

The REPORTER

Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church www.umcnic.org

From the Bishop... Overcoming foreign language anxiety



Bishop Sally Dyck



Bishop Sally Dyck and classmates armed with fly swatters in the Spanish-as-a-second-language class at Grace Church of Logan Square.

“What are you doing this evening?” the woman who cuts my hair asked me.

“I’m going to a Spanish-as-Second-Language class.”

“What’s that?” she asked.

I explained to her that I wanted the people of The United Methodist Church in Northern Illinois to learn to speak Spanish so that they can speak to their neighbors. Nearly every community in the northern part of the state has a large and/or growing population of Spanish-speaking people, I explained, and while most of them are eager to learn English, it’s hospitable to at least attempt Spanish when we who only speak English encounter them in our communities, even in our churches.

“Wow! I never heard of anything like that! That’s cool!” she said. Then she added, “I’d like to do that.” I assured her that it wasn’t exclusively for United Methodists but anyone who was interested.

This represents a typical conversation when talking about our Spanish-as-a-Second-Language classes which started this fall. As you may remember or know, a small group of United Methodist linguists met with me in January 2013 and developed a curriculum that would provide a 100-word Spanish vocabulary, teach the pleasantries that people use when they meet their neighbors (los vecinos), teach some Spanish church songs, and the Lord’s Prayer.

In early September I enthusiastically went to the first orientation for the teachers and host church representatives, but as I went, I was anxious about being able to learn any Spanish. I have a “foreign language anxiety.”

But then I learned at the orientation that we would learn Spanish the way a child learns a language; not by conjugating verbs or memorizing long lists of words. We learned our first language by listening to it, seeking to comprehend it even when we didn’t totally understand every word, and then slowly beginning

to speak it...very slowly. Speaking is the hardest part and usually language courses quickly “force” adults into speaking before they’re really comfortable doing it.

I’ve attempted learning Spanish before. In the 1980’s Ken and I both went to Central America about once a year. As a result, I felt like I began to comprehend some Spanish, especially if it was a vocabulary associated with church, the Bible, theology, or food. We attempted to take a Spanish course at the local community college one year before we went. We only made it through about half of the classes and then our church responsibilities prevented us from completing the course.

I know I won’t be fluent and still not able to pronounce Spanish properly or make sentences with the proper verb conjugations after our Northern Illinois curriculum but I know I am learning. I’m learning another language the way children and adults learn best. As adults we won’t learn as fast if we mostly write (which we haven’t done at all yet in my class) or rely upon strict word-for-word translation, what we’re hearing of the teacher say in Spanish.

In our classes, our teacher asks us “where is the rainbow?” and we jump up from our seats and swat a picture of it. Or when he asks us “where is the color yellow?” we look frantically around and swat our neighbor (la vecina) very gently because she has a yellow t-shirt on! Learning happens best when we see the word through a picture or object and then physically do something to respond to what we hear in relation to the word or concept. As the curriculum development persons insist, “Telling is not teaching!”

Hmmm, maybe we have something to learn in terms of how we teach the Bible or confirmation. If we’d move around, laughing and swatting our los vecinos (gently of course), we might actually learn more and better! But what makes us think that when we figuratively “brain dump” a heap of information about the Bible, Wesleyan history or leadership concepts that anyone is

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NIC SAYS “HOLA” TO: Spanish as a Second Language



This fall, the Spanish-as-a-Second Language program launched in the Northern Illinois Conference as a part of Bishop Sally Dyck’s Harvest 2.0 initiative. This Spanish-as-a-Second Language program invites those who have never taken Spanish before (or took it so long ago that they no longer remember) to learn or renew their skills in the language. The demand for the classes has been strong, with 213 students enrolling at our 12 “pilot” sites across the Conference.

The Spanish-as-a-Second Language course is a six-week class held in local churches, designed

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DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT! TUESDAY DEC 3RD

YOUR GIFT TO MISSION THAT IS MADE ONLINE THROUGH THE ADVANCE ON UMC #GIVINGTUESDAY

WILL BE MATCHED DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR!



umcmmission.org/give

*Up to \$200,000. Some restrictions apply.

This Holiday season **DOUBLE** your dollars for INM

This Christmas season (and all year around) we have a number of great ways to increase your donation dollars to Imagine No Malaria (and do your holiday shopping). All of these efforts help our conference reach its goal of raising \$1,000,000 to help eradicate deaths by malaria.

Giving Tuesday December 3 – **DOUBLE** your dollars

The denomination's General Board of Global Ministries announced that for **ONE DAY ONLY**, on December 3, 2013, as part of UMC #GivingTuesday, gifts made online to any project through The Advance will be matched dollar for dollar.* You can select Imagine No Malaria (and Northern Illinois) to donate to our conference effort. Advance # 3021190. This applies to any Advance including, PRHeSS and Zimbabwe HIV/AIDS.

Just make the gift online, on December 3 (12:00 a.m. EST and 11:59 p.m. EST).

**Limit 10,000 individual donation, limit \$50,000 per conference, and matching is up to \$500,000.*

Cyber Monday December 2

This year you can shop cyber Monday sales and **SAVE LIVES**. By using the portal www.umcmarket.org you can shop all your favorite stores and the company will give a donation to Imagine No Malaria. Go to www.umcmarket.org select Imagine No Malaria from organizations, and start shopping!

You can use this portal all year, not just on cyber Monday.

Ten Thousand Villages Shopping Day Friday November 15 – 6:00-8:00pm

The Ten Thousand villages in Evanston has agreed to host a Imagine No Malaria shopping night. 10% of all goods sold will be donated to Imagine No Malaria. Come and buy wonderful fair trade gifts and help save the lives.

719 Main St., Evanston, IL 60202

Hosting shopping events, or eating out nights at

restaurants (Culvers and Potbelly's do it) are great ways to creatively reach your church goal, and invite the community to join you in fundraising efforts.

Alternative Gift Fair

Find resources (in November) at umcnic.org/imagenomalaria to offer Imagine No Malaria donations as part of an alternative gift fair. Donations made before giving Tuesday could be paid online that day to double your dollars.

With all the consumerism of Christmas, with these projects we have a chance to remember what Advent and Christmas really mean and redirect some of our retail money to help save a life in Africa.

For more fundraising ideas and bulletin inserts about these events to share with your church and community visit umcnic.org/imagenomalaria.



United Methodist Student Day is November 24

"In college, you don't have your family there to remind you to go to church regularly. Your spiritual life is whatever you want it to be, and you have to make the time for it."

— Daniel Tribble, student, TN Tech University, Cookeville

Tennessee Tech student Daniel Tribble constantly strives to serve the church while pursuing a mechanical engineering degree. The UMC is helping Tribble finance his education through a UM Student Day scholarship.

"My family has been Methodist from way back," Tribble says. They attend First United Methodist Church in Lebanon, Tenn. "I learned to play guitar so I could assist with the praise service." Today Tribble is active in the campus Wesley Foundation, chairs Young Adult Ministries for the Tennessee Annual Conference, referees youth soccer games, and is student government secretary and a resident assistant.

He says his faith "remains an essential part of who I am. After I graduate, I would love nothing more than ... to continue to serve the congregation that brought me up."

UM Day calls the church to support students as they prepare for life in uniting faith with knowledge. The offering provides scholarships and student loans for qualified United Methodist applicants. Your gifts to United Methodist Student Day help students like Daniel Tribble continue their education and their faith journey as they strive to make a difference in the world and discern what God has planned for them.

Visit www.umcgiving.org and click on church-wide special Sundays for resources and more info. You can give anytime of the year.

Continued from the cover...

Bishop's Column

learning, really learning? Telling isn't teaching; hearing isn't learning. We need to have an interactive approach to all of our learning.

After my first class, I was privileged to attend the installation of the presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church at the Rockefeller Chapel on the campus of the University of Chicago. And wouldn't you know? The person

Spanish as-a-Second Language

to teach 100 Spanish words often used in worship settings. Participants donate what they can (class costs average \$20 per person) to help bring this course to the community. It is a class open to anyone, and many sites report at least one person who is not a member of that faith community (or even a United Methodist church). It is designed to help participants notice and think differently about their community.

The classes are already producing results. One member from Faith Genoa was able to share a Spanish phrase that a family always says as they leave the church, "Qué Dios te bendiga" (God bless you). The Rev. Melissa Meyers, pastor of Faith UMC in Genoa, also wrote, "Since starting the Spanish as a second language class, I'm finding that I'm occasionally thinking in Spanish..." The language training changes how one thinks and

sitting next to me was the only Lutheran woman bishop in Latin America. She spoke very little English and I spoke very, very little Spanish but she was patient and kind with me and I know she appreciated that I even tried.

Make sure that your church signs up to host a Spanish-as-a-Second-Language course after Christmas or at least make sure that you find a class for yourself. I can assure you

looks at the world. The Rev. Lois Parr also remarked that just signing up for the course heightened her sensitivity to the languages spoken around her, and she looked forward to being able to understand a bit more of what is being said.

These first 12 classes are the "pilot" for a larger project that will ultimately invite 100 congregations to host a Spanish class in northern Illinois. Congregations self-select to be a part of the course, which means they choose a point person and a day and time for the class. That point person is assigned the important task of being the welcoming face of the class and assisting in the logistical parts of the experience.

The next round of classes will be held February 2-April 11, 2014. Congregations select six of those weeks to hold classes as well as the dates and time. At least seventeen congrega-

tions have already said they would like to host the next round of classes. If your church is interested, please e-mail ssl@umcnic.org with a point person with whom we can follow up. Please have dates and time for the courses as well.

Feliz navidad!

~Bishop Sally Dyck

These courses are an invitation to our participants to learn about their community as they become vital Christians in vital congregations, changing the world. Visit www.umcnic.org/ssl for more information about how to register and course offerings for the current and future terms.

Are you a Spanish teacher? Are you fluent in Spanish to teach at an entry level? Apply to become a Spanish as a Second Language teacher! E-mail ssl@umcnic.org for more information. A modest stipend is available for this work.

5-thousand shoes & more for a cause

By Judith Horsley

The First United Methodist Church of West Chicago set a goal to collect 5,000 pairs of shoes for the Shoeman Water Projects by September 21. A daunting task for any organization. But this church had much to celebrate on September 22. An outpouring of shoes from the community following the "Shoe" float in the Railroad Days parade pushed the collection over the goal amount to 6,000!

George Hutchings, known as the Shoeman, came up from St. Louis, MO with a large truck to collect the shoes and to celebrate this achievement. He is instantly recognizable by his black Stetson Cowboy hat and in his opening remarks he literally took his hat off in recognition to the church reaching its goal.

A shoe celebration was held during the regular worship service on Sunday, September 22 and the church had a very special guest, as Mayor Rubin Pineda was in attendance. Three eight-foot tables were set-up at the front of the church loaded with shoes. The call to worship became a call to the congregation to come up to the table to match, band or tie pairs together, count and bag them. It was a joyous celebration of following Jesus by serving others.

The "Shoeman" spoke about his life changing events starting as a young Marine sent to Vietnam in 1967 to 1997 when he met John Kihumba, a man from Kenya needing help to stay and study in America. Through his friendship with John, he began to understand the challenges facing the people of East Africa. George recognized that a large number of ministries and churches were addressing the needs of the disadvantaged in the United States and turned his attentions to Kenya and then Haiti. Since 1998, George has shipped a sizable quantity of supplies including 21,000 meals for orphans, \$2 million in medical supplies, dental labs, and neurosurgeons to perform pediatric facial reconstructions. As good as all this was, George realized that none of these prior

efforts were sustainable unless clean water was provided to the people.

From August of 2008 Shoeman Water Projects has collected over 3.5 million pounds of shoes that have been sold to an exporter in Miami, FL and re-sold in 50-pound bags to street vendors in Chile, Kenya and Haiti where they are sold for pennies on the dollar or bartered to provide shoes for those in need of protection from abrasions and deadly parasites.

The sale of the shoes to the exporter supports the expenses to provide clean water in Kenya and Haiti. Between August 2008 and June 2012 four water-drilling rigs have been delivered to Kenya. Numerous water purification systems have been purchased and distributed in Kenya and Haiti. Over a quarter of a million people now have access to clean water. The on-going shoe collection will be used to purchase a heavy water-drilling rig as 23 rivers have gone underground in Kenya and deeper drilling is required.

With all that has been done, women and children continue to make water walks several times a day to collect contaminated water in 5 gallon cans originally used to hold diesel fuel. With a fresh water source for their village, children can be home taught or attend a regional school.

Women can grow food and have water to raise livestock. With a new goal to collect another 5,000 in 2014, please continue to support this collection for the Shoeman Water Projects and keep shoes out of landfills by dropping off your old, but wearable shoes at the First United Methodist Church of West Chicago, 643 E. Washington St., West Chicago.

Shoes can be dropped off at any time by using the drop bin at the front entrance. For more info call 630-231-3344 or visit www.firstumcucc.org and link to the Shoeman website.

Inspired to make a difference? Search for UM related mission projects at www.umcmmission.org or www.umcor.org.



Volunteers at First UMC of West Chicago sort and bag thousands of shoes for the Shoeman Water Project.



Creating Healthy Leaders

Tossing a ball can be more than it seems. Clergy from across Northern Illinois participating in quadrennial ethics and boundary training were invited to toss a Nurf ball to one another during a recent training exercise. The ball toss simulated some of the information flow clergy are required to navigate everyday in their ministry. In reflecting on the exercise clergy noted that calling people by name helped prepare them to receive the ball, focusing on too many things at once caused them to drop the ball, and some balls come at you too fast to catch.

Led by the Rev. Dr. Karen McClintock, author, therapist and leader in the field of healthy congregations, the event was designed to guide clergy in examining their roles and responses to situations they encounter in everyday ministry. Mindful that clergy must first take care of themselves in order to be effective in their congregation, the day focused on many aspects of clergy wellbeing, communication and conflict.

Bishop Sally Dyck introduced the day by reminding clergy that we hold a sacred trust in our roles as leaders and must tend to our body, mind and soul with holy, healthy habits in our daily living in order to be the best we can be in our pastoral lives.

Dr. McClintock, author of several books including *Shameless Lives*, *Grace-filled Congregations*, guided pastors in tools for their ministry that encourage healthy communication, decrease gossip and diminish anonymous comments. Providing clergy with tools for the ethical treatment of information and sensitivity to the many roles played in pastoral leadership, clergy were equipped to lead in healthy ways.

❁ Happy Thanksgiving & Merry Christmas ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁



The NIC staff wishes you a blessed holiday season with family, friends and loved ones as we celebrate God's precious gift unto the world.

The staff met in October to vision and plan as we continue our important work in this quadrennium.

The team worked through goals and commitments writing a collaborative vision statement:

In partnership with the annual conference, we the staff of the NIC of The UMC honor and respect those we serve and each other in our shared ministry. We commit to communicate clearly and honestly valuing the differences among us. We bring expectations of excellence, integrity, hospitality and joy as we work together to advance God's mission for the world.



ANNUAL INTERFAITH: Thanksgiving Observance



"UNITY, HOPE AND PEACE"

Wednesday, November 20, 2013—Noon

First UMC—Chicago Temple

77 West Washington, Chicago, IL (SE Corner of Washington and Clark Streets)

Sponsored by:

Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago in cooperation with First UMC at Chicago Temple

Council website at www.crlmc.org. In keeping with tradition, donations will be collected to provide Thanksgiving Meals for Those in Need

Prayers, readings and music will be offered by different religious communities. Reception Immediately Following Service. Contact: info@crlmc.org or call (773) 595-4012.

CHURCHES HELPING: Flood victims in Marseilles

By Rev. Jim Galbreath, lead pastor at Woodridge UMC



"Flood-ravaged" gained a powerful new meaning for the work team from Woodridge United Methodist Church, as it responded to the call to help rehabilitate homes in Marseilles Ill. On October 5, 2013, six adults worked on a house already stripped to the 2X4 studs, installing fiberglass insulation and wallboard.

On the outside, the house looked normal, but inside it seemed more like a grove of young saplings or like a skeleton. From the back of the house, you could see all the way to the front wall through the forest of 2X4s."

The homeowners, Scott and Sheila Vicich, explained the need for volunteers. "We were very thankful for the government's help. We qualified for the maximum \$30,000 grant because of the extent of the damage to our home. But we discovered that would only pay for the materials we need, not the labor. We appreciate so much the help that you, and all the others who come, are giving us."

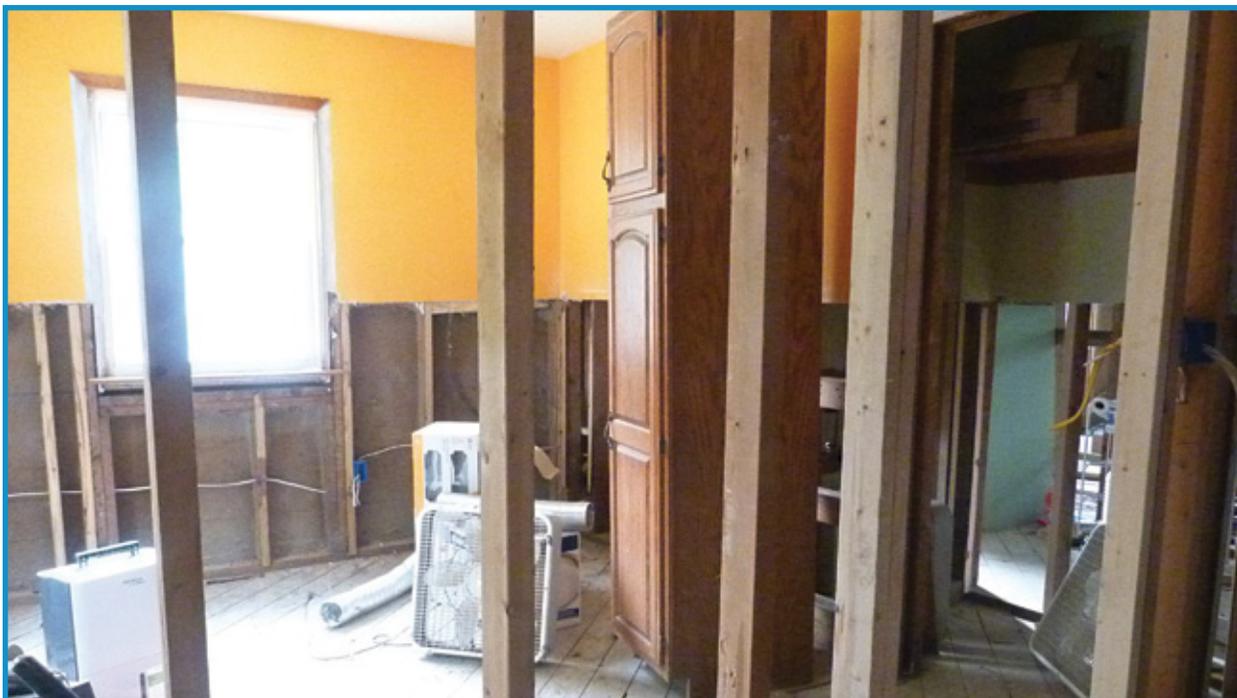
The Marseilles community was stunned by the flooding last April. Even though the town is on the Illinois River, this neighborhood had never flooded in such a serious way before. The massive flow was so strong that barges broke loose and damaged the local dam. Repairs there are still underway. Now a four foot wall of huge sandbags provides a flood barrier along the river bank.

The family is adapting the house during reconstruction to be more flood resistant. Washer and dryer will be moved from the basement to the upper floor, as the main electrical breaker panel has been already.

Two other work teams were in town that day, helping with rehab, and there is opportunity for many more to lend a hand. Local ecumenical contacts deploy volunteers to appropriate locations and help guide the work. Plumbers and electricians are particularly needed, as well as people experienced in hanging drywall or taping and mudding.

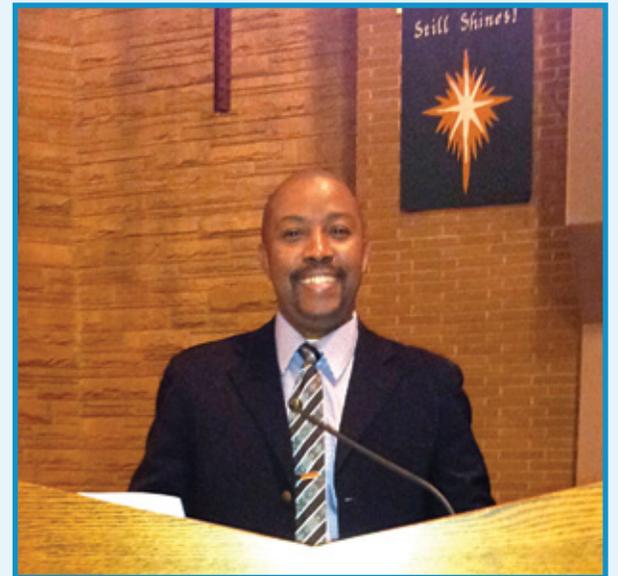
Local contact to schedule work trips is Kent Terry at 815-434-4876. His email is ak-terry@sbcglobal.net. Usual meeting place for workgroups is the Marseilles United Methodist Church at 426 Church St. (815-795-5233). Rev. Carolyn Lukasick is the pastor, her email is PastorCarolynL@gmail.com. Marseilles lies just south of I-80 on IL Rt. 15. Drive down the big hill to US 6 and turn left to Church St.

Cold weather is coming, and there is still much to do, but the Vichichs look forward with great hope to the day they can bring their three daughters and Sheila's sister back to live in their snug home. With people following God's guidance to come and help, their "forest of 2X4's" can become welcoming walls painted in cheerful colors once again.



School of Evangelism announces Denman Awards

Congratulations to the 2013 Denman award recipients announced at the School of Evangelism on Oct. 19. Clergy recipient: The Rev. Christopher T. Druce Jones, serving at Brooke Road UMC in Rockford. Laity recipient: Mr. Alex Krog, member at Cornerstone United Methodist Church from the Elgin District.



Rev. Druce Jones thanked the committee and those who nominated him. "It is a great honor for me to receive such a prestigious award. I accept it also in honor of my congregation, Brooke Road United Methodist Church, whose mission is to transform lives through faith, love, and service.

They challenge me in creative ways on a weekly basis to help make the gospel of Jesus Christ real and relevant to our community, visitors, and members," said Rev. Druce Jones. "Receiving the Denman Evangelism Award affirms and validates my ministry as a disciple in continuing to fulfill the Great Commission. I am very humbled and grateful to be honored in this way."



Alex Krug was nominated by his former pastor, the Rev. Lisa Kruse-Safford, for his work with the youth ministry. "Lisa asked me three years ago to help out with the youth ministry which was in a transition stage and to take on a larger role," said Krug. "I adopted a just say yes, don't say no policy. If someone asks me to do something, I say sure."

Youth explore IMMIGRATION IN NEW YORK CITY



Youth from the Plumblines 2013 tour outside the UN.



Photo courtesy of Kaylee Gerhardt.

Eighteen youth and four adults from across the Northern Illinois Conference traveled to New York City in October for the Plumblines 2013 tour to explore the topic of immigration. Two participants from Kingswood United Methodist Church in Buffalo Grove reflected on their experience.

"We had the opportunity to listen to peoples' journeys through immigrating to the U.S."

During this trip to New York City we had the opportunity to listen to peoples' journeys through immigrating to the U.S. There are four pathways that allow a person citizenship in the U.S: family, employment, refugee, and a lottery.

Even though the government allows immigrants to become citizens, the process is tiring and very challenging. If and only if you qualify for one of these categories you can be on the path to citizenship which could take 6-20 years. This is why many of the immigrants are undocumented or cross the borders illegally. We knew there were consequences for this, but what Blake and I didn't know was if you were undocumented no matter who; a single mom, a 16 year old trying to get a proper education, or a 25 year old looking for a job so he can send money back home, the government will take you away from everything. They will put you in a detention camp to wait for deportation, which in our opinion can easily be compared to a concentration camp.

"There are many people trying to change these laws."

We learned there are many people trying to change these laws. People protest, work to pass the Dream Act and create organizations like the one we visited in Queens called, *Make the Road New York*. Blake and I took a lot of information away from this trip, but that's not all we did, we also were probably some of the biggest tourists there.

~Kaylee Gerhardt

"The leaders had us try all sorts of food from different cultures."

As Kaylee said we talked about immigration reform which was very eye opening. On top of that, we did get to see a lot

of New York which was sweet! We saw a lot between Times Square to *Matilda* on Broadway. Not only were all the sights amazing, but to keep with the theme of immigration the leaders had us try all sorts of food from different cultures. We had Indian, Chinese, Korean, Italian, and even Ethiopian food! The atmosphere in all these restaurants was different than that which I know Kaylee and I were used to, and so figuring out what we should eat or how we should eat it was always an entertaining part of our day. Thankfully, a lot of the places served buffet style.

"We went on a tenant museum tour which took place in the actual house that immigrants lived in."

Besides learning about different cultures and immigration, New York itself served as a lot of fun for our whole group. Going to Times Square was a very cool adventure. There were ads everywhere, so much so that at 11pm it looked like it was daytime from inside a store. We also rode the subway to all of the places we went for food and to tour the city. This gave us a city life experience. And we went on a tenant museum tour which took place in the actual house that immigrants lived in when they first moved here in the 1900's.

"... it was a spiritual moment."

We also took a tour of the United Nations building which built on all of the immigration we were learning about. On top of all that we went to the 9/11 memorial which was very moving. The tree that stood through the devastation was there too and it was a spiritual moment seeing it still standing.

"There was a lot of security almost everywhere we went."

One interesting thing we both realized was that there was a lot of security. Almost everywhere we went we had to put our bags, cameras, phones, shoes, and even belts through the system. Even so, we did a ton in New York and learned so much that it is hard to imagine it was only 4 days. We both want to thank the Northern Illinois Conference and Kingswood for contributing and providing us with this amazing opportunity. I know that Kaylee and I will remember the trip for the rest of our lives.

~Blake Maley

"Plumblines is the kind of experience that's a must for every high school student."

Plumblines is the kind of experience that's a must for every high school student and youth particularly in churches. It's an opportunity to be in relation with other young people both alike and different as they jointly discuss issues of social justice and their role in them as Christians. We wrestle with the questions of what will I do about it and will I do something about it? That process of questioning leads us to a path towards mercy and justice.

~Delia Catalina Ramirez

"This year's Plumblines youth group were exceptionally well-informed about their topic."

This year's group of Plumblines youth were, like other years, exceptionally well-informed about their topic and willing to participate in everything asked of them. Whether that was trying some really different food or trying to keep up with the madman-paced walking of a leader (me), they took it all in stride.

"Our hope is that they take what they learn and begin to take steps to make a difference."

Our hope is that they take what they learn and begin to take steps to make a difference where they are. Whether it's creating vital new friendships or seeing God's world in a bigger, more connected way, the 2013 Plumblines class promises to create lasting change in our world. They are leaders in our churches and our Conference, and I look forward to working with them wherever God leads. Save the date for Plumblines 2014 next October over Columbus Day. If you know of a youth interested in participating email mmann@umcnic.org.

~ Michael Mann - NIC Assoc. Dir. of Mission & Advocacy

Finance agency extends benefits to same-sex couples

By United Methodist News Service

General agencies of the United Methodist Church will extend employee benefits to same-sex couples, under a decision by the board of directors of the denomination's General Council on Finance and Administration.

The board in its Oct. 21 action changed the general agencies welfare benefits program's definition of "spouse" to include same-sex spouses, recognized by a state as being legally married to the employee, and civil partners, either through a civil union or a comprehensive domestic partnership, recognized by a state as being the legal partner of an employee.

The agency's board took the action after hearing from its Committee on Personnel Policy and Practices, made up of representatives of all 11 agencies that get general apportioned funds.

But GCFA will also ask the Judicial Council, the church's supreme court, for a declaratory judgment on whether extending the benefits violates church law.

"The Board's decision was taken in light of actions taken in states where same-sex marriage and domestic partnerships are now the law of the land," said Bishop Michael J. Coyner, president of GCFA. "Our Board has sought with this action to make policy decisions that stay in conformity with both civil and church law. We look forward to the Judicial Council's guidance on this matter."

Paragraph 806.9 of the 2012 *Book of Discipline*, the church law book, states that GCFA "shall be responsible for ensuring that no board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote

the acceptance of homosexuality or violate the expressed commitment of The United Methodist Church 'not to reject or condemn lesbian and gay members and friends.'"

The GCFA news release said Judicial Council will be asked whether general agency payments for portions of the insurance premiums for same-sex spouses and civil partners of general agency employees violates the *Book of Discipline*.

Denicia Roberts, GCFA's executive human resources director, said agency employees can sign up to take advantage of the change during an open enrollment period, beginning Oct. 28. Coverage will be effective Jan. 1.



Cleer plan for end of life issues

By Anne Marie Gerhardt, NIC Dir. of Communications

Serving as a chaplain at Advocate Christ Medical Center in Oak Lawn, Kathryn Cook-Biekman journeyed with many patients as they faced death. Cook-Biekman prayed with them and became a support for families wrestling with difficult end of life decisions for their loved ones.

Cook-Biekman's work became her passion. "I have always felt called to journey with people when, as they define it, are at the worst point in their lives," said Cook-Biekman. "Many times that's when they lose a loved one and I want to make such difficult decisions in that time a little easier."

Cook-Biekman has turned her calling into the Clergy End of Life Education Resource project (CLEER) in partnership with Advocate Christ, the Chicago End-of-Life Care Coalition and the Chicago Southern District of the Northern Illinois Conference. The project received a \$12,000 grant from the General Board of Discipleship Ethnic Local Church Concerns. The aim of the CLEER Project is to:

- Increase clergy knowledge of end-of-life issues including the impact of culture on end-of-life decision making and care.
- Improve clergy understanding of palliative and hospice care and discuss its basic principles.
- Improve capacity to provide pastoral care at the end.

- Enhance clergy skills to support families through the end-of-life process and decision making.

- Improve clergy capacity to help persons die well and with dignity.

Cook-Biekman says not all pastors receive this type of end-of-life training in seminary and many pastors turn to the hospital chaplains to handle these difficult situations. But people often turn to clergy and their faith community for support, strength, comfort and guidance. "A lot of it depends on how we feel about death and dying ourselves and our thoughts about it," said Cook-Biekman. "One of the ways to help make this stage in one's life easier is to talk about it in advance and prepare for it."

Cook-Biekman says learning what we want for ourselves and what our loved ones want can be a gift. Quick, life altering decision making is that much harder when families are uncertain and under stress. "Honoring our loved ones wishes at the end-of-life goes a long way to helping toward the bereavement process," she said.

The CLEER project will hold several focus groups, education lunch and learn series and a symposium at Advocate Christ in the coming year. Also, the CLEER Project hopes to create a church bulletin insert to increase awareness about the importance of advance care planning in conjunction with National Healthcare Decisions Day (NHDD), April 16,

2014. A blog will soon be available to provide educational resources for clergy and lay leadership.

For more information, contact Kathryn Cook-Biekman, CLEER Project Director at 773-734-7920 or via email at CLEERProject@gmail.com



Kathryn Cook-Biekman



Navigating the Affordable Health Care Act

For the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded; I mourn, and dismay has taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored?

-Jeremiah 8:22 in the Hebrew Bible.

The faith community has been leading Illinois towards health care justice for years, and with the roll out of the Affordable Health Care Act, the Campaign for Better Health Care (CBHC) can help you navigate the waters.

CBHC has 5 state-trained ACA Navigators available to visit your congregation or community for educational presentations and one-to-one counseling sessions.

In a 30-60 minute presentation, our Navigators can cover eligibility, benefits, costs, and the process

for signing up, with a Question & Answer session. Following that, Navigators can assist attendees in starting the enrollment process with individuals and small business owners (including church administrators) for the rest of the event, or return at a later date for additional assistance.

The Rockford District is hosting several of these informational meetings throughout the Rockford area and in Forrester, Freeport, Durand, Stockton and Mount Carrol beginning in November. For more info contact Betsy Smith at bsmith@umcnic.org.

The health care sign-up period extends from October 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014. Contact Jessica Palys at 312-913-9449 or JPalys@cbhconline.org with questions or to schedule a visit.



CENTRAL CONFERENCE: Pension Initiative \$25 Million Fundraising Goal Accomplished

By M. Colette Nies, GBPHB Managing Director, Communications

The Rev. Francisco Ferreira is a retired pastor in East Angola—he has led 10 churches during his 41-year career in ministry.

He typifies many ministers in the central conferences—he is putting his pension payment to use to secure his future.

Since he has already replaced his roof, he now buys cement blocks every month to improve his house. They are stacked neatly in his yard—1,500 of the 4,000 he estimates he will need. In most of the African central conferences, the gift of sheets of zinc (the material used as roofing) is common at retirement—essentially giving the retired pastor a “roof over his or her head.” Through the Central Conference Pension Initiative (CCPI), the UMC now provides longer-lasting, ongoing support.

Rev. Ferreira expressed his appreciation to CCPI staff during one of their recent visits: “When I first retired in 2003, we did not receive any pension but I was able to grow my own food. Now, I am older and unable to grow my food, so I am very happy that pension payments started in 2010 and come every quarter to help me survive.” He wanted GBPHB to thank the UMC in America for sacrificing for the central conference retirees.

In October, the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBPHB) announced that the Central Conference Pension Initiative (CCPI) reached its \$25 million challenge goal with a \$217,000 “tithe” contribution from the General Board of Discipleship (GBOD) board of directors, making it possible to retire the fundraising initiative once all pledged contributions are received.

Following the contribution confirmation, GBOD General Secretary Karen Greenwaldt said, “What an honor it is to contribute funds to the CCPI. Providing for retired pastors and spouses across the Central Conferences is the right thing to do and GBOD is blessed to be able to contribute to this important fund.”

GBPHB General Secretary Barbara Boegegrain commented, “We are so grateful to the thousands of individuals, local churches, conferences and others, and now the GBOD, who contributed over the years to make it possible

for our United Methodist Church (UMC) clergy in the central conferences to also have hope for the future.”

All UMC Clergy Now Covered

The UMC central conferences are those outside the U.S. CCPI addressed the challenge to provide a long-term foundation for retirement security for dedicated pastors who would otherwise have little or no pension support when they retire from ministry. All clergy around the world, including every eligible central conference pastor, now have reliable pension support through their conference and/or government program. In January 2013, all central conferences seeking pension support through CCPI had met the necessary pension program start-up criteria. They now have their own pension programs ap-

when their careers in ministry end. This is a significant effort that now recognizes and rewards a life of service to the Lord.”

CCPI Background

CCPI began 13 years ago when GBPHB and the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM) laid the groundwork for sustainable pensions for central conference retirees. General Conference 2000 focused the UMC on this need, launching an inter-agency task force led by Bishop Joe Pennel. As a result, General Conference 2004 amended The Book of Discipline and authorized GBPHB to raise the necessary funds to provide pension support to the central conferences that need it. Several agencies collaborated to provide support for the fledgling effort including United Methodist Publishing House, United Methodist Communications and General Council on Finance and Administration, in addition to GBGM and GBPHB.

Wespath Investment Management (a division of GBPHB) invests the contributions—the earning on which make the initial pension payments possible. Pension plans are different from charitable-giving programs, because ultimately, they are funded by contributions from local churches and the ministers themselves. Over time, the central conferences will grow and manage the pension program funding with contributions from their active pastors.

To date, \$3.9 million has been disbursed, providing a financial foundation while giving central confer-

ences time to build their own contribution base for future retirees. In this way, conference pension programs become self-sustaining over time.

It is important to remember that this significant achievement was realized during the most severe economic downturn in recent memory—a remarkable testament to a great Church and its generous members. Thousands of donations and pledges have been received and will continue to be taken—to date, 94% of pledges have been realized.



Retired Rev. Francisco Ferreira stands by the cement blocks he is buying to improve his house.

proved and in place—two years ahead of schedule.

Boegegrain commended the efforts over the years of the CCPI team—Managing Director Dan O’Neill, Director Paul Dirdak, and Chief Financial Officer Tim Koch—for their active engagement, personal commitment and dedication to this special program. The CCPI-established pension plans today cover 2,801 retirees and surviving spouses, and more than 8,000 active pastors. Bishop Ben R. Chamness (retired), a member of the initial Central Conference Pension Committee, kicked-off and led the fundraising effort in 2007; he expressed his delight at this accomplishment: “It is truly a matter of justice that our central conference ministers have support in retirement

CHICAGO URBAN STRATEGY COMMUNITY SAFETY EVENT:

Bishop Sally Dyck is inviting UMs in the City of Chicago and surrounding Chicagoland to a community engagement event focused on Community Safety on Nov. 16. A panel discussion featuring officials from Chicago Police Dept., Chicago Public Schools and the 24th/22nd Ward Aldermanic Offices will be conducted. Action plans to impact Community Safety in your neighborhood will be developed.

“I look forward to your participation at this our second Chicago Urban Strategy event focused on community safety. It is my prayer that this event will provide each of us an opportunity to “live into” our

covenant with the people of the city of Chicago!” said the Rev. Robert Biekman, NIC Urban Ministry Coordinator.

Planned Agenda
 8 - 9 am Registration
 9 - 9:15 am Worship
 9:15 - 10:30 Panel Discussion
 10:30 - 11:45 Community Safety Break Outs Sessions
 11:45 - Noon Reporting & Covenant Renewal

Parking is available in the school's parking lot.

Visit www.umcnic.org and click on calendar and the event to register.



“...seeking the welfare of the city...”

Saturday, Nov. 16, 9 a.m.- 12:30 p.m.
 Michelle Clark Academic Preparatory High School
 5101 W. Harrison St., Chicago



Chicago Southern D.S. honored NCC alum

Congratulations to the Rev. Dr. Tracy Smith

Malone, Chicago Southern District Superintendent, for receiving the North Central College (NCC) Outstanding Alumni Award. NCC leaders presented Rev. Malone with the recognition at the Alumni Convocation on Friday, Oct. 25.

Rev. Malone'90 is a recognized leader in The United Methodist Church, widely known for her devout faith and outstanding abilities to lead, mentor, teach and preach. As Chicago Southern District Superintendent, she oversees 60 local churches, two campus ministries and other programs. Tracy has served in associate, pastor and senior pastor positions. She's been a board member of the General Board of Church and Society and currently serves as treasurer for the General Commission on Religion and Race. She chaired the 2012 delegation to General and Jurisdictional Conferences. She has received the Distinguished Leadership Award by the Chicago Black Methodists for Church Renewal.

Rev. Malone came to North Central knowing she would prepare for seminary, having been mentored to enter the ministry by her father (the Reverend Willie Smith '79) and other clergy. While a student, she was a change agent who initiated the Voices of Praise gospel choir, planned new events for Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday and served on the search committee that hired the College's first multicultural affairs director.

She graduated from North Central with a degree in religious studies, received a master of divinity degree from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and a doctor of ministry degree from United Theological Seminary. "I hold NCC in high regard," said Rev. Malone. "I feel very strongly about the educational experience and the life on campus. I love NCC. It's the place to be."

As a North Central alumna, Rev. Malone has been generous with her time on many occasions, returning as a speaker at Martin Luther King Jr. events and at the worship service to celebrate the inauguration of President Troy D. Hammond. In addition, she and husband Derrick Malone '93 established the Derrick and Tracy Malone Minority Scholarship to support the African-American student population at North Central.

Social-justice agency forms partnership with Healing Communities

By Wayne Rhodes, Faith in Action Editor

Local church ministry for those affected by criminal-justice system

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The United Methodist General Board of Church & Society has announced a partnership with Healing Communities, a Philadelphia faith-based ministry that provides a framework to engage with persons returning from or at risk of incarceration, their families and the larger community.

"Too many of our brothers and sisters who are among the more than 2.3 million currently incarcerated in the United States are facing mountainous obstacles once they return to their local communities and congregations," said Bill Mefford, GBCS director of Civil & Human Rights. "They face restrictions on access to services as well as the social stigma of having once been in prison."

Mefford said Healing Communities is a way for United Methodist congregations to become 'Stations of Hope' for returning citizens. "In the Healing Communities model, you can mobilize existing resources within your congregation to meet needs both of the individual and their families," he emphasized.

"This partnership allows us to understand ministry with those who have been touched by incarceration as pastoral care," said Doug Walker, who is Senior Urban Ministry Fellow and Healing Communities National Coordinator at GBCS. "The Healing Communities framework helps congregations and conferences to expand their ministry without necessarily expanding their budget."

Walker said this framework utilizes strengths that naturally exist in a congregation. "It allows us to live our faith and practice our ministry in ways that are specific and relevant to each congregation or conference," he emphasized. "Can your church be a 'Station of Hope' for someone suffering silently with shame and stigma? Yes it can."

Healing Communities is led by a team of staff and consultants comprising pastors, scholars, practitioners and thought leaders at the Philadelphia Leadership Foundation. Harold Dean Trulear directs the Healing Communities Prison Ministry and Prisoner Reentry Project of the Philadelphia Leadership Foundation.

Designed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Healing Communities has been implemented in over 20 sites nationally, in partnership with such organizations as the Progressive National Baptist Convention, the Christian Assn. for Prisoner Aftercare and the National Women's Prison Project.

Brings mercy and justice together

Healing Communities identifies basic components of action for congregations. Each action is built on existing strengths, all located within the existing mission and ministry structure of the local church. Resources helpful in ministries among those affected by the criminal-justice system include the formal and informal networks of congregational life, and the Christian themes of forgiving, healing, redemption, reconciliation and justice.

Healing Communities trainings mobilize congregations to serve returning citizens as well as advocate for needed changes so that the criminal-justice system can be transformed into a truly fair and just system, according to Mefford.

"Healing Communities bring mercy and justice together where they belong," Mefford said. "It creates spaces for incarnational relationships among those directly impacted by the broken criminal-justice system so that the United Methodist movement to end mass incarceration can continue to grow and be effective."

Mefford urged every United Methodist church considering ministry among those directly affected by the criminal-justice system, or who are already engaged in these important ministries, to become a Healing Community.

Primary components

Primary components of Healing Communities are the following:

- **Stigma Reduction & a Welcoming, Supportive Atmosphere.**

The aim is to heighten awareness surrounding reentry, help families reduce the sense of stigma and shame over having incarcerated loved ones, and create a welcoming environment for returning citizens.

- **Formal & Informal Support.** Congregations will be a source of strength for the family of the incarcerated and/or at risk persons through pastoral counseling and providing a support group to walk with the family through the incarceration of their loved one and their return home.

- **Volunteering.** Congregations will be exposed to life-skill development programs in jails and prisons, and will be encouraged to provide volunteers for these efforts.

- **Mentoring.** Using the Amachi model, mentors are expected to listen to, encourage, support and assist their mentees as they go through difficult times and face certain challenges.

- **Network of referrals.** Congregations will be introduced to and connected with resources available in the community for persons impacted by incarceration.

- **Advocacy & Mobilization.** Through additional training from the General Board of Church & Society, Healing Communities will build movements among United Methodist congregations committed to seeing an end to mass incarceration and the creation of a genuinely fair, just criminal-justice system.

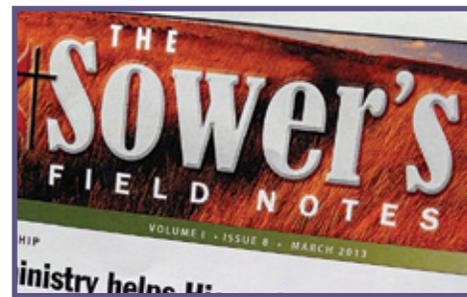
Build teams with others

Healing Community congregations will build teams with other congregations in their conference and community and work with United Methodists from all over to build an effective, movement to change the criminal-justice system at both the state and federal levels.

More information, including United Methodist congregations that have embarked on the ministry is available on the GBCS website at Healing Communities Partnership.

If you are interested in your congregation becoming a Healing Community, contact Doug Walker at dwalker@umc-gbcs.org or Mefford at bmefford@umc-gbcs.org.

You can learn more about Healing Communities on its website at www.healingcommunitiesusa.org.



Sower's newsletter wins 1st place

The Northern Illinois Conference Communications department and the Harvest 2020 campaign received recognition for its work on the Sower's Field Notes newsletter at the United Methodist Association of Communicators annual meeting held in Chicago Oct. 24-27. The Harvest 2020 March 2013 newsletter won first place in the print category. The judges said the issue was a "nice, clean design" and they appreciated the "diverse topics".

Stay Connected

Sign up for the weekly NIC eNews and Appointment Announcements. Visit www.umcnic.org and enter your email in the upper left hand corner.

Note: if you opt out of one email, you opt out of all conference emails.

Job Openings

For the latest job openings in the NIC, visit www.umcnic.org/jobs

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New Extension #s

When calling the Chicago NIC office at 312-346-9766 or toll free (800) 382-3114 from outside area code 312, there's now an easy way to connect to the other regional offices.

To reach Elgin/Aurora Regional office from either phone number above dial 503.

To reach DeKalb/Rockford Regional office from either phone number above dial 504.

How to Submit News

Please submit items at least two weeks prior to publication date to communications@umcnic.org. Include your name, address, email, phone number and name of local church. Space is limited. Electronic submissions are preferred with high resolution attached jpegs.