you can register as an individual or a church at [umcnic.org/learningpath](http://umcnic.org/learningpath).
- Join the Champion Team, a group of more than 80 lay and clergy passionate about dismantling systemic racism within our church and society. Group members are willing to engage through prayer, training and dialogue, and outreach. They participate in bi-monthly (every other month) Zoom meetings to stay informed, and are committed to prayerful discernment about God's desire in doing this work.
- Support Justice Generation, a group of United Methodist

high school students learning and acting for racial justice. Learn more about the new 2021 programs, such as the Ephesus Project, designed to bring together churches of different racial and ethnic backgrounds for worship and fellowship, or the Clergy Peer Review and Engagement Series, created to provide opportunities for pastors to reflect with one another about how to navigate this work in our congregations. More information about all of these initiatives and many more can be found at [umcnic.org/antiracism](http://umcnic.org/antiracism).

The ARTF was created in 2019 alongside the Discipleship and Vitality Task Forces, each charged with enacting action plans for the NIC's three strategic goals. Task force members are selected by the Annual Conference Shepherding Team, co-chaired by Liz Gracie and Rev. Myron McCoy. Questions or comments about the task forces can be sent to [shepherding@umcnic.org](mailto:shepherding@umcnic.org).

It is the conviction of the ARTF that by being authentically and courageously anti-racist, we will make disciples of Jesus Christ and transform the world by sharing our witness that all people are created in the image of God and deserve to be treated as such.



Rev. Charles Straight

## Budget for Black lives: A reason for celebration

Submitted by Rev. Charles Straight, Dolton: Faith UMC

As United Methodists, in our baptismal vows we commit to "renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world," and "resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves."

The COVID-19 pandemic has made worse injustices that already existed – gutting of public services, disinvestment in communities of color, incarceration targeting Black and Brown communities, lack of living wage jobs, nationalism, political and corporate leadership that prioritize profits over the lives of people in our communities.

As an example, while the Cook County jail's population has decreased by more than 50% over the past few years, its budget has continued to increase. The county continues to make huge investments in a racist criminal justice system that has proven to create more problems than it solves.

In Dolton, where Faith UMC is located, and in other Black communities across Cook County, we're in desperate need of investments health care, mental health services, affordable housing, and anti-violence and anti-recidivism initiatives that will address the root causes of the crime and violence that plague us. These root causes were created by the very evil that we United Methodists have promised God that we would fight.

In June 2020, County Commissioner Brandon Johnson collaborated with our organization The People's Lobby and a coalition of groups to create and introduce to the County Board a resolution that would call attention to the unfair funding practices of the county's budget and demand the re-directing of some of those funds to places better spent in

Black and Brown communities.

The members of Faith UMC, Southsiders Organized for Unity and Liberation (SOUL), The People's Lobby grassroots organization, Chicago Community Bond Fund, National Nurses United, and the Shriver Center on Poverty Law went to work calling on the Cook County Board of Commissioners and President Toni Preckwinkle to invest more money in public services that promote community health and safety equitably across the County, especially in the Black communities most impacted by violence and incarceration. The "Budget for Black Lives" campaign simultaneously called on the County Board to divest money from the failed and racist systems of policing and incarceration that have caused immense harm and failed to keep our communities safe.

We proposed cutting the Cook County Sheriff's budget (which includes funding for the Cook County Jail) by \$157 million and redirecting this money to public services in Black and Brown communities to public services not administered by law enforcement. This would:

- Decrease the Cook County Jail budget to account for the 50% reduction in the number of incarcerated people over the past seven years.
- Move money out of policing systems that harm Black communities and do not keep Cook County residents safe.
- Provide significant increases in funding for critical public services in Black and Brown communities, services that will expand community health, safety and sustainability.
- Offset unacceptable proposed cuts to the Public Defender's Office and the Cook County Health system, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic

We gave testimony at County board meetings, held virtual town hall meetings and press conferences, and engaged social media to have people reach out to their commissioners and urge them to vote yes for the Budget for Black Lives.

Besides Faith UMC, other members of the faith community showed up. Bishop Sally Dyck, along with Dr. Rodney Walker of St. Matthew UMC, were among the prominent faith leaders featured in the video campaign driving faith leaders to take a stand.

On Nov. 23, the County Board passed a budget that reduced funding for the Cook County Sheriff and County jail by \$26 million and increased funding for housing assistance, restorative justice, anti-violence programs and mental health by \$40 million. The County has said that they're open to using some of that money to create a 911 alternative for people experiencing mental health emergencies so that mental health professionals instead of police could respond to people in that situation.

People of the United Methodist Church, this is how we "renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world" and "resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves."

We didn't get everything we wanted in the County budget, but it's a good start. Remember the words of Dr. Martin L. King:

"Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals."

We are those individuals! Let's celebrate what God has done.

## Deadline for apportionments

A friendly reminder as the year winds down and we look forward to a new year; there is still time to become a 100% paid church. Be sure to mail in all your 2020 apportionments by **January 15, 2021**. Payments received after this date will count towards 2021.

As a reminder, the apportionment payment address is Northern Illinois Conference, PO Box 5646, Carol Stream, IL 60197-5646. For more information and resources about apportionments, visit [www.umcnic.org/apportionments](http://www.umcnic.org/apportionments).



# Rockford District churches continue Thanksgiving traditions

Despite the pandemic, Court Street UMC carried out its annual Thanksgiving tradition serving a free, community turkey dinner to hundreds of people but with a few changes. This year, the church handed out carry-out meals outside the church doors to keep with COVID-19 safety protocols.

Organizers say approximately 100 volunteers helped prepare the turkeys along with mashed potatoes, vegetables, dressing and 175 pies for more than 600 people. “This is a wonderful tradition of caring and love that has been going on since 1981 at Court Street United Methodist Church,” said Sue Cram, Court Street’s Thanksgiving Chair. “Everyone is welcome to attend, but we especially want the homeless and those who find themselves alone to know they are welcome to take part.”

While the logistics changed this year, the spirit of the event and dedication to the mission didn’t change and organizers say it’s all about making those involved feel special and supported during the holiday season.

"People that are challenged the most—marginalized, those who sometimes are forgotten about—are brought in and treated like they are special, royal-type families,”

Culpepper told a local television station. “We provide them with a wholesome traditional Thanksgiving Day dinners, we give them good music, we make them feel good, we give them clothes, we give them flu shots — we just give them anything we can.”

The dinner is one of Rockford’s largest and all are welcome to attend.

Warren UMC recently made front page news in a recent edition of The Flash, a print and digital newspaper covering northwestern Illinois and southwestern Wisconsin, which covered their annual Thanksgiving meal. A tradition that began at the Warren Community Building, traveled to the Baptist church and other locations and ended up at Warren UMC, the free, old-fashioned Thanksgiving meal was adapted this year for carryout and delivery due to COVID-19 restrictions.

The meal was launched by Warren resident Eledena Bulter many years ago, when she wanted to make sure that no one was left alone without a meal at Thanksgiving. After Bulter passed, Deb Spinhirne and Warren UMC kept the tradition alive to honor Bulter's efforts. When Spinhirne passed away in 2019 due to illness, the cooking crew voted

to rename the meal The Eldena and Deb Community Feast.

A free will offering was collected, with proceeds going to The Eldena and Deb Community Service Scholarship that will be given to a Warren student in spring 2021.



Because of COVID-19 protocols, this year Court Street UMC in Rockford served carry-out meals for its 39-year tradition of providing free turkey dinners on Thanksgiving Day to hundreds of residents.

## Barrington UMC receives historic recognition



Barrington United Methodist Church Senior Pastor Chris Winkler and Church Historian Sam Oliver hold the document certifying the church as an Illinois Sesquicentennial House of Worship.

The Illinois State Historical Society has recognized Barrington United Methodist Church (BUMC) as an Illinois Sesquicentennial House of Worship. Churches across the state that have served their congregations continuously for at least 150 years are eligible. The recognition leads to the church’s history being recorded at the Society as well as at the Illinois State Library for use by future researchers.

Sam Oliver, a long-time Barrington resident and BUMC’s historian, explains, “The church was founded shortly after the Blackhawk War by settlers in 1840. The congregation first met in a stone schoolhouse which was located at the corner of Bateman and Algonquin Roads. Growth required more space so subsequently larger buildings were needed. By 1930 the congregation was housed in its fourth church building, a classic landmark structure at 310 Hough Street, but this building burned

in 1998 and a new church was constructed south of town. Coincidentally, our current church building is not far from the site of our first church building, built in 1853.”

The current church building is on 24-acres at 98 Algonquin Road, Barrington Hills, on the southeast corner of Rt. 59 and Algonquin Road. The first gathering of settlers is a far cry from the current congregation, which benefits from a modern building and full schedule of worship (both traditional and contemporary), faith development, and community outreach opportunities.

Volunteers working in the church’s community garden raised nearly 40,000 pounds of vegetables for local food pantries this year. United Methodist Men, United Methodist Women, Women of the Word, and the Centering Prayer group provide multiple opportunities for adult small group study. Mission projects include strong links

with Carpentersville Community Meals, the Northern Illinois Food Bank, FISH, Kids Above All (formerly Childserv), PADS, the Ottawa-Barrington Growing Project, and other critically important organizations.

The church engages all ages from the Noah’s Ark Christian Academy Pre-school to God Squad, with activities for teens and young adults.

The mission of the Illinois State Historical Society is to foster awareness, understanding, research, preservation, and recognition of history in Illinois. Founded in 1899 to support the Illinois State Historical Library, the Society is a not-for-profit organization that depends solely on membership dues, gifts, bequests, and foundation grants to support, preserve, and disseminate the story of Illinois and its people.

## Discipleship during a pandemic

By Rev. Andi Voinovich, Downers Grove: First Associate Pastor



If we have any shared experience in the past several months, it is that sometimes what we thought would happen a certain way ends up happening a whole other way. Through the late 2019 and early 2020, the Aurora District Shepherding Team was dreaming of ways to implement “5 Cups of Coffee,” a call and discernment conversation starter, in our district. We had such big dreams! Then, as quickly as those dreams appeared, our ability to work with them vanished as COVID-19 swept the world.

Yet we recognized that sheltering in place did not mean that there was no longer a need to gather together to explore call and discipleship. We launched district-wide small groups to gather over Zoom and discuss faith. People from large

and small churches, and rural, suburban and city churches gathered together to talk about God, their spiritual gifts, how faith impacts their lives and more. Some congregations embraced the 5 Cups material and created small groups for their members. During a global pandemic, approximately 170 participants from more than 15 churches participated in 5 Cups of Coffee!

So what’s next? Recognizing that the simple format of 5 Cups of Coffee (scripture, five discussion questions, and prayer) could inspire fruitful conversations and be facilitated with ease, we decided to continue the conversation. We are excited to offer 5 Cups of Water on baptism and 5 Cups of Grape Juice on communion soon! We feel this helpful too

can engage us, continue discipleship and inspire us to dream and discern together who and how God is calling us to be.

New opportunities to participate in district-wide groups are coming soon. If you want to use the curriculum in your local congregation, visit [moumethodist.org/resourcelibrary](http://moumethodist.org/resourcelibrary) and click on “5 Cups of Coffee.” We are grateful for Rev. Ashlee Alley Crawford of the Great Plains Annual Conference who created 5 Cups of Coffee!

Want to learn more or need ideas on implementing this into the life of your congregation? I’d be happy to help! Contact Pastor Voinovich at [andi@dgfumc.org](mailto:andi@dgfumc.org).



# Dixon church member trains to raise environmental awareness



Patricia Smith recently completed training with the Global Ministries EarthKeepers program and hopes to raise environmental awareness in the community.

Patricia Smith, a member of First UMC in Dixon, grew up and lived on a farm as an adult for many years, hence her passion for taking care of the environment. “I love gardening, planting and I recycle,” Smith said. “I have been a lifelong eco-awareness (environmentalist), Christian creation caretaker.”

Smith, who is an online teacher in the medical career field by day, is one of more than a dozen others who recently completed training with the Global Ministries EarthKeepers program aimed at supporting United Methodist laity and clergy to address local environmental concerns and the systemic structures that give rise to those concerns. It is a response to the call to practice social and environmental holiness in the Council of Bishops’ 2009 document, “God’s Renewed

Creation: A Call to Hope and Action.”

Global Ministries says during the training, the EarthKeepers discussed eco-theology and United Methodist entry points into environmental stewardship. Trainees articulated their senses of calling to this ministry, identified community assets and local environmental concerns, and developed project plans to address those concerns.

Smith said her project involves creating a call to action and raising environmental awareness through blogs, podcasts and curriculum targeted to individuals, students, businesses, and churches.

“I want to facilitate networking with existing Eco-practices to encourage community participation and project development,” said

Smith, who has written an Eco News Column and helped develop a recycling program in Payson, Arizona. “My writing will focus on EcoTheology, as God’s creation caretaker backed by Biblical scripture and principles. With God on our side, mountains that exist with resolving the Climate Crisis and Environmental Crisis will become mole hills.”

Global Ministries staff led the training, with resources from other United Methodist agencies. Global Ministries commissioned this cohort of EarthKeepers in an online commissioning service on Dec. 8. The ministry of Global Ministries EarthKeepers is vital to the health of God’s creation. For more information visit, [umcmmission.org/earthkeepers](http://umcmmission.org/earthkeepers).

## Virtual Summer Mission “Trip” teaches youth group to love thy neighbor

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

When their annual summer mission trip had to be cancelled due to COVID-19, Youth Pastor Jeremiah Lee and the youth group at Community UMC in Naperville were left searching for a way to still make an impact.

Enter Kids Above All and their new virtual mission experience.

In August, Kids Above All (formerly ChildServ) facilitated a safe, socially distanced online mission experience for ten Community UMC students in grades 6 through 12. Over three days, Pastor Lee and the students learned about Kids Above All’s programs and its 126-year-old mission to build better lives for children and families. They also made no-sew masks from unused Grateful Dead T-shirts and created identity collages to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to love yourself and your neighbor.

The online mission experience focused on the agency’s DuPage County Group Homes Program, which provides safe, supportive living environments for 18 teens and helps them become independent adults through therapy, life skills training and educational assistance. The youth group met Kids Above All staff and heard about the realities and trauma the youth had experienced prior to their coming to the group homes.

Community UMC youth also learned about the importance of mental health and the basics of managing stress and anxiety using the United Methodist Women Mission U resource “Managing Anxiety: a Youth Study” by Trudy Rankin and Faye Wilson. They also took time to study and find out more about the Shema, the Hebrew version of the Jesus Creed.

During a worship service later that month, Pastor Jeremiah talked about the mission experience and how proud he was of the youth who participated. He emphasized how the event challenged the youth group to ask, ‘Who is my neighbor?’ and seek a greater understanding of what it means today to love God and share God’s love to everyone, as God loves us.

Kids Above All appreciates the partnership of North Central College, as well as the hard work of Lily Stamper, a rising North Central junior and virtual Kids Above All summer intern who helped to design, plan and execute this virtual mission experience.

Finally, Kids Above All would like to express its gratitude to Pastor Lee, the youth group and the entire Community UMC congregation for their continued support. The church’s generosity and steadfast mission partnership includes giving school supplies for the Kids Above All

Back-To-School Drive, collecting 141 dry erase boards with markers for e-learners and providing quarterly pizza dinners for the group homes as an outward sign of loving their neighbors.

*Since 1894, Kids Above All’s (formerly ChildServ) mission has been to protect, heal and educate children and families so they can build better lives. Visit [kidsaboveall.org](http://kidsaboveall.org) to learn more about how to step up and stand up for kids so they can reach their full potential.*



Youth from Community UMC in Naperville participate in an online mission experience facilitated by Kids Above All.







DYK???

## Different

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

Searching for some information on our conference website recently, I was struck by how many times the word “different” popped up on the screen. It made me laugh out loud. We are in a season defined by the “different”.

In the spring, we applauded the adaptive actions of our churches. In the summer, we talked about pivoting. Now it comes down to referencing our lives, church and world as being just plain “different”. We’ve run out of other adjectives to describe this long road we are on as we watch, wait and do our part to save lives through our actions.

This is a very “different” Advent/Christmas season. Drive-in worship, Zoom Advent studies, glow stick Christmas Eve services. Celebrations with families are

different. Gift giving is different. We grieve the loss of our traditions that wrap us in comfort and spiritual renewal as we navigate the “different”.

As The United Methodist Church is deeply rooted in mission, witness and social concerns, our global agencies, boards and ministries have worked on innovation, relevance and continued ways of nurturing our world under dire circumstances. As I think about the reach of The United Methodist Church – into poor communities, through immigrant advocacy, extending emergency relief, offering education, providing shelter for abused families, feeding the homeless, bringing medical aid to the underserved, shoring up food deserts – our call is anything but different. It is the same as it was pre-pandemic and the same as it will be post-pandemic. We are called to be God’s presence in the world.

As we all strive for some peace and joy in the absence of our familiar, comforting routines this season, I hope we will remember that the church is actively bringing God’s love and light to the world. The Northern Illinois Conference has a deep and strong history of mission support. Our Rainbow Covenant giving, Bishop’s Appeal and mission collection have not faltered through these pandemic months. We have continued to care and share, even as our resources have been threatened at home.

You have made a difference through your support for missions beyond your church. I pray that the Christmas ritual of sharing with others, of giving out of your abundance, will not diminish this season. Even as we feel the loss of so much in our lives, we can be the warmth of God’s reach in the lives of others.

## SAVE THE DATE — FEBRUARY 13, 2021

### The Other Side

Making our churches vital  
in a post-pandemic world

LAITY CONVOCATION  
Via Zoom video conferencing

Northern Illinois Conference  
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## 2020-2021 NIC Directory Now Available

The annual conference directory for 2020-2021 is now available to view or download for free on the conference website at [umcnic.org/directory](http://umcnic.org/directory). A print-on-demand option will be available on Amazon by the end of the year.

The conference office strives to be as accurate as possible with the information published in the NIC Directory. If you notice a correction is necessary, please notify your district administrative assistant:

- Rockford, Elgin, Chicago Northwestern: Debra Rogers ([drogers@umcnic.org](mailto:drogers@umcnic.org))
- DeKalb, Aurora, Chicago Southern: Leola Tucker ([ltucker@umcnic.org](mailto:ltucker@umcnic.org))

The most timely information on clergy and churches can be found by clicking the "NIC Clergy and Church Search" button listed at the top of the webpage at [umcnic.org/directory](http://umcnic.org/directory).

## NIC Prayer Network needs your prayers

What word has God spoken to you lately? What scripture have you read recently that has warmed your hearts? Would you encourage others by sharing that? Is God nudging you?

The Discipleship Task Force invites both clergy and laity to write short devotions (250 words). Include a Bible verse and a prayer. This should all fit on one page. Remember, laity, Methodism grew and was strong when the laity took responsibility in ministry.

We have been praying for you that in God’s presence you would experience the fullness of joy (Ps 16:11).

Be a blessing. Share what God has given to you. Please send your devotions to [DiscipleshipTF@umcnic.org](mailto:DiscipleshipTF@umcnic.org).

Pray over the weekly devotions at [umcnic.org/prayernetwork](http://umcnic.org/prayernetwork).

## January/February Calendar Events

### Winter District Leadership Events Postponed

Due to the coronavirus pandemic and the risk of in-person gatherings, the NIC Cabinet has agreed to postpone district leadership training events scheduled for January and February and plan district gatherings for fall 2021. In lieu of winter leadership events, the Cabinet will provide short training videos for church leaders, including members of the SPRC, finance and trustee committees, and lay leaders. Questions? Please contact your District Superintendent.

### DeKalb District Winter Lay Academy

“Transforming Evangelism”

Sundays, January 3 and 10, 1 to 4 pm

Wednesdays, January 6 and 13, 6 to 8 pm

Instructor Marcia Peddicord, Certified Lay Minister, will lead participants to learn from John Wesley how to practice relational evangelism.

**Cost:** \$20.00 per participant (no fee for high-school-aged youth)

**Textbook:** “Transforming Evangelism” by Henry H. Knight III and F. Douglas Powe, Jr. (Each participant must purchase their own book, which is available through Amazon and Cokesbury.)

Register by Dec. 31 at [umcnic.org/calendar/dekalb-district-winter-lay-academy](http://umcnic.org/calendar/dekalb-district-winter-lay-academy).

### UMW Mission u Winter Learning Event

Jan. 23, 9:30 am - noon

“Faith and the Prison Pipeline: Understanding the School-to-Prison Pipeline.”

Join this Zoom event to share information and stories which can transform our understanding of our world and help us to know each other more fully.

**Cost** is \$5 per person to cover speaker honorarium, tech expenses, etc. This event will be recorded (minus breakout sessions).

Register online at [my.cheddarp.com/c/mission-u-winter-2021](http://my.cheddarp.com/c/mission-u-winter-2021).

### Older Adults in the Pandemic: Things We Can Do

Jan. 28, Feb. 23, March 25 - Noon - 1 p.m.

2021 Webinar Series

Though quarantining is changing the way churches engage in ministry, that does not mean the church’s response has slowed down. If anything, it is has ramped up in new and innovative ways to meet the expanding needs of caring for the grieving to comforting the lonely. This new webinar series for 2021 will focus on ways churches can be in ministry to/with/for Older Adults and Boomers during these challenging times. The NIC Older Adult Ministries Council helped plan the series and consultant Rebecca Fraley from the DeKalb District will be one of the panelists for the March 25 presentation.

For more info, visit [umcdiscipleship.org/articles/things-we-can-do-webinar-series](http://umcdiscipleship.org/articles/things-we-can-do-webinar-series).

### Job Openings

For the latest job openings in the Northern Illinois Conference, visit [www.umcnic.org/jobs](http://www.umcnic.org/jobs).

### 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 and click on “Sign up for our Newsletter” to enter your name and email.

### How to Contact Us

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 Communications staff.

### Submissions

For editorial content, subscriptions and address changes:

Anne Marie Gerhardt  
Dir. of Communications  
312-312-346-9766 ext. 766  
77 W. Washington St.  
Chicago, IL 60602  
[agerhardt@umcnic.org](mailto:agerhardt@umcnic.org)