

Navigating Uncharted Waters - 2018 Northern Illinois Annual Conference report

By Anne Marie Gerhardt, Dir. of Communications

“We can be a hope for the world,” said Bishop Sally Dyck in her Episcopal Address to members of the 179th Northern Illinois Annual Conference session, which took place June 3-5 in St. Charles, Ill. The theme for this year’s annual conference was “Navigating Uncharted Waters” with a focus on Romans 5:3b-4: “trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope.”

Bishop Dyck said that in nearly every aspect of our lives these days we are navigating uncharted waters or territory but she says a focus on our mission of “making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world” will continue to guide us.

“Our unity is based on Jesus Christ and Christ’s mission for us,” she said emphasizing that the church can be the hope for our communities and the world. “I believe that the UMC is better together rather than split apart, separated by a lack of agreement, and divided in its mission.”

Service of Commissioning and Ordination

The three-day conference opened Sunday afternoon with the Service of Commissioning and Ordination. Bishop Sally Dyck ordained one deacon and four elders. She commissioned 10 persons for the work of an elder and two persons for the work of a deacon.

She also consecrated two deaconesses. A new, special addition to the service were two baptisms. Bishop Dyck and Assistant the Bishop Rev. Arlene Christopherson baptized two infants, Emmanuel Yura Na Cho, daughter of Rev. Hyemin Na and Rev. Daniel Cho, and Alexander Michaelthomas Smith, son of Rev. Matthew and Lisa Smith.

Laity Address

One of the three NIC Co-Lay Leaders Mark Manzi delivered the Laity Address. “We are in a time of liminality. Many of the old ways we did church don’t work as well today,” said Manzi. “New people coming into your town aren’t just looking for the cross and flame to figure out



where they will be going to church if they will be going to church at all. The challenges we have are adaptive challenges.”

Manzi also highlighted the February 2018 Laity Convocation with keynote speaker Junius Dotson, General Secretary of Discipleship Ministries. “Dotson focused on explaining the importance of knowing our “why” as he described “how” to develop an intentional discipleship system.”

Retirement Service

During the retirement service, 18 retiring clergy and local pastors received recognition for their combined 456 years of service. The Rev. Harlene Holden passed a map and stole to newly ordained Rev. Kyungsu Park.

“Today we share these maps with you offering our wisdom as a foundation and knowing that you will continue to chart both the smooth seas and rough waters,” said Holden. “As we offer you these gifts, we offer you the mantle from our generation to be carried forward by yours.



Memorial Service

During the Memorial Service on June 5, we celebrated and remembered 34 clergy, spouses and lay members who have died over the past year.

Worship leader Gary Rand invited participants to write down a message from a loved one – words of encouragement or something they would say to us today. The messages were placed in a bottle and later exchanged with one another. “These messages are from those who have loved us,” said Rand. “They are messages that can sustain us, challenge us, guide us and comfort us.”



The Rev. Tim Casey, senior pastor at Channahon UMC, delivered the service’s message and shared how faith sustained him following a car accident in 1997 that left him paralyzed from the chest down. "Faith isn't magic. It's about confidence and certitude," said Casey. "Faith has its heights and its depths but it is what moves us along.”

Bible Reflections

This year two speakers presented Bible reflections. The Rev. John McCullough, President and CEO of Church World Service raised awareness of the Global Migration Crisis.



“The world is experiencing the worst migration crisis in history, with more than 65 million people displaced, 24 million of them refugees,” said McCullough who added that scripture and contemporary history details human migration in every year of existence. McCullough asked how do we as people of faith respond?

“I believe the Bible teaches that ours is a God of exquisite hospitality and inclusion. This makes it even more urgent that we as people of faith lift our voices, that we both protect and welcome,” said McCullough.

The Rev. Fred Day, General Secretary of Archives and History, took us back in time 50 years to 1968 — the year The United Methodist Church officially formed with the unification of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church, along with the dissolution of the Central Jurisdiction.



“During the first 50 years, the UMC has lived with and through the push and pull a number of cultural currents flowing throughout its life. Living in the midst of these created swirls of agreement and disagreement,” said Day.

The Rev. Albert Outler’s sermon preached at the 1968 Uniting Conference is not only one of the seminal documents in all Methodist History, but it still speaks an “aura of hope” for the UMC today said Day.

“Outler said that the ‘real work of The United Methodist Church’ began that day in April 1968,” Day reflected. “And it will begin again as 2019 forges a way forward and 2020 will live us into the next quadrennial with the reshaping of United Methodist discipline, structure and ministries.”



Many features, resources and videos are available on the UMC’s 50th anniversary at www.umc.org/umc50.

Worship

This year’s worship leader Gary Rand and his band The Many brought us together with both contemporary and traditional music.

The Gospel Choir from St. Mark UMC in Chicago inspired and moved those gathered at the Ordination Service.



The Rev. Kyungsu Park’s beautiful artwork hung from the backdrop near the stage. His four paintings were titled, Water, Stars, Map, and Spirit. “All the paintings have a sacramental element to them, and they all relate to concepts of navigation, adventure, and risk,” said Park.

In recognition of The United Methodist's 50th anniversary and heritage, clergy and laity with Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist traditions offered prayers weaved throughout our time together at annual conference. We thank each of them for sharing their insights and blessings: EUB Lay - Phyllis Tholin, Methodist Clergy - Rev. Nick Mitrovich Jr., EUB Clergy - Rev. Bob Burkhart, Methodist Clergy - Rev. Martin Deppe, EUB Lay - Mary Wolf, and Methodist Lay - Jean Wood.

Our ecumenical guest was Bishop Jeffery D. Lee, who leads 35,000 Episcopalians in 125 congregations across northern Illinois.

Legislation

The Annual Conference Members debated and voted on a number of pieces of legislation including a document encouraging churches to conduct energy audits and to become styrofoam free, a call to end gun violence, and incorporation of the Annual Conference Shepherding Team and District Shepherding Teams into the standing rules.

The annual conference also passed a **non-binding document** which affirms the Council of Bishop's recommendation of the "One Church Plan" to the General Conference and urges the NIC delegation to support this way forward. They also passed the 2019 apportioned budget \$6.7 million dollars, about the same as 2018.

The Annual Conference also approved a document in support of the General Conference two failed constitutional amendments relating to women's equality and a revote was taken on Amendment #1.

The 2019 budget of \$6.7 million dollars, about the same as 2018, passed.

Special Offerings

The 2018 Bishop's Appeal special offering raised a record \$74,645 for the Global Migration Advance #3022144 fund. Twenty-five percent of the money will stay in the Northern Illinois Conference to assist churches and organizations like World Relief and Refugee One working with local refugees and immigrants. Congratulations to the Elgin District which took home the Bishop's Appeal traveling trophy for raising the most funds per capita.

An offering for the Ministerial Education Fund which financially assists students preparing for ordination in the Northern Illinois Conference totaled \$4,341.



Churches also took part in a mission challenge donating more than 5,000 pounds of items to fill cleaning kit buckets for the Midwest Missions Distribution Center.

Membership in the Northern Illinois Conference stands at 82,003, down 3,347 from the previous year. Worship attendance stands at 28,466, down 1654. Sunday school attendance stands at 6,874, down 962. Professions or reaffirmations of faith for 2017 was 1539, up 184 from 2016. The number of adults and young adults in small groups for 2017 was 16,031, down 805 from 2016. The number of worshippers engaged in mission for 2017 was 13,098, down 7,304 from 2016.



The 2019 Annual Conference will be held in a new location from June 2-4 at the Schaumburg Convention Center.

For more information and photos from this year's conference visit: www.umcnic.org/AC2018.