

2021 Annual Conference registration open

Preparations for the 2021 Northern Illinois Annual Conference are well underway for our virtual gathering July 16-17 tentatively from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. each day with the theme "Jesus Makes a Way." The NIC joins a majority of Annual Conferences across the denomination adapting to remote meetings and remaining entirely online for a second year since the COVID-19 pandemic hit. The NIC's session will again be produced with the help of Good News TV (GNTV), which has made great improvements to its voting format and Zoom features for a better experience for participants.

Online registration is open and will close June 30 at midnight. It's important all those eligible to participate register to receive a Zoom link and voter ID number. Registrations will not be possible after the June 30 deadline. The registration fee is \$30 and covers both the July and October sessions, as well as video production, voting technology, worship planning and other administrative expenses. Non-voting members and guests do not need to register and are welcome to view the Annual Conference sessions as well as the worship services on the NIC's YouTube and Facebook pages.

Other details:

- Legislation and Historical Documents will be posted online by **June 16**. Look for other materials, the agenda and program to be posted closer to the session dates.
- Clergy Session - **June 28**, 10 a.m. - 12 noon via Zoom. Registration is open through June 21 at midnight at umcnic.org/calendar/clergy-session.
- Laity Session kicks off Annual Conference the evening prior, via Zoom on Thurs., **July 15** at 7 p.m.

- Laity session registration coming soon at umcnic.org/calendar/laity-session.
- Pre-Conference Briefings: Thurs., **July 8** (10 a.m.) and Mon., **July 12** (7 p.m.) Choice of day made through AC registration. It's strongly recommended voting members attend a briefing to learn the standing rules and procedures as well as information on legislative documents.
- AC Tech Training: Tues., **July 13** at 7 p.m. or Wed., **July 14** at 10 a.m. Choice of day made through AC registration.

- Memorial Service: **July 16** (Time TBD) Wisconsin Conference Bishop Hee-Soo Jung preaching.
- Retirement Service: **July 17** (Time TBD)
- Bible Study - **July 16-17** (Time TBD) Indiana Conference Bishop Julius C. Trimble leading.
- 2021 Ordination Service - **Oct. 1**.
- Fall Session - **Oct. 2**

Stay up to date on news, registrations and announcements at umcnic.org/AC2021.

AC2021 Mission Challenge: Fill the Truck



Help us reach and beat the Conference goal to collect more than 6,000 pounds for the Midwest Mission Distribution Center! Churches across the Conference are serving as drop-off locations through July 1. For a complete list of sites, contact information and a donation form, visit umcnic.org/2021missionchallenge.

MMDC Top Needs:

- Onesies
- Toothpaste - 2.5 oz. or larger
- Laundry Soap - 32 - 64 oz.
- Dish Soap - 16 - 34 oz.
- Household Liquid Cleaner - 16 - 40 oz. (NO SPRAYS)

MIDWEST MISSION PERSONAL DIGNITY KIT

Biggest Need:

- Toothpaste - 2.5 oz. or larger
- Bath Hand Towels
- Bath Wash Cloths

MIDWEST MISSION LAYETTE KIT SUPPLIES

Biggest Need:

- Onesies
- Donation of \$2 for Diaper Cream
- Cloth Diapers

MIDWEST MISSION STUDENT KIT SUPPLIES

Biggest Need:

- Box 12 Colored Pencils
- Rulers

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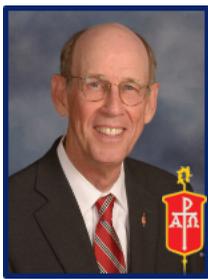


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FROM THE BISHOP:

Questions about the future of The United Methodist Church

Through this column over several months, I want to discuss some crucial bedrock issues that will determine the future of our church at every level. In the last several issues of *The Reporter*, I have been presenting key questions that each of us must understand to help us move forward together in ministry. Each question has more history than I can tell and more nuances than I can explore. I simply want to engage you in understanding the importance of these questions and let you make your own decisions as a follower of Jesus Christ. In the April Reporter I asked question #1: "Is the Church a Movement or an Institution?" In the May Reporter, I asked question #2: "Is the Church a Covenant Community or a Voluntary Association?"

"Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I've commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age."

Matthew 28:19-20 (CEB)

Question 3: "Is our Mission Focus Geographical or Generational?"

"Caroline, the Lord defend you with his heavenly grace and by his Spirit confirm you in the faith and fellowship of all true disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen." With these words and a sign of the cross on her forehead, I had the joy of confirming my granddaughter into the Christian faith this past month. Since I was with her on the day she was born and baptized her as an infant, it only seemed fitting that I participate in her public commitment to follow Jesus all the days of her life. It was a holy occasion that made me acutely aware of the importance of passing faith in Christ to the next generation. Isn't that the core mission of the Church?

Recently I was with a group discussing what metrics we should track in our churches to measure progress and encourage excellence in ministry. There was an embarrassing admission that our membership and attendance figures are inaccurate, followed by an

awareness that 15 months of the pandemic has made counting anything complicated. Personally, I have always counted "first-time resident visitors" as a primary metric, especially if you compare each quarter of the year with the same prior year. If your congregation is not attracting people in your community (even on Zoom, YouTube, or Facebook), you will not grow. The Rev. Martin Lee, our NIC Director of Congregational Development and Redevelopment, strongly suggested we only count baptisms – keep it simple and focused on the Great Commission. If we baptize and help people confirm their faith, God will use them to build the Church and transform the world.

So, what is our most important focus? Is it geographical or generational? Do we count metrics of our congregation or people who will share their faith with others? I realize this is somewhat of a false dichotomy since both are important. However, I have noticed that congregations can spend a lot of time and energy starting ministries for their members that often do not generate faith sharing to those outside the congregation. Is it possible we cannot see the trees because we are looking at the forest?

Caroline was asked to renounce sin and profess her faith. She was asked, "According to the grace given to you, will you remain a faithful member of Christ's holy church and serve as Christ's representative in the world?" She was also asked, "As a member of this congregation, will you faithfully participate in its ministries by your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness?" The 2008 General Conference added the word "witness" to highlight every church member's mission and evangelistic responsibilities. It is possible to serve the Church without personally serving the Great Commission. Supporting the Church with your prayers,

presence, gifts and service is not enough. Each of us, including Caroline, has the responsibility to witness to others what Jesus has done and is doing in our lives.

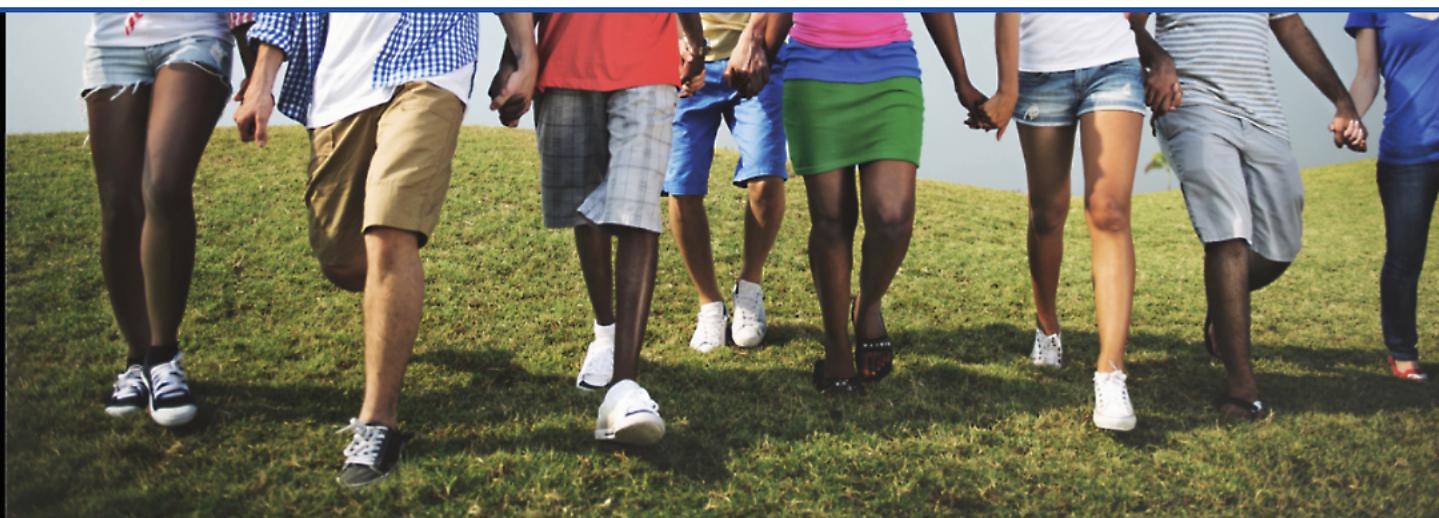
Peter replied, (CEB) "Change your hearts and lives. Each of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you, your children, and for all who are far away—as many as the Lord our God invites."

Acts 2:38-39

Through my many years in ministry, I remember hearing about circuit riders taking the gospel to people on the frontier, missionaries sent to faraway places, and new church planning teams discussing new neighborhoods, housing projects and schools. I have worked with teams dedicated to reaching cross-cultural, multicultural, and marginalized people. Starting with a geographical focus is helpful in establishing new churches and ministries; however, equipping people to share their faith and passing faith in Christ to the next generation is the essence of discipleship. Our task is to witness to our faith in Christ so the next generation will pass it on. My prayer is that everyone baptized and confirmed this year will tell others about their faith in Jesus.

DIY Rally Against Racism

**UNITED
METHODISTS
STAND AGAINST
RACISM**



In the past year, the murder of George Floyd heightened the urgency and prominence of calls for racial justice and the United Methodist Church responded with a coordinated effort calling all to Stand Against Racism. Even before that, the Northern Illinois Annual Conference made one of our three strategic goals to "live out the conviction that racism is incompatible with Christian teaching."

If we held this year's Annual Conference in person, we would envision hundreds of members marching as one to

bear witness to this commitment and showcase the United Methodist Church as a leader in anti-racism efforts. In place of one central rally, the NIC Anti-Racism Task Force is encouraging churches across Northern Illinois to host local DIY (Do It Yourself) Rally Against Racism on the weekend of Annual Conference July 16-18 or any time summer 2021.

Participants are encouraged to share photos and videos on social media using hashtag #rallyagainstracism. We invite each congregation to choose a time and location to

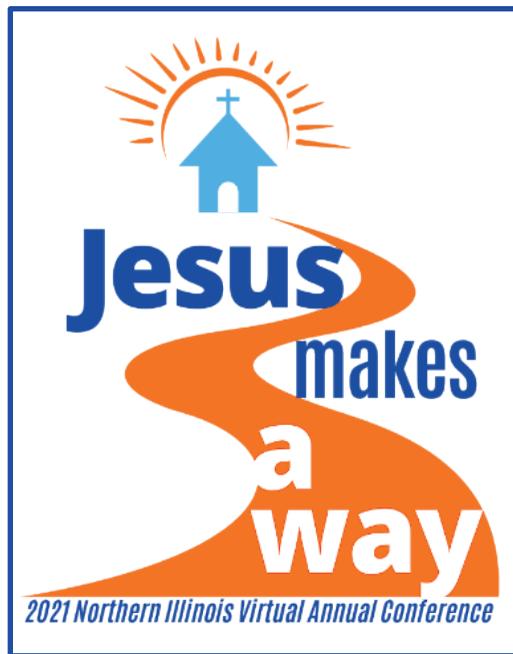
maximize participation and visibility. Congregations and clusters are encouraged to band together. Create signs, wear custom t-shirts, spread a message of love over hate and show solidarity against racism.

For more information and to register your church go to umcnic.org/rallyagainstracism.

Join the growing list of churches United Against Racism and start planning your DIY rally today!

Laity Session kicks off Annual Conference July 15

By Connie Augsburger, Mark Manzi, Eugene Williams, Conference Co-Lay Leaders



We invite you to attend, virtually, Annual Conference 2021 on July 16-17 and October 1-2. This year we will celebrate our 182nd year as a conference together. The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged all of us. We have experienced loss, yet we have also celebrated new life and new ideas in this evolving phase of our lives.

As we begin to see a way forward from this difficult time, we will be entering into a period of discovering what church, ministry, mission, and relationships will look like in the years to come. Whatever changes may occur, we will always have the grace, mercy, peace, and love found in Jesus Christ. Together, we will be stronger and ready to meet the challenges of this adaptive time.

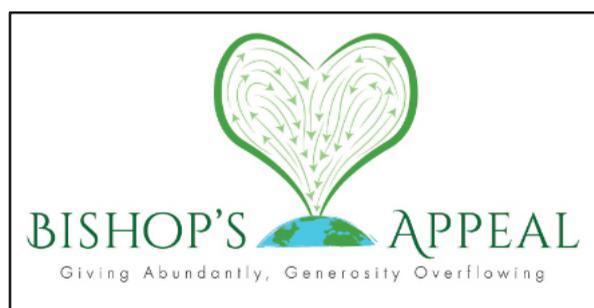
"Jesus Makes a Way" is the theme of the 2021 Northern Illinois Annual Conference. As your Conference Co-Lay Leaders, we believe that it is vital that we work together focused on the way Jesus will make for all of us. We will be together virtually, as we were in 2020, via the technology services of Good News TV (GNTV). GNTV's upgraded technology will allow for even more interaction between members as we hear about the outstanding

ministries occurring throughout Northern Illinois, work on legislation, and face the challenges ahead for our Conference and our denomination.

Please make sure that you register for Annual Conference on time. The registration period begins June 1 and ends June 30 at midnight. Your registration will be for both the June and October sessions of Annual Conference, and the \$30 fee covers both sessions as well. Please be sure to download all materials and read those materials as part of your preparation for Annual Conference.

We are incredibly excited to invite you to the Laity Session to kick off Annual Conference on **Thursday, July 15, from 7 - 8:00 p.m.** During this online session, we will hear about new ministries throughout our Conference. We will learn about Conference and district resources available to help all local churches and we will break out for meetings in the new districts to hear about activities planned for the year ahead.

We look forward to the return of a Laity Session and, while virtual, being together. May God bless you in your journey to Annual Conference.



2021 Bishop's Appeal for UMCOR COVID-19 Response Fund

Donations toward this year's Bishop's Appeal special offering will go toward the United Methodist Committee on Relief's (UMCOR) COVID-19 Response fund to help strengthen the response of health care facilities, provide much-needed medical supplies, increase access to clean water and hygiene facilities and address food insecurity and other economic challenges facing communities, particularly those in underdeveloped countries.

Since the start of the novel coronavirus outbreak, Global Ministries has worked with partners around the world to respond to this humanitarian crisis. The Global Health unit and UMCOR have worked with health boards, medical professionals, disaster management coordinators, and faith leaders to prevent the spread of this disease. Grants have been awarded to provide clean water and medical equipment at health facilities and to address the economic challenges caused by the pandemic, such as food insecurity.

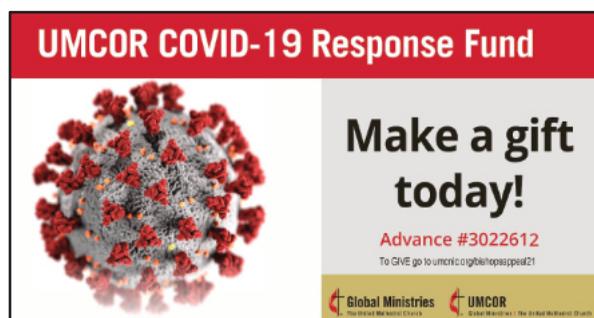
As the virus continues to spread, health facilities are working

beyond capacity to treat those infected. Hospital beds are in short supply, equipment is inadequate and medical supplies are running out. The situation in some countries, like India and Brazil, is dire and the surge of spread is not expected to peak for weeks.

Grants from the UMCOR COVID-19 Response Fund will help strengthen the response of health care facilities, provide much needed medical supplies, increase access to clean water and hygiene facilities and address food insecurity and other economic challenges facing communities, particularly those in underdeveloped countries.

When you say "yes" to supporting the UMCOR COVID-19 Response, you will help bring God's love to life to those in the middle of this unfolding health crisis.

Your church is encouraged to participate in fundraising efforts and/or take an offering for this appeal. To give, text the word GIVE to (844) 563-0429 or visit umcnic.org/bishopsappeal21.



JUSTICE GENERATION TAKES ACTION:

United Methodist high school students respond to racism

◀ Cindy Oh, a member of Wesley UMC in Urbana, created a series of #StopAsianHate social media graphics in response to a rise in hate and racist attacks on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders across the country.

The Justice Generation, an initiative to empower high school students as champions for racial justice, emerged from the NIC's Anti-Racism Task Force in 2020. Eighteen diverse high school students from across the Northern Illinois Conference participated in the Justice Generation during the past school year. A team of adults, including four young adult leaders in their 20s, mentored the students. The Rev. Jeremiah Thompson, Co-chair of this program, offered this overview: "Justice Generation has sought to help our students think about the evils of racism from a big picture perspective, looking at the problems historically and theologically."

Students Invited to Put Ideas Into Action

This past year, the Justice Generation read and discussed the book "Stamped: Racism, Anti-Racism and You" by Jason

Reynolds, which examines the history of racism in America. In addition, Justice Generation had many conversations about racism all around us – with students examining data about racial equality in their schools, learning from guest speakers about racism in health care and media, and the use of indigenous names and images as sports mascots. Clergy, who have been social justice champions, shared ideas about strategies in achieving change. Discussions evolved around sensitive topics such as personal experiences with racism, privilege, the rise in hate crimes, police shootings, the intersection of racism and LGBTQIA rights, and more in 2021 America.

Leaders asked the students to create a capstone endeavor – an "action-impact" project that would raise awareness of racial justice in the communities where students live.

Thompson explains, "The action-impact projects are an

opportunity to take these ideas and put them into a contextually relevant action in our communities." Susan Dal Porto, Lay Co-chair, adds, "Students were coached on project ideas, management, and resources, and asked to prayerfully consider how they could make a difference in their communities." Dal Porto continues, "The creativity and imaginativeness of each student's project idea are impressive."

For her project, Kimiko Darcy, a rising junior at the Latin School of Chicago, a member of Ravenswood Fellowship UMC in Chicago, and an award-winning pianist, planned, practiced, and offered a fundraising concert with her sister called "Play for Justice." Kimiko raised nearly \$2,000 to donate to Black Lives Matter, Japanese American Citizens League, and Asian Americans Advancing Justice.

continued on page 4, see Stop Asian Hate

Justice Generation continues and seeks new class of students



Kimiko Darcy, a member of Ravenswood Fellowship UMC in Chicago, plays the grand piano for a fundraising concert to raise awareness of racial injustices.

The NIC Anti-Racism Task Force is seeking United Methodist high school students who have an interest in learning, developing, and engaging in racial justice work in the church and community with Justice Generation for the 2021-2022 school year. If selected, students will be expected to meet once monthly for a two-hour Sunday evening session (virtually and in person, when permitted), starting in August 2021 continuing through May 2022. The final schedule and dates is TBA.

This cohort of students are offered a variety of learning experiences which will involve special

guest speakers, relevant books, innovative films, dynamic music, and lively discussions focusing on how to create racial justice for social impact. Students will be encouraged to share what they learn within their churches and communities. There may be a culminating out-of-state trip in June 2022 visiting civil rights sites depending on the status of COVID-19.

Cost: \$50 for the August through May learning group. An additional cost for the out-of-state field trip is TBD. Look for more details soon.

continued on page 7, see Justice

All of Us Campaign

Northern Illinois
Justice
For Our
Neighbors
A United Methodist Immigration Ministry

ALL OF US
Campaign

LET'S REPAIR OUR BROKEN AND OUTDATED
IMMIGRATION SYSTEM!

**LEGALIZE ALL 11
MILLION**

All of Us means that families get to live without fear in their chosen homes.

The Northern Illinois Justice for our Neighbors (NIJFON) is joining Church and Society and National Justice for Our Neighbors in mobilizing our communities to engage legislators to create permanent pathways to citizenship for all 11 million undocumented immigrants settled in the United States.

With undocumented communities at the center of this network-wide advocacy initiative, the campaign is organizing teams to lobby legislators in as many states as we can for a week of action. Plans also aim to have op-eds written by JFON site leadership, clients and faith leaders and build the capacity of our teams to host virtual prayer vigils and engage in social media. Their advocacy efforts will center the voices and imaginations of immigrants to determine a future where everyone can thrive.

The United Methodist Church understands that central to Christian faithfulness is a call to love and welcome all those who sojourn, for we are sojourners ourselves. The United Methodist Church's Social Principles "recognize, embrace, and affirm all persons, regardless of origin, as members of the family of God." That family does not include only mothers, fathers and their progeny, but also the

widow, the orphan, and, the foreigner (Exodus 23:9).

Our faith values ground us in the United Methodist Church's commitment to legislation that promotes welcome and equity, upholds the civil and human rights of all migrants, and ensures every sister and brother has the ability to stand in the light of freedom, justice, and the opportunity God desires for All of Us.

It is time for our immigration system to value, dignify, and honor immigrant communities by providing a pathway to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented immigrants settled here. We must have a system that recognizes all of us. Our dignity. Our contributions. Our voices. Our future. All of us. It is time.

A planned week of action from June 7-14 will include opportunities to meet with your elected officials, write an op-ed for your local paper, or help host a prayer vigil. The activities will be happening throughout the week of action. Participants do not need to be available all the days.

If you have any questions and would like to participate, reach out to Claudia Marchan, NIJFON Advocacy Consultant, at claudia.marchan@nijfon.org.

Stop Asian Hate *(continued from page 3)*

Kimiko described the Justice Generation and her Action-Impact Project this way:

"As someone who is half Asian, I grew up experiencing microaggressions and watched news reports of police brutality against Black Americans. More recently, we have seen more publicized crimes against Asians. These events pushed me to become an advocate for racial justice. I struggled with finding a way to effectively spread awareness and work towards social justice until I found out about the Justice Generation. In the Justice Generation, we discuss and share our own experiences and opinions on social justice and racial issues. Through the Justice Generation meetings, I have learned about the history of racism, and they provided me a safe space to share and understand my experiences with racism. For the final project of Justice Generation, I thought about what I am capable of doing. As someone who has grown up loving the piano, I knew that holding a concert with my older sister, Eriko, would be the best way to raise awareness of racial injustices. My goal is to collect donations to support organizations that promote social justice."

The "Play for Justice" concert is available to watch on YouTube at youtube.com/watch?v=ktRcmLZZw0Q.

Dal Porto expresses gratitude to parents and local clergy members by noting, "Parents and Pastors have had a central role in many of the students' projects and have elevated the work of the students through their involvement."

Rev. Thompson reflects on the transformative journey of the Justice Generation by offering this challenge: "We are called to action to end racism, and like the students, all of us need to consider what action God is asking us to take prayerfully."

Justice Generation Action-Impact Project Summaries

Isabella Pena (Milledgeville UMC) is painting a mural to hang in the sanctuary of her church, depicting Jesus loving many diverse kinds of children.

Jaelyn Pirtle (St. Mark UMC Chicago) researched why there are not more black doctors and how to increase the numbers.

Maggie Konczak (Plainfield UMC) worked with her local public library and designed bookmarks with inspiring quotes/designs (which can be colored) about racial justice. Bookmarks will be distributed to participants in the library's summer reading programs.

Cindy Oh (Wesley UMC Urbana) is raising awareness of the many varieties of Asian Americans by building a website for learning and community – she also created series of "Stop Asian Hate" graphics for people to use on social media.

Liz Wellman (Plainfield UMC) raised money and purchased books by and about people of color for the children's library at her church.

Sierra Donaldson (Community UMC Naperville) sought to make an impact volunteering at a food pantry.

Bella Bjerkan (Elmhurst First UMC) pursued asking her local school district to add more music by composers of color to the K-12 curriculum.

Caleb and Angelese Buntun (St. Mark UMC Chicago) sought to create social media campaign to fight racism.

Nicholas Zaccarria (Grace UMC Naperville) sought to organize a post-pandemic dinner between local UMC and AME congregations.

Evan Horvath (Geneva UMC) pursued collecting donations at a local bookstore to acquire books about and by people of color to donate to his local public library.

Anna Proulx (Plainfield UMC) will organize and lead a small group discussion of the book *Stamped* to raise awareness of the history of racism and hopes to invite a local AME church to partner in this endeavor

Leah Popplewell and AJ Hansen (Geneva UMC) imagined an essay contest for K-8 students on a topic about the importance of racial justice.

Kimiko Darcy (Ravenswood Fellowship UMC Chicago) offered a fundraising concert called "Play for Justice" to raise money to support organizations working on racial justice.



Rita L. Smith serves as the national representative on the United Methodist Women Northern Illinois conference leadership team gathering success stories and needs of local membership to report as well as sharing communications from the national office.

United Methodist Women program advisory group holds first meeting of 2021-2024

By Tara Barnes, Editor, Response magazine, United Methodist Women

The 2021-2024 United Methodist Women Program Advisory Group gathered via Zoom for its first annual meeting March 11-13, 2021. This global gathering included Rita L. Smith representing the Northern Illinois Conference.

The group members met for orientation and preparing for their work throughout the next four years. The program advisory group studies issues and prepares recommendations to the national board regarding

mission priorities, mission education work, and program guidance for United Methodist Women. It includes representatives from every United Methodist conference as well as from national and global partners.

Program advisory group members are part of one of five working teams: membership, identity, relationship, technology, and story. Members also serve on United Methodist Women's editorial board, Reading Program team, Legacy Steering Committee, Eliminating Institutional Racism team, and Assembly team. Rita serves on the Story/Brand team and conference officer liaison. Time was spent during the meeting describing the work of the teams and welcoming members on board. The meeting's theme, "Dream It, Believe it, Do it" was reflected in the reports

from General Secretary Harriett Jane Olson and National President 'Ainise 'Isama'u. 'Isama'u reminded members that "our foremothers dreamt it so that we - yes, all of us here - could achieve it. It's now our time to dream bigger dreams and continue the legacy. The dreams we dream today lay the foundation for those women coming behind us. If we dream it, surely, they will achieve it. May it be so."

Olson called the program advisory group members to the work of this quadrennium saying, "We will look - seeing needs and hearing women's stories. We will consult with women "on the ground" and in the know. We will plan, believing that we can make a difference. We will raise funds to support the work, believing that this is our calling. And believing that God will use us for good in the world."

Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer Tamara Clark gave a report on giving and shared the ways members' mission dollars are at work in the world through grants and scholarships, national mission institutions, regional missionaries and the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner as well as through member empowerment through leadership training, spiritual growth, transformative education and service and advocacy.

"Luke 8:1-3 talks about some bold women who gave out of their own means as an expression of God's grace while still active in ministry," Clark said. "As United Methodist Women members, we bring our gifts of not only finances but of time and service so that these offerings might be turned into miracles for women, children and youth."

Each program advisory group meeting includes training on eliminating institutional racism. The March 2021 meeting focused on the history of United Methodist Women's antiracism work, defining racism and sharing resources, including the Charter for Racial Justice, United

Methodist Women's Just Energy for All and Interrupting the School to Prison Pipeline campaigns, and studying Pushout at Mission u.

A moving sermon by Bishop LaTrelle Easterling, Baltimore-Washington conference, closed the weekend and called program advisory group members to be unbent women, to stand up straight and let God's glory touch their faces, referring to the poem "Woman Un-Bent" by Irene Zimmerman. "Be unbent, stand straight and walk in your calling," Easterling said. "Be unbent, stand straight and take thou authority. Be unbent, stand straight and be free of your timidity. Be unbent, stand straight and serve. Be unbent and stand up against those who try to push you back down. Be unbent and stand up and say, 'Here I am, Lord. Send me.'"

Throughout the gathering, program advisory group members dreamed and believed together for the future of United Methodist Women and its crucial role in the church and for a world in which all can thrive, and they left ready to do the work. United Methodist Women is the official women's organization of The United Methodist Church, with hundreds of thousands of members across the country whose vision is to put faith, hope and love into action for women, children, and youth.

Rita L. Smith serves as the national representative on the United Methodist Women Northern Illinois conference leadership team gathering success stories and needs of local membership to report as well as sharing communications from the national office.

The NIC UMW will be holding its summer learning session Mission U July 23-24 (virtually) for all (children, youth, men and women; you don't even have to be United Methodist to attend). Visit umwnic.org/mission-u for more details.

United Methodist becomes oldest American to climb Mt. Everest



Art Muir, a former board member for the United Methodist Foundation of the Northern Illinois Conference and member of North Shore UMC in Glencoe, became the oldest American to summit Mt. Everest.

On May 23 at 7:50 a.m., Arthur (Art) Muir, 75, climbed the final ascent of Mt. Everest, becoming the oldest American to reach the world's highest peak at 29,031 feet, according to Himalayan Guides. He was joined by the second former NFL player to reach the summit, Mark Pattison, and more than a dozen other climbers.

Muir, a longtime United Methodist, member of North Shore UMC in Glencoe, and former board member of the UMC Foundation of the Northern Illinois Conference, who helped chair the grants committee, began his journey to the peak many years ago, according to his son Charles Muir.

"Seven and a half years ago, I received a call in the middle of the night from an obviously foreign number and to this day I'm not even sure why I answered it," Charles wrote on Facebook. "Turns out it was my dad calling me from the summit of Cotopaxi, a 19,000-foot tall volcano in Ecuador."

Charles said that climb relit a fire in his dad, a retired Chicago attorney, that had been dormant for some time. "Fire is not the correct word. An inferno would be more accurate," said Charles. "It led to us summiting Denali together, a dream of ours. That dream led to another dream for him: Summit Mount Everest." Unfortunately, an ankle injury from falling off a ladder on the mountain cut short Art Muir's attempt at Mt. Everest in 2019.

Muir would have to wait until 2021 to make his second attempt since Mt. Everest was closed to climbers last year because of the pandemic.

"I thought that he would never realize his dream. But never discredit my dad's drive and determination," said Charles. "For two years, he trained, exercised, walked, climbed stairs over and over and over again - not even the COVID-19 pandemic would

stop him as he built his own gym in the garage."

Charles said all of that hard work came together on May 23 when his dad became the oldest American ever to summit the mountain (an accolade Art doesn't much care about). Muir beat the record set by Bill Burke, who became the oldest American to climb the mountain at age 67 in 2009.

Muir admits he felt scared and anxious at times. "You realize how big a mountain it is, how dangerous it is, how many things that could go wrong. Yeah, it makes you nervous, it makes some anxiety there," Muir told reporters in Kathmandu. "It was cold and windy on the top and I was just surprised when I actually got there (the summit). I was too tired to stand up, and in my summit pictures I am sitting down."

Muir, a grandfather of six, safely made it down the mountain on May 30 and is looking forward to celebrating with his family back home.

"When I got back down to the (base) camp, I was just overwhelmed with emotion," Muir said during an interview on the TODAY show. "To be quite honest I thought about my family, I thought about my grandchildren, one of whom was born while I was on this expedition, and I started crying. It was an adventure of a lifetime."

"Words cannot describe how proud of him I am. Very few know how hard he had to work, how dedicated and passionate he had to be to accomplish this," said Charles. "When we summited Denali together, I jokingly asked him if he was going to try and climb Everest. He smiled at me and said, 'I don't know. We'll see.'"

Charles said it might be time to stop putting ideas into his head before he decides to conquer another amazing feat. But there may be no stopping him!

MOM AND ME DRIVE

15,614

DIAPERS

257

PACKS OF WIPES

28

DONORS



Kids Above All first diaper drive a success

Kids Above All would like to thank everyone who participated in their first ever Mom and Me Diaper Drive for their kindness and generosity and making the campaign a huge success! "Your support has helped ensure that our kids and families have the childcare essentials they need to build their lives together," said Catherine Inserra, Kids Above All Manager of Faith and Community Relations. For more information, visit kidsaboveall.org

LOCAL CHURCH NEWS

New Hispanic/Latinx Faith Community in Rockford By Rev. Violet Johnicker



Lay missionaries Lety and Ubaldo Ramos, pictured with their three daughters, are leading a Spanish-speaking worship service Sunday afternoons at Brooke Road UMC in Rockford.

In 1921, God gave a vision to a Methodist pastor to minister to families in southeast Rockford and create a Sunday School for children. That outreach quickly grew into Brooke Road Methodist Church, a congregation that served the neighborhood of many Swedish immigrants.

100 years later, God continues to call Methodists to connect with the people of Brooke Road, whose changing demographics now include a growing Hispanic community.

First chartered in Belvidere in 2019, Cristiana Emerge UMC recently launched a second site in Rockford that meets in the Brooke Road United Methodist Church building. Faithful lay leaders Lety and Ubaldo Ramos, who live in the neighborhood, are responding to God's call in creating a dynamic worship

service with praise dancers, a worship band led by young people and meaningful prayer time.

"Our vision is to help families become passionate disciples of Christ to live the purpose of God and transform the world," said Pastor Cristobal Ramirez. Rev. Martin Lee, Director of Congregational Development and Redevelopment, said, "I believe that planting a new church is one of the most effective tools to reach out to young and more diverse people in the current ministry environment."

Spanish Services with English translation are held every Sunday at 2 p.m. at 1404 Brooke Road in Rockford. For more information or to support this growing ministry, contact Pastor Cris Ramirez at crisramz@gmail.com.

Minooka UMC breaks ground for new church building By Rev. Sarah Hong, Minooka UMC Senior Pastor



Twenty years after Minooka UMC purchased a 15 acre plot on Ridge Road, the church held a groundbreaking ceremony on May 1, 2021, paving the way for the construction of a new building.

It really did happen! After years of driving past our property and seeing the sign that says "Future home of Minooka United Methodist Church," we took a very big step into our future on Saturday, May 1. For more than 147 years, Minooka UMC has been serving the community with the current building on 205 W. Church St. On May 1, the church opened a new chapter with the official groundbreaking ceremony for its new home on the 15 acre plot at 1210 Ridge Rd. in Minooka.

For this ceremony, Minooka UMC has been praying over with the theme Bible verse, Jeremiah 31:4, "The Lord said, I will build you again and you will be rebuilt." More than 130 people, including Minooka UMC members and guests, many wearing red T-shirts and some wearing hard hats and holding shovels, attended this special culminating event. After a long period of isolation during the

pandemic, everyone was grateful to gather for this milestone in Minooka UMC's history and rekindle friendship with friends, old and new.

Some former members from out-of-state and out-of-town were present, including former pastor Richard Darr and pastor Eddie Eddy. We were grateful to have join us the Rev. Martin Lee, NIC's Director of Connectional Development and Redevelopment and Rev. Jeffrey Bross, Aurora District Superintendent, who shared the congratulation message on behalf of NIC leadership. "About 20 years ago, Pastor Richard Darr and I went to pray on the site," said Rev. Lee. "Now finally the ground breaking has started. The general contractor said it will take about 10 months to finish construction. God has faithfully watched over us during this journey."

continued on page 7, Minooka Ground Breaking



Children from the church get in the action grabbing a hardhat and shovel to pose for a photo by the excavator.

Rev. Bross invited the congregation to stand and face the four cardinal directions (north, east, south, and west) and reach out to the people in each direction so that the new building becomes a life changing place of worship where all are welcomed.

Participants also enjoyed a snack station, giveaways and a children and youth activity table. The actual groundbreaking brought more joy and excitement with several leadership groups breaking through the soil. The highlight was our children and youth standing in front of us and digging their first dirt toward our future home. Immediately following the groundbreaking ceremony, we had outdoor worship where I preached that church is not about those who are already here, but those who are lost and searching for God's love. This commitment to the Missio

Dei – reaching out to the community – is the mission of Minooka UMC.

Personally, May 1, 2021, was the 6th anniversary of my appointment to Minooka UMC. Since my first Sunday, I preached that the church exists to bless the community. Minooka UMC defined its mission statement to serve and care for the community. During our most difficult times, we reminded each other that if the church stays insulated as a social club, it does not have to exist at all. I am grateful for our wonderful lay leadership who made this groundbreaking possible through their prayers and perseverance. With our new location on Ridge Road, we will have a tremendous opportunity to reach a new generation with the love of Jesus Christ. Learn more about Minooka UMC at minookaumc.com.

Letter from the executive committee of the Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders

As your Conference Lay Leaders, we affirm that active lay persons in vital local congregations are crucial for accomplishing the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We celebrate all that the laity and clergy of our churches are doing, especially during this challenging pandemic time to reach out to each other and neighbors with the love of Jesus. We give thanks for the connectionalism of our global denomination and our common ministry as United Methodists for meeting the needs of so many throughout the world.

Being in partnership with clergy leaders in mission and ministry, we recognize that there are differences among faithful leaders, both lay and clergy. It is not unusual to have rigorous discussions ongoing within the United Methodist Church. We are a global and diverse group, unafraid to address difficult issues. This shows our strength in diversity; it challenges us and ultimately helps us to continue to stretch and grow. Sometimes this process results in pain and conflict when those differences loom large and become divisive.

The 2019 General Conference was an example of this process. Our long-standing differences over how we are to be in ministry with LGBTQIA persons and our understandings of Scripture are diverse. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the postponement of General Conference for a second year. This delay has only magnified our differences and challenges.

We lament the resulting pain for all and the negative impact on our connectional Church. We mourn the reality that we may not be able to reconcile our differences, and that conflict and division are likely to continue if we go on without deep and meaningful change. We cannot ignore the debilitating impact of our conflict on the mission and ministry of the Church as well as the strain on our essential connectional relationships.

In light of the above, we lift our delegates to General Conference and pray that these individuals, being duly elected and fully empowered by their Annual Conference, would seek to discern a path forward based upon our common Wesleyan tradition and our

common commitment to the mission field. We seek a sustainable peace that gives our church the freedom to move into the future with integrity and wholeness in a relationship with each other, connecting our past with a hope-filled future. Delegates to the postponed General Conference carry a heavy responsibility, as we charge them with leading us forward on a path with the most unity possible.

We encourage legislation for the postponed General Conference that resolves our denominational conflict, while blessing each other's ministry. We call for a non-punitive, gracious avenue to multiply the Methodist witness in ways that are true to the conscientious, sincere convictions of our members, and respectful of our church's global reach. We recognize that this may involve structural separations and difficult changes in church connections that require time and grace. We therefore encourage all to remain mindful, we are now and shall remain brothers and sisters in Christ.

God will lead us through this difficult journey and, where others might see uncertainty and cause for hesitation, we see opportunity and a call for boldness in our faith. As a church alive in mission and ministry may we come together as the body, to intentionally seek out and take advantage of every opportunity to show the love of Christ and to share the Good News. Finally, we pledge to continue serving faithfully as your Conference Lay Leaders, encouraging all laity to focus upon following the way of Jesus in ministry, witness, and mission. Together, we will continue to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

The AACLL Executive Committee: Nancy Tam Davis, President (Pacific Northwest), LaToya Redd Thompson, Vice President (Mississippi), Gayla Jo Slauson, Secretary (Mountain Sky), David Koch, Treasurer (Eastern Pennsylvania), Micheal Pope, At-Large (California Nevada), Simon Mafunda, At-Large (East Zimbabwe), Margaret Borgen, At-Large (Iowa), Sharon Gregory, Past President (Western Pennsylvania), Herman Totten, ACDLSM President (North Texas). Reviewed/Edited by Mark Manzi (Northern Illinois), Ralph Thompson (Rio Texas), Rich Hughen (New England), J Knapp (South Georgia), and Micheal Pope (California-Nevada).



Outdoor and Retreat Ministries News



Summer Camps are back!

Registration is open for in-person summer camp!

Youth Camps will be at Camp Reynoldswood in Dixon, Ill. Family Camp remains at Wesley Woods on Geneva Lake in Wisconsin.

June 20-26, 2021

J.O.Y. Camp (Grades 7-13)

J.O.Y. Camp is designed to challenge and encourage youth in their faith journey. J.O.Y. is an acronym that stands for Jesus, Others, and You. This year we are focusing on the "O" for Others.

July 7-9, 2021

Total Camp (Grades Entering: 2-6)

Total Camp offers a camp experience at Reynoldswood for the younger crowd. Fun-filled days include archery, campfires, Bible studies, crafts and a Talent Show! Of course, Gaga Ball, Volleyball, 9-Square-In-The-Air, hiking trails, and slip-n-slide are available to all.

July 25-30, 2021

Woodland (Grades Entering: 7-13)

Woodland offers something for everyone: from sleeping in tree houses in the forests of Reynoldswood to canoeing, games and archery. Evenings include campfires, fun activities and a Talent Show. Daily crafts and Bible Studies help us experience Jesus in a Christian community.

Total and Woodland Camps will explore Creation Speaks!

In the beginning, God created. God is still creating now. What do God and creation have to teach us about how to live today? Creation Speaks invites us to look to God's creation, including each other, as we listen for God's voice in the world today. By looking anew at the creation story, campers will imagine what each part might teach us about God and our place in the world. Light, water, earth, seasons, animals, humans and even a day of rest will invite campers to listen for God, who is still speaking to them today. Through our new understanding of the interdependence of all creatures and responding to our call as caretakers of creation, we are moved to awe and wonder at the gift of creation and the Creator. If the people of God stop and listen to creation, what might we hear? Shhhh, listen. Creation speaks!

For prices, registration and more info, visit niccamp.org/summercamps. Family Camp remains at Wesley Woods on Geneva Lake.

Justice (continued from page 4)



Isabella Pena sketches a mural for the sanctuary of her church, Milledgeville UMC, depicting Jesus and a diverse group of children.

Young Adult Leaders, ages 23-30, are also needed to help plan, lead discussions and facilitate learning opportunities for Justice Generation participants. Young Adult Leaders will be responsible for partial cost of the out-of-state trip.

Applications for both students and leaders are due August 1. Apply online at umcnic.org/justicegeneration.

DYK???

Do Good

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



Can an annual conference launch a massive initiative in 10 days? I'm glad to report that the answer is yes!

For 14 months, the mantra of the United Methodist Churches in Northern Illinois has been "Do No Harm." As we contemplated every step in our ministries during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have done so intending to keep each other and our communities safe by stopping the spread of disease.

Almost as quickly as we pivoted into virtual ministry, we are now moving back into in-person life. The mantra of "Do No Harm" will always be part of our mission, but today we are also asked to actively "Do Good."

In early May, the Illinois Department of Health contacted us. They're charged with getting as many shots in arms as possible before the State of Illinois moves to Phase 5. Their Faith Community Outreach Coordinator, an African Methodist Episcopal pastor, Rev. Garry Mitchell, quickly realized that the largest religious protestant body across the state is the United Methodist Church. We have almost as many United Methodist Churches in the state as there are post offices. Between

the Illinois Great Rivers Conference and the Northern Illinois Conference, we blanket rural, urban and suburban communities from the Wisconsin border to Iowa, Indiana, Missouri and Kentucky.

A few weeks ago, a small group of clergy and laity came together to think through the initiative (via ZOOM, of course). We met our counterparts in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, and soon, I was meeting daily with Rev. Curtis Brown, the Director of Connectional Ministries to our south.

To date, we have almost 100 churches signed up to host vaccination sites, and we have overwhelmed the Illinois Department of Health. Little did they realize what they were asking when they approached the UMC! They are overjoyed by the response and have shifted additional coordinators to this project. The goal was to run an intensive campaign the last week of the month from May 30 to June 6, but we will now spread out that effort well into June.

Being a vaccination site is not the only way you can support this effort. Those who cannot host can also be ambassadors to "Do Good." We have distributed materials to all our Illinois churches via the eNews and

our website, almost 1,200 strong, asking you to encourage vaccinations in your area.

When contacting churches to be host sites, we heard that many of our congregations have a high percentage of members now vaccinated. Still, we know there are pockets of people in every community who have not yet taken this step. For many reasons: fear, confusion, access, hesitation, or language barriers, these are people to whom we can offer an encouraging word or help guide to a vaccination site.

Check out umcnic.org/talkvaccines for web, video and social media resources you can use to "Do Good"!



May 2021 Appointments

Bishop John Hopkins announces the following clergy appointments for the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church, effective July 1, 2021 (unless otherwise noted):

Tim Casey (Elder) to Lemont (Aurora District) from Channahon (Aurora District). Tim follows Hyo Sun Oh who is appointed to Roselle (Elgin District).
Marcia Peddicord (District Superintendent Supply) to Malden ¼ time (DeKalb District). Marcia follows Gary Brooks who is concluding his service.

Eun Young Ko (Elder) to Desert Southwest as a 346.1 serving Tucson, Arizona: First UMC from Elmhurst: Faith Evangelical (Elgin District).

Lanny Hartzell (Elder) to Homewood: St. Andrews (Chicago Southern District) from Joliet: Hope (Aurora District). Lanny follows Beverly Dukes who is appointed to Maywood: Neighborhood (Chicago Northwestern District).

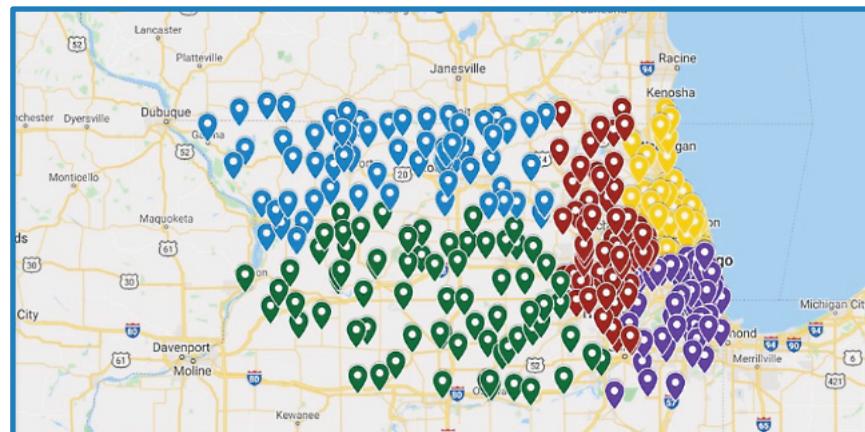
Eun Bae Doh (Elder) to Channahon (Aurora District) from Arlington Heights: Church of the Incarnation (Elgin District). Eun Bae follows Tim Casey who is appointed to Lemont (Aurora District).

Alex Lee (Local Pastors License Pending) to Harvard: First (3/4 time) and Alden (1/4 time) Rockford District. Alex follows Eric Blachford who is appointed to Naperville: Grace (Aurora District).

Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger (Elder) to Chicago Jobs Council as Advocacy Manager, from the UM Connectional Table. Effective January 4, 2021.

Kim Chapman (Local Pastor) to Genoa: Faith (DeKalb District) from Argo Fay, Mt. Carroll and Thomson (Rockford District). Kim follows Juyeon Jeon who is appointed to Bensenville (Elgin District).

Nadan Cho (Pending Local Pastors License) to Argo Fay (1/4), Mt. Carroll (1/2) and Thomson (1/4) (Rockford District). Nadan follows Kim Chapman who is appointed to Genoa (DeKalb District).



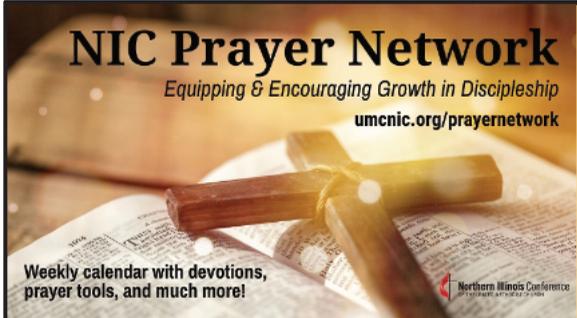
New Districts come online July 1

The five new district boundaries in the Northern Illinois Conference officially take effect July 1, 2021. In 2020, the Annual Conference approved legislation to reduce the number of districts from six to five as well as the number of District Superintendents to five.

Each district will have new branding and webpages. You will find leadership contact information, news, an interactive map and list of churches on the revised landing pages. The pages will go "live" on July 1 and may be found at:

- Prairie North: umcnic.org/prairienorth
- Prairie Central: umcnic.org/prariecentral
- Prairie South: umcnic.org/prairiesouth
- Lake North: umcnic.org/lakenorth
- Lake South: umcnic.org/lakesouth

Or visit umcnic.org and click on "about" and then "districts."



NIC Prayer Network
Equipping & Encouraging Growth in Discipleship
umcnic.org/prayernetwork

Weekly calendar with devotions, prayer tools, and much more!

Seeking lay and clergy devotion writers. Submit your 250-word devotion with a prayer and Bible verse to DiscipleTF@umcnic.org.

Job Openings

For the latest job openings in the Northern Illinois Conference, 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.

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.

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