



Greetings pastors and church leaders,

Greetings from the Cabinet of the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church. We are about to enter into another church conference season. While it is refreshing to have some normalcy, we also realize these conferences may not be what we all are accustomed to.

First, we want to acknowledge and give thanks for how hard you have been working. You have met these challenging times with tenacity, grace and adaptability. We are hearing great stories of churches that adapted quickly to online worship and created new ministries in their communities. The fruits of your labors are truly recognized. Your dedication has shown that you were able to overcome some real challenges. We are even realizing some growth in giving and attendance!

Second, it is also true that we are still facing challenges, with likely more to come our way. We realize that many are reaching a point of online worship fatigue. We know that the number of hours required for this new way of “doing church” has been a great burden on many. We also recognize the loss of relationships and how much is missed by not being together in community. We mourn with you. We are here with resources and assistance to help you overcome and adapt as best we can.

Finally, **because of the pandemic and its unknown influence in the future, the Cabinet has decided that all church conferences should be held online using Zoom video conferencing.** We do not intend to set a precedent for future church conferences; this decision is based on the current extreme circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. That being said, your church’s context may call for a different way to “do” church conference. In these situations, churches should work with their District Superintendent (DS) to develop a plan of safety and social distancing. All such plans must be approved by your DS.

Prior to each church conference, the DS’s will meet with the Staff Parish Relations Committee via Zoom video conferencing. Please consult with your DS to schedule this meeting. Following that meeting, the Church conference will begin. A Zoom invitation with a dedicated link will be sent from the district administrators one week prior to your conference so that you may share the link with your congregation.

Please click here <https://www.umcnic.org/churchconference> for all church conference materials, including the agenda. If you have anything that you need to add to the agenda, please contact your DS as soon as possible to discuss.

It is a blessing to be in ministry with you,

Rev. Jeffry Bross
Aurora District Superintendent

Rev. Brian Gilbert
DeKalb District Superintendent

Rev. Brittany Isaac
Chicago Northwestern District
Superintendent

Rev. Darneather Murph-Heath
Elgin District Superintendent

Rev. Jacques A. Conway
Chicago Southern District Superintendent

Rev. Fabiola Grandon-Mayer
Rockford District Superintendent