

# The Northern Illinois Conference OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Reporter

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**DO NOT DELAY. DATED MATERIAL**

## Repairs begin on storm-ravaged First UMC, Elgin, building

by Rev. Victoria Rebeck, Director of Communication

After losing half of their church roof during a storm late March 14, the people of First United Methodist Church in Elgin are now watching the extensive repairs begin.

A few minutes before midnight on March 14, a powerful wind tore off about half of the copper roof over the sanctuary of this 101-year-old building. Rainwater leaked through the ceiling slats, pooling onto the floor and damaging some of the pews and other wood surfaces. Fortunately, the church's stained-glass windows were untouched.

The startling images of the damage shocked a number of church members who came to help the next day.

Jane Duffy, a 60-year member of the church, said she was heartbroken.

"It's devastating," she said. "At times like this, you think of all that has happened at the church—the baptisms and much more. The building is like a home to us."

Rev. Dr. Felicia LaBoy, the church's pastor, maintained hope even during an exhausting day of working with roofers, the police department, church trustees, and determine next steps.

"First, I thank God," she said. "God has been with us throughout. In the midst of this, God has brought neighbors, the [United Methodist] connection, and many others alongside to help us."

On the Sunday following the storm, some church members helped remove the horns and pipes from the church organ to prevent further water damage.

Soon thereafter, Precision Construction and Roofing covered the open roof with shrink wrap. According to the company's Jeremy



Most of the east side of the sanctuary roof blew off and much of the debris landed on Center Street.

Bates, this "creates a watertight membrane heat-sealed to the building. Under typical weather conditions, it will last for one year and is the best way to protect the church while we work with the insurance company on repairs."

*continued on page 2, see Repairs*

## NCJ Hispanic/Latinx leaders renew their call

by Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer,

Director of Connectional Ministries

From March 28 to 30, the halls of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston came alive with music, prayer, and a renewed sense of mission as about 60 Hispanic/Latinx pastors and lay leaders from the North Central Jurisdiction gathered for the Escuela de Ministerios 2025 (School of Ministries). This event was hosted by GETS's Hispanic Center, in close collaboration with some of the NCJ directors of connectional ministries.

The Northern Illinois Conference played a key role in working hand-in-hand with GETS to provide space, vision, and support. Together, they formed a team committed to creating a spiritual and educational refuge for Hispanic leaders in ministry.



Dr. Javier Viera (center), president of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, presided at communion on the gathering's last day.

Six NCJ conferences were represented: Iowa, Michigan, Northern Illinois, East Ohio, West Ohio, and Wisconsin. This vibrant gathering marked a holy moment for the Hispanic/Latinx community; a people who, amid the wounds caused by church disaffiliations from the denomination, uncertainty, challenges, and persecution, came together to seek healing, purpose, empowerment, and renewal.

The theme, "Renewing Our Call: Leadership and Ministry in the Wesleyan Spirit," echoed

through every workshop, worship service, and conversation. Workshops focused on renewing their calls to serve as United Methodist leaders and discussing strategies for building resilient leaders and communities of faith.

Bishop Dan Schwerin of the Northern Illinois-Wisconsin Episcopal Area welcomed the participants and preached a powerful sermon at the opening service.

"Every member of the body of Christ is of sacred worth. Every member of the body has gifts to bring, and every member of the body in the way we belong to each other has the power to make Christ known. We must be clear that racism is incompatible with Christian teaching," the bishop said.

He encouraged everyone to take their faith deeper and find their own answers as to why they are here, and that they will meet our potential for ministry with millions of Hispanic-Latinx populations who are under attack and need support and good shepherding.

A group of fourteen NIC pastors attended and committed to continue supporting each other. Pastor Roberto Moreno from The Movement Church in Franklin Park said, "It is wonderful to have these opportunities as

*continued on page 3, see Renew call*



From Your Bishop:

# Facts and contradictions and worthy is the lamb

by Bishop Dan Schwerin

I stood talking to a Christian yesterday, both of us wanting to find common ground, but in every direction our conversation went, our discussion broke down. When he asserted something, I could easily say and use the internet to prove that his claim was false. When I spoke, he used the internet and his media source to say that I—whether a bishop or not—was spreading falsehood.

We could not even agree about what was factual or what was fabricated by the other's media source. For me, true dialogue must be based on facts. He agreed, but we couldn't continue our conversation because we could not agree on a shared set of facts. Afterward someone told me I diffused a situation. I think I only confirmed his thinking. I tried with everything I had to see Christ in him.

Maybe in this whirlwind we are called to a third way: love the bundle of contradictions that you have become. Love your neighbor as yourself.

These days I find myself drawn to meditate on paradox, starting with my own. No, I am not giving up the facts I know, nor am I making a false equivalency that the other man's tenets of Christian Nationalism were as valid as my faith. But I am trying to return to understanding how knowledge of my own contradictions, and the paradoxes of faith, call me to humility.

The book of Revelation reminds us that "worthy is the slaughtered lamb" to be called

Lord (5:12). This same Savior rides into Jerusalem on a donkey in his hour of triumph—on the way to his death. This same Jesus taught that those who lose their lives will find them. The risen Lord tells Paul that when he is weak, he is strong. What is going on?

Esther de Waal writes in *Living With Contradiction* that "the mind will never apprehend the truth of paradox, only the heart can do that" (p. 24). Love understands that we are human, a bagful of contradictions.

Moreover, Parker Palmer writes in the *Promise of Paradox*: "if I am to live wholly and fully and freely, then I must accept that I am in the contradictions and the contradictions are in me, and all that is held together by a hidden wholeness" (p. 46). More deeply, my wife knows my contradictions, my inconsistently applied faith; she knows the Pharisee-troll living inside me—and she loves me anyway. Of course, the hidden wholeness Palmer writes about is the healing love of God bringing us through life by our growing in love.

The Lamb I must magnify is the love at the throne of my heart making me more lamblike.

I need humility and love to face the Pharisee in myself and the one living in my neighbor.

Each day I live to offend more and more, and clergy are telling me that for them, too, it is nearly impossible to create bonds of pastoral relationship. I can love my neighbor and my sibling in Christ without choosing silence in the face of racism or silence when facing the loss of due process and democratic norms. This takes me to my own self-differentiation—living by principle and staying as connected as possible.

These days clergy have one hour, perhaps, each month—and maybe a blog and increasingly brief messages—to create Christian community that must compete with countless hours of media and social media leading us away from community. Clergy cannot compete.

The kingdom/kin-dom of God travels at the speed of relationship. This is an *ubuntu* world, a world of mutual benefit. So make relationships with new and different people. Increase your knowledge of the Lamb. Read multiple news sources.

Acknowledge the

Pharisee-troll in the mirror. Love your neighbor as yourself.

Know that I am praying for you.

Your giving to General Church apportionments support the Episcopal Office.



## Repairs (continued from page 1)

This preventative measure also gave the church time to properly plan and execute the repairs.

On its Facebook page on April 13, the church posted a progress report:

- Eleven of twelve ceiling lights had been removed.
- Attic inspections revealed more water damage to the steeple support and staining above the chancel.
- Construction of scaffolding and a catwalk moved along quickly.
- Pews were moved, the piano taken to another site, stained glass was covered, the chancel was secured, and tarp was placed over wood features.
- Attic dampness mitigation continued.

As of that date, work planned for the near future included plaster removal in the southeast stairwell, complete coverage of stained glass, cleaning sanctuary walls, the

removal of tarps and insulation, and identification of damaged wood.

On March 30, the church began worshipping at the Cornerstone UMC building in Elgin. The



Bishop Dan Schwerin hears Rev. Dr. Felicia LaBoy describe how the loss of the church roof affects not only worshipers but the entire neighborhood.

Cornerstone congregation has been discussing the possibility of merger with Journey of Hope UMC and many Cornerstone members have been worshipping at Journey of Hope. The Cornerstone building has been put up for sale, but in the meantime, is serving as a temporary worship space for First.

Those interested in helping the church recover may donate to its Building Development Fund. Find more information at [fumcelgin.org/march2025stormupdate](http://fumcelgin.org/march2025stormupdate).

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### Clarification

The previous issue included an article about the NICUM property and casualty insurance program. The article stated that the program will not drop churches from coverage; however, churches must meet the conditions set forth by the Northern Illinois Conference and the program's participating insurance companies in order to stay covered.



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### Stay Connected

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

### Submissions

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

### Job Openings

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

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports this publication.



# We share for the good of the whole mission

by Bishop Dan Schwerin

This is the principle at the heart of our polity: we share apportionments for the good of the whole mission. We share clergy gifts and deploy them for the good of the whole mission. We share the gifts of the baptized for the good of the whole mission. Luke 10:9 would have us know that it is the locus of the mission's sharing where Jesus says, "God's kingdom has come upon you." That said, many of us see the whole as we see within a marathon—we see the people running alongside us. We see the workings of where we are in the race.

I feel compelled remind us that one essential task of the leader is to tell the truth about group context. More pointedly, I write to interpret where we are in the race by pointing out some facts about this current appointment season.



Some clergy have been upset with the appointments being offered to them. Some have candidly said they feel disrespected. We have heard requests for reconsideration of the appointment by clergy who do not wish to be sent to the places we have discerned. All of us are in this work of discernment together.

When making appointments we consider vocation, gifts of clergy, and needs in the context, all while in prayer. It can take many hours. Often, we consider someone's need to be proximate to a family member or sensitivities related to isolation for cross-racially appointed families.

One reality we all must work with is that our conference lost almost a dozen full-time appointments in the first six weeks of this year. That means these churches left charge conference season reporting to us that they were full-time appointments. By the time we worked

with them to care for openings due to retirement or requested moves, they were no longer full time. Still others that had been paying larger salaries but now could only pay near minimum. And still others were faithfully engaging in a merger process.

Step back and look from the span of a decade. How often did clergy leave your church when it could no longer maintain the compensation package it had been providing? Clergy, how often have you left an appointment and expected a raise in the next one, but left the church able to manage only a far lower salary for the next clergy person?

I don't mean to chastise. However, I want to explain that compensation packages have been dropping for years. This is a reality of post-Christendom. The new norm is not single-point charges. The new norm will be many sorts of experiments—co-ops, two- and three-point charges, mergers, new faith efforts, Fresh Expressions, and digital ministry. The new norm is experimentation and innovation.

Many clergy, myself included, grew up with an emotional contract of sorts with the connection: if I serve in one place for a few years, I will go to another place near where I want to live and will enjoy a raise. This year, when we

could not meet that expectation, clergy were angry and felt disrespected.

Friends, these dynamics have been in motion for a long time. The annual conference exists to equip your disciple-making mission as well as credential clergy, equip laity, expand health and welfare ministry, start new churches, offer advocacy, support camps, and equip disciples for the mission.

Rev. Christian Coon, our director of congregational development, compiled resources and is working on future resources for pastors and churches. You can find these at [umcnic.org/news/we-share-for-the-good-of-the-whole-mission](http://umcnic.org/news/we-share-for-the-good-of-the-whole-mission).

How you can help:

- Please pray for the annual conference and our mission.
- Please grow in your own faith and love in ways that make it larger in your life.
- Please make new relationships and partnerships that bear witness to the love of Christ.
- Please do all you can to experiment with new ways of fulfilling the mission. Help us learn.
- Lead your church to pay its fair share of the apportionments.

Friends, the gospel will continue to transform. The Holy Spirit continues to open doors. Everyone hitting the blocking sled will help us push through this moment as faithfully as we can. Thank you for your ministry.

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports the cabinet, the appointment process, clergy moves and providing development resources.



## Renew call

(continued from page 1)

Hispanic/Latinx pastors and leaders to come together to share our experiences and to learn together. This weekend reminded us that we are not alone—God is still calling us, and we still have a place in this larger family."

This Escuela de Ministerios was more than a conference; it was a prophetic response. In the face of challenges and uncertainty, there is still hope in the Hispanic/Latinx community, which is alive, faithful, resilient, and rising.

Pastor Audrey Rochet from Centennial UMC in Rockford said, "We may have been wounded, but we are not finished. This weekend reminded me that our call comes from God, and God has not stopped calling."

Rev. Dr. Javier Viera, GETS president, presided at communion during the closing worship service and sent out the participants to return to their communities not as the forgotten, but as chosen leaders, renewed and empowered to continue to lead and make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. God is clearly not done with the Hispanic/Latinx community!

## Seeking peace through sharing and caring

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

The evening of March 11 was one of warmth, unity, and reflection during the Muslim-Methodist iftar dinner. The Islamic Foundation in Villa Park hosted this beautiful gathering, which brought together individuals from two different faith backgrounds. (An iftar is a meal Muslims take at sundown to break the daily fast during Ramadan.)

The theme, "Seeking Peace Through Sharing and Caring," served as a powerful reminder of the importance of standing in solidarity with those around us. Within both Islam and Methodism, compassion and service to others are not just ideals but fundamental principles that guide our daily lives.

This shared commitment to kindness and community was at the heart of the evening's discussions and reflections. A highlight of the evening was the thoughtful and inspiring reflection shared by Bishop Dan Schwerin, who meditated on the Zulu proverb "a person is a person through other persons" and spoke on the importance of interfaith collaboration in fostering peace and understanding. Rev. Jane Eesley, a United Methodist missionary serving in Jerusalem, offered heartfelt words on the

power of compassion in action, and Imam Hisham Qaisi emphasized the profound impact of service in both faith traditions. Their words served as a guiding light, encouraging all present to continue the work of faith in action.

Since 2006, the Northern Illinois Conference and the Council of Islamic Organizations of

Greater Chicago have cultivated a meaningful relationship, formalized through a declaration of partnership. This commitment includes ongoing dialogue, engaging local faith communities in conversations on social justice, informing one another about issues impacting our

respective faith traditions, and coming together annually to celebrate, reflect, and reaffirm our dedication to one another.

Muslims and United Methodist Christians share a deep commitment to prayer, the pursuit of personal holiness, social justice, charity, and the inherent dignity of every human being.

In a world often divided, gatherings like this serve as a powerful reminder of our shared humanity and the transformative impact of unity in fostering a more peaceful and compassionate society.

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports The Committee on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns and other ecumenical work.



# Stronger Together Lunch-and-Learn:

A table set for connection at Annual Conference



by Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer,  
NIC Director of Connectional Ministries  
As a connectional church, we believe that ministry happens best in relationship with God and with one another. That's

why we're excited to introduce a brand-new initiative for our upcoming Annual Conference: Lunch-and-Learn.

This opportunity is more than just a meal; it's a chance to come together, break bread, and engage in meaningful conversations around ministry, mission, and community. Each Lunch-and-Learn session will highlight a specific topic or ministry within our conference, giving participants the opportunity to learn, connect, and grow together.

Our hope is that Lunch-and-Learn becomes a sacred space where relationships are formed across the conference. In a church that values being connectional, we need places where we can truly see and hear one another. Over our boxed lunches, we can celebrate what God is doing in different corners of our conference and imagine what we can do together.

Fellowship has always been a vital part of the life of the church. From the early days of

the apostles' breaking bread together to the potluck tables of today, gathering in fellowship strengthens our bonds, nurtures trust, and reminds us that we are not alone in ministry. These shared moments offer not just food for the body, but nourishment for the soul.

We're in a season of experimentation. As we lean into new rhythms and ideas, like Lunch-and-Learn, we know there may be a few bumps along the way, especially on the day when approximately 700 participants will receive a box lunch! We appreciate your patience and grace as we navigate logistics, and we are committed to learning, growing, and improving with each step.

Our goal is to create opportunities that foster connection, curiosity, and creativity. Annual Conference has always been a time for holy conferencing, worship, and discernment—but it's also a time to reconnect with familiar faces, meet new ones, and be inspired by the diverse and faithful ministries taking place across our connection. Lunch-and-Learn builds on that tradition, offering a new way to grow in relationship and in faith—together.

Whether you're a long-time member at Annual Conference or experiencing it for the

Grace  
is Sufficient

## Lunch-and-Learn

### Session Options:

- Board of Global Ministries in partnership with United Women in Faith
- Chicago Black Methodists for Church Renewal
- Commission on Religion and Race
- Creating New Faith Communities
- Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
- Wespeth/Compass Retirement Account Information

Learn more at [umcnic.org/2025-annual-conference/meals-2025](https://umcnic.org/2025-annual-conference/meals-2025).

first time, we hope you'll join us at Lunch-and-Learn. Come curious. Come hungry. Come ready to connect. This is your invitation to experience community in a new and meaningful way, and to be reminded that we are, indeed, stronger together.

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports the Office of Connectional Ministries.



## Constitutional amendments balloting

Annual Conference voting members this June will consider four amendments to the United Methodist constitution. These have been approved by General Conference delegates, and now it's the annual conferences' turn to vote on them. Here is a brief description of their purpose and significance.

### Ballot 1: Worldwide Regionalization

The United States-based United Methodist Church (and predecessor bodies) sent missionaries and formed UM churches around the world.

This created a paternalistic relationship between the church in the U.S. and the church in other countries ("Central Conferences.") In some regions, the UMC is flourishing. However, these conferences still have an unequal "child" relationship to the "parent" church in the U.S. This is evident in how the Book of Discipline is updated: the UM delegates from around the world can vote on these changes, but not necessarily follow them, because the annual conferences outside of the U.S. can adapt the Discipline to their contexts.

This amendment would place all conferences on an equal footing. They would share some essential parts of the Discipline while all being able to adapt other parts to our cultural contexts. A coalition of Central Conference leaders strongly commends this restructuring.

### Ballot 2: Inclusion in Membership

This amendment would add "gender" and "ability" to the list of characteristics that do not bar people from membership in a UM congregation. The amended paragraph 4, article IV in the

constitution would read, "All persons, without regard to race, gender, ability, color, national origin, status, or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments, upon baptism be admitted as baptized members, and upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith, become professing members in any local church in the connection."

### Ballot 3: Racial Justice

This amendment of paragraph 5, article V, aims to strengthen the denomination's longtime support for racial justice.

The new paragraph would read, in part, "... Racism opposes God's law, goodness and love and diminishes the image of God in each person. Fueled by white privilege, white supremacy and colonialism, the sin of racism has been a destructive scourge on global society and throughout the history of The United Methodist Church. ... Racism must be eradicated. Therefore, The United Methodist Church commits to confronting and eliminating all forms of racism, racial inequity, colonialism, white privilege and white supremacy, in every facet of its life and in society at large."

### Ballot 4: Educational Requirements for Clergy Voting Rights

This amendment to paragraph 35, article IV aims to clarify the educational requirements for clergy who may vote for clergy delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences. It has been the case that only clergy in full connection (ordained deacons and elders) may vote for delegates to General Conference. Provisional member clergy, local pastors, and associate

members may not. This amendment would change the qualifications to that of the level of required education completed rather than licensed or ordained status.

Find a summary sheet, more information, and links at [umcnic.org/2025-annual-conference/constitutional-amendments-information](https://umcnic.org/2025-annual-conference/constitutional-amendments-information).

## How the UMC Constitution is Amended

The United Methodist Church's constitution is printed in The Book of Discipline, which you can ask to borrow from your church library or purchase from [cokesbury.com](https://cokesbury.com). The church constitution addresses concerns like the articles of faith, inclusiveness of the church, how conferences are organized, and more.

Any UM individual or group can submit a proposed amendment to the UM General Conference, which meets every four years. A constitutional amendment requires a two-thirds approval vote in order to pass. If General Conference delegates do pass it, the next step is ratification by annual conferences.

The Annual Conference voting members (both clergy and lay) will vote on whether to ratify the amendment. The number of yes and no votes are recorded and sent to the Council of Bishops, who keep track of all of the recorded votes from each conference. The amendment must be affirmed by two thirds of all those who voted across all the annual conferences. The Council of Bishops will announce the results once all annual conferences have submitted their vote totals.

# Annual Conference Reminders



## Dates to Note:

- **Proposed legislation and historical documents posted:** May 9
- **Pre-conference briefings:** online June 4 (7 p.m.) and June 5 (10 a.m.),
- **Clergy session:** May 13, 9 a.m. to noon, at Woori UMC in Naperville
- **Laity session:** June 9, 10 a.m.
- **Celebration of Ministry** (ordination and other recognitions): June 9, 7 p.m.
- **Constitutional amendment voting:** June 10, 1:45 p.m.
- **Memorial Service:** June 10, 4:30 p.m.
- **Retirement Recognition:** June 11, 10:45 p.m.

Find updates online at [umcnic.org/AC2025](http://umcnic.org/AC2025).



## Innovative Outreach

This year's appeal will provide grants to churches that have devised innovative ways of doing outreach.

In their book *A Way Out of No Way: An Approach to Christian Innovation*, Stephen Lewis and Kimberly Daniel explore how Christians can innovate using practices rooted in our faith. They write, "A playful 'what if?' approach to imagining and refining ideas is necessary to develop, support, and amplify solutions that matter to everyday people given that the stakes are high."

In these times, "what if?" kinds of questions are more important than ever and our congregations and communities must begin to imagine, innovate, and foster creative ways of nurture, outreach, and witness.

To encourage this kind of innovation and experimentation, this year's appeal will encourage churches to lead worshipers out of their buildings and find new ways to engage with their communities.

Encourage your church to take an offering for the Bishop's Appeal. Bring your congregation's donation to Annual Conference for the Tuesday collection or donate online.

More information is available at [umcnic.org/2025BishopsAppeal](http://umcnic.org/2025BishopsAppeal).

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports the Annual Conference Session and special events



The 186th Northern Illinois Annual Conference members will gather from June 9 to 11 at the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center, under the theme "Grace is Sufficient." Worship services and plenaries, including the bishop's episcopal address, Bible study, and reports, will be livestreamed on the NIC

## Things to note:

### Registration

Registration for annual conference is open until May 23. All voting members and guests must register. There will be no on-site registration. Find the registration link at [umcnic.org/ac2025](http://umcnic.org/ac2025).

Through the registration site, clergy and lay voting members can:

- Register for the annual conference session
- Sign up to attend clergy session (May 13), laity session, pre-conference briefings, Lunch-and-Learn sessions, and optional meals
- Reserve a scooter if you have difficulty walking through a large convention center

The fee for voting members is \$155 (after April 30). Only credit card payments will be accepted. We are no longer able to accept check payments.

Guests should use the same link and choose the guest option. There is no fee for registration (except for Tuesday for the Lunch-and-Learn box lunch). However, guests must register in advance to help organizers prepare.

### Lunch-and-Learns

On Tuesday, June 10, from noon to 1:30 p.m., all registered participants (and guests who paid in advance) will receive a box lunch. Select among a number of options to learn more about a topic that interests you and take your lunch to that room. Join for a time of learning, presentation, and fellowship. See more information about Lunch-and-Learns in Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer's column on the facing page.

YouTube channel ([youtube.com/c/AnnualConferenceofNorthernIllinoisUMC](https://youtube.com/c/AnnualConferenceofNorthernIllinoisUMC)). Recordings will be posted for later viewing.

If you will be attending, be sure to visit the display tables in the Ballroom Foyer.

Look for full coverage and photos in the July/August Reporter.

**Grace is Sufficient**

### Childcare

Childcare is available during conference sessions. Our Saviour's United Methodist Church in Schaumburg, in conjunction Our Redeemer's UMC, is offering vacation Bible school and planned activities for children. Visit [umcnic.org/ac2025](http://umcnic.org/ac2025) for hours, costs, reminders, and registration. Registration for childcare closes on May 23.

### Blueprint for Wellness Screenings

If you are on the conference insurance program, sign up for a health screening, available on June 10. The screening provides valuable information by checking several signs of health. You'll receive \$100 if you participate! Make an appointment through your Health Flex account.

### Hotel Reservations

Reservations for the Renaissance Hotel are available at \$190 per night plus applicable state and local taxes. Find a link for room reservations at [umcnic.org/AC2025](http://umcnic.org/AC2025) or call the hotel directly at (847) 303-4100.

### Photo Directory

We're creating a new photo directory of clergy and interested lay voting members of the conference. Photos will be taken this year for a new photo directory on June 10 from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. in the Imagination Meeting Room. (We will not accept other photos for inclusion in the directory.) Clergy, please plan to have your photo taken at clergy session from 8 to 10 a.m. and save time at conference.

# Fill the Truck

## Mission Challenge Collection Drive

Midwest Mission gathers and sends tangible resources to those affected by disasters and the loss and uncertainty that come with it. The conference Board of Global Ministries and Midwest Mission will bring a trailer to collect your church's donations.

Supplies will be accepted on June 9 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and June 10 from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Find the Midwest Missions trailer in the east parking lot outside the Schaumburg Convention Center.

Bulk purchases may also be made to take advantage of competitive prices. Midwest Mission has wish lists at Dollar Days, Walmart, and Amazon. Find links at [umcnic.org/2025MissionChallenge](http://umcnic.org/2025MissionChallenge).

You may also donate money. There are three ways to do so: (1) Bring a check to Annual

Conference payable to the Northern Illinois Conference and write Midwest Mission #50000150 in the memo line; (2) send a check to the conference treasurer at 303 E. Wacker, Suite 2020, Chicago, IL 60601, and write Midwest Mission #50000150 in the memo line; or (3) pay through the conference's Prosper online portal ([app.prosperumc.com](http://app.prosperumc.com)) and note that the payment is for Midwest Mission #50000150.

More information including a list of urgent needs and other needed items is available at [umcnic.org/2025MissionChallenge](http://umcnic.org/2025MissionChallenge).



# Leading the Laity

## Celebrating Our Connectionalism



by Eugene Williams,  
Conference Co-Lay Leader  
On behalf of the Northern Illinois Conference laity, I greet you in the name of our Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ! Let us continue to embrace 2025 by recognizing that His "Grace is Sufficient."

The uniqueness of being a United Methodist is our connectionism. We are greater than the sum our parts. We share more in common than what separates us. We are connected to all United Methodists; and through Christ, to all of our siblings across the globe. This was never more evident than our recent 40-day journey through the wilderness to Calvary, ultimately to find an empty tomb.

Siblings, remain resolute in the words from "Pues Si Vivimos" (United Methodist Hymnal, #356): "When we are living, it is in Christ Jesus; and when we are dying, it is in the Lord! Both in our living and in our dying; we belong to God, we belong to God. ... When we are giving or when receiving, we belong to God, we belong to God. ... Across this wide world, we shall always find those who are crying, with no peace of mind; but when we help them, or when we feed them, we belong to God, we belong to God."

Know who you are, but more importantly whose you are: we belong to God! There are those who work so hard to divide us and sever our connectionism. Don't allow their actions to separate us from the love and joy that Christ provides. Philippians 4:11-12 tells us that in whatsoever situation we find ourselves, we are to find a measure of contentment. God is still in control, and His "Grace is Sufficient."

We look forward to seeing you at Annual Conference. Don't forget to register at [umcnic.org/AC2025](http://umcnic.org/AC2025). Guests and voting members are welcome at Laity Session. Go with Christ as we celebrate our connectionism and be well. Amen!



## JOY CAMP

United Methodist Christian Camp

**June 22 - 28**

Located at Camp Reynoldswood, Dixon, IL

Serving youth from ages 5th grade to high school seniors.

[umcnic.org/calendar/joy-camp-2025](http://umcnic.org/calendar/joy-camp-2025)

# CCFA recommends a new apportionment formula



by Kim Emery, Chair of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration

The Conference Council on Finance and Administration is recommending to Annual Conference this year a new apportionment formula.

CCFA created a task force almost a year ago to develop a new formula. This past January, CCFA approved the task force's recommendation. The Annual Conference Shepherding Team and the Cabinet affirmed their support for this formula in March.

The recommended apportionment formula for the total apportionment (conference and General Church):

- Churches whose income is under \$250,000 will be apportioned 8 percent of their income.
- Churches whose income is between \$250,000 and \$750,000 will be apportioned 10 percent of their income.
- Churches whose income is \$750,001 or greater will be apportioned 12 percent of their income.

Income shall be defined by the amount provided in the church's statistical report. It shall be computed by subtracting the amount on line 53 from that on line 55 (total income minus capital improvement funds). The most recent income information available shall be used.

Churches may not appeal the apportioned amount. Previous appeal and adjustment limitations will no longer be in effect.

The recommended apportionment formula is:

- Simple: a church's income from the statistical report determines the amount.
- Timely: it uses the income information from the previous year to calculate the formula.

We recognize that every church, small and large, has bills to pay. Smaller churches, many

of which are in more impoverished communities than larger churches, have fewer resources and opportunities. The task force used Luke 12:48 as their guiding principle: to whom much is given, much will be required.

The recommended process strives for equality in the formula. Whenever a church's apportionment was reduced on appeal, its future increases were limited to 9 percent per year irrespective of its financial capacity. This perpetual limitation has caused churches to fall further and further short of the amount they would otherwise be apportioned. The 9 percent increase limit has caused equity issues among churches.

The table below summarizes how the recommended apportionment formula will impact churches.

	Less than \$250,000	\$250,000 to \$750,000	More than \$750,000	Total*
Total Number of Churches	195	60	19	274
Churches with Appeals (last 3 years)	31	25	12	68
Churches whose Apportionment will Decrease	144	28	5	177
Churches with No Change	1	0	0	1
Churches whose Apportionment will Increase	50	32	14	96

\* Twenty churches did not provide statistical reports.

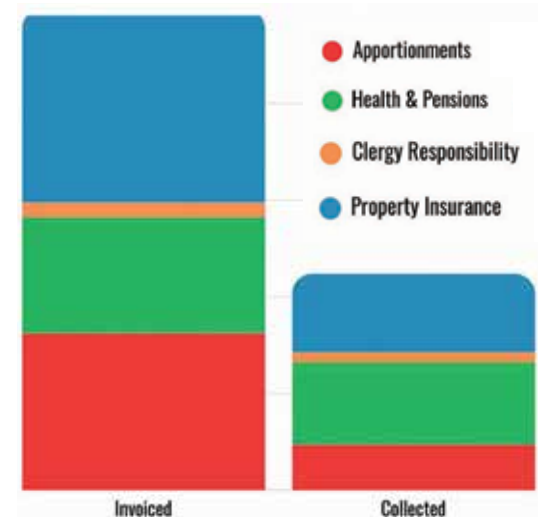
More detailed information is in the legislation, which will be available after May 9, 2025 to view at [umcnic.org/ac2025docs](http://umcnic.org/ac2025docs).

## Connectional Giving Update

As of the end of March 2025, our collection rates are as follows:

- NIC and General Church Apportionments: 58%
- Health and Pension: 69%
- Clergy Responsibility: 74%
- Property Insurance: 45%

Every contribution makes a difference in sustaining our conference's mission and impact in the community. If you are not sure where your church stands on their contributions, please ask your pastor or church treasurer.



KIDS ABOVE ALL'S  
**BACK TO SCHOOL**  
BACKPACK DRIVE  
JUNE 15 - AUGUST 20

MORE INFORMATION  
[WWW.KIDSABOVEALL.ORG/BTS-DRIVE](http://WWW.KIDSABOVEALL.ORG/BTS-DRIVE)

**CONTACT INFO**

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

## Glenview UMC and Nearby Fire Departments Donate Vehicles for Guatemala

by Midwest Mission and Victoria Rebeck

Rev. Marilyn Robb, a retired elder who worships at Glenview United Methodist Church, was reading a mailing from Midwest Mission when she saw a notice that intrigued her.

The organization, which sends tangible resources to those in need, reported that it accepts used fire trucks, firefighting gear and equipment, and ambulances in good shape and ships them to Guatemalan towns that need them.

Rev. Robb thought that Glenview UMC's Mission Team, of which she is a member, would like to participate. She had heard that the Glenview Fire Department was going to replace an older truck with a new one. On behalf of the Mission Committee, Rev. Robb visited the fire chief and encouraged him to donate the used truck.

Then she visited the fire chief in the nearby town of Niles and convinced him to donate a used ambulance.

The village boards of both of these towns approved the donations.

On the day that the Glenview Fire Department released its truck, Chief Tony DeRose said, "The village of Glenview and the Glenview Fire Department bid farewell to one of our trusty fire engines this morning, but it is not the end of the story for this reliable truck. After serving Glenview these past two decades, this tried-and-true engine will help respond [to needs] overseas."

"Thanks for all you've done for Glenview, old friend. And thanks to Glenview United Methodist Church and Midwest Mission for giving new life to this fire engine."

Chief Marty Feld of the Niles Fire Department said, "We are honored to donate an ambulance to Midwest Mission. Thank you to the Glenview United Methodist Church for blessing the ambulance and for organizing its transportation overseas. We hope this ambu-

lance continues to provide care and assistance for many years to come."

Once the church received the generous donations of each vehicle, it cleared the titles with the state. Church members blessed the fire truck and ambulance and then sent the vehicles (separately) on flatbed trucks to Midwest Mission in Pawnee.

The fire truck left Midwest Mission on March 24 and the ambulance on Feb. 14. The next legs of the journey entailed a trip to port cities, carried by Food for the Poor. From there, the Order of Malta, a centuries-old humanitarian and medical ministry, accompanied the vehicles to Guatemala.

"Everything we send is specifically requested and necessary, so everything is a blessing to

people on the other side," said Brad Walton, Midwest Mission's director of operations. "But on days like this, when we get to send items like fire trucks, we know that the impact is huge. The amount of lives saved because of this donation . . . you can't put a value on that!"

Rev. Robb maintains contact with the fire chiefs in case they have more gear to donate. She is also working to develop a relationship between the church and the receiving towns in Guatemala.

"Our church [Glenview] is excited about this," Rev. Robb said. "They are very mission-minded." The church plans mission projects several times a year and people enthusiastically attend them.

"Thank you, Glenview United Methodist Church, for boldly asking," the Midwest Mission newsletter story said. "It's amazing what happens when you simply tell people the good that can come out of the items they no longer need. The great folks at Glenview UMC did just that, and so many blessings came out of their conversations."



Rev. Marilyn Robb blesses the ambulance before it starts its first leg of the trip to Guatemala.

## Reimagining Church Introducing the Turtle Awards



by Rev. Christian Coon,  
Director of Congregational Development  
Some of you may know that I wrote a book and created a podcast a few years ago about failure. In the book, I

proposed the idea that an Annual Conference should give an award to encourage experimentation and failure—that is, promote risk-taking. Highlight a church that tried something new that didn't work out the way it hoped, but that also learned a few things in the process in order to try something else in the future.

It took me only nine months to realize, Oh, I'm now in a position to make this happen! So I'm introducing the first Turtle Award and the winner will be announced at Annual Conference.

### Why the Turtle Award?

I'm currently reading *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*, by Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky. In the chapter on building an adaptive culture, the authors en-



courage leaders to reward smart risk-taking. One section gave me an ah-ha moment: "Like turtles, people need to stick their neck out to move forward. One company we know gives a Turtle Award each year to the initiative that generates the most lessons for the organization, even when the initiative bombs."

I'm stealing this idea and asking churches to tell me about a risk they took since last July that didn't pan out. Fill out the form at [bit.ly/TurtleAwards](https://bit.ly/TurtleAwards). The Congregational Development Team will identify the entry that speaks to them the most and award it one of two \$500 grant/awards. We're grateful for the Midwest Methodist Foundation for sponsoring one of these grants.

The form will ask you to describe what you tried and what you learned from it. As we experiment and innovate, we want to learn from things that didn't work so we can try something different next time.

Certainly we can learn from ministries that have gone well. But, if you're anything like me when I was pastoring a church, you might hear of a wild success of another church and start getting down on yourself a bit and wonder why you weren't having success after success.

This award also connects with this year's Bishop's Appeal for Innovative Outreach. Read about it on p. 5.

How have you stuck your neck out? Failing at something doesn't feel very good, but in this time we must try new things in order to share the Good News creatively. Presenting this very award may be a less-than-great idea, but I'm experimenting and sticking my neck out along with all of you.

Let's turtle together!

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports Congregational Development.



 **United  
Voices  
for Children**  
**5th Sunday Appeal**  
June 29, 2025

For more than 45 years, United Voices for Children (UVC) has helped congregations serve Northern Illinois' most vulnerable populations through our partnership with Kids Above All, MYSI and Rosecrance. Through this collaborative giving effort, United Methodist congregations of all sizes can make a real difference in the lives of at-risk children, youth and families. Learn more: [umcnic.org/calendar/united-voices-for-children-5th-sunday-appeal](https://umcnic.org/calendar/united-voices-for-children-5th-sunday-appeal)

**PEACE WITH  
JUSTICE SUNDAY**

Fostering Just and Peaceful Initiatives

June 15, 2025 [resourceumc.org/pwjs](https://resourceumc.org/pwjs)



## This Life-Changing Journey We'd love to visit your church



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

The past nine months have been pretty busy. Trying to learn a new role and its responsibilities as well as memories of days gone by. Meeting new people and reuniting with friends of the ages. Continuing on a journey that has been wrought with excitement and challenge, discovery and remembrances. It's been all that and more!

As I have journeyed across the conference, I think the most interesting part has been the Sunday morning worship experience. One of the goals for this current Bishop and Cabinet is to visit and worship in every church that



is a part of the Northern Illinois Conference. And what a lofty goal it is!! There is no set order or plan for "who is at the top of the list" or who goes first. While the district superintendents will focus more on the churches of their district, the rest of us get to choose from all five districts. Thank you to those who have extended preaching invitations and to those who are still thinking about it. We (as Bishop and Cabinet) want to be with you even if it is not a special anniversary day! And it is very easy to arrange for that to happen.

When inviting the Bishop, there is a process that is outlined on the website ([umcnic.org/bishop](http://umcnic.org/bishop)). Please check that out because the Bishop's calendar is a little more challenging. For the rest of us, pick a couple of dates and send

us an email. We will respond accordingly. From time to time, it may require a little negotiation, but we will work with you as best we can. This applies to both preaching and for resourcing.

However, if we happen to just show up on a Sunday morning, don't be alarmed! After all, it is Sunday morning and most of us worship on Sunday morning. (Please be sure your church's worship times are correct on your website.) It is proper and appropriate to share with the congregation that we are present but wait until the end of the worship service so that it is not too intrusive. Invite us to bring a greeting (we are equipped with one!) and if appropriate, we can even do the benediction. And yes ...

WE LOVE PICTURES!

I'm looking forward to seeing you this Sunday in church!

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports the cabinet work.



## Exhibit on Native American boarding schools recounts a painful history

by Rev. Dr. Michelle Oberwise Lacock, chair of NIC CONAM

Led by a collaboration between the Conference Committees on Native American Ministries and Religion and Race, nearly 30 United Methodists attended Schingoethe Center Museum at Aurora University on March 13 for a private viewing of the "Away from Home" exhibit. This exhibit, on loan from the Heard Museum in Phoenix, AZ, looks at off-reservation and reservation Indian boarding schools—some established by churches—that strongly discouraged Native American children from practicing their culture, and how this affected Native Americans. Visitors viewed photographs and artwork, read interviews, and engaged in immersive opportunities.

Joseph Standing Bear Schranz, an enrolled member of the White Earth Band of the Minnesota Ojibwe Nation, presented additional information. He is a member of Riverside United Methodist Church and the founder of Midwest SOARRING (Save Our Ancestors' Remains and Resources Indigenous Network

Group) Foundation. It works toward repatriation, protecting sacred sites, educating the public, and promoting community-building among all people regarding indigenous lifeways.

Standing Bear shared moving stories about his own journey and about the great harm done to Native Americans at boarding schools. He also told of seeing and being subject to grave injustices to Native people. Standing Bear joined a United Methodist congregation to ensure that people learned about the Native American experience. "Everybody has the right to be who they are," he said.

Rev. John Alan Boryk, a retired UMC pastor, gave Standing Bear a 2020 U.S. one-dollar coin that features Sacagawea, an indigenous American woman, carrying her infant son,

Jean Baptiste. The other side of the coin depicts Elizabeth Peratrovich and Alaska's Anti-Discrimination Law of 1945.

"This coin will be a lasting tribute to Elizabeth Peratrovich and her relentless efforts to tear down the wall of discrimination against Alaskan Natives," Patrick Hernandez, formerly a U.S. Mint chief administrative officer, has said. "We will proudly produce this coin that honors her bravery and determination."

On May 4, the UMC will observe Native American

Ministries Sunday, which recognizes and honors the gifts and contributions made by Native Americans to society and church. If you would like a speaker to come to your church or obtain informational materials, contact Rev. Dr. Michelle Oberwise Lacock ([mlacock54@gmail.com](mailto:mlacock54@gmail.com)).

Your giving to NIC apportionments supports CONAM and CCORR.



Joseph Standing Bear Schranz (right), founder of Midwest SOARRING Foundation, describes his personal observations of the effects of Indian boarding schools.

## Clergy Appointments and Retirements

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

**Melissa Engle** (Full Elder) to Wyanet (¼) (Prairie South) from the Mountain Sky Conference. Effective March 15, 2025.

**Young Sun Lee** (Provisional Elder) to Woodstock: First (Prairie Central) from Dixon: First (Associate) (Prairie South).

**Denny Yocum** (District Superintendent Supply) to Rock Falls (½) (Prairie Central). Effective March 15, 2025.

**Keck Mowry** (Full Elder) to Lake Bluff: Grace (Lake North) from Morris: First (Senior) (Prairie South). Keck is following Cal Haines, who is retiring.

**Melissa Hood** (Full Elder) to Onalaska United Methodist Church in the Wisconsin Conference from Elgin: Cornerstone (Prairie Central).

**Tércio Junker** (Full Elder) to Bolingbrook: Friendship (Prairie Central) from Poplar Grove (Prairie North). Tércio is following KyungHae Anna Shin, who is retiring.

**Andi Voinovich** (Full Elder) to Voluntary Leave of Absence from Downers Grove: First (Associate) (Lake South).

**Grace Oh** (Full Elder) to Lanark (Prairie North) from Hinsdale (Lake South). Grace follows Marilyn Nolan, who is retiring.

**John Bell** (Full Elder) to Hinsdale (Lake South) from First Lutheran Church (Louisville, KY) (¶1345). John follows Grace Oh, who is appointed to Lanark (Prairie North).

**Daniel Diss** (Full Elder), appointed under ¶1346.1, to Asbury (Illinois Great Rivers Conference) from Los Gatos (California-Nevada Conference).

**Joy Hayag** (District Superintendent Supply) to Machesney Park: Harlem (¼ time) (Prairie North). Joy follows Heewon Kim, who is appointed to Schaumburg: Our Saviour's (Prairie Central).

**Rolland Hayag** (Licensed Local Pastor) to Machesney Park: Evans (½) (Prairie North) from Pecatonica (½) (Prairie North) while continuing to serve at Shirland (¼) (Prairie North). Rolland follows Heewon Kim, who is appointed to Schaumburg: Our Saviour's (Prairie Central).

**Kimberly Lewis-Davis** (Full Deacon) to Evergreen Park: First (¼) (Lake South) from Riverside: Woodside (¼) (Lake South). Kimberly follows Robert Houston.

**Jenny Weber** (Full Elder) to Orland Park: Faith (Lake South) from Director of New Morning Retreat Center in Hampshire (Prairie North). Jenny follows Jacques Conway, who is ap-

pointed to Voluntary Leave of Absence.

**Robert Houston** (Licensed Local Pastor) to Chicago: Resurrection (½) from Evergreen Park (¼). Robert follows Linny Hartzell, who started Voluntary Leave of Absence on January 15, 2025, and Addison Shields, who currently serves as Interim Pastor.

**Marilyn Nolan** (Retired Elder) to Pecatonica (¾) (Prairie North) from Lanark (Prairie North). Marilyn follows Rolland Hayag, who is appointed to Machesney Park: Evans (½) (Prairie North) while continuing to serve Shirland (¼).

**Kwan Chong** (Full Elder) to Retirement from Extension Ministry (Global Healing Mission in Barrington). Kwan was commissioned as a Probationary Elder in 1992 and ordained a Full Elder in 1997. During his ministry, Kwan served at Scales Mound, DeKalb: First (Associate), Chicago: Calvary, Wood Dale: Community, Chicago: Clair Christian, Hampshire: Zion, Telos Healing Center (Wheeling), and Global Healing Mission. Effective May 1, 2025.

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

