

The REPORTER

Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church

www.umcnic.org

From the Bishop... What makes a vital church – big or small?



Bishop Sally Dyck

AT&T has a series of advertisements that ask, "What's better; fast or slow, more or less, big or small?" An adult is seated in child-size tables and chairs with three adorable children who answer the question. One of my favorites is when the children are asked, "What's better? Fast or slow?" A little girl answers immediately by saying, "Fast; so that you're not bitten by a werewolf and become one. Then you'd have to stay inside where it's hot and you'd have to get shades. And then, rrrrrgh (her imitation of a werewolf), which means, 'I wish I was back to being a human.'"

The adorable little girl is waving her head back and forth as she is totally immersed in her answer which comes across totally absurd to the adult (not to mention perhaps the viewer!). Then we hear, "It's not complicated!" which is AT&T's point: fast is better than slow. No matter what –with or without becoming a werewolf.

During Lent I read a sermon that biblical scholar, Walter Brueggeman gave at Fourth Memorial Presbyterian Church in Chicago. He cited this AT&T advertisement and took it to task for its message that promotes the values of Empire; powers and principalities that are contrary to the gospel. Bigger is better than small; fast is better than slow; more is better than less. Empire values aren't complicated; we know the answer and they are often contrary to the gospel.

I was reminded of this ad when I read the "dueling" bishops on the viability of small churches. Retired Bishop Will Willimon, who served for eight years in the northern Alabama area, wrote in the most recent issue of the Circuit Rider magazine ("The Tough Truth About Small Churches" - Aug/Sept/Oct 2013), essentially asking, "Which is better? Small churches or large churches?" He described small churches as "deadly, (with) club-like interiority, insufferable triviality, and hostility toward newcomers." He described their drain on the resources of annual conferences (especially those where each church doesn't pay its full pension and health insurance) and when their lack of vitality negatively impacts the whole system.

Bishop Scott Jones, however, in Ministry Matters ("Why Willimon Is Wrong about Small Churches" posted Aug. 12, 2013 www.ministrymatters.com) responded that perhaps the answer is a little more complicated than 'which is better, small or big churches?' (Those weren't his exact words but what I thought of as I read his re-

sponse.) Bishop Jones is the episcopal leader of the Great Plains Conference which includes Nebraska and Kansas. There are many small churches in the Great Plains. He reminds us all that Jesus' mission to make disciples is not geographically bound, even when the populations are small and declining. He cites some examples of how small churches have raised up vital Christians –laity and clergy – who contribute significantly to their churches and their communities whether they stay in the rural community or venture into other, often more urban ones. Vitality isn't determined by size but the spirit of the congregation and its mission.

What makes a vital small congregation?

- **Enough organization** which includes a sense of direction (vision) that keeps it on task in terms of being church (mission/purpose). Too often small churches don't seem to think that it's necessary to do this kind of planning or visioning and so those most influential, often squeaky wheel members or a clique takes over.

- **Quality care** not only for its members but for its community; not just by the pastor but by the laity. We don't measure funeral dinners/meals for the sick/rides to the hospital 50-100 miles away/etc. But I'm convinced that when a congregation is known for its quality care of its members and community, it will experience vitality. In fact, the more that laity reach out to care for each other and the community, the more vitality it provides as people get to know each other and are known in the community for being a caring church.

- **Lack of disruptive conflict.** In a small community, any disruptive conflict will tank a church long after the subject or the object of the conflict is gone (often focused rightly or wrongly on the pastor). This doesn't mean that there isn't disagreement in the church. There will be disagreement because there are more than two people even in a small church! But often I have found that in a small church there is a reluctance to talk about what is going on with the right people in the right place at the right time in the right way in order to resolve the disagreement. Instead it festers and becomes personalized toward the pastor or other laity. Disagreement that has a freight load of emotion with it (i.e. conflict) doesn't just go away; it's the "gift" that keeps on giving, oozing into everything else. This is the most vitality-resistant factor that exists. Heaven to churches: people don't want to be in the midst of your squabbles! They've got them at home, work, school, school board, neighborhood, and everywhere else. Talk about it, remember your mission and purpose, and find a way forward. Vitality and disruptive conflict don't go together!

- **Joy.** As someone who goes to a different church (or

two) every week, I can sense the joy or lack thereof in no time. It's in the way the pastor interacts with the congregation formally or informally. It's in the eyes and on the faces of the people as they greet each other, talk to small children or someone with tattoos, or do things in worship they sometimes prefer not to do (such as sing a new syncopated song unto the Lord). Really, churches have an invisible joy-ometer over the door. Work on your joy factor!

- **At least one ministry with the poor.** Sometimes we say a church should be known for at least one thing, but in addition to whatever else, if a church has a significant outreach to a constituent group in the community that is in need and where people have the opportunity to know and make a difference in others' lives without immediate benefit to themselves and often to the church itself, this brings vitality. Why? Because it connects with gospel values and not self-preservation or empire values. Because that's what church is! Count on it and do it!

These are a few of my observations as someone who grew up in a small rural church, who has served a small urban church, who has been the district superintendent of small churches, and who has been the bishop of small churches. Small churches have much to give to the denomination and the annual conference, but most importantly to the people in their communities and their own attenders!

Big or small church? That's absurdity, right along with werewolves. Vitality? Now, that's about the gospel and about being church wherever we are and however big or small.

So what's vital about your church? Big or small?

~Bishop Sally Dyck

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Inside
this Issue

Page 2
**IMAGINE
NO
MALARIA**

School of
Evangelism

page 4



page 4



page 5



Learn Spanish with your neighbors

Ever wanted to know more about your neighbors?

Spanish as a Second Language class is a 6-week Spanish course designed to help those who may never have studied Spanish before to get to know their Spanish-speaking neighbors. We have a first "pilot" round of 12 congregations throughout Northern Illinois that will be starting classes in October. These once-a-week classes will specifically teach 100 words of Spanish that might be used in a religious context or worship setting.

This "pilot" round is designed to allow us to test the curriculum and registration process, moving them on to greater perfection before our next round of participants start. If you or your church did not have a chance to participate in this round of classes, there will be another round starting in a few months or so. Look for notifications for your area in the eNews and at www.umcnic.org/ssl.

We also welcome teachers who would like to offer their skills. The position does offer a small stipend for the 6-week course. Teachers can learn more at the www.umcnic.org/ssl web page.

A special thanks goes out to our pilot churches who are participating in this process of discovery for all of us:

- Aurora:** Bethany of Fox Valley
- Naperville:** Wesley
- Chicago:** Broadway
- Rochelle**
- Chicago:** Grace Church of Logan Square
- Schaumburg:** Our Savior's
- Deerfield:** Christ
- Sterling:** Wesley
- Elgin:** Epworth
- West Chicago**
- Genoa:** Faith
- Wood Dale**

Working toward \$1 million goal By Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger

Malaria claims 665,000 lives a year, and yet only 1,500 of those deaths are Americans. Our brothers and sisters who live on the African continent account for 85% of the deaths caused by this horrible disease. The worst part is not even that this is happening, but that this death and suffering could be prevented.

During Seminary I took a class where I was assigned to read a book on malaria (*The Making of a Tropical Disease*- if you're interested). Like most of my seminary reading, I carted the book around with me everywhere I went until I finished the assigned reading. One such day while carrying around the book, I went to visit my Uncle who was sick at Skokie Hospital. I sat by his bed reading my book.

After a while he turned over and looked at me. Quietly he said, "I had malaria." It was very matter of fact, and he looked as if he was remembering a time long ago. "I had malaria when I was in Vietnam."

Now my Uncle never spoke of his time serving in the Vietnam War. Almost all the stories I heard about his time overseas was from other family members. Here I was in a hospital, learning something that no one had ever heard about.

"I remember that it was a horrible disease. I thought I was going to die, or that I was dead. The pain was so bad. I had a fever and headache. It was the worst pain of my life."

After that he was quiet again. I went back to reading my book, but was now curious about malaria's impact on U.S. veterans. I discovered in searching later that over 24,000 members of the Navy had malaria during Vietnam, but only 46 of them died. The U.S. Army reported 40,000 cases, but only 78 deaths.¹ We were able to treat and save the lives of our service members over 40 years ago. But today one person dies of malaria every minute or 665,000 people a year. This proves that this disease is preventable, treatable and beatable.

Learning these facts about Vietnam I had a choice to act, or not. I could continue to live in a world where a preventable disease causes pain, suffering and death to many. But, I have

chosen to give a year of my life to help change these statistics and join the Imagine No Malaria initiative (INM). With the help of funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates and UN Foundations, I am able to invite everyone in Northern Illinois to join with me in contributing to ending death and suffering caused by malaria.

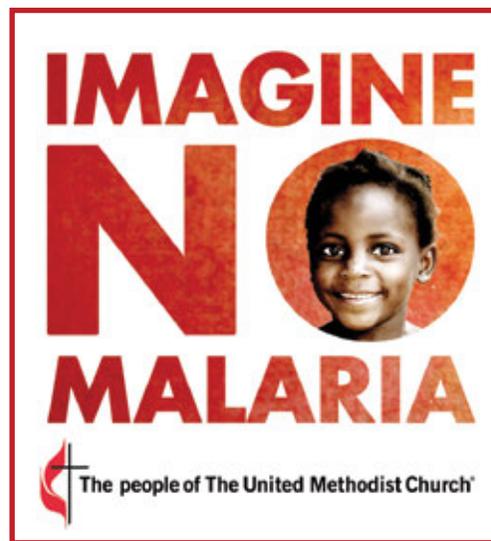
Many in this conference have given generously to Nothing But Nets, which purchases insecticide treated bed nets to help prevent the spread of malaria. Imagine No Malaria is taking this effort to the next level by incorporating education, advocacy, communication, treatment and prevention. All of these actions together are the most comprehensive approach to defeat this disease.

This fall we are officially beginning the Imagine No Malaria initiative in the Northern Illinois Conference. From now until World Malaria Day 2014 (April 25), our conference is challenged to raise at least One Million dollars (in pledges and donations) to help combat malaria. We will begin with district wide trainings and orientations to help educate church leaders on INM and assist with fundraising through pledges and events.

I invite you to explore how this disease is touching your life. I invite you to choose to act to help change the world. I invite you to join this campaign by raising funds – either by pledging yourself or helping with a community fundraiser; educating your community; advocating with government officials

to continue funding global health; and to pray - both prayers for those impacted by malaria but also prayers that our community in the United States will be inspired to join in the fight to eliminate death caused by this disease.

Over the next year be on the lookout for regular articles in the *Reporter* and eNews, and visit our web site to keep you updated on the campaign. You can donate today at www.imagenomalaria.org (please just make sure to check that you are a UM and select NIC.) www.malariasite.com/malaria/history_wars.htm



NEW US-2 MISSIONARY: Fighting for fair wages

Emilie Bowman was among 13 young adult missionaries commissioned into the United Methodist Church's US-2 Young Adult Mission Service program on Aug. 12. Emilie grew up attending Berry Memorial United Methodist Church in Chicago and is a member of Urban Village Church.

Emilie has been assigned to the Workers Interfaith Network in Memphis, Tennessee, within the Memphis Annual Conference. She will be involved in conducting community outreach to build partnerships and advocate for rights for low-wage workers. "I look forward to the opportunity to work alongside the Memphis community to further the advancement of God's kingdom while growing in my faith," said Emilie.

US-2 missionaries are young adults who serve two-year terms in the United States. Their work, often with the poor, integrates faith and justice as they learn from and walk with communities in their struggles to address systematic injustice and human suffering.

The Workers Interfaith Network was organized in 2002 primarily to promote living wage ordinances in the Memphis area.

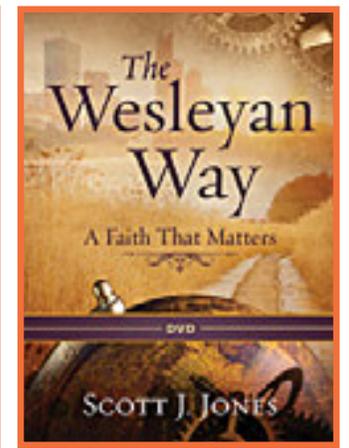
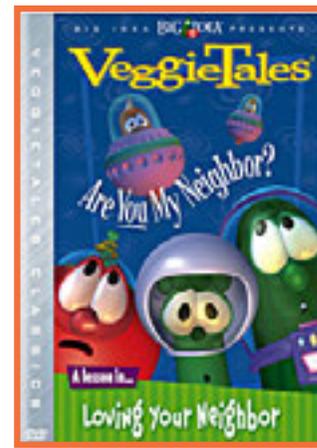
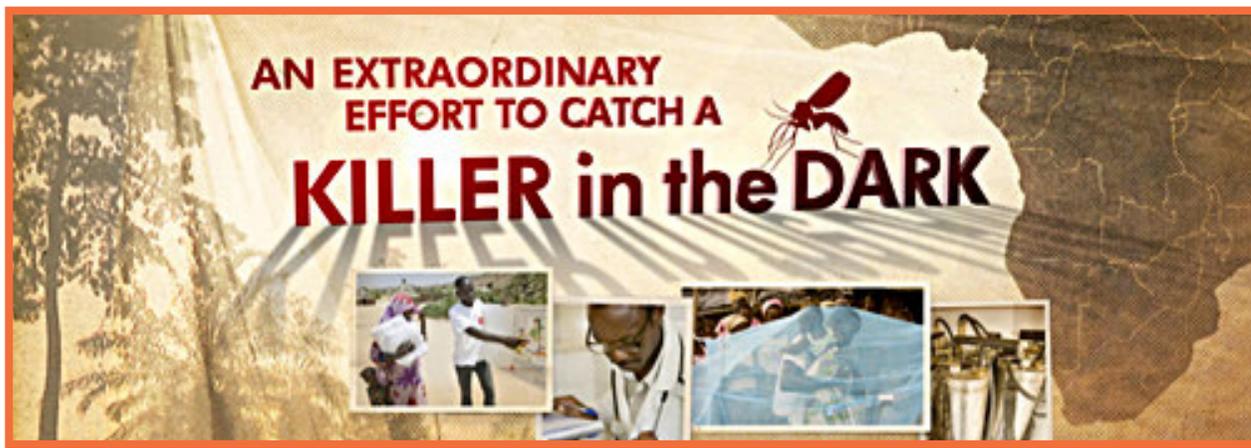
It has expanded to address the challenges of vulnerable workers, especially immigrants. Emilie engages in advocacy for a project to reduce "wage theft" and to engage the religious community in the cause of equity and fairness in the workplace.

Emilie holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in mass communications from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio. She was previously a development assistant at Onward Neighborhood House, Chicago.

Of her call to mission, Emilie said, "I believe this life is not about me. As a follower of Jesus Christ, I was meant to love and serve others." You can follow Emilie's journey at walkingwithmemphis.wordpress.com.

You can support Emilie and other missionaries through prayer and by donating through through Advance #13105Z. You can keep up on Emilie's work by following her blog at walkingwithmemphis.wordpress.com If you would like to learn more about opportunities for young adults in mission, visit www.umcmmission.org/GT.

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What's New in the Media Center? By Susan Gieseler, Media Resource Director

A lot of new resources have come into the NIC Media Resource Center over the summer months, on a number of timely topics.

Thanks to Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger, our INM Field Coordinator, we've been able to obtain copies of the Imagine No Malaria Campaign movie, *Killer in the Dark*, which will be shown on TV through November. It is available for loan from the NIC MRC for showing to groups at your church.

We've tried to add a number of resources to help churches as they explore *Who is My Neighbor?* For the kids, we've obtained the DVD version of the *Veggie Tales: Are You My Neighbor?* For adults there is a new edition to the Embracing series: *Embracing Interfaith Cooperation*, which will help a small group become more literate about other faiths. In 5 sessions you will explore: 1. *Interfaith Cooperation in American History*; 2. *Interfaith Literacy*; 3. *The Science of Interfaith Cooperation*; 4. *The Art of Interfaith Leadership*; and 5. *The Role of Colleges, Seminaries and Houses of Worship*. A short program, *Differences*, was created to help people explore and discuss their own differences through the "voices" of dogs. In 4 minutes the dogs talk about their differences and end up realizing how much they have in common.

A new youth study, *Made to Make A Difference*, based on Max Lucado's book and adult study, *Outlive Your Life* has been added. In this four session study, Lucado offers Biblical insight into how God has uniquely created students with certain passions, talents, and interests to impact the world for Christ.

Two new studies have been added from Ray Vander Laan's *Faith Lessons* series. Both are filmed in the holy land. *God Heard Their Cry* discusses how God answers the cry of his persecuted people and proclaims himself LORD to them and their oppressors. In *With All Your Heart* he takes us on a journey through Sinai and Israel, a region that is still largely desert but at times filled with lush, bountiful places. We will

discover how Jesus called people to live in the Promised land. What can we learn during times of abundance and in times of desert? God led his people back to the desert often to relearn the lessons they had forgotten.

The five session study, *Economy of Love* challenges individuals to join in community, journeying together as they begin to consider a new standard of living - a personal economic threshold oriented not around the size of a monthly paycheck, but around the value of enough.

In *The Shelter of God's Promises*, a 10 session DVD Based Bible Study, gifted Bible teacher and inspiring speaker Sheila Walsh primes Scripture for what God has promised us, what God's promises mean, and how these promises provide the foundation for daily confidence, joy, and hope.

Bishop Scott Jones brings us an eight session DVD-based study of Methodism in *The Wesleyan Way*. He helps seekers and believers to envision and practice discipleship as a way of life. Presenting Christianity from a Wesleyan perspective, Jones invites participants into a deeper, more thoughtful, more active commitment to Christ. Other new offerings on Methodism include *John Wesley: The Man and His Mission* which provides a comprehensive view of John Wesley's life and legacy, and *The Great Awakening* which celebrates the radical and lasting changes brought about by the Great Awakening of the 1700s while promoting the need for spiritual awakening in our time.

All of these resources are available for loan from the NIC Media Resource Center. There is no charge for members of subscribing churches. Members of non-subscribing churches in the Northern Illinois Conference may borrow materials for a charge of \$5 per DVD/VHS, or \$10 for a curriculum set (DVD and Guides). The online catalog of resources is available at www.umcnic.org/MediaCat, or by phoning or e-mailing Susan Gieseler, sgieseler@umcnic.org, 847-931-0710 Ext. 17. The normal hours of the Media Resource Center are 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Call before visiting because meetings

and other events may require modification of those hours periodically.

Redemption of the Prosecutor available from NIC Media Resource Center

Redemption of the Prosecutor is a short documentary by Brave New Foundation's Beyond Bars campaign, which produces videos and engages social media to fight mass incarceration. Running time is 22 minutes.

If you sometimes wonder how we can reconcile the incarceration of convicted criminals and the Criminal Justice System with Jesus message of forgiveness and love for all, then this documentary can serve as a springboard for conversation about this conflict.

When prosecutor and devout Christian, Preston Shipp, began teaching in a Nashville prison, he never thought he'd be the one to get schooled. But the friendship he forges with one young prisoner puts his faith in the justice system—and in Jesus—to the ultimate test.

In the smart and warm Cyntoia Brown, Preston sees a humanity he has been trained to ignore. How can he keep spending his life putting people like this behind bars when Jesus came to earth preaching solidarity with the imprisoned? Preston's crisis of conscience culminates with a shocking discovery that leaves him feeling more convicted—at least in spirit—than Cyntoia ever did.

This DVD has just been added to the NIC Media Resource Center collection and is available for loan.

The producers ask groups viewing this DVD to "please let us know about your screening and tell us how it went by emailing us at mystory@beyondbars.org. We'd love to know how many people are using the video. And if you send us photos we'll post a selection on this website!"

More information about the DVD is available at www.redemptionoftheprosecutor.org.

Summer Mission u provides learning experience

By Janice Gintzler



Peg Hansen led a geographic study, *The Roma of Europe*, during the Summer Mission u event sponsored by the NIC United Methodist Women.

What a learning experience for United Methodist Women and others who participated in our summer Mission u event!

It was a warm weekend, July 18-21, at Judson University in Elgin, with a downpour Friday evening, but our spirits were never dampened because of all we were learning. Each participant in Mission u took two of the three mission studies. The spiritual growth study was led by Dottie Priddy who encouraged us to consider Living Sacramentally and Walking Justly. Quick, what are the sacraments in the UMC?

The social action study, *Poverty*, was led by Julia Jones, of Church World Service and our local CROP walks. And our geographic study, *The Roma of Europe*, was led by Peg Hansen from St. Andrew UMC and the Reverend Norval Brown.

To comprehend how encompassing these three studies really are: a year ago at the CROP Walk leader training event, Dawn Hroucka, of Church World Service (CSW), presented a slide show of her recent trip to Serbia, and to the community of Roma (i.e., gypsies) on the outskirts of Beograd, the capital city. In a community of over one hundred, there was

one, decrepit and dirty, outhouse, around which children were playing. CWS was in the process of addressing the needs of this community with infrastructure and other necessities. Those who participate in CROP walks and give to UMCOR are indeed endeavoring to walk justly.

At our next conference UMW event be sure to obtain your copy of the UMW DVD, *The Roma; History, Culture and Faith*.

If you missed our Summer Mission u, never fear. We will repeat our studies at our winter event, to be conducted early next year, January 10-12, 2014 at Camp Reynoldswood in Dixon, IL. Put the dates on your calendar right now. Stand outside in the brisk night air at Camp Reynoldswood and see a thousand stars, then come inside for fellowship time around two fire places. Just talk about your day and what you learned, or engage in the mission project, which last year was crocheting carefully cut strips of plastic bags into sleeping mats for homeless individuals.

Watch for the registration materials coming soon.



EVENTS:

From the Office of Congregational Development and Redevelopment

Register NOW for Natural Church Development Training!

September 13-14, 2013

The Office of Congregational Development and Redevelopment invites you to a unique training opportunity in Natural Church Development. NCD is a process that has been developed over the past 14 years to help all churches increase in health and vitality. Join us at this special event and learn how your church can benefit from the process.

Registration only costs \$60, but you must register by September 6. Registration includes materials and lunch, but participants must make their own hotel arrangements. To register or receive more information, visit www.umcnic.org/NCD or call Judy Siaba at (312) 346-9766, ext. 724.

Register Today for Healthy Discipleship Systems Weekend

October 4-5, 2013

The Office of Congregational Development and Redevelopment invites ALL pastors, church staff, lay persons, and other interested parties to this two-day training. Pastor Junius Dotson (Saint Mark UMC, Wichita, KS) will lead seminars in developing healthy discipleship systems for vital Christians in vital churches.

The Healthy Discipleship Systems Weekend is October 4-5 at Crowne Plaza Hotel (2875 N. Milwaukee Ave., Northbrook, IL). Registration costs \$770, but you can save \$10 by registering before September 13. To register or receive more information, visit www.umcnic.org/discipleship or call Judy Siaba at (312) 346-9766, ext. 724.

Sign Up for Turnaround Church Bootcamp

October 26-27, 2013

The Office of Congregational Development and Redevelopment invites you to Turnaround Church Bootcamp with Jim Griffith, the founder of Griffith Coaching Network and nationally-known author and church coach. Come and learn new ways to understand your community, reach out in mission, and grow true hospitality.

The Turnaround Church Boot Camp will be held Saturday and Sunday, October 26-27, from 8:00am to 5:00pm at the Crowne Plaza Hotel (2875 N. Milwaukee Ave., Northbrook, IL). Lunch and event materials will be provided; participants must make their own hotel arrangements.

Pastors must register with at least one lay person, and registration is only \$60 per person until October 1, and only \$70 after October 1. Persons outside of the Northern Illinois Conference pay \$125 per person. To register or receive more information, visit www.umcnic.org/turnaround, email jsiaba@umcnic.org, or call (312) 346-9766, ext. 724. Register today!



URBAN STRATEGY TEAM: Marching in back to school parade

Wearing red t-shirts with the phrase “putting legs on our prayers” on the back, more than 50 United Methodists marched in the 84th annual Bud Billiken Parade in Chicago on Aug. 10. The NIC Urban Strategy team organized this year’s entry in the oldest and largest African-American parade in the country which traditionally kicks off the school year.

“We wanted to let the community know that as United Methodists we are praying for our schools, students, teachers and administrators this coming year,” said Bishop Sally Dyck.

Kelly Patton, a member at Mandell UMC remembers marching in the parade as a young girl and was proud to be marching with fellow United Methodists and her church family along with her daughter and stepson. “It’s really important for me to be here and it means a lot for us to show support to the Chicago Public schools and to let them know we care about the city of Chicago,” said Patton.

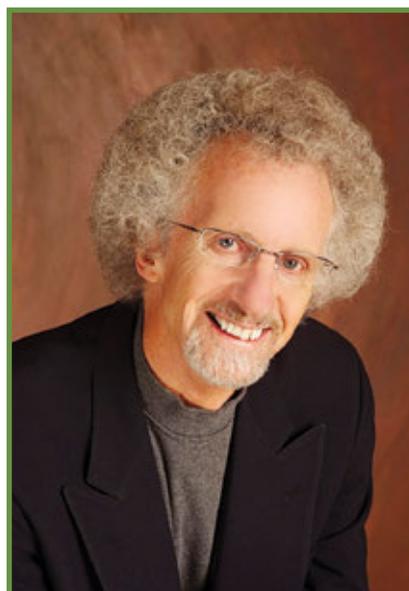
The St. Mark United Methodist Church (UMC) Martial Arts Ministry Worship Demonstration Team and the MYX (Methodist Youth For Christ) juggling troupe from Edison Park UMC joined in marching with the group. Hartzell UMC graciously opened its doors and parking lot for participants before and af-

ter the parade. Marchers came from several churches in the Chicago Southern and Northwestern Districts including: Maple Park, St. Mark, South Shore, G2G, Mandell, Olivet, Maywood and Resurrection.

“This was a great occasion to enjoy this beautiful day and be in fellowship,” said NIC Urban Ministry Coordinator, Rev. Robert Biekman who added the parade was a great way to live out our urban strategy. “But this is a great day to be a witness to the community around us as we pray for our schools throughout this year and we put legs on our prayers!”

The Rev. Barbara Morgan of St. Mark UMC says she put her walking shoes on to take part in the parade to show the community that United Methodists care. “We wanted the city to know the United Methodist church is here and we are concerned about safety in our communities,” said Morgan. “Our presence says more than just prayers. We put action behind our prayers by being here and to show that we too want a safe community.”

If you would like one of the parade t-shirts, email Angel Grant at angelgrant7@gmail.com or visit www.umcnic.org for information on how to order one. Follow the Urban Strategy Team activities www.facebook.com/ChicagoUrbanStrategySummit.



SCHOOL OF EVANGELISM:

Bridging Personal and Social Witness

Keynote Speaker: Author and Speaker Phillip Yancey

Saturday October 19, 2013 8:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
at Barrington UMC 98 Algonquin Road, Barrington, IL 60010, (847) 836-5540
Walk-in registrations welcome, cook will not be able to provide lunch.

A Harvest 2.0 Event

brought to you by the NIC Evangelism Work Area

Phillip Yancey hails from Atlanta but also lived for a time in Chicago. A prolific author, his many books have sold over 14 million copies, among them *The Jesus I Never Knew* and *What's So Amazing About Grace?* He holds graduate degrees from Wheaton College and the University of Chicago. He has written or worked for various magazines, including *Christianity Today*, *Campus Life*, *Eternity*, *Reader's Digest*, and *National Wildlife*. He lives in Colorado and in 2007 completed his goal of climbing all of Colorado's peaks that measure 14,000 ft. or higher.

To register visit www.umcnic.org.



AURORA CHURCHES: Handing out school supplies



Rev. John Bell, pastor of Aurora's Wesley United Methodist Church, right, offered doughnut holes to people lined up for free school supplies at Greenman Elementary School in Aurora Saturday, Aug. 10. Wesley UMC and Fourth Street UMC partnered in the second annual Seeds to Succeed project. About 350 students received bags of supplies.

(Photo courtesy: Al Benson)

PRINCE OF PEACE UMC: Supporting literacy



The Mission Outreach Committee at Prince of Peace UMC wishes to express its grateful appreciation to everyone who made the second annual "Seeds to Succeed - Growing Literacy in Our Community" project a success.

Thanks to generous donations of items and money, 50 backpacks, over 350 books, and numerous school supplies were donated to Grove Junior High and Byrd Elementary in Elk Grove Village, Ill.

This was a community wide project which Prince of Peace spearheaded. It not only helped low income children, but helped the community know that Prince of Peace supports its local community as part of its mission outreach.

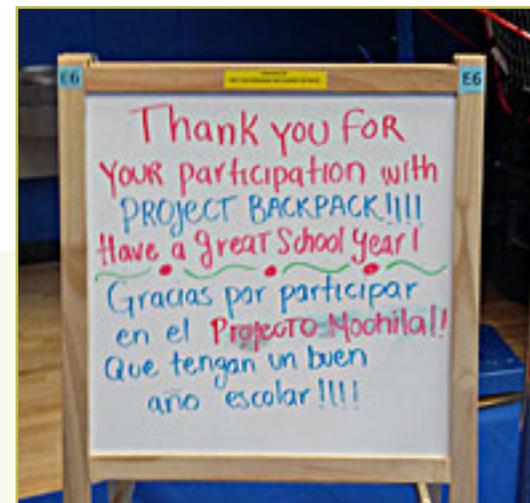
PROJECTS: Backpacks & Water

Elgin area churches donated school supplies and volunteered at the 5th annual Project Backpack at Elgin Community College on Aug. 10. The event served over 2,000 children in school districts U-46 and 300. Over half of all children in U-46 qualify for free/reduced lunch, showing those of us in ministry that the need of the children and families in our community is great.

Project Backpack organized donations of school supplies from agencies, community organizations and churches all over the Elgin area so children can be ready to learn when school starts. All the donations were brought to Elgin Community College to be divided up to provide all the essentials for a successful school year.

"We are honored to be a part of such a life changing ministry each year," said Kara Berg from Epworth UMC. For the second annual "Seeds to Succeed" outreach ministry, Epworth UMC and First UMC Elgin again distributed cups of water to all those waiting in line.

"This simple service was our authentic way of sharing the love of Christ and the living water of God to all those in need," said Berg. "By providing essential supplies for school, and valuable community opportunities, we hope to lift up the children and families in our community and share Christ's message of love and life with our neighbors."



BACK TO SCHOOL: Block Party

Wesley UMC held its first community back to school block party on Aug. 17. The church, located at 201 E. 95th St., Chicago gave away free schools supplies. More than 250 people came out to the event. Families enjoyed free food, games and activities including, basketball, bean bag toss, face painting and a bounce house. A DJ provided music for the afternoon fun. The event is sponsored by the Evangelism Ministry of Wesley United Methodist Church. (photo courtesy: Skip Geddes)



THE NET CHURCH: Running the race for Harlem School District



Nearly 40 runners raced to the finish line participating in the Net Church 5K Giveaway at the Harlem High School on Aug. 10 to raise money for the Harlem School District in Machesney Park, Ill.

Teachers spend an average of \$356 out-of-pocket on school supplies every single year. The Net Church planters Eric Blachford and Kevin Clark said they wanted to come up with an event that would provide school supplies for students so teachers can focus on what's really important: learning.

As a new faith community, the Net Church believes in positively impacting the community. 100% of the race registration costs went directly to helping students. The new faith community thanked everyone who came out to run/walk/cheer. In the end, they raised over \$1,100 for school supplies and backpacks for Harlem School District.

Lending a hand at mobile food pantry

Linda Gehringer handed out information at the recent Northern Illinois Food Bank's Mobile Pantry in Hampshire which served 103 households, 414 individuals from 15 surrounding towns. Zion UMC of Hampshire sponsored the event by recruiting volunteers and raising \$1,300 from the church and community.



Firefighter Appreciation Sunday



Christ UMC of Algonquin, Ill. designated Sunday, August 11 as "Firefighter Appreciation Sunday" for first responders who protect our lives and properties from fire. During the 10:00 a.m. worship service, the congregation honored and blessed the firefighters and their families. Chief Ken Caudle gave a presentation on summer heat safety.

In addition, the fire department helped perform a fire drill during the worship service and then the children took a tour of Huntley Fire Station #4. After worship the congregation enjoyed fellowship and good food at a community picnic.

Financial Peace

Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University is coming to Morgan Park United Methodist Church. Learn God's ways of handling money. The average turnaround is \$8,300 in just the first three months. Classes are every Saturday morning from 9 until 10:30 A.M., September 21st through Nov 16th. The cost is \$93. Register online at daveramsey.com, attend a free preview on September 14 at 9 a.m., or call (773) 238-2600 for more information. THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING!

Youth Vision Singing Opportunity

Calling all musically motivated adult, collegiate and advanced high school singers: sing in the Midwestern premiere of one of today's choral masterpieces! "Requiem for the Living" will be presented on All Saints Sunday, November 3, 8:15 and 9:30 a.m. at Grace United Methodist Church in Naperville.

Written by Dan Forrest, an acclaimed, multi-prized young composer, "Requiem for the Living" is sure to assume a place among the staples of choral literature. Requirements for joining the choir include attending no less than four of the following rehearsals: Thursdays, October 3-31, 8:00-9:00 p.m., and Monday, October 28, 7:30-9:00 p.m. in the Grace Sanctuary.

Mandatory orchestra dress rehearsal is on Saturday, November 2. Please pick up a score by September 11 from the Grace

Church office; scores can be mailed upon request. Contact Dan Wagner at 630-355-1748, ext. 232, or andante147@gmail.com for further information, or visit www.peopleofgrace.org/naperville_festival_choir. Grace Church is located at 300 E. Gartner Road in Naperville.

St. Thomas United Methodist Church
Fall Concert Series
 25511 Route 53, Glen Ellyn, IL

All Concerts will begin at 7:00 p.m.

September 14, 2013

The Karamels, a women's quartet from the international award-winning Village Vocal Chords Women's Chorus from Glen Ellyn, will perform their crowd-pleasing 50's-inspired show. They will be joined by an outstanding barbershop men's quartet.

October 12, 2013

Jim Hendricks, a truly outstanding Christian pianist, has performed in the past with such legends as Dave Brubeck, Della Reese, Rita Moreno, Tito Puente, Maynard Ferguson, and many others. He has also competed in numerous international piano competitions and has been a featured orchestral soloist, performing the piano music of Rachmaninoff.

Today, he dedicates himself to interpreting the Word through his incredible musical performances.

November 9, 2013

The Gayle Memorial Baptist Church Men's Choir from Aurora, IL will once again visit St. Thomas with their Gospel interpretations. In the fall 2012, they joined the line-up of artists at the St. Thomas Fall Music Festival and had attendees on their feet.

Youth Vision 2013 at GETS

Youth (Grade 6 - High School) are invited to attend Youth Vision 2013, Saturday, September 28th, 2013 at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill.

Registration starts at 9:30 a.m. with a continental breakfast. A Worship Service will begin our time together at 10:00 a.m. with a reflection presented by Chris Patterson, author of *21: The Epitome of Perseverance*.

Chris will share his experiences that took him from gang banging, drug dealing and prison to his transformed life. We will then offer two break-out sessions where youth can select topics ranging from teen anxiety and depression, ending gun violence, sexuality, Going Green, Mission Bolivia, Imagine No

Malaria, Outdoor and Retreat Ministry Resources or Creative Spirituality.

Lunch will be provided and we will also offer tours of the Seminary after the event concludes at 1:30 p.m.

To register for Youth Vision 2013, please contact Rev. Dr. Barbara Javore, bjavore@yahoo.com or 847.835.0588. Cost for the event is \$10 per person.

Fall dinner for

Justice For Our Neighbors

Justice For Our Neighbors (JFON), the regional ministry that includes the free immigration legal clinics in Aurora and Chicago, will hold its Second Annual dinner on Sunday evening, September 15. The gathering and program begins at 4:30 p.m.

On-line registration is available at www.umcnic.org/JFONdinner.

In this era when Congress is speaking about immigration reform, learn more about those impacted by immigration law.

The program this year will feature a dramatic presentation of Juana Doe by Yolanda Nieves as well as stories from former clients and volunteers. Due to a MATCHING CHALLENGE GRANT, all individuals who give towards the dinner will double their gift. (Congregations or companies would not count.)

You can also sponsor this dinner and receive special recognition in our sponsor book. At Annual Conference, one of the resolutions passed encouraged congregations to support JFON immigration legal clinics held in Aurora and Chicago. The resolution encouraged congregations to invite speakers and to give financially towards JFON.

If you would like to be on the newsletter list for JFON and to request speakers, please e-mail the Acting Regional Coordinator, mmann@umcnic.org.

Clergy Quadrennial Boundary Trainings

As those serving in a sacred trust, the conduct of appointed church leaders is an important aspect of our ministry. How we conduct ourselves is a reflection of our faith and life. To help us in our continued growth as leaders we are honored to have Dr. Karen McClintock as our guest leader for the Northern Illinois Conference quadrennial Boundary Training to be held at three sites in early October.

Dr. McClintock is the author of four books related to healthy congregations, including the most recent *Shame-Less Lives, Grace-Full Congregations*. Our time with Dr. McClintock will be a refresher on the basics of clergy conduct but we will also be offered insight and tools for deeper, healthier engagements and communications as we face professional dilemmas in our ministry settings.

There will be three sites for training including a Saturday site with Spanish translation. Cost is \$15 per person. In addition, clergy may earn 1 CEU through participation in

the training along with a reading assignment and follow up reflection.

Save the date: Wednesday, October 9 – Rockford: Grace UMC, Thursday, October 10 – Elmhurst: First UMC or Saturday, October 12 – Elgin: Cornerstone (including Spanish translation).

On-line registration can be found at on the NIC Conference Website at www.umcnic.org. On the home page in the upper right hand corner click on calendar, once in the calendar go to October 2013 and choose the training event on the date you plan to attend. This will lead you to the registration.

The registration deadline is September 9. To secure a space on your preferred date please register early.

If you have questions contact: Reverend Arlene W. Christopherson, Assistant to the Bishop at 312-346-9766 ext. 713 or achristo@umcnic.org.



Indian congregations in the Chicago Northwestern District celebrated the 67th India Independence Day participating in the Aug. 17 parade on Devon Ave., in Chicago. The colorful parade was part of a three day celebration hosted by the Federation of Indian Associations (FIA), Chicago.



NIC 5-Day Academy wrap-up

“Wonderful”...“Prayerful”... “Centering.” These are some of the words participants used to describe the NIC 5-Day Academy for Spiritual Formation at the Bellarmine Jesuit Retreat House in Barrington, Ill. The event, held July 29 - Aug. 2, had nearly 40 participants from all over the

world including; the Ukraine, Russia, Bolivia and Bishop Eduard Khegay from the Eurasia Conference. Participants also came from across the U.S. including; Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Georgia, Alaska and Tennessee.

Featured presenters included Mr. Ray Buckley and Sister Kathleen Flood. Buckley, an author, speaker and interim Director of the Center for Native American Spirituality and Christian Study, focused on living out the reign of God in the world and the sometimes difficult history of the church.

“We are constantly waiting for a message or sending the next message. We were able to deliberately take those things away and focus on times when you are alone with God,” said Buckley. “Thinking and mediating on words of scripture, it gives you pause, allows us to step back.”

The Academy Leadership team said their primary goal over the two years of planning was to prepare and provide

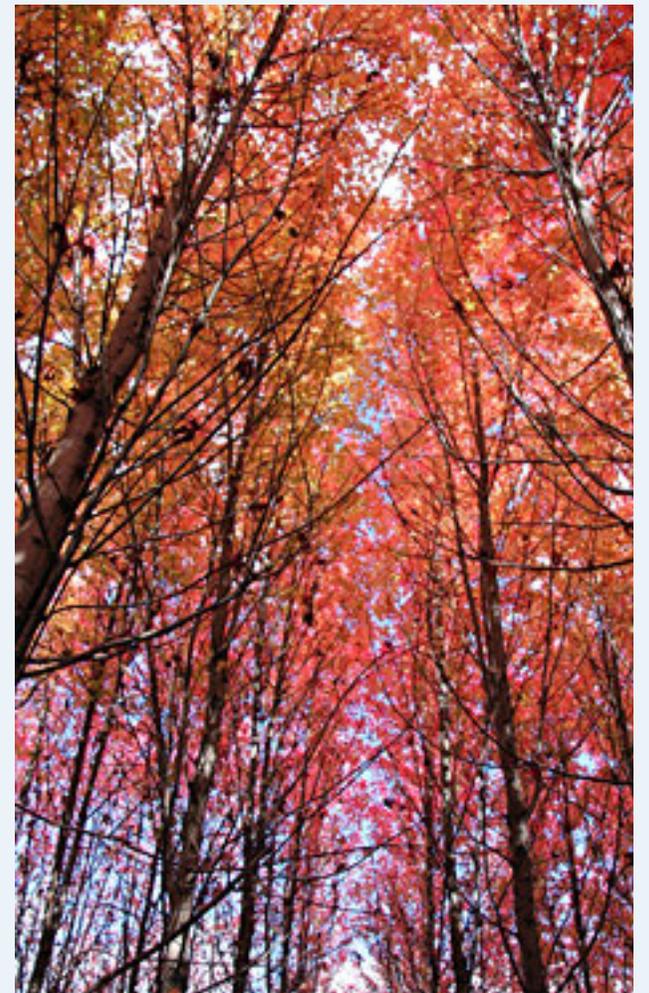
a place for participants to encounter God and Bellarmine was a perfect location. “The beautiful and serene surroundings, the generous hospitality of the Jesuit Community and staff as well as our outstanding faculty, filled our days with worship, prayer, study and fellowship,” said committee member Joyce Carrasco. “Within our AC, we experienced the bond of spiritual community and the encouragement in the practice of spiritual disciplines.”

Bishop Khegay said he hopes to provide a 5-day Academy for Spiritual Formation in the Eurasia Conference so others can experience what he describes as extremely rewarding. “The week gave me time to reflect and think,” he said. “The small group sharing was wonderful. I feel refreshed and ready to work.”

For future 5-day Academies and the next 2-year academy visit academy.upperroom.org.



Sister Kathleen Flood playing the African drum for worship. (Photo courtesy Joyce Carrasco)



Meditation on both sides of the camera

Photography workshop

October 25- 26, 2013

Reynoldswood Christian Camp & Retreat Center in Dixon, IL

For any journey we make, we prepare. We consider what we may need, where we may go and what we may do. Val Isenhower invites you do the same on your spiritual journey using photography.

A celebrated and published professional photographer she shares insights into using Photography as a spiritual practice, as a medium for meditation and becoming more in tune with God on our individual journeys.

Photography is a path to stilling the heart and soul to hear God and to sense the presence of God in the beauty of God's creation. Meditation behind the camera focuses on how our spiritual lives can inform our photography as we learn to pay attention, to be patient, to center and to focus our eyes in new ways. Meditation in front of the camera is the act of focusing on the pictures we record to see how they speak to your souls.

This course is experiential. You will be invited to spend time recording photographs, sharing them with the class and reflecting on the experience.

Participants will have the opportunity to sample Meditation on Both Sides of the Camera connecting with God at the beautiful Reynoldswood Retreat Center with 170 acres of woods, fields and hills along the Rock River.

This workshop is for anyone interested in learning how to include photography in their spiritual journey. Any type of camera will work, even the one on your phone.

Contact Reynoldswood to register (815)284-6979 or by email reynoldswood@niccamp.org. Questions contact Paul Judd 815-275-6819 or by email pastorjudd@gmail.com.

REMEMBERING PASTOR AND WIFE: Committed to Chicago's Latino community

A Memorial Service to Honor the Lives and Work of United Methodist Rev. Bruce W. Johnson, Jr. and Eugenia Johnson September 23, 2013, 5 p.m. – 6:30 p.m., Chicago, Illinois



Rev. Bruce W. Johnson and his wife Eugenia Johnson.

Rev. Bruce W. Johnson, Jr. and Eugenia (Ransier) Johnson dedicated their lives to serving the people of Chicago. Born in Aurora, Illinois in 1938, Bruce Johnson attended Garrett Seminary from 1960 to 1962. It was during that time that he met Eugenia Ransier, who was also a student at the seminary. They married on September 1, 1962. Two years later they began serving the Humbolt Park congregation, a community with a rapidly growing Latino membership.

In 1968, the Johnsons, along with their three young sons, moved to the Armitage Avenue Church in Lincoln Park. Within a few months, this church became "The People's Church" and national headquarters of the Young Lords Civil and Human Rights Movement. Together, they set up a free daycare center, free health clinic, a free breakfast for children program, and held demonstrations to protest the displacement of hundreds of Latinos and poor families from the neighborhood. Less than one year later the Johnsons were found by their children, brutally stabbed to death in their home. Their murders have never been solved.

Those who knew the Johnsons have said "they were people immersed in the present always building for the future." Deeply committed to the inner-city communities they served, the Johnsons worked tirelessly on behalf of the Latino families who had first made their homes in Lincoln Park and who were being forced from their homes through urban renewal. Eugenia was also well-known for her advocacy on behalf of special needs children. As one friend and colleague recalled, "They [knew] that they were engaged in a battle against the dark forces of this world. The school system that did not care for the handicapped child. The Urban Renewal that removed the poor. The world in revolution needing the Christ Revolution. They faced our world having known their acceptance by God. They carried faith and freedom as their shield. And their sword was the Word. In their ministries, they lived out the Christian Story, celebrating life and the Word; constantly fighting for justice and freedom."

Please join us as we celebrate the life and work of Rev. Bruce and Eugenia Johnson on September 23, 2013. Location TBD. Please call: (616)331-8099 to reserve a seat or visit www.gvsu.edu/kutsche.

This event is being organized by the Grand Valley State University Kutsche Office of Local History.

Grace for Logan Square



The community of Grace UMC lived out the message this summer. Immersed in a Sermon Series titled ThEcology (Theology + Ecology) Grace Church explored God's call to take care of creation, and on Sunday June 23 the church went into Logan Square to show they care about how their neighborhood looks and lives.

Almost forty Logan Squarists took to the streets and a local park, seeking to beautify the small corner of the neighborhood in which they live. They teamed up with Unity Park Preservation Society to help clean up garbage and plant flowers. They walked along Wrightwood Avenue to remove trash from the street and clean graffiti from lamp posts. And they took time to landscape their own front yard, while children decorated a flower planter that was placed in the church's front yard.

People aged 6-months to 70-plus years old worked outside following a brief worship service where Pastor Mark Schol asked them to "Live the Message" rather than "Listen to the Message." Schol went onto to say that "in a few days the graffiti will probably be back, the trash will accumulate again and by the fall the flowers will have died...but this is not a reason to give up, only an opportunity to continue to Live the Message!"

Grace's congregation was excited to put their faith to work and take care of God's creation. Congregants remarked how dirty Wrightwood Avenue had become and marveled at the transformation that occurred during their time together.

"People were stopping and thanking us for cleaning up the neighborhood" remarked Vicki Logan, a member of Grace

Church for forty years. "It was a good feeling to know that we were doing good for Logan Square!"

Grace Church hopes to keep this momentum to beautify the neighborhood going in the future, as well as making it safer. "Logan Square is a great neighborhood to live in, but it has its problems," Schol says. "It is a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood, which is good for property values and new businesses, and has helped shape the image of the area as hipster central. But with that, we [Logan Square] are pushing low income families out and forcing gangs to cross lines which causes turf wars. We as a church and a neighborhood must welcome new people but also minister to those who continue to be pushed to the margins."

In the coming weeks and months, Grace will explore Bishop Sally Dyck's call to understand "Who is my Neighbor." Grace hopes to offer Spanish as a second language courses, invite artists from the neighborhood to use their classrooms as a studio space, and partner with a local school to insure that children have a safe space to learn. For the congregation at Grace, Sunday was an important step in understanding "who is my neighbor." They did not simply "hear the message" that all of God's creation is Holy Space, they lived out God's message in the midst of their urban space.

Grace Church of Logan Square is located at 3325 W Wrightwood Ave, Chicago Ill. They offer Sunday School for all ages at 9:30am and they worship together at 10:30am. All are welcome. Follow them on *Twitter* @GraceLoganSq or for more info. email mark@graceforloganquare.org.

Navigating the Affordable Care Act: People of Faith Seeking Justice & Health

This is a health care education conference being convened by Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. Join us on October 1-2, 2013 for plenary and small group sessions providing faith and community leaders with the information they need to help people of the community navigate and access health security provided by the Affordable Care Act.

The Conference will gather at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and four satellite sites around Chicagoland including; Chicago – South Side at Coppin Memorial A.M.E.; Chicago – West Suburbs, Aurora at Main Baptist Church; and Geneva – Far West at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Geneva.

On Tuesday night, the Conference begins at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary with a plenary session featuring the Rev. Gary Gunderson, Professor of Faith and Health of the Public,

Wake Forest University School of Divinity. The introductory plenary will be web streamed to all satellite sites. On Wednesday, all campuses will host a morning plenary and then gather in small groups focused on empowering congregational leaders to help constituents access health care benefits.

The Conference is sponsored by Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, the American Association of Pastoral Counselors and the Center for Religion and Psychotherapy of Chicago in partnership with The Campaign for Better Health Care, The Center for Faith and Community Health Transformation: Advocate Health System, Samaritan Counseling Center in Naperville and the Center for Religion and Psychotherapy of Chicago. To register and for more information visit www.garrett.edu/NavigatingACA.

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