



# Messenger

SYCAMORE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH NEWSLETTER

July 2025

We are now officially in the season after Pentecost, and our practice and experience of the Word shift from the life of Jesus to our own lives—how we embody Jesus' message and mission in our thoughts, attitudes, words, actions, and relationships. This means living out a way of being that reflects true discipleship.

For almost a year and a half, a conversation has been ongoing within the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee regarding how we relate to one another, how intentional we are with our hospitality, and how we welcome "the other."

Even though being a hospitable congregation consistently ranks as a high point in our recent surveys—and is something our newest members speak very highly of—we must not become complacent. We cannot settle for "good enough." As members of the Body of Christ, we are called to strive for better than good.

This coming Monday, July 14, the Reverend Alka Lyall will be joining us at the Church Council meeting. With the consent of our chair, Rob Stover, we will begin our business meeting at 6:30 p.m., and Rev. Lyall's presentation will follow at 7:00 p.m.

It is my hope, desire, and prayer that this presentation will help us cross a threshold and engage in vital conversation about "Cultural Competency"—the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across different cultures.

In consultation with our Council leadership, and while all our meetings are open, we are intentionally inviting all members of committees, boards, ministry teams or anyone in our congregation to attend this one. As our visioning process concludes, it has become clear that our task is to be a congregation that embraces diversity. (Please remember Article 4 of our UMC Constitution.)

Please also remember: diversity is more than the inclusion of people of color.

I invite you to join me in prayer as we prepare for our gathering on July 14.

In prayer with you all,

**Pastor Luis**

*Following is a brief introduction to Rev. Lyall.*



## **The Reverend Alka Lyall**

A life-long Methodist, Alka grew up in the Methodist Church in India and came to the United States in 1996 as a seminary student. She is an ordained elder in the Northern Illinois Conference, currently appointed to Broadway UMC, in the Lakeview East neighborhood of Chicago,

Alka is a mother of two handsome men, a sister of 3 siblings, a daughter, an Immigrant, a pastor, a friend, and above all a beloved child of God who loves to cook, crochet, craft and recently took pottery classes.

An active member of the church throughout her life, she was a delegate to World Methodist Council as a youth representative from India in 1986 and later served on its Presidium. She was an alternate to the 2008 General Conference, and a delegate to 2012, 2016, 2019 and 2020/2024 General and Jurisdictional Conferences. Alka has served on various boards, agencies, and committees in the conference and beyond! She was the founding board member of Justice for our Neighbors (JFON) in the Northern Illinois Conference and currently chairs the Annual Conference committee on Nominations and has served on the Board of Director of the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) of the United Methodist Church since 2016.

Alka desires to share the love of God with all God's people, especially with those who have been rejected, refused, and forgotten by the church and the society.





### Summer Office Hours

Monday - Thursday: 8:30am-2:00pm

Fridays: 8:30am-12 Noon



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## JULY 2025 WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sundays at 9:30am

Children's Sunday School at 9:30am & 4:30pm

Sunday Evening Service at 4:30pm

[www.facebook.com/SUMCIllinois/](https://www.facebook.com/SUMCIllinois/) or  
[www.youtube.com/results?searchquery=sycamore+umc](https://www.youtube.com/results?searchquery=sycamore+umc)

### JULY 6 – THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

Services of Holy Communion

Galatians 6:(1-6), 7-14

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

### JULY 13 - PENTECOST SUNDAY

VBS Sunday

### JULY 20– TRINITY SUNDAY

Amos 8:1-12

Luke 10:38-42

### JULY 27 – SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Colossians 2:6-15 (16-19):

Luke 11:1-13



Sycamore United  
Methodist Church



@sycamoreumc



#### Those for whom we pray:

Nancy	Norma Clarner
David Dykema	Diane Mathey
Diana Grace	Damian
Neil Weir	The Collins Family
Mark McGee	Tia Incapreo
Rick Stewart	Don Mathey
Gary Blake	Ralph Stover
Carol Berndt	Nanette Richards
Jimmy Schmidt	Bruce Richards
Carol Keneway	Bob Clarner
Mike Milyanovich	Tammy O'Reilly
Jerrica Newby	Ray Larson
Dwain Stadie	Matthew Herbaugh
Mark Westrom	& family
Dani Smith	Austin & Becca
Addison	Fraedrich and their
Jamoni Zander	newborn twins

#### The Service Personnel and Their Families

Cpt. Mark Browning,	SGT Brock Grimaldi
*SGT Ben Bushno	*SPC Alexis Jones
SGT Shaune Clark	*Maj Steve Haack
SGT Matthew Einhorn	PV2 Rachel McMillion
PFC Timothy Einhorn	*CPL Joshua Caraballo
PO1 Frank Incapreo	SPC Sutit Jackson
SSG Christopher Isabel	PV2 Liam Keller
MSG Matthew "Scott" Stewart	E-5 PO Hayden Royer
LT Matthew Herbaugh	E-3 Amanda Royer
PVT Trevor Bassett	<i>*indicates deployed personnel</i>
PO3 Samuel V. Bell	

**Please keep your pastors & your church family informed!** As policies surrounding confidentiality and patient's rights continue to be adjusted, hospitals and nursing homes no longer contact church offices to notify them that church members have been admitted. To insure that you desire and receive pastoral care, please call the church office, or have a friend/family member call on your behalf.

### STEWARDSHIP IN ACTION - WHY GIVE? WHY GIVE TO THE CHURCH?

When we realize that our local Church is our community, we know we are accepted.

DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) has been a cause for many in the last few years. It also became a flashpoint for some, who felt they were being compelled to do some things, and they maybe didn't really like the proponents, and certainly didn't like being told that they must do something by those proponents.

But in our local Church, we can get beyond controversial catchphrases. We know we are accepted. We feel good about giving to our local Church because we are the Church. We are accepted. We can participate in making decisions about how our Church's funds are used. We have confidence in our Church's leaders, that they also have good ideas about how our Church's funds will be used.

There are many places we can give, and many causes we can support. But we joyfully give to our Church because we are the Church. We are accepted, and can work with others in our Church community to make the world a better place for all.

We are empowered by grace to do good works by being generous stewards of God's gifts. You may financially support the work of the church by mailing a check to 160 Johnson Avenue, Sycamore, IL 60178 (attention Business Director Jim McCue); by giving on-line at [www.sycamoreumc.org/giving](http://www.sycamoreumc.org/giving); or by texting "Giving" to 815-895-9113. Thank you for sharing your time, talents, and treasures.

### REMEMBER SUMC IN YOUR WILL OR TRUST

A legacy gift is your opportunity to support the church's work beyond your lifetime, to change lives and honor the role the church played in your life, your family's life, our community, and our world. Legacy gifts allow flexibility to respond to the greatest needs of tomorrow. Legacy gifts can benefit the giver through tax savings. Retirement assets are particularly good assets to achieve the best tax outcome for a planned gift. Consult with your accountant, financial planner, or attorney before finalizing any charitable gift.



## OPPORTUNITIES TO GATHER, GROW, AND SERVE

### VBS

There are still a few days left to have kids join the fun! VBS is July 7<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> from 9-noon daily. This is an exciting opportunity for children ages 4 years old through 5<sup>th</sup> grade to learn about Jesus as our TRUE NORTH. Register your child by texting VBS2025



### ALL AGES

- **BREAKTHROUGH & BBQ** – This summer come see what Breakthrough Worship is about! Starting July 27<sup>th</sup>, we will have a monthly outdoor service on the last Sunday of the month from 4:30-6pm. Bring your lawn chairs and a side to share for this unique worship and small group experience.

### SUMMER BOOK & VIDEO STUDIES

- Summer Book Study starts July 9<sup>th</sup> @11am is Girl's Still Got It by Liz Curtis Higgs. Let's take a walk with Ruth and the God who rocked her world. This novel approach to Bible study that leaps from past to present, gleaming timeless truths that speak to the heart. Register by texting **SUMMERSTUDY** to the church phone number. Copies are available in the Resource Center or through Amazon.
- Summer Video Study starts July 21<sup>st</sup>. Join us Monday nights at 6pm in the Lounge to watch and discuss episodes of The Chosen. This study for ages 13 to adult will run through August 25<sup>th</sup>. Participants will view and episode and discuss its depiction of the Bible story. Come for one or all, but please register by texting **CHOSEN** to the church phone number.

### SUMMER KIDS MINISTRIES @ SUMC

- **Magic Mondays** continues through the summer for kids age 4-entering 2nd grade. We will have some faith-filled fun around stories, crafts, games and more. Kids meet every other week over the summer from 9-10:30 am. Upcoming dates include: 7/21, 8/4 & 8/21. Register for one or more by texting SUMMERMM2025.
- **Christian Kids** is meeting on designated Wednesdays from 3:30-5:30pm. We will find ways to expand our understanding of God and ourselves through activities and service. We will also have fun being Christian Kids in our community through excursions around town. Register for one or more by texting SUMMERCK2025.
- **Tunes and Togetherness** is an opportunity for kids, ages 2-6, to sing, move and make music together in this joyful preschool-prep class for little ones and their grown-ups. We gather on alternate Mondays (7/14, 7/28, 8/11), from 9-10am. Older siblings are welcome to join the fun. Register by texting TUNES.

### YOUTH/YOUNG ADULT

- **Youth Group** will continue to meet every other Sunday during the summer. We extended the time now to 6-8p.m. Next meetings are scheduled for July 13<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> (5-7pm on the 27th). As always this is open to all Middle High Schoolers. We have food, games, and some devotional time.
- **WE STILL NEED YOUR DONATIONS!** Our **SUMC Life Missions trip** is scheduled for July 27<sup>th</sup> - August 1<sup>st</sup>. We are going to Benton Harbor MI through Youth Works. Any donations would be appreciated. To donate please scan the QR Code and choose "Life Mission Donations" in the Designation Box
- **Young Adults Fellowship** meets every Thursday evening from 6-7:30. Anyone age 18-29 are invited for dinner and discussion about how God is showing up in our lives.



### ADULTS

- **Singles Fellowship** meets July 22<sup>nd</sup> Weather permitting we will head to Hopkins Park at 7pm for a potluck picnic and stay for the Dekalb Municipal Band concert at 7:30pm. if the weather doesn't cooperate we will meet at Ski's at 6pm.



## OPPORTUNITIES TO GATHER, GROW, AND SERVE

### WORSHIP, MUSIC AND ARTS

Happy Summer and July! Hope you are enjoying the extra warm weather, outdoor activities, travels and all the fun that summer brings! Music and worship here has certainly been exciting and fun so far too! Here's few things we're doing and inviting all to do with the music program this summer! Mark your calendars, we'd love to make music and fellowship with you!



**Summer Choir** - This year we will be having another summer choir on August 3rd.. We will have 1 rehearsal at 8:30 on the morning scheduled Sunday date to sing at both services for that Sunday. For those of you who have wanted to sing with choir but haven't had the time or able to make the weekly commitment now have a chance to try it out! Who knows, you may just love it and join us in the fall! Music will be simple, fun, upbeat, and inspirational! Please see Peter Hansen or contact the office staff for more information!

**Tech Team** - We really need you! We are always looking for tech team helpers! Slides/video and sound help needed! Un sure If you're qualified or not? Not to worry, we'll show and teach you all that is necessary to be successful at it! Please contact Alex Wilson or the office staff for more information!

**Breakthrough** - Do you play guitar, bass, drums, sing? Do you enjoy the contemporary style of worship and music? Contact the office for more information.

**Ministry of Music Spots** - There are a still a few dates available if you play an instrument, sing, etc. for special music during offertory/ music ministry spot in the Sunday Morning Worship services. Please see me for more information! Saturday and Sunday Worship Leaders Not sure you want to be a soloist, but love to sing and love to sing/play with others? Worship leaders are needed to lead hymns at services. This requires helping lead songs and worship on Saturday's and/or assisting with leading hymns and worship on Sunday. If you play piano or stringed instruments, that's a plus too! Please contact me for more information! Hope to see or hear from many of you soon! Meantime, I'll be seeing you.....in the Music!!

Pete Hansen  
Director of Worship, Music and Arts

### P.R.I.D.E. COMMITTEE

PRIDE had a very busy month! We ended May with Pride Palooza, an amazing outdoor event in collaboration with Family Service Agency and Youth Outlook. On June 8th, we hosted another after-service inclusive story time, reading This Day In June by Gayle E. Pitman. We also joined Dekalb Pride for the third year on June 21st, participating in their downtown vendor event and parade. Our collaboration with Youth Outlook began with the first session of their Thrive three-part educational series on June 26th at Federated. We wrapped up the month on June 28th with the ecumenical Pride Worship at Salem Lutheran Church, followed by our second annual PRIDE Formal, an all-ages prom, in our building. It was an amazing month filled with incredible organizations doing meaningful work! We are now looking forward to kicking off our monthly Game Nights on July 19th, a popular request that came from the 40 individuals who attended our last one in February. We can't wait to see everyone there!



**P**ROMOTING  
**R**ECONCILIATION,  
**I**NCLUSION,  
**D**IVERSITY, and  
**E**QUALITY

### 3 SIMPLE RULES

1. Do no harm
2. Do good
3. Stay in love with God.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO GATHER, GROW, AND SERVE



### HOPE HAVEN MEAL ASSISTANCE NEEDED FOR JULY

Prepare or buy just one course or the entire meal to feed 60-65 people! Deliver your contribution to Hope Haven in DeKalb or drop it off at the church by 3:30 on Monday.

**Please call the church (815-895-9113) to let us know which delivery option you will be using. Sign-up at the Welcome Center in the Concourse or by calling the church office at 815-895-9113.** You may also get on the Hope Haven volunteer list by texting HOPEHAVEN to the church #.

### FOOD PANTRY NEEDS FOR JULY

Canned beans  
Crackers  
Canned fruit  
Canned meals  
(spaghettios, beefaroni etc)  
Crunchy Peanut butter

Diced Tomatoes  
Spaghetti sauce  
Mayo  
Salad Dressing  
Boxed potatoes or stuffing  
Cereal

Paper towels  
Tissues  
Toiletries  
Empty Egg Cartons



The Food Pantry will be handing out **school supplies and backpacks** in July/August so we are doing a school supply/backpack drive. Please put your items in the tub in the Concourse.





## Sycamore United Methodist Church

160 Johnson Avenue (north of the High School) on Rte. 64 east of Peace Rd.

# THRIFT SALE

FRIDAY & SATURDAY	
<b>August</b> <b>1</b>	9:00am - 5:00pm <b>Friday only:</b> \$10.00 Bag Sale & Bake Sale from 9:00am until SOLD OUT
<b>August</b> <b>2</b>	9:00am - 12 Noon Saturday only: \$10.00 BOGO Bag Sale

**Featuring:**

Clothing, shoes, books, toys, home décor, sporting goods, holiday, collectibles, accessories, puzzles, housewares, linens & miscellaneous.



ALL PROCEEDS GO TO MISSIONS IN AND BEYOND OUR COMMUNITY

**We need your help!** We are looking for a few willing men and Women to help set-up tables on Sunday, July 27th after church Sign-up sheets are at the Welcome Center.

Donations are needed of gently used items, such as clothing, housewares, toys, and baby stuff.

We **CANNOT** accept furniture, office electronics, TVs, Christmas trees, full sets of dinnerware, textbooks, encyclopedias, nor other large or heavy items.

Please respect other church activities and our summer office schedule. No early donations.

### **Set-up AND donation drop-off hours**


Monday 7/28 from 9AM to 3 PM

Tuesday 7/29 from 9 AM to 3 PM

Wednesday 7/30 from 9 AM to noon

# JULY 2025 EVENTS CALENDAR

The deadline for the August issue of The Messenger is July 20th

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2 9:00 AM Faithful Fitness	3 CHURCH OFFICES CLOSED 4:00 pm TOPS 6:00 PM Young Adult Fellowship Group	4 CHURCH OFFICES CLOSED 	5 3:00 PM VBS PK & Station Decor
6 9:30 AM <b>Sunday Worship Service</b> 9:30 AM Children's Sunday School 11:00 AM VBS Décor and Youth Leader Training 4:30 PM BREAKTHROUGH <b>Sunday Evening Worship</b>	7 9-12 VBS 9:00 AM Faithful Fitness 12:00 PM Food Pantry 7:00 PM Trustees	8 9-12 VBS 9:30 PM Mary Circle 11:00 AM Staff Meeting 7:00 PM Pumpkin Fest Parade Float Team	9 9-12 VBS 9:00 AM Faithful Fitness 11:00 AM Adult Book Study	10 9-12 VBS 4:00 pm TOPS 6:00 PM Young Adult Fellowship Group	11 9-12 VBS	12
13 VBS SHOWCASE 9:30 AM <b>Sunday Worship Service</b> 9:30 AM Children's Sunday School 4:30 PM BREAKTHROUGH <b>Sunday Evening Worship</b> 6:00 PM Middle & High School Youth Group	14 9:00 AM Faithful Fitness 9:00 AM Tunes & Togetherness 12:00 PM Food Pantry 5:30 PM Finance/ Stewardship Committee 6:30 PM Church Council Business Meeting 7:00 PM Cultural/ Intercultural Competency Presentation	14 1:00 PM Grace Circle	16 9:00 AM Faithful Fitness 11:00 AM Adult Book Study	17 4:00 PM TOPS 6:00 PM Young Adult Fellowship Group 6:00 PM Youth Ministries Team	18	19 8:00 AM UMM Breakfast 10:00 AM Memorial Committee
20 9:30 AM <b>Sunday Worship Service</b> 9:30 AM Children's Sunday School 4:30 PM BREAKTHROUGH <b>Sunday Evening Worship</b>	21 9:00 AM Faithful Fitness 9:00 AM Magic Mondays 9:30 AM Ruth Circle 12:00 PM Food Pantry 5:00 PM Discipleship Committee 6:00 PM Summer Video Study - "The Chosen"	22 11:00 AM Staff Meeting 1:00 PM UWF Missions Team 6:00 PM Singles Fellowship at Ski's	23 9:00 AM Faithful Fitness 11:00 AM Adult Book Study 3:30 PM Summer Christian Kids	24 4:00 PM TOPS 6:00 PM Young Adult Fellowship Group	25	26
27 LIFE Missions Trip to Benton Harbor, MI 9:30 AM <b>Sunday Worship Service</b> 9:30 AM Children's Sunday School 11:00 AM UWF NOW Circle 4:30 PM BREAKTHROUGH <b>Worship and BBQ</b> 5-7 PM Middle & High School Youth Group	28 LIFE Missions Trip to Benton Harbor, MI 9:00 AM Faithful Fitness 9:00 AM Tunes & Togetherness 12:00 PM Food Pantry 6:00 PM Summer Video Study - "The Chosen"	29 LIFE Missions Trip to Benton Harbor, MI	30 LIFE Missions Trip to Benton Harbor, MI 9:00 AM Faithful Fitness 11:00 AM Adult Book Study	31 LIFE Missions Trip to Benton Harbor, MI 4:00 PM TOPS 6:00 PM Young Adult Fellowship Group	August 1 LIFE Missions Trip to Benton Harbor, MI 9-5:30 UWF Thrift Sale with Bake Sale	August 2 8:00 AM UMM Breakfast 9-12 UWF Thrift Sale

SYCAMORE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

**BLESSING**  
of the backpacks



**SUNDAY**  
**AUGUST 17**  
at 9:30am

Students, educators,  
and education support  
staff are  
invited to attend this ser-  
vice, where special  
prayers will  
be said for you as you  
go back to school.



## **2025 NIC LAY MEMBERS TO ANNUAL CONFERENCE REPORTS**

The Annual Conference is an interesting mix of business and worship. On the first day, I attended one of seven legislative sections that addressed multiple pieces of legislation. The two pieces of legislation addressed in my session both passed with the required majority vote of over 80%. The first was titled “Who Are Our Neighbors? Standing with our Immigrants, Refugees, and Asylum Seekers Communities.” This piece of legislation reaffirmed the Northern Illinois Conference’s (NIC) ‘commitment to support the rights of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers to legal services, health, housing, education, and other necessary services to become full members of our communities.’ The second piece of legislation, titled ‘Supporting Human Rights Advocacy and the Right to Engage in Nonviolent Actions including Boycotts and Free Speech,’ calls upon clergy, lay leaders, and members to support the right to engage in nonviolent resistance including the use of boycotts and divestments. It calls upon these persons to contact their Illinois state Representatives and Senators to urge them to support the Illinois Human Rights Advocacy Protection Act. This act would repeal the 2015 anti-boycott law, ‘restore protections for peaceful advocacy, remove legal uncertainty for Illinois organizations, realign state law with fundamental democratic principles, and protect civil society’s ability to engage on humanitarian issues.’ Throughout the three days we also heard from multiple NIC committees and staff members and we discussed/voted on legislation that did not pass during the individual legislative sessions.

The most meaningful portion of the conference, for me, was the daily Bible Study/Devotion. The theme of the conference was ‘Grace is Sufficient.’ I learned that grace is not plan B – it IS the plan. We are not disqualified from grace when we’re grieving or doubting, because weakness is holy ground. 2 Corinthians 9:8a says ‘God has the power to provide you with more than enough of every kind of grace.’ We were encouraged to practice three types of grace: 1) Inner grace where we are gentle with ourselves, 2) Relational grace where we offer patience and forgiveness even if someone doesn’t earn it, and 3) Creative grace where we entrust God’s grace to empower our vision. As I work daily to learn to accept God’s grace in my life, my wish for our congregation is that we more fully lean into God’s grace every day.

Submitted by Peggy Carey

On the first morning a Laity session was given that outlined events, expectations, and the roles that Laity were to uphold during the conference. The afternoon Plenary covered Historic Reports, Daily Procedures, and the Organizing Motions of the conference. We then separated into legislative sections to discuss legislation items in detail. Some of these items included voting on the formation of an LGBTQIA+ conference level committee (Document 700.07), and voting on minimum salaries for full-time elders (Document 680.02). There were also many other legislation items voted on that required amendments, approvals, or denials. Later in the evening, the Celebration of Ministry service announced new ordinations, a sermon entitled “Give Me Your Hand” was given, and a variety of joyful music was performed.

The morning of the second day began with bible study. Immediately following the bible study, an Episcopal address was given and was supplemented by presentations from committees such as the Shepherding team, The Northern Illinois Board of Trustees, The Insurance Board, etc. Before lunch, we voted on the Consent Calendar. After returning from lunch a memorial service that honored the recently deceased was given, and showed pictures (accompanied by music) of those who had served the church.

The third morning began with the continuation of the prior day’s bible study, immediately followed by a Laity Address, the Cabinet Report, and legislation nominations. Afterwards, a retirement service ensued, which acknowledged and celebrated those retiring by means of showcasing heartfelt testimonials (and more music). After we returned from lunch, a significant amount of discussion surrounding church apportionments took place. There was notable disagreement on how to address apportionments, but after much debate, the voting body came to a consensus.

In conclusion: the three days of the conference were loaded with a variety of informative presentations, opportunities to worship, and covered multiple aspects of legislation. Attending the conference is always a joyful and uplifting experience – and offers significant insight into the inner workers of the Church. This is an event that I would recommend that all SUMC members attend at least once.

Submitted by Tim Keller



This was my second year to attend the Northern Illinois Annual Conference held June 9-11 in Schaumburg. The underlying theme of the conference was Grace is Sufficient. Of big importance was the prior education before attending and then actual voting of four constitutional amendments: 1) Regionalization; 2) Inclusion in Membership; 3) Racial Justice; 4) Educational Requirements for Clergy Voting Rights. Regionalization had been talked about at SUMC the last two years. Essentially conferences outside the US can adapt the Methodist Book of Discipline to their own contexts, and the amendment would place all worldwide conferences on an equal footing. The inclusion and racial justice amendments adds language for accepting all persons, races and abilities to be baptized and serve as professing members in any local church, and denounces white privilege and white supremacy.

I enjoyed participating in my laity legislation group, the Celebration of Ministry with the ordination of 6 new Elders for the conference, the two bible studies,, the Bishop's episcopal address, and the live music performed by the conference praise team. Here are a few of my personal take-aways from the conference.

Laity legislation; My laity breakout group considered legislation for minimum salaries for full time elders and licensed local pastors (LLP). The legislation proposed cash salary increases of full time pastors from a base in 2023 at \$32,450 for elders with increases of 7% recommended yearly to 2026 at \$46,669. Lesser increases for LLP were recommended with a 2026 minimum cash salary recommendation of \$42,668. Our group had lay members offering pro and con arguments before passing the legislation as recommended by over 2/3 voting affirmatively.

#### Bible Study provided by Reverend Dr. Reggie Blount of Garrett Evangelical Seminary

Dr. Blount led the Tuesday Bible study with a Job biblical grace theme with these points:

- Grace tells the truth
- Grace trusts power through the broken
- Weakness is holy ground
- Grace is not a detour; it is divine design
- Through grace when I reach my limit I am made stronger

For Dr. Blount's leading the study on Wednesday he spoke of how grace abounds, based on 2 Corinthians 9:6-10.

- God's grace is not rationed out; generosity is the natural fruit of grace
- Grace's abundance is meant to flow outward
- Grace is a way of life we practice
- Grace is a spiritual discipline; be gentle with yourself; offer patience and forgiveness to others, and trust grace to empower your vision
- Lead, give, dream as grace is sufficient

#### Bishop Dan Schwerin message

The Bishop again as last year addressed how the United Methodist Church should work to remain relevant: we are the body of Christ for this storm!

- Ongoing recent local Methodist experimental models to address declining membership are: Southside Collaboration; Garrett Resilience Hub; Rosecrance center for substance abuse treatment; Hispanic outreach
- Change from old style UMC and discard old baggage; Love the people- love the church less; What are we called to do during a storm? MacGyver it if need be.
- Become allies of those on the margins (sanctuary moment); our resistance is non-violent love; my well-being is your well-being

In short, we are the body of Christ, so don't be tired or weary doing God's work.

#### Laity address by Reverend Eugene Williams

His message was that grace is unconditional love for all, including the stranger and the immigrant. He pointed this out through the immigrant theology of Leviticus 19:34 and Matthew 25:35.

- The storms of life are always raging but we laity provide hope and encouragement; remove barriers for equity
- Lead courageously; celebrate connections—we all belong to God
- We will experience discomfort with current change; we don't get distracted by alternate facts
- DEI is "definitely earned it"
- Don't get down but go to prayer; God is in control
- Our Great Commission will endure long after any executive orders

Submitted by Joel Maurer

The NIC was very well organized, it was well run, and disagreements were kept civil. Several speakers were included in the program, and their speeches were very inspirational. The Bishop gave two sermons, both of which were excellent. Bishop Schwerin was really funny, and he delivered an extremely powerful message.

#### Bishop Schwerin:

Overall, the NIC recognizes that we are losing congregations, we are not getting funding to the extent we did previously, and we need to respond by emphasizing meaning. We do this by *working together* and *combining resources*.

He talked about MacGyver, and I did not know what that meant.

#### Rev. Blount:

Paul did not say we were given "just enough" grace.

We have been granted a **surplus** of grace.

Think of grace as a state of being.

One of the last speakers (I am sorry, but my notes do not have his name):

It does not matter who is in the State House, the White House, or the outhouse; God is in charge.

Four amendments were voted upon, and each one passed:

#### Ballot #1: Regionalization

- No change to Methodist beliefs
- Makes all regions equal
- Does give all nations an equal voice

#### Ballot #2: Inclusion in Membership

- Adds *Gender and Ability* to the list of identities that cannot be used to discriminate against membership

DS Brian Gilbert gave an example of why we need this:

He talked about an experience he had with one of the evangelical churches. A boy in a wheelchair, age 6, was refused baptism because he could not walk to the baptismal font, and if you are not baptized by immersion – **in THAT church** – then you are going to hell. Furthermore, if you are in a wheelchair, that is because of something you did so you will be going to hell anyway. Can you imagine **anyone** saying such things??? I think I would have responded with, "Well, if I do end up in hell, I will plan on seeing YOU there. So there will be somebody I already know." Anyway, the Methodist church did baptize the boy.

#### Ballot #3: Racial Justice

Intended to eliminate any innate language in the UMC that authorizes or promotes white privilege.

Learned some things about discrimination:

- There can be conscious bias
- There can be unconscious bias
- There can be implicit bias

All of these are extremely hurtful to anyone who is subjected to these

#### Ballot #4: Educational Requirements for Voting Rights

- No change to the rules

Does clarify and adds consideration to the voting process for clergy, delegates, etc.

Submitted by Bob Brown

#### United Women in Faith

- Speaker Barb Farley from Cunningham Home - She talked about serving 900 families.
- Rev. Hughes, Missionary from Chili - Spoke about the Methodist Church there.
- Chantill Couri - She spoke about many services at the Midwest Mission.

Bible Study by Rev. Dr. Michael Blount - Both studies were in II Corinthians.

Voted on the closing of Franklin Grove and the salaries of ministers.

I enjoyed being in a room of over 700 Methodists. The kindness, fellowship, and caring we showed each other.

Submitted by Becky Brown

This year I had a new appreciation for Annual Conference since declaring my candidacy to become an ordained deacon in the UMC. I particularly enjoyed the ordination service, which our very own Pastor Luis created and oversaw. It was a moving worship and show of support for those who are being commissioned to be emissaries of grace in the world. I sat in on legislation that approved a new pension plan for clergy and the closing of a parish. While this legislation was approved on our consent calendar, I had the honor of voting for our congregation on four constitutional amendments. It is truly humbling to be a part of this moment that, if ratified, will help our denomination to stay true to Wesley's intention of being connectional, while loving neighbor. Bishop Schwerin's message called us to shower grace upon all and turn towards each other in this season of change. This is our opportunity to bring the church to our communities and love people a little more than we love the church. It is when we acknowledge the suffering of others in our midst that we can let God be at work in us. It is our chance to be courageous and have faith the God's *Grace is Sufficient*.

Submitted by Becca Rome

I had the privilege of attending the 2025 Northern Illinois Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. During the plenary sessions, I participated in the approval of the consent calendar compiled from various legislative forums, engaged in deliberations and votes on legislation not previously resolved in smaller sessions, and joined in recognizing and celebrating the accomplishments of congregations across the conference. Additionally, we voted on the four constitutional amendments brought forth by the General Conference.

A particularly meaningful aspect of the conference was the Bible study led by Reverend Dr. Reginald Blount, centered on the theme "Grace is Sufficient." His teaching, combined with table discussions, provided valuable opportunities for reflection on both the life of the church and our individual spiritual journeys.

Overall, it was an enriching experience. I look forward to sharing insights and highlights from the sessions with the congregation at SUMC

Submitted by Jessica Gale



