

MICONNECT

Michigan Area of the United Methodist
Church News & Information

Print Edition

MIMAGAZINE

October 2018 Review

Wesley students listen to God through EncounterMI Call



EncounterMICall is a "selfie" of the best kind helping young people become more self-aware of their gifts and skills. Intern Lauren Thayer (foreground) is operating the Student Food Pantry at Ferris State University. ~ courtesy Devon Herrell

KAY DEMOSS

Senior Content Editor

Every year the Lewis Center for Church Leadership, part of Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., reports on clergy age trends in The United Methodist Church. This year's report, like those before it, reveal that clergy are

graying. Here in The Michigan Conference, there are currently 21 elders and two deacons under 35 years of age. Read more on page 12.

The 2012 General Conference created the Young Clergy Initiative (YCI) to address these realities. A \$7 million fund was established, designed to

“increase the number of young clergy among the jurisdictional conferences.” The initiative was developed for a three-quadrannia period (12 years) to be reassessed every four years at General Conference.

Go to **CALL** p. 13



October 2018

MiConnect provides the official news of The Michigan Conference 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

If you have not already heard, The United Methodist Church, at its last General Conference in 2016, added a continuing education and evaluation requirement for clergy. "Every clergy person shall also engage in a six-month process of personal and professional assessment and development every eight years.... The process

shall include both a formal review and an in-depth renewal opportunity." (The Book of Discipline, ¶349.3). The Book of Discipline leaves design of the process of cabinets (bishop and district superintendents) and Board of Ordained Ministry. Our Michigan Conference has a wonderful team working to develop our eight-year assessment process and you will be hearing more about it in the coming months.

As a bishop, my evaluation process is distinct and more frequent. The Jurisdictional Committee on the Episcopacy is responsible for evaluating bishops, in cooperation with annual conference Committees on the Episcopacy. In the North Central Jurisdiction, of which our conference is a part, we have two evaluations done each four-year assignment period. The evaluation tool is designed by the Jurisdiction, sent to a representative group of leaders from across the conference, and feedback comes to me through both the annual conference and the jurisdiction. At a recent meeting of our conference Committee on the Episcopacy, my evaluation was discussed, and I appreciate the feedback.

One of the questions asked was about whether the bishop teaches generosity, including the full payment of ministry shares. All who saw the response to this question on my evaluation noted the significant number of people who answered, "Don't know." I would like to increase the number of people who can answer the question differently the next time!

When I preach or am present in our local churches, I do not consider it my number one priority to speak about or preach about connectional giving and ministry shares. If someone were to ask me to do so, I would do so gladly. However, my thinking is that if this seems to be the topic I speak about most, I could easily be viewed as a typical institutional functionary caring more for the support of the structure of the denomination than about the local churches, people and ministries. That is not who I am. Let me say two other things, here, though. I do not think there is a large chasm between local churches, local ministries, and the denominational structure. We work together in order to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Our denominational Book of Discipline affirms that "local churches and extension ministries of the Church provide the most significant arenas through which disciple-making occurs" (¶120). Our structures exist to help local ministry settings be their best, and to provide opportunities to connect those local setting with wider mission and ministry. I recognize that there are sometimes tensions between local ministry settings and the wider denomination, but we work together for the mission of the church. If the primary message I give is only about the wider denomination, it may seem unbalanced. The other thing I want to say, however, is that I am a strong supporter of the fully payment of ministry shares. In the church where I was last a pastor, just before being elected bishop, we paid 100% of our ministry shares for ten of my eleven years there. In my second year at the church, we confronted some unique challenges and were not able to pay at 100%, but I worked with the church leadership to make changes so we could return to that place.

Generosity is about so much more than ministry shares. Generosity is about so much more than financial giving. I would say I have a generous view of generosity, believing it to be an idea of great significance in our journey with Jesus. To my mind, an adequate understanding of Christian generosity does not begin with our wallets, check books, or credit cards. An adequate understanding of Christian generosity begins with God. Early in Ephesians, the writer affirms that in Jesus Christ, God has redeemed us and forgiven us, "according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us" (Ephesians 1:7). God is

UMCOR provides funding for Keweenaw Flood Recovery

KAY DEMOSS

Senior Editor-Writer MIUMC

HANCOCK, MI | October 9, 2018 — The Rev. Paul Perez, Associate Director for Mission and Ministry for the Michigan Conference announces the hiring of two UMCOR Disaster Case Managers to serve the Flood Recovery Project—Copper Country.

Marci Vivian and Dennis Leopold have received training and are now preparing to aid residents in the Keweenaw Peninsula affected by the torrential rains overnight June 17, 2018, causing the “Fathers’ Day Flood.” Assisting with their training along with Perez were Christy Smith, UMCOR staff; Dan O’Malley, Michigan Conference Disaster Coordinator; Katie Vokal and Anne Wortley, Disaster Case Managers for the Flood Recovery Project in Midland.

A grant from the United Methodist Committee on Relief will keep Marci and Dennis at work for the next 12 months. Their office is located in the old D&N Bank building at 400 Quincy Street, Room 402, Hancock, MI 49930. Contact them by phone at 906-231-6856; email dleopold@michiganumc.org and mvivian@michiganumc.org.

Perez reports that the Portage Health Foundation “has done a tremendous job over the past four months assisting 460 residents in their recovery.” As the

Portage Health foundation efforts draw to a close, the UMCOR Case Managers will pick up where PHF leaves off. “Marci and Dennis will follow up with about 150 residents who have self-identified as in need of recovery assistance,” Perez says.

“They will also conduct outreach to engage additional residents working in partnership with the Keweenaw Foundation and Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church. The Foundation at Good Shepherd have funds for use in direct assistance.



These volunteers were part of a bucket brigade organized by Hancock UMC. The crew worked to empty a basement filled to the ceiling with rocks and gravel by the flooding from torrential rains that soaked the Keweenaw Peninsula on June 17, 2018. ~ Facebook photo/Hancock UMC

Bishop’s 2018 Advent Offering supports disaster response

Today thousands suffer from natural disasters. Some reeling in the aftermath of storms and earthquakes are in far-away places like the Philippines or Indonesia. Others are closer to home, recovering from hurricanes on the eastern seaboard and Florida’s coast.

Michigan’s disasters don’t have names like “Harvey,” “Florence,” or “Michael,” but people have been hurt and property damaged, nonetheless, by torrential rains in places like Midland and Houghton. In those and many other cases unnamed, UMCOR has partnered with Annual Conferences and local agencies to bring healing and help.

Michigan United Methodists have given millions of dollars of contributions to disaster relief, national and international. Further, congregations have packed countless tubes of toothpaste, bottles of bleach, pencils, and work gloves into relief supply kits distributed by Midwest Mission Distribution Center.

In the past four years UMCOR has touched the lives of those within the state at the mercy of rain and wind. Since 2014 UMCOR-funded disaster case workers have ministered in Detroit, Flint, Midland, and, now, Copper Country.

Disasters keep happening. Therefore, Bishop David Bard has designated

Disaster Response as the recipient of the annual Advent Offering. The 2018 Advent Offering will again be shared between UMCOR Domestic Disaster Relief, UMCOR international Disaster Relief, and the Michigan Conference Disaster Relief Fund.

“Advent is about arrival and hope,” says Bishop Bard. “As I think about places in our country and God’s world devastated by recent natural disasters, nothing speaks of the arrival of hope more than UMCOR. Beyond the headlines, UMCOR brings hope to people and helps them put their lives back together in the long-run.”

Talking about the future of The United Methodist Church

KAY DEMOSS
Senior Content Editor

Not every United Methodist in Michigan will travel to St. Louis next February to witness the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference. But every clergy and layperson in the state has the opportunity to express himself or herself regarding the important issues coming before that legislative body, thanks to Connectional Conversations hosted by Bishop David Bard. Over the course of ten fall weeks, starting in Marquette and ending in Lansing, the bishop and Michigan delegates have engaged participants on the theme, “Weaving the Future.”

Matters at hand

The Council of Bishops proposed the formation of the Commission on A Way Forward and that proposal was approved by the 2016 General Conference. The

32-member commission has met nine times over the past 17 months. The fruit of the commission’s work is three plans: The Traditionalist Plan, the One Church Plan, and the Connectional Conference Plan. Forty-eight petitions related to these three plans, as well as another 52 related petitions, will be on the legislative slate of the 2019 General Conference.

Bishop presents

For those considering participation in one of the two remaining Connectional Conversations, here’s what to expect based on the session held at Georgetown UMC on October 15.

Present with the bishop in Georgetown were five delegates and alternates to the 2019 General Conference: Rev. Benton Heisler, Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai, Rev. Mary Ivanov, Simmie Proctor, and Laura Witkowski.

“You have an excellent delegation,” the Bishop said. “They have been working hard and praying hard.”

Bishop Bard began the session with a half hour presentation about the values embraced by the commission, overviews of the three plans and the legislative process at General Conference 2019. He stressed that “All three plans have deep theological roots and represent important values in our Wesleyan tradition.” Bishop Bard noted that the majority of the Council of Bishops recommends the One Church Plan. Bishop Bard referred participants to the A Way Forward pages of the Conference website for further study and prayerful reflection.

Participants share

The bishop spent the evening’s remaining hour answering questions from the group. Inquiries ranged across biblical and theological topics,

practical considerations around timelines and consequences, the outlook of young people in the church, and the pain and passion experienced by many, regardless of which plan they favor.

Asked where he senses the Spirit at work, the bishop answered, “In the midst of conversations like this. And I do think God shows up at General Conference. I pray the Spirit will guide us in new ways in St. Louis. God is not done with God’s church.”

The conversation could be described as authentic, respectful, transparent, open and honest. One participant thanked those in the room for giving her hope. “I was scared to come tonight,” she said. “I didn’t want to hear shouting and people saying terrible things. You have renewed my faith that we can desperately disagree but still stay part of the same family.”

The evening finished with three words the bishop deems important going forward: self-knowledge, openness, and hope.

Delegates listen

Connectional Conversations serve several purposes. They are forums for the bishop to present information and resources for gaining additional perspective. They are also opportunities for participants to ask questions and voice their heartfelt thoughts. And these conversations also provide Michigan’s delegates, who are preparing to head to St. Louis, a window into viewpoints and concerns of the grassroots.

“My prayer is, that despite our passionately held and vastly diverse opinions and



One of 11 Connectional Conversations was held at Georgetown UMC on October 15. Five persons from Michigan’s delegation were also present. ~ MIC photo/Kay DeMoss

beliefs, we will continue to focus on the proclamation of the Gospel to people who are in need of the Gospel's saving message and the life-changing power found in a relationship with Jesus Christ," said the Rev. Benton Heisler, Michigan Director of Connectional Ministry. "The moment we choose to disconnect from one another, will not change the constant and growing need for feeding the hungry, comforting the broken-hearted and preaching Good News to all who will have ears to hear." Heisler says he listens in each session "for how this essential mission of the Church will be maintained whatever is the chosen path forward."

Laura Witkowski, Conference Associate Director for Lay Leadership Development and alternate lay delegate, believes it is important to pay attention to questions people ask. She says "I'm trying to stay in touch with what comes out from the General Church. Staying up to date on information has been helpful in conversations I've had; being able to address rumors and hearsay." Laura believes good questions are emerging as "United Methodists try to wrap our ears and hearts around a future we don't know yet." She adds, "I feel God present in delegation meetings, Jurisdictional gatherings, and now the listening sessions and hope others feel that too."

Alternate clergy delegate and pastor of Muskegon: Lake Harbor UMC, the Rev. Mary Ivanov, is thankful for Bishop Bard's leadership and willingness to travel the state to share details of the proposed plans. "His modeling of how we engage this issue in the local church is incredibly helpful," Mary says. She is preparing for St. Louis



Bishop David Bard held two Connectional Conversations in the Northern Skies District. He and Michigan delegates were in conversation at St. Ignace UMC on September 26, 2018. It was a time of listening, answering questions and sharing. ~ Facebook/Northern Skies District

"through personal prayer, prayer with others in the church where I serve, and reading the information from the Commission." She is concerned about "the possibility that even with proposals in front of the General Conference, nothing will pass and, therefore, nothing will ultimately change."

"If we get to General Conference and engage in a spirit-led process of discernment, we will be ok and the Church will be ok," comments the Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai. "I am praying the Spirit will show up and that we will allow the Spirit to reign." Bigham-Tsai is one of Michigan's four clergy delegates to the 2019 General Conference and currently serves as the chief connectional officer of the denomination. "I am trying to project non-anxiousness in the midst of a very anxious system," Kennetha notes. Her hope is based in what she calls the gifts of The United Methodist Church ... "our

connectionalism and theology of grace are the ways we reach out into the world in mission that impacts real lives. To me, that's what we've got to hold onto. I keep those in the center through all of this."

Bishop Bard has expressed appreciation to delegates joining him in Connectional Conversations. "I am very grateful that members of the Michigan delegation have and will be at every session," he said. "They want to hear from Michigan United Methodists, as do I. To date every conversation has been meaningful and respectful."

More conversation

Plan now to hear and be heard in one of these settings:

—Thursday, Nov 29 Ann Arbor First UMC, 7 pm;

—Thursday, Dec 6 Lansing: Area Ministry Center 7 pm

"I have deeply appreciated people taking their time to come out and hear about what

is happening in The United Methodist Church and the decisions that will be made about our future," Bishop Bard said. "It is important that people have accurate information about the three plans coming from the Commission on a Way Forward, and I am doing my best to provide that in these gatherings."

As important as the information-sharing and the 2019 General Conference are in the life of the denomination, the bishop encourages Michigan's faithful to stay focused on ministry. "I hope people will continue to pay attention to what is going on, and yet not become so preoccupied that we lose focus on our mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. The world needs the good news of God's love in Jesus Christ and the kindness and compassion of followers of Jesus, and we cannot lose sight of that."

Drinking the cup ... *do no harm*



REV. JOHN BOLEY
Clergy Assistant to the Bishop

The Senate Judiciary Committee hearings on the confirmation of Judge Brett Kavanaugh had the country riveted. The layers of political and cultural dynamics were as plentiful and thick as we have seen in many years. It was truly stunning to see how human beings can perceive things so differently. Regardless of political persuasions, it is hoped that the entire country became more aware and attuned to the huge prevalence of sexual harassment and misconduct in our midst.

Thanks be to God that The Me Too Movement finally arrived. The dam of abuse, denial and silence has been building for decades, and indeed centuries. Thanks to the Weinstein disclosures as a catalyst, the dam has now broken and I pray that our society never returns to where it has been. Instead, like many of us, I will pray for a future of honesty, integrity and equality between genders.

This past week, Bishop David and I, along with David Hills and Sondra Willoughby, two members of our Healthy Boundaries Task Force, attended the “Do No Harm” Sexual Ethics Conference offered by the UMC Committee on the Status and Role of Women. We heard powerful presentations on the continued existence of sexual misconduct in the United Methodist Church. This long planned-for conference was as timely as could be after the Kavanaugh hearings.

From the # Me Too Tool Kit of resources produced by COSROW, here are a few things that all of us can do:

Refuse to be a silent bystander when we hear or see someone say or do something that could be harassment. Intervene. How are we holding one another accountable for behavior?

Respect and affirm women and men in such a way that they know they will be believed if they choose to confide their experiences. One way to practice and cultivate a culture of respect and affirmation is by supporting women called to ministry.

Encourage our local churches to utilize available resources and take action to continue to protect the vulnerable, care for the broken-hearted and seek justice. Resources available from COSROW include the #Me Too Tool Kit and *The Way of Integrity: Living in Right Relationship with Self, Others and God*.

The simplest and most profound act of Christian response is this: listening to those who have suffered. By listening to stories, we can learn. And by learning, perhaps we as local church communities can take proactive steps to prevent more abuse from happening and to help survivors find true healing in Christ. As one victim disclosed, “My church helped me to see how God sees me and who I am, instead of who I am not.”

Oh Gracious God, forgive us for our continual mistreatment of others, and free us for grateful love and respect of others in Jesus Christ.

Michigan educators attend 'Curious Church' conference

TIM TANTON
UM News Service

Churches must align themselves around spiritual formation and become “studios of love” as they face a time of significant change, author the Rev. Brian McLaren told Christian educators.

“In the world of organized religion, we’re in a time of great upheaval,” he said. Human brains are wired for facing fear, he said, and he encouraged his listeners to let go of their trapeze and reach out to something new. “We don’t face mere technical challenges right now,” he said. “We face adaptive challenges. This isn’t just a matter of slight tweaks; this is a matter of rethinking the entire system of what we’re doing from scratch.”

McLaren, a theologian and author of titles such as “The Great Spiritual Migration,” spoke to members of Christians Engaged in Faith Formation at the ecumenical organization’s 50th anniversary gathering in Des Moines.

There were 250 in attendance for the event, including 13 from The Michigan Conference, led by the Rev. Kathy Pittenger, Children’s Initiatives Coordinator.

Whatever happens at the called General Conference in February, McLaren said The United Methodist Church will still have polarization. “Every denomination is polarized between a nostalgic wing that thinks the better days were in the past and a progressive wing that says we’ve never been what we thought we were and we have to keep moving forward toward a more just and

generous expression of Christian faith,” he said. A minority of congregations are at those extremes, while the majority are torn between them, with many “walking on eggshells” to avoid offending people on both sides. A small group of churches is “holding the tension,” along with the bishops, he said.

On the opening night of the Christian education conference, Oct. 9, he invited the educators to envision churches as studios of love. “It’s easy for us to forget the reason we’re here,” he said. “And I’m just not sure there is a reason more important than the spiritual formation of human beings who become increasingly Christ-like....” “The question that I want us to be curious about tonight is: Can our congregation become

a studio of love, and if so, how?”

Christian educators also heard from faith formation consultant John Roberto and Bishops Laurie Haller and Cynthia Fierro Harvey. Faith formation must move from a one-size-fits-all approach to “one size fits one,” appropriate to the person and the life stage, Roberto said. A holistic faith formation plan is needed for every stage, and it must be intergenerational, he said. He explained that the stronger the intergenerational ties, the stronger the faith. Parents are the No. 1 factor in faith formation, he added.

Haller, the host bishop, addressed the “incredible responsibility” of faith formation and asked the group if they were willing to take up

the cross and follow Jesus. Christ’s call to discipleship is countercultural, she said, and it entails speaking for justice, mercy and wholeness. Harvey also directed the group’s attention outward, urging her listeners to make disciples of Christ and transform the world for the sake of the children. People of faith can improve the lives of children by addressing needs such as health care, education, fair wages, immigration, hunger relief, and protection from abuse and mistreatment. “We can no longer be tentative, for the sake of the children.” Church people want to get people into the church, while kingdom people want to get the church into the world, Harvey said. “We’ve got to be kingdom people.”



Thirteen leaders from Michigan attended the CEF Curious Church conference. Clockwise from left: Petrina Hone, Mackenzie Hibbard, Kim Bowyer, and Chaundra Burkett all from Birmingham 1st; Rebecca Wilson, Detroit: Central UMC; Christy Miller-Black, Flint: Court Street UMC and East Winds District; Kathy Pittenger, Children’s Initiatives Coordinator; Elisabeth Danielsons, Ann Arbor: West Side UMC; Ruth Tuttle, Montague UMC; Roxie Weaver, Cherry Hill UMC; Alina Sanburn, Ann Arbor: West Side UMC; Michelle Shoger (Missouri). Absent from photo: Cora Glass, Waterford: Central UMC and Geri Hamlen, Iron Mountain: Trinity UMC. ~photo courtesy Kathy Pittenger



NORTHERN SKIES ... D.S. Scott Harmon and Jesus express joy in the Vital Church Initiative work at Escanaba: First UMC.



GREATER DETROIT ... Pastor Jill Hardt Zundel encourages the congregation at Detroit: Central UMC to blow the dust off their Bibles.

Snapshots of Vitality



MIDWEST DISTRICT ... Jan Johnson, local pastor and chaplain at Mercy Hospital, presided at the first annual blessing of the therapy animals at the Hackley Campus.



EAST WINDS ... Port Huron First UMC hikes for hunger at the 2018 Blue Water Area CROP Walk.



NORTHERN WATERS ... All creatures great and small were welcome at Kingsley UMC for the Southwest Connection Hub hosted by D.S. Anita Hahn.



CENTRAL BAY ... Frankenmuth UMC made \$16,863 on their annual Fishin' for Mission event. They cast their nets on the right side of the boat!



HERITAGE ... Church and community come together on 3rd Thursdays in Milan. Marble Memorial Kids Zone offers fun on the front lawn.



MID-MICHIGAN ... Sweet time! Okemos Community Church's Trunk or Treat moved indoors, giant spiders and all.



GREATER SOUTHWEST ... Pastor Joe Shaler delivers. Otsego UMC's Apple Dumpling Gang treated staff at their community schools.

HomeWords Bound ... *first impressions*



REV. BENTON HEISLER
Director of Connectional Ministry

“You only have one chance to make a first impression.” Likely not a new statement to most of you. Yet a profound truth to constantly keep in mind.

Linda and I have moved to a new community this past week. I keep reminding myself of this “first impression” truth. Each person I meet is a new opportunity to make a friend, offer a word of encouragement, and hopefully model a Christlike example.

We went to our favorite “chain” restaurant for a bit of comfort food tonight. We knew the menu would be identical to the one in the town we just left, but would the service be as good? Our server made multiple good impressions, including an unsolicited loaf of bread as we boxed up the left overs at the end of our meal. “Here, she said, you will want this with lunch tomorrow.” What an unexpected act of generosity and excellent first impression!

My point? Every “first encounter” in our congregations and with each of us as disciples of Jesus Christ, should leave persons with the impression of Christ shining thru us. A generous, kind, grace filled and compassionate experience should be the memories we leave behind.

Paul Perez, steadily guides the multiple responses we have made to various disasters. In the face of tragedy, the compassion and generosity of United Methodists is the first impression of the Church may encounter. Please consider giving generously to the Bishop’s Advent Offering to help our impact in the face of these recent disasters.

I Samuel 16: 7 reminds us that as “humans we look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.” What is the first impression we are making with God as God looks into our heart? Is it a heart of war seeing others as objects to be conquered or a heart of peace that seeks to welcome graciously every individual we encounter?

As we left the neighbors that had become our “family” the past 10 years, one of the women commented, “Linda brought us brownies the day we moved in. You have no idea how much that made us feel welcomed. I have made it a point to do that with every new family that I have seen move in.”

Discipleship is like that, a contagious multiplication of kindness, grace and generosity that leads others into a similar walk with Christ.

So, walk boldly in Christ’s image and make a great first impression!

“If you make my Word your home, you will indeed be my disciples. You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:13 New Jerusalem Bible.) Each article I write for this column is based in the guidance of a Scripture passage. I pray that these reflections, stories and information will assist you in your own witness and service as a Disciple of Jesus Christ.



Michigan Conference delegates attend to business at the 2016 General Conference in Portland, OR. L-r: Nichea VerVeer Guy, Rev. Laurie Haller, Rev. Dr. Charles Boayue, Jackie Euper, and Rev. Joy Barrett. ~mic photo/Mark Doyal

Nominations open for 2020

Significant decisions about the global nature of the church, mission emphasis, deployment of clergy, local church vitality, and denominational structure, are likely to be made at the 2020 General Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, May 5-15, 2020. The North Central Jurisdiction will be electing bishops in Fort Wayne, Indiana, July 15-18, 2020. This is your opportunity to nominate Michigan delegates, clergy and lay persons, to serve at both the 2020 General and Jurisdictional conferences. The election of delegates will occur at the Michigan Annual Conference in June 2019.

To appear in the list of nominees to be published prior to the Annual Conference, nominations must be submitted electronically by **February 15, 2019**. To nominate an individual, complete appropriate Nomination Forms for clergy and laypersons found: 2019.michiganumc.org/general-and-jurisdictional-conference-delegation/.

As specified by the Conference's Committee on Rules and Order of Business, completed nominations will be transmitted to the Director of Connectional Ministry, along with other members of this committee, who will oversee their collection and the extraction of relevant data for inclusion in a list of nominees that will be published on **April 1, 2019** only on the Michigan 2019 Conference Website: 2019.MichiganConference.org. This list will be included as part of the package of preconference materials.

Other nominations for delegates to General and Jurisdictional conferences may be received as write-in nominations on the first ballot at the Michigan Annual Conference with no nominating speeches and no biographical sketches. Individuals may nominate themselves or be nominated by a third party. In either case, nominees must affirm their willingness to serve if elected.

As always, The Michigan Conference strives for a slate of nominees that is inclusive of age, gender, persons with disabilities, and ethnic diversity. You are encouraged to differentiate between loyal workers who are deserving of recognition and those who truly possess the qualities needed to be an effective delegate to the 2020 General Conference.

BISHOP from p. 2

generous toward us. God loves us wildly, lavishly, with abandon. God's love is deep and wide – "God so loved the world!" Our own generosity flows best when we are grasped by this wild, lavish love of God in the depth of our hearts and souls.

When I preach and teach about the wild and lavish love of God, that is part of generosity. We give because we know that lavish love of God. We give because we want to participate in God's generous self-giving love, making a difference in the lives of others.

There is something remarkable about this. We give because we have received love and grace. We give because we want to make a difference. Yet when we give, we also continue to receive. In a recent book, *The Paradox of Generosity*, Christian Smith and Hilary Davidson, report on a five-year study on giving and generosity. The study found that generosity is highly correlated with well-being, health and happiness.

Reward centers in our brains light up when we are generous.

The authors write: "By failing to care for others, we do not properly take care of ourselves. It is no coincidence that the word 'miser' is related to the word 'miserable'."

The words of poet David Whyte come to mind. "To give well, appropriately and often is to establish a beautiful symmetry between the urgency within us that wishes to be generous, and the part of the world that is suddenly surprised and happy to receive." This is about more than financial generosity,

though it is not about less than financial generosity. It is also about the giving of our time, attention, energy and intellect.

There is one other word about generosity that I need to share. Among the most important forms of generosity needed in our time is generosity of spirit.

By generosity of spirit I mean an approach to the world that is open, curious, wondering, compassionate. It is a willingness to listen to others, to want to understand their thinking and their experience. Generosity of spirit does not entail the abandonment of our critical thinking and analytic skills, but it does not confuse critical thinking with criticism thinking or analysis with cynicism. Generosity of spirit is also rooted in our understanding of the wild and lavish love and grace of God. Generosity of spirit flows best when we are grasped by this wild, lavish love of God in the depth of our hearts and souls. We begin by seeing others as wonderful and beautiful people loved by God, people who also know some of the hurts of life and carry pain and wounds.

In a way, my generous concept of generosity means that the whole of the gospel could be summarized in its terms. A generous God, a God who loves with wild abandon, and whose grace is lavish, so lavish that he came to us in Jesus to heal, free and save, continues that work of healing and freeing and saving as God's Spirit continues to shape us into becoming a more generous people – people generous with our time, our talent, our energy, our intellect, and our

Survey shows young clergy are in short supply in UMC

SAM HODGES

United Methodist News Service

Young elders — under age 35 — continue to be rare in the denomination. And women elders are dropping in number and in their percentage of the young clergy group.

Those are two findings of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership's 2018 clergy age trends study.

In an essay with the report, the Rev. Lovett H. Weems Jr. and Ann A. Michel offer five reasons why The United Methodist Church needs young leadership.

Reaching young people is one. "They are more likely to speak the language of an emerging generation whose worldview and modes of communication differ from those of their parents' generation," Weems and Michel wrote.

The Lewis Center, part of Wesley Theological Seminary, annually reports on U.S. clergy age trends in The United

Methodist Church, drawing on statistics from Wespath, the denomination's pensions agency. This year's report confirms some longstanding patterns, including the overall decline in the number of active elders. In 1985, the denomination had 21,378, and earlier this year had just 13,669.

The number of licensed local pastors, who tend to lead smaller churches, often on a bi-vocational basis, grew steadily from 1985 to 2010, and has stayed about even as the elder numbers continue a steady drop. The denomination had five elders for every local pastor in 1990. Now the ratio is under two-to-one.

The Lewis Center study shows the number of deacons dipped in 2018. But the number of young deacons stayed the same — a record high 124 — and young deacons make up just over 12 percent of the total. By contrast, elders under 35 make up about 7 percent of all active elders.

The challenge of recruiting young clergy has long been recognized in The United Methodist Church, with such programs as the Young Clergy Initiative and Excellence in Clergy Leadership Scholarship created to turn things around long term.

The Dakotas Conference ranks second (after Arkansas) among U.S. conferences in percentage of young clergy. Deb Kjerstad, Dakotas' leadership development director, can tick off a long list of targeted efforts that are part of a "culture of call" strategy. But Kjerstad warns there's no easy fix, and probably no fix at all without a lot more flexibility. She believes many young people who feel called to church ministry are more concerned with relevance and impact than with credentials or serving in an established church setting.

The Michigan Conference program EncounterMICall is part of the Young Clergy Initiative. See story on Page 1.



The 2018 Class of Ordinands in The Michigan Conference. L-r: Gary Simmons, Ryan Wenburg, Timothy Trommater, Janine Plum, Seok Nam Lim, Kristen Coristine, Caleb Williams, Christy Miller-Black, and Susan Amick. ~mic photo/John Woodring

CALL from p. 1

In the first quadrennium, 78 grants were given. Those first YCI grants were awarded in 2014 and Michigan received \$64,000 at that time.

EncounterMICall was designed in the fall of 2014 by three clergy in the Michigan Area — Revs Paul Perez, Carl Gladstone, and Lisa Batten. EncounterMICall established a network of interns sent from college campuses to be mentored in local churches.

The 2016 General Conference earmarked another \$7 million for YCI and in August of this year the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), selected 21 grant recipients. Once again, EncounterMICall, is among those grant recipients.

Based at Wesley

Lisa Batten, now The Michigan Conference Young Adult Initiatives Coordinator, administers EncounterMICall. Lisa says the program enables campus ministries to connect students with paid internships with an emphasis on discernment of Christian vocation.

Wesley Foundations participating in the program this year include Big Rapids Wesley House, Wesley at CMU, Motor City Wesley, Wesley Campus Ministry at WMU, and Wesley Foundation at MSU. This school year, 2018-2019, there are 18 EncounterMICall interns; 16 are working in local churches and 2 with non-profits. Interns are hired for 10 hours a week at \$9.50 an hour. They are employed for 32 weeks.

“Placement sites are not just getting cheap labor,” Lisa says. “Sites pay \$1,000 and agree to invest in mentoring

the young person.” Interns participate in weekly sessions, alternating between mentoring by the site supervisor and group meetings with fellow interns and Wesley Directors for additional support and leadership development. All interns gather in retreat settings three times a year.

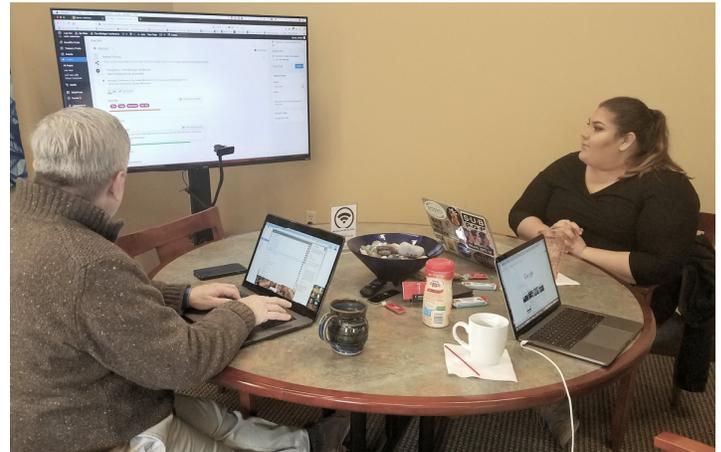
Big Rapids five

Rev. Devon Herrell is the Director of Big Rapids Wesley House. But in addition to her ministry on the campus of Ferris State University, Devon is pastor of three churches: Big Rapids: Third Avenue, Paris, and Rodney UMCs. She has interns under her care, two as site supervisor and five as Wesley Director.

Sierra Oliver and Sarah Wood are interns at Big Rapids: First UMC. Sierra is involved in children’s ministry and technology. Sarah is in her second year as the youth group leader for young people in grades 6-12. “I am giving them a tool box for moral issues,” Sarah says. “Mainly I am guiding the youth to help out their community and their church.”

Lauren Thayer interns for Devon in her campus venue. “I run the food pantry on campus, keeping it open and stocked,” Lauren explains. Located at Wesley House, the pantry serves an average of 25 students a week.

Katy McCall and Jordan Brinker partner with Pastor Devon in her ministry to three congregations. Katy is in her second year as the congregational care helper. “I send cards to members and visit members in the hospital or in nursing homes,” she reports. She will also be involved in community outreach at Thanksgiving and Christmas.



Kalamazoo Wesley student Sarah DeHaan receives training from her mentor, Mark Doyal. Sarah served an internship in communication. ~ photo courtesy Lisa Batten

Jordan designed and launched a youth program for teens at Third Avenue UMC. “We play games, eat dinner, talk about Jesus and pray for their week ahead,” Jordan says. “With the amount of work that I have as pastor,” Devon says, “I could not have started a youth group or done the kind of caring and outreach that Katy and Jordan do. They fill in the gaps.”

‘Used by God’

Devon adds, “The most important thing I do as a Wesley Director is to work with these interns. It is about them having an experience of ministry in which their skills can be used by God in a way that impacts other people’s lives.” She continues, “That’s way more helpful than getting a job in the dining hall. They are paid minimum wage but EncounterMICall is a great opportunity compared to other options.”

The students appreciate the opportunities EncounterMICall provides. “The older people who I visit or send letters to are not used to young people having an interest in their lives,” Katy

observes. “I think this job has been very self-fulfilling and a great call from God.” Sarah reflects, “I’ve been part of the LeRoy church my entire life. I grew up with it and want to contribute myself to it.”

Lauren admits that “I kind of stumbled into the job of running the food pantry when I came looking for volunteer hours.” But stumbling can be a God-thing as she goes on to say, “This job has been great. Now I know how much the community cares and how much they are willing to support each other.” Jordan didn’t really know what she wanted to do with her life. While she loved working with teenagers, she knew she didn’t want to be a teacher. “After this internship,” Jordan says, “I am headed for seminary.”

Lisa Batten says, “We could not do this without the grant from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.” Devon concludes with a thought that summarizes the worth of the Young Clergy Initiative. “There are not many places in life where we have the chance to explore a vocation that is not just a job.”

Rev. Paul Perez leads delegation to the US border

WASHINGTON — The General Board of Church and Society is the social justice, advocacy and peace-building arm of The United Methodist Church.

The Rev. Paul Perez, Michigan Conference Associate Director for Mission and Ministry, is a member of the General Board of Church and Society. In mid-October he led a delegation of Board members and staff for a go-see tour at the US-Mexico border.

The delegations report led to the issuance of this statement by the General Board of Church and Society directors.

We, the directors of the General Board of Church and Society of The United Methodist Church, are gathered this week in San Antonio, Texas. During our meeting, we focused on the impact of the U.S. government's zero tolerance policy on migrant families seeking asylum and communities along the U.S.-Mexico border.

A delegation of four of our members traveled to the U.S.-Mexico border to better understand the root causes of migration, the right to asylum and the criminalization of migrants.

Our delegation heard stories of men, woman and children fleeing violence and corruption in their home countries of Honduras, Cuba and Zimbabwe.

Traveling by foot across the International Gateway Bridge border from Matamoros, Mexico, to Brownsville, Texas, they passed through the metering checkpoint where, on a daily basis, migrants seeking asylum are turned away and forced to wait — a violation of the U.S. commitments under the Geneva Conventions.

Our delegation met with the staff of the Federal Public Defenders office in McAllen, Texas and learned about the trauma inflicted on children who were separated from their families, as well as the massive taxpayer resources that continue to be used to prosecute the misdemeanor crime of border crossing.

All of the faith, nonprofit, and government leaders our delegation met shared great concern and fear about U.S. troops being deployed in response to the group of migrants traveling through Mexico to the U.S.-Mexico border.

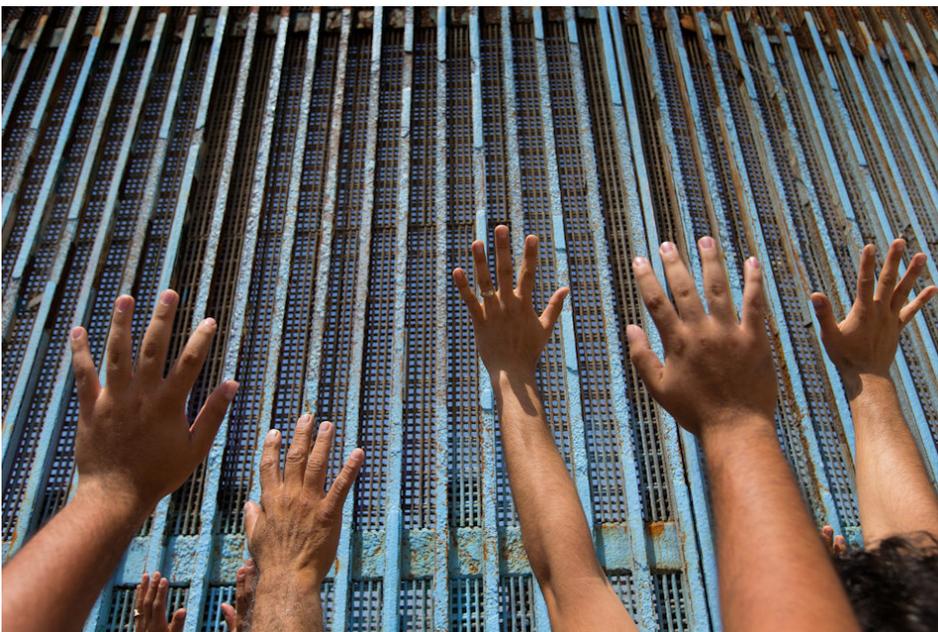
We were, therefore, alarmed to learn that the administration will most likely send U.S. troops to the U.S-Mexico border.

The United Methodist Church is resolved “as followers of Jesus, to work to eliminate racism and violence directed toward newly arriving migrants to the United States.” Further, we “denounce and oppose the rise of xenophobic, racist, and violent reactions against migrants in the United States, and support all efforts

to build relationships among people, instead of building walls among diverse ethnicities and cultures.” (2016 United Methodist Book of Resolutions, 3281 “Welcoming the migrant in the US”)

Guided by this social teaching of our church, empowered by the scriptural mandate to welcome the stranger and sojourner (e.g., Exodus 22:21, Leviticus 19:34, Matthew 25:35, and Hebrews 13:20), and emboldened by our shared experience at the border:

- We oppose the decision by the U.S. government to send U.S. troops to the U.S.-Mexico border.
- We call on our fellow United Methodists to contact their elected officials and the U.S. Department of Defense to express their opposition to U.S. troop deployment at the U.S.-Mexico border.
- We call on our fellow United Methodist to prayerfully and peacefully rally, march and protest in solidarity with our brother and sisters seeking asylum and refuge.
- We call on our fellow United Methodists to bear witness by being present in immigration courts and visiting immigration detention centers.
- We call on our fellow United Methodists to pray for all those affected and build communities who welcome migrants with compassion and grace.

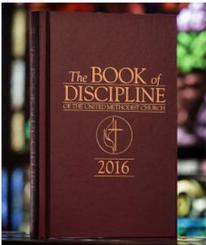


GBCS reports that roughly 11 million undocumented people live in the United States. They pay US\$12 billion in payroll taxes annually, according to the Social Security Administration. That doesn't count how much they pay in other taxes, like property and sales taxes.

Meanwhile, the United States spent more than US\$18 billion on immigration enforcement in 2012 alone.

News in Brief

JUDICIAL COUNCIL RULES ON PLANS



A review of possible plans for the future direction of The United Methodist Church found the One Church Plan to be largely constitutional, said a decision released Oct. 26 by the denomination's top court. In [Decision 1366](#), which was unanimous, the United Methodist Judicial Council found more problems in the Traditional Plan petitions that would need to be addressed before that plan could pass a constitutional test. The Council of Bishops had asked Judicial Council for a declaratory decision on the constitutionality of the plans in the Way Forward Commission report.

MICHIGAN'S MISSIONARIES ON THE MOVE



Three EngageMI missionaries have changed assignments since the guidebook was printed. Rev. Paul Webster has left Mujila Falls and returned home to Wisconsin. He will train agricultural missionaries for the Board of Global Ministries. Rev. Nkamba Ndjungu and his wife, Mbwizu, are no longer in ministry in Cameroon. The Ndjungus have arrived in Central America to serve the Methodist Church in Belize.

MICHIGAN CONFERENCE RECEIVES UMCOR GRANT

Through its grants with partners, the United Methodist Committee on Relief reaches out to vulnerable populations in the world's crisis points. Grants approved by UMCOR's directors during their Oct. 12 meeting addressed all of those issues. Two large disaster recovery grants were awarded in the U.S. With the help of a \$204,700 grant from UMCOR, The Michigan Conference will staff a coordinator for disaster recovery ministries who will oversee other grants and provide leadership as the conference develops a long-term strategy to manage multiple recovery projects.



I am a United Methodist ... Bishop Julius Trimble, Indiana Conference

I am United Methodist...even though
Every day is not sunny

Even though
I have heard some really lousy sermons...and I was preaching

Even though
I have been accused of singing hymns too loud

Even though
I think John Wesley was cool but not nearly as important as Jesus

Even though
Little children often skip up to children's time and don't follow script

Even though
Some church greeters seemed surprised when visitors don't arrive to church on time

Even though
Some churches suggest it would be better if they didn't receive a female pastor

Even though
When churches hesitate to accept diversity we block our own blessings

Even though
Some prefer to quote the Bible in part rather than read it in full

Even though
Other churches have cool names like Full Gospel, World Center, Bible, Christian, and Community

Even though
Our bishops wear purple shirts, but don't have colorful skull caps (or miters)

Even though
Our offering trays are not deep enough and rarely do we dance when receiving offertory

The truth is ... I am United Methodist because I don't need to be great to experience grace

For more go to inumc.org.

Bishop Laurie Haller visits Ubuntu Center in Zimbabwe

EVELINE CHIKWANAH
UM News Service

Iowa Bishop Laurie Haller visited Africa University to see the Ubuntu Center, the final product of a \$500,000 fundraising campaign she led while a district superintendent in Michigan.

As the superintendent of the Grand Rapids District in the West Michigan Conference, Haller led a campaign toward the construction of the center, which provides a place for people to stay on campus. “We wanted to do something meaningful at Africa University and worked with James Salley to determine the needs at the institution,” she said during the October visit to the Zimbabwe campus.

Salley, associate vice chancellor for Institutional Advancement for the university, said visitors needed a place to stay on campus.

About 450 churches in West Michigan raised \$500,000, which was then matched by an anonymous donor, bringing the total to \$1 million. “It was a wonderful thing. It helped us come together for

a common purpose. Some rooms at the center have plaques honoring individuals, churches and districts for their substantial donations,” said Haller. Those who contributed at least \$20,000 have a room named after them.

Haller, now bishop of the Iowa Area, was accompanied by her husband, the Rev. Gary Haller, and a nine-member team from Iowa.

At a dinner held in her honor, Salley said Haller caught the vision of Africa University and dreamed of building a meeting place that would also be a place of peace and reconciliation. Ubuntu is an African term for humanity to others. Literally, the word means “I am what I am because of who we all are.”

The Ubuntu Retreat Center is a 24-room accommodation facility on a hill overlooking the Kwang Lim Chapel. The center has allowed the university to save money on accommodations for meetings and transportation costs, said Isidore Fungai, the university’s acting director of



On October 18, 2018, Bishop Laurie Haller (right) and Africa University Board celebrated the completion of the Ubuntu Retreat Center. ~ Facebook/Laurie Haller

Information and Public Affairs.

Before the center was built, visitors stayed in hotels in Mutare, a city almost 12 miles away. They had to be driven to the school and returned to their hotels daily.

“Most visiting groups now make use of Ubuntu Center and the university has realized a substantial amount of revenue from it,” said Fungai. Irene Chibanda, the university’s bursar, said the Ubuntu Center had contributed significantly to the university’s finances by reducing hotel bills that used to be paid for accommodation outside the campus.

“We are now able to host our visitors, board members and external examiners. For the full year ending 30 June 2018, we got over \$36,000 income from the center,” Chibanda said.

But Salley noted the lasting contribution of the center is more than dollars and cents.

“It is also in the fact that it allows for more informal, intimate and impactful interactions than we ever had with stakeholders and friends when most of them stayed off campus,” he said. The center allows visitors time to take in the natural beauty of the campus. “You can spend a bit of time in conversation with students and staff after dinner, outdoors or in the halls of residence and share about your life experiences, spiritual journey and hopes for the future,” he said.

The Rev. Gayle Wilcox of Cedar Falls, Iowa, said staff members were very welcoming and went beyond what was required to make guests comfortable. “The Ubuntu is a great place for connecting with people from across the globe. I was impressed by the private bathrooms, which are not usually found at retreat centers. The beds were wonderful and comfortable,” Wilcox said.



Rev. James H. Salley (right), top AU fund raiser, stands with the West Michigan Conference Africa University Task Force during a presentation at the 2011 West Michigan Annual Conference. ~ mic photo/Mark Doyal