From the Bishop:  **A time to declutter?**

Few people do “spring cleaning” anymore. In case you’ve never heard of it, it was the practice of thoroughly cleaning a house in the springtime. Its history is debated but in most cultures, spring was a time of new beginnings which called for the cleaning out of the old. The origins of spring cleaning are thought to go back to the Iranian Norouz, the Persian New Year, which falls on the first day of spring. Iranians practice “khoooneh tekouni” which literally means “shaking the house” before the New Year begins. Scotland and Japan also have “New Year’s cleaning” on December 31.

In northern climates, whether in caves, huts, teepees, sod houses, wooden or brick structures, spring cleaning meant that you had to have enough light and warmth to take draperies and rugs and even mattresses outside in order to clean them. You had to open the windows and the doors to let a fresh breeze blow out the stuffiness and let in more light which is always good for cleaning!

Traditionally the Church had a thorough cleaning of the altar and everything associated with it on Maundy Thursday. Which brings me to my point. Have you looked around your church building lately? Do you have a lot of clutter? Do you have rooms that you don’t use much anymore and they have become clutter magnets, collecting every old thing brought into or made in the church? Take a look at the backside of the pulpit. Could you do an archeological dig of every children’s sermon in the last year (or more)?

Just like Jesus “cleaning the temple,” I can tell you stories about cleaning out storage areas in a church only to be met with harsh criticism. “You threw away what?” Whatever it was, we hadn’t used it in years. One particular thing that really upset an elderly woman in the church was so faded you could hardly recognize what it was. My husband threw away a raggedy cardboard donkey (who hadn’t gotten the lead in a Christmas play or Palm Sunday parade for years) and he got a real dressing down! People don’t always like you to mess with their clutter!

But it is all worth it! You see, when we have a lot of clutter around our churches, especially in public spaces for all to see (not just new people or visitors), it says that we live in the past, not in the future. We’re hanging onto stuff that we don’t need and in fact keeps us from being free, nimble, and even new. Our old stuff is more important than dreaming and creating fresh expressions of being church, telling the story, and living unencumbered by all the old.

De-cluttering our buildings from literal papers, props and stuff may actually help us de-clutter some other things like old hurts, “we’ve always done it that way” excuses, and too much looking back and inward instead of looking forward and outward. We could all really use some spring cleaning in our hearts, minds, and relationships!

There’s a meme on Facebook that says: “Instead of giving up sweets for Lent, give up clutter! Each day fill a bag (any size) with things that you no longer need/use and donate to charity.” It might be a little late to do the full Lenten practice but even if you just do it for a few weeks or Holy Week—at church and in your own life—you might find the de-cluttering of your house, church, heart and soul.

God is always seeking to do a new thing in us and through us. Give God some space to work, open the windows and doors of your life for fresh breezes and more light, beginning in your building and moving into your heart and mind.

Enough for now, I’ve got some de-cluttering to do. What about you?

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**Outpouring of support for Ottawa**

Several EF3 tornadoes left a trail of destruction through north-central Illinois on Feb. 28. Photo courtesy Timothy Hortsman

When an EF3 tornado barreled through the small communities of Ottawa and Naplate in north-central Illinois on Feb. 28, there was an immediate response to help from United Methodists. The Rev. Cheri Stewart of Ottawa’s First United Methodist Church says it’s never more evident that the church really is a compassionately caring Christian community than when there’s a tragedy.

“Ever since the tornadoes struck, I’ve seen that caring compassion expressed in four simple words, ‘how can I help?’”, said Stewart.

She said the night of the tornado youth from Ottawa FUMC sent her texts asking ‘how they could help.’ The next morning Dwayne Jackson, NIC Director of Risk Management, called the church asking ‘how he could help.’ Soon after the Rev. Laura Wilson Underwood from neighboring Morris UMC called asking the very same question: ‘how can I help?’

NIC disaster coordinator, the Rev. Christina Vosteen emailed the churches asking ‘how she could help’ and by the end of that first day after the tornado many NIC clergy, active and retired, had reached out to Stewart each asking: ’How can I help?’

“All these offers to help and I had no idea what to say to them,” said Stewart whose church was also in the midst of organizing two funerals (not related to the tornadoes). “All I knew was no one was getting in or out of affected areas without identification...
Tornado damages Iowa church, pipe organ

By Arthur McClanahan

March 6 was an active weather night across Iowa. A round of heavy thunderstorms and lightning rolled west to east across the state along with gusts of damaging wind. Funnel clouds were observed well off the interstate. Hail struck homes and cars. Shortly after 10 p.m. things changed drastically in Muscatine. A tornado touched down, demolishing businesses, taking the roof off an apartment house, and lifting and dropping the heating/cooling unit atop the Family Life Center of Wesley United Methodist Church. That led to serious water damage. By far the most serious impact of the storm took place across the street when part of the roof of the more than century-old sanctuary of Wesley UMC blew off and the ensuing high-speed wind collapsed the 5200 pipe Casavant organ. Some of the pipes were as big as 32 feet long.

“We think this all happened about 10:10 p.m.,” said Katie Roquet, Wesley’s director of media ministries. “My husband and I first got a text message from church members who live along the alleyway from the church. I remember being on the phone with the head of our trustees wondering, ‘what is the damage like...how bad is it...what do you see?’ and he said, ‘I don’t even know how to tell you.’”

Debris was scattered on the road outside the church. Roquet reports that she and her husband, Eric, who is Wesley’s celebration worship leader, “were glad we brought our truck to get down there.” They and others found it difficult to get into the building, and once they did get in they were shocked. “We came down here not knowing what it was going to be like and wanting to salvage as much as we could. When we walked in here everyone was quiet...it was just still...eerily so...there were no lights.”

Roquet described the damage they saw. “We think that there was a chimney back there...the wind took that down, blew off that section of the roof, and the organ just collapsed and shattered everywhere.” Yet, amazingly, “we didn’t see a lot of damage in other places and the stained-glass windows seem to be OK.”

Even with the catastrophic damage to the Casavant organ, grand piano, and contemporary band instruments buried on the altar platform under the roughly scattered pipes, the focus of the Wesley UMC community is outside the sanctuary walls. “Right now, we’re trying to become a communication hub between all the volunteers contacting us wanting to help and the individual home owners who need the help,” Roquet said.

“We’ve felt a huge outpouring of love and support from the community from all the people who reached out and wanted to help the church,” Roquet added, and “that’s amazing to me!”

Even in the midst of their sadness, Roquet said, “we’re hopeful because we’re seeing so many people come and want to help in any way they can. And that’s amazing because that’s what the church is for.”

In short, despite the significant damage from the March 6 tornado that tore through part of Muscatine, Iowa, the people of Wesley United Methodist Church are committed to “getting out of the walls and making a difference.”

From the Cover: Ottawa

of their residence. All we knew was truck and truck after truck...utility after utility truck, garbage trucks, insurance company trucks and city trucks and the police were everywhere to help and secure access to the affected areas. It was chaos, really.”

Fortunately, none of the churches or parsonages of the three UMC churches, First, Epworth and Evangelical, sustained substantial damage even though the twister narrowly missed their properties. Epworth UMC’s Rev. Carolyn Lukasick says they were very fortunate to suffer nothing more than hail damage to their roof, however, they had to cancel Ash Wednesday’s service and supper since the church lost power.

When the sun rose the day after the storm, help began to pour in. Church members young and old stepped up to assist their neighbors with meals, caring cards from children, youth-led cleanup and a spiritual support table at the Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC).

Stewarts says the FUMC’s youth group raked and helped clean up several yards of fallen trees and debris on the Sunday after the tornado.

“The youngest member of the group that day was Reily who at supper that night showed me two rocks he’d found while helping that afternoon,” said Stewart. “Reily told me that he picked up the rocks to help him remember how they had helped!”

Even though First UMC had back to back funeral dinners at the church following the tornado, Stewart says there were no questions asked to help support the United Church of Christ in Ottawa, which was preparing 200 meals a day for the victims. “Our kitchen crew said ‘absolutely we can help’ and we provided and delivered the meal Monday night giving our UCC neighbors a break from their responsibilities.”

Epworth members collected supplies for the local resource center and assisted an older couple in the church who lost a sunroom addition and garage. “They came to church the following Sunday expressing how fortunate they were,” said Lukasick. “Our Lenten focus this year will be less reflection and more about how we can be the church for our community at this time.”

Bishop Sally Dyck and DeKalb District Superintendent Young-Mee Park visited all three Ottawa churches during the following Sunday morning services to offer a message of hope, prayers and support.

“Warm thanks to all who were willing to help out on such a short notice,” said Park. “It was possible only thanks to our connection and willingness of our pastors to help out.”

Park said 15 pastors (14 from DeKalb District, one from Aurora) volunteered their time to fill all the shifts covering 15 hours over two days at the MARC. At that event, at least 40 people stopped by the table and they prayed with at least 10 different people.

“No other churches could do it, but us, the UMC, thanks to our strong connection,” said Park. “I think our presence in the MARC with the mission of providing ‘Spiritual Support’ was a witness and ministry in itself.”

Stewart says one of the last clients they saw at the MARC was a mom and a daughter.

“When the mom came through she asked us to pray for her daughter whose home in Naplate had a lot of damage,” said Stewart. “The ERT crew from Morris UMC, which had come to volunteer and at first was turned away, was an answer to our prayer.”

Stewart says minutes after the connection was made the ERT crew was able to help with debris removal at the daughter’s home as soon as they are able to get a dumpster.

“We witnessed so many UMC connections, so much help and so much caring compassion being shown to the people of Ottawa and Naplate,” said Stewart. “We’re grateful to be a part of the UMC connection.”

Volunteers

The North Central Illinois Council of Governments (NCICG) says volunteers are no longer needed. Assistance in long-term recovery efforts may be possible in the future.

Donations:

The Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Services is accepting relief donations on behalf of the Ottawa/Naplate Recovery Assistance Effort. Anyone wanting to donate items following the tornado must call 815-433-0798 and receive an authorization number. Please also call before purchasing any items so that they may coordinate on what items are still needed.

For those who would like to make a monetary donation, you may contribute to the NIC Advance for Disaster Response. Checks can be made out to Northern Illinois Conference, memo: Advance #50000148

Mail to: Northern Illinois Conference
PO Box 5646, Carol Stream, IL 60197-5646

For the latest updates and information on how you can help, visit the NIC Disaster Response Facebook page.
Registration Opens
Registration for the 2017 Annual Conference session of the Northern Illinois Conference opens April 6, visit www.umnic.org/AC2017. The early bird cost is $80 through April 28. The cost increases to $95 from April 29-May 19. The onsite cost is $130. Rooms at Pheasant Run Resort must be reserved by May 10 to receive the conference rate at $119 plus tax.

Childcare
Certified childcare will be available for those attending the Annual Conference at no cost. May 19 will be the last day to register and June 1 is the last day to cancel. No shows will be billed for the actual cost of the service for the day (approximately $20 an hour).

Display Table Information
Display tables which celebrate our connectional ministries will be set up in the St. Charles Ballroom in conjunction with the Cokesbury Bookstore in the same space on Monday, June 5 and Tuesday, June 6. Deadline to apply for space is May 19. The cost is $25 per table and $45 for a table with electrical hook-up. For online applications visit www.umnic.org/AC2017 select Display Table tab.

Accessibility Coordinator
Our onsite Accessibility Coordinator will be present to help coordinate with any needs (vision, movement, hearing, etc.) we may have. Please be sure to indicate when registering how we can extend welcome and hospitality to you during Annual Conference.

Volunteers Needed
If you are interested in ushering, greeting or volunteering during plenaries and worship services, email Alka Lyall at pastorkalyall@gmail.com.

Journal and Directory
Sales will be separate from Annual Conference registration. A link will be available to purchase online when both are complete and published in the fall. Both will be available to download for free on the conference website.

Meals at Annual Conference
All meal reservations must be completed by 5/19, as they are not available onsite. Buffet meals will be served at every meal time on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday. “Invitation” meals are listed for planning purposes and not to be included in registration.

*Prices and more information on meals will be available through registration on the web.

Blueprint for Wellness Screenings
Blueprint for Wellness Screenings will be held at Annual Conference on Monday and Tuesday (June 5 & 6) from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. in the Ruby Room (Tower 2nd floor). For more info and pre-registration visit www.wespath.org and log in to your “HealthFlex/WebMd” account.

**Agenda subject to change**

**Sunday, June 4**
1 – 3 p.m. Registration
1:00 p.m. Coat Room Open for Clergy Robes
2 - 3 p.m. New Member Orientation
2:00 p.m. Ordination Rehearsal – Mega Center
2 - 7 p.m. Youth Session
3:00 p.m. Deadline for Submitting Removal from Consent Calendar Petitions
3:00 p.m. Clergy Line-Up for Ordination – St. Charles II/VII
4:00 p.m. Ordination – Mega Center
7:00 p.m. Celebration Dinner Buffet – New Orleans Ballroom

**Monday, June 5**
6:30 - 8 a.m. Breakfast
8:30 a.m. Opening Plenary - Mega Center
9 a.m. - 5 p.m. UMM Prayer Line - Topaz Room
9:00 a.m. Bible Study - Mega Center
10:00 a.m. Episcopal Address - Mega Center
12:00 p.m. Lunch
1:30 p.m. Retirement Service - Mega Center
3:45 p.m. Plenary 2 - Mega Center
5:15 p.m. Dinner
7 - 9:00 p.m. Plenary 3 - Mega Center

**Tuesday, June 6**
6:30 - 8 a.m. Breakfast
United Voices for Children
North Central College
8:00 a.m. Plenary 4 - Mega Center
9:00 a.m. Bible Study- Mega Center
10:00 a.m. Memorial Service - Mega Center
12:00 p.m. Lunch
1:30 p.m. Plenary 5 - Mega Center
3:45 p.m. Plenary 6 - Mega Center
5:00 p.m. Adjournment

**NIC Clergy Day Apart/ Clergy Annual Conference Session**

**A day planned by the Board of Ordained Ministry for fellowship, renewal, education and business.**

**Tuesday, May 23 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

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

The morning will include worship and a keynote address by Science Mike McHargue, author of the book *Finding God in the Waves* and host of the podcast Science Mike and The Liturgists. You can learn more about Mike at: www.mikemcharague.com.

The afternoon will include the annual clergy session (held apart from the June meeting). Watch for more information regarding the Clergy Session registration coming soon.

**Mission Challenge**

This year’s mission challenge at Annual Conference will be to collect bulk items for Dignity Kits for the Midwest Mission Distribution Center, our United Methodist disaster relief supply center just south of Springfield, Ill. See below the assigned donations by district.

- **Aurora:**
- Hand Towels/1,500 - Washcloths/1,500
- Cologne/1,500

- **Chicago Northwestern:**
- Nail Clipper Sets/1,500 - Razors (individually wrapped)/750
- Chicago Southern:
- Combs/1,500 - Shampoo/Conditioner (4 oz.)/750
- DeKalb:
- Deodorant (2 oz./1,500 - Shampoo/Conditioner (4 oz.)/750
- Elgin:
- Toothbrush/ 1,500 - Toothpaste 2.5 oz or larger/1,500
- Rockford:
- Bar Soap (3-4 oz.)/1,500 - Razors (individually wrapped)/750

All items are available through Dollar Tree online except the washcloths (currently only available in the store). The trailer from the distribution center will be outside the MegaCenter on Sunday afternoon and through the day on Monday.

**AC Worship Leader - Marcia McFee**

**The 2017 Annual Conference worship committee is pleased to announce Dr. Marcia McFee as this year’s worship leader.**

**Dr. McFee is an author, worship designer and leader, professor, preacher and artist. Her engaging and interactive style has been called “refreshing,” “inspiring,” and “unforgettable.”**

Marcia combines her background and experience in professional companies of music, theater and dance with a variety of worship and preaching styles in order to bring a fresh experience of the Gospel to each worship setting. Marcia has provided worship design and leadership at numerous international and regional gatherings.

Marcia’s passion for helping the church to worship God fully is especially directed toward the education of local congregations. She travels extensively in order to teach regional workshops that are accessible to congregational leaders and worship teams. These one-day workshops are usually hosted by a church, underwritten by district or conference bodies or by registration fees, and open to all churches in a particular area. Participants have commented that these workshops are inspirational as well as practical, no matter the “style” of worship practiced or denomination of the participants. Additionally, Marcia has begun a program of continuing education events in her home town of Lake Tahoe and an online subscription service to Worship Design Studio that offers inspirational and educational help for worship teams featuring a ground-breaking worship design application.
We need in the future to give more time for congregations. Fairs being an annual event (even on the District level).

The diverse 27 member task force divided into four teams meeting five times spending more than 20 hours as a full team and countless more hours in smaller groups evaluating different designs, options and strategies. After meeting in February and incorporating ideas from each team, the task force proposes the formation of a central coordinating body with co-chairs and representatives from areas of the conference. They chose the name “Annual Conference Shepherding Team” and its purpose is: discerning, stewarding, and empowering NIC vision and priorities that faithfully lead toward more vital congregations and vital Christians in alignment with the NIC mission statement. The task force reviewed the restructuring work of other annual conferences and made recommendations that comply with requirements of the 2016 Book of Discipline. The call for an annual conference restructuring was developed out of the Landscape process, Landscape survey, purpose summit and clergy/laya sessions held in 2015-16.

“The design we are presenting is the 4th iteration and truly the work of the entire member task force,” said Task Force Chair Liz Gracie. “It’s still a work in progress and we want to remind everyone this is an adaptive process. What we are able to come up with all together is just going to be the starting point. It’s going to evolve as the annual conference works with it.”

The Task Force met again in March and incorporated the input from the three listening sessions to help craft its final proposed legislation, which will be available to download and review online at www.umcnic.org/AC2017 by May 1. It will be voted on at Annual Conference in June.

Clergy and laya attended listening sessions in March to provide input to the Organizational Task Force’s restructuring plans.
Downers Grove First United Methodist Church partners with World Relief

This January Downers Grove First United Methodist Church (DGFUMC) began a partnership with World Relief to address the needs of refugees resettled in our community. World Relief is an organization that partners with local churches to transform communities economically, socially and spiritually, so that the lives of the vulnerable can thrive and grow.

As part of their Refugee Resettlement program, World Relief works in partnership with the U.S. Department of State and local church partners to welcome and resettle thousands of refugees referred by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) to the United States each year.

This year World Relief will resettle hundreds of refugees to our area. Refugees often flee their homes at a moment’s notice. They arrive at a U.S. airport with few belongings, a difficult past and high hopes for the future.

An important first step in making refugees feel welcome is to provide each family with the supplies they will need to make their house a home. This January DGFUMC took our first step in partnering with World Relief with a commitment to donate supplies for a Welcome Kit. These kits include kitchen supplies, bedding, hygiene and other household items. The items for the Welcome Kit were filled the very Sunday the program was introduced as generous congregants signed-up all the needed items, leading to a collection for a second kit.

In February members of DGFUMC delivered a van full of pillows, towels, dishes and everything else needed for two families to start fresh in a new apartment in a new country. DGFUMC looks forward to continuing and growing this partnership with World Relief.

Artists take residence at Chicago church

The current artist-in-residence is Billy McGuinness who uses his art to explore the pressing issues of hunger, mass incarceration and homelessness.

“My approach to art making is that it’s a learning process,” said McGuinness who brings art to the homeless and detained at the Cook County Jail. “I’m asking a set of questions, not a set of statements.”

One of McGuinness’ art pieces displayed in Grace’s Fellowship Hall showed extremely stark photographs of himself before and after his hunger project, which for 365 days he lived on $4 a day - the equivalent of living off food stamps for an entire day.

“Artists in our neighborhood need affordable places to create, so what better way to give back to the neighborhood by opening our doors up to artists,” said Schol. “The artwork, like that from Billy, has really opened up our congregation to the exploration into art.”

The church recently received a grant from the Northern Illinois Conference United Methodist Foundation to help keep the program going and applications are now being accepted for a fall resident.

The church is also hold a special community event on April 26 to meet Billy McGuinness. For more info visit: www.gracelogansquare.org.

Annual dinner invites discussion with our Muslim neighbors

The 12th annual CIOGC/NIC interfaith dinner will be held Wednesday, April 19 at the MECCA mosque (Muslim Educational and Cultural Center of America) 16W560 91st St., Willowbrook, IL.

The dinner begins at 6 p.m. and is sponsored by the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church and the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago.

This year we gather in the new MECCA building in Willowbrook for which Northern Illinois Conference helped advocate with zoning officials. After welcomes by Bishop Sally Dyck and CIOGC chairperson Dr. Bassam Osman, the theme of Immigrants and Refugees: Our Nation’s Story will be modeled for table discussion by the guest speakers sharing of their own stories and journey of their own families to this land.

The planners from the CIOGC along with the Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Relationships feel that such discussion will be a bridge of understanding because all of us have had the same journey and challenges, which are so evident in today’s headlines.

Our hope is, that with bridges built, we will be better able to work together for the goals that were set forth 12 years ago in the Declaration of Relationship between NIC and CIOGC. Look for more details in the NIC eNews and CCIUR Facebook page.

Who is My Neighbor: A Gathering on Immigration

The NIC Hispanic/Latinx Ministry Team is hosting a gathering on immigration for lay and clergy on Saturday, April 22 at Our Saviour’s UMC in Schaumburg from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

The day will include an overview of immigration in the United States and an in-depth look at what the United Methodist Social Principles say about immigration. Time will be given for hearing the stories of immigrants and learning how we can respond to the needs.

Partners from the United Methodist Board of Church and Society, as well as state and regional representatives working with our immigrant communities and on immigration reform will share their work.

Participants will learn ways that churches and individuals can be involved in the sanctuary movement, political reform, legal services and direct services to our immigrant communities.

Register online at www.umcnic.org/immigrationevent. Cost of the event is $5, including lunch.

Clergy mentor training April 26

The NIC Board of Ordained Ministry invites current and future licensed local pastor/candidacy/clergy mentors to the NIC’s 2017 Mentor Training Workshop. This is a highly recommended training for all current and future licensed local pastor/candidacy/clergy mentors. After completing this training, you will be trained to serve as a mentor for the next quadrennium.

When: Wednesday, April 26 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Where: First UMC: DeKalb, 321 Oak St, DeKalb, IL
Phone: (815) 756-6301

Continental breakfast provided.

Lunch: Panera boxed lunches. You can specify lunch preferences on the RSVP page. Lunch is provided at no charge to attendees courtesy of the NIC Board of Ordained Ministry. Visit www.umcnic.org/mentor to register.

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Calendar News
Bishop May a Chicago church planter and pastor dies at 81

By Sam Hodges

UMNS - Bishop Felton May often spoke of the need for "holy boldness" — and his admirers said he lived the phrase. He was a forceful preacher and a force away from the pulpit.

"You did not have to ask him to enter the fray," said James H. Salley, associate vice chancellor for Institutional Advancement for Africa University, a United Methodist School. "If he saw it and felt it was wrong, he opposed it. If he felt it was right and something he needed to support, he did it."

May died Feb. 27 at age 81, at his home in Ellicott City, Maryland. He had been under hospice care for pancreatic cancer. Survivors include Phyllis Henry May, his wife of 53 years.

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling of the Baltimore-Washington Conference announced May's passing and called him "a giant of The United Methodist Church."

"I urge us all to actively keep his family and all those who loved him in our prayers," she said.

During five decades of ministry, May led United Methodist churches, conferences and agencies. He was the first African-American bishop of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. He helped start both Africa University and the denomination's Communities of Shalom movement.

May made church-related visits to the White House, but also accepted a first-ever "set-aside" episcopal assignment to the streets of Washington, during a spike in drug-related violence. Through his ministry, he acted on a deep concern for those on the margins.

"What I saw was a person who showed bold leadership, a person who was visionary and a person who didn't mind taking risks on behalf of those who tended to be left outside," said Bishop Marcus Matthews, who was a district superintendent under May. Matthews retired as bishop of the Baltimore-Washington Conference in 2016.

May was born in Chicago in 1935. He grew up in an apartment on the South Side and regularly attended a Baptist church with his mother and siblings. While a student at Judson College, May worked part-time at a reform synagogue. Rabbi Louis Leopold Mann recommended that he become a part of St. James Methodist Church, which had a commitment to integration.

"I think God has called you to be a minister," May, speaking in 2009 at Wesley Theological Seminary, recalled the rabbi saying.

May also remembered being incredulous at the rabbi's assertion, but was soon involved in leading Sunday school and youth programs at St. James.

"And then I began to read Methodist literature and its social witness, and it made sense to me. I felt I was called by God to do that," he told the Baltimore Sun for a 2001 profile.

May was active as a young adult in civil rights work, including Operation Breadbasket. He was ordained as a deacon in the Northern Illinois Conference in 1962 and served two pastoral appointments in Chicago, one of them a church start. To get Maple Park Methodist going, May served two pastoral appointments in Chicago, one of them including Operation Breadbasket. He was ordained as a social witness, and it made sense to me. I felt I was called the rabbi saying.

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Native American Ministries Sunday is April 30
By Pastor Kirby Verret

Since 1984, the Clanton Chapel Christian Pre-school in Dulac, La., has helped countless local children who might otherwise not have the opportunity to learn about Jesus and receive basic education to start public school. This program serves students from various ethnic groups in the community, both members and non-members of Clanton Chapel United Methodist Church.

In the past, public preschool space was limited, and often, the neediest families were the last to hear of the programs. By the time they applied, no vacancies remained.

In 1984, Zoeanna Billiot Verret, a member of the Houma Indian Nation, took a leap of faith to address the needs of the young students. She herself was excluded from public education, and her first teachers were United Methodists.

Verret’s inspiration was Wilhemina Hooper, who came to Dulac in the 1930s and found her calling. She stayed until the early 1970s. Verret was in some of her last classes in the 1960s. Hooper strongly believed that the local church should create ministries to help people in the community and develop United Methodist leaders.

Today, United Methodist women help young students in the community. “Every year,” said the Rev. Kirby Verret, “our (Committee on) Native American Ministries provides at least $3,000, but the needs are much greater. We have three Native American United Methodist women teachers with approximately 20-25 students per day. This is not a babysitting service but a strong teaching program that also invites parents to be involved in their children’s education as the first teachers.” Verret chairs the Louisiana Annual Conference Committee on Native American Ministries.

Sharing Jesus is vital
One man comes back every year to attend the preschool’s commencement program. He told Verret, “The preschool program is where I learned how learning can be fun and God made us to learn.” The man is a college graduate, who worked on his Master degree, and it is our hope that the extraordinary clergy of our society are our society. The special offering supports Native American outreach within annual conferences and across the United States and provides seminary scholarships for Native Americans.

When you give generously on Native American Ministries Sunday on April 30, you equip seminary students who will honor and celebrate Native American culture in their ministries. You empower congregations to find fresh, new ways to minister to their communities with Christ’s love. For resources and how to give visit: www.umcgiving.org/nams.

*Pastor Kirby Verret, Chairman of the Louisiana Annual Conference Committee on Native American Ministries

Calendar News (continued from page 5)

NCJ Volunteer Academy
April 27 - 30, 2017
“Learn & Prepare to Witness & Serve”
Where: Camp Warren, 4225 South Camp Warren Lane, Decatur, IL
Cost: $85.00 - $175.00 depending on the lodging and days you choose.
Clergy CEU: 2 Hours
This Academy is open to those who desire to further their knowledge in UVMIM-UMCOR Disaster Response. We welcome volunteers who desire to work with survivors of natural disasters in the most vulnerable populations of the country. Come and meet those who work in Disaster Response and those who would like to serve!
Cathy Earl from UMCOR will be teaching along with others on emotional and spiritual care. Come and earn some CEU credits! For more info: umvimncj.org and click on “trainings”.

paumcs.org

McFee (continued from page 3)

As well as her experience with local church worship, Marcia specializes in designing and leading conference worship. Over the last 18 years, she has coordinated worship for countless regional and agency conferences. Most recently, she designed and led 29 worship services over a 10 day period for the international quadrennial General Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Dr. McFee received a Master’s of Theological Studies degree at Saint Paul School of Theology with a concentration in Preaching and Worship, where she recently received the Outstanding Graduate Award from the Alumni Association. She earned a Ph.D. in Liturgical Studies at the Graduate Theological Union with an allied field of Ethics. She has been a guest lecturer and adjunct faculty at twelve seminaries. Marcia is an avid skier and the co-author of Spiritual Adventures in the Snow: Skiing and Snowboarding as Renewal for Your Soul.

Holy Week Worship Experience with Dr. Marcia McFee
Tuesday, April 11, 7:30 p.m.
Barrington UMC

For many clergy and church leaders, the most significant holy days of the year get consumed by the tasks of ministry instead of being able to authentically worship.

This Holy Week, the Northern Illinois Conference is partnering with Dr. Marcia McFee to provide an opportunity for clergy, their families, and church leaders to come and participate in a profoundly moving worship experience. No reading or other preparation is required. You are simply invited to come and have your soul fed.

Dr. McFee will lead a worship experience through the lens of Egeria, a 4th-century pilgrim who left a journal describing Holy Week events in Jerusalem. Together, we will engage in our own pilgrimage through Holy Week, from Palm Sunday through Holy Saturday, experiencing prayers, soulful singing, candlelight and space for personal reflection.

“Dr. Marcia McFee is unparalleled in creative, transformative worship design, and it is our hope that the extraordinary clergy of this conference will be blessed by this Holy Week offering, not as another meeting or event to attend, but rather an opportunity to join with sisters and brothers journeying to the cross,” said Bishop Sally Dyck.

Childcare and parking are available. This event is entirely free, meant to be a gift for those who are so generously giving of themselves through their calls to ministry.

We do, however, request registration in order to facilitate adequate setup and materials. To register visit www.umcnic.org/Egeria. For more information, contact the Barrington United Methodist Church office at (847) 836-5540.

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Every morning as I ride into the office on Metra and approach Union Station an automatic announcement plays reminding us of safety tips and procedures so the hundreds of thousands of people traveling these rail lines can travel well informed. “If you see something, say something” is a tagline embedded in my brain.

“Say Something” this should also be a mantra for us in the church. Sometimes we are the best-kept secret around!

A few years ago my husband and I agreed to take one of our family members to visit a relative in western Illinois for Christmas Eve. I was up for the trip with one condition, that we time our travels so we could worship in a United Methodist church along the way. I was confident that with churches dotting the countryside we would find one that lined up with our plans.

A few days before our trip I pulled up google maps to plot out the churches we could worship with. I began calling up their websites to coordinate a time. What I learned was that worship times are one of the best-kept secrets in the world. Facebook searches and website scouring yielded no clues for where we might find a church to join for Christmas Eve. Finally I began phoning church offices. It was already the weekend but I hoped for a voicemail that would recite worship options. No luck.

When we arrived at the town where the relative lived I thought maybe the local paper would have a section where worship times were listed and we could invite the whole family to join us at church. The town we were in happened to have multiple United Methodist Churches so hope sprang eternal… only to be dashed. The worship page of the local paper contained Christmas greetings and worship times for the United Church of Christ, Lutheran Church, local Roman Catholic Church, but not one of our United Methodist Church’s had participated in the ads.

After our afternoon visit and dinner with the family, as we drove east that night I continued phoning churches hoping that someone might answer and our timing would work out. It did. We worshiped, but I began to wonder why we are so reluctant to “Say Something”.

I was a determined, loyal United Methodist. We were going to worship on Christmas Eve even if it was a midnight service when we arrived home. What about the fledgling Christian, the seeker, the ‘none’ who is inspired to take a big step and find a place to worship? If we do not make it easy for them to know who we are and when we gather, we are missing a wonderful opportunity to share the gospel story.

The moral of the story as we move through Lent and approach Holy Week services is to “Say Something”. Our worship services shouldn’t be the best-kept secret. With more ways than ever to get the word out: Twitter, Facebook, Websites, voicemail, local print newspapers and more, we should be saturating the world with news that all are invited to come remember Jesus’ journey to the cross and celebrate the resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Update your website, Facebook page, UMC’s Find-A-Church and voicemail today – tell the world when you gather and extend hospitality to the stranger.

Chicago Southern District offers summer camp opportunity


During this previous charge conference season, I learned two very important things about our local children’s ministries in the Chicago Southern District. The first is that too many of our local churches have very few or no children in their churches or part of their outreach ministries.

Second, our local church membership was not aware that our Conference owns two campsites that are fully operational and serve thousands of kids and adults throughout the year. During my years pastoring local churches in our Conference, the kids and adults from the churches I served have visited both of our campsites, Reynoldswood in Dixon, Illinois and Wesley Woods in Williams Bay, Wisconsin, enjoying the hundreds of acres the camps offer, including the land and water activities for all ages.

So working with the Northern Illinois Conference Outdoor Retreat and Ministries, we partnered to offer a mini-summer camp opportunity for our local churches in August. Our local churches can use this camp opportunity to recruit kids from around their neighborhood as well as use this as a start of a vital children’s ministry for their church.

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