



▲ Anna Mashirima waters her vegetable garden near her home in Moheto, Kenya, using water from a well system installed by First United Methodist Church in Moheto. Having access to the well water allows her fruit trees and vegetables to thrive, even during drought conditions. Photo by Gad Maiga, UM News.

◀ Josephine Kwamboka, 12, fetches water from a new tap. Prior to the installation of the well, children traveled great distances each day to find water in streams and ponds. Waterborne illnesses have decreased significantly since the well was drilled. Photo by Gad Maiga, UM News.

Evanston church helps provides clean, safe water in Kenya

By Gad Maiga*

A borehole project in rural Kenya is transforming lives, and United Methodists are playing a significant role.

For years, residents in Migori County were forced to gather contaminated water from a dying stream littered with paper, plastic and heaps of garbage. Spending up to one-third of their day collecting water in the scorching heat, women and children were vulnerable to water-borne illnesses and predator attack.

In December 2019, the 280-member First United Methodist Church in Moheto, Kenya, devised a plan to provide safe, clean water for the community.

The Moheto congregation established a borehole project in Migori County with funding help from the Rev. Grace Imathiu, senior pastor of First United Methodist Church of Evanston, Illinois, and church members Drs. Christine and Mike McGuire. Today, some 2,000 community members — including 500 pupils at Moheto Primary School — benefit.

Water is pumped by a generator from a borehole that is 230 meters deep. A water-collection point with a 2,642-gallon (10,000-liter) tank was installed at the church compound. The tank is mounted on a raised stand to increase the rate at which piped water flows to homes in the community. Water sourced from the borehole is used for domestic, irrigation and livestock purposes.

The new borehole project is just one example of United Methodist support for water and sanitation projects worldwide.

The church established a community water point within the compound to serve residents who lack piped water in their homes. With the COVID-19 pandemic, water has played a key role in handwashing during church services. A handwashing facility was constructed at the primary school.

“The water project not only reflects the heart of God directly because he continuously shows his love for us in meeting our physical needs, but it also gives the church an avenue to demonstrate the love of God in the gospel,” said beneficiary Anna Mashirima, whose family uses piped water from the church.

“Jesus frequently utilized bodily needs ministry to pave the (way) for spiritual needs ministry,” said Francisca Elnora, a church

member. “His ability to heal not only saved people’s lives but also helped create his identity as the divinely appointed Son of God.”

Beneficiary Joys Boke said people are extremely happy and at peace.

“They no longer have to get up early in the morning to fetch water. During the dry season, the nearby stream kept drying up. We had to fetch low-quality water that gave our children diarrhea and impacted school attendance.”

Student Josephine Kwamboka says the borehole has changed her life.

“It was very difficult for me and my sisters to get water from the stream every morning at six o’clock,” said the 12-year-old. “I am no longer late for school, and I have enough time now to study.”

Church member Samwel Chacha noted that the piped water from the borehole has improved community sanitation and hygiene. “Pit latrines are cleaned with water in leak tins and soap,” Chacha said.

“The church has helped the Moheto community to navigate through intense dry spells,” he said, “while performing preventative maintenance and conducting quality repairs when needed.”

Some community members did not realize that contaminated water contributed to illness.

“After the construction of the borehole and tap-water installation,” said Eustna Robi, “sicknesses like diarrhea, typhoid and dysentery that were posing serious medical threats are no more. Water is life, and getting clean, pure drinking water at your doorstep is a very big blessing.”

The Rev. Kennedy Mwita, senior pastor at First United Methodist Church in Moheto, noted that water infections are a significant health concern in rural Kenya, and people have been left unprotected against occasional outbreaks of cholera and parasitic worms.

“The rate of exposure is quite high,” Mwita said, “since the water at the streams is heavily contaminated, and the containers for collecting water are, most of the time, found, secondhand objects used previously for oil, fertilizer or wastes.”

continue on page 3, see From the Cover

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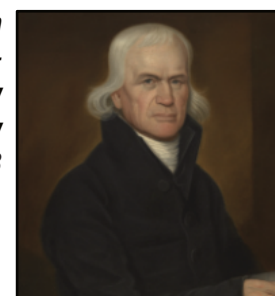
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FROM THE BISHOP: Questions about the future of The United Methodist Church

Previous Questions addressed:

Question 1: "Is the Church a Movement or an Institution?"

Question 2: "Is the Church a Covenant Community or a Voluntary Association?"

Question 3: "Is our mission focus Geographical or Generational?"

Question 4: "Is our emphasis on Clergy or Lay Ministry?"

Question 5: "Do we have a Private Faith or a Public Witness?"

Question 6: "Do we want a large Church or a Small Church?"

Question 7: Can you imagine?

Through this column over several months, I want to discuss some crucial bedrock issues that will determine the future of our church at every level. In each issue of The Reporter the last several months, I have been presenting key questions that each of us must understand to help us move forward together in ministry. Each question has more history than I can tell and more nuances than I can explore. I simply want to engage you in understanding the importance of these questions and let you make your own decisions as a follower of Jesus Christ.

Let me be clear, the questions I propose require more than a mental choice. You will need to answer each question with your daily decisions as a follower of Jesus Christ. They are your choices to make considering what you understand about Jesus and his Church. How you live out your choices will determine the future of The United Methodist Church.

What kind of church do you want? What kind of church do you need? Do you even need a church for your spiritual growth? As you look at the future of your local church and The United Methodist Church, how can you live to make the church strong? How you individually take responsibility for the church will determine its future.

I end this series of questions about the future of The United Methodist Church thinking about what Jesus had in mind when he said, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18) Here is the Church I imagine:

A Church that is a movement so strong it can build institutions to put God's love in action. A church that builds hospitals, children's homes, universities, places of worship, ministry centers, and institutions we cannot even imagine.

A Church that is a covenant community that is so compelling that people voluntarily commit their lives to one another. A church that doesn't judge people but invites them and loves them even when they are unlovable. A covenant community that centers around Jesus and his church above all else.

A Church that reaches each new generation with the good news of Jesus Christ and sees their neighborhood as a mission field. A church that honors God's work around the

world and connects local people across their differences.

A Church that baptizes and equips people to claim their ministry and serve others. A Church with pastors who guide congregations with vision and spiritual leadership. A church that serves as a basecamp where everyone shares what they have done for Jesus throughout the week.

A Church that has a public witness so focused on relief and justice for those in need that people ask, "What inner strength enables these people to love others so much?" A church that is truly for others and welcomes everyone to the throne of God's grace.

A Church that is large enough to encompass the love of God for the world and small enough to enable everyone to grow as a child of God. A church that follows Jesus who lived, suffered, and died so that we may all repent of our sins and glorify God.

In the baptismal vows of The United Methodist Church:

1. We renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of this world, and repent of our sin.
2. We accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.
3. We confess Jesus Christ as our Savior, put

our whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as our Lord, in union with the church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races.

4. We agree to remain faithful members of Christ's holy church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world.
5. We profess the Christian faith using the Apostle's Creed.

Of course, we can only do this by the grace of God. In affirming our faith, we rejoice in the faithfulness of our covenant God and say:

We give thanks for all that God has already given us.

As members of the body of Christ and in this congregation of The United Methodist Church, we will faithfully participate in the church's ministries by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

Now, that is the kind of Church I imagine! Sign me up!

"The Church exists by mission as a fire exists by burning. Where there is no mission, there is no Church; and where there is neither Church nor mission, there is no faith."

- Emil Brunner



Fall fill-the-truck collection drive for Haiti and disaster relief



The Midwest Mission Distribution Center works with the non-profit organization Food for the Poor to distribute disaster relief kits in Haiti.

The NIC Board of Global Ministries is organizing a fall collection drive from Nov. 29 - Dec. 7 to support recovery efforts from the 2021 Hurricanes and the devastating earthquake in Haiti.

Haiti: Relief items requested by non-profits:

Home

- Blankets - can be gently used
- Powdered milk with expiration date of 12 months or more

Hygiene Supplies

- Toilet Paper
- Baby Wipes
- Diapers - adult or child

Cleaning Kits

- Liquid Laundry Detergent - 32-64 oz.
- Liquid Household Clean - 16-40 oz.

- Liquid Dish Soap - 14-32 oz.
- Toothpaste - 2.5 oz or larger

Other MMDC kits will be accepted, but please no electric sewing machines or bikes are needed at this time.

Christmas Game/Toy Collection for non-profits serving children in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica and Haiti

- Jump ropes simple musical instruments (recorder, harmonica, percussion)
- Sports balls (soccer, basketball, soft ball, baseball), board games: Candyland, Connect4, Jenga, Trouble, or other simple games - no batteries required.
- Pumps to inflate sports balls.

Bring your items to the most convenient collection point at several designated churches around the Conference between Nov. 29 and Dec. 7, and MMDC will pick them up on a day to be announced between Dec. 9 and 15.

If you want to make a financial contribution, you can give to MMDC online or send a check to the Northern Illinois Conference with the Advance Number 50000150 in the memo section.

Please check the NIC website for future info and updates. Visit umcnic.org/2021missionchallenge.

NIC 2021-2022 Directory Available

Are you looking to replace your NIC directory with one that has the most recent info? A paperback copy of the 2021-2022 Directory of NIC churches, clergy, laity and committees is now available to purchase for \$7 on Amazon or available for free to download on the NIC website. Go to umcnic.org/directory for details.



From the Cover *(continued from page 1)*

Lives have been transformed, the pastor noted.

“Community members have been coming to fetch water from the water-collection point at our church because there is no other clean water point nearby,” he said. “The church has a maize farm. We use the water in the tanks to irrigate it.”

The borehole water is saving the church money while the main church building is being constructed. “We would have paid so much to those who supply water on the construction site,” Mwita said.

He invited United Methodists worldwide to join the congregation’s commitment to sustainability by giving generously to the borehole project.

“Our vision,” he said, “is to pipe water to different strategic points where community members can easily access water. By collaborating in the work of the church in the Moheto community — by assisting in the provision of clean water — you are investing in the kingdom of God.”

**Maiga is a communicator for the Kenya-Ethiopia Conference.*

Learn More

For more information on Moheto First United Methodist Church and its projects, email mohetofirstumc@gmail.com or visit fumcmoheto.org.



Lisa Smith joined the NIC staff as Administrative Assistant/Communications Specialist on Oct. 1.

media, and other communication projects.

Lisa is a creative professional with 15+ years of experience in design, branding, marketing and art direction. She has worked for nonprofit organizations and in the corporate world.

Lisa graduated from the University of Wisconsin – Stout with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design and a minor in Business

New Communications Specialist joins NIC staff

Please help us welcome Lisa Smith to the NIC Staff as the new Administrative Assistant/Communications Specialist as of Oct. 1, 2021. She will work closely with Rev. Arlene Christopherson, Dir. of Connectional Ministries and Anne Marie Gerhardt, Director of Communications. Lisa will be responsible for special publications, brochures, graphics, Annual Conference media support, web content, social

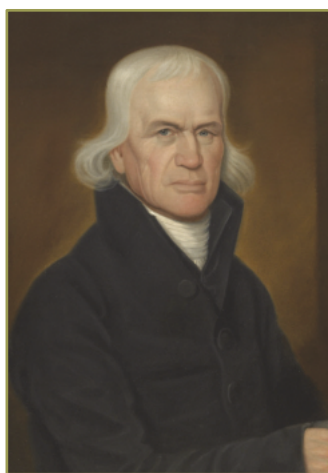
Administration.

“I really look forward to helping the conference with their communications,” said Lisa. “Helping nonprofits succeed through good design and communications is a passion of mine.”

Lisa is married to Rev. Matthew Smith, who is currently appointed to Chana UMC and Oregon: Lighthouse UMC in the Prairie South District. They have two kids, Lily (8) and Alex (3), who keep them very busy. She likes to read, watch a wide range of TV shows, take walks, do good, create art with her hands, and spend time with friends and family.

“We are excited to welcome Lisa Smith onto the conference staff as our Communications Specialist,” said Rev. Christopherson. “Communication is an important foundation for our work at every level in the church. Lisa brings skills, experience and a heart for the mission.”

To reach Lisa, contact her by email at lsmith@umcnic.org or phone at 312-346-9766 ext. 764.



A portrait of Francis Asbury painted by American painter John Paradise (1783-1833) is part of the National Portrait Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Bishop Asbury still shapes church today

By Heather Hahn*

With car keys in hand, the Rev. Bonnie McCubbin was about to leave her archiving work for the day — when a box in a stack of old church records caught her eye.

“I saw a label on one that said ‘Bishop Asbury,’ and I thought, ‘That’s not a closed church.’”

The United Methodist historian put away her keys, opened the box and began carefully removing the papers from inside.

What she uncovered on Sept. 29 was lost treasure — documents that shed light on a pioneering bishop who played a key role in shaping what is now The United Methodist Church.

The find also comes at an auspicious time. This fall, both The Methodist Church of Britain and The United Methodist Church are celebrating the 250th anniversary of Asbury’s crossing of the Atlantic from England to America.

Near the top of the box was an official copy of Asbury’s last will and testament from 1813. He bequeathed most of what little money he had to the Book Concern, the predecessor of today’s United Methodist Publishing House.

The contents also included a letter dated 1800 from Asbury’s mother, Eliza — one of the few missives in her own hand that still survives. She wrote from England to a son whom she would not see again in this life. Alongside these papers were ordination certificates signed by the bishop himself.

McCubbin, the Baltimore-Washington Conference’s director of museums and pilgrimage as well as pastor of Old Otterbein United Methodist Church, is no stranger to long-overlooked records. She has spent the past few months cataloging the papers and artifacts stored at Lovely Lane United Methodist Church in Baltimore. But on that September afternoon in the museum, she knew she had unpacked something truly momentous.

Based on the notes left in the box by a former conference historian, McCubbin estimates that no one had looked at these Asbury papers in nearly 60 years — and they had never been on public display. She hopes to change that.

So does Ashley Boggan Dreff, top executive of the United Methodist Commission on Archives and History in Madison, New Jersey. After reading McCubbin’s Facebook post about the find, Dreff said she was tempted to hop in a car and drive three and a half hours to see the documents in person.

“This rediscovery stresses that our narrative is never quite complete,” Dreff said. “Even our founding bishops’ stories, like Francis Asbury’s, are still being written.”

What no one disputes is that Asbury left a legacy far bigger than any dollar amount bequeathed in his will.

He helped shape not only the religious landscape of his adopted country but also the way United Methodists do church to this day. It’s no wonder that some 203 United Methodist churches in the U.S. bear his name.

“The Methodist Episcopal Church may have been born from the minds of John and Charles Wesley and Holy Club at Oxford, but it was Asbury who ultimately implemented it and was the driving force behind its success,” McCubbin said.

Today’s United Methodist Church is an international denomination with about 12.5 million members across four continents. It all started with Asbury accepting the call to go far from home.

Crossing an Ocean

Asbury grew up a laborer’s son in Great Barr, England — part of Britain’s rapidly industrializing West Midlands, where soot hung heavy in the air and his life hung in the balance.

At age 12, Asbury quit school, and the following year, he apprenticed with a local metalworker. But he also grew in faith.

The Methodist movement initially faced a rocky reception — attracting both mob violence and eager converts. Among those early Methodists was Asbury’s mother, who encouraged her son to start attending local Methodist meetings. By age 21, he was a lay preacher himself assigned to travel a circuit — a group of churches.

In August 1771, he broadened his horizons still further — volunteering when John Wesley asked for preachers willing to go to America. Asbury set sail for Philadelphia just a few weeks later on Sept. 4.

During the voyage, he reflected in his journal that he was not setting off for the New World in search of honor or money. “I am going to live to God, and to bring others so to do,” he wrote.

He was 26 at the time. He would never return to the land of his birth.

Growing a movement

Methodists already had a foothold in the American colonies before Asbury’s arrival on Oct. 27, 1771, but they were mainly concentrated in Philadelphia and New York with a small but growing presence in the South. Asbury took on the tasks of connecting these disparate groups and reinstituting Wesleyan disciplines such as the Methodist class meetings that had fallen by the wayside in the New World.

United Voices for Children year in review

By Diane Strzelecki, UVC Communications Coordinator

Going into 2021, United Voices for Children (UVC) was determined to continue advocating for at-risk Illinois children and their families and raising awareness of its affiliated agencies Kids Above All, MYSI, Inc., and Rosecrance. The events of 2020 had exposed systemic issues that placed vulnerable populations at risk; for children and families in the crosshairs of poverty, violence and inequality, the pandemic was a disaster.

Board members understood their work was more critical than ever, but rising COVID-19 infection numbers and restrictions on gatherings meant that virtual events and Zoom board meetings would continue.

Focusing on a comprehensive virtual event

Undaunted, the board organized “Raising Our Voices,” an online event August 11 celebrating its affiliating agencies, honoring its 2021 annual award winners, and thanking supporters. They enlisted the technology expertise of Rev. Chris Griffin to assist with behind-the-scenes work and “day-of” Zoom administration.

During the event, seven NIC child advocates accepted awards for their extraordinary work in advocating for children and families in Illinois (see sidebar). Deaconess Catherine Inserra, Kids Above All Manager of Faith and Community Relations, notes that these awards can be life changing. “When I received my UVC award in 2019, it confirmed God’s calling in my life and where I wanted to devote my energies and skills,” she said.

Four heroic leaders also joined the Aug. 11 event to share their insights for advocacy moving forward. Deacon Kathy Wellman (Naperville: Wesley) from the NIC Disabilities Ministry inspired the audience with her passion in caring for ability-challenged individuals during the pandemic. Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer, Prairie North District Superintendent, prayed for the needs of children in agencies while a “new normal” was developed. Dr. David Gomel, President and CEO of Rosecrance Health Network, shared his perspective on what the future looks like for the children served by his organization. Rev. Norval Brown (Cary UMC) inspired attendees to answer God’s call to serve children and join forces with agencies, partners and UVC.

An unveiling and vision casting

In spring 2021, UVC considered a redesign of its logo, one that would acknowledge its 42-year history while looking to the future. The original design featured four childlike figures and colors representing the original four agencies supported by UVC: Marcy-Newberry Association, Rosecrance, Methodist Youth Services, Lake Bluff/Chicago Homes for Children.

Over the years, some names changed: Lake Bluff/Chicago Homes for Children became ChildServ, then Kids Above All; Methodist Youth Services became MYSI, Inc. After 130 years of service to at-risk children and families, Marcy-Newberry Association closed in 2013. The three remaining agencies were committed to the UVC coalition, with a board liaison attending meetings and participating actively in board activities, but it was time for a fresh look to the UVC logo.

After several design iterations and prayerful evaluation, the board unanimously approved the final design at their June meeting and the result was unveiled at the Aug. 11 “Raising Our Voices” event to a virtual drumroll. The logo contains three childlike hands in primary colors representing the three agencies, with the palms of the hands in the shape of hearts representing God’s love in action. A cross still stands in place of the “T” in United, highlighting UVC’s ministry and mission.

Blessed by faithful support

Since 1979, UVC has raised more than \$1 million through the 5th Sunday Appeal. In 2021, the board was heartened by

and grateful for the faithful support of congregations and individuals despite pandemic-related challenges. In late summer 2021, UVC provided \$3,000 grants to their affiliated agencies Kids Above All, MYSI Inc. and Rosecrance.

In late September, UVC learned that the people of Berry Memorial UMC would be donating \$5,000 over three years as a part of their tithe from their building sale proceeds. In her September 27 email to Rev. Timothy Biel, UVC Board President, Berry Memorial Lay Leader Joy Thorbjornsen-Coates noted that the church was making donations to organizations that fit within their Justice and Joy missions. “We are thrilled to be able to help support the work of United Voices for Children and the organizations within,” she wrote.

5th Sunday Appeal giving remains the cornerstone of UVC’s fundraising, although individual donations through UVC’s direct giving links at bit.ly/giveuvc and unitedvoicesforchildren.org/donate have increased since 2020. For 2022, 5th Sunday Appeal months are January, May, July, and October. To help congregations promote the 5th Sunday Appeal, UVC provides dated bulletin, website, and social media promotional material at unitedvoicesforchildren.org/links/resources. Congregations may request giving envelopes by sending an email to unitedvoicesforchildren@gmail.com. UVC thanks you in advance for your support!

Board members reflect

The UVC Board is a diverse, committed group of leaders who aren’t afraid to ask questions and explore new avenues for advocacy and fundraising.

Board member Chamus Burnside-Savazzini, director of Children’s Faith Formation (Naperville: Grace), notes that being part of the UVC helped her stay connected during the pandemic. “Each time we gather, I feel inspired, supported and appreciated. When our meetings end, I look forward to the next one,” she says. “I pray that we will continue to grow, evolve and continue to make a difference in all the areas we serve.”

Rev. Grant Swanson, Recruitment Coordinator for Garrett-Evangelical Theology Seminary, notes that the greatest joy of his time on the UVC board has been building a deeper relationship with UVC’s three partner child-serving agencies: Kids Above All, MYSI, and Rosecrance. “These incredible organizations are doing invaluable work in our communities to ensure the flourishing of our children and their families. Each partner agency has an amazing representative on the board who reports about their agency’s business at each meeting. Being able to learn about the vital ministry work going on in our city through these agencies and discover the ways in which we, as individuals, as a board, and as a Church, can support the agencies in this work, is life-giving and inspiring.”

Deaconess Inserra added that UVC has persisted with intentional planning and innovative steps given the many challenges and concerns for advocating for children, youth and families brought on by the ongoing pandemic. “UVC’s new logo featuring three colorful hearts in the palms of three hands offers a heartfelt and hopeful message for these times,” she said.

Are you passionate about child advocacy and the flourishing of Illinois children and their families? If so, United Voices for Children welcomes you to apply for a board position. Please send an email at unitedvoicesforchildren@gmail.com or visit unitedvoicesforchildren.org and click on “Resources” for an application.



2021 Award Winners



Rev. Jeremiah Lee

(Note: the Katherine B. Greene Child Worker Award was not given this year.)

Bishop Jesse R. DeWitt Child Advocacy Award Co-Winner: Rev. Jeremiah Lee, Naperville: Community

Rev. Lee is a youth pastor reaching out to junior and senior high school students at Community UMC in Naperville. He stepped up when he was appointed to CUMC when Deacon Nick Nicholas had to go on a health leave in late 2019. Rev. Lee is an active and engaging youth pastor going beyond to model serving and helping youth in need. He is involved with the NIC’s Anti-Racism Task Force and he promotes congregational mission and ministry in partnership with Kids Above All in practical and unique ways that seek to make connections to social justice and equity

Co-Winner: Justice Generation Young Adult Leaders: Emerson Jordan-Wood, Jennifer Kirkpatrick, Emma Trevor, Nura Zaki

These four young adult leaders pioneered the Justice Generation young adult leader role through during the pandemic, primarily online, with utmost dedication and enthusiasm. Their leadership for this initiative with intent to become an action body for racial justice offers a continued opportunity for young adults to engage in purposeful ministry with great impact. Mixing their professional skills within this forum and their commitment to the UMC has been exciting and inspiring.

Rev. Margaret Ann Williams Service Award Co-Winner: Carol Risenhoover, Rockford: Centennial (not pictured).

Carol directed, managed, and scheduled educators and volunteers for a Saturday Kids Club (SKC) and has been involved with SKC for more than 27 years. She coached, led training, and promoted children advocacy at her church and in the community of Rockford. Carol advocates for resources and meals for the program; has led fundraisers, planning and implementation of events and activities.

Co-Winner: Cindy Minju Oh, DeKalb: First As a high school junior, Cindy was a passionate participant in Justice Generation and serving with their young adult leaders. She assisted in organizing the distribution of 10,000 free masks to low-income families through a Korean company; participated in school as a tutor; and is an Amazing Grace with Peace Movement founder to increase awareness around the Korean border that separates families. She also founded Asiadentity to empower the voices and the identities of Asian children, youth, and community.



Emerson Jordan-Wood



Jennifer Kirkpatrick




Emma Trevor



Nura Zaki



Cindy Minju Oh



Kids Above All

Holidays

Kids Above Holiday Gift Drive

Put your Holiday Spirit into action by stepping up to support Kids Above All's Holiday Gift Drive 2021. There are a variety of ways to do this by sponsoring children, volunteering in their toy room during Dec 1-13, and/or ordering online to help stock their pop-up toy store. If you would like to help, contact Deaconess Catherine Inserra at 847-224-2870 or cinserra@kidsaboveall.org. More than ever, your kindness is both needed and appreciated to ensure happy holidays for all the children Kids Above All serves. For more information, visit kidsaboveall.org.

Bishop Asbury (continued from page 3)

He also expanded the Methodist movement far beyond America's urban centers. Asbury understood that America had developed its own culture, and he knew how to connect the Gospel to its people.

All of this work took a lot of travel on horseback. Asbury rarely stayed in one place for very long, living as a houseguest in other Methodists' homes. By the time of his death in 1816, Asbury had ridden over 130,000 miles and crossed the Allegheny Mountains some 60 times.

The continued United Methodist presence in many rural communities around the globe begins with Asbury's commitment.

Leaving a legacy

Ultimately, Asbury was a tough act to follow. He never married and chose voluntary poverty — never owning much more than what he could carry in his saddlebags and giving most of his funds away.

His tireless ministry bore fruit. When he arrived 250 years ago, there were about 600 Methodists in America. When he died 45 years later, there were more than 200,000 (about 1 of every 36 Americans).

Bishop LaTrelle Easterling leads both the Baltimore-Washington and Peninsula-Delaware conferences that are home to multiple landmarks in Asbury's ministry.

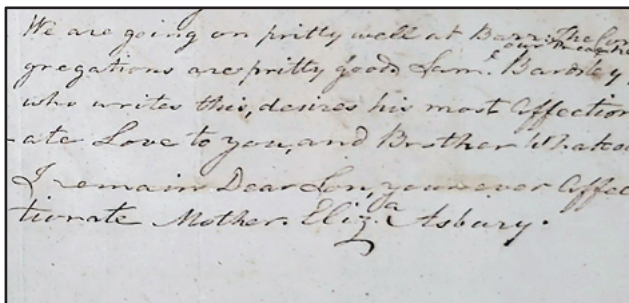
"I am inspired by Bishop Asbury because of his humility, his commitment to go wherever he felt God was sending him, and his perseverance in the face of adversity," she said.

McCubbin, the historian who rediscovered his will and other papers, described his legacy as larger than life.

"Our rules, our structure, our Discipline, our model for Holy Conferencing, our passion for justice and piety, our itinerant structure wouldn't be what they are today without Bishop Asbury."

Learn more about the 250th celebration at gcah.org/resources/celebrating-asburys-voyage-to-the-americas-250-years-ago.

*Hahn is assistant news editor for UM News.



An 1800 letter from Eliza Asbury in England to her son, Bishop Francis Asbury, in the United States. She died in 1802. The Rev. Bonnie McCubbin recently rediscovered the letter while going through a box of Bishop Asbury's papers. Photo by the Rev. McCubbin.



The small congregation of Hope UMC in Hope, Texas greets John Inserra after his final steps from a 1,700 mile walk down the middle of America to find a common thread of shared humanity.

Mt. Prospect man walks miles for a common goal

A walking journey to find common ground that took 55-year-old John Inserra across 1,700 miles, through six states, more than 75 towns, and for 120 days ended with some hope for this country.

Inserra, a retired restaurant and hospitality businessman from Mt. Prospect, Ill., and brother of NIC Deaconess Catherine Inserra, stepped off from Westhope, N.D. on July 4 and walked to Hope, Texas for his last stop on Oct. 22 with receiving a warm welcome at Hope United Methodist Church.

Inserra's journey started with his concern over a divided nation, which led him to create the charitable non-profit organization, For Our Shared Humanity (FOSH), to find what Americans all have in common.

"I think there are a lot of extremes right now in our nation," John Inserra told the Journal & Topics news. "I'm just going to encourage people to come together, walk to the middle, and have a conversation. You don't have to agree, but if you listen and you focus on what you have in common, versus what you have different, I think the world can be a better place."

To help raise money and spark the conversation, Inserra spent the summer and fall pounding the pavement "down the book spine of our country, on foot, at eye level, in person," talking and listening to people's stories documenting every step along the way. He found inspiration in coffee shops, on farms, and in elementary schools.

The Rev. Warren Hornung and the congregation at Hope UMC greeted Inserra at his last mile and were thrilled he chose their small church as his final destination.

"No telling how many seeds were planted.

Nothing ever happens in Hope, and we got excited about the opportunity to meet John," Rev. Hornung said.

Catherine Inserra helped connect her brother with Rev. Hornung and Hope UMC.

"As a UM Deaconess, I was fully aware (and excited!) of the importance of a UMC being located where John would end his journey," said Catherine Inserra. Once I heard of Hope UMC, I believed I could make a connection, which I did through a Facebook group, asking (Texas native) Rev. James Preston (Buffalo Grove: Kingswood) for some Texas tips and then calling the RIO Texas Conference. That fact that all this came together is all grace!"

Rev. Hornung said the emphasis on unity shared through the stories told by each person at the church and during the lunch afterward was so prevalent and so important because of the country's divisions.

"The spirit and attitude of John, and his contagious energy, are refreshing. His convictions and Christianity are all about hope," Hornung said. "The whole idea behind FOSH is a great principle for life and gives us hope for the future."

While Inserra may not have found all the answers, he discovered characteristics and attitudes that unite us.

"Choose kindness, slow things down to the pace of walking so you can connect in a real, genuine level and keep your eyes open and keep your heart open to the possibilities," Inserra told WGN news.

Inserra hopes to use his journey's documentation to shape appropriate educational content and programs to share in schools. Follow Inserra's journey at foroursharedhumanity.org.



John Inserra (right) with his brother Michael (left) and Rev. Warren Hornung (center).



Inserra walked through 75 towns meeting with farmers, coffee shop owners, ordinary people, and elementary school students. Photo courtesy of For Our Shared Humanity.



Volunteers unload sacks of potatoes at Grace UMC in Rockford to distribute to food pantries and individuals to combat hunger in the community.

Thousands of families fed

By Steve Nailor, United Methodist Men Foundation President

On Oct. 16, crews delivered 40,000 lbs. of potatoes to Grace United Methodist Church in Rockford, Ill. Grace United Methodist Men and the Prairie North District United Methodist Men hosted the potato drop to help feed the hungry in the community. Local pantries, news media, and the Northern Illinois Conference helped spread the word throughout the area. Food pantries were able to take advantage of the fresh produce that came from Wisconsin to help put food on tables of those in need in the northern Illinois area. Individuals who drove through the church parking lot were able to pick up 10 lb. bags of potatoes at no cost. Several volunteers filled their trunks with potatoes and shared them with people in local store parking lots. The Potato Project is a Society of St. Andrew (SoSA) program headquartered in Big Island, Virginia. The Rev. Ken Horne and Rev. Ray Buchanan, two United Methodist ministers concerned with world hunger, started the Society. In 1979, the two ministers were granted "a special appointment beyond the local church" by the

Virginia Conference. The Society of St. Andrew adheres to Christian principles of good stewardship. About 93% of all funds raised by the Society of St. Andrew are spent on the direct delivery of food and services to the hungry. They focus on cost-effective ways to move produce to the tables of hungry Americans instead of to landfills, reducing waste and fulfilling a social need at the same time. Since SoSA started the Potato Project in 1979, more than 500 million pounds of produce have been salvaged and distributed through this and other SoSA programs. Learn more at endhunger.org.
By the Numbers: *(Through September 2021)*
SoSA Potato & Produce Project

- 15,399,062 pounds of food collected and distributed
- 46,197,186 servings of fresh food shared
- 367 events held to rescue and share food
- 232 volunteers engaged in hands-on service
- 162 recipient agencies and partners

Dolton church makes plans to reinvest in the community

By Rev. Charles Straight

Faith United Methodist Church is an important congregation that desires to deepen and extend its legacy of partnership and service in the Chicagoland community of Dolton. From its classic midcentury building, Faith Church represents the optimism and social engagement of its founders. This legacy of a congregation as a community hub motivates the congregation's leaders today in renewing its mission to the largely Black neighborhoods of Dolton and envisioning an increased role for its property as an asset that supports the needs and dreams of the community. In addition, the congregation seeks to develop a long-term and sustainable response to the challenges of stewarding and maintaining its property. As a United Methodist church, our social principles teach that we must follow in the footsteps of our founder, John Wesley, who sought to improve the lives of those who suffered from debilitating conditions such as poverty, starvation, illiteracy, imprisonment, addictions, and disease. We have a responsibility to innovate, sponsor, and evaluate new forms of community that will encourage the development of the fullest potential in individuals in the place where we serve. That commitment to justice and to the community of Dolton cannot change. While the gifts of our members may keep the lights on and pay the pastor's salary, the church's financial capacity is not keeping pace with the needs of ministry. We need to invite more people into our space for our own financial sustainability and for the missional call to be of service to our community. In 2021, Faith Church has invested in a year-long project to make the church a center of community life and a public

resource shared by and accessible to people in Dolton. The goal has been to create a more sustainable plan for Faith Church to engage with and serve our community, invite partners to use our space, and identify new sources of revenue consistent with our mission. To date, we have accomplished the following:

- Assembled an Advisory Board of community stakeholders and industry leaders
- Surveyed church members and neighbors to identify assets and needs
- Hosted a community asset mapping (identifying the strengths and resources of a community) event for key partners and community stakeholders
- Produced a report outlining the main takeaways from the asset mapping event
- Secured a \$25,000 grant for COVID-19 vaccine community outreach and hosted vaccine events

The vaccine and wellness events was one of the more visible ways to reach out to the community. The latest was held Oct. 30 and offered gift cards to persons who received their shot, free HIV

testing, free wellness screenings, free food, resources for people who have been incarcerated and the homeless, Cook County Assessor's Office resources and more. Together with community survey responses, Faith Church has identified five program areas for action, including workforce development, technology training and access, health and human services, child and senior care, and environmental justice. With this vision and reinvestment strategy, the hope is to create a more sustainable plan for Faith Church to engage with and serve our community, invite partners to use our space, and identify new sources of revenue consistent with our mission. For more information, visit faithdolton.org.

**COMMUNITY
VISIONING & REINVESTMENT
PROJECT
2021**

November/December Calendar Events



Tending to the Harvest Discipleship Weekend

Growing Together Symposium - Ephesians 4:15.

Sat., November 13 from 9 - 11 a.m. (Via Zoom)

Presenter: Rev. Kyungsu Park: "Youth Discipleship and Relationship." Breakout sessions: "Let's Talk About IDS: Intentional Discipleship Systems."

For registration and more information visit:

umcnic.org/calendar/growing-together-symposium.

All Conference Worship

Date: Sun., Nov. 14 at 4 p.m.

Location: Our Saviour's UMC, 701 E. Schaumburg Rd., Schaumburg, IL. The event will also be livestreamed.

Speaker: Rev. Olu Brown, Senior Pastor at Impact Church, Atlanta, GA.



Vital Mergers Workshop

November 20, 2021 and March 19, 2022

Registration fee: \$20 - lunch box provided

Speaker: Dirk Elliott, Director of Congregational Vibrancy and Leadership Development for the Michigan Conference.

Attend this workshop and explore new ways your church might become healthier through a merger.

Location: First United Methodist Church, 503 N. Lily Creel Rd., Freeport, IL.

Watch the story of a successful merger between two Elgin churches to form Journey of Hope at vimeo.com/570021796.

Register at

umcnic.org/calendar/vital-merger-workshop.

Sponsored by the Office of Congregational Development and Redevelopment.



Special Sunday Offering: United Methodist Student Day 2021

November 28

United Methodist Student Day (last Sunday of November) furnishes scholarships and loans for students attending United Methodist-related and other accredited colleges and universities. In 2020, donors to gave \$236,828 towards the ministries funded by the United Methodist Student Day Sunday offering. This offering helped provide for over 70 scholarships available for United Methodist students to further their education and enrich the life of the Church. The fund is administered by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Remember you can celebrate this Sunday and any Special Sunday on a day of your choosing. For resources to promote, visit resourceumc.org/en/churchwide/umciving/special-sundays.



**STRENGTHENING
THE BLACK
CHURCH**

SBC21 celebrates 25th anniversary

December 1 - 2

The United Methodist Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century will kick off its 25th anniversary celebration during the group's Dec. 1-2 national conference.

"Shift Happens: Doing Ministry from the Right Side" will be held at St. John's United Methodist Church in Houston, TX. The hybrid event is expected to attract 200 in-person attendees.

To honor its work empowering and equipping Black clergy and lay leadership, the group will highlight achievements and hold observances through May 2022.

Learn more at sbc21.org/shifthappens.



We need to trust

By Mark Manzi,
NIC CO-Lay Leader

In this pandemic time, it seems as if we are finding it more and more difficult to trust, to trust our leaders, to trust each other, and even to trust ourselves. This lack of trust causes us, at times, to become afraid. What is going to happen to us in the future? What is going to happen to us this year? What is going to happen to us tomorrow? We can start to spin out of control.

As Christians, we often look to scripture in times of fear. Psalm 56: 3-4 reminds us, "Whenever I'm afraid, I put my trust in you—in God, whose word I praise. I trust in God; I won't be afraid. What can mere flesh do to me?" Or, perhaps, we look to Proverbs 3: 5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; don't rely on your own intelligence. Know him in all your paths, and he will keep your ways straight."

I will trust in God and won't be afraid. I will trust in the Lord with all my heart, and he will keep my way straight. I pray that you find solace in these words of scripture and remember that God is with us always and God will help us in times when trust in the world seems to be lacking. I would also hope that you reach out to each other.

Reach out to those you trust in your family, your church, your neighborhood, and your community. Strengthen that relationship for it is when we trust each other and work with each other that the fear can be dissipated and the challenges in front of us can be seen.

Your Conference Lay Leaders and Board of Laity wants to strengthen our relationship with the people in the churches of the Northern Illinois Conference. We want to provide help, suggest resources, connect you with people who can help in times of challenge, difficulty, and need. Let's expand our relationships and build trust in what we can do together as God's people and as people of the United Methodist Church!

Please put Laity Convocation 2022 - Saturday, February 13 - on your calendar. We will be examining Spiritual Formation.

SAVE THE DATE

Laity Convocation 2022
Saturday, February 13th



9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. via Zoom

"Hold Fast to the Mast: Spiritual Formation for a New Time"



DYK???



It begins with baptism

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

Hospitality is a cornerstone of the United Methodist Church. Welcoming the stranger, caring for the lost, providing a safe space are all part of our mandate. In the United Methodist baptismal vows, we commit to nurture all who are baptized by teaching and example, vowing to surround them with a community of love and forgiveness.

I am thankful for the ways in which congregations in the Northern Illinois Conference have faithfully lived out this mandate to nurture and teach in large and small ways. Last winter, I wrote about the work of our Conference Insurance Board as they undertook a survey to help us better understand how each congregation in the Conference was living out this sacred vow in our protection of children, youth and vulnerable adults. While our insurance program approaches this issue from a vantage point of liability, as the church, we approach it from the vantage point of giving witness to our love for

all people. The partnership of biblical mandate and concern for liability provides a strong foundation for our sacred work. Thank you for your faithfulness to this critical work.

The initial Safe Sanctuaries Survey, completed in the spring, helped provide concrete information to understand our churches' work better as they strive to be safe spaces for ministry. Over the summer, we invited clergy in churches that have programs but no structured training to be trained themselves. In the fall, churches that use training resources other than the Conference recommended program "Safe Gatherings" were surveyed to ensure their efforts provide a good foundation for a safe environment. This fall, we are sending the information we've collected back to each church asking that they verify the accuracy of our records.

As of September, we have verified that there are 1,326 lay volunteers and staff screened and trained for the work of leading ministries for children, youth and vulnerable

adults in our congregations. In addition, 274 of our congregations are led by clergy who have also been trained. This is a strong foundation for our commitment and indicates at least one trained volunteer or staff person in every congregation reporting ministry to children, youth and vulnerable adults.

I want to thank everyone who has provided information, stepped up to meet these important expectations, thoughtfully evaluated your work, and gave witness to our baptismal vows. We've spent much time and effort this year establishing a baseline for our work and I am grateful for your participation.

The work, however, is never finished. Next year we anticipate additional steps needed to continue advancing the mandate of Safe Sanctuaries. I look forward to our continued partnership in these efforts.

If your church wishes to know more about what it means to be a Safe Sanctuary, you can go to our website at umcnic.org/safesanctuaries.



People of God Campaign

Throughout November, the People of God campaign is focusing on worship, our opportunity to gather as a community to offer praise and experience grace. Share this message, and an invitation to #BeUMC, with your congregation by downloading resources, available in English and Spanish. Download resources at umc.org/PeopleofGod.

Anti-Racism pilot program explores Chicago cultural sites

By Amania Drane, NIC Project Manager – Strategic Initiatives

On Saturday, October 23, the NIC Anti-Racism Task Force hosted a pilot cultural tour of the South Side of Chicago. Twenty-three people from across the Conference gathered at the First United Methodist Church at the Chicago Temple to begin the tour and travel to 17 places of historic and significance in Chicago history.

These were spaces where "justice rolled down like waters" and also where injustice rose its ugly head. The tour included stories of both cross burning and how immigrant rights were upheld. We saw the home where Emmett Till and his mother lived and the church where Emmett Till's funeral was held. We traveled to the Pullman National Monument and heard the story of one of America's first planned industrial towns, the evolution of American train travel, the Pullman Strike, and the Methodist Church's role during the strike. We learned about the move of organized labor after the strike and the life of the Pullman Porters.

We went down by the riverside to sing freedom songs where "Freedom Seekers" took the underground railroad at the Little Calumet River Underground Railroad Site. We visited the Chatham Community and learned of the growth of St. Mark UMC, the NIC's oldest African American congregation, and visited the Queen of Gospel Music Mahalia Jackson's home. The tour included a visit to the site of the 1893 World's Fair in Jackson Park, the Midway Plaisance, Washington Park, and the DuSable Museum. Participants heard the stories of the Great



More than 20 people toured significant cultural sites on Chicago's South Side on Oct. 23 for a pilot program organized by the NIC Anti-Racism Task Force.

Migration and the Bronzeville community as they traveled down MLK Drive. Guides shared stories about the "Red Summer" and the 1919 Race Riots. The tour ended with a visit to Quinn Chapel AME and concluded at the DuSable bust at Pioneer Court, where Jean Baptiste Point du Sable settled, traded with the Native Americans, and where Chicago was founded. What a great day it was!

Pastor Luther Mason, who leads Greenstone UMC in Chicago's historic Pullman District, leads the Anti-racism Task Force Tour Committee. Members are Vickie Powell-Bass, Susan Wakefield Dal Porto, Ed Miner, and NIC Project Manager Amania Drane. The committee gives thanks to the Conference and those who participated in support of this pilot. The committee is looking at offering future culutral tours and opportunities.

Job Openings

For the latest job openings in the Northern Illinois Conference, visit www.umcnic.org/jobs.

Stay Connected

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

How to Contact Us

Please submit items at least two weeks prior to publication date. Include your name, address, email, phone number and name of local church. Space is limited. Electronic submissions are preferred with high-resolution attached jpegs. Submissions will be edited at the discretion of Communications staff.

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