



MI CONNECT

Michigan Area of the United Methodist
Church News & Information

Print Edition

MI Magazine

Year-end 2017 Review

Michigan United Methodists march ahead to new conference



Bishop David Bard and Clergy Assistant to the Bishop John Boley led the processional that opened the 2017 Michigan Annual Conference on June 1st at Grand Traverse Resort. ~mic photo/Hannah Hazen

KAY DEMOSS
Senior Editor-Writer

A year of change is always tinged with a little stress but 2017 was mostly about hope and promise for the United Methodists in Michigan.

In his first full year of service, Bishop David Bard did a lot of listening and leading as he oversaw the final stages of The Design Team’s plan for a new Michigan Conference.

Careful drafting of plans dominated the calendar during winter and spring. Then enthusiastic adoption of those plans took place at an historic “up north” Annual Conference.

Fall was a time of transition toward nine districts and a director model of leadership. Here’s a month-by-month look at the highlights.

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MI CONNECT

Michigan Area of the United Methodist
Church News & Information

Year-End 2017

MIConnect provides the official news of The Michigan Area of The United Methodist Church. This printable edition is a summary of the month's top news published online every Wednesday in MIConnect Weekly. Find the "rest of the story" at MichiganUMC.org.

Bishop David A. Bard
Publisher Mark Doyal
Editor Kay DeMoss

We are 800 churches making disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Connected in the Spirit with our neighbors, we are making a difference across the state of Michigan.

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Bishop David Bard

The Joyful Journey

As I write this, the office is officially closed, but I am here finishing up work that I want to get done before the New Year begins. In the quiet, I pause for a few moments, tracing the path on my desktop labyrinth. I take time to reflect, the peacefulness feeling a bit like the quiet at the center of a storm.

2017 has been quite a year, a whirlwind in so many ways. It has been my first full year as your bishop. I presided at my first annual conference with you, ordained and commissioned the first persons I will ever ordain or commission. I preached at licensing school graduation. I worked with others to make staffing decisions, decisions that challenged me not because we lacked good candidates but because we are blessed with so many good leaders, and not all could be offered the positions being considered. I have met with committees, groups and design teams. I have preached at churches across the state, spoken to groups of clergy and laity in locations far and near, celebrated with you, pondered and prayed with you.

It has been a whirlwind, and I am grateful for every moment. I have experienced this whirlwind often as the creative winds of the Spirit. I also appreciate moments such as these of finding the quiet center, also a gift of the Spirit.

In this moment of reflection, I think of words that crossed my desk earlier in the week. *Love is the soul of leadership. Love is what sustains people along the arduous journey to the summit of any mountain. Love is the source of the leader's courage. Leaders are in love: in love with leading, in love with their organization's products and services, and in love with people.* (James Kouzes and Barry Posner, *The Truth About Leadership*, 138-139)

This past year has been a year of deepening love – love for the Michigan Area, our churches and our people; love for our identified vision as a conference: to be Christ-centered, engaging in mission and ministry, developing and encouraging bold and effective leaders, and nurturing and growing vibrant congregations. I love that our vision serves an even larger vision, the vision God has for a newer world.

God's creating, redeeming and sustaining work, as we understand it in Jesus Christ, is the transformation of human lives and the world in love. The Psalmist glimpsed this newer world when he wrote, "Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other" (Psalm 85:10). The word for righteousness includes, and could even be translated, "justice," and the word translated "peace" is "shalom," that wonderfully encompassing word with its deep echoes of well-being, joy, and delight.

John Wesley glimpsed this newer world in his sermon "Scriptural Christianity." What will the world look like when God's transformative work is complete? *All is peace.... Here is no din of arms... wars are ceased from the earth... Civil discord is at an end forever.... Here is no oppression... no extortion to grind the face of the poor; no robbery or wrong... or injustice.... No unkind word can ever be heard among them, no strife of tongues, no contention of any kind.*

Such a world seems so distant, yet in God's grace we in our work contribute to this newer world. The theologian Nicholas Wolterstorff put it beautifully: *In the eschatological image of the city, we have the assurance that our efforts to make these present cities of ours humane places in which to live – efforts which are so often frustrated, efforts which so often lead to despair – will, by way of the mysterious patterns of history, eventually provide tiles and timbers for a city of delight.* (Until Justice and Peace Embrace, 140)

What we are about together here in the Michigan Area is this transforming work of God, this work of new lives and a new world. It is the work of love, and I love it, and I am privileged to do it with people I love.

Thank you for the year gone by. Thank you for the work ahead.

Bishop Bard names two new District Superintendents

LANSING, Michigan | December 15, 2017 – Today Bishop David Alan Bard announced the appointment of two new district superintendents. One will be the missional leader of a new district forming in July 2018, and the other will guide an existing district into the new Michigan Conference structure and beyond.

Bishop Bard announced that the Rev. Dr. Jerome (Jerry) DeVine will take over as the Superintendent of the Lansing District on February 1, 2018. DeVine steps into that role as current D.S., the Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai, transitions to her new responsibility as Chief Executive Officer of The Connectional Table for The United Methodist Church. On July 1, 2018, the Rev. Dr. DeVine will lead the new District 5 of the Michigan Conference.

“Rev. DeVine knows both conferences, brings experience as a district superintendent and has worked diligently to form our new conference,” Bishop Bard said. “He is a creative thinker who will help our district superintendents think in new ways about how they can engage in this important ministry even as their responsibilities expand. I am pleased he agreed to become the Lansing District Superintendent, and then continue as the superintendent for District 5,” the bishop concluded.

The Rev. Dr. DeVine has provided leadership across the Michigan Area since coming to the state in 1999. He comes to the post in Lansing after eight years as the Detroit Conference’s Director of Connectional Ministries. Prior to that his skills and gifts were at work in the West Michigan Conference first as a Ministry Consultant and then as Superintendent of the Albion District. Before arriving in Michigan DeVine pastored churches in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference. Both DeVine’s Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees were earned at Wesley Theological Seminary. Connectional positions held at present include membership on the North Central Jurisdiction’s Committee on Native American Ministries and Commission on Religion and Race. Jerry and his wife, Ruth, are making their home in the former Argentine United Methodist Church near Linden Michigan.



Rev. Dr. Jerome (Jerry) DeVine will step into the role of Lansing D.S. on February 1 as the Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai moves on to lead The Connectional Table. He will then continue as superintendent of District 5. The Rev. Dr. Margie Crawford will start as D.S. of District 4 on July 1, 2018.

Bishop Bard also announced that the Rev. Dr. Margie R. Crawford will serve as District Superintendent of the newly formed District 4, effective July 1, 2018. She follows the Rev. William Haggard, who retires as Grand Rapids District Superintendent in June 2018.

Rev. Dr. Crawford will bring experience as a pastor, a leader at both the district and conference levels, and from her previous career as a teacher and educational administrator to the role of District Superintendent for the new District 4.

“Rev. Crawford has a passion for helping create something new, and while the role of D.S. is not new, how we accomplish this ministry in our new Michigan Conference will need to be different,” Bishop Bard stressed. “I am pleased that we will have Rev. Crawford’s gifts, skills, and perspectives at the Cabinet table, and know that she will provide exceptional leadership for her district and our conference,” he added.

Crawford has pastored Saint Clair: First United Methodist Church in the Detroit Conference since 2011. Before that

appointment she served as Associate Pastor at Flint: Court Street UMC. Ministry is a second career for Crawford, who has a depth of professional and volunteer experience. For ten years she was in higher education: first as Assistant Professor, Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology for the University of Iowa in Iowa City; then Assistant Professor and Director of Audiology at Wayne State University’s College of Medicine. She has a Master of Audiology from Cleveland State University and a Ph.D. in Audiology with specialties in Neuroscience and Counseling from The University of Memphis.

After earning her Master of Divinity degree from the Methodist Theological School in Ohio in 2005, Crawford began significant volunteer leadership in the Detroit Conference, first chairing the Hunger/UMCOR Committee of the Conference Board of Global Ministries. Current service includes membership on the Conference and Blue Water District Boards of Ordained Ministry; administration of the Conference Extension Fund; and chairing the Blue Water District Leadership Team.

Drinking the Cup ... *grace beyond circumstances*



REV. JOHN BOLEY
Clergy Assistant to the Bishop

This past Sunday when Diane and I were in worship, we sang that great Advent Hymn, “Hail to the Lord’s Anointed.” I was struck by the third verse:

*He shall come down like showers upon the fruitful earth;
love, joy, and hope, like flowers, spring in his path to birth.
Before him, on the mountains, shall peace, the herald, go,
and righteousness, in fountains, from hill to valley flow.*

As I sang this verse of this great hymn, its recitation of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love struck a chord, reminding me of the countless times I have participated in the lighting of Advent Candles over the years. Lighting Advent candles every year is a tradition that speaks volumes to so many people, and is so easily captured by children as they grow in faith.

But the common use of “Hope,” “Peace,” “Joy” and “Love” makes these terms almost too familiar, almost too rote, almost too trite, almost too pedestrian. Like the Lord’s Prayer, we often use these terms, in Advent and of course at other times, without internalizing how radical they are, and how filled they are with inexplicable grace.

For me, to fill these terms with grace-full meaning, I must compare them to their counterparts which are based on the circumstances and happenings of our lives.

Hope v. Optimism. Optimism is based on an assessment of current circumstances pointing to the future that looks bright and positive. Hope is very different from this. It is based in confidence in God’s activity in the world. Hope can exist in the bleakest of circumstances. As Leon Joseph Suenens puts it, “*I am a man of hope, not for human reasons, nor from any natural optimism, but because I believe the Holy Spirit is at work in the Church and in the world even when his name remains unheard.*” Optimism is good, but Hope is grace-full.

Peace v. Contentment. Contentment is based on life circumstances and connotes satisfaction and happy acceptance of positive things that are happening. Peace (individual peace) is very different from this. Real Peace is something which “passes all understanding” (Philippians 4) and can only come from the power of the Triune God, not as the world gives. (John 14). Billy Graham once said, “*I would not change places with the wealthiest and most influential person in the world. I would rather be a child of the King, a joint-heir with Christ, a member of the Royal Family of heaven! I know where I’ve come from, I know why I’m here, I know where I’m going – and I have peace in my heart. His peace floods my heart and overwhelms my soul!*” Contentment is good, but Peace is grace-full.

Joy v. Happiness. Happiness is the emotional and mental state of a person based on circumstances that affect that person’s short-term well being. It can rise and fall based on the changes in those circumstances. But joy is very different from this. It is not based in circumstances, but is based in the delight of the Holy Spirit. Charles Hembree says, “*Joy is like a well containing sweet water. It is not enough to know the water is there or even to drill the well. If the well is to be useful, the water must be brought to the surface. Those who know Christ have found the source of joy.*” Happiness is good, but Joy is grace-full.

Love v. Affection. Affection is the state of endearment and attraction that comes from a very positive relationship. It can be emotional, physical, and intellectual. We all thrive on affection as we are all social and relational beings. But love is very different from this. Martin Luther King, Jr. talked about the three levels of love – love of self, love of neighbor and love of God. Oswald Chambers says, “*If human love does not carry someone beyond himself, it is not true love. If love is always discreet, always wise, always sensible and calculating, never carried beyond itself, it is not love at all. It may be affection, it may be warmth of feeling, but it has not the true nature of love in it.*” Beyond our joy and obligation to love (love of enemies is of course the toughest), love only exists at all because it is the character of God, who first loves all of creation and has made us in God’s image. Affection is good, but Love is grace-full.

Maybe it’s because I’ve been doing this for a long time, or because the state of our world seems to be bringing more difficult circumstances, but I am more thrilled than ever that Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love are not dependent on life’s circumstances, but rather on the powerful workings of the Creator, the Christ, and the Spirit in our lives.

Annual Conference registration opens in February

It's time to look ahead to the 2018 Michigan Annual Conference, Thursday, May 31 through Sunday, June 3, 2018 at the Grand Traverse Resort in Acme, Michigan.

The 2018 theme, "Ministry with*" will introduce a new model for mission for the Michigan Conference.

TOM Talks (Transformational Outreach and Ministry) will demonstrate how to engage youth, schools, the poor, neighbors and even your church in mission during ten education sessions on Friday and Saturday.

The nine new districts will be another significant focus for members' attention.

The Conference Program Committee listened carefully to feedback from those attending the 2017 Annual Conference. That input was overwhelmingly positive, however, adjustments have been made to reduce dinner costs, address special dietary needs and reduced rates for hotel rooms. Specifics will be announced in January to aid churches in planning for participation by their pastor(s) and lay member(s). Also by popular request, the pre-conference Golf Scramble and 5K Run-Walk-Bike will return on Wednesday, May 30, 1 pm and 4 pm.

Highlights of the schedule (subject to change):

Thursday, May 31, 2018:

10 am – noon Opening Worship/Memorial Service
1:30 pm – 4 pm Clergy and Laity Sessions
4:30 pm Organization of Conference
7:30 pm – 9 pm Legislative Committees

Friday, June 1, 2018:

8:30 am – 9:30 am
Worship
10 am – noon TOM Talks
2 pm – 6 pm TOM Talks and Legislation
Evening free with some onsite activities

Saturday, June 2, 2018:

6:30 am – 8 am New District Breakfasts
8:30 am – 9:30 am
Worship
10 am – noon TOM Talks and Legislation
2 pm – 3:45 pm Celebrating Journey of Ministry
4:15 pm – 5:30 pm TOM Talks and Legislation
7 pm Legislation

Sunday, June 3, 2018:

9 am Devotions
9:30 am – noon Cabinet Report, Appointment Setting, Prepare for General Conference 2019
2 pm Ordination and Commissioning
5 pm Adjourn

Directions on how to submit legislation to the 2018 Michigan Annual Conference will be released in January. The deadline for submitting items for consideration is February 15, 2018.

Registration will open mid-February, 2018. No room reservations may be made before that time. Members are asked to NOT contact Grand Traverse Resort to book a room.

The Michigan Annual Conference Program Committee stands ready to welcome you to another history-marking session of the Michigan Annual Conference.



Michigan offices relocate

Michigan Conference Staff in a number of locations moved to new offices in December. Here is contact information.

Michigan Conference Center North ...

1161 East Clark Road, Suite 212, DeWitt MI 48820.

Treasury and Benefits Staff moved from the Detroit Conference Office in Flint and the West Michigan Office in Grand Rapids to Clark Corners, their new location north of the Michigan Conference Center in Lansing.

Treasury and Benefits may be reached at the same number 810-233-5500. You can also reach them by calling any local District or Conference Office and asking to be transferred.

Michigan Conference Center East ...

1309 North Ballenger Hwy, Suite 1, Flint, MI 48504.

Detroit Annual Conference Program Staff will continue to operate out of the current Flint office location.

Michigan Conference Center West ...

207 Fulton Street E, Suite 6, Grand Rapids MI 49503.

The West Michigan Conference Office and Grand Rapids District Office moved to downtown Grand Rapids from the 11 Fuller Avenue center on December 13th.

The staff is now in First Place, third floor, next door to Grand Rapids 1st UMC. The telephone will remain the same 616-459-4503. You can also reach them by calling any local District or Conference Office and asking to be transferred.

Other moves

Michigan Area UM Camping has moved to their new location in St. Johns – 2307 West Maple Rapids Road, St. Johns. They can be reached by calling 517-212-5442.

The Michigan United Methodist Foundation moved to new offices at 3347 Eagle Run Dr., NE, Suite B, Grand Rapids, MI 49525. They can be reached Toll Free (888) 451-1929 or visit their website UMFmichigan.org.

2017 from p. 1

January

The Michigan Area celebrated the election of the Rev. Samuel Quire as bishop of The Liberia Conference.

Conference Design Team continued listening and refining plans for structure, staffing, districts, etc. for new Michigan Conference.

Michigan Volunteer in Mission team went to Haiti to assist in rebuild of churches destroyed in 2016 Hurricane Matthew.

Bishop Bard named two new District Superintendents: the Rev. Dale Miller (interim Albion District) and the Rev. Scott Harmon (Marquette).

February

Registration opened for an historic “up north” Conference in Acme, MI.

A 9-district concept was introduced along with an invitation to attend listening sessions with Bishop Bard.

The Rev. David Hills, chair of the Michigan Area Haiti Task Force, and others from Michigan were present in Port-au-Prince for the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Methodist Church in Haiti and the certification of 115 local preachers graduated from the Local Preaching Academies organized by The Task Force.

March

Bishop Bard cut the ribbon on the new dining facility at Wesley Woods Camp.

Wesley Campus Ministry at Northern Michigan University reorganized in partnership with Marquette Hope and Director Erica Thomas.

The 17-month partnership between UMCOR and the Crossroads District drew to a close. Greg Timmons continues as Coordinator of Flint Water Recovery.

April

Trustees of the Detroit and West Michigan conferences transferred deeds to all United Methodist campgrounds to

Michigan Area United Methodist Camping.

Detailed proposals of every aspect of the life of the new Michigan Conference became available online as members prepare for the upcoming Annual Conference.

The Michigan Area celebrated the life of the Rev. Dr. Robert C. Smith who died April 29. After retiring from service in the West Michigan Conference, Smith was a global ambassador for The United Methodist Committee on Relief.

May

Cass Community Social Services hosted a progressive tour of six of the 25 Tiny Homes that will rent-to-own by Detroit's homeless. The Rev. Faith Fowler spearheaded the \$1.5 million project. The first residents would move into the houses in October 2017.

Michigan Area UM Camping moved into new offices in St. Johns.

Rhonda Ramsey, office manager at Plainwell UMC, was elected Vice President of the national Professional Administrators of United Methodist Connectional Structure (PAUMCS).

June

Bishop David Bard presided over his first Annual Conference. After two years of work since “Count Day,” June 10, 2015, members approved, without amendment, the 38-page Plan of Organization for the new Michigan Conference. The action enabled full forward movement toward making changes necessary to birth the Michigan Conference on January 1, 2019.

The 2017 Conference voted to send the delegates to the 2016 General Conference as delegates to the special session of General Conference to be held in St. Louis, February 23-27 2019.

After a nation-wide search, the Board of Michigan Area United Methodist Camping elected the Rev. George Ayoub as their Executive Director.

July

UMCOR sent Cleaning Buckets and Health Kits to Midland for distribution following the torrential rains that flooded mid-Michigan on June 22nd.

Bridget Nelson began coordinating Youth Ministries for the entire Michigan Area.



The Rev. Marsha Woolley and the Rev. Dr. Glenn Wagner have shepherded the Design Team's work since its creation on September 2015. ~mic photo/Hannah Hazen

July continued

The Rev. Robert Sieh, Director of the Bishop Judith Craig Children's Village in Liberia, visited Michigan to express gratitude for support for the orphanage. The 2017 Annual Conference contributed \$23,450 to the ministry.

Vietnamese clergy and their families from around the globe gathered in Grand Rapids for their annual caucus. They also celebrated the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Grand Rapids Vietnamese United Methodist Church, the first in the world.

August

Two Haitian women were commissioned as Global Mission Fellows of the General Bd of Global Ministries. Lynda Sylvan and Grace Okerson then began ministry in Michigan as US-2s. They serve Motown Mission and NOAH Project in Detroit respectively.

Michigan United Methodists spent a week in intentional prayer for the work of the Commission on A Way Forward as part of a broader initiative umcprays.org.

The Michigan Area Treasurer's Office welcomed two new staff: Accountant Chad Lundy and IT Specialist Michael Mayo-Moyle.

September

Michigan United Methodists participated in a monumental disaster relief effort in support of clean-up after Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria blast the southern U.S. and Puerto Rico. Cleaning Buckets and Hygiene Kits were collected at nine sites around the state and trucked to Midwest Mission Distribution Center with the help of Corrigan Moving.

Bishop Bard invited the Area into dialogue around issues of human sexuality. The context for this "Weaving the Future: connectional conversations" is engagement with the work of The Commission on A Way Forward.

The Michigan Area mourned the passing of the Rev. Dr. William K. Quick who died Sept. 17th.



Birmingham 1st UMC was one of many Michigan congregations that provided dollars, time and prayer to Disaster Relief efforts in the wake of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. ~photo courtesy Birmingham 1st UMC

Bishop Samuel Quire visited the Michigan Area. He met with the Michigan Liberia Task Force to share his vision for the Liberia Annual Conference.

Discipleship Ministries announced that the Rev. Anna Moon, TroyHope, is a member of the Hymnal Revision Committee.

Isabella (Izzy) Nowak, Pinconning UMC, named to the North Central Jurisdiction Delegation to the 2018 Global Young People's Convocation in Johannesburg, South Africa.

National Justice For Our Neighbors met in Detroit for their annual roundtable. Kirstin Huhtala Karoub, Dearborn Clinic, was honored as National JFON Volunteer of the Year for 2017.

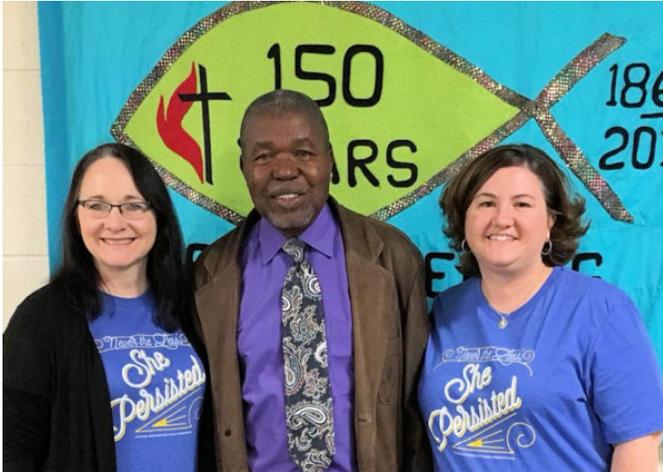
Ruth Jones received the Francis Asbury Award conferred by the General Bd of Higher Education and Ministry for support of campus ministries during ceremonies marking the 50th anniversary of Wesley at CMU.

October

A \$100,000 grant from UMCOR opened a Flood Relief Office in Midland and hired two case workers, Katie Vokal and Anne Wortley to assist survivors of the June deluge in mid-Michigan.

Justice For Our Neighbors of West Michigan and Southeastern Michigan announced they will unite as JFON-Michigan on January 1, 2018. A new director is being sought.

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LANSING DISTRICT ... Haitian Artisans for Peace International visits Wacousta UMC. L-r: Valerie Mossman-Celestin, Paul Prevost and Pastor Hillary Thurston-Cox.



BLUE WATER DISTRICT ... Pigeon 1st UMW share a Raggedy Ann & Andy skit and sing along at the local care facility.



HEARTLAND DISTRICT ... Mt. Pleasant 1st UMC demonstrates spiritual gifts.



MICHIGAN CONFERENCE ... "O, Congressman, O Congressman ..." Melanie Goldberg, Paul Perez and Tori Booker caroling for the DREAM Act at Rep. David Trott's office on December 6.



ALBION DISTRICT ... Fairies, princesses, super heroes, angels, pirates and more showed up for a great time at Unhaunted Hall hosted by Climax United Methodist Church.

Snapshots
of Vitality



SAGINAW BAY DISTRICT ... The church family at West Branch First United Methodist Church turned out to hang the greens.



KALAMAZOO DISTRICT ... Watching their flocks by night at Kalamazoo First United Methodist Church. "A Shepherd's Adventure" was the tale of what guided their feet to the stable.



CROSSROADS DISTRICT... Circuit Rider John Hice helped Flushing UMC celebrate 175 years.



GRAND TRAVERSE DISTRICT ... A new quilted wall hanging for Kewadin Indian Mission United Methodist Church. Thank you artist, Wendy Clark.



DETROIT RENAISSANCE DISTRICT ... The staff of Royal Oak United Methodist Church starts their meeting around the piano. Way to tune up your ministry!

Bishop Bard names core leadership of Michigan Conference

KAY DEMOSS

Senior Editor-Writer, Michigan Area

LANSING, Michigan | December 15, 2017 – Today Bishop David Alan Bard announced the names of seven Directors of the new Michigan Conference. He also reported the Superintendent assignments for the nine new Districts.

Together with the Bishop, these 16 persons will put their skills and gifts to work focusing the vision and shaping the mission for the 140,000 United Methodists in the state.

All elements of the Design Team's work, including this staffing model, have been organized around the vision and mission for the Michigan Conference.

Bard explained, "We are working to organize our life together so that, centered in Jesus Christ, we are engaged in mission and ministry to our communities and the world, we are led by and are nurturing and a encouraging bold and effective leaders, and we are supporting and fostering vibrant congregations."

The Bishop called these leaders for new day, "an essential element in our life together." There are familiar faces among those chosen and there are some new faces, as well.

Directors continuing in service are: the Rev. John Boley, Clergy Assistant to the Bishop; David Dobbs, Director of Administrative Services and Conference Treasurer; Mark Doyal, Director of Communications; the Rev. Don Emmert, Director of Conference Benefits; and the Rev. Benton Heisler, Director of Connectional Ministry.

Pastor Jennie Brown will serve in the new position, Director of Clergy Excellence. She is currently the pastor of Georgetown United Methodist Church. Another new director position, Church Vibrancy, will be served by the Rev. Dirk Elliott. Elliott has been acting as the Area Director of New Church Development.

District Superintendents are to be close partners in the new approach to staffing. Seven of the current Superintendents will



Bishop David Bard spent a good deal of his first year in Michigan listening, as he shepherded the work of the Design Team. Eighteen months into his time in the state, he announced the leaders who will become his core team. ~mic photo/Mark Doyal

continue, with new assignments. The Rev. Dr. Margie Crawford and the Rev. Dr. Jerome (Jerry) DeVine come on the Cabinet as leaders of the new District 4 and District 5 respectively. Click here to read more.

Superintendent assignments were also shared. See the info graph on page 11. Detailed maps and lists of the nine new Districts that will be under the care of these persons can be found online at www.design.michiganumc.org/design-team/districts-michigan-conference/

While many faces are the same, roles and responsibilities are significantly different. "It is a time of transition for all of them, even those who are already in leadership," Bishop Bard said. "While the personnel may be the same, the way we work is changing."

With fewer districts and sharper focus, leaders "will be using their experience to develop new ways of being in ministry with the local church." Cooperation and collaboration are key toward fulfilling the vision for the Conference. Together the Directors and Superintendents make up an implementation team.

Ellen Zienert, Conference Personnel Committee Chair, helped in the development of the Director Model. She said, "Clarity and flexibility are crucial practices that will be needed. I am excited as I envision what I believe will be a greater sense of the Spirit's power and God's grace working through us to increase congregational vitality and missional focus so that together we are transforming lives and making new disciples."

What lies ahead? The process for determining Associate and Administrative Assistant positions will take place this winter. District organization—naming, visioning, nominations, activity planning, budgeting-- will be done in the months leading up to Annual Conference. The nine new D.S.s begin ministry with their districts and Directors come together as a team on July 1, 2019.

The location of district offices will be part of the organization happening through the spring. Directors' offices will be housed at the Conference Center in Lansing and in the nearby Conference Center North.

Bishop Bard asks all to be in prayer during this time of transition.

2017

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October continued

Bishop Bard, wife, Julie, and colleagues spent time in South Korea as part of a North Central Jurisdiction Delegation.

The Methodist Children’s Home Society celebrated 100 years of dedicated service.

November

Bishop Bard shared details—boundaries and lists of churches—for the nine new districts of The Michigan Conference.

The Michigan Conference Treasury announced hiring , effective January 3, 2018, of Jennifer Gertz as Database Specialist and Administrative Assistant.

The Rev. Faith Fowler traveled to Puerto Rico to deliver 50 Solar Powered Generators for use by survivors of Hurricane Maria. The generators were built by homeless persons employed by Cass Green Industries.

The West Michigan Conference Center at 11 Fuller Avenue SE in Grand Rapids was decommissioned after more than 50 years as home to Methodist Ministries in the region.

December

It was announced on December 5 that the Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai has been named the Chief Connectional Officer of The United Methodist Church. She leaves her role as Lansing District Superintendent on January 23, 2018 to head the Connectional Table, based in Chicago.

The Treasury and Benefits Office of the Michigan Conference relocated to Clark Corners in Lansing.

The Grand Rapids District and Connectional Ministries offices of West Michigan moved to First Place in downtown Grand Rapids.

Reported that the 2018 Michigan Annual Conference will take place at Grand Traverse Resort May 31 through June 3. The theme is “Engage With” and registration will open in February, 2018.

Bishop Bard named two new District Superintendents. The Rev. Dr. Jerome (Jerry) DeVine will begin service on

Directors



John Boley
Clergy Assistant to the Bishop



Jennifer Browne
Director of Clergy Excellence



David Dobbs
Director of Administrative Services and Conference Treasurer



Mark Doyal
Director of Communications



Don Emmert
Director of Conference Benefits



Dirk Elliott
Director of Church Vibrancy



Benton Heisler
Director of Connectional Ministry

February 1 as the Lansing D.S. The Rev. Dr. Margie Crawford will assume the role of Superintendent for District 4 on July 1, 2018.

Bishop Bard announced the Core Leaders of The Michigan Conference—seven Directors and nine District Superintendents.

A favorite hymn reminds, “ In the bulb there is a flower, in the seed an apple tree.”

It was a year of decision, of finally making whole-hearted commitment to live together in a new way.

In 2017 visions and concepts on paper took shape in real time and space. It was a year to nurture seeds— planted two years before— toward growth and maturity.

By the end of 2017, fruit started to emerge. That fruit now promises to ripen further as districts organize in the early months of 2018 and additional staff are employed.

Six months from now a team of core leaders will engage Michigan United Methodists in the Christ-centered work that will birth the Michigan Conference

District Superintendents



Scott Harmon
District 1



Anita Hahn
District 2



David Kim
District 3



Margie Crawford
District 4



Jerry DeVine
District 5



John Hice
District 6



Dwayne Bagley
District 7



Elizabeth Hill
District 8



Charles Boayue
District 9

Michigan pastor says, 'Life goes on,' in South Korea

REV. BARB SMITH JANG
Taejon Christian School



As an Albion College student volunteer for the Crisis Center Hotline, I remember being surprised during a feedback session when another volunteer pointed out that what I

wanted most was recognition. I felt a little defensive at the time, but I think he actually nailed it. It's part of our human nature to want to be recognized and respected.

North Korea is no different. It seems to me that the drive by North Korea to become a nuclear power is all about wanting to be recognized.

The most homogeneous country in the world — in terms of language, culture, race, etc. — is North Korea. The second is South Korea. With a history of 4,000 years, North and South Koreans consider themselves to be one people despite the last 60 years of separation.

South Korea has earned the world's respect through decades of hard work and sacrifice. The Confucian roots of Korean culture encouraged a focus on education, equal opportunity, and strong family ties. Corruption and exploitation notwithstanding, South Korea has gradually developed an advanced democratic system and has become one of the most highly educated, WiFi'd, and popular travel destination in Asia. South Korea has earned the respect of the world and is glowing in the limelight of K-Pop and Samsung.

North Korea started strong in the 1950s, betting on the side of communism, but lost their support when the Soviet Union collapsed. The current North Korean leaders may be ruthless, but they are not stupid. Most South Koreans do not fear a nuclear attack from North Korea. That would be suicide for the North. North Korea doesn't really want to attack their

kin in South Korea, or the USA or anyone else. They want to be recognized and respected. They believe that having nuclear capability is the only way to ensure their security against the U.S. military bases in South Korea and Japan. It's like a bully standing up to another bully.

As the middle child of five kids growing up in Midland and Ludington, I just wanted to be noticed and respected.

The biggest fear that I sense in South Korea is that some flippant comment might trigger a misunderstanding that escalates into an attack.

So life in South Korea goes on without much real concern over North Korea's nuclear program. We watch the news. We pay attention. But we worry more about our aging society, air and water pollution, renewable energy sources, and South Korean politics.

South Korea in 1981, when I first arrived after graduating from Albion

College and working at Muskegon Central United Methodist Church, was a third world country. During the decade of the 90s that I spent at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Grand Ledge and East Lansing, South Korea leaped into the first world. I was astounded at the progress made when I returned to Korea in 2001, and continued to be amazed at what hard work and determination can do for a people and a country. Just look at the upcoming Olympics!

As the middle child of five kids growing up in Midland and Ludington, I just wanted to be noticed and respected. Today, living near the most heavily armed border in the world, I think that North Korea feels the same way.

Why can't we accept that they are people, too?

~Barb Smith Jang is an Elder in the West Michigan Conference. She served as a missionary of the General Board of Global Ministries in South Korea 1981-1990 and 2001-2003. Churches served in Michigan include: Muskegon Central UMC; East Lansing: University UMC; and Grand Ledge: First UMC. At the present time Barb is the Pastoral Counselor/Parent Liaison at Taejon Christian International School, Daejeon, South Korea.



For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that whosoever believes in him shall have everlasting life..

Home Words Bound ... *moving ahead, sort of*

REV. BENTON HEISLER

Director of Connectional Ministries, West Michigan



It has all gone as planned...sort of.

There have been delays, distractions, disappointments, and now the weather is what it usually is in December. Of course this is why the goal was to move the various offices earlier in the fall. Three dozen staff persons, in multiple locations, have worked incredibly hard and long behind the scenes to assist with this transition as we become one conference.

So here is some trivia related to these office transitions I have mentioned the past few months:

- How many computer/electronics components recycled? *More than 1,200 pounds.*
- How many pounds of excess paper files have been recycled? *More than 3,000 pounds.*
- Number of cans of old dry paint that have been disposed of? *40, plus 4 five-gallon buckets.*
- Latest date on a can? *1980's*
- When was 11 Fuller built and how was it first used? *1904; 50 years as an elementary school.*
- When did it become the Conference Center? *1964*
- What was the date of the oldest Sunday School resource in the building? *Cokesbury 1957.*

More importantly, all the while as staff have been sorting through 53 years of ministry supplies, equipment and records, they have stayed focused on serving local congregations. They have coached clergy and consulted with congregations. They have met early deadlines required to be ready for Annual Conference next year in Traverse City. They have vetted banking and health care benefits providers. They have shifted from a 20-year-old data base and web management system to more contemporary models. They have sought to comply with every changing legal, tax and HIPPA parameter.

So, can I just suggest that before you “go off on them” on Social Media, make a phone call to talk with somebody and maybe even share with them a word of appreciation for all their conscientious work in the midst of change, even as they are uncertain of exactly if or what their role will be in the new conference.

Two weeks ago all the details were released in regard to the nine new districts. This week the new superintendents and director positions will be communicated. The Nominations Committee has begun their work, guided by the boards, agencies and committees that are coming together from each conference. Over 400 persons who used to have a position on the two conferences' nominations report will now be released and encouraged to volunteer their service on their district or in their local congregation. There is a lot of change for a lot of people!

I am reminded of the Scripture text as the Apostle Paul wrote, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow (I Corinthians 3:6).” This is indeed the reality of us all. We may begin something or we simply help it take the next step. Ultimately it is God who provides the increase and if there is any blessing or praise for what has been accomplished, it belongs to the Glory of God.

In the midst of way more details at work and at home than could possibly be cared for in the short amount of time available, Linda and I paused from it all. We drove across the state to a public university where a longtime friend of ours is a director of choral music. Soon the auditorium was filled to capacity. It wasn't long before the choral and instrumental music of this Christmas season moved the tears down my face. “Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty Father, Prince of Peace...Yea, Lord we greet thee; Born this happy morning.... Still, Still, Still,... He rules the world, with truth and grace; And heaven and nature sing.... Silent Night, Holy Night...”

It has all gone as planned...sort of.

I imagine that is how God has felt. Created the world; it was good. Gave us freedom; we turned it into rebellion. God continued through the ages with patterns of judgment and grace, only to realize it was going to take God's Son, Jesus Christ, here among us for us to “get it right.” And we still struggle...

But again we will celebrate God's coming to us; in human flesh; of humble beginnings; appearing first to those most outcast and alienated; demonstrating love to all and peace on earth. I am praying that we will all take the time necessary, even if it is not convenient nor is it according to plan, to pause and “Worship Christ the new born King!”

United Methodist top five stories for 2018 listed

JOEY BUTLER
United Methodist News Service

For the second consecutive year, the work of the Commission on a Way Forward in addressing the church's debate over homosexuality was considered the top news story by church communicators.

Coverage of the commission's progress came in first place out of 37 ballots cast by communicators in the US, Africa and Asia, along with News Service staff. Second was the denomination's response to a number of natural disasters worldwide in 2017. The Judicial Council's ruling on the election of a gay bishop, United Methodist response to gatherings of white supremacists and Global Migration Sunday rounded out the top five.

First: Commission on a Way Forward

The 32-member commission has been meeting throughout the year to seek a way through the denomination's impasse over how LGBTQ individuals are included in the church. The bishop-appointed commission serves in an advisory capacity to the bishops, and in November, the bishops reviewed the considering. The bishops also have

called a special General Conference in February 2019 to take up the bishops' legislation based on the commission's work.

Second: Response to natural disasters

The United Methodist Church, through churches, annual conferences, The United Methodist Committee on Relief and individuals, stepped up again and again to help after natural disasters around the globe. United Methodists were there in the aftermath of devastating hurricanes in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico; earthquakes in Mexico; wildfires in the western United States and a deadly mudslide in Sierra Leone. They prayed, assembled cleaning buckets, offered shelter, donated financial resources and brought their muscle and know-how to disaster response. A group of United Methodists even developed an app to facilitate hurricane response in Texas and now Puerto Rico. United Methodists also continued rebuilding in West Virginia and Louisiana after 2016's floods and the Carolinas after 2016's Hurricane Matthew. Response even continues to Superstorm Sandy, which happened five years ago.

Third: Judicial Council rules on gay bishop

The Judicial Council, The United Methodist Church's top court, ruled on April 28 that the consecration of a "self-avowed practicing homosexual bishop" violates church law. A key part of Decision 1341 is that a "same-sex marriage license issued by competent civil authorities together with the clergy person's status in a same-sex relationship is a public declaration that the person is a self-avowed practicing homosexual." While the majority decision did not name Bishop Karen Oliveto, the denomination's sole openly gay episcopal leader, it was her election and consecration in 2016 that prompted a petition to the church court. The ruling marked the first time the denomination's court weighed in on same-gender marriage licenses since the U.S. Supreme Court in 2015 established same-sex civil marriage as a constitutional right.

Fourth: United Methodists witness against racism

White supremacists were on the march in 2017, and United Methodists provided a witness against racism and for the way of Christ. United Methodist clergy and their interfaith partners in Charlottesville, Virginia, took a stand against the Ku Klux Klan in July and offered shelter when white supremacists rioted and a woman was killed when a white nationalist intentionally drove into a crowd of counter-demonstrators. United Methodist clergy also bore witness against white supremacy when the same white-nationalist groups headed to Tennessee.

Fifth: Global Migration

More people are on the move than at any time in recorded history and United Methodists around the world are helping those migrants and refugees. In response to the global migration crisis, The United Methodist Church planned a day of prayer and a special offering to raise awareness and funds to aid migrants and refugees. Global Migration Sunday was held Dec. 3, the first Sunday of Advent. The offering went to the UMC's Global Migration Advance, a fund set up in 2014



The Rev. Kirbyjon Caldwell greets volunteer Mary Jackson at the doorway of the food and clothing distribution center at Windsor Village United Methodist Church in Houston, Texas, after Hurricane Harvey devastated the area. ~umns photo/Kathleen Barry

for donors to designate gifts specifically to support work that alleviates the suffering of migrants.

Other stories

- Two new advocacy groups got off the ground and two more groups continued their development. *The Wesleyan Covenant Association*, which considers church teachings on homosexuality to be part of Christian orthodoxy, held two public gatherings and named its first staff members. *The United Methodist Queer Clergy Caucus* formed as a caucus in March 2017 and elected officers. *The Uniting Methodists Movement* organized to give voice to those who don't see different views of homosexuality as church dividing. *The United Methodist Association of Retired Clergy* also organized to promote full inclusion of LGBTQ Christians.

- Africa University celebrated its 25th anniversary and the election of a graduate as bishop in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Discipleship Ministries launched its #SeeAllthePeople initiative. The message of the campaign: "Let's



The Rev. John D. Copenhaver, a retired pastor, drove 140 miles from Winchester, Va., to attend an interfaith worship service and anti-racism protests in Charlottesville. ~umns photo/Richard Lord

stop fixing churches and start seeing the people Christ called us to reach.”

- As sexual harassment and abuse dominated headlines, the United Methodist Commission on the Status and Role of Women asked United Methodists to respond to a survey aimed at finding out what has changed since its 2005 survey of

sexual harassment in the church.

- The Philippines Board of Church and Society and other United Methodists in the country denounced extrajudicial killings stemming from President Rodrigo Duterte's violent war on drugs. There have been about 13,000 deaths, both from legitimate police operations and by unidentified assailants in vigilante-style or unexplained killings. Un
- United Methodists from around the globe participated in the United Nations climate summit — also known as COP23 — in Bonn, Germany. United Methodist bishops asked President Trump to reconsider his removal of the U.S. from the Paris Climate Accord. United Methodists also tried to find ways to be green in their ministries including supporting the expansion of solar power across Africa in their investments.
- This year saw the election of three new bishops in the Democratic Republic of Congo and a new bishop in Germany.



Bishop Karen Oliveto (center) visits with her mother, Nelle Oliveto (left) and her wife, Robin Ridenour outside the April 25 meeting of the United Methodist Judicial Council meeting in Newark, N.J. ~umns photo/Mike DuBose

Kennetha Bigham-Tsai to head Connectional Table

A pastor of The Michigan Conference has been appointed to a key leadership post in The United Methodist Church.

The Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai has been named as the new Chief Connectional Ministries Officer of the United Methodist Connectional Table, effective January 22, 2018. Bigham-Tsai has served the past five years as the Lansing DS.

The Connectional Table discerns and articulates the vision for The United Methodist Church, stewarding the mission, ministries,

and resources as determined by General Conference and in consultation with the Council of Bishops. Bishop Christian Alsted, Chair of the Connectional Table, says, "I am very pleased to welcome Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai as our new Chief Connectional Ministries Officer. Rev. Bigham-Tsai is a seasoned leader in the denomination with extensive experience and first-hand knowledge of the multi-faceted work of the Connectional Table, and with her sharp analyzing mind, visionary thinking and strong communication skills, she

will be able to provide excellent leadership to the Connectional Table. I look forward to working with her at this important time in the life of the worldwide United Methodist Church."

Michigan United Methodist episcopal leader, Bishop David Alan Bard, shared his joy in the announcement. "The Connectional Table has made a wonderful decision in offering the position to the Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai." He added, "Her deep faith, her probing intellect, her inquisitive spirit, and her vast knowledge about and experience with the denominational structures of The United Methodist Church, along with the tremendous gifts she has for focusing on what is most important, and for working with people, make her an excellent choice. Precisely because she possesses such gifts, she will be greatly missed in Michigan."

The Rev. Bigham-Tsai brings to the Connectional Table a wealth of experience at every level of the church. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Harvard University and a Master of Divinity degree from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Before ordination, she served as director of the District Peace with Justice Community of Grand Rapids, Michigan. From 2006-2013 she served pastorates at Milwood United Methodist Church, Kalamazoo, MI and University United Methodist Church in East Lansing, MI.

Bigham-Tsai has served as a member of the Connectional Table since 2012 where she has been deeply immersed in the work of the church. She has also served in a wide range of local, state, national

and international United Methodist leadership roles. "I am honored to be invited to serve as the Chief of Connectional Ministries," Bigham-Tsai said. "I am grateful for the work of my predecessor, Rev. Dr. Amy Valdez Barker, and look forward to working with Bishop Alsted, our excellent staff and the superb leadership of the CT and our ministry partners throughout the connection to continue to cast vision, align to the mission and build trust. I welcome the opportunity to be a part of what the Spirit is doing in The United Methodist Church."

Rev. Ken Nelson, Chair of the search committee stated, "With her experience on the Connectional Table and familiarity with the staff, we are confident Rev. Bigham-Tsai will help advance the work of the Connectional Table at this crucial moment in the life of the Church. She is a strategic thinker who demonstrates an ability to build bridges and facilitate collaboration and group processes that invite persons to engage one another. I believe she will help us continue to discern our identity as United Methodists in a global context."

Rev. Bigham-Tsai succeeds Rev. Dr. Amy Valdez Barker who accepted the position as the Executive Director for the Global Missions Connections at the General Board of Global Ministries in June of 2017 after serving the Connectional Table for six years.

The United Methodist Church is the largest mainline Protestant denomination in the United States and the third largest Christian denomination in the country. .



Above: the Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai was installed as Lansing D.S. in 2013. Below: She has functioned as a strong leader on The Connectional Table since being named to that body in 2012.