

The Northern Illinois Conference OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Reporter

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DO NOT DELAY. DATED MATERIAL

Hispanic Heritage Month in NIC celebrates vital ministries

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

The Hispanic/Latinx community is one of the largest demographic groups in the U.S., with a population of 62.1 million. In Northern Illinois, the Hispanic/Latinx population is 1.9 million and continues to grow rapidly.

This makes Hispanic Heritage Month—Sept. 15 to Oct. 15—very important to The United Methodist Church as a whole and our conference in particular. It's a time we set aside to celebrate and appreciate the contribution of the Hispanic/Latinx community in our country and our churches.

The United Methodist Church is served, in various settings, by almost 1,000 self-identified Hispanic/Latinx clergy and has about 240 Hispanic/Latinx congregations, according to Ask the UMC. Our Northern Illinois Conference has 17 Hispanic/Latinx churches and new faith communities and 28 pastors and lay missionaries who serve in Spanish-speaking congregations and cross-cultural appointments.

"In order to love our neighbors, we must see them, and see them as our neighbors," says Bishop Dan Schwerin. "Within these 30 days we have a wonderful opportunity to honor our Hispanic congregations, their lay and clergy leaders and to name how we want to increase our support and impact of these vital ministries."

The last couple of years have been challenging for the Hispanic/Latinx community in our country, and now they are recovering and continuing the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.



Members of the Spanish-speaking El Redentor del Calvario and the English-speaking The Redeemer of Calvary UMC celebrate many events together, including Easter.



"We are still grappling with the global pandemic, societal inequalities, natural disasters, and the ongoing political divisions that have persisted in our nation. These issues have disproportionately affected the Hispanic community," says Dr. Michelle Maldonado, director of multilingual communications for United Methodist Communications (humc.org/en/content/celebrating-hispanic-heritage-amidst-everything).

"Nevertheless, amid these challenges, we find reasons to celebrate. The resilience ingrained in the Hispanic DNA has been a source of strength during these trying times. We celebrate the collective achievements of our community."

Among those achievements are wonderful developments in Hispanic/Latinx ministry across our conference. We continue to welcome new neighbors by generating creative programs for the Hispanic/Latinx immigrants in our area.

The people of El Redentor del Calvario/The Redeemer of Calvary UMC in Chicago, under the leadership of Pastor Noemi Meza, is a good example. Both English and Spanish

are spoken at this congregation. Since 2022, in partnership with Chicago's 16th District police station and Northern Illinois Justice for Our Neighbors, the church has conducted four "Know Your Rights" workshops for asylum seekers. In addition, the church collected, ahead of winter 2022, cold-weather clothing for those who recently arrived from Venezuela.

"Our church has a food pantry that provides food for 250 individuals, which will feed approximately 750 people, from the Little Village, Girsh Park, 71st and California, and Pilsen neighborhoods [of Chicago]," says Rosa Garcia, lay missionary from Chicago Lawn.

Our conference's most recently established Hispanic/Latinx new faith community is The Movement in the City/Franklin Park UMC, under the leadership of Pastors Roberto Moreno and Jackie Salgado. They gather every week for worship, fellowship, and Bible study. The group has been a welcoming community for refugees and immigrants in the area, showing love and care through food, clothes, and spiritual support.

continued on page 3, Hispanic Heritage



From Your Bishop:

Amidst confronting horror, interfaith leaders commit to peace and strong relations

Rabbi Yehiel Poupko of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago and Rev. Dr. Javier Viera, president of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, invited Julie, me, and other faith leaders in the Chicago area to an instructive tour this past summer of the Holocaust sites in Poland. The rising tide of nationalism in Poland and the ongoing polarizations in our own country suggested an opportunity to bear an interfaith witness to peace and strong interfaith relations among leaders in Chicago.

Rabbi Poupko reiterated his hope that we would come to strengthen our relationships with the Jewish faithful in Chicago by coming to know a people the way they know themselves. To prepare, our interfaith group gathered for evenings of historical study, readings, and breaking bread together at the Jewish Federation offices in Chicago. (Northern Illinois Conference apportionments did not underwrite our trip, aside from some continuing education reimbursements by means of the Episcopal Fund in the denominational budget.)

We were humbled to see the site of the Warsaw Ghetto and cemetery, and resistance sites in Warsaw. From there we traveled to Tykocin, a small community that looks like a hamlet in the Midwest. It was the site of the first phase of the Nazi Holocaust, when the murderers went to the murdered, before engineering a system to bring their victims to the murderers. We saw the street where the Jewish people in the town were led out in full view of their neighbors and made to walk to a woods where they were killed.

Rabbi Poupko noted that “locality is morality.” In some places citizens resisted the Nazis. Many gentile Poles died at Auschwitz. In other places, neighbors turned in neighbors to the German authorities.

We heard the stories of Treblinka, Majdanek, Kazimierz, Sandomierz, and Auschwitz.



Bishop Schwerin reflecting at the Nathan Rappaport Memorial to Heroes of Warsaw Ghetto.

I had not appreciated that some camps were extermination camps. People were transported directly to their means of murder.

The Nazis extracted from them anything they wanted—from shoes and clothes to the gold fillings from their teeth. Some captives were sent to do hard labor while others were tortured and murdered.

Look at the Book of Kings, Isaiah, or Amos and learn how Scripture warns of the human penchant to extract from others what we want for ourselves. Scholar Walter Brueggemann has written how Pharaoh, Ahaz, and Rome not only occupied other nations, but also extracted wealth from the people.

Our vision as an annual conference is important. One of the clearly articulated goals of the Annual Conference Shepherding Team is that by our teaching and practice we would make clear that racism is incompatible with Christian teaching. As I review our vision process in my heart and mind, I pray:

By your Spirit Makes us One as a beloved community life together, living a theology of abundance, for developing vital faith communities that make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Julie and I are still processing the trip, reading post-war Polish poets, Yiddish poets, and poets who died at Auschwitz.

It brought to my mind that earlier this year—70 years after the armistice on the Korean peninsula—our Northern Illinois Conference Korean leaders blessed our annual conference session with a prayer service that deepened our understanding of the continued harm war leaves and galvanized our commitment to peace.

To close this reflection, I will leave you with a *sijo* I wrote, a poem in the Korean verse form that flourished during the Chosun dynasty. It has a musical spirit and ends in a resolution, something I appreciate about the form. (This appeared in *Hummingbird: Magazine of the Short Poem*, issue 33, p. 17.)

On Mixing

*Trust a farm porchlight
to travel straight across the prairie.
I have wanted the high road,
and yet light mixes with the world.
Praise the night that falls on grasses
without bruising even one.*

A ginkgo of resilience pushes through the rubble

by Julie Schwerin

We were reminded when we landed in Warsaw that none of the buildings we saw predated the war because everything had been reduced to rubble. One small section of the Warsaw Ghetto wall, however, remains standing. In an out-of-the-way corner of the city, this short section of brick wall offers a reminder. There is a plaque and a space where a brick had been removed and placed in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. Slightly off to the side is a small ginkgo tree. There is no mention as to how it came to be growing there, but it seems apt. Ginkgos are considered signs of longevity and resilience as they were some of the few trees that survived the bombing of Hiroshima. And this one, growing in a place of atrocities and resistance to these acts, felt to me like it offered hope for the Jewish people particularly and humanity as a whole.



A remaining part of a wall in the Warsaw Ghetto with a small ginkgo tree.

Both photos by Julie Schwerin

The Northern Illinois Conference OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Reporter

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Submissions

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 the Communications staff.

Job Openings

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

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NIC United Methodists keep the dream alive on the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington

by Susan Dal Porto, NIC Anti-Racism Champion Team

In August 1963, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. addressed a peacefully assembled crowd of 250,000 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. He said some of his most famous words: "I have a dream that with our faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With our faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, and to stand up for freedom together."

Rev. King's call to action echoes across the decades. On Aug. 27, United Methodists and friends assembled at the First United Methodist Church—Chicago Temple for "Keep the Dream Alive" to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington. Participants filled the sanctuary for worship and later moved across the street to Daley Plaza for a peaceful rally and march against racism.

During worship, Rev. Dr. Myron McCoy, senior pastor of First UMC—Chicago Temple, called those gathered to consider "what a challenge, responsibility, and blessing it is to be the church today as we face eroding voting rights in many states, a Supreme Court that has struck down affirmative action in college admissions and abortion rights, the decision of some to rewrite history, the growing threat of political violence and hatred against people of color, Jews, and LGBTQ community. Unfortunately, these issues today appear eerily like the issues of 1963."

"Lead us out of our comfort zones, so we can bless and build bonds with people who are different from ourselves," Rev. McCoy prayer. "Help us to love mercy and act in ways that are just and right."

St. Mark UMC in Chicago and the Gospel Choir of First UMC—Chicago provided inspiring music.

Rev. Martin Deppe, a prominent white civil-rights activist, told of some of his experiences, through an interview by

Rev. Dr. Irene Taylor, a retired NIC black clergywoman who had personally faced obstacles placed by racism.

Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer, NIC's director of Connectional Ministries, observed, "Racism is still very real at all levels of our society. The work for racial justice is unfinished and it is our responsibility as Christians and people of faith to stand up and continue the fight. If the Christian church fails to the complex issues of racism in our own time, we have failed our fellow believers and our God."

"The church's task is to be a prophetic voice, speak the truth, and to be God's instrument wherever we go. So please don't get tired of doing this sacred work. Let's help others not to be indifferent to the needs of others and let's be the voice of the voiceless."

During this service, Nadia Kanhai, chair of the Northern Illinois Conference's Anti-Racism Task Force, praised the efforts of local churches to stand up for racial justice. She highlighted these congregations:

- **Friendship UMC, Bolingbrook, and its African American Spirituals Project.**

Recognizing that white churches have appropriated this music into their worship services, sometimes without acknowledging its origins, the church decided that every time they sang an African American spiritual, they would donate to scholarships for local Black music students and choirs.

- **Christ UMC, Rockford, and its "Be the Change" Learning and Action Project.**

The church offered people a four-week opportunity to increase their awareness of racism and take action. Participants

learned, acted, and shared their activities on a peace pole, so that others could take note of their actions and act themselves.

- **First UMC, Evanston, and its Supporting Reparations project.** The church raised money in support of the

reparations effort of the city of Evanston. Church members learned more about systemic racism and raised \$80,000 toward reparations. This was a significant part of an interfaith response to reparations.

- **First UMC, Elmhurst, and its Juneteenth celebration.** The church holds an annual Juneteenth learning and celebrations event to raise awareness about racism, featuring local Black authors, artists, and musicians, and other organizations working for justice. They also raised over \$1,000 to support historically Black colleges and universities.

- **St. Mark UMC, Chicago, and its Freedom School.** The church's Children's Defense Fund Freedom School provides enrichment and academic support for neighborhood children and youth. (See the September Reporter for a story on this school.)

At the end of the service, worshipers joined in singing "We Shall Overcome" while marching across the street to Daley Plaza.

There the past and current president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Michael Childress and Patrick Watson, addressed the gathering. They talked of efforts to suppress voting rights and our continuing need for vigilance and seek justice in many areas.

Then the crowd marched peacefully around the plaza, strengthening the resolve of each one present. Signs and chants demonstrated commitment. Some of the younger people in the crowd started the chant "keep the dream alive!"

Learn more about the inspiration of this march and find a link to the worship service and more photos at umcnic.org/news/nic-united-methodists-keep-the-dream-alive.

Your giving to NIC Apportionments supports the Anti-Racism Task Force.



Hispanic Heritage (continued from page 1)

We also continue to offer the Conference Academy for Faith Community Development, which "is a portal for recruitment and learning," says Rev. Martin Lee, NIC director of congregational development and rede-

velopment. "Its goal is to develop Christlike servants based on demonstrated giftedness. Participants are admitted by recommendation based on fruitfulness rather than having a specific educational background."

The annual Hispanic/Latinx Celebration, which this year takes place on Oct. 7 at Franklin Park UMC, is a featured observation of the heritage month here in Northern Illinois. (Find more information at umcnic.org/calendar.) It gathers pastors, lay missionaries, and laypeople from all the Hispanic/Latinx churches in our conference for a time of worship, training, fellowship, renewal, and camaraderie.

"Our annual Hispanic/Latinx ministry celebration highlights the numerous and diverse

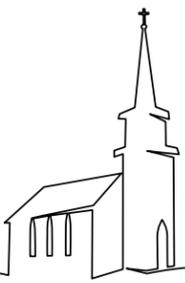
ministries within the Northern Illinois Conference," says Rev. Patricia Bonilla, chair of the Hispanic/Latinx Ministry Team.

Bishop Schwerin invites all Northern Illinois United Methodists to take time this month to pray for the Hispanic communities in our conference, a ministry we share, so "that we might be open-table people who extend the beloved community for the love and justice of Jesus."

Your giving to NIC Apportionments supports vital congregation work, the Office of Revolucion and Development, new faith communities and intentional redevelopment, Justice for Our Neighbors, and the Hispanic Ministry Team.



The Movement in the City in Franklin Park celebrating Sunday worship.



Local Church News

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

Brooke Road Community Center hosts ribbon-cutting and open house

by Rev. Violet Johnicker, Brooke Road UMC

The Brooke Road Community Center—a ministry that included input from neighborhood groups—of Brooke Road United Methodist Church in Rockford celebrated its official opening on Sept. 8. They are eagerly welcoming partner groups and planning ministries that benefit the community.

“Since the pandemic, we’ve been growing our programs and partnerships by repurposing Sunday-school classrooms and other spaces in our church building to be open during the week for community groups to use. From AA to Zumba, the legal clinic to the little free food pantry, Girl Scouts to the Bookmobile, and so many more, we’re building a real resource center for our neighborhood,” says Pastor Violet Johnicker.

Brooke Road UMC intentionally listened to what neighbors would like to see and learned that they wanted programming and support for children and families. This led the church to build a community center that would give space for organizations to provide such services.

The church had long wanted to hire a community center manager, which became possible in July thanks to the generous support of United Way of Rock River Valley. United Way has a new initiative to address low child-literacy rates and contributing factors. Brooke Road is well-positioned to assist those efforts by supporting parents and caregivers of children who are learning to read, particularly immigrants and recent arrivals to the United States. Many of the programs at Brooke Road Community Center are in Spanish, and a growing congregation with members from Tanzania, Burundi, Zambia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and other African countries worship in Swahili on Sundays at noon.

“Being able to read is life-changing, but for parents who are learning to read in English themselves or are very busy caring for their families by working two jobs or more, it can be a real challenge to spend time reading with kids,” says Pastor Johnicker. “Our intergenerational, volunteer-driven approach will make a big difference for kids here. As we develop our methods, we’re writing a how-to guide for other faith communities that would like to replicate literacy programs like this.”

In Winnebago County, just one in three children read at or above grade level. This motivated United Way and the partner organizations to create a comprehensive approach to improving literacy in their community.

Using research-based strategies that include funding measurable interventions, parental engagement, volunteer mobilization, caregiver support, and community awareness, this collaborative hopes to increase Winnebago County’s literacy rate from 32 percent to 75 percent by 2034.

“Congregations are part of the permanent fabric of our communities; they are a trusted resource and often provide the services needed most in our communities,” said Julie Bosma, president and CEO of United Way of Rock River Valley. “Brooke Road UMC has excelled at responding to critical needs and they know those needs in their community very intimately. When you start to combine efforts with churches, you can really have an important impact on the community as a whole.”

The leader of this initiative at Brooke Road UMC is the new community center manager,



Pastor Violet Johnicker (center, blue dress) joins others in the ribbon-cutting to open the Brooke Road Community Center.

Kristin Cottrell. A Rockford native, she knows the needs of south Rockford firsthand. She was born into a family that, in her words, could have used wrap-around services like the kind being developed now. She has experienced extreme poverty and the ripple effects of alcoholism and substance abuse within her family, as do many families within our community.

Cottrell is passionate about her community and its families, deeply values health, and knows the importance of social-emotional well-being. She has six children and is grateful for the ways in which “the village” has assumed its role in raising children. Her background in child welfare and family support services makes her a perfect champion for this work, and Brooke Road UMC is thrilled to have her on board.

“Seeing the excitement for the center and the willing support already makes me so proud of Rockford,” Cottrell said. “This community deserves safe spaces to learn and grow and to teach us how to connect again after the pandemic. I am so looking forward to seeing all of the individuals and families coming together here, gaining a sense of hope, consistency, and community like we haven’t seen in a while.”

The spiritual—and physical—need for sabbath



by Jim Patterson, United Methodist News Service

Sabbath: An Ancient Tradition Meets the Modern World is a documentary with an agenda. The film’s director, Martin Doblmeier, believes that setting apart one day a week to rest and reflect is desperately needed in our go-go, social-media-saturated society.

“We’re inviting people to rediscover the Sabbath as a gift that’s less about the obligation of it,” says Doblmeier, who has made more than 35 films on religion and spirituality for Journey Films, which he founded. “It’s more about the opportunity and the privilege of doing it.”

“One day a week, you say, ‘I’ve done enough, and I am enough. I have enough for that one day.’” United Methodists are part of the team that made the film and appear in it. Members of Silver Spring UMC in Maryland are devoting time to watch and discuss it.

“Part of what I appreciated about the documentary . . . is the way in which Sabbath can occur in a variety of practices,” says Rev. Will Ed Green, Silver Spring UMC’s lead pastor. “It doesn’t just have to be Sunday morning church and Sunday evening church with youth group in the middle. It doesn’t have to be Sunday dinners with your uncle who prays those hour-long prayers.”

“It can be everything from volunteering at a soup kitchen to carving out quiet space in your life.”

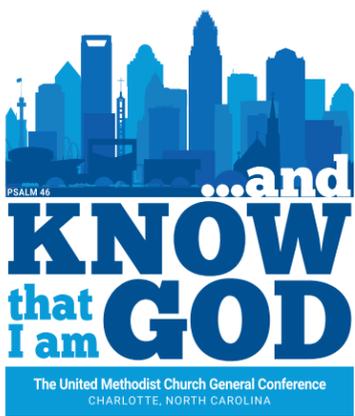
“Without regularly carving out spaces to encounter the presence of God, not only does our faith begin to atrophy, but our spiritual well-being negatively impacts the spiritual well-being of the people around us,” Green says. “We burn out and we burn out other people along the way.”

That variety of ways to observe Sabbath may appeal to folks who don’t engage with organized religion, Green says.

“If God is present in everything and around us at all times, every moment is a moment pregnant with the possibility that God is going to show up,” he says. “I don’t think that people have to practice an organized religion to experience the gift of Sabbath, because God is always present and active.”

Viewers can screen the film for free at journeyfilms.com.





NIC General and Jurisdictional delegation meetings set

by Rev. Alka Lyall,
Chair of Delegation

The last few months have been pretty quiet for the General and Jurisdictional Conference delegates. Most

annual conferences were busy processing congregation disaffiliations and we as delegates were waiting to see how that would affect the delegation pools and what the process for submitting new legislation would be—if that was even going to be possible.

As of this writing a little over 6,000 churches have disaffiliated, some of which had among their membership delegates who had submitted petitions to be considered at General Conference. While the Commission on General Conference grapples with what to do about those petitions, they continued to accept new ones up until Sept. 6.

Your giving to NIC Apportionments support the delegation. General Church Apportionments support General Conference.

We hope to know the answer to the petitions question—and receive the new petitions—before the end of the year. We will share them with you when they are made available to us.

As of now, we know that the Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters and the Connectional Table, in collaboration with the authors of the Christmas Covenant, have approved a new petition on regionalization for consideration by to the General Conference.

With these developments, your delegation is also starting to meet and get back into preparation mode. All delegation meetings are open meetings so we wanted to let you know our meeting calendar for the rest of the year.

- Oct. 29 at Belvidere UMC
- Nov. 12 at Wesley UMC, Naperville
- Dec. 3 at Cosmopolitan UMC, Melrose Park



General and Jurisdictional Conference delegates at Jurisdictional Conference, Nov. 2022. Some membership has changed.

NIC's Lonnie Chafin Accepts New York Conference Post

Lonnie Chafin, who has served the Northern Illinois Conference as treasurer and director of administrative services for 24 years, has accepted the position of treasurer of the New York Annual Conference, effective Oct. 1. Bishop Thomas Bickerton, who oversees that conference, has also invited him to serve on a team that will explore new expressions of Methodism during this time of change and opportunity in The United Methodist Church.

"When Bishop Bickerton described forming a team to explore the potential for our future I felt a whisper of call," Chafin said.

"While we have big shoes to fill, we can be in prayer and joy for Lonnie and thankful for his 24 years of service to the Northern Illinois Conference," said Bishop Dan Schwerin. "The Conference Council on Finance and Administration is working on a transparent, diverse, and in-depth process as we address our next steps. We will also call on the General Council on Finance and Administration to help equip our personnel conversations."

"My first reaction to learning that Lonnie was accepting a position with the NYAC was of deep gratitude and awe for the way that he has served the NIC with grace and love while managing financial responsibilities and changing conference staff and structures for the past 24 years," says Rev. Tammy Scott, chair of the CCFA. "We will be creating opportunities for the NIC to thank Lonnie and send him off to New York in good Chicago/Midwest fashion."

Chafin expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve the NIC.

"I deeply love the Northern Illinois Conference and I'm so grateful for the trust placed in me as conference treasurer and what we accomplished together," he said.



Lonnie Chafin

NIC Seeks Benefits and Human Resources Officer

The Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church seeks a full-time Benefits and Human Resources Officer.

The responsibilities for this role include but are not limited to:

- managing and administering the benefit plans for lay and clergy employees (active clergy, retirees, and surviving spouses)
- managing specific human resources functional area(s)
- ensuring alignment with strategies and objectives while handling the day-to-day administration of the benefit plans, resolving questions and problems in a timely manner.
- coordinating logistics for benefit enrollment to carriers
- preparing announcements, educational material, booklets, and other media for communicating and explaining the programs to participants.

This position as well as that of the Conference Treasurer/Director of Administrative Services are currently vacant.

"Our conference has been without a conference benefits and human resources officer since the death of Woody Bedell," the previous conference benefits officer, almost three years ago, says Rev. Katherine Paisely, chair of the NIC Board of Pensions. "During these past few years, our insurance and health benefits programs have undergone a number of changes. Understanding our benefits has become increasingly difficult. With another series of changes anticipated in the next few years, providing someone to help us explain those changes and assist our clergy in making decisions to best provide for their needs has become urgent. It is for this reason that we decided to move towards filling this crucial role as soon as possible."

Applications are being accepted until Oct. 18.

Find detailed position information and instructions on how to apply at umcnic.org/jobs.



Your giving to NIC Apportionments supports Conference Staff.

Leading the Way in Mission: NCJ Bishops Join Midwest Mission in the Joy of Serving



On Sept. 20, the North Central Jurisdiction College of Bishops, assistants to the bishops, and directors of connectional ministries took time during the bishops' meeting to offer hands-on service with Midwest Mission. Within two hours, they assembled 153 student kits and 107 personal dignity kits, wove plastic grocery bags into one-

half of a sleeping mat, and packed 600 rice meal bags, which will feed 3,600 people. Midwest Mission is grateful for the opportunity to speak with the bishops and to serve alongside them and their teams in meeting the needs of people in crisis around the world.

Your giving to Mission Links supports Midwest Mission.



How is your DNA? Healthful living groups to form soon

Are we living longer, healthier lives? A 2022 report from the Centers for Disease Control points to evidence that we are living shorter lives; another report notes that in 2021, Americans believed themselves in poorer health than in previous years.



DNA Ministry

The DNA Leadership Team will also share resources and opportunities through the NIC eNews and social media channels.

During the rest of this year, the DNA Leadership Team will research, discuss, and strategize in structuring this ministry. The team plans to visit each district to share information, determine interest, and solicit input.

Learn more about DNA and share your views by taking the survey at umcnic.org/DNAMinistry.

Disclaimer: The Disciples Nurturing Actions support group leader (SGL) is not a professional provider (physician, psychiatrist, psychologist, therapist or counselor, nurse practitioner, etc.). Participants must agree and acknowledge that the leaders and groups are not providing health care, medical, nutritional therapy services, counseling, or spiritual advice. We will not diagnose, treat, prevent, or cure any physical, mental, spiritual, or emotional issue, disease, or condition and will not give advice on exercise. The SGL will not give advice about medication, and specific medications will not be discussed in the group setting. Leaders will not provide counseling. The group members are advised to seek professional services from their pastors, licensed physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists or counselors, and health care professionals, if and when necessary.

“The U.S. health system trails far behind a number of other high-income countries when it comes to affordability, administrative efficiency, equity, and health care outcomes,” according to a 2021 Commonwealth Fund study.

Northern Illinois Conference’s Discipleship Task Force realizes that this must be addressed. They will be rolling out a Disciples Nurturing Actions (DNA) ministry in early 2024.

This new ministry will provide support groups for clergy and lay to support each other in attending to their health. Together they will engage in biblically informed and prayerful discussions about resources, tools, training, and encouragement. Multiple groups, lead by different health-educated laity, will meet via Zoom, in person, or in a hybrid arrangement. It will provide an opportunity to share godly principles by learning, discussing, and engaging in healthy body, mind, and spirit practices. By early next year, support groups will begin meeting.

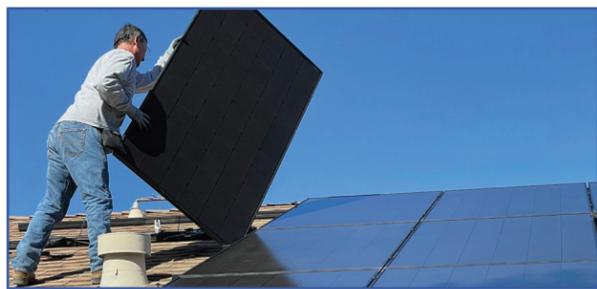
Your giving to NIC Apportionments supports the Discipleship Task Force.



Communications Learning Week: Communications that Transform, Oct. 16-20

United Methodist Communications has announced the return of its week-long ecumenical training opportunity launching this fall for anyone in ministry seeking to enhance their communications skills. It is designed with busy schedules in mind. All of the learning week content will be recorded and stored in a learning portal that participants will have access to for six months following the event. Workshops led by experts on a variety of topics will be presented followed by Q&A sessions with each facilitator. Opportunities for discussion and networking round out the week’s activities.

For further details and registration visit umctraining.org/product?catalog=Transform.



by Dick Alton, NIC Net Zero Task Force

Last year the eleven United Methodist general agencies and the Council of Bishops pledged to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This means achieving a balance between the amount of greenhouse gas emissions they produce and those they remove from the atmosphere.

What happens if we don’t reach net zero? Our emissions trap heat in the atmosphere and warm the planet, causing wildfires, droughts, floods, crop failures, famine, migration, and the destruction of the ecosystem. If these emissions continue, global warming will only intensify.

Net zero requires abatement of our emissions. We must eliminate carbon-producing activity. This will require our being less reliant on fossil fuels by pursuing efficient energy use, electrification, and renewables. A key action is to go solar.

Solar gardens

Community solar is an important option for our congregations. You don’t need to do anything physical to your building, you won’t have any upfront costs, your monthly savings will be 20 percent of the electric bill’s energy cost. Yes, there is a cost saving, but just as important we will be supplying a huge amount of renewable energy to our energy system and therefore moving us all toward Net Zero.

NIC congregations leading solar energy use save money and care for God’s creation

Less than 15 percent of the electricity we use from the grid is produced from renewable sources. To reduce emissions from electricity on the grid, we could take the following actions:

1. Use less electric energy so we need less from the grid.
2. Produce some of our own electric energy (from onsite solar), so we need less from the grid.
3. Support new production from renewable sources such as solar gardens (community solar). An effective way to support new solar is to subscribe to a community solar project. (All of the energy produced by a community solar project is put on the grid.)

Community solar is an arrangement in which many customers subscribe to buy energy from a large solar garden developed and owned by a third party. A subscriber is assigned virtual “ownership” of a portion of the total system and agrees to purchase the energy produced by their portion. In Illinois, a concept called virtual net metering allows utilities to give their customers credit on their electric bill for the energy produced by their portion of a community solar project. For example, if the monthly bill from your utility for energy (in kilowatt-hours [kWh]) was \$55 and your portion of the community solar produced \$50 of energy, your net metered cost would be \$55 minus \$50, coming to \$5. That is, your cost for the energy portion (not taxes and fees) of your utility bill would be \$5, not \$55.

The objective is to support the production of new sources of renewable energy for the grid. However, compared to the total cost of the electric bill (including taxes and delivery charges) from your provider, the savings might appear small and not to be worth the effort.

The big picture

However, the collective savings of all NIC United Methodist congregations could be huge. For example, if the real average energy usage of an average church is about 2,000 kWh per month and the cost per kWh is 10 cents (\$0.10), then the cost is \$200 per month, or \$2,400 per year. A 20 percent discount is \$480 per year. There are 324 churches in the conference so collectively, the savings would be \$168,000 per year (\$480 x 324) and \$1,555,200 over 10 years. Over a million dollars is worth the effort, especially as these 324 churches all using community solar would not have to pay a penny for this huge collective savings.

Not only would this be a huge financial savings, but also a significant step in moving to net zero. If each church uses and puts on the grid 2,000 kWh per month of renewable energy (24,000 kWh per year) from community solar, then 324 churches would put 8.4 million kWh per year of renewable energy on the grid (24,000 kWh/year per church x 324 churches = 7,776,000 kWh/year). This would be a huge move toward our collective net zero.

Three UM churches in the Oak Park/River Forest area—First UMC Oak Park, First UMC River Forest, and Euclid Avenue UMCs—are

continued on page 8, Solar

Leading the Laity

We can face change because our God is constant

by Eugene Williams, NIC Co-Lay Leader

Greetings on behalf of the conference co-lay leader, Connie Augsburger, and the entire Board of Laity.

The world is ever-changing and the church is ever-evolving. Change is like the storms of life: You are either in one, about to enter one, or coming out of one. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, "Change is the only constant in life."

The world is always changing and so are its people. As a result, we find ourselves constantly adapting to it. It has been said, "If you are not changing, then you are dying."

We can embrace change on our own, or events and people will change our situation for us. How successful we are with change depends on how well we adapt.

To be sure, those stormy seas and our future uncertainty didn't just recently rear their ugly heads. We have been changing for quite some time. For example, we have been discussing issues related to the philosophical and biblical impact of the LGBTQIA+ community upon our denomination for several years. We haven't had a General Conference since 2016 and the next one will not take place until next year.

We are facing decline in membership and the closing of churches. We have undergone redistricting and disaffiliation. We've had a retiring bishop, an interim bishop, and a newly appointed bishop within a three-year span. Then, because of COVID, some of our churches were closed for months on end. And some still haven't fully recovered even as they transitioned to a virtual or hybrid wor-

ship format. Clergy and laity are still learning how to use and leverage social media to do ministry. And now, coming soon to a theater near you, is the distinct possibility of sharing a bishop with another conference, much like a two-point charge. We hope to have some clarity after General Conference 2024.

But we, the positive-thinking lay and clergy of the Northern Illinois Conference, disagree with Heraclitus. We were built for an ever-changing world because we recognize that the only constant in our lives is Christ Jesus!

Laity, working with and supporting our clergy siblings, will ensure the church continues to persevere. Notwithstanding stormy seas and constant change, we serve a God who sits high and looks low. Though the world is ever-changing, God is still the same. And because Jesus Christ is the only true constant in our lives, we will remain positive, whatever changes and challenges may come. We will do so in love and look at these challenges as opportunities to embrace our beloved community. Matthew 6:34 tells us not to worry about tomorrow. This is where God is asking us to trust that he will give us the strength to face tomorrow, day after day after day.

Siblings, we can overcome any fear, uncertainty, obstacles, or changes if we just hold to God's unchanging hand. So stay focused on the mission that our Lord has assigned us: to love one another and make disciples for Christ. May God bless you real good!

Your giving to NIC Apportionments support the Board of Laity.



Laity Sunday: Oct. 15

Laity Sunday celebrates the ministry of all Christians to love God and neighbor. In the early days of American Methodism, the laity served and maintained congregations between visits of the circuit riders.

Today, lay people are the front line of daily ministry at the workplace, in the home and within the community. Laity Sunday is a time to recognize the work and mission of all laity — not only within the walls of the church but in everyday lives.

The theme of this year's Laity Sunday is "Rise Up – Remain committed to Love's teachings" (II Timothy 1:13). The 2023 focus is on what it means to hold on to the pattern of healthy words heard—words heard in those whose lives have been remade and restored by grace.

Your giving to General Church Apportionments support Discipleship Ministries.



Find out more at umcnic.org/calendar/laitySunday2023.

Upcoming Events

See the full calendar at umcnic.org/calendar

Fall 2023 Lay Academy offerings:

- **Lake South:** Oct 7 & Oct 14
Dolton Faith: UMC
- **Prairie South:** Oct. 21 & 28
Mount Morris: Disciples UMC
- **Prairie North:** Oct. 28 & 29
Rockford: Beth Eden UMC
- **Prairie Central:** Nov. 4 & 11
Schaumburg: Our Redeemer's UMC



October

21 What Makes for a Vital Church Today? Workshop

9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Our Saviour's UMC,
701 E. Schaumburg Road,
Schaumburg
Cost: \$20 (includes box lunch.)



This workshop is part of the How to Reach New People series with the Office of Congregational Development and Redevelopment. For further details and registration visit umcnic.org/calendar/what-makes-for-a-vital-church-today-workshop.



November

4 Vital Partnerships: New Models of Cooperative Ministries

9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Journey of Hope UMC
37W040 Highland Ave, Elgin
Cost: \$20 (includes box lunch.)



Explore new ways your church might become healthier through a merger. For further details and registration visit umcnic.org/calendar/vital-partnerships-new-models-of-cooperative-ministries-1.



9 Kids Above All's 2023 Annual Celebration Dinner

6 p.m.
4 Seasons Hotel,
120 E. Delaware Pl., **KIDS ABOVE ALL**
Chicago

The evening will highlight the strength and resilience of our young people, recognize members of the community for service, and make an impact on the children and families in our care. For further details visit kidsaboveall.org/dinner/.



30 2023 Film Series Latinx History and Culture

6 p.m.
Multiple locations
across the conference
& online via Zoom
Cost: \$5



Meal, presentation, panel discussion and table discussions around Latinx history, representation, and culture. For further details and registration visit umcnic.org/calendar/23-film-series-latinx-history-culture.



Attend your church conference— you are a link in the connection

by Rev. Arlene Christopherson, Assistant to the Bishop

The role of a district superintendent is often described as having three seasons: appointment season (winter and spring), supervision season (summer) and church-conference season (fall). As we move into the last quarter of the year, our Northern Illinois Conference district superintendents are immersed in church-conference season. On many evenings and most weekends throughout the fall, our district superintendents are on the road, traveling from congregation to congregation to convene their conferences.

Church conferences focus on electing leaders, setting the pastor's salary, approving the church's budget (if available), recommending candidates for ministry, and approving lay speakers. The event also includes a time to review and affirm the congregation's plans for ministry and mission and learning about the work of the conference and the wider United Methodist Church.

These meetings are part of the fabric of our connectional nature. "Connectional" means that every United Methodist church in the world is connected through our mission to "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world." Through the

connectional system, we are involved in God's mission together. Together, we are able to do more than if we remained alone.

Gathering in this type of meeting can be traced back to John Wesley, one of the founders of Methodism, and the emergence of quarterly conferences in the early development of the Methodist movement. In February 1741 John Wesley met the Bristol Methodists to issue tickets of membership to those "who were sufficiently recommended." By the following year, the quarterly renewal of these tickets was an established procedure.

The quarterly meeting enabled the Methodist movement to become a compact ecclesiastical organization, a "connexion" rather than loosely associated groups. This legacy is part of our strength in creating a religious movement around the world.

Somewhere in the 20th century we moved from quarterly conferences to annual charge or church conferences. This shift came as communication evolved between churches, districts, and conferences and we no longer depended on the district superintendent to bring us news of our denomination every quarter. Today, learning about what is happening in the church and the world no longer depends on one visiting church leader

"Connectional" means that every United Methodist Church in the world is connected in our mission to 'Make disciples of Jesus Christ, for the Transformation of the World.'

each quarter. It has become part of our lives through electronic connections, social media, print, and updates that are available daily.

(Right now, our district superintendents are saying "Hallelujah! We can manage once-a-year church conferences better than quarterly ones!")

Check your church calendar and see when your conference is scheduled. Consider attending and learning more about your own church and the connection. We no longer give out membership tickets to those who are recommended, as they did in John Wesley's day. But we do review, recommend, and connect through this tradition.

Join in this rich tradition of connecting with the wider denomination as a way of showing your commitment to your faith, your church, and the United Methodist connection. Recommend to the witness and mission of your church through this annual opportunity. Don't miss it—it takes place only once a year.



Your giving to NIC Apportionments support church conferences.

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 date noted:

Tanya Lozano-Washington (District Superintendent Supply) to Chicago: Adalberto (Lake North District). Tanya follow Jacobita Cortes, who concluded her ministry. Effective August 15 .

Kun Sang Cho (Retired Elder Rocky Mountain Conference) to Mundelein: Vision (1/4 time) (Lake North District) as an interim. Kun Sang follows Kwan Woo Park, who has withdrawn his clergy membership from the Northern IL Conference. Effective Septmber 1.

Jake Cho (Provisional Elder) to Prospect Heights: Korean Central (1/2 time) (Lake North District) while remaining at Highland Park: Galilee Korean (1/2 time) (Lake North District). Jake follows Jin Ho Hong, who is appointed to Leave of Absence. Effective September 15.

Juyeon Jeon (Full Elder) to the newly created associate position at Wheeling: First Korean (Lake North District) from Bensenville. Effective October 1.

Juancho Campañano (Full Elder) to Downers Grove: Faith (1/2 time) (Lake South District) while remaining at Western Springs (1/2 time). Juancho follows Charles Yoon, who is appointed to Flossmoor: South Suburban Korean (Lake South District). Effective October 1.

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



Solar (continued from page 6)

among nine congregations in that area that are already using community solar. Rev. Marti Scott, pastor of Euclid Avenue UMC, appreciates that going green with community solar will ease the stress on her congregation's budget. They have an additional reason:

"We're doing this as a way of honoring the God of creation and fulfilling our ministry of caring for the earth," she says. "That's primary. We have come to understand that salvation is not only about humans but that it is really about all of creation. We have set off these gigantic changes in climate. We have brought a judgment on the Earth by the way we've lived and our excesses, so helping people to become better stewards, to care for the Earth, is a way to give the [planet], which is a gift from God, a chance at life."

Become a better steward. Go community solar.

Start your registration for community solar or email by contacting Vira Dubkova at Unity Solar Group, (773) 727 8347 or vira.d@unitysolargroup.com; or Maureen Stillman, member of the NIC Net Zero Task Force and of Community UMC, Naperville, at maureen.stillman@gmail.com.

Your giving to NIC Apportionments supports the Net Zero Task Force.



Get the Latest Conference Directory and Journal

The 2023-2024 NIC directory and 2023 Journal are now published!

The directory contains contact information for conference churches, clergy, laity, committees, and agencies.

View online or download a free PDF version at umcnic.org/directory. You may also purchase a paperback version from amazon.com.

The journal includes the daily proceedings of the 185th annual conference session, resolutions, historical reports, 2022 statistics, and more. View online or download a free PDF version at umcnic.org/journal. You may also purchase a paperback version from amazon.com.

Your giving to NIC Apportionments support these publications.



Find ideas, graphics and more at umcnic.org/news/october-is-pastor-appreciation-month

October is Pastor Appreciation Month

No matter how humble or unassuming they may be, most people get a warm glow inside when someone says "thank you" for what they've done or expresses appreciation simply for who they are. Clergy and others who fill pastoral roles are no exception. It is a time to thank the people who may be most visible, but in reality are on call 24/7. They laugh, cry an pray with us, attend countless meetings, and lead us in mission to our communities and world.