

# The Northern Illinois Conference OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Reporter

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**DO NOT DELAY. DATED MATERIAL**



## Northern Illinois Conference seeks to yield to God's leading

by Rev. Victoria Rebeck, NIC Director of Communications

Observing a Wesleyan spiritual practice rather rallying around a slogan, members of the 2024 session of the Northern Illinois Conference met from June 16 to 18 in Schaumburg to yield to God as they recognized ministry milestones, worshiped, and voted on policies and resolutions.

Bishop Dan Schwerin of the Chicago Episcopal Area, who presided at session, explained why he chose "Yield" as this year's theme. "I couldn't stomach a slogan," he said. "I wanted something that would help us steer into the Spirit and listen."

Pondering Wesley's Covenant Prayer, he was struck by this line: "I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal."

"I knew the Spirit was asking us to yield the trappings and form of religion as we had known it for something new, Wind-whispered, less programmatic, more relational, and yet to be fully clear," the bishop said.

### Sow seeds of God's grace

Bishop Schwerin invited Bishop Sally Dyck, who had recently served Northern Illinois Conference until her retirement, to preach at the ordination service. She elaborated on the theme of "yield" in her sermon on Jesus's parable of the sower (Luke 8:5ff): "A sower went out to sow."

She compared the uncertainty in the idea of yielding to what God might have in store, even if that is yet unknown, to farming. Much of a harvest's yield is dependent on conditions that the farmer cannot control, like weather, pests, and other factors. Yet every year, the farmer goes out to sow.

"Ministry is the same," Bishop Dyck said. "You have to get up every morning like farmers. But



June 16-18, 2024 Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center



Your giving to NIC apportionments supports the Annual Conference Session.



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From Your Bishop:

## Our Dunkirk is coming

This column is an excerpt from the State of the Church Address that Bishop Schwerin delivered at the 2024 Annual Conference. Read the full address and find a link to a recording of the address at [umcnic.org/news/bishops-state-of-the-church-address-2024](http://umcnic.org/news/bishops-state-of-the-church-address-2024).

I was inspired by the Wesley Covenant Prayer to choose the

theme “yield” for this year’s annual conference. At the center of the prayer is the phrase, “I freely and heartily yield all things to Thy pleasure and disposal.”

Pondering this, I was reminded of a prediction by Rev. Dr. Kendra Creasy Dean, professor of youth, church, and culture at Princeton Theological Seminary. She was recently asked, What is on the horizon for the church? She said, “Dunkirk is coming.”

On May 26, 1940, almost 400,000 French, British, and Belgian soldiers were stranded on a beach in the Northern French port of Dunkirk. They had been driven there by the Germans and the waters were too shallow for escape vessels. They sat unprotected by any

credible naval defense. The Germans could have pressed on and wiped out 400,000 soldiers, forcing Britain to surrender.

The soldiers were keenly vulnerable. Being vulnerable makes us open, driven to our knees before God, willing to consider new approaches, desperate to experiment, ready to give up conventional wisdom to survive and thrive, to yield to the facts of this moment.

Winston Churchill, Britain’s prime minister, had no other recourse but to call the owners of the boats along the shore, any boats that could traverse the channel—naval boats, fishing boats, and recreational boats—to rescue those soldiers and defend the United Kingdom. Between 850 to 1,000 good enough, large and small, rickety and robust boats departed Ramsgate for those troops facing the Germans at Dunkirk. Churchill hoped that they could at best rescue 20,000 to 30,000 troops.

Those pinned at Dunkirk eventually could see on the horizon a thousand little specks, then spots, then boats—1,000 experiments, a thousand rickety and good-enough civilian boats.

Not one of those tiny experiments alone could save the soldiers. But all of them together had a chance. Between May 26 and June 4, they rescued 338,000 French, British, and Belgian soldiers.

What’s coming after General Conference? Dunkirk is coming. The church must turn toward the world with a unity for the mission, a renaissance of experimentation; a thousand experiments sent out into the seas for the young people who have been left behind; a call to our Hispanic African-American, Indian, Filipino, Congolese, European, and Korean boats.

Dunkirk was faced with preserving the next generation. Yield to the call forward and get on an experiment for the gospel!

Your giving to General Church apportionments support the Episcopal Office. 

## New staff members are serving the conference

Rev. Christian Coon and Rev. Cheryl Weaver are the newest staff members appointed to serve the people of the Northern Illinois Conference.

Rev. Christian Coon began serving as director of congregational development, effective July 1. He follows Rev. Martin Lee, who recently retired after 24 years in the role.



Rev. Christian Coon

“In my time of prayer and discernment with the Northern Illinois Conference Cabinet and leadership, I heard the need to continue carrying forward the work of Rev. Lee in leadership development and strategic church development throughout the annual conference,” Bishop Schwerin said. “We are a people in transition as the church takes on new shapes and forms for the future and we need leadership to help us navigate these changing tides.”

The United Methodist General Council on Finance and Administration and the Northern Illinois Conference Personnel Committee reviewed a large pool of candidates for this position.

“It was with confidence that I found Rev. Coon to be the best among those interviewed, for our conference, at this time,” Bishop Schwerin said. “He has a very strong strategic vision for the development of systems and supports for the whole conference, as well as good knowledge of the context.”

Rev. Coon is a native Iowan who has lived in the Chicago area for 32 years. He began his career in non-profit public relations before entering the ordained ministry in 1997. He has degrees from Simpson College, the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, and Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. He has served as pastor of River Forest and Deerfield: Christ; and in 2009 he co-founded Urban Village Church, a multi-site church with three locations in the city and one in the suburbs.

Reflecting on this position, Rev. Coon said, “I’m very excited to step into this position to resource and support our existing churches while also working with others to dream about other faith communities we might start.”

A long-awaited conference benefits officer has begun work for the conference: Rev. Cheryl Weaver stepped up to the role on June 1. She holds the same role for Wisconsin Conference.



Rev. Cheryl Weaver

“Cheryl Weaver has a heart for The United Methodist Church and has served it as a clergy leader,” said Bishop Dan Schwerin. “Her experience and wisdom, combined with a winsome spirit, will be a gift to both conferences. I am grateful for the collaboration that brings this sharing to fruition. Our clergy and families deserve great support.”

Northern Illinois had been without a CBO since 2020. When the North Central Jurisdiction confirmed in January that Wisconsin and Northern Illinois Conferences would share the same bishop (while remaining separate conferences), the NIC board of pensions began conversing with Wisconsin about possibly sharing a CBO.

“Ministry is my second career,” Rev. Weaver said. “In my first career, I worked in administration and marketing and my roles have always involved customer service. What a gift to be able to combine my skills in technology and my knowledge of insurance with ministry.”

“I am grateful for the opportunity to serve both the Wisconsin and the Northern Illinois Conferences. I’m looking forward to partnering with Lameise Turner and the Northern Illinois board of pensions and health benefits.”

Ms. Weaver is filling the role of a much-appreciated predecessor, Woody Bedell.

“Cheryl is a fitting heir to Woody’s legacy, with a strong background in pensions as well as the heart of a pastor,” said Rev. Katherine Paisley, chair of the NIC board of pensions. “She will assist our active clergy in preparing for retirement, provide support for our retired clergy, and facilitate our relationships with both Wespeth and the Clergy Fund.”

“Lameise Turner [NIC’s benefits administrator] has been covering brilliantly,” Rev. Paisley said, “but we have all felt the lack of a CBO. Cheryl is a wonderful partner in this work—and an answer to our prayers.”



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### Submissions

Deadlines for submissions are Feb. 5, April 5, June 5, Aug. 5, Oct. 5, and Dec. 5. Include your name, address, email, phone number and name of local church. Space is limited. Electronic submissions are preferred with high-resolution attached jpegs. Submissions will be edited at the discretion of the Communications staff.

### Job Openings

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

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# General Conference removes barriers, respects regions

by Rev. Victoria Rebeck, NIC Director of Communications

United Methodists from around the world met in Charlotte, N.C., from April 23 to May 3 for the quadriennial General Conference. Because the COVID pandemic prevented the 2020 General Conference, this year's conference represented the postponed 2020 gathering.

Northern Illinois delegates had three priority concerns: removal of language that restricted the full inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in the church's life; passing the revised UM Social Principles; and supporting regionalization, which would give equal participation and decision-making responsibility to the international regions where the United Methodist Church has conferences.

## Removing restrictions against LGBTQ people

The most remarkable act of General Conference was one that has been sought by many for over 50 years. In one vote, General Conference lifted the ban against the ordination of "self-avowed, practicing homosexuals;"

approved the right of clergy and churches to choose to officiate or host same-sex weddings, and urged bishops to pursue inclusivity of gender, race, ethnicity, age, people with disabilities, sexual orientation, and economic condition in naming representatives to ecumenical organizations.

Churches may host same-sex weddings if they so choose. Churches that are not ready to accept a gay pastor will not be obligated to receive one.

## Revised Social Principles

The UMC now has a new version of its Social Principles. The revision was 12 years in the making. The process included engagement from thousands of United Methodists around the world.

The only section of the revision that was amended addressed marriage. The first sentence in this section was changed to: "Within the church, we affirm marriage as a sacred lifelong covenant that brings two people of faith, an adult man and woman of consenting age or two adult persons of consenting age, into union with one another and into deeper relationship with God and the religious community." This amendment clarifies that both partners must be old enough to consent to the marriage.

## Regionalization

The proposal that was referred to as "regionalization" also received delegates' approval. Under this plan, the U.S. church and the central conferences separately vote on matters that relate to their region only.

At present, General Conference makes decisions for the entire worldwide UMC. However, most of these relate almost exclusively to the U.S. The delegates from the U.S. and the "central

conferences"—those in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines—all vote on these.

Recognizing that some of these are more practicable in the U.S. and would not be possible or relevant in other regions of the world, the UMC constitution has allowed the central conferences to reject or alter decisions of the General Conference, including items in the Book of Discipline, to fit their contexts better. Thus, even though delegates from all over the world vote on official United Methodist matters—including those that apply only to the U.S.—the churches in the U.S. are bound to them but the central conferences may adapt them.

The denominational budget for 2025-2028 is \$373.4 million, a drop of about 40 percent from the 2017-2024 budget. The effects of COVID on worship attendance and church ministry, as well as disaffiliations, informed an anticipated drop in apportionment receipts.

Delegates reduced a key component of calculating apportionments, the portion of church giving requested to fund the general-church budget. They lowered the current base rate, 3.29 percent, to 2.6 percent for 2025 and 2026.

## Constitutional amendments

Some General Conference actions entail amendments to the church constitution. This requires ratification by two-thirds of all annual conference members voting on them in their conference sessions. The following amendments were passed and will be voted on before the 2028 General Conference. These address worldwide regionalization, racial justice (§ 5), adding the words "gender" and "ability" to the affirmation of full inclusion (§ 4), and an edit of the educational requirements for voting privileges to elect clergy delegates to General Conference (§ 35).

NIC is expected to present these for annual conference votes in 2025 or 2026.



## General Conference Debriefing

The delegation & Cabinet invite lay and clergy to a time of debriefing, conversation, and Q&A about the recent General Conference.



- Saturday, September 21: 10 a.m. to noon @ Arlington Heights: First UMC
  - Sunday, September 22: 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. @ Rockford: Christ UMC
  - Monday, September 23: 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. via Zoom
- More information at [umcnic.org/calendar/general-conference-debriefing](https://umcnic.org/calendar/general-conference-debriefing)

# A trip begins an eye-opening journey

by Toni Lucas, DS Supply, Albany UMC

The Northern Illinois Conference Anti-Racism Task Force has been an eye-opener for this elderly Caucasian country girl.

When I first moved from Kentucky back to my home state of Illinois and began attending NIC Annual Conferences, I was most disgruntled. All of the statistical reporting about the makeup of conference committees as to age, gender, and ethnicity seemed to me to be much ado about nothing. That feeling grew to anger when I asked to serve on a committee that was seeking new members, and I was turned down. I was basically told that the committee already had enough old white ladies. I tromped home in my little white boots and thought, "See if I ever volunteer again! Doesn't ability and willingness count for anything?" And I also thought, "The church is just like the State of Illinois. It's all about Chicago!"

I sulked for a few years, and then I became a Certified Lay Minister. Not long after that the Anti-Racism Task Force was established, and a plea went out for members. Though I was still wearing my little white boots and fussing about Chicago, I have always been passionate about justice. And I didn't see any nonsense about gender, age, or ethnicity in the pleas, so I raised my hand.

Actually, I think God raised my hand! What a journey it has been!

I hate the word "woke," but my grandson used the word so I guess I'll be OK with it.

I've worn many ARTF hats in the past few years and attended a retreat. Oh my! I surely didn't know what I didn't know! I'm a farmer's daughter who grew up in an area where everyone looked just like me. (It was somewhat unsettling to learn that was by design.) And even at a time when I worked in Chicago and lived in the 'burbs, my church and friends were white.

My mother's people lived in the South and things were different there. My parents didn't agree with some of those things, but there was no real discussion about anything. That was just how it was.

Though my "awakening" had begun before that, I was fully awakened when I went on a civil rights pilgrimage with the Indiana Conference in 2022. I recommended that NIC should do something similar and, just like

that, I was chair of the NIC 2023 Civil Rights Pilgrimage! Through these two pilgrimages, I looked at the South through other lenses. Our theme was "Educate to Advocate." Last year we were educated, this year we advocated, through an April 18 Lobby Day in Springfield.

If our rural northwestern Illinois country church were not part of the conference that includes the City of Chicago, I would never have had the opportunity to know and work with people of other ethnicities. Now I really do have friends of other ethnicities and not a token co-worker or acquaintance.

While I still feel the NIC could do more for the rural church, the very things I disliked I now appreciate. I do still sometimes feel there are too many restrictions about committee makeup, but I truly understand the reason for those rules.

I have learned SO much. What a shock it has been to learn that racism is built into the American life, so much so that we don't even realize it. Maya Angelo said, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then, when you know better, do better." I'm certainly trying to do better. Thank you, Northern Illinois Conference, for the opportunity to learn and grow.



Toni Lucas (front) during the pilgrimage



ministry is not all about you. Sometimes you don't know what is making a difference in people's lives or remember that you did it."

Nevertheless, she urged, "Be a sower who goes out to sow."

### Time for experimentation

Yielding to God's leading may carrying God's people into a new time, Bishop Schwerin noted in his state of the church address.

One may think of this between-time as a "hinge time," he said, that has come just after a pandemic, the disaffiliation of many UM congregations, and General Conference's declaration of openness and welcome to all people.

"For me the hinge is connected to a door, a threshold, and as Rev. 3:20 tells us, Christ is the stranger knocking at the door," the bishop said. On inviting Christ in, "we will become something more, as we become community with Christ and share table."

Now is the time to answer that knock at the door, he urged. It is a time for churches to take risks and experiment in reaching out to neighbors.

"We don't have 330 churches; we have 330 experiments," he said of the conference's constituent congregations. "Experiment, serve, give, teach and serve together. We are missional incubators."

It won't be one experiment that will defines a new missional prototype; rather, there will be a thousand of them coming from many new ministries around the conference, he said.

### Be an illuminator

The significant turn in the life of the UMC in recent years—with its loss of many congregations and decision to include fully LGBTQ people in all aspects of the church's life—is an opportunity, said Connie Augsburger, the conference co-lay leader, in her address to the conference.

Drawing on an idea by columnist David Brooks, she told conference that "we are called to be illuminators, not diminishers."

In his book *How to Know a Person* (Random House, 2023), Brooks proposes that there are

diminishers—those who see other people as objects to be used and treat others as if they were small or insignificant.

Illuminators, on the other hand, help people to feel seen, he says. They take time and effort to get to know others. If we

strive to see another, we will better understand each other and be more considerate, Ms. Augsburger explained.

"Today is a new day," she proclaimed. "Some of us left, and we miss our brothers and sisters. But we emerge as illuminators."

"The new days of the United Methodist Church were long in coming, but we are now free to continue on our path and move toward perfection."

This means we can make "a lived reality" of the denominational slogan, "Open Hearts Open Minds. Open Doors," she said.



### Apology for abuse

Following a General Conference mandate, Northern Illinois apologized to those who suffered sexual abuse in churches and/or at the hands of lay and clergy leaders.

"The United Methodist Church apologizes for the times we allowed our desire to protect the Church to outweigh our desire to care for victims and survivors of sexual misconduct," the statement reads in part. "We have allowed policy and protection of the institutional Church

to prevent us from holding persons accountable, thus perpetuating harm within our local churches and other ministry settings, and damaging the whole United Methodist connection.

"We apologize for the times we have not listened to you, doubted your stories, ignored your wounds, and have not tended to your pain."

The apology includes actions the UMC will take to prevent abuse in the future.

### Conference decisions

A significant action by the conference was its passage of an increased minimum salary schedule for clergy. After conference members expressed much concern last

year about inadequate minimum salary for ordained clergy, an equitable compensation task force successfully proposed a

small increase in the conference's minimum, to \$43,616. This is an incremental raise from the 2023 (\$37,450) and 2024 (\$40,763) minimums. The task force's survey of other conferences' minimum clergy salaries showed that among the 18 responding conferences, the NIC is currently second to last in minimum salary (by a small margin of \$165).



With sadness, conference members approved the closure of nine congregations: Grace UMC in Blue Island; New Gresham, Freedom, Faith, and Mandell UMCs in Chicago; St. Andrew in Homewood; Little White Church in Melrose Park; Korean UMC in Naperville; and Thornton UMC.

### Decisions

The conference passed a budget of \$4,630,098, increased by \$243,254 over the 2024 budget. Members passed the following resolutions:

- to be active peacemakers as articulated by Jesus, Isaiah, and Micah
- to urge United Methodists to call on Congress and the president to support steps for establishing a peace based on justice for all peoples in Israel and Palestine
- to condemn the harm caused by the Israeli national government's political and military occupation and the resulting apartheid conditions imposed on Palestinians in the Occupied Territories
- to encourage every NIC church to name at least one Creation Care Advocate who will strengthen the church's existing green actions
- to address gun violence by advocating for the passage of red-flag laws, study a relevant curriculum recommended in the proposed resolution, and advocate for laws that prevent or reduce gun violence
- to urge all United Methodists and U.S. citizens to use personal courtesy in political conversations



Dr. AHyun Lee, associate professor of pastoral theology, care, and psychotherapy at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, led members in a thought-provoking Bible study on Jonah.

**Find links to videos, photos and more at [umcnic.org/ac2024](https://umcnic.org/ac2024).**

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports the Annual Conference Session.



# Stronger Together

## A time to celebrate our connexion



by Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer, NIC Director of Connectional Ministries  
Annual conferences in the U.S. meet in May or June. Gathering at these sessions are all clergy members and an equal number of lay members for worship, fellowship, and ministry decision-making. The bishop presides over plenary sessions, which include reports, programs, budgets, ordination services, memorial services, retirement services, and the election of delegates to Jurisdictional and General conferences (every four years).

Our Northern Illinois Conference met in June under the theme "Yield," taken from a line in John Wesley's covenant prayer: "I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal." I strongly believe that annual conference session is a time to celebrate and strengthen our "connexion."

It's inspiring to see clergy and lay get together at the annual conference, taking meals together, attending special dinners, supporting their caucuses, taking selfies with new and old friends, sharing about their ministries, enjoying snacks at their tables, and just being happy to be together.

We celebrated the commissioning of three provisional elders and the ordination of a deacon, and recognized the licensing of new local pastors. We also applauded the five churches that received One Matters awards and heard their testimony of how God has used them in their community.



Worship services were another area in which we experienced connectionalism. Many people created, designed, and developed the various worship services. Many gifts, talents, inspiring music, and other expressions of adoration helped us praise God and celebrate as God's people.

Annual conference sessions are an opportunity to celebrate and strengthen our "connexion." John Wesley used the word "connexion" (the eighteenth-century spelling) to describe the network of Methodists in societies, groups, classes, and annual

conferences. He believed that faith and spiritual journeys are deeply personal but not private; and because our spiritual journey is not private,

we need each other, we need to live out our faith, and to be the church in the world in "connexion" with each other. Connection is relationships and connectionalism reflects the relational nature of Christian discipleship. It is the basis of the Methodist movement.

Our Northern Illinois Conference has many reasons to celebrate. Although we are not all the same, come from diverse backgrounds, and have different opinions, we are one in Christ Jesus, and attending this



annual session helps us live out our connectionalism in extraordinary ways. As we work for the kingdom we are not islands; we are one body working together to make a difference in this world.

Because we are one family, I encourage you to explore ways to strengthen your "connexion" with your neighbor churches, share resources with others, exchange fruitful ministry ideas, and support each other in love.

Bishop Schwerin shared at the end of his address to the annual conference, "We must help each other yield to the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit, to seek the healing of the gospel of Christ, and to seek life in Christ, where there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free—all are one in Christ Jesus."

Let us begin this new year "yielding" to God's call and always finding opportunities to celebrate and strengthen our "connexion."

Let us always remember that we are stronger together.



Your giving to NIC apportionments supports Connectional Ministries and Annual Conference.



### In Memoriam

#### Retired Clergy

Lowell Dean Allen, Oct. 14, 2023  
Gessel Berry Jr., Nov. 24, 2023  
Philip Bergstrom, April 17, 2024  
Frankella Brandon, Oct. 20, 2023  
Allen R. Campbell, Nov. 10, 2023  
James Campbell, Oct. 18, 2023  
Eugene Carter, Oct. 31, 2023  
Walter "Slim" Coleman, April 17, 2024  
Daniel Facemyer, Sept. 22, 2023  
Ron Greene, April 14, 2024  
Berty Hakeem, June 27, 2023  
Delbert Hargreaves, April 29, 2024  
Irvine Huber, April 14, 2024  
Richard Hundrieser, Jan. 16, 2024  
Peter Youngkil Kim, Oct. 25, 2023  
Kermit Krueger, March 3, 2024  
Howard Leach, May 18, 2023  
Donald Long, March 19, 2024  
Morgan McLeland, Dec. 2, 2023  
Thomas John Potenza, May 25, 2023  
Kirk Scott, July 11, 2023  
Harry Wainwright Jr., Dec. 10, 2023  
Charles Leslie Young, Dec. 28, 2023

#### Spouses of Active Clergy

Steve Starwalt, Aug. 6, 2023

#### Spouses of Retired Clergy

James Laban Glass, March 7, 2024  
Don Niswonger, Dec. 24, 2023  
James Rial, Nov. 10, 2023  
Gilles Verboom, March 29, 2024  
Tom Zolk, July 10, 2023

#### Surviving Spouses of Deceased Clergy

Nancy Sue Allen, July 23, 2023  
Kiyoko Kasai Fujiu, June 27, 2023  
Penelope Logan, July 5, 2023  
Joyce Meyer, March 24, 2024  
Elinor Sorenson, Sept. 30, 2023  
Susan Vaughn, June 10, 2023  
Irma Vautrin, Nov. 4, 2023  
Betty Ann Wilson, Nov. 12, 2023

#### Lay Members of Annual Conference

Cindy Belle, River Forest UMC, Jan. 14, 2024  
Lillie Childs, Resurrection UMC, Chicago, Aug., 8, 2023  
Charles (Chuck) Dexter, Trinity UMC, Yorkville, April 18, 2024  
Jim Kloopping, Chana UMC, June 8, 2023  
Vickie Powell-Bass, Wesley UMC, Chicago, Nov. 17, 2023  
Cindy Radigan, Union Avenue UMC, Chicago, Oct. 21, 2023



Watch the video of the Memorial Service here: [vimeo.com/966917812](https://vimeo.com/966917812).

# 2024 One Matters Awards

by Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer,  
NIC Director of Connectional Ministries

The Northern Illinois Conference recognized five churches with the One Matters Award. The United Methodist Church's Discipleship Ministries created this award in 2015 to encourage congregations that in the previous year increased baptisms and professions of faith from zero to at least one. Each person matters!

Discipleship Ministries offers a commemorative plaque and a \$1,000 award to one church in each annual conference, as nominated by the conference's director of connectional ministries.

Northern Illinois Conference, wanting to recognize more churches, makes four additional awards, funded through the conference budget. (This is another way in which your apportionment giving directly assists congregations.)

The Northern Illinois Conference is one of the most diverse conferences in the connection. In celebrating these churches and telling their stories, the conference hopes to inspire all of its churches to consider how to be the hands and feet of Jesus and share God's love and hope with everyone.



## Lake North: Kingswood United Methodist Church, Buffalo Grove and Deerfield.

Joining with the the former Christ UMC, Kingswood created campuses in Buffalo Grove and Deerfield as well as online. They have baptized many infants and two adults this year (after their professions of faith). The church confirmed a robust class in 2023 and expects to 11 youth in this year. Several new members joined the church by transfer, and several others came as restoration of faith professions.



**Lake South: First United Methodist Church, Downers Grove.** They celebrated the confirmation of 18 youth, who were accompanied in the service by their mentors. More than 30 adults in the congregation agreed to be confirmation mentors and nurture the faith of the church's children. For two years, mentors participate in confirmation classes alongside the young students and offer them their guidance, support, and presence. Through this and more, the laity are living out their baptismal vows—and in doing so, they have grown in relationship with the congregation and their larger community.



**Prairie Central: Batavia United Methodist Church.** They received 12 new members by profession of faith or transfer. In-person

worship attendance increased 25 percent over the last year and online worship attendance increased 23 percent. They continue to tell their story around tables—eating meals, ice-cream sundaes, apple nachos, root-beer floats, pancakes, and more. Each is an opportunity to invite friends, family, neighbors, and others to be a part of the story.



**Prairie North: Marengo United Methodist Church.** They received 12 new members, including three via confirmation and seven through baptism. Three of the baptisms were for a family that first came talk with the pastor about a wedding, having never really attended any church before. They were so moved by the worship and the connection with the people that they eventually joined the church, and brought their children for baptism a few years later. A mother who had begun sobriety visited the church as part of that work; she found the church to be so loving and caring that she joined and had her three children baptized. A family who was caring for a child who had been diagnosed with leukemia experienced supported from the church in many ways. When they were able to return to church, they had their other child baptized.



**Prairie South: Ashton United Methodist Church.** This struggling rural church had a weekly worship attendance of about 25 people, with two youth regularly attending and a few who came a couple of times a year. The church was changed in June 2022 when one of the teens who regularly attended worship died in a utility-terrain vehicle accident. They church reached out to his high-school classmates during this time of grief. Church members started regularly to attend the students' sports games and other activities. They invited the teens to movie nights and created a youth room in their church. The high-schoolers started coming to the church not only for the games and movies but also for Sunday worship. And then their parents came. When the church announced they were starting confirmation classes, 16 people, most of them high-school students, signed up. Today, weekly worship attendance has more than doubled to 55 to 60 people, including 20 youth.

If you have questions about the One Matters Awards, please contact Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer, director of connectional ministries (fgrandon-mayer@umcnic.org) or visit [umcnic.org/onematters](http://umcnic.org/onematters).

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports One Matters Awards and the Office of Congregational Development



Churches and individuals across the Northern Illinois Conference responded with overwhelming generosity to this year's Bishop's Appeal to help children through UVC. A total of over \$35,000 was raised so far. If you missed bringing your church's donation, you can still donate at [umcnic.org/2024BishopsAppeal](http://umcnic.org/2024BishopsAppeal).



Bishop Schwerin received the Bishop Jesse R. DeWitt Child Advocacy Award.



Over 5,000 pounds of goods and over \$2,100 were collected at the Midwest Mission truck through the Mission Challenge!



If you missed out on the challenge, don't worry. There are also online shopping and donation options and you also can always send donations to the center directly or drop off at the NIC permanent sites:

- Lake North: Maywood: Neighborhood UMC or Glenview UMC
  - Lake South: New Lenox UMC
  - Prairie Central: Fox River Grove: Community
  - Prairie North: Lanark UMC
- Learn more: [umcnic.org/2024MissionChallenge](http://umcnic.org/2024MissionChallenge).



These churches have given 100% of their apportionments and supported project in each of the 7 giving areas.

**Philip Otterbein Award for Highest Total Mission Link Giving**  
**Christ United Methodist Church, Rockford: \$51,405**

- Also of note:
- First UMC, Downers Grove: \$25,390.46
  - Kingswood UMC, Buffalo Grove: \$21,369.45
  - New Lenox UMC: \$17,594.50
  - First UMC, Arlington Heights: \$12,388.62

**John Wesley Award: Highest Mission Link Giving Per Member**  
**Triumph United Methodist Church: 77%**

- Also of note:
- Christ UMC, Rockford: 57%
  - First UMC, Hinckley: 43%
  - Antioch UMC: 40%
  - Argo Fay UMC: 39%

Learn more about Mission Link giving at [umcnic.org/missionlinks](http://umcnic.org/missionlinks).

# Slightly increased budget passes

by Rev. Victoria Rebeck, NIC Director of Communications

Without debate, this year's NIC session members passed a 2025 budget of \$4,630,098. It represents an increase of \$243,254 over the 2024 budget.

This year's (2024) budget is lower than the 2023 budget.

"The increase of 5.25 percent from 2024 is an increase in every area of the budget; every grouping was increased," explained Elaine Moy, conference treasurer and director of administrative services. "There was not a single large expense. All areas went up."

Last year, Northern Illinois churches shared 77 percent of what was needed to support the conference budget, which their conference voting members passed. One-third of churches

remitted less than 50 percent of their apportionment, another third remitted between 51 and 75 percent, and the other third paid between 76 and 100 percent.

"We are asking churches to pay as much as they can of their apportionments," Ms. Moy said. "The members who approved the budget include the members of the local churches who valued the missional and outreach programs. We hope the annual conference members return to their local churches to

share what they have learned and to support the annual conference budget."

In the coming year, an apportionment task force will reexamine the current apportionment formula.



Rev. Linny Hartzel and Rev. Scott Christy answer members' questions about the conference budget.

## Leading the Laity



by Eugene Williams,  
Conference Co-Lay Leader

Grace and peace unto you, my siblings of Northern Illinois! On behalf of my Conference Co-Lay Leader, Connie

Augsburger, and the entire Board of Laity, we would like to thank each of you for your continued support of laity. So much has taken place, is taking place, and will take place in the life of our denomination. There were historic changes approved at General Conference in North Carolina during April and May. But just when you thought it was safe to go back into the water, just remember: we still have a considerable way to go on our journey toward perfection, seeking equity and loving our neighbors as Christ did.

Nevertheless, we have embraced joining with our siblings from Wisconsin to become a new episcopal area. And we acknowledge all that has taken place at General Conference and annual conference, each with its own positives and negatives. We are not static, but ever evolving.

For us, the only constant is change itself. The world is ever-changing but God is still the same. Where we are today is just another rung on Jacob's ladder. So let us continue to embrace this season of experimentation and possibilities with hope and with love. Let us not dwell on what we didn't get or

what we gave up or what we don't have. Rather, let us seek opportunities for new growth to go forward with love to meet each other wherever we may be found. For only Christ is perfect, and perfection for us is indeed elusive!

We can complain and talk down the decisions and progress that have been made so far or we can help spread the

## We've come this far by faith

word of how God is blessing us to do the work that Christ has set before us. We may not yet be where we want to be individually or as a denomination and we certainly are not yet where God would have us to be. But we should be thankful that God didn't leave us where He first found us. We've come this far by faith, sisters and brothers! Though we may not always get what we want, if we try real hard, we might just find what we need.

Siblings, God may not come when we want Him, but He will always be there right on time. Let us be the best we can for Christ, guided by the Holy Spirit. My prayer is that you will: Embrace opportunity! Cling to hope! Choose love over fear! Pray without ceasing! And always remember, "We've come this far by faith, leaning on the Lord! Trusting in His holy word, He's never failed us yet" ("We've Come This Far by Faith," by Albert A. Goodson).

Let us pray for all God's children, especially those who don't even know that we are praying for them. Tell them about the ark of safety that he provides for us. Tell them of the salvation that Christ offers. Tell them about the good news: that Christ saves, Christ saves indeed!

Blessings to each of you during this season of gratitude. Amen.

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports the Board of Laity.



Laypeople discuss their questions about what's ahead for the NIC.

## Celebration of Those in Leadership Ministries



### Commissioned for the Work of an Elder

Abby Savannah Holcombe  
Young Sun Lee  
Eric Marc Reniva

### Ordained as a Deacon

Tura J. Foster Gillespie

### Orders Recognized

Tercio B. Junker

### Licensed as Local Pastors

Ed Bickham  
Seth Botts  
Jonah Boutell  
Fernando Candumbo de Castro  
Christopher Druce-Jones  
Sandra Gullede  
Lambert Habonimana  
David Hamer  
Kelli Harrison  
Robert Houston  
Hwankyu Kim  
Fredrick Lartey  
Roberto Moreno-Cruz  
Ha Son Nguyen  
Jason Princer  
Gerardo Rodriguez  
Jacqueline Salgado-Moreno  
Valorie Tatum  
Jacob Tipantasig-Wolverton



### Newly Consecrated as a Lay Deaconess

Barbara Sutton

### Missionary Sent Forth

Miriam L. Safford

### Ministerial Education Fund: \$2,048

Watch a video of the Celebration of Ministry here: [vimeo.com/966917812](https://vimeo.com/966917812).

### Retiring Clergy (with years of service)

Judith Early Best (4)  
Brenda Byrne (30.5)  
Jay D. Carr (40)  
Regina Davis-Bridges (17)  
Romir Reyes Esguerra (41)  
GaHyung Kim (36)  
Martin Lee (31)  
Paul C. Meyers (30)  
Lynn Mikels (26)  
Young-Mee Park (21)  
Virginia Ellen Rainey (11.5)  
Martha Lynne Scott (48.5)  
Charles M. Straight (15)  
Reuel Argamaso Talapian (13)  
Richard Prugh Wagner (36)  
Wendy A. Witt (37)

Watch a video of the Retirement Recognition here: [vimeo.com/966996283](https://vimeo.com/966996283).



Korean Clergy Choir performed at the Retirement Recognition Service.



# Farewell Thoughts

by Rev. Arlene Christopherson,  
Retiring Assistant to the Bishop

Before I knew I would be a United Methodist pastor, before I knew I would serve in administrative roles for over half of my ministry, God knew. It was through the leading of the Holy Spirit, my introduction to the United Methodist Church during seminary, and the trust of wise and gifted bishops that I have taken this journey.

I am proud of the service I have given to the Northern Illinois Conference. First, as a pastor in rural, suburban, and urban settings, serving in five out of the previous six districts. Then in the role of Elgin District superintendent, entrusted to be the first assistant to the bishop in our conference and as the director of connectional ministries for a season of change in our organization.

The work has been a blessing as I have assisted bishops in legal, ecclesial, organizational, and administrative roles. The work has also been deeply painful, as I have journeyed through the darker side of the institutional church and been reminded that we are all sinners. The work has been



uplifting as I have resourced clergy, offered innovation and change to our conference Cabinet, and worked to bring integrity and accountability to the wider community.

The words of affirmation and thanksgiving I receive many days reminds me that we need this glue that binds us on a spiritual and relational level when we are consumed by the tensions and tribulations of our society and plagued by the human dynamic.

I have been honored to author the weekly Clergy Prayer Post, connecting active and retired clergy around the world in our joys and our sorrows. I have been awed to hold sacred the pain of victims of church violence. I have been challenged in bringing change to our institution as we struggle with racism, colonialism, elitism, and more.

All good things must come to an end and as I reach my 39th year in ministry, it is time for Bishop Schwerin to build his own team for the work of the conference as we enter this era of a shared bishop for the Northern Illinois-Wisconsin Episcopal Area.

I love what I do, and I will miss the engagement and the work. I have made myself available to Bishop Schwerin and others for the future and I know God will find ways to continue to use my gifts and my passion for the good of the kin-dom. Thank you all for your support and love through the years. I look forward to celebrating with many of you on Sept. 8, when we gather to remember and celebrate my ministry.



## Celebration of Rev. Arlene Christopherson's Ministry

Sunday, Sept. 8, 4 to 6 p.m.

Downers Grove: First UMC

1032 Maple Ave., Downers Grove

For further details visit:

[umcnic.org/calendar/celebration-of-rev-arlene-christophersons-ministry](http://umcnic.org/calendar/celebration-of-rev-arlene-christophersons-ministry).

## Clergy Appointments and Retirements

Bishop Dan Schwerin announces the following clergy appointments and retirements for the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church, effective July 1, 2024 (unless otherwise noted):

**Linny Hartzell** (Full Elder) to Chicago: Resurrection (1/2) in a newly yoked charge with Harvey: Transformation (1/2), formerly yoked with Home-wood: St. Andrew, which has voted to close (Lake South). Linny follows Delian Stone, who is concluding her ministry.

**Dennis Langdon** (Full Elder) to Olympia Fields (3/4) in a newly yoked charge with Chicago: Trinity (1/4), formerly yoked with Chicago: Morgan Park (Lake South). Dennis follows Richard Wagner, who is retiring.

**Nadan Cho** (Licensed Local Pastor) to Naperville: Woori (Prairie Central) from Mount Carroll, Thompson, Argo Fay (Prairie North). Nadan follows Chung Nam Kwak, who has been serving as interim.

**Timothy Biel Sr.** (Licensed Local Pastor) to Bolingbrook: Crossroads of Faith (3/4) (Prairie Central) from Alsip: Christ (Lake South District). Timothy follows Michael Hickcock, who is appointed to Princeton (Prairie South).

**Yoshiya Takahashi** (Full Elder) to Extension Ministry (Four Seasons Hospice) from Extension Ministry (Duke University Hospital).

**Jason Princer** (Licensed Local Pastor) to the newly created Site Pastor for Bartlett: Journey of Hope (3/4) (Prairie Central).

**Rich Ottens** (District Superintendent Supply) to Chadwick: Hope/Hickory Grove/Fairhaven (1/2). Rich follows Catiana McKay, who will return to retirement.

**Lambert Habonimana** (Licensed Local Pastor) to Mount Carroll/Thompson/Argo Fay. Lambert follows Nadan Cho, who is appointed to Naperville: Woori (Prairie Central).

**Joyce Hazel Salatan** (346.1/Student) to Associate Oak Park: St. John's and Chicago: Edison Park (1/2) (Lake North). Joyce follows Fernando de Castro, who is appointed to Savanna (Prairie North)

**Jan Shaulis** (Retired Local Pastor) to Reynolds (1/2) while remaining at Ashton (1/2) (Prairie South). Jan follows Glen Allen Stewart, who returns to retirement.

**Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger** (Full Elder) to transitional leave from Extension Ministry.

**Beverly Dukes** (Full Elder) to Chicago: Morgan Park (3/4) and Alsip: Christ (1/4) (Lake South) from Maywood: Neighborhood (3/4) (Lake North) and Lombard: Faith (1/4) (Prairie Central). At Morgan Park, Beverly follows Dennis Langdon, who is appointed to Olympia Fields (3/4) and Chicago: Trinity (1/4) (Lake South). At Christ, Beverly follows Timothy Biel Sr., who is appointed to Bolingbrook: Crossroads of Faith (Prairie Central).

**Jake Cho** (Provisional Elder) to Schaumburg: Salem Korean (Prairie Central) from Prospect Heights: Central Korean and Galilee Korean (Lake North). Jake follows Sang Hun Han, who is appointed to Aurora: Bethany of Fox Valley (Prairie Central).

**Robert Houston** (Licensed Local Pastor) to Evergreen Park (1/4) from Chicago: Faith (Lake South). Robert follows Caitlyn Nesbit, who will remain at Palos Heights (1/2) (Lake South) and serve less than full-time.

**Pamela Pirtle** (Full Elder) to Maywood: Neighborhood (3/4) (Lake North) and Lombard: Faith (1/4) (Prairie Central) from Leave of Absence. Pamela follows Beverly Dukes, who is appointed to Chicago: Morgan Park and Alsip: Christ (Lake South).

**Valerie Johnston** (District Superintendent Supply) to Millington (Prairie South). Valerie follow Cherrie Quillman, who is appointed to Forre-son: First (3/4) and Leaf River (1/4) (Prairie North).

**Karen Andrus** (District Superintendent Supply) to Winnebago (1/4) (Prairie North). Karen follows Gavin Brandt, who returns to retirement.

**Young Sub Cha** (346.2) to Prospect Heights: Central Korean and Galilee Korean (Lake North). Young Sub follows Jaeon "Jake" Cho, who is appointed to Schaumburg: Salem Korean (Prairie Central). Effective August 1.

**Bill Dunfrund** (District Superintendent Supply) to Serena (1/4) and Norway (1/4) (Prairie South). Bill follows Cherie Quillman, who is appointed to Forre-son and Leaf River (Prairie North District).

**David Price** (Full Elder) as interim to Lombard: Faith while remaining at Glen Ellyn: First (Prairie Central). David follows Beverly Dukes, who is appointed to Chicago: Morgan Park and Alsip: Christ (Lake South).

Additionally, we are thankful to the following:

**Romir Esquerria** (Retired Elder), who will be supporting Oak Park: St. John's as they wait for their new pastor, Hazel Joyce Salatan.

**Lynn Mikels** (Retired Deacon), who will be supporting Chicago: Edison Park as they wait for their new pastor, Arnel Vasquez.

**Sung Ja Lee Moon and Soong-In Moon** (Retired Elders), who will be supporting Prospect Heights: Central Korean and Galilee Korean as they wait for their new pastor, Young Sub Cha.

Your giving to NIC apportionments support clergy appointments, moves and retirements.



## Kids Above All Back to School Backpack Drive

June 24 - August 23

Kids Above All invites everyone to step up this summer for the school-aged kids.

Contact Catherine Inserra  
(847) 224-2870  
[cinserra@kidsaboveall.org](mailto:cinserra@kidsaboveall.org)

For more details visit:  
[kidsaboveall.org/bts-drive/](http://kidsaboveall.org/bts-drive/)

