



The United Methodist Church

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Date: June 1, 2021
To: Members of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference
From: Bishop John L. Hopkins
Re: Call for Annual Conference Session 2021

“Jesus Makes a Way” is the theme of the 182nd session of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference. In the song “Way Maker” written by Nigerian gospel star Sinach, Jesus is identified as a miracle worker, a promise keeper, a light in the darkness. These are attributes we cherish as we slowly find our way out of a global pandemic while also facing racism and the deep divisions in the church. “Jesus Makes a Way” where we cannot navigate for ourselves. “Jesus Makes a Way” when the old ways no longer work.

Once again in 2021 our familiar way of gathering for an Annual Conference Session will not work, but “Jesus Makes a Way” and we turn to technology to assist us in gathering virtually. The Annual Conference Session will be held on Friday, July 16, Saturday, July 17 and Saturday, October 2.

Online registration will open on June 1 and close on June 30 at midnight. Registration is required to receive voting credentials and the deadline is firm. To find online registration, [visit this link](#). Guests will be able to watch the proceedings livestreamed via Facebook and YouTube. As Interim Bishop, I am grateful to my episcopal colleagues who will be joining me in leadership. Wisconsin Conference Bishop Hee-Soo Jung will be the Memorial Service preacher. Indiana Conference Bishop Julius Trimble will lead in Bible study and East Ohio Conference Bishop Tracy S. Malone will be preaching for the 2021 ordination and commissioning service on Friday, October 1.

The work of the annual conference will include routine legislation, a minimal number of reports and time to learn about the work of our congregations through this pandemic year. The work will lead off with the Clergy Session on Monday, June 28 from 10 a.m. to noon via ZOOM and a Laity Session on Thursday evening July 15 at 7 - 8 p.m. via ZOOM. Clergy should have received information with a registration link for the Clergy Session, [which can be found here](#).

The Laity Session will be on Thursday evening, July 15th at 7-8pm via Zoom. [Please see the Laity call letter here](#). This year you are invited to participate in a Bishop’s Appeal special offering raising funds for the United Methodist Committee on Relief - COVID-19 Response Fund. Donations will help strengthen the response of health care facilities, provide much-needed medical supplies, increase access to clean water and hygiene facilities and address food insecurity and other economic challenges facing communities, particularly those in underdeveloped countries. Your church is encouraged to participate in fundraising efforts and/or take an offering for this appeal. [More information for the Bishop's appeal may be found here](#).

Our Annual Conference Fill-the-Truck Mission Challenge will be for the Midwest Missions Distribution Center. Donations may be delivered to drop-off sites around the Conference between May 15 and July 1. The conference goal is to beat last year’s numbers and collect more than 6,000 pounds. [Click here](#) for the mission challenge information.



I began my assignment as Interim Bishop in Northern Illinois on January 1. In the first five months, I have Zoomed all through the conference meeting with clergy and laity, leadership groups and constituencies. It has been a delight to learn about the ministries and passions of the people in Northern Illinois. I regret that our Annual Conference Session this year is limited by COVID-19 and I look forward to the day when I can see many more of you face-to-face. In all of this, we can proclaim “Jesus Makes a Way.”

[Annual Conference Fact Sheet](#)

In Christ Service,

JLH:mla