

September 2019

# MImagazine

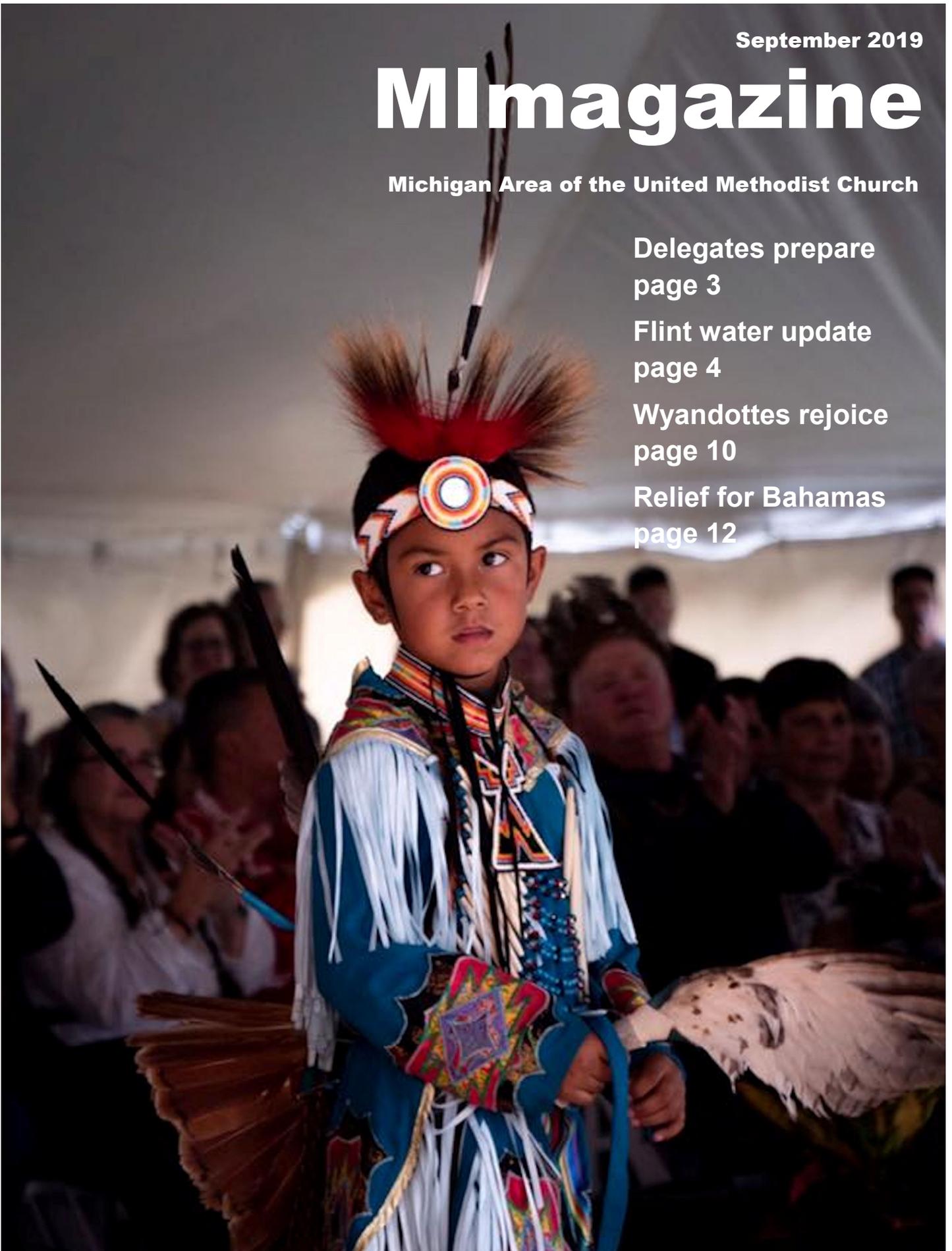
Michigan Area of the United Methodist Church

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## September 2019

*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 850 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

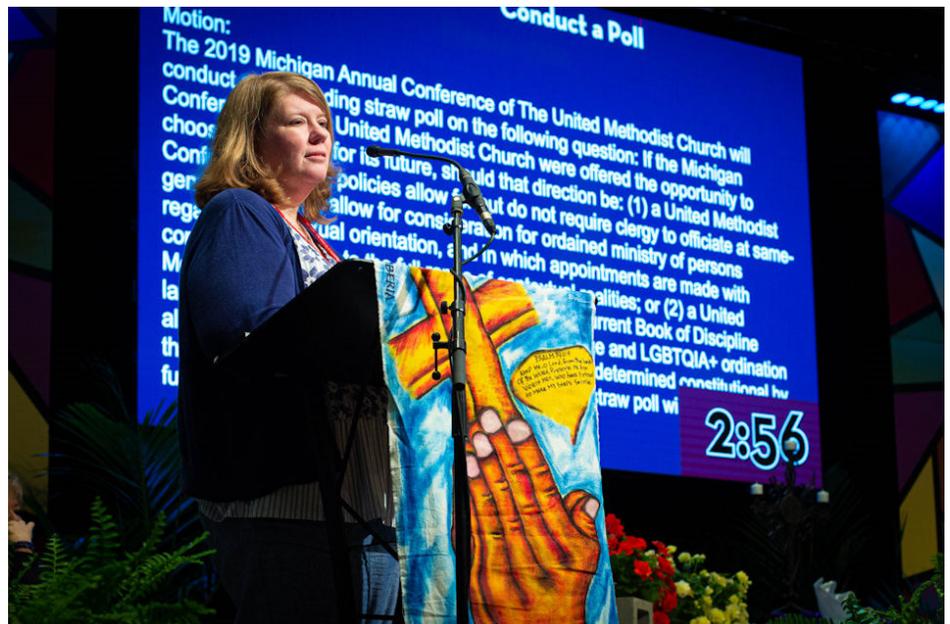
Emails and letters I've received in recent weeks, along with observations made to me by district superintendents, lead me to think that some of the actions of the 2019 Michigan Annual Conference need clarifying.

There is confusion. Has the Michigan Conference broken away from the larger United Methodist Church? Have we said that we will not live by the rules approved at the special called session of the General Conference? Have we declared ourselves independent?

The answer to all these is "no." As many of you know, General Conference 2019 approved the Traditional Plan which reaffirmed traditional teachings on LGBTQ persons and how they will be included in the church. It added restrictions to some of the church's judicial processes and mandated penalties for persons violating certain provisions of *The Book of Discipline* when they are found guilty at a church trial. The new provisions take effect on January 1, 2020. Also approved was legislation allowing congregations to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church, but voting irregularities at General Conference have put that legislation in doubt. The United Methodist Judicial Council will be reviewing that matter in October.

Our Michigan Annual Conference, in response to General Conference, passed resolutions that indicate we would like The United Methodist Church to move in a different direction, that the church as defined by the Traditional Plan does not reflect our understandings of Christian faith and how LGBTQ persons can be included in the church. These were aspirational resolutions, that is, they indicate a direction, an idea, a set of feelings. One of the resolutions passed will come to the Judicial Council for review at their spring meeting, as will a resolution approved at the clergy session. The Michigan Conference was not alone in approving such aspirational resolutions. Many United States

Go to ..... **BISHOP** p.13



**Rev. Amy Mayo-Moyle, Leadership Team Chair, encourages the 2019 Annual Conference to take a straw poll that would assist leaders and the bishop in determining the future of the Michigan Conference. ~ mic photo/Jonathan Trites**

## Michigan delegates prepare and keep Bible in view

### KAY DEMOSS

Senior Content Editor

A 20-member Michigan Delegation to General and Jurisdictional Conference was elected at the 2019 Annual Conference. General Conference meets in Minneapolis in May 2020. Delegates gather in Ft. Wayne for the North Central Jurisdictional Conference next July. General Conference is the top legislative body of The United Methodist Church. The primary purpose of the Jurisdictional Conference is the election of bishops. Both 2020 sessions promise to be historic in nature and careful, prayerful preparation is important.

So, the Michigan Delegation is already hard at work getting ready to act in faithful and spirit-led ways. Five meetings are scheduled to take place between now and GC2020 in addition to the gatherings the delegation has already had. The delegation welcomes input and can be reached at [Delegation@michiganumc.org](mailto:Delegation@michiganumc.org).

Traditionally, the Michigan Delegation is led by the first person elected by the Annual Conference. In 2020 that's Laura Witkowski, a lay person from Grand Rapids, who serves on the Conference Staff as Associate Director of Lay Leadership Development. She will share leadership of the delegation with the Rev. Kennetha Bigham-Tsai, the first clergy person elected. Kennetha, who lives in East Lansing, serves as the top Connectional Table officer of The UMC. When delegates met on September 7, the focus of their opening devotions was theological foundations. Delegates were asked the question, "What biblical or theological image is most descriptive of this moment and the future of The United Methodist Church?"

Here are some of the delegates' biblical perspectives on this moment in time ...

**Psalms 46:10** — A call to live into the invitation, "Be still and know that I am God."

**Acts 15** — The Jerusalem Council with the conflict over circumcision; who was in or who was out.

**Luke 18:18ff** — Jesus speaking to the rich young ruler and telling him to scrap his whole life and follow him; sell it all.



**Go to [gc.michiganumc.org](http://gc.michiganumc.org) to learn more about this 20-member delegation and the task that is before them in Minneapolis next May. ~ mic photo/Jonathan Trites**

**Jeremiah 32** — the prophet buying the field at Anathoth in the midst of destruction.

**Ezekiel 37** — the valley of the dry bones; Can these bones live?

**Exodus 32** — Moses going to get the 10 commandments and taking them back to the people.

**Genesis 25** — Jacob and Esau competing for a blessing.

**Genesis 39** — Joseph in a prison cell having big dreams and no idea how they would come to fruition given that he was in jail.

**Exodus 2** — The five women in Moses' birth story and their acts of resistance.

**Jonah 1:17** — Being in the belly of the whale—gastric juices and debris floating around—Ick!

**Genesis 1**— The Creation story; the chaos over the waters; the African American Spiritual, *Wade in the Water*, *God's gonna trouble the waters*.

Delegates' biblical images for the future (or both) included ...

**Revelation 21**— a new heaven and a new earth.

**Acts 10** — Peter baptizing Cornelius. Peter had to repent of a system in which he lived and then had to own this new way of being.

**Genesis 6** — Noah building the ark before

really understanding why it would be needed.

**Jeremiah 29:7** — the call to pray for the shalom of the city, where they would be sent in chains

**Genesis 33** — the eventual reunion between Jacob and Esau.

**Isaiah 43** — God is doing a new thing, can we not perceive it? The idea that our perception is limited. Our challenge is to perceive what God is doing, beyond our normal imaginings.

**An image of lots of hands** — small, large, wrinkled, newborn, some with four fingers and a thumb and some without, some prosthetic, some scarred — all intertwining.

**Image of the wilderness**; the gift of the wilderness is to sit in the emptiness and get clarity about what you can hold on to and what you have to let go of.

**Jesus' crucifixion and struggle** and the need to test the struggle. His struggle had a purpose and an intended ending. The struggle produced life.

Insights and perspectives that range from Genesis to Revelation.

The prayers of The Michigan Conference go with these 20 delegates as they journey toward Minneapolis and Fort Wayne, where they will help determine the future course of The United Methodist Church.

## See the footprint of the United Methodists in Flint

### KAY DEMOSS

Senior Content Editor

For the past four years residents of the city of Flint have been experiencing what it's like to live without a dependable source of clean water. To put it another way, that's 1,460 days of not being able to use what flows from the faucet with any degree of trust, something most persons in Michigan and these United States take for granted.

Since the beginning, in the fall of 2015, the East Winds District (then Crossroads District) of The United Methodist Church has been at the forefront of meeting the needs of their neighbors struggling to cope with how to bathe, how to do laundry, how to cook, how to drink, and how to flush using filters on the tap and bottles on the counter.

The initial emergency phase of the response was led by Peter Plum. Then Greg Timmons came on to coordinate the recovery stage. At the same time newspaper headlines announced replacement of lead pipes. Progress? Some. But when asked if the water is now safe to drink, Timmons' response is, "No." He explains, "In just the past six weeks there have been two more water alerts. They say pipe replacement will be finished in November but, realistically, next summer." The water remains unsafe because tearing up of pipes and disrupting the system has introduced bacterial contamination.

In the meantime, the reliance on bottled water continues, distributed at three Help Centers located at Flint: Bethel United Methodist Church, Flint: Asbury UMC, and Greater Holy Temple Church of God in Christ. Each center is open one day a week, and around 700 persons are served at each site. Nestle provides a truck load of water weekly at each center. While the Help Centers are open from 10 am to 2 pm, Timmons reports that the water is typically gone in the first two hours. Food funded through Michigan Health and Human Services, and psychological services provided by Genesee County Health Systems are also available.

Lead levels in the water are now at acceptable concentration. But lead is stored in the bones, and the body never eliminates it. Greg notes that Flint's



**Four years after the beginning of the water crisis in Flint, truckloads of bottled water can still be seen in Help Center parking lots three mornings a week. In this photo from May 2018, the city's Chief Recovery Officer, Jameca Patrick Singleton is on hand at Flint: Bethel UMC.. ~Facebook photo/Flint Bethel**

teachers have observed an uptick in violence in the classroom. They also noticed more children who are challenged in their ability to learn.

In light of these long-term consequences, programs continue to be created in Flint to meet the developmental needs of children growing up in the city. The Flint Children's Museum is organizing projects to engage and stimulate learning for children two-nine years of age.

Asbury Farms, one of the largest urban farms in the U.S., is a farm-to-table enterprise organized by Flint: Asbury United Methodist Church. A commercial farming operation, they have 14 hoop-houses that extend the growing season year-round. Ten full-time employees work with "an army of volunteers and youth" cultivating fruits and vegetables for market on five acres of property. Asbury Farms not only feeds the body but also nourishes the spirit of community.

Since June 2016 Flint ReCast has been addressing trauma and promoting resiliency for citizens. Greg, a consultant with Flint ReCast, remarks, "We are shifting the culture of Flint from being victimized to self-care." See more at [Flintrecast.com](http://Flintrecast.com).

A year ago, Timmons became "Pastor Greg" with an appointment to Flint: Calvary United Methodist Church. He is using that venue to add to the array of healthy options available to Flint residents. He hopes to open the second Freedom School in the city at Calvary next summer. Flint: Bethel has hosted a Freedom School, for the past three years. A creation of the Children's Defense Fund, Freedom Schools operate for six weeks in the summer. Other activities on the drawing board at Calvary are Symphony (interns teaching children to play classical instruments) and weekly VBS-like experiences for kids of various ages (Awana, Wild Life, and Young Life).

Perhaps, four years into the Flint Water Crisis and Response, progress should not be measured by the water quality only. Maybe progress should also be measured by the ability of Flint's people to persist and to overcome and to teach others how to do that, too. Because Flint, unfortunate to say, is likely the first in many water crises to come. Newark, New Jersey, for instance, is currently in the news.

September 12 marks the world premiere

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## FLINT .....from page 4

of a feature film, *Flint: The Poisoning of an American City*. From the synopsis: “A recent report found that 5,300 American cities were found to be in violation of federal lead rules, and research published in *USA Today* detected excessive lead in nearly 2,000 public water systems across all 50 states. This documentary educates and inspires action, seeking to radically change how we view and value water.” For some time Timmons has worked closely with the film’s Director/Producer David Barnhart who states, “We are facing an urgent drinking water crisis in the U.S. that is systemic and widespread, but it does not get the headlines or attention from the wider public.” Barnhart wants that to change. “Stories of disaster are educational and serve as a warning to the rest of us to open our eyes and live proactively for a better tomorrow,” he says. Barnhart Films is funded by Presbyterian Disaster Assistance.

The documentary has been in the making throughout the Flint emergency and recovery, talking to leaders on the ground who were living through the crisis. Barnhart saw in Greg Timmons “one who is not a victim but a person working for solutions.” Timmons has been both behind the scenes with advice on issues and in front of the camera with stories of horror and hope.

The synopsis describes the film: “it intersperses first-person accounts of area residents (including parents, social workers, educators, pastors, and experts on water and health) with testimony at congressional and other oversight committee hearings to demonstrate how 100,000 people have been poisoned by lead, an irreversible affliction.”

Why should people see the film? Timmons offers several reasons. “First, you get a chance to see a history of Flint that you can take and relate to your own town, big or small,” he begins. “And the film is important because it displays the responsibility of citizens to manage their own government. The government infrastructure caused them to ask question that you don’t, as a citizen, usually think about asking. You can’t assume the government is looking out for you,” Timmons observes. Then there are the

powerful personal journeys, both of residents and those trying to help. “People describe what has happened to them, what they are going through and the efforts made in addressing issues on a community-wide basis.” Timmons reminds viewers to be watchful for United Methodist presence. “You will see The United Methodist Church throughout the film, there in the midst of the challenges people are experiencing,” Greg explains. “You won’t hear the words ‘United Methodist Church’ but the Help Centers are there on the screen, and I provide some commentary.” He emphasizes that from October 2015 until today, “Our footprint is there. United Methodists have been in the forefront of these efforts, making a difference.”

*Flint: The Poisoning of an American City* was not created for mere entertainment. Greg joins the producers in hoping the film will encourage conversation and thought in other communities around the country. “It will be great if collaborations are born around public safety and wellbeing in every viewers’ community,” Greg says. Thanks to his role in this film-making, Timmons’ expertise and passion for the Lord’s justice in water recovery is now going beyond the city limits of Flint. He

will accompany Director David Barnhart to showings now scheduled in Chicago, Atlanta, and Baltimore to share lessons learned in Flint.

What hope does the Rev. Greg Timmons have for Flint? It’s no surprise that he’s hoping BIG. “I hope we can get state and city and federal funding lined up,” he says, “so that Flint, Michigan can become the water technology capital for the United States, like Silicone Valley is for technology.” As part of that huge goal, Greg longs for the kind of economic development for his city that “can cure some of the sociological challenges we have which really revolve around poverty and lack.” He adds, “A whole lot has changed in Flint, but a whole lot must change.” When asked, “What does Jesus have to do with this?” Greg concluded, “Jesus has everything to do with it! Remember, he said, ‘When I was hungry, poor, you took care of me.’ And that’s what we are doing.”

How can others become partners? Greg Timmons issues this invitation: “Stay focused on Christ. Stay focused on the community. Love people without getting pulled or distracted. Keep your heart and soul holy and continue to pray for Flint.”



**On September 11, 2019 Film Director David Barnhart (left) and Flint Recovery Director Greg Timmons appeared with Jasmyn Durham on NBC25 News to talk about the September 12th premiere at The Capitol Theatre. ~ Facebook/Flint: The Poisoning of an American City**

## Drinking the Cup ... pastoral leadership with 'range'



**REV. JOHN W. BOLEY**  
Clergy Assistant to the Bishop

So one of the books on the stack that actually got read recently is, "Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World," by David Epstein.

I was originally drawn to this book by a morning news interview with the author in which he described the differences in the training and development of Tiger Woods and Roger Federer. Epstein claims that Tiger Woods is the quintessential "early specialist," from the age of two being single-mindedly directed by his father to be a championship golfer. It obviously worked, and Woods was playing amazing golf at an early age. Federer, on the other hand, participated in multiple sports before settling on tennis. Indeed, his mother, a tennis coach, quit coaching him because he was always distracted by other athletic pursuits and could not focus on exactly what it was she wanted to drill into him. And he would still be tinkering with his shots in a way that frustrated his own mother. Of course, he went on to become the greatest male tennis player of all time. Federer is an example of a "late specialist."

So Epstein examines the dynamics of specialization and generalization in our culture and offers an interesting perspective: as the subtitle of the book indicates – while culture seems to value and emphasize early specialization in all fields, it is a certain degree of early generalization leading to late specialization which is more successful in our world. Generalists have a broader "Range" and are not as limited as early specialists. As one who actively believes in and pursued a liberal arts education, and who resisted too much specialization while practicing law, Epstein's thesis was music to my ears.

Epstein goes on to cite a vast amount of material from chess, science, music, technology, and literature where generalization followed by late specialization was a more successful route. It is fascinating reading and an excellent study of our society today and human achievement within it. In a nutshell, generalization allows individuals greater Range to think outside the box and not be stifled by ingrained rules learned so early that is then impossible to break out of.

So what? That's all well and good, but what does that have to do with us in the Church of Jesus Christ?

I have come to believe that the same dynamics of Range are at play in pastoral leadership and that a certain amount of generalization is most healthy in performing pastoral roles and leading a congregation. I haven't done this all correctly myself, of course, but it is good to pin it down conceptually. Although for me personally, I can point to my experiences in the U.S. Navy and in practicing law which have been every bit as important in my pastoral leadership as have been skills in biblical interpretation and theological understanding.

Not every pastor is going to have the same kinds of experiences. Not every pastor will be a second or third career pastor who automatically brings to the pastorate experience in other realms. Nevertheless, even while in the pastorate, there are many ways to broaden horizons and bring some Range to the roles of the pastor.

This is especially true in preaching. If a preacher can only preach about salvation, he/she will quickly become boring. If a preacher who wants to be a prophet can only talk about radical social justice, he/she will soon become irrelevant. Preaching has to be broader and deeper, beckoning parishioners to join into a mysterious journey that relates to them.

So, to pastors, and SPRCs, my advice would be to expand your "Range" – find ways to cross-train and generalize such that your late specialization in preaching, teaching, and pastoral care can be authentic, grounded and relatable.

Here are some possibilities:

1. Broaden your reading repertoire. Reading only about church growth and vitality, or biblical commentaries, will not bring the breadth of perspective necessary to relate to a congregation in preaching, teaching, administration or pastoral care.
2. Participate in the community to cross-train for the place of the congregation in that community.
3. Spend time with people who are not cradled Christians to get a higher breadth of relatable human experience.
4. Travel when you can – there is nothing like travel to obtain Range and expand preaching and teaching possibilities.
5. Be willing to experiment, like later specialists Roger Federer and Thomas Edison, with the acceptance of failure as a learning experience.
6. Remember that God's wonderful world is full of grace, diversity, and surprises, beyond our self-absorption, and to be effective pastors, we should seek Range – busting out of our self-imposed early specialization rules.

## Giving God your best in ‘such a time as this’

**JACK HARNISH**  
Michigan Conference Communications

The Chapel of the Holy Trinity in Staunton Harold is typical of many small, ancient chapels in England, but it has a unique distinction. It was built during the civil war which pitted the Protestants against the Catholics with dreadful consequences. Building a chapel in such tumultuous times was an act of defiant faith.

A plaque over the entrance reads: *“In the year 1653 when all things sacred were throughout ye nation either demolished or profaned, Sir Robert Shirley, Baronet, founded this church; Whose singular praise it is to have done the best of things in the worst of times, and hoped for them in the most calamitous.”*

Obviously, the conflicts tearing at the fabric of the United Methodist Church today do not hold a candle to those destructive years in England. But in the face of the pitched debates and potential schism in the denomination, there are still young adults who chose to enter the ministry of this divided church.

In a day when it would be fair to ask why you would want to move toward ordination at this time, these persons have sensed God’s call and will not be dissuaded. They hold the future of the church in their hands, and they face the future with hope.

This series of articles will share the journey of some of the provisional elders and deacons who were commissioned at this year’s Michigan Annual Conference. They are the men and women who choose to “do the best of things in the worst of times.”

Meet Alex Plum and Elizabeth Hurd. Alex was commissioned as a Provisional Deacon and Elizabeth as a Provisional Elder. Their ministries and ordinations differ. But Alex and Elizabeth share some things in common.

Alex grew up in Swartz Creek United

Methodist Church. He credits his youth pastor Rev. LuAnn Rourke and the Disciple Bible Study Program for “...laying the foundation for my personal Christian discipleship.” The Rev. Terry Gladstone, an ordained Deacon and member of the Detroit Conference staff at the time, invited Alex to become a summer Mission Intern. Alex worked with the Rev. Faith Fowler at Cass Community Social Services. Fowler and the unique ministry of Cass in the urban setting enabled him to experience alternatives for ministry beyond the local church.

Alex says that serving as a Mission Intern and participating in the Young Leaders Initiative, “...helped me see, feel and do

deep calling to walking with people on their faith journey, connecting them to God and helping them recognize God’s love and grace in their lives.” Terry Gladstone was the first to encourage Elizabeth to move toward ordained ministry. Then her youth leader, the Rev. Alecia Williams, also an ordained Deacon, mentored her and gave her space to grow in her sense of call and the use of her gifts.

Both were asked about their “hopes and apprehensions for the church.” Alex said, “My hope is the same as my apprehension—that I will be able to do this authentically and that being ‘set apart’ will be fulfilling and not alienating. Authenticity is

my greatest hope, wanting folks to be able to see God in my words, my actions, and my love.” He said he finds hope in young people who spend their summers working with families in poverty, in campers who experience the Creator in creation, and in the everyday stories of health and healing happening both where he works and the city of Detroit.

Elizabeth said, “My hopes and apprehensions for becoming an Elder

are tied together. I have a lot of hopes and apprehensions about what the United Methodist Church is going to look like in the future.” She believes the church is at what she calls “...a changing point. I believe God is luring us toward something new, and that is both exciting and terrifying.” She finds hope in the conviction that this is not our church, but God’s church.

Sir Robert Shirley, Baronet, would agree, and John Wesley would be proud. These rising leaders are ready to commit their lives to the ordained ministry of the church. They are ready “to do the best of things in the worst of times and hope for them in the calamitous.”



**Rev. Barry Petrucci greets Elizabeth Hurd during the Service of commissioning and Ordination at the 2019 Michigan Annual Conference. ~ mic photo**

ministry in ways that felt authentic to my desire and aptitude to do public health work and connect the church with the world.” Today, he is doing just that. Alex Plum is employed by the Henry Ford Global Health Initiative at Henry Ford Hospital coupled with his local church appointment at Cass Community United Methodist Church.

Elizabeth, recently appointed as the pastor of the Caledonia United Methodist Church, was pursuing a degree in teaching at Saginaw Valley and spending her summers as a counselor at Lake Louise Middle School Camp. For five years, she worked with children and youth as a Mission Intern. During that time, Elizabeth says, “I felt a



**NORTHERN SKIES ...** Taking note at Marquette Hope. Children's Choir is keeping their mind on their music.



**NORTHERN WATERS DISTRICT ...** Participants at Arts Alive Camp, hosted by Grand Rapids 1st UMC, spent time "Choosing Kindness."



**MID-MICHIGAN DISTRICT ...** All smiles for Picnic Day at Owosso First United Methodist Church.

Snapshots  
of Vitality



**GREATER DETROIT DISTRICT ...** Hooping it up at the Church Picnic that kicked off a new ministry season at Farmington: Orchard UMC.



**CENTRAL BAY DISTRICT ...** It was "All Greek" to this young child at First UMC Mt. Pleasant Vacation Bible School.



**MICHIGAN MINISTRIES ... Residents of Clark Retirement Community enjoy Cardio-Drumming. Good for the heart and good for the spirit!**



**EAST WINDS DISTRICT ... Down Home Days at Oregon United Methodist Church offered good music, delicious food, and the love of the Lord.**



**GREATER SOUTHWEST DISTRICT ... Pastor Joe Shaler shares a Whale of a Tale at Otsego United Methodist Church.**



**HERITAGE DISTRICT ... Middle School youth at South Lyon UMC created a scarecrow for the PumpkinFest. Pastor Mary McInnes gets acquainted.**

## Wyandotte Nation celebrates land returned by the UMC

**KAY PANOVEC**  
West Ohio Conference

Imagine being forced to leave your home and everything familiar to you. Imagine leaving the place where you learned, gathered with friends and worshipped; where your ancestors were buried. This was the reality for 664 Wyandotte people when the United States government enforced the Indian Removal Act of 1830.

On September 21, that land including the Mission Church was returned to the Native Americans. The Wyandotte people had entrusted the land to the Methodist

Church 176 years ago because of shared friendship and faith.

“Today is a monumental day for the Wyandotte people,” said Chief Billy Friend of the Wyandotte Nation of Oklahoma. “For the Methodist people to come to us and offer to give the land back to us, we are truly overjoyed.” With tears in his eyes, Friend accepted the deed to the land from Thomas Kemper, general secretary of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church. Nearly 600 people rose to their feet and applauded while Wyandotte from Oklahoma, Kansas, and Michigan lifted

celebratory cries. Wyandotte children and youth – including Wyandotte Princess Sara Wright – danced, and Wyandotte men drummed.

The day began at the John Stewart United Methodist Church with a look back at the relationship between the Wyandotte and the Methodists.

### First Methodist Missionary

John Stewart was born in Virginia to parents of mixed African and European descent. Plagued by illness throughout his life, Stewart experienced many difficulties traveling from Virginia to Ohio. He was robbed of his possessions, drank heavily and fought depression.

One night, after attending a Methodist camp meeting in Marietta, Ohio, Stewart received a calling from God to be faithful and tell others about God. Although he fought the calling, he vowed to commit himself to mission work among Native Americans. Traveling more than 200 miles to northwest Ohio, Stewart settled in what is now known as Upper Sandusky. He began his work with the Wyandotte people in 1816.

He was befriended by Jonathan Pointer, another person of African descent. Pointer, who lived with the Wyandotte people, translated Stewart’s messages. This resulted in friendship and religious conversion by Wyandotte chiefs and leading women in their community.

The Methodist Episcopal Church supported Stewart’s mission work financially and appointed missionaries to assist him. His work and example inspired the formation of the Methodist Missionary Society in 1820, the forerunner to today’s General Board of Global Ministries.

In 1845, a Methodist church (now a United Methodist church) was named in his honor.

### Sharing the Story

In the 1960s, the Records and History Committee of the John Stewart United Methodist Church was formed to share



**Wyandotte Princess, Sara Wright, offers the Lord’s Prayer during the celebration at the John Stewart United Methodist Church in Upper Sandusky, Ohio on September 21st. ~ West Ohio Conference photo/Brandon Abbott**

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## NATION ..... from page 10

the history of the Wyandotte and Methodists with students in the Upper Sandusky public schools. In 2007, Wyandotte high school and college students, along with local and national leaders of the Wyandotte Nation, visited the site for a day of immersion in Wyandotte language, culture, and history.

“It is an honor to know and share the history of this sacred place with all who visit. After 176 years, we close the circle as the land is returned to the Wyandotte,” said Pastor Betsy Bowen of John Stewart UMC and a member of the Records and History Committee. “It’s a good day to be a Wyandotte, and it’s a good day to be a United Methodist.”

### Moving on toward hope

In 2012, The United Methodist Church began a new chapter in the church’s relationship with indigenous peoples. Since then, 26 conferences have either held an Act of Repentance or began a process to connect with indigenous peoples. The Michigan Annual Conference took first steps on this path toward wellness in 2016.

The Council of Bishops, represented by West Ohio Bishop Gregory V. Palmer and East Ohio Bishop Tracy Malone, reaffirm their commitment to work toward healing relationships and acknowledging the failings of the past and the present. Palmer and Malone committed to cultivating opportunities for advocacy, dialogue, repentance and participation in new and meaningful ways.

“This history has been both painful and tragic; yet, there has also been the triumph of human spirit by the grace of God coming out of that history. That grace has enabled people to heal, to be redeemed and to reconcile with one another, with God and with the land,” Palmer said.

The Global Ministries president, Wisconsin Conference Bishop Hee-Soo Jung, said the agency would continue supporting annual conference and Native American ministries; educating staff, churches and communities about the harms of Native American mascots and racism they perpetuate; and listening to and standing with Native Americans in



*Members of the General Commission on Archives and History left our business meeting at the Methodist Theological School of Ohio in order to have the privilege of being present for this historical event. After two of us were seated near the front of the sanctuary of John Stewart UMC, I spoke to the person next to me. He was a descendant of John Stewart! Many persons from the Wyandotte Nation, coming from Oklahoma, Kansas, and Michigan, were recognized. During the walk to the Mission area, you could feel God’s presence in the somberness of the cemetery, the comfort of the Mission Church, and in the prayers expressed during the ceremony held in a large tent. It was amazing to experience great joy as they received the deed to the mission area.*

~ Diana Spitnale Miller, Gladwin MI

their struggle for justice and full participation in society.

Together, chiefs and bishops clasped hands and prayed.

### The Work Continues

Kemper expressed hope that that attendees would leave with a new commitment to cross boundaries in order to be in solidarity with Native American and indigenous sisters and brothers everywhere. “We also hope that each will take away a sense of mission from the margins from the example of missionary John Stewart, whose marginalized position in society allowed him a unique way of connecting with the Wyandotte people,” Kemper said.

Friend presented a \$10,000 check to the Records and History Committee of John Stewart UMC for the continuing care and upkeep of the Mission Church.” It is a miracle the church is still standing,” Friend said. “We will be forever indebted to the local community for their commitment and hard work for the preservation and upkeep of this land. This will always be our church together.”

~ Reprinted with permission. Kay Panovec is the Director of Communications for the West Ohio Conference. Alfred T. Day, General Secretary of the General Commission on Archives and History, and Kay DeMoss, Michigan Conference Communications, contributed to this story.

## Bahamas cope with trauma of Hurricane Dorian

**LINDA BLOOM**  
UM News

The Rev. Kenneth Lewis, a Freeport resident and superintendent of the Grand Bahama Circuit for the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas, experienced his first hurricane when he was five- years-old.

Of all the hurricanes he has lived through, he declared that Dorian “was the worst by far.” Even in Freeport, two miles outside the hurricane’s eye, Dorian was a punishing experience, with four days of hurricane-force winds, including a battering 48-hour period as the storm sat still.

About a dozen people — Lewis and his wife, Dularie, and extended family members — rode out Dorian in the house he had built after a hurricane in 2004, with its

expandable metal hurricane straps, planted inside reinforced concrete, tied to steel and nailed to the roof’s wooden frame. Solar batteries kept the lights on and fans running when needed.

Still, Lewis feared the roof would come off his home, leaving them with no place to go. “I prayed every minute of the storm,” he told UM News.

Hurricane Dorian’s lingering impact, after first striking the Bahamas on Sept. 1, has been vast devastation, the displacement of tens of thousands of residents and an official death toll of 56.

“Emotionally, it’s going to scar us for some time to come,” Lewis said. “I have to deal with members who lost everything. The house is gone, belongings gone, no food, no clothing, no vehicles.”

Members of the two Methodist denominations in the Bahamas have responded to the immediate needs after the disaster, with initial solidarity grants from the United Methodist Committee on Relief. But they believe that helping survivors with Dorian’s psychological impact will be as significant as providing the means for daily survival.

“In my opinion, there’s going to be a great need for counseling because many persons have been left traumatized,” said Bishop Theophilus Rolle, president of the Bahamas, Turks and Caicos Islands Conference. Many of those displaced from Abaco and Grand Bahama islands have evacuated to Nassau. Ongoing pastoral care requests have demanded continual attention from

members of the Bahamas Conference of the Methodist Church, including its president, the Rev. L. Carla Culmer.

Through Bahamas Methodist Habitat the Bahamas Conference has extensive experience with rebuilding homes after hurricanes. That work eventually will be part of its Dorian recovery work. “I want to get back to rebuilding,” Culmer said as she prepared to preside over the funeral of someone who died after suffering the trauma of the storm. “But you’ve got to rebuild lives first.”

A full report can be found at [news.michiganumc.org](http://news.michiganumc.org). Just search on “Bahamas.” Gifts to UMCOR International Disaster Relief #982450 will assist in this recovery.



**Rotary Club president Susan Culmer presents backpacks to students in a shelter for Hurricane Dorian evacuees at Bahamas Methodist Habitat. The backpacks were donated by the local Rotary Club.~ photo by Maisie Thomson**

## Bishop ..... from p. 2

Annual Conferences, as well as some Central Conferences in Western Europe, approved similar resolutions. This does not mean that we will not live within the rules. This does not mean we have declared independence. They simply provide a sense of who we want to become as Michigan United Methodists.

Of course, not all want to move in the direction represented by these aspirational resolutions. I knew that at Annual Conference, and I have heard that clearly since. Churches and pastors who hold traditional views remain part of the beautiful tapestry that is the Michigan Conference. In letters and emails, those whose own views are traditional, have asked how someone can think differently about LGBTQ inclusion and still take the Bible seriously. If you are curious about this, I offer a few resources.

The late theologian William Placher in his book *Jesus the Savior* writes the following: “If we trust the Bible enough to think that it can tell us who Jesus was, and thereby who God is, then we cannot dismiss what the Bible says on other issues because we find it inconvenient or uncongenial.” With that in mind, Placher analyzed biblical passages about same-sex relationships and arrived at this conclusion. “Does Paul teach that homosexual intercourse is always sinful? For the reasons I have been indicating, I think that’s a question on which honest Christians can disagree.”

I would also offer a brief video done by Bishop Richard Wilke, the United Methodist bishop most

responsible for *Disciple Bible Study*. It can be found on [umc.org](http://umc.org).

Again, I offer these resources in response to the questions about how anyone who takes the Bible seriously can view LGBTQ inclusion differently from traditional viewpoints. Let me also acknowledge that our United Methodist Church seems to have moved beyond a place where we are willing to say “that’s a question on which honest Christians can disagree.” We do not seem able to live together in the way we have been, and I believe there needs to be and will be a dramatic change in The United Methodist Church in the coming year.

We need to create new space, new structure. We do not know what that will look like and a number of creative proposals have been submitted as legislation to be considered at General Conference 2020 in May in Minneapolis. The United Methodist Church will be different. I got to thinking about that the other day as I was reading Anne Lamott’s reflections on death. “There is grief at the memorial service, but also gratitude for what the person brought to our lives, amazement at the details in the obituary.... Gratitude is seeing how someone changed your heart and quality of life, helped you become the good parts of who you are.” (*Almost Everything*, 116, 117)

The United Methodists Church has significant flaws and failures. Our history is littered with them, and they mar our present. Change is needed, and the kinds of changes under consideration will be a kind of death for The United Methodist



**Two delegates from the 2016-2019 delegation, Alex Plum and Meghan Walther, introduced legislation on the floor of the 2019 Michigan Annual Conference. ~ mic photo/Trites**

Church as we have known it. Perhaps now is also a time when we might recount with gratitude how this church has also been part of changing our hearts and the quality of our lives and helped us become the good parts of who we are as people and as churches. The United Methodist Church and the traditions it represents – Methodism from the Wesleys, the Evangelical and United Brethren traditions — have been remarkable in the way they have combined a warm-hearted, evangelical faith with concern for the wider society and its impact on people. Wesley invited people to faith in Jesus Christ, to grow in the love of Christ, and he wrote vigorous essays opposing slavery. The Methodist Episcopal Church was the first church ever to adopt a social creed. The 1908 creed called for an end to child labor, fair wages for workers, and worker safety, and committed the church “to manifest the life of the gospel in the world.” We are the church of the revival meeting and the social justice rally. We are the church of the church school and of educational institutions. We are the

church that has touched each of our lives and has invited us to touch the world with God’s love.

I hope amid our deep conflict we might also give thanks for the way this church, which may be in its last months as we have known it, has been a conduit for God’s grace, God’s love, and for the movement of God’s Spirit. Yet even now, as we remain together, we can keep doing what is best about us as United Methodists. We can continue to invite people to faith in Jesus Christ, a warm-hearted, deeply-felt, deeply-thought faith. We can continue to make a difference in our world, to manifest the life of the gospel. Not only can we do this, we ought to be doing this, for no matter what happens to our denomination, we remain the church of Jesus Christ, called to be in ministry with and for him.

Even if “at present, we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror” (I Corinthians 13:12, Revised English Bible), that does not relieve us of the responsibility to live out our calling in Christ.

# Ways to dismantle the ‘invisible wall’ migrants face

**PAUL PEREZ**  
Michigan Conference

Being a migrant in the U.S.A. is becoming more and more difficult. Changes to policy and procedure are restricting historic, legal pathways for entering the U.S.A and making it more difficult for migrants, already in the U.S.A., to live, work, and secure status.

Immigration attorneys and activists are calling this the “invisible wall.” The four major building blocks of the wall include:

### Reducing Refugee Resettlement:

Each year the presidential administration sets a cap for the number of refugees admitted. The refugee admissions cap reduced from 110,000 to 50,000 in 2017. It was lowered to 45,000 in 2018 with only 22,491 refugees actually settled in the U.S.A. that year. In 2019, the cap is set at 30,000. The administration recently announced a cap of just 18,000 refugees for 2020; resulting in a nearly 84% reduction in the nation’s refugee resettlement over three years. In addition, the White House issued an executive order requiring state and local governments to consent to receive refugees. These reductions leave not only tens of thousands of

refugees around the world in limbo but also greatly weakens and defunds the U.S.A.’s faith-based and non-profit organizations responsible for refugee resettlement.

### Restricting and Undermining Asylum:

Asylum is protection, based on international and U.S. law, granted by the U.S. government to any migrant within the country or at its borders who meets the legal definition of a “refugee.” Throughout 2018, the U.S. Department of Justice, under the leadership of then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions, instituted several policies that made it more difficult to seek and receive asylum. In April 2018, Sessions announced the institution of a “Zero Tolerance” policy which resulted in controversial “child separation” and “child detention.” In June 2018, Sessions, overturning precedent, ruled that fleeing gang violence or domestic violence were no longer grounds for asylum, a change primarily impacting people fleeing countries in Central America. The Supreme Court, in September 2019, ruled in favor of a “third country” or “remain in Mexico” policy and

implementation of the Migrant Protection Protocols. Asylum seekers are forced to camp in Mexico and process their asylum cases via video conference in “tent courts” without access to legal assistance along the border.

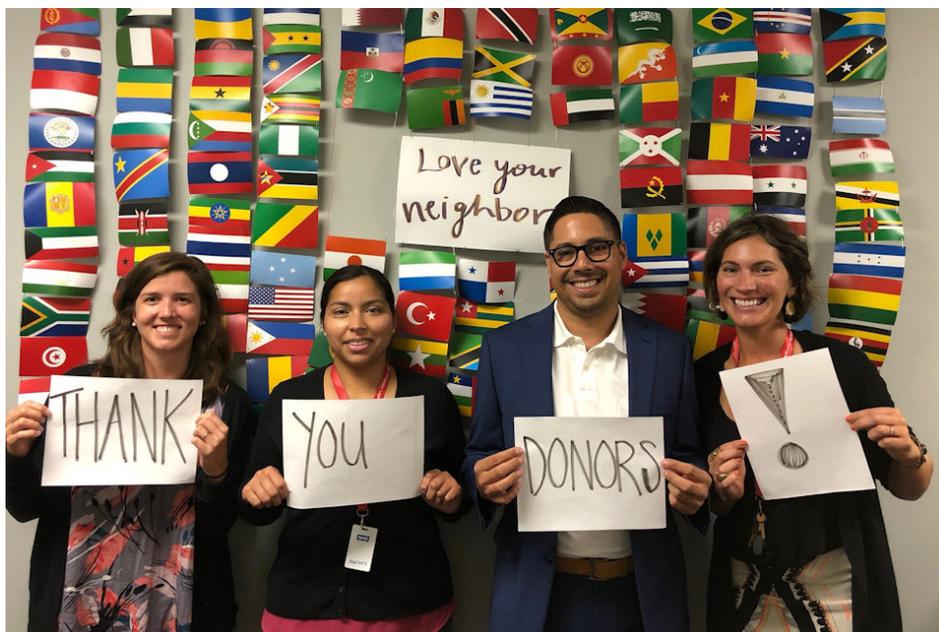
### Redefining “Public Charge”:

October 15, 2019 a new set of regulations take effect which redefine “public charge” as grounds for being denied admission to the U.S. Since 1999 a public charge has been defined as someone who is primarily dependent on the government for subsistence, for example, someone institutionalized at the government’s expense or who received federal, state or local dollars for income maintenance. The new regulations define a “public charge” to include anyone accessing a wide range of public assistance (including Medicaid and SNAP) program for 12 months out of a 36-month period. The regulations also add additional factors and evidence in assessing if someone might become a “public charge” in the future. Many immigrant community leaders and immigration experts fear this change will make it difficult for many low-and-moderate income people to secure legal permanent status (green cards).

### Slowdown and Backlog at the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS):

A series of policy and procedure changes at USCIS has made even the most routine immigration cases cumbersome and time-consuming. These changes include, but are not limited to, increasing USCIS officers’ ability to track cases into detention proceedings, officers’ authority to reject applications for minor errors, and the additional requirement of in-person interviews for some visas. The results: tremendous backlogs and wait times leaving thousands of people in legal limbo. I’ve learned from JFON attorneys across the state that these changes have nearly doubled their workload!

Over the weekend in Traverse City, I spoke about this “invisible wall” at a Saturday teach-in and preached at Central United Methodist Church as part of a weekend organized by Justice for Our Neighbors Traverse City about the “invisible wall.”



**Justice For Our Neighbors is active around the state of Michigan providing ways to invest time, dollars, and the love of God in the effort to welcome migrants. They provide legal services and tools for advocacy. JFON attorneys across the state report that changes in policies and procedures have nearly doubled their workload.~ Facebook/Justice For Our Neighbors-Michigan**

## News in Brief

### ALBANIAN MAN CONTINUES IN SANCTUARY



Ded Rranxburgaj continues to live with his family at Detroit Central United Methodist Church. He has not left the building for 18 months. On September 12 U.S. District Judge Denise Page Hood ruled that her court is not the proper venue for his case against the government. He has petitioned to stay with his wife and children on humanitarian grounds. Ded is the caregiver for his wife, Flora who suffers from Multiple Sclerosis. “I’ve been in the

church for almost two years, and I am not going to give up now,” said Ded. “I am going to keep fighting for my family. I won’t leave my wife sick to die until I have no options left. I will continue to fight.”

### MICHIGAN UMC CAMPING SEEKS EXEC. DIRECTOR



The Board of Directors of Michigan Area United Methodist Camping is hiring an Executive Director for its five active residential camps, RV Camp, and Retreat Center located across the state’s lower peninsula. Start date is flexible but MAUMC anticipates March 2020. For full details and to apply, contact Human Resources Dept., 2307 West Maple Rapids Rd., St. Johns MI 48879.

### 47-YEAR-OLD DEBATE HEADS TO GC2020



United Methodist News has done an analysis of the General Conference actions since the session in Atlanta in 1972, including an interactive timeline. That was when the top lawmaking body declared the practice of homosexuality was “incompatible with Christian teaching.” The 47-year long debate about the role of LGBTQ people in church leadership “reached a crescendo in 2016 and the whole issue was put on pause. The Council of Bishops was

asked to appoint a commission to come up with a way forward to present at a special called General Conference.” Since the 2019 Special Session that strengthened the “traditional position,” overall Advance giving to UMCOR dropped by more than \$24 million. Of the 2020 delegates, 55.9% will be from the U.S., 32% from Africa, 6% Philippines, 4.6% Europe and the remainder from concordat churches. Compared to the 2019 session, the U.S. will have fewer delegates overall while African delegations gain 18 and the Philippines gain 2. Go to [news.michiganumc.org](http://news.michiganumc.org) and search on “grinds” for the full analysis.



*The Rev. Paul Perez, Chair of the Board of Justice For Our Neighbors – Michigan, was honored with the Penny Zago Peacemaker Award, conferred by the Lansing Shalom Center for Justice and Peace. The presentation was made at the Faith and Reason event held at Central United Methodist Church in Lansing, MI on September 12, 2019. ~ Facebook photo/JFON-Michigan*

## WALL..... from p. 14

A growing number of United Methodists in Michigan, in the United States, and in the world are dedicated to migrant justice. The UMC resolution, “Welcoming the Migrant to the U.S.,” puts the commitment this way, “At the center of Christian faithfulness to scripture is the call we have been given to love and welcome the sojourner. We call upon all United Methodist churches to welcome newly arriving migrants in their communities, to love them as we do ourselves, to treat them as one of our native-born, to see in them the presence of the incarnated Jesus, and to show hospitality to the migrants in our midst, believing that through their presence we are receiving the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

I encourage you to join this growing movement. What

can you do? You where you can begin ...

~**Learn:** Google and read the statement by the General Board of Church and Society, “General Secretary Calls Record-low Refugee Cap Outrageous.”

~**Give:** Justice For Our Neighbors MI (JFON) is a United Methodist-related immigration legal services provider with locations in Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, and Metro Detroit, and Traverse City. Mail a check made out to Justice for Our Neighbors Michigan to 2000 West 13 Mile Road, Beverly Hills, MI 48025.

~**Act:** Find or form a small group of people who share your passion for migrant justice. Also, contact your members of Congress and President Trump at least once a week to share your opinions on the “invisible wall.”

## Campers find frogs and Jesus at Michigan campsites

**SUZANNE EVERETT**  
Michigan UM Camping

This summer, nearly 1,100 campers met Christ in the woods, at the lake, on the rivers, at the campfire, and even on horseback! Your camping ministry team has been working hard to grow a ministry that you can support with pride. We thank the 198 churches that sent campers and the many donors who gave camp scholarship funds. About 100 young people received scholarship help from the Michigan Area United Methodist Camping scholarship fund. On top of that, many churches held their own fundraisers to make sure more campers could go to camp.

In addition, thousands of campers enjoyed time together at Michigan United Methodist RV campgrounds. Precious weeks and weekends away from the demands of “normal life” reconnected families and friends.

We’ve heard from campers, parents, and event volunteers that they had an amazing summer, and they are ready to come back next year! Very soon we’ll have the 2020 schedule posted and ready to sign up! That’s great news for the 88% of parents responding to a recent survey who said they were interested in signing up for 2020 camps. Watch for all camp news at [umcamping.org](http://umcamping.org).

We asked parents what kind of stories they heard

from their campers. Many mentioned the songs by the lake or campfire.

Others told about making friends, funny counselors, swimming, and the food.

But our hearts melt when we hear remarks about awesome times at camp ...

“Playing cards with elderly persons from their host churches on canoe camp.”

“He told us how he needs to take care of the Earth because God made it.”

“Finding frogs with her new friends.”

“He told me about the Bible Stories he learned about –*Friendship in the Bible*. He is only seven-years-old, but the stories had a big impact on him and he even had dream about it.”

When asked about the changes families noticed in their campers, we often heard campers returned home more social and outgoing, and more excited about practicing and sharing their faith.

One parent said, “[My camper] realized they could have fun without electronics and loved being outside.”

A grandparent who sent her granddaughter to camp at Lake Michigan Camp & Retreat told us how happy she was because her granddaughter has been inspired to start attending church even though her mom and dad don’t.

Another grandparent shared on a camp Facebook page: “Our grandchildren attend camp at Judson Collins every summer. They look forward to it and come home singing the songs and sharing their great memories. The Love of God pours through the staff to the children and it is a beautiful thing.”

A parent of a Wesley Woods high school camper said, “He was so filled with the Holy Spirit. So upbeat!”

The Michigan Area United

Methodist Camping Board of Directors and staff are committed to providing quality camps that build relationships and grow disciples of Jesus Christ. It will take continued hard work and great investment to maintain and improve facilities.

Your gifts to Michigan Area United Methodist Camping for scholarships or facilities will build the foundation for a robust, long-term ministry. Please pray and consider giving toward this life-changing outreach.



**Grandparents and grandchildren gathered at Judson Collins Center in July. Doing new things together brought joy to everyone. ~ Facebook/Michigan Area United Methodist**