Farming community weathering difficult season

By Anne Marie Gerhardt, NIC Dir. of Communications

On this particular hot August summer day, the sun shines on the fields. Cows peacefully graze up on the hill. Playful sheep cluster in the barn. Hay bales sit neatly bundled ready for sale. Maintained tractors idle on standby. All seems right on Greg and Sheila Miller’s farm in Freeport, Ill., but behind it all are signs of a challenging season.

“Farmers are under a lot of stress,” said Greg Miller who has owned his farm since 1989. He raises cattle and sheep as well as grows corn, soybeans and alfalfa for hay. “Right now the economy translated with inflation is comparable to the 1980s farm crisis (which left many farms with heavy debt loads).”

Miller said the heavy rains this spring delayed and prolonged planting considerably. “We started planting late April and finished June 15,” he said noting that a dry July prolonged planting considerably. “We started planting late April and finished June 15, “ he said noting that a dry July

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Miller said the heavy rains this spring delayed and prolonged planting considerably. “We started planting late April and finished June 15,” he said noting that a dry July has added to the stress. “Feed quality is down by 30 percent, and we bale what we can.” According to the USDA, Illinois farmers planted 1.1 million fewer acres of corn and soybeans combined this season.

The Miller’s farm was the first stop on a day tour by Bishop Sally Dyck and the Cabinet on Aug. 14 to hear the concerns of farmers in northern Illinois (see the Bishop’s Column pg. 2 for more.)

Fourteen miles away at the Bardell family farm, chickens, hens, and pigs greeted the group on their second stop. The Bardells have been farming in Freeport since 1839 and have adapted to the unpredictable agriculture business through the years – slowly changing from a traditional, diverse farmstead to market gardening today by growing and selling vegetables, flowers, and herbs along with grass-fed beef and free-range eggs. The family participates in land conservation practices, is working to open a farm stand soon and has applied to become “certified organic.”

“We had 1,000 square feet of land that flooded every year, so we stopped planting there,” said Margaret Bardell, who helps manage the family farm with her husband Trale along with his parents. “We just moved the planting to fields that are flat and drain well. With 100-year floods happening more frequently, we can’t keep just doing the same thing.”

The Cabinet tour continued on for lunch at First UMC in Freeport provided by the Miller’s downtown Freeport restaurant, featuring their homegrown beef and food. The visit included an informational session with Dan Obert from the Caroll County Farm Bureau and Josh Richardson, a student at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

Richardson is working with Rockford and DeKalb districts to build educational programs around climate migration to help churches gain a better understanding of the acute environmental issues facing northern Illinois and around the world.

“With rising temperatures and precipitation changes, conservative estimates project a 40 percent yield decrease for corn and soybeans by the year 2100 in northern Illinois,” Richardson said. “There’s no quick fix solution and we are at the point of mitigation. Understanding what’s happening in your community and being aware that this is a global situation is really important.”

Both the Bardells and Millers are members of Faith UMC in Freeport and appreciated the show of concern and prayers from their Bishop and NIC leaders.

“It was a privilege to have them come out here and find out what the real problems we are facing are,” said Miller. “It was wonderful.”

Bishop Dyck gathered the farmers in a circle of prayer after each tour. “We thank you God for farmers and we pray for a prosperous harvest,” said Dyck. “We thank you for farmers who seek to practice earth-friendly agriculture endeavors. We appreciate their adaptation. May we all learn and grow from it. Bless their families.”

The Cabinet tour concluded in the DeKalb District at the Jonamac Orchard in Malta, a three-generational family farm, to learn about the growing agritourism business and how it’s contributing to the economy.

For traditional farmers, Miller said the future is uncertain. As for harvest, the Millers are praying for a late frost so they can salvage those crops that have survived. “It doesn’t look good, but only time will tell,” he said. “We are taking it one day at a time, sometimes hour by hour.”

DeKalb District Superintendent Brian Gilbert asked Sheila Miller what the church can do for farmers. She replied, “pray, lots of prayers.”
Improper voting at GC2019 voids key vote

By Heather Hahn, UM News

General Conference organizers have determined enough improper voting likely took place at the 2019 special session to nullify a key vote on how congregations can leave The United Methodist Church.

The Commission on General Conference — meeting behind closed doors during its Aug. 7-9 meeting — reviewed an investigation that found “credible objective evidence” of four ineligible people casting votes using the credentials of delegates who were not present.

The commission did not speak in public about its investigation’s findings and did not provide the names of the accused ineligible voters or the conferences they represented.

“‘When you are dealing with allegations, they may or may not be factual in nature so you don’t want to do any defamation of anyone’s character by inappropriately saying certain things,’” said Bishop Thomas J. Bickerton later told United Methodist News. “He is the Council of Bishops representative on the commission and leads the New York Conference.”

Ultimately, the commission wants the Judicial Council — the denomination’s top court — to weigh what the fraudulent voting means for the legality of the disaffiliation legislation.

The investigation findings come more than five months after a pivotal special General Conference, called by the Council of Bishops to try to resolve the longtime debate over the status of LGBTQ people. Since the Feb. 23-26 special session in St. Louis, discussions of splitting the denomination have only intensified and giving to general church ministries has dropped.

The denomination’s top lawmaking body, by a vote of 438-384, adopted the Traditional Plan that adds enforcement measures to bans on same-sex weddings and “self-avaowed practicing” gay clergy.

The number of ineligible voters was too slim to affect that outcome. However, the invalid vote count was enough to cast doubt on the disaffiliation legislation that allows, with limitations, congregations to leave the denomination while keeping church property.

By a two-vote margin, 402-400, the body substituted a minority report for Petition 90066, the originally submitted disaffiliation legislation.

Because voting at General Conference is supposed to be confidential, the investigation did not determine whether the ineligible voters favored the substitution or not. But under Robert’s Rules of Order — which General Conference uses — the possibility that invalid ballots might affect the result of a vote invalidates the entire ballot.

“Having found sufficient evidence that there were invalid votes that potentially affected the result of the vote, the living expenses was greatly appreciated by one farmer as it took the edge off of daily living. It’s also the frustration of having built something from nothing or inheriting the family farm and then not being sure that there will be anything left after this year or another one like it. An extreme sense of failure and letting others down, such as parents and grandparents, is common. Tears flowed along our farm tour. Hearts were heavy. What can you do? What can your church do? Two things.

First, you can pray and raise awareness of the farm crisis in our conference and across the Midwest. It’s not always covered in the news, so calling for prayers in our congregations raises awareness about “where it hurts” in our own conference.

Second, you can give. On November 16, 2019, the Northern Illinois Annual Conference will hold a special session. A call letter will be coming out shortly. It will be held at Kishwaukee College in Malta, Ill. You’ll drive by some cornfields to get there. More importantly, we will collect a special Bishop’s Appeal offering for the farm crisis. More information about how the money will be used will be available shortly, along with resources to better understand the situation. Make a point of learning more about what hurts your neighbor, the farmer.

We run our fingers across the map of our annual conference and ask where it hurts, knowing that it hurts in many places and many ways, such as gun violence and immigrants who are further oppressed by our nation’s lack of comprehensive immigration policies and other concerns. But let’s not overlook our farmers! — Bishop Sally Dyck
In June the Northern Illinois Annual Conference authorized Bishop Sally Dyck to form a task force to explore our future as an Annual Conference in light of the passing of the Traditional Plan at February’s General Conference Special Session in St. Louis. Named the “Exploration Team,” the task force first met in June and then in August at Barrington UMC.

At the first meeting, the Exploration Team divided into three subgroups: Education and Engagement, Theology and Vision, and Networks and Alliances. These subgroups met between sessions of the larger Exploration Team and presented their initial work in August.

The Education and Engagement Team is exploring ways to communicate and provide resources to individuals and local congregations about what the Traditional Plan is and how it will affect our Conference and our churches. This team is also considering how to engage the whole Conference in conversations to help us discern our direction as we navigate a rapidly changing United Methodist landscape. The team anticipates working with the Bishop and Cabinet to conduct a straw poll at each Charge Conference this fall to help this team proceed with its work.

The Theology and Vision Team is engaged in authoring a statement to define who we are as a Conference and the values we share, and to affirm our Methodist and Wesleyan heritage. The team aims to present an initial draft at the Special Session of Annual Conference in November, with time for feedback and comments during the following months. The team anticipates presenting a final version for ratification at the regular June conference session. The team hopes that the document in its final form will guide us and inform potential ministry partners about what we hold to be of ultimate importance as we move into the future that God has in store for us.

The Network and Alliances Team is active in discussions with potential partners, paying careful attention to the discussions, proposals, and plans that are emerging quickly around the church.

The Exploration Team began its August meeting by recognizing that numerous discussions—both formal and informal—are taking place and that it seems likely that multiple plans for moving the United Methodist Church forward will be introduced at General Conference in 2020.

In light of these many discussions and plans, the team affirmed that its most productive work would be to gather a firm understanding of who we are as NIC United Methodists and what our “negotiables” and non-negotiables are. The Exploration Team asks for your prayers and support as they engage in this important and timely work.

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**BMCR celebrates 50 years and looks to the future**

By Diane Strzelecki, NIC Communications Specialist

On Sunday, June 30, the Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR) held its Annual Worship Celebration at historic St. Mark UMC, a Northern Illinois Conference (NIC) Chicago Southern District landmark that produced Chicago BMCR founders and early leaders such as Rev. Maceo D. Pembroke, Sr., Rev. William T. Carter, Helen M. Fannings (Ammons) and Marie McFarland.

The celebration, which brought together members, family, and friends to lift up ordinands, retirees, life members, and honorees, was also a time to celebrate BMCR’s 50th anniversary with the theme “This Far by Grace.”

Musicians included the Chancel Choir of St. Mark UMC, and musicians and vocalists from Transformation UMC and Resurrection UMC. BMCR President Rev. Dennis M. Oglesby, Jr. provided greetings and the Rev. Albert Shears (retired) preached the sermon.

Selena Roberts, Lay Leader at Resurrection UMC in Chicago and longtime member of BMCR, said the service was inspiring. “If you had any doubt of how we could make it through another 50 years, Rev. Shears’ words were very encouraging and really motivational,” she said. “I could see others were motivated to continue on and do whatever we can to make sure BMCR is around to celebrate at the 100th anniversary.”

A member of Chicago BMCR since 1971, Sylvia Jo Oglesby organizes the annual event and was honored to be part of the anniversary celebration. “I’m blessed to be aware of our history and still be producing and serving and doing what the Lord requires me to do,” she said. “We had a wonderful worship program.”

BMCR was founded in 1968 with the mission “to raise up prophetic and spiritual leaders who will be advocates for the unique needs of Black people in The United Methodist Church.” The June 30 event celebrated such milestones as 47 years of the Maceo D. Pembroke Institute for Ministerial Recruitment and Leadership Development, 23 years of Keeping Hope Alive Ministries (HIV/AIDS Awareness), and five Episcopal Leaders: Bishop Edsel Ammons, Bishop Charles Jordan, Bishop Jonathan Keaton, Bishop Julius Trimble and Bishop Tracy Smith Malone.

Roberts notes that part of BMCR’s work centers on running culturally relevant programs for children and youth so they “see who they are and what it means to be a United Methodist.” It’s important to her to stay connected with the movement of African Americans in the UMC and the church’s policies and relationship to BMCR, but at the end of the day, it’s the word “United” in the denomination’s that is her greatest affirmation.

“We may have Korean churches, Hispanic churches, Caucasian churches, African American churches, but I see all of us worshipping together,” Roberts said. “We are worshipping a true and a just God; we are brothers and sisters in Christ.”

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**BMCR 2019 Awardees/Honorees**

- Life Members Honored
  - Rev. Dr. Norval I. Brown (Deerfield: Christ)
  - Darryl Harris (Chicago: Gorham)
  - Luonetta Jones (Chicago: Hartzell)
  - Sandra Jones (Chicago: Hartzell)
  - Betty Lewis (Chicago: St. Mark)
  - Valerie Tatum (Chicago: Engelwood Rust)

- The Founders’ Legacy Life Membership
  - (established in 2018 to honor BMCR founders in the 50th year)
  - Rudolph D. Smith (St. Mark)
  - Yvette Harris-Black (Harvey: Transformation)

- The Rev. Margaret Ann Williams “Joy of Serving Award”
  - (given to a clergy and layperson for rendering extraordinary service)
  - Rev. Darneather Murph-Heath (Elgin DS)
  - Vickie Powell-Bass (Chicago: Wesley)

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We can honor the sacrifices and achievements of our veterans in many ways, but one that resonates with veterans is the Honor Flight, which takes American veterans on “one more tour with Honor.” This was true for the Rev. David Rogula of Esmond UMC who was among the 106 vets on an Honor Flight out of the Dixon/Quad Cities area on May 30, 2019. The Honor Flight, funded by donations, sends World War II, Korea, and Vietnam veterans to Washington D.C. for a one-day trip to explore war memorials dedicated to them and other attractions.

Although he said he almost forgot to submit an application for the Honor Flight two years ago at the suggestion of a friend, the Rev. Dave Rogula was pleasantly surprised by a phone call notifying him that he’d been selected for the distinguished trip. “Taking off from Moline Airport at 7 a.m. began an emotional whirlwind that continues to this day, said Rogula. “The whole experience, and especially that 24-hour day of the flight itself, was one mountaintop high.”

Air Force Service

Stationed at Kincheloe Air Force Base, Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., Rogula served during the Vietnam era, from January 1962 to October 1967. A staff sergeant with the 507th Supply Unit on the Air Defense and Strategic Air Command, he supplied and set up the first computer equipment for expediting parts and equipment to aircraft deployed for flights covering the Northern Hemisphere. Noting the lifelong friends he made from various parts of the country during his military service, Rogula said he actually considered a career as a chaplain but the opportunity just never came up.

Incredible Day in Washington, D.C.

The Honor Flight began with breakfast served by the service. "Loaded onto three buses led by a police escort, according to Rogula, the arrival at Dulles Airport at 7 a.m. began an emotional whirlwind that continues to this day, said Rogula. "The whole experience, and especially that 24-hour day of the flight itself, was one mountaintop high.”

The veterans, accompanied by 100 volunteer guardians, visited the Vietnam Memorial, World War II Memorial, Air Force Memorial, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and Arlington Cemetery. Describing his "very emotional day,” Rogula said, "We were greeted with high fives, hugs, and thanks for our service; at both airports, there were crowds of children, teachers, [and] military servicemen and women in uniform welcoming and thanking us for our past service.”

Ministry

After his retirement in 2007 from the Iowa Annual Conference, Rogula began serving Esmond UMC in the DeKalb District, which he calls a “beacon within the community.”

Rogula is also a volunteer hospice chaplain for Serenity Hospice and Home in Oregon, Ill. As a Hospice Chaplain, he helped implement a program recognizing hospice patients who served in the military. The veteran receives a flag lapel pin and a certificate thanking the veteran for his/her service.

Rogula says he has been "blessed beyond measure” to mentor several persons throughout his ministry. His first confirmation class at Chana UMC included a confirmand who eventually became a United Methodist minister, the Rev. Ryan Sutton. In addition, a local assistant local pastor at the Brooklyn, Iowa church, from which Rogula retired from, now serves her own church, he explained.

Future Plans

When asked what keeps him going in his long-term service, Rogula replied that it is “the joy of seeing people respond to God’s care and realizing how very much each of us is loved by our Creator.” He credits his very loving and understanding wife and his family—son, daughter, step-daughter, and nine grandchildren—with keeping him going. He expresses the wish that he can continue ministry as long as his health allows.

Rogula is also taking to the skies again. Having received a free flying lesson as a Father’s Day gift in 2018, Rogula has become hooked, he said, and has been taking light aircraft flying lessons ever since. He hopes to complete the course by his 80th birthday.

“God isn't finished with me or the gifts He has given me to share in whatever capacity seen fit for whatever occasion,” said Rogula.

Honor Flight Network

A nonprofit organization recognizing American veterans, the Honor Flight Network flies veterans at no cost to Washington, D.C., to see the memorial dedicated to his/her service. At the end of 2017, some 200,000 veterans had been escorted to Washington. For additional info or an application for an honor flight, see www.honorflight.org.

*Linda Hendelman is a freelance writer and editor, a lifelong United Methodist and Lay Servant in the Chicago Northwestern District.

Voting (continued from page 2)

congregations in Mississippi already have used the legislation to exit the denomination.

The Rev. Beth Ann Cook, a 2019 General Conference delegate from the Indiana Conference, presented the minority report and serves on the General Conference commission. "The Commission acted with the highest integrity," she told United Methodist News. "I'm blessed to be associated with all of our members. I'm obviously disappointed that the substitute motion vote had to be voided. I will continue to pray and work for a gracious exit path. As I said at GC2019, I believe this is how we can best live out Christ's call to love one another deeply in the midst of disagreement." The Council of Bishops (COB) has voted to ask the Judicial Council to rule on the implications of the invalid votes discovered during the independent investigation.

We were also given two additional tasks, exploration of additional voting irregularities and collaboration with the General Council on Finance and Administration on the membership statistics of our annual conferences. We are naming two small working groups to fulfill this request," said Rev. Ken Carter, COB President.

Bishops preside over annual conference meetings where delegates are elected.

The sons of two different bishops, East Congo Area Bishop Gabriel Unda and South Congo Area Bishop Kasap Owan were named in a New York Times article as possible ineligible voters. However, Unda provided UM News a document listing his son as a reserve and Kasap provided a conference journal showing his son elected as seventh reserve.

Just before The New York Times story appeared March 14, the Rev. Gary Graves — secretary of the General Conference — acknowledged problems with credentialing and voting. He announced that "a very limited number" of people initially denied credentials to vote had later obtained them. At the time, he declined to give a precise number.

On March 16, the General Conference commission named 12 of its members to serve on a task force to investigate improper voting. The commission also authorized staff members Graves and Sara Hotchkiss, business manager, to negotiate with auditing firms to help with the work.

The Council of Bishops' executive committee soon called for an independent probe, and the commission hired attorneys with the Nashville, Tennessee, law firm Bass, Berry & Sims to work with the auditing firm, LBMC, in the investigation.

The auditing firm looked at available documentation for every authorized delegate, including voting lists, attendance lists, travel reimbursement forms and visa information.

Delegates to the multinational General Conference are equally divided between lay and clergy. The 2019 General Conference was to have 864 delegates, but 31 were absent — primarily because they were unable to get visas.

In the commission's report, several actions were approved to develop new registration, credentialing and voting procedures to make them more secure and to safeguard against unauthorized votes at future gatherings, including dedicated entry points to the plenary room and ensuring that names match the government ID in the delegate's profile.

The next General Conference will be May 5-15, 2020, in Minneapolis.

Hahn is a multimedia news reporter for United Methodist News. Contact her at (615) 742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org.
Youth campers say ‘thank you’

By Anne Marie Gerhardt, NIC Dir. of Communications

For one week in August, more than 60 children from the city could just be kids and enjoy the great outdoors at one of NIC’s two camps. The campers from 14 churches in the Chicago Southern and Chicago Northwestern Districts took part in the Chicago Metro Camp at Camp Reynoldswood in Dixon, Ill. This week of fun was made possible in part thanks to the generosity from all the churches and individuals who donated to the 2019 Bishop’s Appeal offering at the Annual Conference in June.

“The money donated is allowing us to do new activities, focus on recruiting new children and families, and work with new churches and startups through both of our sites,” said Casey. “We can't thank all those who donated enough. You rejuvenated us and all our staff and we are all excited as well as surprised by the generosity. We appreciate you so much.”

“Outdoor ministry matters,” said Becky Boggs, ORM’s office administrator. “There are times in both kids and adults lives that you just need to go outside the church and this is one of those places where people can come to experience God's love and grace. It's through generous gifts like the Bishop’s Appeal that we are able to continue this ministry and we thank you.”

College student Kelly Pringle from First UMC in Downers Grove spent many summers attending camp at Wesley Woods on the shores of Geneva Lake as a youth leaving an indelible mark on her. She’s been a counselor and co-leader there the last four years and knows the difference camp makes in the children’s lives. “I feel so grateful for everyone that has supported us and makes these camps happen,” she said. “It makes all the kids really happy and it changes their lives.”

Besides the fun activities, the youth at camp often find a closer relationship with God. “We talk about a relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit,” said Casey. “The back of our staff shirts says ‘preach the Gospel always, if necessary use words’. We try and communicate with the kids that we can be witnesses through our actions and how we live our lives; words are not always necessary to invite people in.”

ORM is already making plans to reach more children and families in the year ahead with a new Aurora District camp this winter at Wesley Woods. Casey also hopes to expand the metro camp to the Rockford District next summer. Lots of exciting things are happening at both Reynoldswood and Wesley Woods! If you or your church would like to get involved, email Jeff Casey at jeffcasey@niccamp.org, 262-245-6631, or visit www.niccamp.org.

NIU campus ministry reinvented

Starting this fall, the Wesley Foundation at Northern Illinois University (NIU) is undergoing a name change and will have a new appointed campus minister. In partnership with the Northern Illinois Conference’s (NIC) growing campus ministry, the Inclusive Collective at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), NIU’s campus ministry will become the Inclusive Collective - NIU.

The leaders of the Wesley Foundation at NIU and the Inclusive Collective at UIC discerned that God’s call to connectionism and partnership makes them stronger together. Bishop Sally Dyck appointed Pastor Kaitlyn Frantz to lead this next chapter of this vital ministry at NIU. Kaitlyn is a Master of Divinity student at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. She has spent her last year interning with the Inclusive Collective at UIC and will bring her skills and experiences from that context to NIU.

The ministry celebrates the Rev. Rosa Lee’s work at NIU and her dedication to students since 2015. Under Lee’s leadership, the ministry launched Hungry Huskies, which offers a substantial and healthy meal to one hundred students on Sunday nights in an effort to create community and combat student hunger.

The Inclusive Collective - NIU will carry on the ministry of Hungry Huskies and looks forward to continuing to host students for this “dinner party” tradition. “Building upon the success of Hungry Huskies, we will launch and experiment with several new ministries this year, including small groups, retreats, and worship,” said Frantz. “Many of these ministries will partner with the Inclusive Collective at UIC, allowing our students to broaden their network and experience God’s movement with new friends.”

Frantz says the Inclusive Collective - NIU ministry is about offering the good news of a God who likes you as you are, hearing the stories of young adults in DeKalb, and offering spaces of rest and dialogue that can grow and stretch students through the radical work of the Holy Spirit.

“We are so excited to see what this new expression of Methodist ministry at NIU will look like!” said Frantz.

How can you get involved?

• If you know a student or faculty/staff at NIU, reach out to Kaitlyn (pastorkaitlynfantz@gmail.com).
• If you are a student, join a community group, attend Hungry Huskies, and/or simply have coffee with Kaitlyn! See more at @letsgetinclusiveniu.org.
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Children from both the Chicago Northwestern and Chicago Southern Districts enjoy outdoor fun activities for a combined week-long camp made possible through donations from the Bishop’s Appeal offering.

Kaitlyn Frantz serves as the new campus minister at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb.

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Youth travel to nation’s capital for Plumbline Tour

By Amania Drane

Youth and chaperones from across the Northern Illinois Conference participate in the inaugural Plumbline trip to Washington, D.C. to learn about social and justice issues facing our nation.

Being the first can be challenging, but it can also be very rewarding. The Northern Illinois Conference has been sponsoring United Methodist high school students to go on faith-building trips to New York City since 2002. This year, plans changed to take our conference youth to Washington, D.C. for the first time. Participation was lower than anticipated, but the spirits were high and the trip certainly didn’t disappoint. High school youth from urban, suburban, and rural United Methodist Churches all took part.

The focus of the trip was on understanding immigration from a faith perspective. This was done through our session leader, Aimee Hong, Director of the UM Seminar Program at the General Board of Church and Society, a visit with Legislative Aides from Illinois Senator Tammy Duckworth’s office and Illinois Congressman Bill Foster’s office, a visit to Sojourners Office, the Holocaust Museum, daily devotion time, and much more. We also made sure there was plenty of fun and exploring the city by visiting the Ford’s Theatre, a cruise on the Potomac River, bicycling, a motorized scooter outing, and great food and discussions!

Responses from students, parents, and others were plentiful. Students said the experience made their faith more meaningful and it gave them a sense of unity with other Christians. Jaelyn Pirtle, a member of St. Mark UMC in Chicago, a Junior at Flossmoor High School, and a two-time Plumbline participant said, “A truly great experience! I enjoyed every second of it, even when the walks were long and the air was hot, I learned a lot and it was fun.”

Angelease Bunton, a Junior at Marist High School, also a member of St. Mark UMC, was a first-time Plumbline participant. More than a week after the trip, Angelease’s father, Euel Bunton, said, “Angel is still talking about her trip to the United Stated Holocaust Museum and the Q&A session with Congressional aides.”

Helen Salita, Campaigns, Mobilizing and Media Associate of Sojourners, a D.C. faith-based organization for social justice, said that she “felt particularly hopeful getting to see young people who really care, are invested, and want to make a difference.”

As our first conference-led Plumbline Tour to Washington, D.C., the trip exceeded our expectations. If your church and youth leadership are interested in helping our United Methodist youth grow in their understanding of social justice issues from a faith perspective in 2020, please contact Amania Drane at nisenterprises1@comcast.net.

HealthFlex Exchange workshops offered

To help you choose the health plan that works for you, the NIC will offer five workshops around the conference this fall. Wespath and conference representatives will lead the workshops to explain each plan and help you choose the best option to fit your family’s needs and budget.

“It’s very important to be informed and elect the plan you want for 2020,” notes Woody Bedell, NIC Director of Human Resources. “For example, if you are currently in a $1,000 deductible PPO plan and you do not make an election, you will default to a higher deductible plan.”

Workshops will be offered on the following dates/locations:

- Oct. 15, 9 - 11 a.m. Orland Park: Faith, 15101 S 80th Ave, Orland Park, IL
- Oct. 15, 2 - 4 p.m. Naperville: Grace, 300 E Gartner Rd, Naperville, IL
- Oct. 16, 9 - 11 a.m. Barrington, 98 Algonquin Road, Barrington IL
- Oct. 16, 2 - 4 p.m. Sycamore, 160 Johnson Ave, Sycamore, IL
- Oct. 22, 9 - 11 a.m. Mount Prospect: Trinity, 605 West Golf Rd., Mount Prospect, IL

In September, Wespath will open up ALEX, an online diagnostic tool to also help participants select the most appropriate plan for their expected medical expenses and budget.

Take charge of your insurance options and plan to attend one of these informative workshops!

Questions? Please contact Woody Bedell at 312-346-9766, ext 707 or wbedell@umfnic.org.
For more information and to register, visit www.umcnic.org/healthflex.
Laity Sunday October 20, 2019: “Therefore Go! With hope through purpose”  
By Mark Manzi, Co-Conference Lay Leader

Laity Sunday focuses on the celebration of the ministry of all lay Christians. A Sunday to commemorate, recognize, and honor the partnership between ministry and laity in every church. It may be a Sunday where lay leaders and lay servants lead the worship service.

The work of laypeople has always been essential to the life of the church and making disciples of Jesus Christ. During the Wesleyan Movement, both Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury carried on John and Charles Wesley's legacy of equipping and empowering laity to be in ministry. Through the ministry of the laity, more and more people made a commitment to Christ, were nurtured in the faith, were equipped for ministry, and were sent out to be in ministry with others. The movement was alive because the ministry partnership between laity and the clergy was also alive.

Today, when we reach out and receive new people in our churches by building relationships with them, are we also offering them opportunities to commit themselves to Jesus Christ? Are we offering opportunities for growth in personal holiness through a relationship with Christ and others? If we are to reclaim the movement and truly #SeeAllThePeople, we must be harbingers of HOPE—the core process of discipleship, the method of Methodism:

**Hospitality**—We go into the world in outreach and mission, offering hope through proclamation of the gospel, seeking, welcoming, and gathering as we offer (and receive) hospitality to (and from) those not yet in the body.

**Offer Christ**—We provide opportunities for people to commit their lives to God through baptism by water and Spirit and profession of faith.

**Purpose**—We nurture people in Christian living to help them find a true sense of purpose in life, as they learn what it means to live out their beliefs through acts of piety and acts of mercy, Christian conferencing, and regular participation in the sacrament of Holy Communion and other means of grace.

**Engagement**—Through engagement, we again offer and receive hospitality.

On Laity Sunday, we celebrate that all of us, laity and clergy, are called to go and make disciples in a world so desperately in need of hope through our humble service. Coke and Asbury lived it out in their own lives. Therefore, go! Need help? Looking for ideas? Please call/email your District Lay Leader or your Co-Conference Lay Leader. Visit www.umcnic.org/laity for more information.
ANNOUNCEMENTS
Bishop Sally Dyck announces the following clergy appointments and retirements for the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church, effective July 1, 2019 (unless otherwise noted).

**Discipleship Systems Training**
Sept. 10-12
Jeff Campbell, UM Associate General Secretary for Strategic Programming, will lead “SeekAllThePeople,” a conference-wide event for leaders to become more intentional about making disciples in their ministry setting. The event will occur six times in six different NIC locations.

For more info and to register, visit [www.umcnic.org/news/being-intentional-about-making-disciples](http://www.umcnic.org/news/being-intentional-about-making-disciples)

**NIC - UMM Spiritual Congress**
Sept. 13-15
Conference Point Rd., Williams Bay, WI.
Cost: $175 for all three days. One-day and Two-day options available.

“Changing the Game” is this year’s theme and the keynote speakers will be Rev. Norval Brown of Chicago and Rev. Mark Lubbock of Baton Rouge, LA., with musical guest Alleluia Quartet.

For more info and to register, visit [www.nicumm.org](http://www.nicumm.org).

**Brunch with the Bishop**
Sept. 21, 9:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.
Location: Wheatland Salem UMC, 1852 95th Street, Naperville, IL

**Welcome New District Superintendents**
DeKalb DS Installation Service for Brian Gilbert
Sunday, Sept. 22, 2019, 3 - 5 p.m.
Dixon First, 202 Peoria Avenue, Dixon, IL

**Rockford DS Installation Service for Fabiola Grandon-Mayer**
Sunday, Sept. 29, 3 - 5 p.m.
Beth Eden UMC, 3201 Huffman Blvd., Rockford, IL

**Chicago BMCR**
30th Annual Layit Awards
Sept. 28, 12 noon
Luncheon at Holiday Inn Matteson Hotel, 500 Holiday Plaza Drive Matteson, IL.
 Donation: $50.
For more info, contact the BMCR office at 708-940-3315 or email chicagobmcr2@gmail.com.

**NUFON Annual Celebration Dinner**
Sept. 29, 4:30 - 6:30 p.m.
Two Brothers Roundhouse, 205 N. Broadway, Aurora, IL.
Northern Illinois Justice For Our Neighbors (NUFON) celebrates its 8th year with this annual fundraising event. To purchase tickets, visit [nifon.org](http://nifon.org).

**50th Anniversary Memorial Service**
Sept. 29, 10:30 a.m.
For former NIC Pastor Rev. Bruce Johnson and his wife Eugenia who were victims of an unsolved murder in their parsonage.

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