

What happened at General Conference? By Joe Iovino*

At the conclusion of General Conference 2019, many United Methodists were left wondering what the decisions made will mean for each of us and our congregations. Let's take a look at what we know and what is still to be resolved.

What happened?

The global United Methodist Church met in St. Louis, Mo., February 23-26, 2019. During the four days together, United Methodists from around the world gathered for worship, prayer, conversation and several decisions.

The Traditional Plan was passed by the 2019 Special Session of General Conference, which means the current statements in the *Book of Discipline* about homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and the ordination of LGBTQ persons have not fundamentally changed.

The changes proposed by the Traditional Plan are mostly about ordination of LGBTQ clergy and how to resolve issues when a clergy violates our human sexuality stances by, for example, performing a same-sex marriage.

The Traditional Plan received 438 "yes" votes (53 percent) and 384 "no" votes (47 percent), which indicate the diversity of thought United Methodists have on these issues. This also means it is likely there are people in your church who agree with the outcome and others who do not.

A disaffiliation plan, sometimes called an "exit plan," was also passed. The plan provides guidelines for congregations who wish to leave The United Methodist Church "for reasons of conscience" regarding issues of human sexuality. The approved legislation and amendments are available at <http://umc.org/calms>.

Who made these decisions?

The General Conference consisted of delegates elected from their annual conferences on four continents. Half of the delegates are clergypersons and half are laypersons. Bishops preside at General Conference sessions but do not vote. The number of delegates was set at 864 — about 58 percent (504) from the United States and 30 percent (260) from Africa. The remaining delegates (90) are from the Philippines, Europe, and Eurasia as well as 10 from "concordat" churches with which The United Methodist Church has formal relationships. Thirty-one delegates were absent during General Conference, mostly because they could not obtain visas. The General Conference is the legislative body of the worldwide United Methodist Church.

What happens next?

Before the 2019 Special Session of General Conference closed, a motion was passed (405-395) to request a decision from the Judicial Council on the constitutionality of the Traditional Plan's legislative petitions. The bishops have



Legislation passed at the 2019 Special Session to the General Conference will be reviewed by the Judicial Council which meets April 23-25 in Evanston, Ill. Photo by Kathleen Barry, UMNS

also requested a ruling on the constitutionality of the disaffiliation plan. These issues will be addressed by the Judicial Council when they gather in Evanston, Ill., April 23-25, 2019. Visit www.umc.org/judicialcouncil to view the two-item docket.

This means that we don't yet know what will change and what will not. Anything ruled unconstitutional can be addressed at the next regularly scheduled General Conference in Minneapolis, Minn., May 5-15, 2020.

Credentialing under review

General Conference 2019 organizers are looking into whether ineligible people might have received credentials to vote during the special session. After consultation with the chair of the Commission on the General Conference and an in-depth review, it appears possible "a very limited number" of ineligible people who earlier were correctly denied delegate credentials were later able to obtain them, said the Rev. Gary W. Graves, secretary of the General Conference. He declined to give a more specific number.

"We take the integrity of the legislative process very seriously, and the breakdown in the process is troubling," said Graves. "Had the concerns been received while the General Conference was in session, the matter would have been taken to the Committee on Credentials, who would have brought a recommendation to the plenary session for resolution of the question. However, since the General Conference is not in session, the matter is being referred to the Commission on the General Conference."

Duncan McMillan, chair of the Commission on General Conference, said the executive committee of the Commission is considering next steps and

recommendations to the full Commission. "We are committed to working to strengthen the credentialing process," said McMillan.

"While this is a sad reality in our beloved church, many delegates and bishops have been asking for greater accountability in terms of voter and financial fraud for some time," said Bishop Sally Dyck. "I'm encouraged that this will be a step toward transparency and honesty and therefore greater health and wholeness in our church."

What didn't happen?

Paragraph 4 of the *Book of Discipline* has not been changed. It still reads, "The United Methodist Church acknowledges that all persons are of sacred worth. All persons without regard to race, color, national origin, status, or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection."

We acknowledge, however, that many LGBTQ people, their loved ones and allies were hurt by the speeches, rhetoric and decisions of the General Conference. We pray for healing and forgiveness.

The United Methodist Church has not split.

Clearly, we are not of one mind on these issues. The disagreements are deep on a number of subjects. Through it all, however, we remain one church that continues to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

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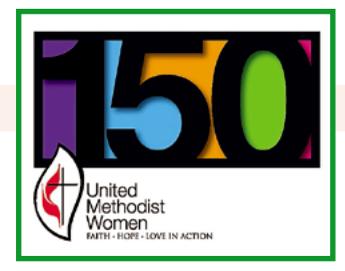
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BISHOP'S COLUMN: THAT'S NOT CHURCH!

A little after 6 p.m. on August 1, 2007, I was making dinner and listening to the radio. I was the bishop in Minnesota at the time. What I heard on the news was that the I-35 bridge over the Mississippi River had collapsed. I rushed to turn on the TV and there I saw frightening scenes of cars, and even a bus of children, precariously hanging on what was left of the bridge. Some cars had careened into the river.

I quickly began to make calls to see what kind of response the Minnesota Annual Conference could make to the community. I was initially told that this tragedy wouldn't have a news cycle longer than the weekend. But news outlets from around the world came and stayed and stayed. Many of them stayed for weeks until they found the last of the 13 people killed.

The bridge collapse rocked our world in Minnesota but it also unnerved others around the world. Tornadoes and other natural disasters occur and many more people are killed, but this disaster was particularly disturbing because a bridge is not supposed to collapse. As Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar said after the tragedy, "A bridge in America just shouldn't fall down."

Senator Klobuchar's words have come back to me over and over again since the close of the Special Session of the General Conference. If the outcome had been a firm support of "traditional" marriage, I would have understood; many people want traditional marriage upheld. I may have another opinion but I truly understand that perspective.

But for me—and I suspect I'm not alone even with some who affirm traditional marriage—it was more than affirming traditional marriage. It was how punitive and inflexible the church became in enforcing a no-tolerance approach to same-gender marriage in clergy, or clergy performing weddings of same-gender couples (which is the law of the land—it's not an outrageous interjection into our religious communities and practices).

Church isn't supposed to be that punitive and inflexible. Consequences result when people hurt others, such as sexual misconduct or abuse. But even in those cases, no bishop is punished if they don't adjudicate a clergy person who has committed egregious acts toward their parishioners. There are no chargeable offenses that carry mandated penalties in the Book of Discipline, which the Traditional Plan would create.

Church isn't supposed to be a place where people wonder if they, or their sons and daughters and friends, will be welcome. Church isn't supposed to be a place where God-given gifts are categorically denied and rejected.

Church isn't supposed to be a place where we have to agree with each other and if we don't we denigrate one another. That's not church! That's not Methodism! John Wesley said:

Only see that your heart be right toward God, and you know and love the Lord Jesus Christ; that you love your neighbor, and walk as your master walked; I desire no more. I am sick of opinions, I am weary to bear them. My

Soul hates this frothy food. Give me solid and substantial religion. Give me a humble, gentle lover of God and humanity; a person of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy ... Let my soul be with these Christians wheresoever they are, and whatever opinion they are of.

I believe in a church that helps us all grow in our love for God and our neighbor and then helps us trust in where that love will lead us. For John Wesley, "growing in perfection" had nothing to do with being flawless, and totally without sin, but being made whole in our love for God and neighbor.

I believe in a church that welcomes all people. I believe in a church that cares for all people. I believe in a church that encourages all people to fully offer themselves in service to each other and to their communities in whatever form of ministry that might be, including, if duly qualified, being ordained.

As I walk through the wreckage of the church in these last few weeks, just as I once walked by the collapsed bridge, I have seen here in Northern Illinois, and also in other parts of our church, people who are hurting, grieving and angry. And it makes me weep.

Churches, like bridges, aren't supposed to collapse so I don't, or won't, stay in my tears. I will continue to live into the church that I joined, love, and desire to be God's people on earth as we will be in heaven.

I pray you'll join me.

~Bishop Sally Dyck

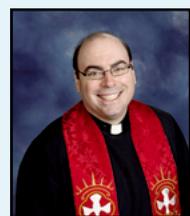
Bishop appoints two new District Superintendents

Bishop Sally Dyck is pleased to announce the appointments of two new District Superintendents. She has named the Rev. Brian Gilbert as the new DeKalb District Superintendent and the Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer as the new Rockford District Superintendent. Both appointments are effective July 1, 2019. Rev. Gilbert follows Rev. Young-Mee Park, who has been appointed to Hinsdale United Methodist Church; Rev. Grandon-Mayer follows Rev. Lisa Kruse-Safford, who has been appointed to First UMC in Crystal Lake.

Bishop Dyck thanked both Rev. Young-Mee Park and Rev. Lisa Kruse-Safford for their years of service on the Northern Illinois cabinet since 2013. "Young-Mee has been invaluable to us over the last six years as she has pursued additional training in cultural competence and has utilized that passion and training within our annual conference," said Bishop Dyck. "We have every hope that she will continue to share her gifts and passion with all of us even after assuming leadership in the Hinsdale Church."

Dyck added her appreciation for the many gifts and talents Rev. Kruse-Safford has shared with the conference. "In addition to her responsibilities as a District Superintendent (DS), she has been a great asset to the Conference Committee on Finance and Administration (CCFA) and the Annual Conference worship committee along with other projects," said Bishop Dyck.

Rev. Brian Gilbert named DeKalb DS



Rev. Gilbert is from a small community in Tennessee. He has a teaching background and community service both before he went to seminary and after serving churches. He did his seminary training at Wesley Theological Seminary. He served several churches in the Tennessee Annual Conference before coming to Northern Illinois to serve as associate pastor at First UMC in DeKalb in 2010, and then First UMC in Princeton in 2015.

Gilbert is a self-described "Methodist nerd" and is proud of it, said Bishop Dyck. "He knows his history and polity but has a deep and abiding passion for both people and Scripture," she added. "He worked for a short time at the Methodists for Social Action office in Washington, D.C., before going to seminary and therefore learned to appreciate the social holiness as well as personal holiness of our tradition."

Gilbert said it is a deep honor and privilege to walk alongside the DeKalb District. "I

really believe that, with God's help, all things are possible and the potential for life-giving ministry is limitless," said Gilbert, who added that over the past nine years —while serving in various congregations and at events — he's seen examples of faithfulness through people being the hands and feet of Jesus. "The love among this District is powerful and God's greatness is brightly reflected into many communities because of that love. I am excited to be a part of this dynamic district!"

Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer named Rockford DS



Rev. Grandon-Mayer was born and raised in Chile in the Methodist Church; her father is a Methodist pastor. For five years she coordinated a program called Youth in Mission for all Latin America and the Caribbean Methodist churches. She was the Director for Youth and Young Adult Ministry of the World Methodist Council. "As a result, Fabiola has experience and the perspective of worldwide Methodism," said Bishop Dyck. "It has also honed her administrative and leadership skills."

In addition to her previous experience with the global church, Bishop Dyck said Fabiola has been a tremendous asset in the revitalization, organization, and health of our Hispanic-Latinx ministries in the NIC. "She balances both a progressive and evangelical understanding of our Christian faith and ministry," Bishop Dyck added.

Fabiola is a graduate of Asbury Seminary in Lexington, Ky. Her first appointment in the NIC was to First UMC in Elgin in 2012, and then to Centennial UMC in Rockford, where she's been since 2014. She and her husband, the Rev. Mario Mayer, pastor of Beth Eden UMC in Rockford, have 6-year-old twins, Pedro and Paulina.

"I have been blessed to serve in the Rockford District as a pastor for the last six and a half years and I am excited to continue my pastoral ministry from another perspective along with a great group of clergy and laity committed to the mission that God has put in our hands," said Grandon-Mayer.

Opportunities for saying "thank you" to both Rev. Park and Rev. Kruse-Safford and "hello" to Rev. Gilbert and Rev. Grandon-Mayer will be publicized when details are made available.

Back to the Future

2019 Northern Illinois Annual Conference

Registration opens April 2

Members of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference may register online at www.umcnic.org/AC2019. The 180th session, "Back to the Future", will be held June 2-4 at a new location, the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center, 1551 N. Thoreau Dr., Schaumburg, Ill.

Details and reminders:

- **Registration cost:**
\$80 until April 28 (early registration fee)
\$95 From April 29 - May 19
\$130 available After May 19 and on-site ONLY
- **Hotel reservations:** Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center Hotel reservations will remain open until May 17 at 5 p.m. The rate is \$149 + tax. The reservation link is available on the conference website at www.umcnic.org/AC2019.
- **Theme:** We will go "Back to the Future" to remember our history and reclaim it for a hopeful future.
- **Documents:** All historical documents and proposed legislation will be available online by May 2.
- **Delegate Elections:** We will be voting on Clergy and Lay Delegates for the 2020 General and Jurisdictional Conferences. Annual Conference members will elect three lay and three clergy General Conference delegates and three lay and three clergy Jurisdictional Conference delegates, as well as two clergy and lay alternates. At Annual Conference, elections are electronic and a candidate is considered elected when they have received 50% + 1 of the votes. The first three elected are General Conference delegates, the next three are Jurisdictional Conference delegates. Starting this year, the lay delegate nomination form is only available online. Also this year, potential delegates are asked to include a picture to make it easier to recognize candidates at Annual Conference. All active clergy are eligible candidates and do not need to fill out a form. The lay delegate form is available at www.umcnic.org/AC2019.
- **Laity Reception:** The NIC Co-Lay Leaders will not host a laity session but invite you to a laity reception Sunday evening following the Ordination Service to meet and greet nominees for Lay Delegate.
- **Celebrations:** We will also celebrate Global Ministries bicentennial in 2019 and the United Methodist Women's 150th anniversary.
- **Bible Study Leader:** United Methodist Women's General Secretary Harriett Olson will lead this year's Bible Study. Olson has served as chief executive officer of the United Methodist Women's national administrative and policymaking arm since 2007. The Rev. Russell Pierce, Executive Director Mission Engagement and Director of the Advance for Global Ministries, will speak about the past 200 years and the future of mission both in our local communities and around the world.
- **Worship Leader:** Gary Rand and The Many Band will lead us in worship for a second year.
- **Schedule:** The Conference will open on Sunday afternoon with the Ordination service. Watch for more information about clergy processional and all other related instructions. The Retirement Service will be held Monday at 10:30 a.m. and the Memorial Service will be held Tuesday at 1:30 p.m. (please remember to submit the names and photos of the Lay Members to Annual Conference who have passed since June 2018 to communications@umcnic.org).
- **Clergy session:** May 21, 2019 at Faith UMC, 15101 S 80th Ave, Orland Park.
- **On-site childcare** for children 12 years old and under of parents/guardians of those attending AC. Childcare is free thanks to the cost being incorporated into the registration fee.
- **Display Tables:** Visit www.umcnic.org/displaytables to reserve a space. Payment and applications are due by May 1.
- **Accessibility Coordinator:** Please indicate any special requests if you need assistance on your registration form. Three coordinators will be on site to help with any needs.
- **Volunteers:** If you are interested in being an usher, plenary page, greeter, secretarial pool, or volunteer in other areas, please email your name and job you're interested in to Alka Lyall at NILAC2019@gmail.com.

Agenda Highlights

Sunday, June 2

- 2 p.m. New Member Orientation
- 4 p.m. Ordination/ Reception to follow

Monday, June 3

- 8:30 a.m. Opening Plenary
- 9 a.m. Episcopal Address
- 1:30 p.m. Retirement Service

Tuesday, June 4

- 8:30 a.m. Opening Plenary
- 10:30 a.m. Memorial Service
- 5 p.m. Adjournment



Send a youth to camp!

By Jeff Casey, NIC Outdoor & Retreat Ministries Director

BISHOP'S APPEAL



NIC Camps are excited to be designated as the 2019 Bishop's Appeal because our over-arching purpose is to support and strengthen local congregations in their mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

In the last year, we have coordinated a major paradigm shift among our Board and staff, moving away from recruiting campers for camp to partnering with local churches to grow their laity – adult and youth – through outdoor retreats and service experiences that develop intentional community, experiential leadership, interpersonal communication skills, and enhanced self-esteem—all via tangible, hands-on accomplishments.



During the past four years we have successfully laid the foundation to emphasize District-wide Summer Camps and Family Camps, while also introducing new winter camps. Specifically, we have consolidated 14 specialty camps with an average attendance of eight into three broad-based camps with an average attendance of 60, and added a week-long Family Camp that serves approximately 60 campers.

Moving to a district-wide focus will enable us to better serve churches and better grow their youth, adults and families – regardless of the churches' geographic location.

J.O.Y. Camp, our most successful camp, serves the DeKalb and Aurora Districts, while Woodland Camp primarily serves youth from the Elgin District. J.O.Y. Camp successfully integrates clergy and lay leadership, and trains/recruits all of its own chaperones from among J.O.Y. Campers, making it a self-sustaining discipleship camp that strengthens the local churches who participate every year.

The purpose of the Bishop's Appeal is to enable us to target children from all districts who would not otherwise be able to attend camps.

Our goals:

- Expand the successful J.O.Y. Camp model to youth and adults throughout the Conference geography via District networks
- Introduce additional weeks of family camp
- Develop new winter weekend camps with district-wide focus

While we would love to expand to all of the Districts this year, it takes time and resources to coordinate, recruit and train chaperones, and counselors. This year, we are adding a Chicago Metro Camp (Southern & Northwest Districts) at Reynoldswood, and a second week of Family Camp at Wesley Woods this summer. In 2020, we will add a Rockford District Camp and a new week of Family Camp both at Reynoldswood.

Your investment in camps through the Bishop's Appeal helps the camps financially, and helps local UM congregations by developing their youth and adults through camp discipleship and leadership experiences.

You may, of course, send youth to any camp that you or they prefer, but we encourage grouping by District in order to strengthen long-term relationships, witness, and fellowship, while also helping our youth to realize that they are not alone in their Christian faith.

Watch for some exciting news and proven success stories from NIC Camps in the coming weeks. Interested in distributing NIC Camp promotional materials? Want to request an NIC Camps staff or board member to provide a presentation about camps to your congregation? Please send an e-mail to exec@niccamp.org.

To help support this year's Bishop's appeal, look for more information and resources at www.umcnic.org/bishopsappeal.



Annual Conference Shepherding Team prepares top goals

By Anne Marie Gerhardt

On March 16, the Annual Conference Shepherding Team (ACST) and the six District Shepherding Teams (DST), which are made up of both clergy and laity, met at Woodridge UMC to collectively access and share their work over the last year.

This is the second time the two teams have come together as a group. They first met in March 2018 at Barrington UMC for adaptive leadership training with Consultant Susan Beaumont. The ACST has met eight times for all-day sessions across the conference to continue strategic planning and goal-setting for the NIC while the DSTs have been meeting separately to access the needs within their individual districts.

At the joint meeting, ACST Lay Co-Chair Liz Gracie shared that from their work over the last year, 15 people came up with 31 goal statements and the team chose the top three for the conference's five-year strategic plan. She said the meeting together with the DSTs was an opportunity for the ACST to roll out the goals and obtain feedback. After Gracie presented the details and rationales of each goal, each DST met for a breakout session to discuss how to share the information and involve local churches.

"The meeting with the ACST and the DSTs was productive and hopeful," said Gracie. "It was encouraging to see the DSTs embrace the goals and begin to brainstorm about ways to implement them in each district. There was good energy and it felt like everyone was eager to get to work for the church we all love."

ACST Clergy Co-Chair Rev. Myron McCoy shared that this work began four years ago after the Conference Committee on Finance and Administration (CCFA) looked for guidance amid a declining budget. In spring 2015, a landscape survey identified the areas of focus for the conference. In November 2015, an Annual Conference Special Session was called to receive a report of the survey's findings. A special task force was approved that later developed a mission, vision, and values statement and

proposed an organizational task force. In June 2017, the organizational task force's ACST legislation was approved. The plan has brought together leaders from the various Conference and District committees, programs, ministries and staff to one table for the first time.

The ACST will bring legislation to the June 2019 Annual Conference asking for support of the three major goals and strategic plan.

"After much work and once these goals are approved by the Annual Conference, we are ready to launch and move

forward together with the next steps," said McCoy. "We ask for prayers that the work we are doing, and will do, helps energize us to continue to live out our common goal to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

The ACST legislation will be released and made available for download by May 2 on the Annual Conference webpage at www.umcnic.org/AC2019.



Members of the Rockford District Shepherding Team meet to talk about next steps during a breakout session from a joint meeting with the Annual Conference Shepherding Team at Woodridge UMC on March 16.

Mission Challenge

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



The assigned donations by District are as follows (2,000 of each item):

Aurora:

- toothpaste 2.5-oz or larger
- adult toothbrushes

Chicago

Northwestern:

- 1-gallon sealable plastic bags
- shampoo (3-4 oz.)

Chicago Southern:

- combs
- nail/toenail clippers

DeKalb:

- bath hand towels
- bath Washcloths

Elgin:

- deodorant (2-3-oz.)
- razors (with guard)

Rockford:

- 1-gallon sealable plastic bags
- bar soap (3-4-oz.)

If you have trouble finding any of these items, please check the FAQ sheet for suggestions at www.umcnic.org/missionchallenge. The trailer from the distribution center will be outside the Convention Center from noon on Sunday through 3 p.m. on Monday. Questions? Please call or text Larry Dunlap-Berg 615-945-6411 or email ldnlpbrg@gmail.com.

Calling youth for the 2019 Plumblin Tour

The NIC Plumblin Tour is still accepting applications for the upcoming summer trip to Washington, D.C. This tour provides an opportunity for students to connect their Christian faith and with social justice, and to meet other teens from rural, urban, and suburban communities within the conference.

During the past 17 years, hundreds of youth have traveled to New York City to attend seminars at the United Methodist Women's Building and experienced many sites in NYC. This year, the group will visit Washington, D.C. for seminars in the United Methodist Building, which is the only non-governmental building on Capitol Hill. In addition to the daily seminars, the group will have an opportunity to visit other D.C. sites, including monuments, museums, a Congressional visit, and more.

The tour cost of \$699 per student includes airfare, hotel, meals, and excursions. Limited scholarships are



available based on financial need. Space is limited. Visit www.umcnic.org/calendar/2019-plumblin-tour for an application and more information. All registrations, materials and a \$50 deposit are due by May 1. The remaining balance is due by June 1.

Questions? Please contact Plumblin Tour Coordinator, Amania Drane, at niaenterprises1@comcast.net.

Carrying on the legacy at ChildServ



Catherine Inserra, a Deaconess in the NIC, replaces Kim Coffing as ChildServ's next Manager of Faith and Community Relations.



ChildServ President and CEO Dan Kotowski presents the Lucy Rider Meyer Courage Award to Kim Coffing at the agency's recent legacy banquet.

On March 3, ChildServ held its annual "Legacy That Leads" Banquet, to recognize the congregations of the Northern Illinois Conference for their 125 years of support for the children and families in the agency's care. The event acknowledged the churches' continued generosity through financial contributions and support the ChildServ's annual Back-to-School Backpack and Holiday Gift drives.

"Our ongoing partnership with the United Methodist Church informs our identity and grounds us in our work," said Dan Kotowski, president and CEO of ChildServ. "ChildServ's impact on the lives of children is much greater due to the kindness of our faith partners in the Northern Illinois Conference."

The agency's 2018 Holiday Gift Drive was the most successful in history, providing toys, clothes and books to 1,500 at-risk children so they could enjoy the love and spirit of Christmas.

The churches and Methodist-affiliated organizations in attendance were Barrington UMC, Chestnut Square at The Glen, First UMC Arlington Heights, First UMC Park Ridge, Grace UMC in Lake Bluff, Prince of Peace UMC in Elk Grove Village, and Trinity UMC in Mount Prospect.

The event also featured the presentation of the Lucy Rider Meyer Courage Award to Kim Coffing, ChildServ's former Director of Faith and Community Relations, for her career-long commitment to making a difference in the lives of children, youth, and families. Coffing recently retired from her role after five years of building and strengthening the organization's relationship with 217 churches, as well as many chapters of United Methodist Women, in the Northern Illinois Conference.

In addition to her work with the UMC, Coffing broadened ChildServ's connection with all faith communities, helped to establish the agency in Chicago's trauma-informed networks, and represented the organization on the board of United Voices for Children, ascending to its president in 2017.

Inserra joins ChildServ

Following in Coffing's footsteps, Catherine Inserra has joined ChildServ as Manager of Faith and Community Relations.

A resident of Park Ridge, Inserra brings 38 years of work experience with nonprofits and churches to her new role, focusing on educating and empowering children, youth, and families.

"I am honored and thrilled that this opportunity fuses my passion for ministry with my lifelong efforts to help parents and kids in high-risk communities throughout Chicagoland," said Inserra.

Catherine's primary responsibility will be to continue to build and strengthen the organization's relationship with the congregations in the NIC and all faith communities.

Catherine earned an undergraduate degree in Speech Communications from Illinois State University in Normal, Ill., with a minor in Child and Family Development. She later completed her master's degree in Counselor Education, pursuing a Human Services track as a graduate assistant. Finally, she received a Certificate of Spiritual Formation from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston.

In response to her calling to serve The United Methodist Church in love and justice, Catherine was consecrated a Deaconess in May 2018, at the United Methodist Women's Assembly in Columbus, Ohio.

ChildServ was founded by Deaconess Lucy Rider Meyer in 1894, as the Methodist Deaconess Orphanage in Lake Bluff, Ill. Today, the agency builds better lives for children and families who are at risk in Cook, DuPage, Kane and Lake counties through early childhood education, foster care and adoption services, and housing for teens and young adults who were homeless.

To learn more about ChildServ, visit www.childserv.org.

Ministry Makers

This monthly column highlights conference and local church outreach ministries that are making a difference and transforming lives. We hope sharing these success stories ("it worked for us") will inspire and become learning tools for other churches. If you have a Ministry Makers story, email agerhardt@umnic.org.

Table community serves hungry students By Rev. Rosa Lee, Wesley Foundation Campus Minister

Warm. Chatting. Laughter. The smell of happiness. Just some of the words and emotions the Wesley Foundation at Northern Illinois University (NIU) conjure up for me. The Wesley Foundation has been Christ's loving presence for the past four years on campus. One of the main ministries of the Wesley Foundation is Hungry Huskies table community. More than 100 students and staff participate in this table community every Sunday evening during the school year.

What we share is not simply a homemade meal, but heartwarming hospitality with love and care. Students feel welcomed, valued, and loved, and they began to invite their friends. One of the students said, "At Hungry Huskies, I feel really welcomed and loved. I'm so happy to be a part of this community." Another student said, "Hungry Huskies is a family to me. I have a meal with my friends and make more friends here."

To many NIU students, it is not just a place for a meal, but an inclusive community of their own. As a result, many student organizations want to work with Wesley Foundation at NIU and have invited me to their gatherings. The Wesley Foundation at NIU has become a hub for many.

According to Mark 14:22-24, the first Holy Communion took place during an ordinary supper. "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take it; this is my body.'" Then, all of a sudden, the ordinary bread and wine became more than merely the sources of nutrition. And when Jesus said in Luke 22:19 "Do this in remembrance of me," the ordinary meal became the sharing of life, where

inclusive hospitality overflows, and where people find their meaning of life in God's love.

Eating is more than merely "the means of life" and food is "a gift of love" (Food and Faith, Norman Wirzba). Food is a crucial part of our lives for us to remember that no one can live alone and a sharing meal is "self-offering, accepting responsibility for another's well-being and turning one's own life into nurture of others." In addition, "the table is a site for the divine encounter," because by eating, we are reminded of our mortality and find ourselves as "members of God's creation" (*Good Food*, Jennifer Ayres).

When I see our students around the table community, I witness Jesus' inclusive table with love, and I understand more about John Wesley's theology on open Communion. He claims that Communion should be open to all who are willing to receive because God's love is given to all of us and no one can hide from God's grace and love.

Hungry Huskies is open to all. We have Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, and Buddhists as well as Christians, anti-Christians, and atheists. But what I see among them is God's loving presence with them. God is surely working in the middle of our table community. God is using all of us to build the Kin(g)dom of God in the campus. It is the mission of God: Missio Dei. And I can smile again with hope among our students.

Besides Hungry Huskies, we host an ecumenical worship service with Grace Place (ELCA) on Tuesdays and a special support meeting on Wednesdays for students working for justice, and we run a book study/Bible study on Thursdays

for students to learn more about and know God.

How is your congregation reaching out to college/university students in your community? We are thankful to the many UM churches who have donated food and sent volunteers over the years including, DeKalb, Waterman, Coleta, Milledgeville, Paw Paw, Compton, Des Plaines and several others.

If you would like to support the Wesley Foundation, you may contribute through Rainbow Covenant (GREEN BAND #50000135) or send a check, made out to Wesley Foundation at NIU, to P.O. BOX 1171 DeKalb, IL 60115. Questions? Please contact Pastor Rosa Lee by email at pastorlee@niu.edu or phone 815-669-9648.



The Wesley Foundation campus ministry serves a home-cooked meal on the Northern Illinois University campus every Sunday evening. The "Hungry Huskies" ministry, which began in September 2015, has fed hundreds of students.

Mission and disaster relief ready



Kris Aves and Larry Dunlap-Berg are the NIC's new UMVIM co-coordinators and ready to help get your mission journey started.



Colin Monk is the NIC's new disaster relief coordinator

◀ Fifteen people from five different churches in the Rockford/DeKalb district set out on a Voluntes In Mission trip to Chile in December 2018.

Have you always been interested in joining a mission team but don't know what to do or how to do it? The NIC United Methodist Volunteers In Mission (UMVIM) committee is reorganizing and ready to get you and your team started. Mission journeys are opportunities for both lay and clergy to offer their skills and talents for Christian service at home and around the world.

Educators, medical experts, electricians, handy people, construction workers, pastors, and all sorts of folks are needed to build relationships, share the Gospel, and help leave the world better than you found it for the sake of Christ. Your skills, prayers, witness, personality, and gifts are an answer to someone's prayers. Projects may include construction and renewing of mission facilities, teaching, witnessing, conducting medical clinics, coordinating a Bible study or Bible school for children, and serving in disaster relief efforts around the world.

Some examples of VIM trips from the NIC include to Chili and Puerto Rico. After almost 10 months of preparation, last December a team of 15 members representing five churches in the Rockford/DeKalb Districts (Beth Eden UMC, Centennial, Orangeville/Afolkey, Bethel, and Rochelle UMC) embarked on a mission trip to Villarrica, Chile, a small town in the southern part of the country. Two pastors led this team from the NIC, the Rev. Mario Mayer and the Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer, whose country of origin is Chile. The team worked hand in hand with the local congregation of Villarrica Methodist Church in their process of continuing to build a fellowship hall onto their church.

Betsy Lovelady-Smith, Rockford/DeKalb Regional Administrator, participated in the mission and said authentic love was the greatest gift of the trip. "We went with a servant's heart and left with our hearts filled with God's unconditional love through the people of Villarrica, Chile," said Lovelady-Smith. "There were many hours of hard work, laughter, sharing, and learning from each other. From this experience, we saw how God does not see differences in people; God sees love and so does the people of Chile."

To help more United Methodists take part in amazing experiences like this recent Chile mission trip, the NIC has added two new UMVIM co-coordinators, Kris Aves and Larry Dunlap-Berg. We thank the Rev. Carol Meynen for her years serving as the previous NIC UMVIM coordinator.

Aves and Dunlap-Berg are charged to promote local, national, and international UMVIM trips, train UMVIM team leaders, encourage partnerships across the global church connection, and invite and mentor those who want to say yes to missions small and large. Both are available for Sunday morning preaching, speaking to groups at retreats and community gatherings, training, and strategizing with mission teams, and more.

Aves is a certified lay servant and member of Faith UMC in Genoa. She has been a youth leader for many years and has been active in taking middle school and high school domestic trips for the last 11 years. Some of her favorite trips have been to Detroit working with Motown Missions, to Nashville working with McKendree UMC, and to Philadelphia working with the Rev. Nick Nicholas when he was with Arch Street UMC.

Aves has experience in agricultural, gardening, and naturalist fields. Her youth work has been particularly focused on homelessness, social justice for the marginalized, food equality, and ecumenical and interfaith conversations. She also served on the NIC Board of Ordained Ministry from 2008 to 2019. One of her favorite Scripture is the parable of the Sheep and the Goats found in Matthew 25:31-46. "It's clear what we are to do as we follow the work and teaching of Christ," Aves said.

Dunlap-Berg, an NIC elder, has served in Chicago as a US-2 Global Mission Fellow and co-pastor of Humboldt Park and Albany Park UMCs. He's also been a hands-on educator in Evanston, San Juan, and middle Tennessee for school-age, university and family audiences and has worked with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry campus ministry. His favorite international trips included Puerto Rico, exploring its natural beauty and environmental challenges, and Peru, experiencing impacts of mission in urban and rural communities. He's also enjoyed helping eighth- and ninth-graders and their parents explore science, technology, engineering, art and math careers and educational opportunities at MIT, Northwestern University and the University of Chicago.

He has focused on community engagement, renewable energy/conservation, social justice for immigrant and other marginalized communities, science communication, and reclamation efforts for people and environments damaged by human actions and natural disasters. He has served on the NIC boards of Church and Society, Outdoor

and Retreat Ministries and Global Ministries. He lives in Carbondale and attends Grace UMC.

One of Larry's favorite Scripture lessons is 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, unity and diversity in the body. "Each of us is part of the body of Christ, which is strongest when gifts for ministry of all members are accepted, treasured, nurtured and encouraged to flourish," said Dunlap-Berg.

To get started on your VIM trip, find forms and resources at www.umcnic.org/VIM.

New NIC Disaster Response Coordinator

Colin Monk is the NIC's new volunteer Disaster Response Coordinator. We thank Rev. Christina Vosteen for her commitment and serving in this role for the past nine years and her commitment to educating, coordinating and responding to disaster situations across the conference and beyond.

Monk is a member of First United Methodist Church in Morris, Ill. He and his wife have lived in Morris for almost 28 years, raising three children there.

"I became interested in the United Methodist Church disaster relief ministry after two tornadoes impacted several small towns near Morris," said Monk, who helped form the Early Response Team (ERT) at Morris FUMC. "The team has responded to numerous disasters locally and throughout the country including Hurricane relief in North Carolina and Texas and flood cleanup in Wisconsin."

Monk helped form the Grundy County VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) and is actively connected with the Illinois VOAD. As NIC Disaster Response Coordinator, Monk hopes to expand the disaster response ministry across the conference and involve many more NIC congregations.

"I would like to see additional education about disaster preparedness and planning along with training for early disaster relief and long-term recovery efforts," said Monk. "I encourage all United Methodists to get involved in our conference disaster relief ministry. When there is a need, United Methodists respond."

You can contact Monk either by calling 815-603-9253 or via email monks5@comcast.net.

For news and updates about NIC Disaster Response, visit Facebook at www.facebook.com/nicdisaster. Resources are available at www.umcnic.org/disasterresponse.

UMW turns 150



On March 23, 2019, United Methodist Women (UMW) marked a milestone. On this day, UMW officially turned 150 years old. The organization also celebrated with a special “Day of Giving,” during which members and supporters contributed to the Legacy Fund Endowment Campaign to ensure the next 150 years in mission.

UMW’s 150-year legacy started when the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society first organized in Boston in response to a lack of women’s healthcare in India. A small group of strong, determined women first met on March 23, 1869, at Tremont Methodist Episcopal Church in Boston and decided to raise money to send the first female missionary to India. That was the first of thousands of mission projects that would build what is now called UMW. We can only imagine what they would say now about what they started! They would likely be

very pleased to see that the school, Isabella Thoburn College, and hospital, Clara Swain Hospital, founded by their first missionaries in India are still in operation today.

Day of Giving

In Boston, near the site where it all began, the New England Conference United Methodist Women, in collaboration with the United Methodist Commission on Archives and History and Boston University School of Theology, hosted a daylong 150th birthday event. In other parts of the country, members participated in district prayer breakfasts, mission institution celebrations, issue forums, legislative events and more.

UMW established the Legacy Fund Endowment Campaign as a way to support and celebrate the history of this important organization and ensure its future. Donors are encouraged to make a real impact by pledging to donate monthly \$18.69, the dollar amount of the year UMW was formed.

“On Day of Giving, we’re honoring those who had a vision of what women could do to help other women, children, and youth,” said Lynda Morris, president of the Metro District United Methodist Women in the Western North Carolina Conference. “We are taking that vision

and looking toward the future at how much more we can accomplish.”

Ways to Donate

There are many ways to still donate:

- **Call** 212-870-3705 and speak to a staff person who can assist you with a donation over the phone or answer any questions you might have about becoming a member of the 1869 Society through a planned gift.
- **Make** a one-time donation or make an ongoing pledge by texting 41444 on your cell phone and writing the word “Legacy” and the amount in the message.
- **Mail** your donation to the national office, noting “Day of Giving” on your check.
- Visit unitedmethodistwomen.org/legacyfund to make a donation by credit card or set up an ongoing pledge.

“Just like those original women who began putting two pennies together to make a difference,” said Marsh. “I give to the Legacy Fund Endowment Campaign because it’s the best way to continue their legacy and invest in the future of United Methodist Women.”

APRIL/MAY CALENDAR NEWS

Hispanic/Latinx Youth Retreat

“THE PAUSE: LEARNING TO SEEK GOD”

April 5-6

Location:

Wesley Woods Camp, 250 Stam St., Williams Bay, Wis.

Cost: \$20/per person

An amazing opportunity for youth ages 12-18 in grades 6-12 to take time for fellowship, worship, games, prayer, Bible study, and the opportunity to meet new friends and connect with old ones. And it all happens at an amazing place: Wesley Woods Camp in Wisconsin.

The program starts on Friday, April 5 at 7 p.m., with a light dinner and ends on Saturday, April 6 at 3 p.m. Attendees/groups must provide their own transportation to the camp.

Visit www.umcnic.org/calendar/hispaniclatinx-youth-retreat for online registration. Questions please contact Patricia Bonilla at 847-393-6348 or Pastor Cesar Hernandez at 847-878-5509.

NIC Order of Elders Gathering

April 10

Time: 8:30 a.m.- 4 p.m.

Location:

Barrington UMC, 98 Algonquin Road, Barrington, IL

“Clergy Thriving in Changing Social/Cultural Times”
“and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)

Presenter: Dr. Michael Emerson, Provost North Park University

RSVP Panera boxed lunch preference to NICorderofelders@gmail.com.

Lunch options are as follows:

- Turkey
- Smoked Turkey
- Ham & Swiss
- Mediterranean Veggie
- Tuna Salad
- Greek Salad
- Cesar Salad
- Seasonal Greens



Gun Violence - Enough is Enough!

April 13

Time: 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Location:

East Side UMC, 11000 S Ewing Avenue, Chicago

Cost: \$5 per person. No charge for groups of 5 or more registering together.

Info and Registration:

www.umcnic.org/news/gun-violence-assembly

Gun violence affects everyone! Whether you live in an urban, suburban or a rural community gun violence directly or indirectly affects you and those you serve. The question is not “WILL” but “HOW” does the faith community respond to this epidemic and maintain the integrity of its calling?

“ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!” has been designed as an interconference, faith-rooted Teach-in and Café Conversation sponsored by the Indiana and Northern Illinois Conferences of The United Methodist Church.

This half-day assembly is designed to equip and engage participants in principles and practices to effectively implement congregation and community-based gun violence prevention strategies. The teach-in portion of the day will feature concurrent workshops led by experienced gun violence prevention practitioners in the areas of public health, public policy and urban ministry.

According to Bishop Dyck, “Enough is Enough” is the opportunity to focus and refocus with our neighbors in Indiana on preventing gun violence. Education, motivation and collaboration are needed if we’re going to make a difference.”

Collaborators for this event include: Live FREE Chicago, Illinois Gun Violence Prevention Coalition, the Center for Faith and Community Public Health Transformation, North Central Jurisdiction Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Ten Points Coalition – Indianapolis, United Voices for Children.

Empowering Mental

Wellness in Your Congregation

Saturday, April 27

A presentation from the NIC Committee on Accessibility Ministries

Time: 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Cost: \$10

Who should attend? All Clergy and all laity, especially SPRC Committee members and those involved in pastoral care ministry in their church and/or their community.



Keynote speaker: Robert Skrocki will introduce us to the concept of empowering us to focus on mental wellness for ourselves and others.

Robert Skrocki has a special interest in how faith communities can help build mental health resiliency and support the recovery of persons with mental illnesses. He is a certified

trainer in Mental Health First Aid, Youth Mental Health First Aid, and Soul Shop. He has a master’s in social work and clinical pastoral education training. In addition, Robert is communications coordinator for the Interfaith Mental Health Coalition, a local organization working to connect faith leaders to mental health resources and chairs the board for Pathways to Promise, a national organization helping promote mental health training coalitions for faith communities all over the country.

Two workshops, running sequentially, will be hosted by Rev. Dr. Cheri Margini on “Circle of Care” and Rev. Rev. Violet Johnicker on “What more can we do”.

For a complete details of the workshops and to register online, visit www.umcnic.org/calendar/mental-health-wellness-workshop.



DYK???

Did You Know? Delegates Count

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

The far-reaching impact of the decisions made at the 2019 Special Session in February have heightened our awareness of the role delegates play in our United Methodist democratic process. During this Annual Conference, June 2-4, we elect a new set of delegates to attend the 2020 General and Jurisdictional Conferences of The United Methodist Church.

In the wake of the General Conference Special Session and the realization that many important decisions happen with close votes on highly charged issues, many clergy and laity have now turned their attention to learning more about how we select our delegates for General and Jurisdictional Conference.

The number of delegates assigned to each conference is based on a formula for conference membership with delegations made up of equal numbers of lay and clergy. For instance, Alaska has two delegates and Cote d'Ivoire has 34 delegates. Northern Illinois sends six delegates to General Conference (three Clergy/three Lay). We also have twelve votes at Jurisdictional Conference (from the combined six General and six Jurisdictional elected delegates) where one of the most important agenda items is the election of Bishops. We also elect two alternates in the event that someone on the delegation cannot fulfill their responsibilities.

You can see that if we rely on votes alone, Northern Illinois Conference's impact on the legislative process of the church is minimal. The voting is the final step in a complicated process of legislative debate, negotiation, diplomacy, compromise and networking. Effective delegates are people of faith who have a commitment to The United Methodist Church. Effective delegates are knowledgeable about the UM Discipline, have jurisdictional and general church experience and a network of relationships across the connection. Delegates need to reflect the heart of the conference in their beliefs so they can reflect the views and wishes of the conference when they vote their conscience.

All Full Member Elders and Deacons are eligible for election.

All will be assigned a number and be part of the electronic ballot. Laity who are Lay Members to Annual Conference are eligible to run as delegates, but those who wish to commit to this task must fill out a Lay Delegation Election Information Form in order to be assigned a candidate number. The Board of Laity will host a candidate's forum on Sunday, June 2 following the ordination service to meet and greet those running as laity delegates.

Once elected, the work of the delegation is rigorous. There will be thousands of pages of legislation to read, meetings as a delegation, as well as meetings with interest groups and experts. General Conference in 2020 will take place in Minneapolis, Minn., May 5-15. The North Central Jurisdictional Conference will take place in Fort Wayne, Ind., from July 15-18.

You can find the Lay Delegation election form at www.umcnic.org/laydelegationform.

Delegates count!



The NIC's six General Conference Delegates engage in worship, discussions, debates, and voting on the floor of the Special Session in St. Louis. From left to right: Rev. Chris Pierson, Elisa Gatz, Rev. Gregory Gross, Irma Clark, Rev. Alka Lyall, and Lonnie Chafin.

OUTDOOR AND RETREAT MINISTRIES CALENDAR

Spring Confirmation Camps

Cost: \$75 per person includes Friday night snack and lodging, Saturday breakfast and lunch, and materials.

- Reynoldswood, Friday-Saturday, May 17-18
- Wesley Woods, Friday-Saturday, May 3-4

Spring Work Parties - earn \$20 discount off your own Summer Camp Fee!

- Reynoldswood, Saturday, May 4
- Wesley Woods, Saturday, May 18

For more information and a registration form, visit www.niccamp.org.

Appointments & Retirements: March Announcements

Bishop Sally Dyck announces the following clergy appointments for the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church, effective July 1, 2019 (unless otherwise noted).

Avani-Cosset Christian (Elder) to West Chicago: First (Aurora District) from Kaneville (Aurora District). Avani follows Nancy Blade whose appointment announcement will be forthcoming.

Brian Gilbert (Elder) to DeKalb District Superintendent from Princeton (DeKalb District). Brian follows Young-Mee Park who is appointed to Hinsdale (Aurora District).

Fabiola Grandon-Mayer (Elder) to Rockford District Superintendent from Rockford: Centennial Multicultural (Rockford District). Fabiola follows Lisa Kruse-Safford who is appointed to Crystal Lake: First.

Nancy Blade (Elder) to Kaneville (Aurora District) from West Chicago: First (Aurora District). Nancy follows Avani-Cosset Christian who is appointed to West Chicago: First.

Uziel Hernandez (Provisional Elder) to Rockford: Centennial Multicultural (Rockford District) from Elmhurst: Faith Evangelical (Elgin District). Uziel follows Fabiola Grandon-Mayer who is appointed as Rockford District Superintendent.

Stay Connected

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

Visit www.umcnic.org and scroll down to enter your email and name under "Sign up for our eNewsletter".

Job Openings

For the latest NIC job openings, visit www.umcnic.org/jobs

Submit News

Please submit items at least two weeks prior to publication date. Include your name, address, email, phone number and name of local church. Space is limited. Electronic submissions are preferred with high-resolution attached jpegs. For guidelines and to submit online, visit www.umcnic.org/communications/submit-news.

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Our response to God's call continues.
umc.org/movement

The People of The United Methodist Church

