



Northern Illinois Conference

OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Annual Conference Special · June 18, 2024



**185th Northern Illinois
Annual Conference**

**Sunday, June 16 -
Tuesday, June 18, 2024**

Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center
1551 N. Thoreau Dr., Schaumburg Ill.

Day 2 of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference Session was full of decisions and information. Following are a few highlights. More will be included tomorrow and in following days.

Bishop Schwerin Finds God's Grace in Uncertainty

For decades, church-growth consultants and pastors of growing churches received desperate pleas from anxious pastors, clamoring for fool-proof steps out of decline.

During his episcopal address on Monday, Bishop Dan Schwerin urged something very different. "We do not need slogans anymore," he told the conference. "We need to be open to the new."

That the last few years have caused disruption is undisputable. However, in a break with unofficial United Methodist tradition, Bishop Schwerin did not champion a new catch phrase and or recipe for success.

Essentially, he urged the conference to go with it.

“The end of the status quo produces chaos and anxiety,” he said. “It brings us into a liminal space. Individuals must experiment and learn from their failures.”

Susan Beaumont, author of *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You Are Going*, says that organization adapt when they yield to disturbance.

That kind of yielding nudged Bishop Schwerin to remember John Wesley's Covenant Prayer, which says, in part:

“I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things
to thy pleasure and disposal.”

Yielding all things to God might mean not to attempt to fix things, but to be open to God's leading; to be open to new ideas and to God's spirit, the bishop said.

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Yielding all things to God might mean not to attempt to fix things, but to be open to God’s leading; to be open to new ideas and to God’s spirit, the bishop said. He reminded the conference of Rev. 3:20, saying that Christ is the stranger knocking at the door. “It’s our time to yield to the one who stands at the door and knocks,” the bishop said.

Times of uncertainty and anxiety are particularly a time to heed Christ’s beckoning.

“The chaos genie is out of the bottle,” Bishop Schwerin said. “Wars rage around the world. White Christian nationalism is rising. How will we respond?”

We must draw on the spiritual and prophetic cores of our faith, he said. “We cannot focus inwardly in this hour.”

“This is the time to yield to the call forward and experiment for the gospel,” he said. “Perhaps enter into a cooperative parish experiment. Partner with a nonprofit. Or teach a class on invitation.”

“We cannot lose this generation,” the bishop said. “We are a post-COVID, post-disaffiliation, post-General Conference church. We will give you tools to start 330 experiments” (the number of churches in our conference).

General Conference Delegation Points to Hope-Filled Decisions

“There were many high moments and painful moments” at **United Methodist General Conference**, April 23-May 3, said Rev. Alka Lyle, chair of the NIC delegation to General Conference. To many observers, this General Conference appeared much more hope-filled and less rancorous than those of previous years.

The NIC delegation's priorities were regionalization, revised social principles, restrictive language.

Regionalization, a plan that organizes United Methodist churches into equal and connected regional bodies that can make local decisions, earned more than 74 percent support. The UMC has operated as a U.S.-centered church with satellite locations. Each region now will be able to make decisions for themselves that are appropriate to their cultural context.

Because this plan entails amendments to the United Methodist constitution, each annual conference will need to ratify these amendments. All of the votes



cast at conferences will be combined for the final totals.

Removal of language that harmed LGBTQIA people was finally achieved at this conference, after many years of advocacy. Delegates approved four changes to church law that remove the last remnants of restrictions aimed specifically at LGBTQ people.

It had been the case that the UMC boards and agencies could not spend funds that promoted acceptance of homosexuality. Now the agencies must be sure that none of their expenditures promotes harming LGBTQIA people.

Revision of the UM Social Principles began eight years ago. Among other changes, the revision deletes the clause that called homosexuality "incompatible" with Christian teaching.

The delegation reported on much more and will offer **debriefings** in September.

Of Note . . .

- **Rev. Cheryl Weaver** was introduced as conference benefits officer (she also serves Wisconsin Conference in this role).
- **Rev. Christian Coon** was introduced as Director of Congregational Development.
- Churches and individuals contributed **\$35,126.88 to United Voices for Children**, the Bishop's Appeal recipient. (Funds are still being accepted.)
- Those attending the ordination and celebration of ministries service donated **\$2,048 to the Ministerial Education Fund**.

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