



The Mission of Harvest 2.0 is to create Vital Christians in Vital Churches Changing Communities

VOLUME I • ISSUE 10 • NOVEMBER 2013

■ NEW FAITH COMMUNITIES

## Changing Course—Engaging the Community

Walking into a local restaurant for a lunch meeting, DeKalb District Superintendent, the Rev. Young-Mee Park exclaims, "This is not the Dixon I knew before!"

A lot has changed in the 10 years since Rev. Park ministered in Dixon. She recalls how there was once a furniture store where now a trendy café serves up healthy choices. Just one sign of the dramatic changes taking place in this community.

Rev. Park met with leaders from Dixon: First United Methodist Church and the Rev. Martin Lee, Director of Congregational Development and Redevelopment, inside this café, a potential site for a new faith community to worship.

"We gathered with a team of leaders who are not sitting on the sidelines but are engaging the community and loving their neighbors with the gospel of Jesus Christ," says Rev. Lee. "The leadership at Dixon: First UMC has worked hard to adapt to the changes in their neighborhood."

The church's leaders invited Rev. Park and Rev. Lee to participate in the organizing meeting for the new faith community's shepherding team. First UMC is pursuing revitalization and church planting simultaneously. Rather than resign the church



The Ginko Tree Café is a possible site for a new faith community in Dixon, Ill.

to irrelevance, First UMC is dedicated to reaching out says Rev. Lee. "The Rev. Mike Jones' leadership at First UMC has empowered the congregation to reach younger generations and religious 'nones,'" says Rev. Lee.

Dixon currently has a single-parent rate of 39%, and 34% of the citizens consider themselves religious 'nones'. The leaders of First UMC, however, have relentlessly pursued authentic outreach. The congregation has a goal of baptizing 12 adults every year, and so far they have baptized 8 adults by profession of faith in 2013. The old Sunday school classrooms

are being transformed into activity centers for children and youth.

The church-planting efforts are led by Wade Buzzard. This new faith community is launching through a grassroots strategy. Wade is committed to hold one-on-one meetings with potential members until 150 people commit to join him for the church's launch in September of 2014.

Wade's labors in the Spirit have already yielded fruit: the owner of the furniture store-turned-café has agreed to open up her restaurant to the new faith community free of charge. Sunday evening services

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■ COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## Imagine No Malaria Miracle Offering—Saving A Child A Week

As Bishop Sally Dyck called the Northern Illinois Annual Conference session together June 5, the opening worship highlighted the theme for the entire four day session, *Who Is My Neighbor?* And as the familiar hymn *Jesu, Jesu* conveys in its text, we affirm that our neighbors are both near and far. Churches across the Northern Illinois conference are joining efforts to end preventable deaths by malaria in Africa, especially the deaths of a child or a mother.

As an Annual Conference our goal is to raise at least \$1,000,000 over the next three years for Imagine No Malaria. Knowing that \$100 saves a life, churches are challenged to pledge \$100 for each person who attends worship regularly. The conference plans to collect pledge forms from all churches by World Malaria Day (April 25, 2014), so that

we can begin to celebrate our generosity.

One church, Wesley UMC in Sterling Ill., has gotten a head start by challenging the congregation to save one life a week by raising \$100 with a miracle offering since annual conference this past June.



Under the leadership of the Rev. Nancy Weingartner and Elisa Gatz, lay member to annual conference, the congregation has completed this challenge for 25 weeks, saving 25 children and raising \$2,500 for Imagine No Malaria.

They are not alone in this effort. First UMC of West Dundee raised \$400 with a spare change jar, the Vacation Bible School at Our Saviour's in Schaumburg raised over \$250, Christ in Deerfield raised \$300 from their community at the July 4th parade,

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## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

# Street Stories—Urban Strategy for Chicago

A 12 year-old boy is crying on the street as he walks on his way home from school. "Why?" you ask. He's just received his school progress report and is concerned. His grades are not as good as he expected and he knows his mother will be disappointed.

He barely notices the lady in the car he passes that is stopped at traffic light. He barely notices the tears streaming down her face. She's crying because she has just been told that for the third pay period, six weeks

in a row the state funded not-for-profit agency she works for can't pay her salary. She's not crying for herself but for her children who have to eat every day. Where will she find the money to pay for the food?

Glancing around before she proceeds on her drive home, she spots a well-dressed man quickly walking up the steps of the church on the corner. She sees him raise his hand to his face but he's moving so quickly that she does not see the tears that he's wiping away as he dashes into the church. He thinks, "This is the third funeral in as many months that he has had to attend due to the untimely death of a young person.

*Saturday, Nov. 16, 2013—9am to 12:30pm the Chicago Urban Strategy Team is planning a Community Safety event at Michelle Clark HS in Chicago, IL. Doors open at 8 am. Follow us on Facebook for details [www.facebook.com/chicagourbanstrategysummit](http://www.facebook.com/chicagourbanstrategysummit).*



**More than 50 United Methodists marched in the Bud Billiken Parade to pray for and support local schools.**

In August, Bishop Sally Dyck led nearly 50 United Methodists as they created a new chapter of the United Methodist story by marching on the streets of Chicago's south side during the 84th Annual Bud Billiken Back to School Parade.

While seemingly disconnected, these lives have a common thread. The church provides the background for each of these street stories!

There are more than 60 United Methodist faith communities in the city of Chicago. Collectively these faith communities represent nearly 10,000 members serving most of the 77 communities and 200 distinguishable neighborhoods in the city

of Chicago. This does not include the many United Methodist congregations in the Chicagoland area and beyond that support ministries directly benefiting the people of Chicago.

By getting to know our neighbors through focused community engagement in the areas of Community Safety, Education & Literacy, Restorative Justice and Food Security and living our Covenant with the People of Chicago, the United Methodist Church can step out of the background and be an instrument in God's hand to re-write the many street stories that exist. ☞

~Submitted by Rev. Robert E. Biekman, NIC Urban Ministry Coordinator

## HEALTHY DISCIPLESHIP

# A Place to Call Home

The Nueva Vida congregation now has a permanent place to call home. On Sept. 6, 2013, the congregation celebrated the gift of the official building transfer from the former First United Methodist Church at 60 S. Lincoln Ave., Aurora to Nueva Vida. First UMC held its final worship in June 2011. The Aurora Childcare Center still operates in the historic building.

Local Pastor Martin Lopez expressed appreciation and excitement as they continue to grow this Hispanic/Latino church. "It's like a dream come true for me," says Lopez. "I dream that 500 brothers and sisters, youth and kids will come here to worship God."

Nueva Vida has become a second home for Margarita Ramirez and her 7 year old son, Miguel, who danced with excitement in the pews during the celebration service's music. "Before I came here, I didn't know the word of God very much," says Ramirez. "This church is very important to my family and has shown me that in spite of problems we may have, God is going to be with me."

The church began as a Hispanic ministry in the early 70's at First UMC Aurora under Associate Pastor Luis B. Areyza. Through the years, several pastors have led the congregation and the number of worshipers has gone up and down. But the church continues its important outreach to the surrounding Hispanic/Latino community.



**Bishop Sally Dyck and conference leaders helped celebrate the official building transfer to Nueva Vida.**

Wanda Sanchez, a lay missionary and graduate of the NIC Hispanic/Latino Lay Academy for Faith Community Development, is leading Nueva Vida's Agua de Vida (water of life) recovery group. "We are seeing lives changed. It's just amazing. You can feel God's presence," says Sanchez. "Many of the people start in the recovery group, end up knowing Christ and now worship with us."

Juan Carlos leads the praise band and says the transition at Nueva Vida and the transfer of the building is a miracle. He

says people have walked by, heard the music from outside and have come in to check it out. "It's a blessing," says Carlos. "The transition hasn't been easy, but we are seeing a new generation here with a vision and we are seeing the results and fruit of our work."

Nueva Vida hopes the building will become more than a house of worship, but a vital church that creates vital Christians to change communities and be a place to call home for many more people. ☞

## NEW FAITH COMMUNITIES

# The Xperience of Sponsoring Congregations

On a beautiful Saturday evening in September, around 80 young people from many backgrounds gathered around a bonfire in the parking lot of Hartzell Memorial United Methodist Church worshipping Jesus while praying for an end to the violence in Chicago.

Xperience Church, a new faith community plant in the Hillside/Bellwood community organized the event. Was it unusual for Hartzell UMC to host an Xperience church event? Not at all.

Hartzell UMC has been a tremendous support to Pastor Dwayne Grant as he's been working to start a new church. They've offered him meeting space, co-hosted a fundraising concert last July, and are

committing to financially support him as he works to launch Xperience Church. "Hartzell is like our mother church," says Pastor Grant.

The relationship between Hartzell UMC and Xperience Church began long before Pastor Grant was called to plant a new faith community. Actually, it began even before he was called into ordained ministry.

The Rev. Dr. Michelle Taylor Sanders met Dwayne when she was working as a minister at the Maceo D. Pembroke Institute at Garrett Evangelical-Theological Seminary. She was impressed with his depth, passion, love for the Lord and his enthusiasm. "He's just in love with life," says Taylor Sanders.

Their friendship deepened when she hired him as the minister of music at Hartzell UMC. While at Hartzell, Taylor Sanders noticed Dwayne had a real gift for working with youth. He started the Inspirational Choir and acted as a de facto youth pastor. The whole congregation came to know and love Dwayne and embraced his enthusiasm and passion for music and the Lord.

Pastor Grant's call eventually led him to pastor Resurrection United Methodist Church in Chicago, and then to plant a new faith community.

The people of Hartzell, while sad to see him leave, were excited for Dwayne to answer his call to ordained ministry. Their support of Dwayne's

call to be a planter and his vision to plant a socially relevant, mission oriented church was affirmed when Dwayne approached Hartzell and asked them to covenant to be a financial partner with Xperience Church.

The people of Hartzell responded with a resounding 'yes', and agreed to be a sponsoring congregation. They are supporting Xperience financially with \$12,000 over three years.

Hartzell's sponsorship of Xperience Church is just one example of how churches in the Northern Illinois Conference are connecting with each other to cultivate vital Christians in vital churches who are changing our communities. ☞



**Youth and young adults gathered around a bonfire at Hartzell Memorial UMC, a sponsoring congregation for Xperience Church.**



*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”* —Matthew 22: 37–39

### New Faith Communities

- Conference and District Strategy Teams
- Local congregations partnering and parenting
- Focus on Ethnic and Multicultural Starts

### Healthy Discipleship: SEED

- Seek
- Engage
- Equip
- Deploy

### Community Engagement

- Supporting each other
- Sharing resources
- Cooperating in Ministry
- Urban & Rural Strategy

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*Published by the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church*

Northern Illinois Conference UMC  
Harvest 2.0  
77 West Washington Street, Suite 1820  
Chicago, IL 60602

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## Saving A Child A Week

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and many others have begun, in small ways, to work toward their church fundraising goal.

Wesley UMC has been creative in their promoting of the miracle offering by building a display for the fellowship hall and sanctuary, speaking about the challenge in worship, linking this effort to the mission of the church and inviting the INM field coordinator to preach.

Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger serves as the full time field coordinator to lead the Imagine No Malaria effort through our next annual conference. She is available to



preach, meet with committees or small groups, and help churches and individuals dream about the number of lives we will save from this disease.

Contact Rachel at: 847-431-4880 or e: [rbrommelfanger@umcnic.org](mailto:rbrommelfanger@umcnic.org). Follow the campaign at: [www.facebook.com/INMNIC](http://www.facebook.com/INMNIC) or for more information visit: [www.umcnic.org/imaginenomalaria](http://www.umcnic.org/imaginenomalaria).

## Changing the Course

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will launch in this space. Wade is describing those future gatherings as “gospel feasts.”

The services will focus on reaching out to young adults and religious “nones.” Wade is also taking his musical skills into the community. He plays music at a local bar twice a month and he takes the opportunity to share about his faith and the new faith community. The public launch is several months away, but God is already stirring hearts in Dixon!

Rev. Mike Jones says, “We were able to move ‘outside of the box’ because of our partnership with the Northern Illinois Annual Conference.” The Harvest 2.0 Campaign is providing \$12,000 per year for three years to support this new faith community.

“With the Conference behind us, we had the leverage

we needed to push the existing congregation to try a new thing,’ says Rev. Jones.

Rev. Lee says First UMC did not have to choose between revitalization and church planting. They chose both! The leadership helped the congregation to see that the community had changed just like the local furniture store. Reaching out meant a totally new mindset. They concluded that revitalization and church planting went hand in hand, and they are seeing the fruit today says Rev. Lee.

“I hope that more and more churches see that church planting as a “win-win” for existing congregations. When we work together in connection, God can do great things in both our existing congregations and our new faith communities. Together we can make a difference.” says Rev. Lee.