

The Northern Illinois Conference OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Reporter

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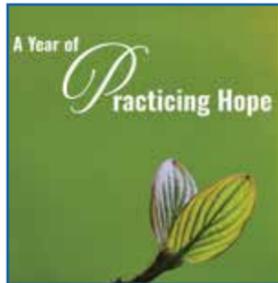
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DO NOT DELAY. DATED MATERIAL



Rendering of the completed La Herencia.

Photo courtesy of Lucha

Humboldt Park UMC Continues Housing Legacy

by Rev. Victoria Rebeck, NIC Director of Communications

A good home can be a sanctuary. Humboldt Park United Methodist Church is demonstrating that a sanctuary can be a good home.

Over the past few years, the church has faced some difficult decisions. The congregation on Chicago's west side was getting smaller and the 98-year-old building was expensive to maintain. Church members could better worship and serve their neighbors in a smaller space. At the same time, they wanted the valuable building—which has 12 apartments—to continue to bless the neighborhood.

Providing housing sounded like it would continue the church's legacy.

Lucha, an organization that provides advocacy and affordable housing development, particularly for Latino and Spanish-speaking populations, showed interest in purchasing the building in 2018 in order to transform it into affordable housing. This would continue one of the church's core ministries.

Providing housing has been part of the church's ministry since its inception.

"When the church was built in 1928, most of the members were German immigrants," explains Rev. Paula Cripps-Villejo, HPUMC's pastor. The building's 12 apartments both

addressed a need of the new neighbors and gave the church a revenue stream.

In the 1960s, the Hispanic folks began moving to the neighborhood. The need for affordable housing remained and the church continued to provide it.

Now the church remodeling is underway. In a neighborhood being eyed by developers for gentrification, housing the existing residents can afford is an increasingly scarce necessity.

It's the first time in Chicago that a sanctuary has been transformed into affordable housing, Rev. Cripps-Villejo believes.

Those who were living in the church apartments have been moved temporarily and will likely be able to return at the end of the year once the new units are completed.

The new apartments will be improved over the century-old ones.

"The original units were limited in size," says Rev. Cripps Villejo. "There were nine one-bedroom apartments and three three-bedroom apartments."

It was also not possible to make them compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.

continued on page 3: see Housing Legacy

Practicing Hope: Annual Conference 2026

by Lisa Smith, NIC Communications Specialist

This summer, members of the Northern Illinois Conference will gather for worship, reflection, and shared discernment at the 187th session of Annual Conference, June 14–16, in Schaumburg. Under the theme "Practicing Hope," clergy and lay members will explore how hope can shape ministry and mission in changing times. Rooted in Romans 5:3–5, the conference invites participants to deepen connections, strengthen leadership, and renew their commitment to Christ's work in the world.

Getting Ready for Annual Conference

Registration opens April 1. The fee is \$160, increasing to \$175 on May 1. Registration closes May 22. Please note: there will be no on-site registration.

Proposed legislation and historical documents are due April 1, with materials posted by May 14.

Back by popular demand, the Lunch-and-Learn sessions on Monday, June 15, will provide an opportunity to enjoy a meal while connecting with others around valuable topics in mission and ministry.

Group-discounted hotel rooms are available at the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center Hotel for the nights of Saturday, June 13, through Monday, June 15, at \$195 per night plus applicable taxes.

Childcare has been expanded for 2026 to better support families, with extended hours, basic meals, and an age range of 1-17. These enhancements create a safe, welcoming environment for children and youth while parents participate fully in conference sessions. Advance registration is required.

Committees and organizations may share their ministries through presentations, Program Booklet ads, or display tables in the ball-

continued on page 5: see Practicing Hope

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports the Annual Conference Session.





From Your Bishop:

A Year of Practicing Hope: Building Beloved Community

by Bishop Dan Schwerin

As I make my rounds, I have been reflecting on some New Testament images for Christian living and leadership: salt, leaven, and light. I have been thinking about how salt, leaven, and light are nonviolent and collaborative. They are change agents and part of the whole being changed. They allow themselves to be vulnerable to share their presence for good.

All suggest that God's nearness is a catalyst, that God's presence is among us as a change agent. In this year of practicing hope I have been asking people to share with each other the scriptures and images have been grounding their practice of hope.

I have also been teaching from a book prepared by the Council of Bishops and published by the United Methodist Publishing House: *Building Beloved Community*.

As people pray their way through Lent and scroll through their daily news feeds, I thought I would offer a section of the book from pp. 16-17 that reminds us of the way the gospels frame the use of authority.

When Jesus spoke of authority, he consistently connected it to service, love, and the advancement of God's reign. Biblical authority is always exercised for the benefit of others, particularly the most vulnerable. Biblical authority heals, liberates, feeds the hungry, and includes the marginalized. God's authority is always tempered by love and is therefore fundamentally different from the authoritarianism we see in political movements today.

True authority, rooted in God's character, can be recognized by its fruits:

- it serves the common good rather than personal gain
- it empowers others rather than concentrating power
- it promotes justice and mercy
- it protects the vulnerable rather than exploiting them
- it seeks accountability rather than avoiding it
- it points people toward God rather than toward the leader

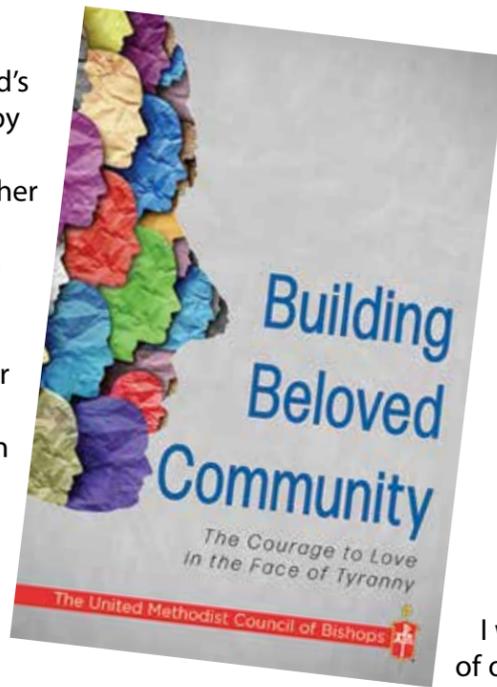
God's authority flows from love and seeks to build up beloved community. Authoritarianism flows from fear and the desire to control.

How is authority rooted in God's character needed now? In this moment when some populations are feeling more vulnerable, what does it mean to practically love our neighbors? How might learning how to love our neighbor change the divisiveness among us? How might recognizing biblical uses of authority help us spot bullying in our institutions and mobilize bystanders into those who stand with the bullied?

More particularly, I offer this section from our *Book of Discipline*:

We affirm that every form of government stands under God's judgment and must

therefore be held accountable for protecting the innocent, guaranteeing basic freedoms and liberties, protecting the natural world, and establishing just, equitable, and sustainable economies (Social Principles, *Book of Discipline* 2020/2024, p. 135; ¶ 163)



I was listening to one of our pastors reflect theologically on the

Lord's Supper. He was saying that just walking up to the communion table and preparing the heart is an act of vulnerability. He needed to ask how his life did harm and how might God be calling him to greater love. The pilgrimage to the table is not one of fortifying our positions and finding confirmation of our prejudices. For Wesley, we are always moving in the orbit of love, and by grace, growing in love.

I pray you have a holy Lent, one tempered by love and authority given to building beloved community.

Your giving to General Church apportionments support the Episcopal Office.



Video Shows Chicago Churches' Help for Immigrants

"When Fear Knocks, the Church Shows Up: A Chicago Story" tells the stories of how immigrant communities in Northern Illinois struggle to continue working, attending worship, obtaining groceries and other needs, and

sending their children to school, and how conference churches have reached out to help. The production of this video demonstrates how



Rev. Dr. Lydia Muñoz, Executive Director of El Plan for Hispanic Ministries, facilitates a conversation with NIC Hispanic pastors about walking alongside immigrants and responding to their needs.

Photo by Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer

the United Methodist connection supports our active sharing of Christ's love and mercy with our neighbors. The video can be viewed at youtu.be/9LxicWhQwd4.

El Plan for Hispanic/Latinx, UM Communications, and General Commission on Religion and Race visited several of our



Rev. Hannah Kardon points to the Broadview facility as she shares about clergy presence at the ICE detention site.

Photo by Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer

churches and talked with pastors and leaders affected by ICE raids. This is part of a series of videos that El Plan is creating.

Your giving to General Church apportionments support racial and ethnic ministry plans like El Plan.



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Stay Connected

Sign up for the weekly NIC eNews, Appointment Announcements and Sympathy notices. Visit umcnic.org and scroll down and click on "Sign up for our Newsletter" to enter your name and email.

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.

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports this publication.



Dangerous Times Call for Dangerous Religion

by Rev. Victoria Rebeck, NIC Director of Communications

Our times are dangerous, Rev. Dr. Charles Woolery Sr. observes, and this requires a dangerous religion.

Over 300 people gathered at Trinity United Methodist Church in Mount Prospect on Jan. 18 for the Northern Illinois Conference's annual Martin Luther King Jr. celebration, where they heard Rev. Woolery preach about how King's words and life are still relevant to our Christian witness today.

National government leaders are motivated by greed and use lies and violence to get their way. The chief executive seems to have an unquenchable desire for adoration and approbation, Woolery said.

The Rev. Dr. Charles Woolery Sr. tells worshipers to practice a "dangerous religion" that cares for the dispossessed before the prestigious.

What Jesus wants from us is to change the world, Woolery said.

John Wesley, one of the founders of Methodism, taught this as well; that reli-

gion requires acts of love and justice as much as acts of piety.

And being a disciple of Jesus requires that we take the side of Jesus. In these times of oppression and disregard for human rights and dignity, "You cannot be neutral and be on the side of Jesus," Woolery said.

"A dangerous religion sees Jesus in disguise. He appears in

the faces of the dispossessed, not in the places of power and prestige."

"What are we waiting for?" Woolery asked the worshipers. "We need a sense of urgency.

"We need to be involved in transforming people and transforming the world."

The celebration was led by a diversity of presentations and cultures. Three youth—Naylah Handley, Cooper Matyja, and Christopher Smith Jr.—performed a reader's theatre piece that imagined how King may



Over 300 worshipers gathered to celebrate, sing, listen and fellowship in honor of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Photo by Rev. Victoria Rebeck



The Rev. Dr. Charles Woolery Sr. tells worshipers to practice a "dangerous religion" that cares for the dispossessed before the prestigious.

Photo by Rev. Victoria Rebeck

have struggled with God's call on his life, particularly the risks of speaking truth to power.

With enthusiasm and heart, the Northern Illinois Conference Filipino-American Choir sang Mark Miller's song, "Justice Will Rise." Miller is a United Methodist musician and songwriter. Trinity's choir encouraged worshipers in their work for Jesus's love and justice through the song, "We've Come This Far by Faith."

Referring to King's sermon "The Drum Major Instinct," Bishop Dan Schwerin sent the worshipers out with exhortation to "be a drum major for love."

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports celebrations across the conference.



Theme Devotional, A Year of Practicing Hope, is Available Now

by Lisa Smith, NIC Communications Specialist

The Northern Illinois Committee on Discipleship and Spiritual Formation has released *A Year of Practicing Hope*, a new devotional created for 2026. Rooted in Bishop Dan Schwerin's invitation to practice hope this year, the entries invite individuals and communities to live hope as an active, daily practice of grace.

The devotional brings together diverse contributions from laity and clergy across both the Northern Illinois and Wisconsin Conferences. Rather than presenting hope as an abstract idea, it invites readers to experience it as a lived, faithful life.

Hope is not something to be consumed, but something formed and sustained within Christian community through a relationship with Jesus Christ. Each entry provides scripture, reflection, and prayer, making the devotional accessible for a variety of spiritual practices.

A Year of Practicing Hope is inspired by earlier conference-wide resources that sustained the church through pivotal seasons, including *Times Like These*, a prayer and reflection resource distributed in 2020 during the early days of the pandemic, and *Sufficient: Reflections on a Year of Grace*, which was shared at the 2025 Annual Conference. Building on

the legacy of these shared devotionals, *A Year of Practicing Hope* continues the tradition of grounding the conference in scripture, reflection, and prayer during times of discernment, transition, and faithful response.

A Year of Practicing Hope is well suited for individual devotion, small groups, youth gatherings, and congregational study. The booklet invites readers to gather,

reflect, and share stories of hope.

Copies of *A Year of Practicing Hope* will be distributed at key gatherings throughout the year, including district trainings, Laity Convocation, the Order of Elders gathering, and Annual Conference.

A digital copy may be downloaded at umcnic.org/news/this-years-theme-devotional-practicing-hope-is-available-now. Local churches may

also order printed copies in quantities of 100 or more directly from the printer by contacting Lisa Smith at lsmith@umcnic.org.



Your giving to NIC apportionments supports the Conference Committee on Discipleship and Spiritual Formation.



Housing Legacy

(continued from page 1)

The new development—called La Herencia, or The Inheritance—will offer some two-bedroom apartments—and all will be ADA compliant.

HUMC now meets for worship in a space near Armitage and Pulaski. Once a month, they worship in a home, a Hispanic cultural practice. They also have access to Grace United Methodist Church. In the meantime, they are seeking a new building.

"We are hoping to move to a section that is more Hispanic and does not have a mainline Protestant presence," Rev. Cripps-Villejo says. "We preach and live liberation theology," a perspective proposed by Gustavo Gutierrez in his 1998 book *A Theology of Liberation*.

"Our hope is to be a judgment-free zone," says Rev. Cripps-Villejo. "We seek to be a church that shows how expansive God's love is.

"We believe we are called to bring souls to Jesus and together save/restore the soul of the systems that break and dismiss God's community. We work and pray for the day when our hearts and our world reflect God's inclusive and liberative love."



Photo courtesy of Lucha

A side rendering of the planned apartments.

Stronger Together Young Voices Matter



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

We were pleased to welcome several young people to our 2025 Annual Conference, including some selected by their district superintendents to serve as lay members.

Their presence brought fresh energy and deep meaning to our gathering. Several of these young leaders offered prayers before each plenary session, grounding our work in faith and reminding us that God continues to speak through new generations. Their commitment, courage, and spirit inspired participants across the conference.

Building on this meaningful experience, we are excited to expand opportunities for young people to participate in the 2026 Annual Conference. Each district superintendent will designate two young people: one aged 12–17 and another aged 17–30. This intentional inclusion reflects our deep conviction that young voices matter—not someday, but now, in the life, leadership, and discernment of the church.

Young people are not only the future of the church; they are also the present. They are already leading, serving, worshiping,

questioning, and shaping our ministries in meaningful ways. When young people are present at decision-making tables, the church is strengthened. They bring insight shaped by today's realities, thoughtful questions that stretch our imagination, and hope rooted in their vision for what the church can become. Their participation is not symbolic; it is essential.

This commitment is personal for me. As a young person in the Methodist Church of Chile, I served as national president of the Youth and Young Adult Federation and had both voice and vote at our General Assembly. I presented reports, chaired commissions, and was later elected secretary of the General Board, which met between assemblies. Those early opportunities to lead, speak, and

serve shaped my faith, calling, and confidence in the church as a place where young people truly belong.



Milan Christian, young adult member of Hope Indian in Naperville, giving a prayer to open plenary at AC 2025.

Photo by Marc Dean

We invite churches across our conference to intentionally identify, mentor, and support young people as leaders in their congregations and as lay members to the Annual Conference. Now is the time to make space for their voices, nurture their gifts, and trust their leadership. When we invest in young people, we invest in the present and future of the church.

As you prepare for the 2026 Annual Conference, come ready to interact, share, and learn from the young people among us. Their voices, questions, prayers, and leadership are gifts to our conference. Young voices matter at our Annual Conference session because when young people are heard, the whole church grows stronger.

Bishop's Appeal: Education for Central Conferences

This year, Northern Illinois United Methodists will be donating to one Bishop's Appeal for two worthy recipients.

One beneficiary of the appeal for Education for the Central Conferences is the construction of a high school in Tanzania, at a mission site led by missionary and NIC clergy member Rev. Young Seon Kim, known as Christina. The other is the Endowment Fund for Theological Education in the Central Conferences (which comprise Africa, Europe, and the Philippines). Gifts will be distributed equally to these projects.

Tanzanian High School

Rev. Kim and the people of Dar Es Salaam is planning to build a high school, which will help young people continue their education and pursue a future they may never have thought possible. Northern Illinois United



With the completion of the new high school, students at the secondary school like these will have the opportunity to continue their education.

Photo courtesy of Rev. Kim



BISHOP'S APPEAL
Giving Abundantly, Generosity Overflowing

Methodists can help empower these young adults to achieve the education and callings they discern.

The building will have four classrooms, a computer laboratory, separate dormitories for boys and girls, a multipurpose hall, and guest rooms for volunteer teachers and visitors. It will share with the secondary school its science laboratories, a library, and a cafeteria.

"This high school is not just about buildings; it is about raising a next generation of Christian leaders for Tanzania and the kingdom of God," Rev. Kim says.

"It will provide quality Christian education, strong academic preparation, and character and spiritual formation. We believe these students will become future leaders who serve Tanzania, the church, and the world."

Endowing theological education

The Council of Bishops this year is inviting all United Methodists to invest in educating church leaders in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines, where resources are limited. Through gifts made to the Endowment Fund for Theological Education in the Central Conferences (named before the 2024 General Conference eliminated the category "central conference"), the bishops plan to fund 500 theological scholarships in perpetuity for emerging clergy leaders in these areas.

As an endowment, the fund bypasses the uncertainty of relying

on General Conference decisions and World Service Apportionment Fund receipts.



Today, fewer than 5 percent of pastors outside the US hold a master's degree in theology, compared to more than 71 percent within the U.S. The scholarships supported through this campaign will equip a new generation of women and men for pastoral ministry in some of the most challenging missional contexts.

How you can support

- Pray for students, teachers, and church leaders in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines.
- Talk to your church and share information in newsletters, social media, flyers, and bulletin inserts about the Bishop's Appeal.
- Receive a special offering during worship, perhaps on Miracle Sunday, May 21. (Bring your offering to Annual Conference for the collection on Monday.)
- Donate individually online or as a church.

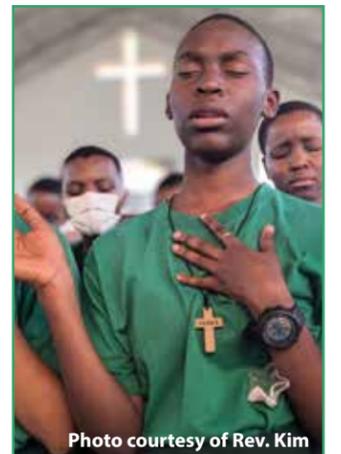


Photo courtesy of Rev. Kim

Find more information and resources to share at umcnic.org/2026BishopsAppeal.

Practicing Hope

187th Northern Illinois Annual Conference

Sunday, June 14 -
Tuesday, June 16, 2026

Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center
1551 N. Thoreau Dr., Schaumburg Ill.



Mission Challenge with Midwest Mission

The conference Board of Global Ministries and Midwest Mission will continue their multiple-year partnership to send tangible resources to those affected by disasters and poverty.



Photo by Marc Dean

Midwest Mission will again bring to Annual Conference a trailer to collect the most needed items, including contents for home care and personal dignity kits. Home care

kits needed items include liquid household cleaner (54 to 80 ounces, no spray bottles), liquid dish soap (42 to 64 ounces), liquid laundry detergent (100 to 150 ounces), scrub brushes, and 5-gallon round buckets with resealable lid. Needed items for personal dignity kits include hand towels, washcloths, individual toothbrushes, bars of soap (3 to 4 ounces), shampoo bottles (12 to 19 ounces), deodorant (2 to 3 ounce stick, roll on, or pump), lotion bottles (8 to 10 ounces), and gallon resealable plastic bags. A full list of accepted items can be found at umcnic.org/2026MissionChallenge.

Supplies will be accepted on Sunday, June 14, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Monday, June 15, from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Find the Midwest Missions trailer in the east parking lot outside the Schaumburg Convention Center.

Consider making bulk purchases to take advantage of competitive prices. Midwest Mission has wish lists at Dollar Days, Walmart, and Amazon. Find links at umcnic.org/2026MissionChallenge.

You may also donate money. There are three ways to do so: (1) bring a check to Annual Conference payable to the Northern Illinois Conference and write Midwest Mission #50000150 in the memo line; (2) send a check to the conference treasurer via the lock box at Northern Illinois Conference, PO Box 5646, Carol Stream, IL 60197-5646 and write Midwest Mission #50000150 in the memo line; or (3) pay through the conference's Prosper online portal (app.prosperumc.com) and note that the payment is for Midwest Mission #50000150.

More information including a list of urgent needs and other needed items is available at umcnic.org/2026MissionChallenge.

(continued from page 1)

room foyer. More information and registration forms are available at umcnic.org/ac2026.

Volunteers are essential to a smooth and welcoming conference. Opportunities include check-in, ushers, guides, the information desk, and more. Volunteers can serve a full day, part of a day, or multiple roles—no experience required. Volunteers must be at least 16 and cannot be voting members. Sign up by May 4 using the volunteer form.

Services and Special Observances

The Celebration of Ministry will take place on Sunday evening, June 14, and will include ordination and commissioning, recognition of local pastors, and conclude with gluten-free communion. Bishop Dan Schwerin will preach. The NIC Mass Choir will return, and churches are invited to send four or five choir members to participate. The retirement celebration will take place mid-morning on Tuesday, June 16, giving members of the retiring class of 2026 an opportunity to speak.



Sally Vonner

The Bible study, led by Sally Vonner, general secretary/CEO of United Women in Faith, will be held the mornings of Monday, June 15, and Tuesday, June 16. Sally brings extensive experience across The United Methodist Church, including leading women's retreats, serving as a jurisdictional conference delegate, and engaging in immigration reform, community development, and dismantling racism initiatives.

Clergy and laity sessions will take place simultaneously on Sun-

day, June 14, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. All clergy are required to attend the clergy session and should make arrangements with their local churches to cover worship services. Laity will gather in their own session for discussion, learning, and shared leadership.

The memorial session will take place early Monday afternoon, June 15, with family members provided special seating. Names of those remembered are gathered from clergy records. Organizers recommend that people submit names to ensure no one is overlooked. The form can be found at umcnic.org/ac2026. Rev. Dr. Brian Gilbert, superintendent of the Prairie South District, will preach. A self-described "Methodist nerd," Brian is passionate about United Methodist polity and theology and empowering local churches to make disciples.



Rev. Dr. Brian Gilbert

Annual conference also provides opportunities to celebrate milestones in the life of The United Methodist Church. This year's observances include the 70th anniversary of full clergy rights for women, the 50th anniversary of United Methodist Volunteers in Ministry, the 40th anniversary of the NIC becoming a Reconciling Ministries Network Conference, and the 30th anniversary of the Order of Deacons.

Annual Conference 2026 promises to be a time of hope, connection, and celebration of faith in action, offering meaningful experiences for clergy, laity, families, and the broader conference community alike.

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports the Annual Conference Session.



Find updates online at umcnic.org/AC2026.

Announcing the #BeUMC Awards

The Northern Illinois Annual Conference, in partnership with United Methodist Communications, is pleased to announce the launch of the #BeUMC Awards: a new opportunity to honor and celebrate outstanding faithfulness across our conference during the upcoming Annual Conference session.

The #BeUMC Awards recognize individuals and congregations that embody our shared United Methodist vision to love boldly, serve joyfully, and lead courageously. These awards highlight lives and ministries that reflect the mission of the UMC: to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Northern Illinois Conference will present #BeUMC Awards in three categories:

- An outstanding layperson
- An outstanding clergy member
- An outstanding congregation

Award recipients will demonstrate faithfulness, leadership, and impact that reflect both denomination's mission and the values central to its vision.

All clergy, laity, and congregations within the



Northern Illinois Conference may submit nominations. This is a meaningful opportunity to lift up stories of faith, service, and leadership that inspire the

wider connection and bear witness to what it means to #BeUMC today.

The nomination forms are available on the Annual Conference Award page, umcnic.org/ac2026awards. You may nominate yourself or someone else. The submission deadline is April 15.

Join us in celebrating those who embody the spirit of The United Methodist Church and who continue to make an extraordinary difference through their witness and ministry.

First Korean UMC Hosts Prayer Vigil in Solidarity with Minnesotans

by Rev. Juyeon Jeon, Associate Pastor, First Korean UMC

As a sign of its commitment to stand alongside immigrant communities and serving as a protective umbrella for those facing uncertainty and hardship, First Korean United Methodist Church in Wheeling held a prayer vigil on Feb. 7 in solidarity with Minnesota.

Part of their participation in the Chicago Sanctuary Church Network, the gathering was a *ger* prayer service. *Ger* is a Hebrew word meaning a foreigner or sojourner; people who reside in a land not originally their own.

As immigrants living as *gers* in this country, participants found it impossible to ignore the heart-breaking realities of recent months. Yet rather than yielding to fear, the community discerned that this was precisely the moment to respond faithfully as followers of Christ.

The vigil was intentionally structured around three movements: remembrance, lament, and hope.

During the time of remembrance, the congregation called aloud the names of two individuals who lost their lives while attempting to protect demonstrators as well as the names of eight individuals who died in detention centers or in custody. Each name was spoken slowly and reverently, followed by moments of silence and communal prayer, honoring their lives and grieving their loss.

In the movement of lament, participants listened to firsthand testimony from Rev. Isaac

Park, director of emergency services for the Union Gospel Mission Twin Cities, Minn. He described the realities on the ground through stories of fear, displacement, and resilience. After hearing these accounts, the congregation entered into guided prayer, lifting up those directly affected and bringing their collective grief and anguish before God.

Finally, in hope, participants were invited to come forward and light candles at the altar, remembering the victims and offering prayers for solidarity and peace. As each flame was kindled, the sanctuary grew brighter—a quiet yet powerful reminder that even in the midst of sorrow, hope continues to shine.

Although held on a Saturday afternoon, the vigil drew approximately 70 participants, reflecting the community's deep desire to gather in prayer and bear witness. It was a sacred time of shared tears, united intercession, and songs of peace and hope.

In gathering this way, the church embodied its calling to be a community of compassion and courageous faith. Even amid fear and uncertainty, the witness of remembrance, lament, and hope declares that violence and exclusion do not have the final word. As the people of God continue to walk as *gers* in this land, may they also remain steadfast bearers of peace, justice, and enduring hope for all.



Photo courtesy of First Korean UMC

Your support funds humanitarian relief and recovery efforts

100% of your donation on UMCOR Sunday cover the operational cost of UMCOR so that every dollar received for emergency appeals will go directly to communities in need

UMCOR SUNDAY
March 15, 2026

SPECIAL SUNDAY

"Weeping may last for the night, but joy comes with the morning."
- PSALM 30:5B

NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES SUNDAY
April 19, 2026

Suit Alleges Rescinded DHS Policy Infringes on Religion

by Jim Patterson, United Methodist News

United Methodist Carlos Chavez was motivated by his need for health care to sign a waiver that led to his immediate deportation after he was arrested Jan. 29 at North Hills United Methodist Church Hispanic Mission in Los Angeles, said an immigration attorney.

Meanwhile, 2,300 miles away in Washington on Feb. 5, a lawyer representing more than two dozen religious organizations—including four United Methodist bodies—spared with a federal government attorney over how church attendance is being affected by an aggressive new U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement policy justified by an executive order by President Donald Trump.

The memo put an end to the long-standing federal "sensitive locations" policy under which law enforcement officers were directed to avoid disrupting houses of worship, hospitals, and schools unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The lawsuit, "Mennonite Church USA vs.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security," was originally filed in the U.S. District Court, District of Columbia, in February 2025, seeking an injunction to prevent federal agents from carrying out immigration enforcement activities at places of worship and to stay the effective date of the Rescission Memo. That motion was denied in April 2025 and an appeal was filed.

"Before reversing longstanding policy, an agency must recognize that it is changing course, reasonably explain its rationale for adopting the new policy, consider reliance interests that the previous policy may have engendered, and grapple with alternatives," the complaint reads. "DHS made no attempt to engage in such a considered approach."

Among the signatories are four United Methodist entities: the Commission on Religion and Race, New York Conference, North Georgia Conference, and the Western North Carolina Conference. Also represented in the lawsuit are Mennonite, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Jewish,

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Church of the Brethren, Episcopal, Presbyterian and Unitarian bodies.

Chavez, an undocumented immigrant from Mexico, is an example of the consequences of the new policy.

A member of North Hills United Methodist Church Hispanic Mission, he was apprehended by ICE agents at the church on Jan. 29 while it was distributing food, and "mothers, young children and youths" were tending the church garden, according to a statement from the church.

"Places of worship should be safe for everyone," said Bishop Dottie Escobedo-Frank of the California-Pacific Conference.

North Hills UMC Hispanic Mission was forced to halt their food ministry after ICE officers came onto their property. Similar experiences are likely to befall other congregations under the current ICE policy, according to the complaint filed by the religious organizations, which says houses of worship are already seeing declines in attendance.

A decision from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit is expected to take about two months.



2025 Financial Report: A Milestone Year for Generosity

Thanks to all Northern Illinois United Methodists for your commitment to sharing your gifts for the good of our United Methodist Church and its ministries.

In 2025, you gave \$5,056,797—80 percent of our budgeted goal—to support missions and ministries. This is the highest percentage we have achieved since 2016.

THANK YOU



Strengthening our Shared Witness and Ministries

Because of your commitment to giving:

- churches received grants for new ministries with neighbors
- churches had access to more affordable property and liability insurance
- churches learned strategies for reaching new people
- lay and clergy learned skills for effective administration and ministry
- and much more

Achievements in Faithful Giving in 2025

- 24 churches paid over 100% in 2024 and 2025
- 53 churches gave more in percentage in 2025, compared to 49 churches that had raised their percentage in 2024
- fewer churches decreased their giving over the previous year: 61 in 2025, compared with 137 in 2024 (including closed/merged churches)
- fewer churches submitted no apportionments in 2025: 26 churches gave 0 in 2025, compared with 33 churches in 2024 (including closed/merged churches)

International United Methodist Ministry

We are in partnership with other United Methodists around the world. We start churches; work alongside people learning sustainable agricultural practices, medical skills, and

other abilities to build up their own communities; help people recover from disasters, and more. Because we share our funds alongside those of United Methodists around the world and have an existing administrative infrastructure, we can provide and support mission and ministry much more financially efficiently than can independent mission organizations.

Together, we paid 81 percent (\$1,082,126) of our General Church apportionments for 2025. In 2024, we gave only 41 percent (\$778,533).

Benefits and Insurance

To compensate our clergy with necessary medical insurance and pension benefits and provide our churches with reliable and affordable property insurance, we came close to meeting our commitments in full.

- Health and pension premiums: Churches submitted 92 percent of billed premiums. This is up from 80 percent in 2024.
- Clergy responsibility for health-insurance premiums: Clergy remitted 92 percent of their insurance obligation, up from 85 percent in 2024.
- Property insurance receipts: You submitted 82 percent of your property insurance premiums. Unfortunately, this is a decrease from 90 percent in 2024.

Commitment to Transparency and Support

Your conference administration and finance staff intend to be honest and clear about our shared financial commitments so that we can be a reliable partner with every congregation. We want to communicate clearly so that ministry can grow stronger.

To support our local churches in navigating their financial responsibilities, we have offered nearly 20 webinars throughout the 2025 year. These sessions provided direct assistance, answered critical questions, and ensured that every leader felt equipped to manage their church's stewardship and obligations with confidence.

REMINDER: New Apportionment Formula

- To assist local churches in simplifying their budget, the 2025 annual conference adopted a simplified apportionment formula for 2026 based on income tiers. Churches with incomes under \$250,000 are assessed 8 percent. Those with incomes between \$250,000 and \$750,00 are assessed 10 percent. Those with incomes over \$750,000 are assessed 12 percent. Income is defined by specific lines on the church statistical report (line 55 minus lines 53 and 54b).
- Apportionments are based on the last statistical report completed as of Jan. 31 of apportionment year.

Find a full listing of all the NIC Church's giving on page 8 and 9.

Repair the Harm Final Update

THANK YOU! Northern Illinois Conference collected 100 percent of our \$754,348 responsibility!

The Boy Scouts of America settled a lawsuit related to accusations of sexual abuse of children. The United Methodist Church has chartered BSA troops or packs over the years and were assessed liability.

The denomination agreed to raise and contribute \$30 million over a three-year period to a fund created by the U.S. Bankruptcy Court to compensate survivors. The church also committed to supporting the healing of survivors and to continuing its work to end sexual

abuse of young people. Of the \$30 million committed by The United Methodist Church, the amount allocated to the Northern Illinois Conference was \$754,348.

In the Northern Illinois Conference, the Repair the Harm to Children campaign was created by the Conference Committee on Finance and Administration and the Board of Trustees, in collaboration with Bishop Dan Schwerin, to address the needs of survivors in three ways: listening to and providing healing for survivors, contributing our fair share to the survivor fund, and strengthening safeguards to prevent harm in the future.



Pledges and donations were requested from churches and individuals from Sept. 2023 through Dec. 31, 2025, to support restorative healing for survivors.

We are grateful that 108 churches and 212 individuals participated in this endeavor. This giving is above and beyond apportionment and mission link contributions. Because of the generosity of these churches and individuals, apportionment funds were not used to pay our portion to the Boy Scouts of America.

- | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Albany | • Chicago: Renewed Hope | • Evanston: First | • Joliet: Grace | • Oak Park: Euclid Avenue | • Rockford: Grace |
| • Algonquin: Christ | • Chicago: Resurrection | • Evergreen Park: First | • Joliet: Hope | • Orangeville | • Rockton |
| • Alsip: Christ | • Chicago: South Lawn | • Forrester: First | • Joliet: Trinity | • Oregon | • Roscoe |
| • Antioch | • Chicago: South Shore | • Freeport: Faith | • LaGrange: First | • Orland Park: Faith | • Schaumburg: Our Saviour's |
| • Arlington Heights: Church of the Incarnation | • Chicago: St. Mark | • Freeport: Harmony | • Lake Bluff: Grace | • Oswego: Good Shepherd | • Shannon: Bethel |
| • Arlington Heights: First | • Chicago: Temple | • Galena | • Lansing: First | • Oswego: Wellspring | • Sycamore |
| • Aurora: Bethany | • Chicago: West Ridge | • Geneva | • Leaf River | • Ottawa: Epworth | • Triumph |
| • Aurora: Fox Valley | • Coleta | • Glen Ellyn: First | • Libertyville | • Ottawa: First | • Villa Park: Calvary (Merged) |
| • Aurora: Wesley | • Crystal Lake: First | • Glencoe: North Shore | • Lombard: First | • Palos | • Waterman |
| • Barrington | • Des Plaines: First | • Glenview: Glenview | • Milledgeville | • Park Forest: | • Wauconda: |
| • Belvidere: First | • Dixon: First | • Grayslake: | • Morrison | Grace United Protestant | Federated Church |
| • Bensenville: First | • Downers Grove: First | • Hampshire: First | • Mount Morris: Disciples | • Park Ridge: First | • West Chicago: First |
| • Bolingbrook: Friendship | • Durand | • Harvard: First | • Mount Prospect: Trinity | • Pecatonica | • West Dundee: First |
| • Brookfield: Compassion | • Earlville | • Hebron | • Naperville: Community | • Poplar Grove | • Wheaton: Gary |
| • Buffalo Grove: Kingswood | • Elgin: First | • Hinckley: First | • Naperville: Grace | • Reynolds | • Wilmette: Trinity |
| • Carol Stream: St. Andrew | • Elgin: Journey of Hope | • Hinsdale | • Naperville: Wheatland Salem | • River Forest | • Winthrop Harbor: |
| • Cary | • Elmhurst: Christ | • Homewood: | • New Lenox | • Rockford: Beth Eden | North Prairie |
| • Chicago: Berry Memorial (Clsd.) | • Elmhurst: First | • St. Andrew (Clsd.) | • Northbrook: Northbrook | • Rockford: Brooke Road | • Woodridge |
| | • Esmond | | • Oak Lawn: First | • Rockford: Court Street | • Zion: Memorial |

Emergency Solidarity Fund: A Sign of Hope in Challenging Times

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

Last September, Bishop Dan Schwerin met with Hispanic/Latinx pastors to listen to their stories and better understand how their congregations are navigating these challenging days. What he learned was both powerful and heartbreaking.

Parents spoke of being afraid to send their children to school. Some individuals are afraid to leave their home to work and, as a result, cannot pay their rent or other basic bills. For the same reason, some families are not going to worship services. Most painfully, the bishop learned that two members of our congregations have been detained.

Families who have lived and worked among us for years now find themselves unable to meet their most basic needs. These are not distant stories; they are the realities of our siblings in Christ.

Moved by these conversations, Bishop Schwerin felt compelled to establish an Emergency Solidarity Fund, which received strong support from our Conference Committee on Finance and Administration and Advocacy Partners Subcommittee.



Scripture reminds us to stand with the marginalized, to bear one another's burdens, and to embody God's justice and compassion. This was an opportunity to live out that calling in tangible and faithful ways. More than financial assistance, this appeal was a visible expression of solidarity. It declared that our immigrant siblings in Christ are not alone. Together, we are choosing to be a community of hope, courage, and resilience.

We are deeply grateful for the generous response of the Northern Illinois Conference. We distributed \$60,000. These gifts enabled us to distribute three rounds of support directly and compassionately to the 20 Hispanic/Latinx churches and ministries within our conference, while also extending support to other communities experiencing similar hardship. Assistance focused on immediate and critical needs, including rent, bill payment, food, transportation, legal fees, and essential support for families in crisis.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the churches, clergy, and laity across the conference who have responded with compassion and generosity. Your faithful giving was more than a financial contribution; it was a testimony of love, unity, and shared commitment to our Hispanic/Latinx communities. Thank you for standing alongside our immigrant siblings and for embodying the gospel in such a tangible and transformative way. This is the church at its best: listening, responding, and standing together.

In a time marked by uncertainty and fear, we continue to practice hope, not as an abstract idea, but as faithful action rooted in love.

Northern Illinois Churches:

Lake North

% paid in 2025

Arlington Heights: Incarnation +	100%
Arlington Heights: First	100%
Buffalo Grove: Kingswood *	100%
Chicago: Adalberto Memorial	0%
Chicago: African Community	44%
Chicago: Bethany/Jesus, El Buen Pastor	0%
Chicago: Broadway	100%
Chicago: Church of 3 Crosses	17%
Chicago: Edison Park	53%
Chicago: El Redentor/Redeemer of Calvary	36%
Chicago: Emanuel +	71%
Chicago: First Vietnamese	0%
Chicago: Grace of Logan Square +	100%
Chicago: Granville Avenue	0%
Chicago: Humboldt Park	100%
Chicago: Indo Pak	100%
Chicago: Olivet	0%
Chicago: Parish of the Holy Covenant +	100%
Chicago: Ravenswood Fellowship	16%
Chicago: Renewed Hope +	100%
Chicago: St. Matthew	108%
Chicago: United Church of Rogers Park +	100%
Chicago: Urban Village	25%
Chicago: West Ridge	24%
Des Plaines: First *	100%
Des Plaines: Neuvo Amanecer	100%
Evanston: Emmanuel	100%
Evanston: First *	100%
Evanston: Hemenway	25%
Evanston: Sherman	100%
Franklin Park: First	43%
Glencoe: North Shore	93%
Glenview +	100%
Grayslake: United Protestant	5%
Lake Bluff: Grace +	83%
Libertyville	100%
Maywood: Neighborhood	100%
Melrose Park: Cosmopolitan +	104%
Mount Prospect: Sam Mool Korean	100%
Mount Prospect: Trinity	59%
Mundelein: Vision Church	0%
Northbrook: North Northfield +	41%
Northbrook: Northbrook	100%
Oak Park: Euclid Avenue	101%
Oak Park: First	100%
Oak Park: St. John's	100%
Palatine: First	53%
Park Ridge: First	100%
Prospect Heights: Central Galilee +	92%
River Forest	100%
Skokie: Central	44%
Skokie: Jesus Loves Korean	100%
Waukegan: First *	100%
Waukegan: New Hope	32%
Wheeling: First Korean +	83%
Wilmette: Trinity	100%
Winthrop Harbor: North Prairie	66%
Zion: Memorial +	100%

Lake South

% paid in 2025

Blue Island: La Gracia de Dios NFC	0%
Brookfield Compassion *	100%
Chicago: Amor de Dios	0%
Chicago: Chicago Lawn	108%
Chicago: Clair Christian	100%
Chicago: East Side	0%
Chicago: House of Praise	100%
Chicago: First (Temple)	100%
Chicago: Gorham	107%
Chicago: Greenstone	67%
Chicago: Hartzell Memorial	67%
Chicago: Hyde Park Korean	100%
Chicago: Ingleside Whitfield	100%
Chicago: Lincoln +	191%
Chicago: Maple Park	100%
Chicago: Morgan Park	58%
Chicago: Resurrection	100%
Chicago: South Shore	100%
Chicago: Southlawn	100%
Chicago: St. Mark +	100%
Chicago: Trinity	7%
Chicago: Union Avenue	100%
Chicago: United Church of Hyde Park +	6%
Chicago: Wesley	100%
Crete +	40%
Dolton: Faith	32%
Downers Grove: Faith +	61%
Downers Grove: First *	100%
Evergreen Park: First	105%
Flossmoor: South Suburban Korean	17%
Green Garden	100%
Harvey: Transformation Community	33%
Hazel Crest: Community +	42%
Hinsdale	108%
LaGrange: First	100%
Lansing: First	52%
Lemont	103%
Lockport: First	100%
Manhattan +	100%
New Lenox	100%
Oak Lawn: First	100%
Olympia Fields +	54%
Orland Park: Faith	100%
Orland Park: First Korean	100%
Palos	100%
Park Forest: Grace United Protestant	69%
Peotone	55%
Riverside: Woodside	100%
Tinley Park	100%
Wilmington +	102%
Wilton Center Federated Church	41%

Churches with a + sign increased their percentage from the year before and a * denotes they are a Mission Link Church

For more information visit: umcnic.org/apportionments and umcnic.org/missionlinks.



Connected in Generosity



Prairie Central % paid in 2025

Addison: Good Samaritan +	12%
Algonquin: Christ	100%
Antioch *	100%
Aurora: Bethany of Fox Valley	44%
Aurora: Nueva Vida	0%
Aurora: Wesley	5%
Barrington: Barrington +	63%
Barrington: Salem	75%
Batavia	100%
Bensenville: First	100%
Bolingbrook: Crossroads of Faith	91%
Bolingbrook: Friendship	100%
Carol Stream: St. Andrew *	100%
Cary *	100%
Crystal Lake: First	83%
Elgin: Cornerstone	0%
Elgin: First	51%
Elgin: Journey of Hope	101%
Elk Grove: Prince of Peace	59%
Elmhurst: Christ	92%
Elmhurst: First	100%
Fox River Grove: Community	0%
Geneva	87%
Glen Ellyn: First +	57%
Hebron *	100%
Ingleside	100%
Itasca: The Center	0%
Joliet: Cristo Es El Camino NFC	0%
Joliet: Grace	100%
Joliet: Hope *	100%
Joliet: Ingalls Park	53%
Joliet: Trinity (Closed)	0%
Lake Villa	100%
Lombard: Faith	62%
Lombard: First	100%
McHenry: First	28%
McHenry: Mount Hope	100%
Naperville: Community *	100%
Naperville: Grace	92%
Naperville: Hope Indian	0%
Naperville: Wesley	100%
Naperville: Wheatland Salem	0%
Naperville: Woori +	100%
Oswego: Good Shepherd &	100%
Oswego: Wellspring	100%
Plainfield: First +	46%
Roselle	100%
Schaumburg: Our Redeemer's	46%
Schaumburg: Our Saviour's	100%
Schaumburg: Salem Korean	0%
South Elgin: Community	0%
St. Charles: Baker	66%
Wauconda: Federated Church	100%
West Chicago: First	33%
West Dundee: First	100%
Wheaton: Gary	85%
Winfield: South Asian	0%
Woodridge	75%
Woodstock: First	27%

Prairie North % paid in 2025

Alden	93%
Apple River	100%
Argo Fay	0%
Belvidere: First	100%
Belvidere: Iglesia Esperanze y Vida +	83%
Blaine	100%
Burlington	108%
Burritt	0%
Capron	51%
Cedarville	100%
Chadwick: Hope *	100%
Cherry Valley	17%
Dakota Rock Grove	100%
Davis Junction	20%
Davis: Calvary	100%
Durand	68%
Elizabeth	100%
Forreston	100%
Freeport: Faith	25%
Freeport: First	28%
Freeport: Harmony	100%
Galena	100%
Genoa: Faith	1%
German Valley +*	100%
Hampshire: First	17%
Hampshire: Zion	100%
Hanover *	102%
Harvard: First	38%
Herbert: Davis +	24%
Hickory Grove +	168%
Hunter	100%
Kingston	101%
Kirkland: First	67%
Lanark	100%
Leaf River	100%
Lena	27%
Machesney Park: Evans	100%
Machesney Park: Harlem	92%
Marengo *	100%
Mount Carroll + *	111%
New Milford	20%
Orangeville	100%
Pearl City: First	72%
Pecatonica	100%
Poplar Grove	100%
Freeport: Red Oak	52%
Rockford: Aldersgate	100%
Rockford: Beth Eden *	100%
Rockford: Brooke Road	102%
Rockford: Centennial Multicultural	100%
Rockford: Christ the Carpenter	10%
Rockford: Christ	83%
Rockford: Court Street +	76%
Rockford: Grace	100%
Rockford: Victory NFC	0%
Rockton	89%
Roscoe	80%
Savanna: First	100%
Scales Mound +	48%
Shannon: Bethel	100%
Shirland	100%
Stockton: Wesley	100%
Thomson	100%
Warren +	100%
Winnebago	0%

Prairie South % paid in 2025

Albany	14%
Ashton +	100%
Brookville	100%
Chana *	100%
Channahon +	16%
Coleta	100%
Creston +	100%
DeKalb: First	103%
Dixon: First +	7%
Dixon: Grace	42%
Earlville *	100%
East Jordan	100%
Erie +	13%
Esmond	0%
Harmon *	100%
Hinckley: First +	100%
Kaneville +	100%
La Moille: Community	89%
La Salle: Grace +	16%
Leland	100%
Leon	100%
Malta +	102%
Maple Park: Grace	100%
Marseilles	59%
Mendota: First +	109%
Mendota: Zion	25%
Millbrook *	100%
Milledgeville +*	109%
Millington +	44%
Minooka	48%
Morris: First +	60%
Morrison *	100%
Mount Morris: Disciples	92%
Norway	100%
Oregon	100%
Lighthouse	100%
Ottawa: Epworth	38%
Ottawa: Evangelical	65%
Ottawa: First +	100%
Paw Paw +	100%
Plattville	71%
Polo: Faith	100%
Princeton: First	100%
Prophetstown	9%
Red Oak (Bureau)	44%
Reynolds *	100%
Rochelle +	100%
Rock Falls	35%
Sandwich: United *	100%
Seneca: First	92%
Serena *	100%
Sheridan	100%
Sterling: First	100%
Sterling: Wesley	101%
Steward	108%
Sugar Grove	48%
Sycamore +	100%
Tampico	100%
Triumph +*	141%
Walnut	0%
Waterman	100%
Wyanet	100%
Yorkville: Trinity	1%

United Voices for Children Commits to Children's and Youth Mental Health

by Rev. Abby Holcombe, UVC board President

And Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me." (Matt. 19:14)

At United Voices for Children, we firmly believe that advocating and caring for children is part of God's work in the world. UVC is the main artery for action and advocacy for children and youth in the Northern Illinois Conference. We represent a coalition of three Methodist-founded child-serving agencies: MYSI, Kids Above All, and Rosecrance. All three of these agencies continue to offer a variety of programs, services, and treatments addressing poverty, violence, and injustice, including the ongoing suffering of those living with addictions.

Board Vice President Deaconess Catherine Inerra, board members (both clergy and laity) across the NIC, and I, as board president, see ourselves as a working board. Together with our organization partners, we host events that raise awareness and empower people to embrace their hearts for kids and become advocates.

This year, we are welcoming new board members: Rev. Jacob Tipantasig-Wolverton, Nick Werth, and Tae Yoon Kim. Read more about our board and partner organizations at unitedvoicesforchildren.org/people/.

UVC is continuing its focus on the mental health and well-being of children and youth.

We are partnering with Children's Advocates for Change, a non-profit organization that advocates for and promotes policies which support the en-



Photo courtesy of UVC
The UVC Board at their February board meeting.



tire well-being of children and youth in Illinois. Policy plays a pivotal role in these concerns. May we be emboldened by the Holy Spirit, our Advocate, to also be an advocate for children in every community.

At UVC, we believe every person has a heart for kids. As the Northern Illinois Conference practices hope together this year, every action—small or big—is one for advocacy.

To be part of what God is doing through UVC, here are a few things you can do:

- Give. Encourage your church to participate in the Fifth Sunday Appeal.
- Be empowered. Join us for our webinar on March 30 and stop by our table at Annual Conference in June.
- Stay connected. Subscribe to our email list, like our page on Instagram and Facebook, and learn more at unitedvoicesforchildren.org.

Your giving to Mission Links supports UVC and it's three child-serving agencies.



Support the 5th Sunday Appeal for UVC on Sunday, March 30

Learn more at: umcnic.org/calendar/united-voices-for-children-5th-sunday-appeal

Uncover Our History Through Illinois Pilgrimage in June

by Tim Alexander, NIC CCORR Co-Chair

The Commissions on Religion and Race of both the Northern Illinois and the Illinois Great Rivers Conferences are proud to collaborate on a Pilgrimage Journey Through the Heart of Illinois, June 25-28. Participants will be guided through historical sites that reflect the complex history of racism and resilience within the state.

The journey begins on June 25 with an optional pre-tour of Chicago. Attendees will see various historical landmarks within the city, setting the stage for the days to follow.

The main expedition officially kicks off the following day. Starting in at North Central College in Naperville, the tour will head west toward Ottawa and stop at a Lincoln-Douglas debate site there. Then it will turn south to the El Paso Voting Rights Museum, eventually arriving in Springfield for dinner and an overnight stay.

On June 27, the pilgrimage will focus on the state capital's deep ties to Abraham Lincoln. Unlike standard tours, this visit will specifically examine Lincoln's policies and their impact on Black and Indigenous people. The tour will continue to the Collinsville area for the evening.

The final day, June 28, will be a time for both reflection and discovery.

- Morning: The group will participate in a worship service in East St. Louis, followed by a community lunch.
- Afternoon: Pilgrims will visit to the Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site to explore the indigenous history of the region.
- Evening: The journey will conclude with a return trip to the Naperville area.

"This pilgrimage is an invitation to look honestly at our past so we can better navigate our future together," organizers say.

Registration & Costs

Watch the Northern Illinois eNews and check umcnic.org/calendar/nic-corr-illinois-pilgrimage for registration and updated information.

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports CCORR's initiatives.



Volunteers in Mission Rehab a Bahamian Camp

by Bill and Katherine Howell, VIM Volunteers

A mission camp on Eleuthera in the Bahamas is in better shape thanks to United Methodist Volunteers in Mission from Northern Illinois and Iowa.

A team of volunteers from seven congregations headed on Jan. 18 for Camp Symonette near James Cistern on Eleuthera, a long, narrow, apostrophe-shaped Bahamian island that is 112 miles long and 2 miles wide at its broadest point. The Caribbean Sea is on the west and the Atlantic Ocean on the east.

Camp Symonette is supported by six Methodist churches throughout Eleuthera and serves as the hurricane emergency shelter. The COVID pandemic and the death of a pastor left the camp in neglect. The team was asked to revitalize this once very functional camp for mission teams, youth training, and educational retreats.

Our intended mission schedule included making renovations and repairs as well as leading a vacation Bible school, a canning class, and an oral hygiene class with take-home supplies. We were not able to accomplish everything scheduled, but what activities we could perform were well attended and greatly appreciated—which brought us much joy.

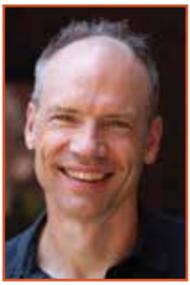
The first tasks we had to tackle were cleaning and repair. The Methodist leaders hoped to raise awareness of the camp and encourage churches to support it so that it could become a renewed and functional part of the Methodist ministry. The residents are hardworking people and could not take much time off to visit the campsite while we worked.

The continued growth in spirituality and team spirit brought a spirit of success and cohesiveness. Many of us have been together for other missions and the acceptance and attention to help develop new team members was inspiring; a holy moment to remember.

The attitude of the islanders was hopeful, though their hardships were very apparent. Because they live on an island, residents pay double for goods due to shipping and taxes. We observed that many functional everyday items are not available on Eleuthera and must be brought in from other islands and countries. We have compiled an extended list of needed items that could be brought in and would make the camp more functional for staff and upcoming teams. We pray that this article will encourage others to serve, work, and play at Camp Symonette in the Bahamas.



Photo courtesy of Katherine Howell
One of the projects at the camp was to paint murals to enhance the space.



Reimagining Church Our 'Why' Stories

by Rev. Christian Coon, NIC Director of Congregational Development

Having a sleepover with a friend is one of life's first adventures as you both try to stay up as late as you can and maybe do things you wouldn't normally do in your own home.

When I was 8 years old, I spent the night with my friend Brett. But the experience

doesn't stay in my memory because of the sleeping-over. It was the next morning that I did something out of the ordinary.

Brett and his family were good Baptists and so part of the sleepover meant that I would go to church and Sunday school with them. It was different than my United Methodist Sunday school. One of the biggest differences is what the teacher said at the end of the class: "If there is anyone here who would like to invite Jesus into their heart today, you can come up and talk to me after class."

It's never too early to offer an altar call in a Baptist church and, for whatever reason, something compelled me to go up to that teacher after class. "I would like to invite Jesus into my heart." I have no memory of the look on the teacher's face. Did this happen often? But I do remember her taking me outside the class and as we sat down on the green carpeted steps, she led me in a prayer.

As I grew up, I pooh-poohed that experience as not that meaningful. But the fact that it has stayed with me means something, I think, so I'm claiming it as my first come-to-Jesus moment.

The more time I spend in my position, the more I learn about all kinds of resources to offer or suggest to churches, but I also find myself wanting to keep asking leaders—whether they're clergy or lay—what is your Jesus story? Why are you a part of a church in the first place? Why did you say yes to Jesus?

These are really big questions. Still, I would love to start collecting responses as a way for us as a conference to be reminded of why we are a part of the church in the first place.

When it comes to evangelism and outreach, I confess that I spend time sharing a lot of "how" resources: how you can be in your community, how you should have a welcoming space, etc. But before a church gets into the "how," I think it's important to first answer the why and who questions. Why am I inviting someone in the first place?

Once we spend time with the "why" question, a church can then ask, "Who specifically is God calling us to connect with?" After spending time with those questions, then we can start tackling the "how."

1 Peter 3:15 encourages us, "Honor Christ and let him be the Lord of your life. Always be ready to give an answer when someone asks you about your hope" (CEV). What is your Jesus story? It might be a story like mine, something that has stuck with you over the years. It might be something that happened yesterday.

I'd love to collect them so we can remind each other of why we are connected as United Methodists. Please share your story at niumc-reg.brtaapp.com/SharingOurWhyStories.

This is not to save the church. It's because sometime in our life, we had a come-to-Jesus moment and our lives have never been the same. And whether you're 8 or 88, that story is the best resource for church renewal we have.

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports Congregational Development.



What is your Jesus story?



See the full calendar at umcnic.org/calendar.

April

15 Springfield Advocacy Day Trip

about 5:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.

- \$25 - Round-trip transportation, morning snack and lunch.
- \$15 - Morning snack and lunch (you provide transportation)



The CCORR Legislative Action Team is leading the third annual trip to Springfield. They will meet with state legislators to address racial justice concerns important to United Methodists, particularly in environmental justice, immigration, and education. For further details and registration visit umcnic.org/calendar/springfield-advocacy-day-2026.

18 Who Is My Neighbor? NIC Youth Interfaith Bus Trip

Multiple locations across Northern Illinois to visit 4 houses of worship

Sponsored by the NIC Council on Young People's Ministry for middle school and high school youth. For further details visit umcnic.org/calendar/NIC-youth-interfaith-bus-trip.

Leading the Laity

Let Us Hope Fully



by Eugene Williams, Conference Co-Lay Leader

Siblings in Christ, greetings on behalf of the laity of the Northern Illinois Conference. As we celebrate the many blessings and the unmerited grace, mercy, and favor that

we continue to receive, let us move forward in 2026 by practicing a year of hope.

Though we may witness disappointments, abuse, and cruelty again and again in a community near us, we must be resolute in our hope and faith. We must continue to hope and do so fully. Not hopefully, hope-fully! Now is not the time for part-time or sometime hope. We must do so full-time by endeavoring to hope fully.

When we hope fully, we will not allow doubt, worry, or concern overshadow the blessings that our Lord and Savior promised us. As we celebrate this season of Lent, let us hope fully on the mighty works of Christ at Calvary and in the resurrection. Hope fully upon the promise in Hebrews 13:5, where we are assured that God's presence, love, and support will always be with us. He promised never to leave or forsake us. We serve a mighty God who has proven his faithfulness time and again. Let us likewise have the courage and faith to hope fully on his word.

You are invited to join us for our Laity Convocation for a meaningful morning of learning, connection, and encouragement. The speakers include Bishop Dan Schwerin; Rev. Hope Chernich, NIC Rapid Response

team member; and multiple young people from across the conference. See more information below. Journey with us to move forward with hope, practicing a year of hope as we love boldly, serve joyfully, lead courageously—and hope fully. Have a blessed lenten season. Go with God and be well.



Sat., March 21

9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Gather in person at First UMC in Glen Ellyn or watch the live-stream at one of our satellite locations at Princeton: First UMC, Freeport: Faith UMC, or Orland Park: Faith For further details and registration visit umcnic.org/calendar/2026-laity-convocation.

Cost: \$15

Optional box lunch \$10 at Glen Ellyn Location

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports the Board of Laity.



This Life-Changing Journey Women Who Made History



by Rev. Danita R. Anderson, Assistant to the Bishop

The month of March is Women's History Month. It is a time to think and reflect on the women who have made an impact on our history down through the years. Many women have withstood a variety of challenges to reach the achievements that make them noteworthy. Everyday, simple tasks to courageous feats, women have been at the forefront of our history as a people, as a nation, and as a church. From the women of our Bible to the women who care for children and elderly patients, teach in schools, serve meals, sit at boardroom tables and head corporations. Women's History Month is certainly not a long enough period of time, but in most aspects of society, not enough space to highlight just a few of our achievements.

Also, this year marks the 70th anniversary of the ordination of women in the (United) Methodist Church. During the days of Wesley, there were women who preached alongside John Wesley and Harry Hosier. Women led many of the house churches that were formed during the Methodist Movement in



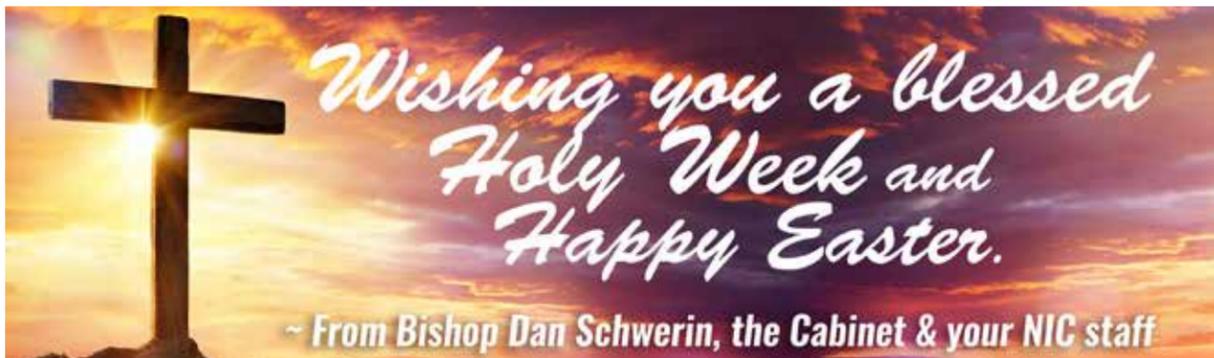
America. Our Methodist history books are chock full of the achievements of Jarena Lee, Sojourner Truth, Mai Gray and

Marjorie Matthews and so many more.

Along my journey, there has been the influence of women who refused to be silenced and refused to give up. I remember when I first met Barbara McEwing, the first Black woman ordained elder in Northern Illinois. Or the many encounters, conversations and visits with Tallulah Fisher Williams, the first Black woman to

serve as a district superintendent in Northern Illinois. Both of whom now rest in paradise, but without either I would not be serving today.

Thanks be to God for all of those women who continue to walk with me, talk with me, pray for me, ride with me and sometimes carry me. Thanks to those who opened doors that I have been able to walk through and those who broke glass ceilings so that I could look up to the sky and be reminded of a limitless/infinite God! Why not spend the month of March telling a woman who influenced your life "thank you" for making history, even if their names are not "up in lights" or in the top news stories. Their presence influences people they may never know! They are a part of a history that cannot be silenced or ignored.



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, 2026 (unless otherwise noted):

Bill Hollowell (District Superintendent Supply) to Chana and Polo: Faith (Prairie South). Bill follows Joshua Brown, who has received a new appointment in the Arkansas Annual Conference. Effective Jan. 1.

Zaki L. Zaki (Full Elder) to Dixon: First (Interim, Prairie South) from Naperville: Wheatland Salem (Prairie Central). Zaki follows Timothy Mitchell, who is retiring. Effective Jan. 1.

Norval I. Brown (Full Elder) to retirement. Norval was ordained a probationary elder in 1977 and ordained as a full member in 1981. During his ministry, Norval served Chicago: St. Mark; Chicago: West Englewood; Maywood: Neighborhood; Chicago: Southlawn; Chicago: Gammon Memorial; Aurora: Fourth Street; Homewood: St. Andrew; Southern District Campus Ministry; Carol Stream: St. Andrew (Interim); Park Forest: Grace United Protestant; Thornton; Deerfield: Christ; Cary; Cary/Fox River Grove: Community.

Eun-Hye Choi (Full Elder) to retirement. Eun-Hye was commissioned a probationary elder in 1998 and ordained as a full member in 2000. During her ministry, Eun-Hye served Palatine: First (Associate); West Dundee: First; Chicago: Morgan Park; Plainfield; and Glenview.

Sandra E. Harbour (Full Elder) to retirement. Sandra was ordained a probationary elder in 1996 and ordained a full elder in 1988. During her ministry, Sandra served Morris: First (Associate); Prophetstown; Gulfside Regional Hospice (Chaplain); and Moffitt Cancer Center (Tampa, Fla.). Effective Feb. 1.

Donna Hoffman (retired Licensed Local Pastor) returning to retirement from Elizabeth and Hanover UMCs.

Adrienne Ann Iseman (Full Deacon) to retirement. Adrienne was consecrated as a Diaconal Minister in 1989, was certified in

Christian Education in 1991, and ordained a Full-Member Deacon in 1998. During her ministry, Adrienne Ann served Naperville: Grace; Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary; Glen Ellyn: First; Healing Flow Yoga & Retreat Ministries, Naperville. Effective: March 1.

Barbara Javore (Full Deacon) to Retirement. Barbara was commissioned as a provisional deacon in 1999 and became a Full-Member Deacon in 2004. During her ministry, Barbara served Glencoe: North Shore (Director of Christian Education).

Brian LeBaron (Retired Associate Member), returning to retirement from Freeport: Harmony (interim).

Emma Lozano (Licensed Local Pastor) to retirement. During her ministry, Emma served Chicago: Lincoln, and Chicago: Adalberto Memorial.

Barbara J. Morgan (Full Elder) to retirement. Barbara was commissioned a full-member elder in 2005 (Recognition of Orders from American Baptist Churches) and became a full-member elder in 2008. During her ministry, Barbara served Chicago: St. Mark; Chicago: New Gresham; Evanston: Sherman; Waukegan: First.

Grace Oh (Full Elder) to retirement. Grace was commissioned a provisional elder in 2014 and ordained a full-member elder in 2016. During her ministry, Grace served Ottawa: Evangelical; Chicago: Englewood-Rust; Thornton; Hinsdale.

Irene Taylor (Retired Elder) returning to retirement from Ingleside: Joyful Spirit.

Richard C. Wisdom (Full Elder) to retirement. Richard was commissioned a provisional elder in 2000 and ordained a full member in 2002. During his ministry, Richard served Kingston: Herbert; Rockford: Christ (Associate and Senior Pastor); DeKalb District Superintendent; Aurora District Superintendent; and Plainfield: First.

George Woosnam (Retired Elder) returning to retirement from Lanark UMC.

Mary Zajac (Retired Elder) returning to retirement from Wheaton: Gary (interim).

Rachel Grover (District Superintendent Supply) to Germany Valley (1/4, Prairie North) while continuing to serve Davis: Calvary (1/4, Prairie North). Effective February 1, 2026.

Mark Harkness (Full Elder) to Dixon: First (Prairie South) from Cherry Valley (3/4, Prairie North) and New Milford (1/4, Prairie North). Mark follows Zaki Zaki.

Eric Blachford (Full Elder) to Plainfield (Prairie Central) from Naperville, Grace, Associate Pastor (Prairie Central). Eric follows Dick Wisdom, who is retiring.

Kurt Alan Gamlin (Full Elder) to retirement. Kurt was ordained a probationary elder in 1979 and ordained a full elder in 1982. During his ministry, Kurt served Reynolds, Hinsdale (Associate), Antioch, Wheaton: Aldersgate, Woodstock: First; and McHenry: First.

Charles Yoon (Full Elder) to Cary (Prairie Central) from Flossmoor: South Suburban (Lake South). Charles follows Norval Brown, who is retiring.

Chan Ik Choi (Full Elder) to voluntary leave of absence (family leave) from Carol Stream: St. Andrew (Prairie Central)

Kelli Knight (Full Elder) to Central UMC, Albuquerque, New Mexico, NMAC under par. 346.1e., Senior Pastor.

Steve Good (Full Elder) to retirement from Oswego: Good Shepherd (Prairie Central). Effective Sept. 30. Steve was ordained probationary elder in 1987 and ordained a full elder in 1989. During his ministry, Steve served at Geneva as associate; Elgin: First as associate; Sugar Grove; Channahon; and Oswego: Good Shepherd.

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