

Mediation Team of UMC Bishops and leaders offers separation proposal

By Sam Hodges*

Members of a diverse group of bishops and other United Methodist leaders gather for a group photo in Washington after reaching agreement on a proposal that would maintain The United Methodist Church but allow traditionalist congregations to separate into a new denomination. Photo courtesy of the Mediation Team.



A diverse, 16-member group of United Methodist bishops and other leaders has offered a proposal that would preserve The United Methodist Church while allowing traditionalist-minded congregations to form a new denomination. The separating group would get \$25 million in United Methodist funds and would keep its local church properties.

Details are in a nine-page “Protocol of Reconciliation & Grace Through Separation,” released Jan. 3 along with an FAQ and press release.

The proposal — reached with the help of famed mediator Kenneth Feinberg, who worked on the federal September 11th Victim Compensation Fund — requires approval by the 2020 General Conference. Drafting of legislation is still underway for the legislative assembly, which is the only body that speaks for the 13 million global denomination.

But given the broad, influential coalition involved — including bishops from around the global connection and advocacy group leaders often sharply at odds — the potential seems strong that the separation proposal can end or at least greatly reduce the denomination’s decades-long struggle over how accepting to be of homosexuality.

New York Conference Bishop Thomas Bickerton, part of the group, said the contentious 2019 special called General Conference in St. Louis underscored intensifying divisions and the need for amicable separation.

“It became clear that the line in the sand had turned into a canyon,” Bickerton said. “The impasse is such that we have come to the realization that we just can’t stay that way any longer. “This protocol provides a pathway that acknowledges our differences, respects everyone in the process and graciously allows us to continue to live out the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, albeit in different expressions.”

The plan looks toward a restructuring of the remaining global United Methodist Church into regions, with flexibility to adapt church policies, including on LGBTQ inclusion. Meanwhile, traditionalists forming a new denomination could continue what they see as Bible-

supported restrictions on same-sex marriage and ordination of gay persons as clergy.

The traditionalist Wesleyan Covenant Association already has taken steps toward forming a new denomination, such as drafting a book of policies and doctrines. Bickerton and the Rev. Keith Boyette, WCA president, said the negotiating team’s assumption is that the new church would emerge out of the WCA. Boyette was part of the group developing the proposal. He said traditionalists have long felt that divisions in The United Methodist Church were irreparable, and that an amicable separation was the best way forward. “I believe this is a fair and equitable solution that puts decades of conflict behind us and gives us a hopeful future,” he said.

Also negotiating and signing onto the agreement was Jan Lawrence, executive director of Reconciling Ministries Network, which has long sought to remove restrictions against LGBTQ participation in the denomination. “As a United Methodist who is LGBTQ, my priority at the table was to make sure we addressed the full participation of LGBTQ people in the life of the church, making sure the answer was not ‘ask us again in 2024,’” she said. “The language needs to be removed now. I am pleased that there is opportunity here for that to happen in 2020.”

The new proposal would allow other United Methodist churches to form their own denominations, while foreseeing ecumenical agreements and cooperation on some fronts. Representatives of traditionalist, centrist and progressive advocacy groups joined with a handful of bishops from the U.S., Africa, Europe and the Philippines to reach the agreement. They promised to support it and no other.

“We humbly offer to the delegates of the 2020 General Conference the work which we have accomplished in the hopes that it will help heal the harms and conflicts within the body of Christ and free us to be more effective witnesses to God’s Kingdom,” said Bishop John Yambasu of Sierra Leone, who last summer began the private talks that led to the proposal. The group had the help of Feinberg, who oversaw the victims’ compensation funds after 9/11

and the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill disaster. Feinberg donated his time, as did other lawyers who helped the group.

“(Feinberg) has a deep interest in religion and the preservation of the public witness of religion, and this is what intrigued him and enabled him to say ‘yes’ to us,” Bickerton said. “We are extremely indebted.” Feinberg called it “an honor and a privilege” to be part of the negotiations.

“As a result of weeks of intense, voluntary mediation in Washington — ably assisted by Northern Illinois Conference Chancellor Richard Godfrey, and Attorney Wendy Bloom both of the distinguished Kirkland & Ellis law firm — and with the intense, direct and ongoing participation of all church representatives, a comprehensive resolution of all issues and principles has been achieved,” he said in a statement.

A clear catalyst for the negotiations was the 2019 General Conference, which saw passage of the Traditional Plan reinforcing restrictions on same-sex weddings and ordination of LGBTQ persons — but also igniting passionate, ongoing resistance in the U.S. by full inclusion supporters.

The tougher enforcement provided by the Traditional Plan went into effect Jan. 1, but the new proposal calls for holding “in abeyance” any administrative or judicial processes related to same-sex weddings or ordination of gay clergy.

“You cannot stop someone from filing a complaint. Neither can you stop someone from requesting a trial,” Bickerton said. “You can hold a complaint in abeyance. That’s our request.”

continued on page 3, see From the Cover

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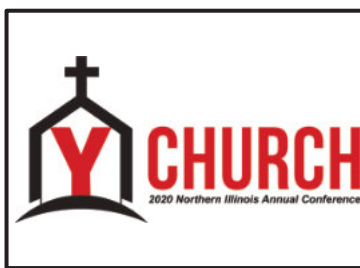
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INSIDE THE ISSUE

From the Bishop:



Road to Reconciliation... 2



Annual Conference Preview... 3



Bracelets Help Bahamas... 5



Grants Reach Rural Programs... 5



From the Bishop: Road to Reconciliation

The story of Esau and Jacob's "reconciliation" may be a prescient one for this moment in United Methodism (see Genesis 32-33). I'm sure you remember the story. Esau was pretty mad—homicidally mad—at Jacob for

stealing Esau's birthright and blessing. For decades, the two lived apart. But the time came for Jacob to return to the land of Canaan and in order to do that, he had to face Esau.

He spent the night beforehand praying and tossing and turning with the angel of the Lord (or whomever it was). When he awoke, he realized that he was wounded. But he persevered in spite of the report that Esau was coming with a mighty army of 400. Jacob was justifiably afraid about what would happen. He strategized about how to keep his loved ones safe, preparing for the worst but also for the best possible outcome. And he took gifts for his brother.

Much to Jacob's surprise, Esau came immediately to him and "hugged his neck," embracing him as the long lost relative that he was. There was some verbal and cultural dancing back and forth. Esau wanted them to go forward together; Jacob didn't want to do that. Jacob wanted to give Esau gifts, but Esau didn't see that as necessary. Finally, they parted ways. They were never best friends or very brotherly with each other. But there was just enough reconciliation that they were able to come together peaceably when their father died and, most importantly, not to live in animosity.

There was just enough reconciliation for them to separate in peace.

This may be the moment in United Methodism when we have just enough reconciliation for us to separate in peace. By this time, I hope that you have had the opportunity to read the "Protocol for Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation," which was a mediated agreement by factions within The United Methodist Church to end the harm we are inflicting upon each other regarding human sexuality. I encourage you to read it at unitedmethodistbishops.org

First, let me say that I come to this place of potential separation with a great deal of sadness. I have for decades believed that we could find a way as the church to bridge, if not resolve, our differences about human sexuality and the underlying dynamics, such as interpretation of scripture. We are not only divided, but are in a constant state of battle, strewing winners and losers along our way. The United Methodist Church itself was the greatest loser following the Special Session of

General Conference in February 2019. I think all would agree that no one won and that our witness to the world for Christ was seriously damaged.

A lot of plans have been proposed for General Conference 2020 since our special session in St. Louis in February. I think it's safe to say that most of them involve some degree of separation, too, so the Protocol isn't unique. What's unique about it is that it is a mediated agreement by the factions within the church to put an end to the war. Part of that agreement is that the other plans will be pulled back so that General Conference 2020 can act on this one.

A few other points to keep in mind:

- The United Methodist Church has not separated or split, as many secular press have reported through sensational headlines. The General Conference is the only body that can act on the agreement and that won't be until May 2020, if it happens.
- The United Methodist Church remains intact; in essence, it wouldn't split but allows others to leave if they so desire. The Traditionalists are expected and have negotiated these terms in order to leave. Others such as progressives could also leave.
- The agreement allows The United Methodist Church to be a "Big Tent" church, not forcing anyone to officiate same-gender weddings but also not penalizing those who do. Likewise, LGBTQ+ persons who already serve among us are not penalized.
- No one is required to vote! This has been a cry across the church during the last year as proposals have been developed and discussed. No local church or annual conference needs to vote in order to stay in The UMC. Only if a local church or annual conference does not want to stay within The UMC, then they would vote to leave.
- The agreement called for a moratorium or abeyance on all complaints, charges and trials against LGBTQ+ clergy or clergy who perform same-gender weddings, beginning now. Admittedly this isn't the official law of the church, but it is a part of the cascade of my own conviction not to pursue complaints. The Northern Illinois Annual Conference's legislation in June 2019 also calls for the bishop not to pursue complaints to trial and not allow any money or personnel to be used for complaints and trials. The North Central Jurisdiction's delegation also issued a statement that there be no complaints and trials regarding human sexuality across our jurisdiction.

- The trust clause will allow those who wish to leave to keep their property, as long as they join one of the new expressions of Methodism.
- A regional U.S. conference, similar but not the same as a central conference, will allow the U.S. to meet and decide on ministry not related to the global church. However, the global church connection will continue.
- An agreement that the U.S. legal system won't be used to acquire additional assets. Frankly, if an agreement like this isn't passed at General Conference, most likely it will be lawyers who benefit and our financial resources as a denomination, annual conferences, and local churches will be seriously jeopardized.

Some people who have read the Protocol are encouraged by this development and others understandably have concerns. We need to understand the Protocol as it exists and also discern how it might be perfected without jeopardizing the agreement so as to bless those who wish to leave The UMC.

My reference to having enough reconciliation to separate in peace is important in our discernment about the future. A compromise (which is what this mediation protocol is) doesn't make everyone happy or comfortable. But if it is perfected and agreed upon, it will prevent a legal blood bath or the total coming apart of our church. My question is: what is the alternative to some form of this protocol going forward?

Therefore, I encourage people to attend our conversations in February across the conference. The agenda may have shifted slightly, but it's still important to understand what is going on in our church and to hear from and have the ear of our own delegation to General Conference. See the sidebar for locations, dates, and times.

Jacob wrestled with God before meeting Esau. He acknowledged that he was wounded. Coming to this painful but potentially reconciling moment in the life of our church is wounding. But the pain and sadness that has been increasing and ongoing are also debilitating to our mission and witness as a church.

So Jacob went out and faced Esau whose face was that of God to him, and they had enough reconciliation to go their ways in peace. Maybe it be so for all of us in The United Methodist Church.

~Bishop Sally Dyck



Statistical Reporting

It's that time of year for local churches to enter their statistical tables from the previous year. Know that the NIC uses the statistics to calculate apportionments for your church. It's very important that we have accurate, up-to-date information so that your apportionments accurately reflect your church's ability to contribute to the conference's connection. 2019 statistics can be entered at umctables.org. The deadline is February 28, 2020 to enter these numbers.

For resources and more information, visit umcnic.org/statisticalreporting. If you have questions, contact David Quinn at dquinn@umcnic.org.

Road to GC2020 Conversations

Co-hosted by the NIC Exploration Team, NIC General Conference Delegates, and the Cabinet.

- Sunday, Feb. 2 at 3-5 p.m. at River Forest UMC, 7970 Lake St., River Forest
- Thursday, Feb. 13 at 3-5 p.m. at Woodridge UMC, 2700 75th St., Woodridge
- Thursday Feb. 13 at 7-9 p.m. at Schaumburg: Our Saviour's, 701 E. Schaumburg Rd., Schaumburg
- Sunday, Feb. 16 at 3-5 p.m. at Rockford: Christ, 4509 Highcrest Rd., Rockford

For registration and more information, go to umcnic.org/calendar and click on the date of your choice.



Annual Conference 2020 Asks: Y Church?

The Annual Conference Committee is busy organizing details and finalizing plans for the 2020 Annual Conference. It will be held June 7-9 and returning to the Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center and Hotel for a second year. The Clergy Day Apart and Session will be held on May 26. Location and details will be announced soon.

The Annual Conference theme this year is "Y Church" while reflecting on the scripture 1 Peter 3:15b that calls us to always be ready to make an account of the hope that is within you. Bishop Sally Dyck asks us to reflect on why church matters to you and why church still plays an important role in our communities.

"In times of uncertainty such as we find ourselves today in our denomination and the changes in the religious landscape in America, it's essential that we all ask ourselves what it means to be the church," said Bishop Dyck. "What has it meant to us? What difference does and can the church make in an uncertain and chaotic world?" Bishop Dyck hopes these questions and more will help us re-focus and stay focused on how to live out the mission that Jesus has given to us. How would you answer the question, Y Church?

Online registration will open Monday, April 6, 2020. In the coming months, more updates will be provided, but read on for information to start to prepare yourself for our time together with worship, business, and fellowship.

Presenting at Annual Conference

In order for the conference schedule to run smoothly, the AC committee has established a new procedure for organizations and individuals who would like to present at Annual Conference. All potential presenters must provide essential information to the Annual Conference Committee,

including contact information, reason for requesting an opportunity to present, a short description of the proposed presentation, estimated time for the presentation, and whether the presentation includes slides or video. To do so, please fill out the "2020 NIC Annual Conference Presentation Request Form" available at umcnic.org/AC2020. Priority will be given to requests received January through March. Final decisions regarding scheduling are made by the Daily Proceedings Coordinator in conjunction with the Annual Conference Committee.

Legislation/Historical Documents

ALL historical documents and proposed legislation for the conference must be submitted by April 1, 2020 to Rev. Katie Voigt at ACdocuments@umcnic.org (no exceptions). If you have any questions about how to format your documents, please feel free to contact Rev. Voigt at this same email address during your writing process, well in advance of the deadline. All legislative documents must be in the Action/ Rationale format with a maximum of 500 words for the rationale, be submitted as a WORD document and editable. At-conference documents must be submitted to her BEFORE the start of the annual conference. The author must submit both a printed version and on a flash drive or similar USB storage device (the device may or may not be returned), and the author must bring 1000 copies to the annual conference session for distribution.



Worship Leader

This year's worship leaders is Rev. Rich Rubietta, a Northern Illinois Conference elder who has been a "Circuit Riding *Musicianary*" for 20 years. Rich crisscrosses the Midwest each weekend to help create family-friendly worship experiences with your local church musicians. With the creative use of music, he helps children, parents, and grandparents worship happily together, crafting upbeat worship experiences. His mission is to use music to help bring people closer to God and to one another. Rich has a music degree from Northwestern University, an MDiv

from Trinity Divinity School in Deerfield, and has pastored churches in Freeport, Morris, Joliet and Grayslake in Illinois. Rev. Rubietta will be accompanied by One Big Tribe, a worship and concert ensemble with fluid membership, composed of talented musicians who share a vision for an inclusive church. See UMCalive.com for more details.



Bible Study Leader

This year's Bible study leader will be Rev. Junius B. Dotson, the General Secretary/CEO of Discipleship Ministries (formerly the General Board of Discipleship). Dotson is a nationally recognized leader, speaker, and author on evangelism and church revitalization. He launched "See All The People," the highly successful church-wide initiative that helps church leaders concentrate on intentional discipleship, while learning new behaviors around engaging their surrounding community.



Memorial Service Message

Woody Bedell will be delivering the message at the Memorial Service. Woody is the NIC Director of Benefits and Human Resources. He helps in the design, implementation and explanation of the benefit programs provided by the conference and Wespeth as well as managing the conference staff human resource needs. Previously, Woody had been the Benefits Officer for the Virginia Conference, Chief Strategic Relations Officer at Wespeth and Director of Benefits for the Reformed Church in America. Woody is a member of Libertyville United Methodist Church where he has taught adult classes and played in the contemporary band for more than twenty years. At one point, he says he was crazy enough to participate in the Hawaiian Ironman Triathlon twice.

continued on page 4, see Y Church

From the Cover

Key elements of the group's proposal include:

- The General Council on Finance and Administration of The United Methodist Church would provide \$25 million, over four years, "to the traditionalist Methodist denomination established pursuant to this protocol." The new denomination would give up further claims to United Methodist assets, including those of general boards and agencies.
- GCFA would escrow \$2 million to help other potential new denominations.
- To support communities historically marginalized by racism, GCFA would allocate \$39 million over eight years to strengthen Asian, Black, Hispanic-Latino, Native American and Pacific Islander ministries, as well as Africa University. Of that total, \$13 million would come from funds the separating traditionalist denomination chose to forgo.
- After the 2020 General Conference, set for May 5-15 in Minneapolis, there would be a special General Conference for the remaining denomination. "The protocol also references a plan which calls for a special general conference of the post-separation United Methodist Church. The purpose of the Special Session would be to create regional conferences, remove the current prohibitions against LGBTQ persons, and to repeal the Traditional Plan," said a press release from the negotiating group.
- A (non-U.S.) central conference would be able to choose with a two-thirds vote to affiliate with a new

Methodist denomination. The vote deadline would be December 31, 2021, and if no vote is taken the conference remains in The United Methodist Church.

- An annual conference, whether in a central conference or U.S. jurisdictional conference, also could vote to affiliate with a new Methodist denomination. A vote of 20 percent or more at an annual conference session would be needed to have the disaffiliation vote, and a disaffiliation vote would have to pass by 57 percent. The disaffiliation vote deadline is July 1, 2021.
- The leadership body of a local church considering disaffiliation could determine a threshold of a simple majority or two-thirds for the vote on whether to separate. Decisions about disaffiliation must be made by December 31, 2024.
- A local church affiliating with another Methodist denomination "pursuant to the protocol" would keep its assets and liabilities.
- The pension plans of The United Methodist Church would remain in place for all current clergy and lay employees, even if they affiliate with another Methodist denomination under the protocol.

Though the petition deadline for the 2020 General Conference is months past, church rules allow for special annual conference sessions to consider submitting additional petitions. The General Conference Committee on Reference also can allow late petitions. The group behind the new proposal has asked the Council of Bishops to request that the Judicial Council consider the

constitutionality of the still-being-developed legislation before the opening session of the 2020 General Conference. The group also wants the Council of Bishops to seek a report from GCFA on the financial impacts of the proposal.

The group noted in its FAQ that participants represented themselves and could not speak "for all of any group." After details were announced, both MFSA and the UM Queer Clergy Caucus stated that their groups were not officially represented in the discussions. The Rev. Tom Berlin and the Rev. Junius Dotson represented UMCNext, Mainstream UMC and Uniting Methodists. Those in the room consulted with "outer circle" advisers, as well as financial experts.

"The process was a journey," said Dotson, top executive of Discipleship Ministries. "It was filled with anxious moments. It was filled with moments of hope. I definitely felt the weight of these discussions."

All of those signing the protocol agreed to support the development and implementation of enacting legislation.

"The fact that we were able to come together from across the world, from across theological spectrums and define an opportunity to collaborate for the sake of the church we all love is a monumental thing," Bickerton said. He added: "My hope would be that the delegates to the General Conference would be able to employ that same spirit as they undertake their work in Minneapolis." To read the full proposal, visit unitedmethodistbishops.org.

**Hodges is a Dallas-based writer for United Methodist News. Kathy L. Gilbert contributed.*

Puerto Rican Methodists tackle earthquake response By Dan Curran*

A series of earthquakes in recent weeks has left the people of Puerto Rico in a constant state of unease and distress. The Methodist Church of Puerto Rico has shared in that unease, but also is responding to the situation through its own disaster response organization and in partnership with the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR).

Experience gained from the Hurricane Maria recovery has been an asset in this response, said Glorymar Rivera-Báez, program director for disaster recovery with Rebuilding Communities With Hope (REHACE). Rivera-Báez was in touch with UMCOR's U.S. Disaster Response team immediately after the earthquakes began.

"Although this is a time of great hardship, one positive aspect is that we already had a strong disaster response system in place because of our Hurricane Maria work, plus we have an ongoing relationship with UMCOR," she explained.

"The advice, trainings and financial support they have provided to the people of Puerto Rico will most certainly help us respond to this current situation."

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, more than 500 earthquakes of magnitude 2 or greater have rattled the area since Dec. 28. Of the hundreds of earthquakes, 32 were magnitude 4 and above, including the ones Jan. 6 and 7.

News reports indicate that the Jan. 7 deadly 6.4 magnitude earthquake — the strongest of the series of quakes — left a man dead and injured at least eight others, caused dozens of homes and structures to crumble, and cut power and water service to large swaths of the island.

Days later, the island is still struggling. More than 5,000 people are sleeping outside of their homes, with 2,200 of them in government-run shelters and 3,400 sleeping in parks, parking lots and other places. The Methodist Church of Puerto Rico has opened the parking lots of its churches in Ponce and Jayuya to families in need of a place to sleep.

On Jan. 6, the Methodist Church's central office staff and the REHACE disaster case managers, who serve people

living in 26 municipalities across the island, were advised to work remotely and travel only if it was safe to do so. REHACE staff and contractors are still repairing and rebuilding homes damaged by Hurricane Maria in 2017. All work projects eventually were canceled for the week of Jan. 6.

The agency's structural engineers and case managers then started the process of evaluating the structural integrity of the more than 600 homes REHACE has repaired during the past two years. Staff also assessed the condition of

been repaired with hurricane recovery funds.

"Our duty right now is to provide all the support, help and hope we can to our communities," Ortiz said. UMCOR has awarded a solidarity grant to help with immediate needs. An UMCOR special assessment team will be traveling to the island the week of Jan. 13 to conduct site visits and determine how best to support the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico and REHACE in their response efforts.

The church and REHACE have teamed up with Caribe

Girl Scouts Council and members of Puerto Rico Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster on a project to obtain tents and canopies that will be distributed to families affected by the earthquakes.

Meanwhile, the earthquake aftershocks are expected to continue for several more days and keep people on edge.

"The mental stress that these earthquakes are causing, and the tremors that don't seem to ever stop, is amazing," said Gusmary Blanco Mersie, the church's social media director and the mother of two young children.

"Everyone is afraid to sleep because they're worried about a building collapse, babies don't want to be in their rooms because everything moves and kids only feel safe in the park or on the street. The aftermath of this is going to be much bigger than we can imagine."



The Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Ponce, Puerto Rico, suffered extensive damage in a series of earthquakes that have rattled the area since Dec. 28. Photo courtesy of the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico.

campers and host sites where some of the more than 2,500 volunteers from mainland United Methodist congregations have stayed when visiting the island to work on these homes. Early reports indicate minimal to no damage so far.

On Jan. 8, Bishop Hector F. Ortiz, episcopal leader of the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico, traveled to Guayanilla — located on the island's southwest coast near the earthquake epicenter — to inspect damaged churches and residences.

He toured the damaged Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Ponce and the Methodist Church of Guayanilla, both of which suffered extensive damage. The stained-glass windows in the Church of the Resurrection in Ponce, previously damaged by Hurricane Maria, had

**Curran is a communications consultant for the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico and for UM Global Ministries.*

How to help

To support the work of UMCOR and REHACE, donate to umcmmission.org/give and choose Advance #901670.

Y Church continued from page 3



Bishop's Appeal

Bishop Sally Dyck has designated the Secondary School in Tanzania as the recipient of the 2020 Bishop's Appeal. Churches are encouraged to fundraise to help finance the second stage of the school's construction and bring their offering to the Annual Conference in June. Global Missions Missionary and NIC elder Rev. Young Seon

(Christina) Kim is leading the project, which is in the second stage of construction. The foundation, walls and roof are expected to be completed in the coming months before the rainy season. Rev. Kim hopes to open the school to

students by Jan. 2021. For more information and resources, visit umcnic.org/bishopsappeal.

Hotel Reservations

Room reservations at the Renaissance Hotel are open. The rate is \$152 + tax, per night. Deadline to cancel a reservation is 72 hours to arrival date at no penalty. To book your room online by May 22, a link is available on the NIC website at umcnic.org/AC2020 or you may call the hotel directly at (847) 303-4100.

Booklet Advertising

New this year, we will be selling advertising space in the AC booklet. Limited space is available. Full-page, half-page or quarter-page ads must be submitted as 300-dpi JPG, PNG, or PDF files: no WORD files will be accepted. Ads will be included on a first-come, first-served basis. The Annual Conference Committee will make the final decisions on inclusion. Special pricing for display tables will be available

for groups reserving ad space. Costs and details can be found on the AC webpage at umcnic.org/AC2020. The deadline for ad submittals is April 1, 2020.

Worship Schedule

Sunday, June 7 - Ordination - Bishop Dyck preaching
Monday, June 8 - Retirement Service
Tuesday, June 9 - Memorial Service

Also:

- Childcare will be available for those attending Annual Conference. Details will be available soon.
- Registration forms for the display tables will be made available by February 15.
- If you are interested in ushering, greeting or volunteering during plenaries and worship services, please email Annual Conference Committee Chair Alka Lyall at nilconfacc@gmail.com

Young girl's handmade bracelets help Bahamas disaster relief

By Anne Marie Gehardt, NIC Dir. of Communications

A dollar can go a long way. Second-grader Olivia Hoffman learned that selling her handmade rubber band loom bracelets for one dollar not only adds up but also makes a big difference.

The eight-year-old member of First United Methodist Church (FUMC) in Morris, Ill., was making her bracelets on the sideline of her sister's soccer game last summer when a gentleman offered to buy one in Green Bay Packers' colors for a buck.

"She was so excited," said Olivia's mom, Molly Hoffman. Then Olivia got an idea. "We went to church on Sunday and during prayers and concerns there was mention of Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas," said Molly. "We came home that afternoon and Olivia asked me if she could make bracelets in school or sports team colors or any combination of choice, sell them for a \$1, and all the proceeds would go to the kids in the Bahamas who were hurt."

Dorian was one of the most powerful hurricanes recorded in the Atlantic Ocean, devastating many parts of the Bahamas. Immediately after, pleas went out for help rebuilding homes and donations of new clothes and toys. "Olivia was very concerned about the children," said Molly. "After I put Olivia's bracelet sale on Facebook, we had more than 100 orders in 30 minutes!"

Olivia also sold the bracelets in the community at her mom's apparel store in downtown Morris and at the church on several Sundays. "We have shipped bracelets out to five different states," said Molly. In just a few short months, Olivia raised \$1,200 for the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) to help in their recovery efforts in the Bahamas.

"Olivia wanted to make sure all the money would go to help people. I told her that 100% of funds donated to

UMCOR go directly to relief and rebuilding efforts," said Colin Monk, NIC Disaster Relief Coordinator and member of FUMC Morris. "She spent many hours making and selling bracelets to raise the funds to help people thousands of miles from her who are in desperate need, and the church helped to promote her fundraiser."

On Dec. 29, 2019, the church recognized Olivia's efforts and gave her a special certificate of appreciation from UMCOR. "I didn't see a need for an award or anything," said Olivia. "I just wanted to help the kids and their families!"

What started as a small fundraising idea taught her daughter a lot, said Olivia's mom. "She learned how one little action can make such a huge difference and how positivity can spread so fast," said Molly. "She has learned that there are so many kind people who are willing to help others and if we all just help a little, what a difference it can make in the world!"

Olivia also was able to educate her classmates about disaster relief and many teachers at her school purchased bracelets. "This really opened Olivia's mind about how if just by herself she made \$1,200, think what she could do with a whole group of kids working towards a goal," said Molly. "She really saw the community come together and help support her cause and it was great for her and her siblings to see the kindness in others."

Olivia hopes her efforts will inspire kids her age to think about others and that there is no act too small when it comes to disaster relief. "I would tell other kids that they could make something they enjoy and sell them to make money for other disaster relief efforts. It doesn't have to be anything big—just something you love doing—think about all the families who are hurt by a disaster that you can help," said Olivia who hopes the money she raised will help

other families get clothes, blankets, shoes and help rebuild homes. "If 100 kids each raised \$1,200, that would make a huge difference. We need more kids to start making a lot of bracelets!"



8-year-old Olivia Hoffman, a member at First UMC in Morris, receives a special certificate of appreciation for selling her handmade bracelets and raising \$1,200 for the UM Committee on Relief to help children in the Bahamas after Hurricane Dorian devastated parts of the islands in 2019.



Ministry Makers

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

Grants help small town/rural churches serve their communities

By Diane Strzelecki, NIC Communications Specialist

Pastors and lay members from small town/rural churches across the NIC gathered last November to celebrate the ministries made possible through Martin Keagy and Planned Acts of Christian Kindness (P.A.C.K.) grants awarded in 2019.

Attendees enjoyed worship, prayer, and messages from Rockford District Superintendent Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer and DeKalb District Superintendent Rev. Brian Gilbert. The event featured leaders from grantee churches speaking about ministries ranging from after-school programs to elder care to literacy programs—even ice cream socials! Several presentations outlined building projects that made churches more accessible to people who worship there and live in their communities.

"What a refreshing reminder of God's diverse and meaningful ministry throughout our Conference!" remarked the Rev. Mary Bohall (Mendota: First) and Keagy Town and Rural Committee Chair. "Each church had a unique story to share about the impactful ministry provided in small communities helped through grant funding."

Sara Robbe, a member of Apple River UMC involved with their summer reading program, enjoyed the festival. "It's fantastic! This was the second year I attended," she said. "Just hearing all of the different things that different churches are doing to reach out to communities and seeking unique opportunities to bring people to Jesus—I

love going and getting new ideas."

This is the second year Robbe's church received a Keagy Grant for their three-week summer reading program. "Through building relationships in Sunday school classes, our pastor discovered that many kids weren't reading at grade level," she said, adding that her pastor reached out to her to help with the growing program because of her teaching experience. In 2018, 13 students were enrolled; 2019 saw 23 students participate.

"The grant was critical: it helped us purchase the curriculum and about 15 children's Bibles," she said. "We were able to purchase quality materials and some really good critical thinking games that we use in the last half-hour of each day."

Robbe is very grateful for the funding. "The grant was everything, otherwise we wouldn't have had the funds to start the program," she says.

Bohall has been spreading the word across the NIC about the grants "A lot of people think these grants are just for churches in the Rockford and DeKalb districts, but they are for any small town/rural church in the conference—especially those engaging in hands-on ministry," she said, adding that important work happens in small churches.

"Sometimes we have this picture that we need big, powerful churches with lots of money to do ministry, but our faith started with a poor rabbi and ragtag teenagers following him around," Bohall says.

"All we need is faithfulness to God and he will make it work and do the Kingdom work through us."

2019 Keagy/P.A.C.K. Grants Awarded

P.A.C.K. grants of more than \$4,500 were awarded in amounts ranging from \$250 to 500. Funds are part of the NIC budget. Keagy grants of more than \$25,000 were awarded in amounts ranging from \$500 to \$3,000. Funds are drawn from a trust specifically dedicated to small town and rural churches. (A full list of recipients and application deadline can be found on page 7.)



Nearly two dozen children participate in Apple River's summer reading program and thanks to a Keagy Grant the program will be able to grow.

Campus Ministry creates soul space

By Rich Havard, Inclusive Collective Campus Minister

At a time when more than 36% of 18-24-year-olds describe their religion as “nothing in particular” and more than 3,500 Christian churches shut their doors every year, it is no secret that the church is in major decline in the United States, especially among young adults. If we are honest, we can also name that mainline denominations like ours are experiencing the worst decline.

In the midst of this precipitous downfall, we can either shrink away and passively hope that something changes, or we can take bold action. The Inclusive Collective (IC - formerly Agape House), our NIC campus ministry partner at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), strives to do the latter, forging a new path by doing ministry in experimental and imaginative ways. In the past four years, our community has grown from zero to more than 70 students and young adults, many of whom haven't been part of a faith community in many years or ever.

This past year, the IC adopted a new mission statement: “Fueling young adults through Jesus-rooted soul work.” What does that mean? We strive to create experiences where people can encounter God in such powerful ways that they feel inspired and energized for courageous, faithful living. Experiences that stir them up to follow Jesus, disrupt the status quo, and co-create God's Beloved Community.

This past year, we also made a discovery: more than 100,000 students are in Loop-area universities alone, yet we are one of only two campus ministries that is theologically open, LGBTQ-inclusive, and rooted in a mainline denomination in that geographic area. Prior to

fall 2019, neither the IC nor the other mainline ministry offered regular worship. That meant that, in the third largest city in the country, there was no worship gathering created by and for students that was LGBTQ-inclusive and theologically progressive.

In an attempt to live out our mission more faithfully and meet a huge need, the IC launched Dinner + Worship in September 2019, thanks to a creative ministries grant from the Northern Illinois Conference. It has created a new worship experience that is compelling to our members. Each month, 50+ college students and young adults gather to eat delicious food, build community, sing stirring songs, encounter God, and explore what it means to follow Jesus. And we do this all at the Chicago Temple due to their immense generosity and hospitality.

UIC graduate student Mary Heath said, “For me, Dinner + Worship provided a safe environment to reconnect with communal spiritual practice. It gave me the chance to sing worship songs and take communion for the first time in years in a space where I feel completely accepted. I am so grateful for the opportunity to share a meal, conversation, and worship with such a welcoming and diverse group.”

The church may be dying in a lot of ways, but God is giving birth to fresh expressions of church, too. It is my joy to see the new form of Christian community IC folks are creating. If you want a peek at what God is doing, join us one Friday and watch God move.

For more information about us, visit LetsGetInclusiveUIC.org or follow us on Instagram (@LetsGetInclusiveUIC).



More than 50 college students and young adults gather to eat delicious food, build community, sing songs, encounter God, and explore what it means to follow Jesus at the Inclusive Collective's monthly dinner and worship gathering at the Chicago Temple.

Outdoor and Retreat Ministries News



Final Winter Camp

Bring your youth group to focus on relationships, spiritual rest and renewal, and the discipleship aspects of youth ministry from Feb. 21-23. High school youth will explore God's vision for their lives while experiencing fast-paced games, delicious meals and amazing activities, including a new Escape Cabin. Cost: \$99 per youth, \$69 per chaperone. The registration deadline is Feb. 9. Registration and health forms are available online at www.niccamp.org/retreats.

2020 Spring Confirmation Retreat

@Reynoldswood: May 15 - May 16

@Wesley Woods: May 1 - May 2

Summer Camp 2020 ~ Seasons of Jesus

From the cradle to the grave, we encounter Jesus through the seasons of the year, and through the seasons of His life. God encounters each one of us in different ways. This summer, NIC Outdoor and Retreat Ministries will be focusing on how we understand the life of Jesus through the seasons of the church. Or to put it another way, we will seek to understand why and how the church year teaches us about the life of Jesus.

J.O.Y. Camp - June 14-June 20, 2020

Grades 5-13 (\$489)

J.O.Y. Camp is designed to challenge and encourage youth in their faith journey. J.O.Y. is an acronym that stands for Jesus, Others, and You. This year we are focusing on the “J” for Jesus. Fun camp activities, Bible studies, and reflection explore ways to invite others to experience Jesus. We use music, multimedia, worship, Scripture, and personal interaction to create an exciting space for campers to share, participate, and experience positive attitudes of mutual respect.

Woodland - July 5-July 10, 2020

Grades 4-13 (\$449)

Woodland offers something for everyone—from sleeping in Tree Houses in the forests of Reynoldswood to canoeing, horseback riding, and archery. Evenings include campfires, foil pouch cooking, and a talent show. Of course, daily crafts and Bible studies, help us experience Jesus in a Christian community.

Chicago Metro - August 2-August 7, 2020

Grades 4-13 (\$449)

This camp, exclusively for the Chicago Southern and the Chicago Northwestern Districts of the NIC, gives urban and suburban campers an opportunity to experience wooded forests, wide-open grassy play spaces, horseback riding, swimming, archery, campfires, Bible studies and extensive opportunities to relax and bond with youth from different areas of the Chicago metropolitan area.

Total Camp - June 28-July 3, 2020

Grades 6-9 (\$449)

Total Camp offers Wesley Woods' most diverse camp experience. Fun-filled days include archery, swimming, kayaking, campfires, foil pouch cooking, paddle boarding, Bible studies, crafts, and a talent show! Of course, Gaga Ball, Volleyball, 9-Square-In-The-Air, hiking trails, and slip 'n slide are available to all.

Registration and health forms will be available online: www.niccamp.org/summercamps.



I am growing - now what?

By Mark Manzi, NIC Co-Lay Leader



Mark Manzi

A disciple is a person who knows Christ, grows in Christ, serves Christ, and shares Christ! In my December/January *Reporter* article, I asked you to consider if you felt that you were a disciple. I hope you said YES! and that you are thinking of yourself as a disciple and doing the things that will help you know, grow, serve, and share Christ.

Before we go too much further, however, I want to ask a few questions. Why? Why do we want to make disciples? Perhaps we need to go further back. Why are we here - in the particular church we attend? Data tells us that over 75% of us would answer: that question with this answer, I was "born" a United Methodist and have always

gone to a United Methodist Church. While being a life-long United Methodist is wonderful, and I am a life-long United Methodist, this may have also caused us to lose our "Why."

In his book "Start with Why," Simon Sinek tells the corporate world that great leaders know and operate from their "Why." Many people in business know what they do and how they do it, but few know why. Sinek says, "By Why I mean what is your purpose, cause of belief? Why does your company exist? Why do you get out of bed every morning? And Why should anyone care?" Aren't these questions valuable for us as well? If we asked each other why we are in church, what would we say? Would it be because of what Jesus says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very

end of the age." (Matthew 28: 19-20)

As United Methodists we have a history of going to the people and making disciples. John Wesley encouraged people to be in small groups and showed the power of these small groups to help members grow and mature in their discipleship. Small groups provided encouragement for following Wesley's General Rules, which are: 1) Do no harm 2) Do good 3) Practice the means of grace. Wesley also taught us to go. Go to the people. Meet them where they are.

As we continue on our journey as disciples and live out our conference's goal to grow and reach new disciples of Jesus Christ, I hope that you will ask yourself about your Why. This focus will help us to go to, connect with, and engage the people of our communities.

February/March Calendar News

Laity Convocation - "Unpacking Racism"

Feb. 8, 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Location: Sycamore UMC, 160 Johnson Ave., Sycamore, IL
Cost: \$10/person or \$40/church

Through this year's theme "Unpacking Racism," we will explore such issues as unconscious bias, the impact of racism, and how race shape's one's place in society. Includes Bible study with Bishop Dyck and a panel discussion. This is an opportunity to learn and support the conference goal: to live out the conviction that racism is incompatible with Christian teaching. Event registration closes Feb. 5 at noon. For more info and registration, visit umcnic.org/calendar/laity-convocation.

Clergy Tax Seminar

Feb. 20, 9 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Location: Sycamore UMC, 160 Johnson Ave, Sycamore, IL (Clergy and interested lay people are welcome.)
Cost: \$10 (lunch not included)

Sponsored by the United Methodist Foundation of the NIC. Ellen Feliciano, an enrolled agent and a master tax advisor with H&R Block, is the seminar instructor. Ellen has been preparing taxes professionally for ten years. Her areas of expertise include clergy taxes, sole proprietor taxes, investment income, healthcare expenses, and retirement income. She worked as a Project Manager in the insurance industry for many years before preparing taxes. Ellen is a member of Urban Village Church and serves as co-District Lay Leader in the Chicago Northwestern District. Register at umfnic.org/clergy-tax-seminar. Contact the Foundation office with any questions at (312) 334- 0704, ccooc@umfnic.org.

John Wesley Institute

Feb. 23-24

Location: Elmhurst: First, 232 S York St, Elmhurst, IL
Cost: \$150 (\$100 for students) includes Sunday evening dinner and Monday lunch.

Speaker: Dr. Ashley Dreff, author of "Entangled: A History of American Methodism, Politics, and Sexuality."

Learn about 18th century British sexuality and how American Methodists understand Wesley's theology, as well as American concepts of sexuality and the Methodist response. Dr. Dreff is Director of Women's and Gender Studies and Assistant Professor of Religion at High Point University in North Carolina. Participants are responsible for arranging their own accommodations. For more info and to register, visit umcnic.org/calendar/john-wesley-theological-institute.

Justice Songfest Workshops/Rehearsals with Mark Miller

March 7, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., Songfest at 7 p.m.

Location: Evanston: First, 516 Church Street, Evanston, IL
Cost: \$15. Register at faithatfirst.com/registrations.

Hosted by the Music Ministry and Reconciling Task Force of First UMC of Evanston, the day includes a series of morning and afternoon workshops and rehearsals with Mark Miller culminating in an evening concert.

Green Summit

Feb. 29, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Location: Sycamore UMC, 160 Johnson Ave., Sycamore, IL
With the theme "It Works for Us!" the Green Summit will highlight local church green efforts and encourage others to start their own. Includes keynote speaker Rev. Brian Sauder, president and director of Faith in Place, on "Greening our Faith Communities." Participants will also have a choice of workshops on Earthkeepers projects, and community organizing or the UMW Climate Justice emphasis. Register at umcnic.org/calendar/green-summit.

Fresh Expressions

March 12, 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Location: Barrington UMC, 98 Algonquin Road, Barrington, IL
Cost: \$20

Presenter Bishop Ken Carter of the Florida Annual Conference will cover such topics as including redefining connection and evangelism, fresh expressions of our Methodist faith, and missional relationships in our current cultural landscape. Bishop Carter is president of the Council of Bishops and co-author of "Fresh Expressions: A New Kind of Methodist Church for People Not in Church" (Abingdon Press). For more info and to register, visit umcnic.org/calendar/fresh-expressions.

Intentional Discipleship Systems Training

March 24, 25, 26

Cost: \$10. Online registration coming soon.

Designed as follow-up to the Discipleship Systems Training presented in September 2019, this conference-wide event will feature Rev. Dr. Scott Hughes, UMC Executive Director of Congregational Vitality and Intentional Discipleship, and Rev. Dr. Ken Sloan, UMC Director of Stewardship and Connectional Ministries. Leaders will learn practical ways to expand on their church's intentional discipleship system with a revitalized perspective on stewardship.

Tuesday, March 24

9 a.m. to 12 noon – Chicago Northwestern District
Park Ridge: First UMC, 418 W Touhy Ave.

2 to 5 p.m. – Chicago Southern District
Oak Lawn: First UMC, 10000 Central Ave.
(100th Street & Central Avenue)

Wednesday, March 25

9 a.m. to 12 noon – DeKalb District
Ashton: Reynolds UMC, 2496 Reynolds Road

2 to 5 p.m. – Rockford District
Harmony UMC (formerly Freeport: Trinity UMC) 2600 W Pearl City Rd., Freeport

Thursday, March 26

9 a.m. to 12 noon – Elgin District
Schaumburg: Our Saviour's, 701 E. Schaumburg Rd.

2 to 5pm – Aurora District
Naperville: Grace UMC, 300 E. Gartner Rd.

Learn more at umcnic.org/calendar/discipleship-training.

UMCOR SUNDAY
(Formerly One Great Hour of Sharing)

Through your generous gift today, you share the goodness of life with those who hurt.

UMCOR SPECIALIZES IN SOLUTIONS THAT HELP PEOPLE BECOME SELF-RELIANT

For offering envelopes and resources, visit umciving.org.

22 March 2020

continued from page 5

2019 Keagy/P.A.C.K. Grants Awarded

- Apple River – Reading Program
- Brookville – Easter Egg Hunt
- Capron UMC – Neighbor's Night
- Cedarville UMC – Caring for Others, TOMY's Project, and Summer Fun Thursday
- Elizabeth UMC – Messy Church and Backpack Food Ministry
- Esmond UMC – Generator Project and School Supplies Ministry
- Forreston UMC – Adventure Club
- Harmon UMC – Vacation Bible School
- Marseilles UMC – Summer Feeding Program
- Mendota: First UMC – Henderson Project
- Mendota: Zion UMC – Vacation Bible School and Sweet Corn
- Festival Outreach
- Mt. Morris UMC – Community Vacation Bible School
- Norway UMC – After the Bell Connections
- Oregon UMC – Feed the Families Program
- Red Oak – Building Project
- Tampico UMC – Vacation Bible School
- Walnut: Red Oak – Children and Community Outreach
- Warren UMC – Community Meal
- Waterman – Fun Day for All Kids, Christmas Dinner, and Ice Cream Social
- Wauconda UMC – Acts of Kindness Ministry
- Wyanet UMC – Boy Scouts of America

Applications for 2020 grants are due March 15. Find the forms at umcnic.org/congregationalgrants.



DYK???

Churches go the extra mile

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

When I was denomination shopping as a young adult, one of the aspects of The United Methodist Church that attracted me was the balance between personal and social holiness. This tightrope between personal spiritual development and faith in action drew me in.

At the time, I wasn't aware of how young The United Methodist Church was as a denomination. Although it was just over 20 years old, the church was steeped in Methodist traditions and shaped by a deep understanding of discipleship.

Today we are at the crossroads. Although we are still young by denominational standards, we are now talking about reforming the church in the coming years. Key to the journey is the question of how we continue to live into our Wesleyan heritage of social and personal holiness. As we plan the future, we look at the best of who we are and find ways to capture those core values for the next expression of our beloved United Methodist Church.

In the Northern Illinois Conference, we live out this

expression in many ways: campus ministries, camps, work with immigrant populations through Justice for our Neighbors, local church homeless ministries, food pantries, prison ministry, sending out missionaries, interfaith work, inclusion, and engaging in actions to change systems that are unjust.

Another way we engage is through giving. Apportionments are our "first" ask as a conference. The funds in this first response to our faith support the ministries noted above, provide the support and infrastructure for our churches and our pastors, and extend beyond our conference into our denominational witness. These "first mile" gifts provide the foundation for all of our general work around the world.

Our "second mile" giving includes twelve Special Sunday Offerings, the Rainbow Covenant and our Annual Conference Bishop's Appeal. These justice and mercy efforts supplement the first mile efforts and take us into a broader and deeper witness as they help us balance our internal and external actions as disciples.

This past year was one of the most financially challenging on record in the Northern Illinois

Conference. With the unrest in the denomination, many churches have experienced financial repercussions. Some churches have lost members; others are uncertain or angry and have withheld support. As apportionments have dwindled, we have cut back on conference ministry and our support of the general church has been severely limited.

Yet, we have been strong and faithful in our care for others, in our heart for missions. We have clung to our core value of reaching out to the marginalized and engaging both mercy and justice. In 2019 we gave over \$500,000 to these efforts beyond our obligations in apportionments. We collected more than \$80,000 in special appeals. This was lower than our 2018 giving by \$96,000 but is still a strong witness to our faith.

Thank you to all who continue to take pride in the witness of the UMC. As the future becomes clearer throughout 2020, may our resolve to be those who make a difference in the world continue to be a high priority through our actions and gifts.

For apportionment and giving resources, visit umcnic.org/apportionments.

Appointments - January Announcements

Bishop Sally Dyck announces the following clergy appointments for the Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church effective July 1, 2020 (unless otherwise noted):

Richard Carlson (Elder) to retirement from Elgin: First Elgin District). Rick became a probationary member in 1982 and a full Elder in 1984. During his ministry he served at Crystal Lake: First (Associate), South Elgin: Community, Dixon: First, Bolingbrook: Crossroads of Faith, Barrington: Salem and Elgin First.

Jan Comerford (Elder) to retirement from South Elgin: Community (Elgin District). Jan became a probationary member in 1990 and a full Elder in 1996. During her ministry she served Kirkland, Hinsdale (Associate), Genoa: Faith, McHenry: First, Belvidere: First (Associate) and South Elgin: Community.

Cecelia Swafford Harris (Elder) to retirement from Waukegan: First (Elgin District). Cecelia became a probationary member in 1994 and a full Elder in 1997. During her ministry she served Chicago: St. Mark (Associate), Hazelcrest: Community, Chicago: St. Matthew and Waukegan: First.

Charlette (Char) Hoffmann (Elder) to retirement from Antioch (Elgin District). Char became a probationary member in 1996 and full Elder in 1998. During her ministry Char served Polo: Emmanuel, Evergreen Park: First, River Forest, Villa Park: Calvary and Antioch.

Kolleen Klemmenson (Elder) to retirement from appointment under ¶ 345 to another denomination. Kolleen became a probationary member in 1993 and a full Elder in 1996. During Kolleen's ministry she served Ohio: Red Oak, Elmhurst: Christ and Albany before beginning her service with the United Presbyterian USA.

Jerry Martz (Local Pastor) to retirement from appointment to Brookville/Elkhorn (DeKalb District) where he served since 2008.

Mary Steinwandt (Local Pastor) to retirement from Mokena (Aurora District) where she served since 2016.

Irene Taylor (Elder) to retirement from DesPlaines: First (Elgin District). Irene became a probationary member in 1998 through recognition of Orders from the Progressive Baptist Church, and a full Elder in 2001. During Irene's ministry she served Riverdale: Ivanhoe, Waukegan: Living Faith and DesPlaines: First.



CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY MONTH

February is Black History Month, a time to celebrate the historical contributions of African Americans to the worship life, mission, and ministry of the church. While the month-long celebration recognizes progress made, it also reawakens us to continuing issues of poverty, discrimination, and inequality. For DVD and book resources available to borrow from the United Media Resource Center, visit umcnic.org/news/black-history-month-resources.

Ash Wednesday - Feb. 26

Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday, is a time of repentance, fasting and preparation for the coming of Easter. It is a time of self-examination and reflection. To find devotionals, activities for families, inspiring stories and information about our faith for the observance of the Lenten season, visit resourceumc.org/en/seasonal/lent



CORRECTION: In the November 2019 Reporter in the Bishop's Column pg. 2, we regret incorrectly reporting that Rev. Jason Turner would be attending training with the Air Force and National Guard. Turner is a Captain and chaplain in the Army Reserve, 472nd Chemical Battalion (headquartered in Chicago).

Job Openings

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

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Visit www.umcnic.org and scroll down and click on "Sign up for our Newsletter" to enter your name and email.

How to Contact Us

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

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