

The REPORTER

Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church

www.umcnic.org

From the
Bishop...

What's our response to the Zimmerman verdict?



Bishop Sally Dyck

In the days following the verdict of the George Zimmerman and Trayvon Martin case in Florida, President Barack Obama said two things of note. The first statement was that the death of Trayvon Martin was a tragedy, "not just for his family, or for any one community, but for America." I wholeheartedly agree with the President's assessment but I wonder whether all of America feels the impact of that reality.

I wondered at the reception of the verdict in parts of our country, annual conference and church where diversity of ethnicity and color aren't as pronounced. Do we all perceive this as a tragedy or somebody else's problem? Or do people who look like me ever think about, talk about, listen to or acknowledge the daily obstacles that ordinary African-American males go through? Even not so "ordinary;" as President Obama later described from his own experience which matches nearly every other African American male.

But then the President said, "We should ask ourselves if we're doing all we can to widen the circle of compassion and understanding in our own communities. We should ask ourselves if we're doing all we can to stem the tide of gun violence that claims too many lives across this country on a daily basis. We should ask ourselves, as individuals and as a society, how we can prevent future tragedies like this? As citizens, that's a job for all of us. That's the way to honor Trayvon Martin."

Yes, we should ask ourselves if we're widening circles of compassion, especially if we claim to be followers of Jesus. We should ask ourselves if we're doing all we can to stop the gun violence. Every week there is a gun violence report put out by the New York Times opinion writer, Joe Nocera. Over 6,000 people have been killed by guns since Newtown, Ct. Nearly every day someone loses their life and others lose a loved one.

But the President's remark seems to lodge the responsibility firmly if not solely in the realm of individual responsibility. There's truth to the individual's role, but what gets glossed over in that statement is that there are systems in place in our society that act in stronger ways that we like to admit.

I was just finishing Michelle Alexander's book, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, when the verdict was announced. Ms. Alexander expertly describes how the laws that make up the so-called "war on drugs" that's really a war against young African American males, our state judicial systems, gun laws, and such laws as Stand Your Ground (where people in Florida and about 25 more states can defend themselves without impunity when they feel threatened) act as institutional/systemic racism that profoundly impact individuals' lives.

The Stand Your Ground law may not have "racism" written all over it but in fact given the racial dynamics of our culture, it will more quickly impact people of color. As Michelle Alexander noted in her Facebook entry the day of the verdict,

If Trayvon Martin had been born white he would be alive today...he never would have been stalked by Zimmerman,

there would have been no fight, no funeral, no trial, no verdict. It is the Zimmerman mindset that must be found guilty - far more than the man himself. It is a mindset that views black men and boys as nothing but a threat, good for nothing, up to no good no matter who they are or what they are doing. It is the Zimmerman mindset that has birthed a penal system unprecedented in world history, and relegated millions to a permanent undercaste...

As a citizen of this country and as a person of faith, I believe we all must do more to change the mindset that Ms. Alexander describes and that includes changing some of the systems that "relegate millions to a permanent undercaste." Putting faith into action sometimes requires that we rally, vote, and stand for change in our systems. It means that we make our neighbor's good our own whether it literally be a neighboring community or the actual neighbor next door.

But what really disturbs me and disappoints me is the church response. Rev. Pamela Lightsey, a clergy member of this annual conference, said on Facebook that 85% of churches polled on the following Sunday did NOT even mention the verdict and its impact on America. And to top it off, the lectionary reading for the day was the story of the Good Samaritan! Seems like even an ad lib might have been in order, such as someone said (again on Facebook), "an African American youth in a hoodie with Skittles and flavored ice tea was walking down the street..."

Elisa Gatz, a lay member of our annual conference, retweeted, "How cool would it be to live in a world where George Zimmerman offered Trayvon Martin a ride home to get him out of the rain that night." This was regarded by many as the best tweet of the night that the verdict was given and it was from Tom Crabtree, formerly of the Green Bay Packers and now with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Our role as people of faith is to hold up such visions of what true community can look like and then do the hard work of making it "on earth as it is in heaven."

President Obama gave another statement later in the week. He described some of the legal changes that need to be addressed to change the context in which Trayvon Martins in our communities would encounter violence and death. He also mentioned that there has been an outcry for a national conversation. He recognized (rightly, I think) that such a conversation is not productive on a national or political level, but in fact needs to happen "in families and churches and workplaces, (where) there's the possibility that people are a little bit more honest, and at least you ask yourself your own questions about, am I wringing as much bias out of myself as I can? Am I judging people as much as I can, based on not the color of their skin, but the content of their character?"

Shortly after the gospel story in Luke about "who is my neighbor?" Jesus teaches his disciples to pray. Part of his prayer is to ask for "earth as it is in heaven." Let us envision heaven for the purpose of working for it on earth. Prayer and action are two sides of every Christian's life. We're all challenged to widen the circles of compassion, break open the systems that oppress, and imagine a better world that we live into as people of faith.

~Bishop Sally Dyck

Northern Illinois Conference
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Spanish as a Second Language Class



As a part of our Annual Conference's Harvest 2.0 initiative, we are asking 100 NIC congregations to host a class for Spanish as a Second Language (SSL).

You may have heard of classes that encourage English as a Second Language, but our conference's SSL

courses invite those who want to learn a new language or just a refresher and to enter into the vibrancy of life and worship of the Spanish-speaking communities around us all. Classes are offered once a week over six weeks, and each class is focused on knowing our neighbors through a special emphasis on sharing in worship and scripture.

This fall, we are developing "pilot churches" that will begin our push towards 100 host sites. These pilot sites for these once-a-week classes are available throughout the Conference. At this printing, current host sites include (but are not limited to) the following:

Bethany of Fox Valley in Aurora
Broadway UMC in Chicago
Deerfield: Christ
Elgin: Epworth
Naperville: Wesley
Schaumburg: Our Saviour's
Sterling: Wesley
Wood Dale

There is no set fee to attend. A voluntary offering will be taken at the class.

Check the www.umcnic.org/ssl website for the full list of host churches and times. Registration is available on-line at the www.umcnic.org/ssl website. Each class is limited to 20 people.

The next round of classes will be held early next year. Any congregation can become a host site. If you think your congregation is interested, visit the website for more information and send an e-mail to ssl@umcnic.org.

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Let's Read
Together

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Marcy-Newberry Assoc., Inc. provided these services:

Early Head Start/Head Start-Child Care (birth to 5 years)

Home Day Care – 7 providers

School-Age/After School/Summer Camp

Evening Programs – Healthy safe environment for older youth to reduce the influence of gang activities and exposure to drugs, through sports and recreational activities..

Special Programs – Curriculum based programs for youth – Young Men at Their Best, Newberry 13, Dynamic Divas, Newberry Children's Community Choir and Family Night Out. Social development workshops, recreational programs, tours and special events.

Alvin D. Sims Scholarship Program – since 1988, 118 students at sixteen schools received ½ of their tuition at private/parochial elementary school.

History

Marcy-Newberry Association was established nearly 130 years ago by Evanston resident, Elizabeth Smith Marcy, who was active in her Methodist Church's Woman's Home Mission Society. She saw the need to help the poor and the Eastern European immigrants living in the west side communities of Chicago. Along with other women from the Society, they developed a mission to provide food and clothing collected from local congregations in Evanston.

In 1888, the Rock River Conference Women's Home Mission Society granted accreditation. In 1890, a two story frame building was erected at the corner of Maxwell and Newberry Streets. In 1964 the Newberry Center was completed on West Maxwell Street. In 1969, Marcy and Newberry centers merged. Through the years, other sites and programs emerged including senior homes, childcare and Head Start.

Marcy-Newberry's mission grew to develop, manage and operate groups and individual programs to stimulate: self-determination, empowerment, self awareness, community development and revitalization, human dignity and racial pride; promote positive self images in children and adults. The agency sought to provide, through the existing resources of the agency and referral to others, education/training designed to lead to employment and job fulfillment; and to promote citizen involvement in the improvement of the neighborhood.

From a one room mission site at 300 W. Maxwell Street to 17 sites, they have been busy meeting the growing needs in the community since 1883.

MARCY-NEWBERRY CLOSING: A void left in community

By Anne Marie Gerhardt

Many people are expressing shock and sadness following the sudden closure of Marcy-Newberry Association's programs on June 28, 2013. "Marcy-Newberry touched the lives of thousands of children and parents who have come through our doors. To say it's all over is very difficult," said Executive Director Benjamin J. Kendrick who has served the agency for 34 years.

According to Marcy-Newberry's board of directors, recent budget cuts, sequestration, the current state of the economy and reduced revenue from private funding sources have all taken their toll on the agency which has provided social services in Chicago since 1883. .

Former Board President, the Rev. Bob Atkins said in 2010, 70% of MNA's over \$6.5 million dollar budget came from government funding sources. "The closing of Marcy-Newberry Association was neither sudden nor unexpected for those aware of Chicago social service and education funding in an environment of changing priorities," said Atkins.

In January 2012, the Jane Addams Hull House Association suddenly closed its doors after 123 years of providing critical human services in Chicago. Author and Jane Addams biographer, Louise W. Knight, wrote that the reason Hull House disappeared is because it became "overly reliant on government funding in a time of public-sector cutbacks for social services, and particularly for child welfare." Atkins says the same is true for MNA.

The Rev. Tracy Smith Malone, board liaison to the Bishop's office said that MNA struggled to meet payroll and other financial obligations over the last couple months, "It had become increasingly more difficult to financially sustain all the programs and services. Due to not having a steady source of sustainable income the decision was made to close. After much prayer and discernment, the Board made a very difficult but faithful decision."

The Northern Illinois Conference Director of Connectional Ministries, the Rev. Chris Pierson said a (federal, state or city) budget is a moral document. "It's about choices and the budget choices being made by politicians are cutting the social safety net or at least weakening it which impacts the most vulnerable people in our society."

Lifting up History

United Voices for Children (UVC), which speaks and acts on behalf of all children and youth in the Northern Illinois Conference, is also saddened by the closing of MNA.

"We are grateful to the staff which provided services to the community for over 130 years, filling a void in neighborhoods in need of human services. It is unfortunate for all concerned that despite MNA's amazing history, it has closed," said UVC Board President, Lois Moreland-Dean. "As families search for replacement services, let us keep them and the staff of Marcy-Newberry in our prayers."

One of MNA's loyal supporters is the Metro-Women's

Auxiliary which started 26 years ago by five United Methodist women to help volunteer, fund and support MNA. They held an annual spring fashion show and luncheon to raise money for the agency.

Their board's President Carolyn Townes said the Metro-Women's Auxiliary is shocked and disappointed by MNA's closing. "We are just devastated that an organization which had been together for 130 years could just disappear from the community," said Townes. "It's just heartbreaking. This was a community organization that was so sorely needed. We are hoping something can be done for the many children who need a place to go. They were in a safe environment."

MNA served infants to seniors in the communities mostly on the westside of Chicago in seven locations, plus seven Day Care Home Providers and three partnerships. The agency said the closing would leave over 600 families in search for child care, after school, summer camp, youth enrichment, and evening programs.

Changing Lives

Marcy-Newberry had a huge impact on the life of Samuel Cory. At the age of 8, he started participating in the after-school programs at the Newberry Center on the Near West side of Chicago. He remembers the many field trips, camps and special activities. But most of all he remembers the staff. "They really paid interest in the young people," said Cory. "They were always a caring staff."

Cory says MNA helped shaped his future. "My first job was at the Newberry center as a teenager," he said. "The program helped me and other teens build personal and practical work skills." Cory went on to become a Cook County Sheriff's police officer, a position he's held over the last 20 years. And he's remained active with MNA for 50 years, as a volunteer, staff member, board member and now the Vice President of the board of directors.

"Samuel Cory is certainly an example of the many, many successful stories of the impact of MNA over these many years that has been made on our children," said the Rev. Margaret Ann Williams, MNA

Associate Executive Director who would be celebrating 50 years with the agency next year.

Williams also acknowledged the many great activities and opportunities MNA have provided for youth. The Newberry Children's Choir members have won talent shows, the youth basketball and volleyball teams have placed in tournaments and the steppers and tumbling teams have enjoyed many successful performances.

Cheryl Pugh says Marcy-Newberry was a lifeline to her as a single working parent raising two teenage boys. For the last six years her boys have grown up at Marcy spending lots of time at the Newberry Center on Maxwell street in the after-school program, in the children's choir and playing sports. "Marcy was an extension of my support system," said Pugh. "Marcy-Newberry played a crucial part in shaping my family to who it is today."

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Members of the Newberry Children's Choir have won talent shows. Many other Marcy-Newberry youth groups have received awards and recognitions.

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So – How are the Children?



Children from Hartzell Memorial UMC participated in the Children's Sabbath worship services through music and prayer.

Hartzell Memorial United Methodist Church in the Bronzeville neighborhood of Chicago's South side, celebrated Children's Sabbath on Sunday, June 30, 2013. On the three Sundays leading up to the big day, there were Children's Sabbath moments offered by one of the children or youth. On Sabbath Sunday, the sanctuary was decorated with colorful balloons and special bulletins with activities for the children were prepared.

Young people took an active part in the service serving as worship leaders, participating in the Children's Choir, and leading a special prayer litany. Rev. Allyson Talbert offered the sermon entitled "So, How Are the Children?" in which she lifted up the theme for the 2013 Celebration of Children's Sab-

baths, "Beating Swords into Plowshares: Ending the Violence of Guns and Child Poverty." Focusing on the theme text from Micah 4:1-5, Rev. Talbert challenged the congregation to determine what action they would make sure that "the children are all well."

The service was organized by Carolyn McBride, Hartzell's Child Advocate and Rev. Talbert. This was the first Children's Sabbath celebration the church has had in several years and plans are already under way for next year. The 2013 National Observance of Children's Sabbaths is designated for October 18-20. For resources visit: www.childrensdefense.org and click the programs & campaigns tab.

Void (continued from pg. 2)

They provided us with so many resources and opportunities."

Pugh says she along with many other parents have had to scramble and make adjustments to find structured activities and a safe place for their children to go. "Initially I was in denial and thought for sure they would find some way to keep the doors open," said Pugh. "But reality hit and we have had to make adjustments to find things in the community to keep them busy. Marcy will sorely be missed."

The Future

Cory and many others worry about what will happen to the hundreds of children, youth, families, adults and seniors, who relied on MNA programs on a daily basis.

"Of major concern, is a place that is considered a 'safe haven', during these challenging times for youth in our city with so much violence on the streets," said Rev. Williams. "I am deeply saddened and have shed many tears following the board's decision (to close)."

Rev. Williams and others remain hopeful for the future. "I don't believe that the UM Missional outreach and presence will cease forever. I feel sometime in the near future, the MNA centers will re-open bigger and greater, perhaps with new programs, new staff, new funding support and resources and even new board members with new resources."

Child advocates suggest this may be a wake up call as we

look for ways to continue ministering to children and youth in our communities through giving and service. "We ask for your continued support and prayers for the three remaining UVC child serving agencies and programs addressing at-risk children, youth and their families within the NIC community," said Lois Moreland-Dean.

ChildServ Director of Advocacy and Church Relations, Mike Adams encourages NIC churches to designate a child advocate at charge conference, participate in Children's Sabbaths and give to the United Voices for Children 5th Sunday Appeal. "Greater support for United Voices for Children Sunday might not have prevented the closing of Marcy-Newberry, but it might well strengthen the NIC's surviving child-serving agencies," said Adams.

Bishop Sally Dyck hopes, through the Urban Strategy plan and other avenues we will continue to address the challenges and concerns of at-risk children in our communities.

"Now more than ever every United Methodist Church needs to be reaching out to the children in their communities to provide community safety, education and enrichment, and safe havens as well as basic needs. We need to rally together to find new and creative ways to care for our children," said Bishop Dyck.

The next United Voices for Children 5th Sunday appeal is September 29. For more information visit www.unitedvoices-

New INM field coordinator

As we begin our Imagine No Malaria campaign to raise at least \$1 million, I am pleased that Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger – one of Northern Illinois' own – will be our field coordinator. The field coordinator's responsibility is to get up every day and figure out how else we can meet our goal!

She will be scheduling and providing training in districts. She will be available to come out to local churches (sign her up early for Sundays but also mid-week) to preach, meet with Sunday School classes, meet with the youth, and any other group that will be helpful in your church's ability to raise significant money for Imagine NO Malaria.



Rachel Birkhahn-Rommelfanger, INM field coordinator.

Rachel graduated from American University with honors receiving a Bachelor's degree in History and Sociology. She received her Master of Divinity from Wesley Seminary with honors. Rachel has worked on a number of outreach, advocacy, and fundraising campaigns for secular and faith organizations. She has been on staff at National Council of Churches Eco Justice program, and coordinated GCORR's Drop the I-Word campaign. She also worked as presenter and educator for the DC Rape Crisis Center. Most recently she served as the University of Maryland UM Campus Minister.

Throughout his ministry Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry and helped those who needed it; and he called his disciples to do the same said Rachel. "By being a field coordinator I am excited to invite others to join me in these essential elements of discipleship. As together through education, advocacy and fundraising we will be able to help our sisters and brothers get the treatment they need for Malaria, and prevent death from this treatable, preventable illness," she added.

While Rachel will be calling you, you can get on her schedule first by contacting her at 847- 431-4880 or email rbrommelfanger@umcnic.org and arrange for her to come to your church.

The United Nations Fund has provided the grant that pays for field coordinators. She's their gift to us so that we can be successful in meeting our goal. Remember, our goal is to save children, youth and adults in sub-Saharan Africa from death by the poverty-related disease of malaria which is preventable! Thank you in advance for your willingness to make a difference in the world through Imagine NO Malaria!

~Bishop Sally Dyck



EVENTS:

From the Office of Congregational Development and Redevelopment

Register Now for Natural Church Development Training!

September 13-14, 2013

The Office of Congregational Development and Redevelopment invites you to a unique training opportunity in Natural Church Development. NCD is a process that has been developed over the past 14 years to help all churches increase in health and vitality. Join us at this special event and learn how your church can benefit from the process.

Registration only costs \$60, but you must register by September 6. Registration includes materials and lunch, but participants must make their own hotel arrangements. To register or receive more information, visit www.umcnic.org/NCD or call Judy Siaba at (312) 346-9766, ext. 724.

Upcoming Healthy Discipleship Systems Weekend

October 4-5, 2013

The Office of Congregational Development and Redevelopment invites ALL pastors, church staff, lay persons, and other interested parties to this two-day training. Pastor Junius Dotson (Saint Mark UMC, Wichita, KS) will lead seminars in developing healthy discipleship systems for vital Christians in vital churches.

The Healthy Discipleship Systems Weekend is October 4-5 at Crowne Plaza Hotel (2875 N. Milwaukee Ave., Northbrook, IL). Registration costs \$70, but you can save \$10 by registering before September 13. To register or receive more information, visit www.umcnic.org/discipleship or call Judy Siaba at (312) 346-9766, ext. 724.

Save the Date for Turnaround Church Bootcamp

October 26-27, 2013

The Office of Congregational Development and Redevelopment invites you to Turnaround Church Bootcamp with Jim Griffith, the founder of Griffith Coaching Network and nationally-known author and church coach. Come and learn new ways to understand your community, reach out on mission, and grow true hospitality.

The Turnaround Church Boot Camp will be held Saturday and Sunday, October 26-27, from 8:00am to 5:00pm at the Crowne Plaza Hotel (2875 N. Milwaukee Ave., Northbrook, IL). Lunch and event materials will be provided; participants must make their own hotel arrangements.

Pastors must register with at least one lay person, and registration is only \$60 per person until October 1, and only \$70 after October 1. Persons outside of the Northern Illinois Conference pay \$125 per person. To register or receive more information, visit www.umcnic.org/turnaround, email jsiaba@umcnic.org, or call (312) 346-9766, ext. 724. Register today!

8TH ANNUAL SCHOOL OF EVANGELISM:

Save the Date



When:
OCTOBER 19, 2013
8 a.m. to 3:30pm

Host:
NIC School Of
Evangelism "Holiness Of
Heart, Life, And Witness"

Speaker:
Author Philip Yancey

Where:
Barrington UMC
98 Algonquin Road
Barrington, Illinois.

Early Registration ends September 16

See details and register online at
www.umcnic.org/evangelism

Seeking nominations for Denman Award

The NIC is now accepting nominations for the Harry Denman Evangelism Award for clergy, lay and youth, which recognizes a person whose life and ministry exemplifies the teaching of Christ and the Great Commission.

Recipients of these awards, nominated by individuals, churches, or districts and selected by the AC, live their call to "Offer Them Christ" daily as modeled by Dr. Harry Denman, founder of the Foundation for Evangelism that sponsors these awards.

To learn more about the award or to download nomination forms visit foundationforevangelism.org or call Rev. Brian Channel at 815-248-2461 or email blchan1969@gmail.com.

Nominations must be received no later than September 16, 2013 to be considered for the 2013 rewards. Please send nominations to: Rev. Brian Channel at 102 E. Main St., Durano, IL 60124.

SAVE THE DATES:

Clergy Quadrennial Boundary Trainings

As those serving in a sacred trust, the conduct of appointed church leaders is an important aspect of our ministry. How we conduct ourselves is a reflection of our faith and life. To help us in our continued growth as leaders we are honored to have Dr. Karen McClintock as our guest leader for the Northern Illinois Conference quadrennial Boundary Training to be held at three sites in early October.

Dr. McClintock is the author of four books related to healthy congregations, including the most recent Shame-Less Lives, Grace-Full Congregations. Our time with Dr. McClintock will be a refresher on the basics of clergy conduct but we will also be offered insight and tools for deeper, healthier engagements and communications as we face professional dilemmas in our ministry settings.

There will be three sites for training including a Saturday site with Spanish translation. Cost is \$15 per person. In addition, clergy may earn 1 CEU through participation in the training along with a reading assignment and follow up reflection.

Save the date: Wednesday, October 9 – Rockford: Grace UMC, Thursday, October 10 – Elmhurst: First UMC or Saturday, October 12 – Elgin: Cornerstone (including Spanish translation).

On-line registration can be found at on the NIC Confer-

ence Website at www.umcnic.org. On the home page in the upper right hand corner click on calendar, once in the calendar go to October 2013 and choose the training event on the date you plan to attend. This will lead you to the registration.

The registration deadline is September 9. To secure a space on your preferred date please register early.

If you have questions contact: Reverend Arlene W. Christopherson, Assistant to the Bishop at 312-346-9766 ext. 713 or achristo@umcnic.org.

NIC - UMVIM Team Leader Training

Tuesday September 3, 2013 10:15am-2:15pm

NIC, Winnebago County Fairgrounds at Pecatonica, Illinois in conjunction with the NOMADS reunion, Rockford, IL. Bring your own sack lunch. Contact Michael Mann, mmann@umcnic.org or Lorna Jost, umvim-ncj@brookings.net to register. Cost: \$25 – for manual and materials. You must have had a background check within the past 3 years for team leader certification. Contact ngardner@umcnic.org if you do not have a current background check. Remember, all team leaders must be recertified every five years!



CHILDSERV'S ANNUAL: Backpack-to-school drive

Summer is here, and kids around Chicago are enjoying their vacation. But at ChildServ, we're planning for their return to school with our annual Backpack to School Drive. Each year we ask businesses, churches, and community organizations to work with us so that every child in ChildServ's care will receive school supplies for the new year. Approximately 600 school-age children participate in ChildServ programs, such as Foster Care, Emerge, HIPPIY and Group Homes.

Elementary School Supplies:

Backpacks, scissors (round-tip), construction paper, colored pencils, crayons, markers, glitter, erasers, glue sticks, folders

Middle/High School Supplies:

Backpacks, notebooks, note cards, pencils (#2), pens (blue, red, black), rulers, calculators, calendars, binders

We will begin accepting backpack donations through all of August. Donations can be brought to our central office at:

ChildServ
8765 W. Higgins Road, Suite 450
Chicago, IL 60631

If you or your organization are interested in contributing to this event, please contact Sean O'Sullivan, Volunteer Services Coordinator at 773-867-7362 or by email at SOSullivan@ChildServ.org.

Job Openings

For the latest job openings in the Northern Illinois Conference, visit www.umcnic.org/jobs

Stay Connected

Sign up for the weekly NIC eNews and Appointment Announcements

Visit www.umcnic.org and enter your email in the upper left hand corner.

Note: if you opt out of one email, you opt out of all conference emails.



Youth tour the United Nations Center in New York City through the 2012 NIC Plumblin trip.

Seeking youth for Plumblin 2013

Now is the time. This is the year. Over the past few months, these phrases have been used to refer to immigration reform. Many of those who have been asking Congress for change over the last 30 years now believe that this year holds special promise for many in our country.

This year's Plumblin Tour is all about immigration. We will look at the history and the stories surrounding people's migration to the U.S., including why this issue has come up at this time. There are few better venues to gain this understanding than in New York City.

We'll also look at our faith and what our faith may have to tell us about how we can act. Immigration impacts all communities, from urban to rural and across all ethnic groups. To meet the challenge of this time, we hope to

build a team of young people who can energize others.

If you know of any high-school aged youth that you think would be interested in applying for this experience in New York City, visit www.umcnic.org/plumblin for a brochure and more information.

This will be an experience they won't forget. Please have this application returned to us by no later than August 30th. Thank you!

What is Plumblin?

This four-day experience starts on Sunday, October 13, and goes until Wednesday, October 16. We will worship together, tour the UN, see a Broadway show, explore New York City, eat amazing food, and learn about what God

calls all of us to do in this world.

The cost may appear high, \$650, but this covers all airfare, travel, lodging, food, and all expenses in New York City. Normally, that cost would barely cover lodging alone in New York City.

We do recognize, however, that financial assistance is needed by some of our participants. We are able to offer partial scholarships for many participants. Others have found that they have been able to raise a significant portion of their funds from their local church. We highly encourage youth to do this in order to make the experience their own.

If you have any further questions, please contact Rev. Michael Mann at 847-931-0710, ext. 20.



Justice For Our Neighbors (JFON), the regional ministry that includes the free immigration legal clinics in Aurora and Chicago, will hold its Second Annual dinner on Sunday evening, September 15. The gathering and program begins at 4:30 p.m.

On-line registration is available at <http://www.umcnic.org/JFONdinner>.

In this era when Congress is speaking about immigration reform, learn more about those impacted by immigration law.

The program this year will feature a dramatic presentation of Juana Doe by Yolanda Nieves as well as stories from former clients and volunteers. Due to a MATCHING CHALLENGE GRANT,

all individuals who give towards the dinner will double their gift. (Congregations or companies would not count.)

You can also sponsor this dinner and receive special recognition in our sponsor book. At Annual Conference, one of the resolutions passed encouraged congregations to support JFON the immigration legal clinics held in Aurora and Chicago. The resolution encouraged congregations to invite speakers and to give financially towards JFON.

If you would like to be on the newsletter list for JFON and to request speakers, please e-mail the Acting Regional Coordinator, mmann@umcnic.org.

Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries training

The Illinois Great Rivers and Northern Illinois Conferences are pleased to announce the establishment of Disciple Bible Outreach Ministries of IL, Inc. DBOM of IL is a ministry related in faith to the two conferences and is an affiliate ministry of DBOM-National, Inc. DBOM recruits, trains and equips local church volunteers for ministry in the prisons, jails and youth development centers using DISCIPLE Bible Study materials.

All DBOM prison volunteers must be trained and certified for this ministry. This training is the first to be offered through our brand-new Illinois affiliate. As a part of our training day, training for DISCIPLE Bible Study facilitators will be offered in the morning. This training will be useful for anyone teaching DISCIPLE Bible Study. Local church DISCIPLE leaders are welcomed and encouraged to attend, whether or not your church intends to offer DISCIPLE in the prisons.

The Training Schedule is as follows:

9 a.m. to noon: DISCIPLE Bible Study Facilitation Training. This training provides an overview of DISCIPLE 1-4, leadership skills and implementation in the local church and prison.

Noon: Lunch

1 to 4 p.m.: Disciple Bible Outreach Prison Certification and Training – Required of all DISCIPLE outreach volunteers. All those interested in becoming DBOM volunteers should attend. Those desiring to learn more about the ministry are welcome.

Cost of the event is \$30 per participant. This covers all training materials and lunch. The DISCIPLE Bible Study Facilitation Training alone used to cost \$100 or more per person. We are delighted to be able to offer this training at such a discount through our affiliation with DBOM-National.

To register visit www.igrc.org. Deadline for registration is Aug. 12.



Aurora resident Frances Martinez, left, was among the prayer recipients at Aurora's downtown farmers market on July 20. From left are Martinez, Rev. Deborah Tinsley Taylor, pastor, Fourth Street UMC in Aurora; and Auroran Jill Orr. (Al Benson photo)

Produce & prayers at local farmers market

Shoppers can stop at the downtown farmers market in Aurora, Ill. to get fresh vegetables, fruit and prayers. For the second year, Fourth Street United Methodist Church in Aurora sponsored a prayer booth on Saturday, July 20 staffed by the Rev. Deborah Tinsley Taylor and trained church volunteers.

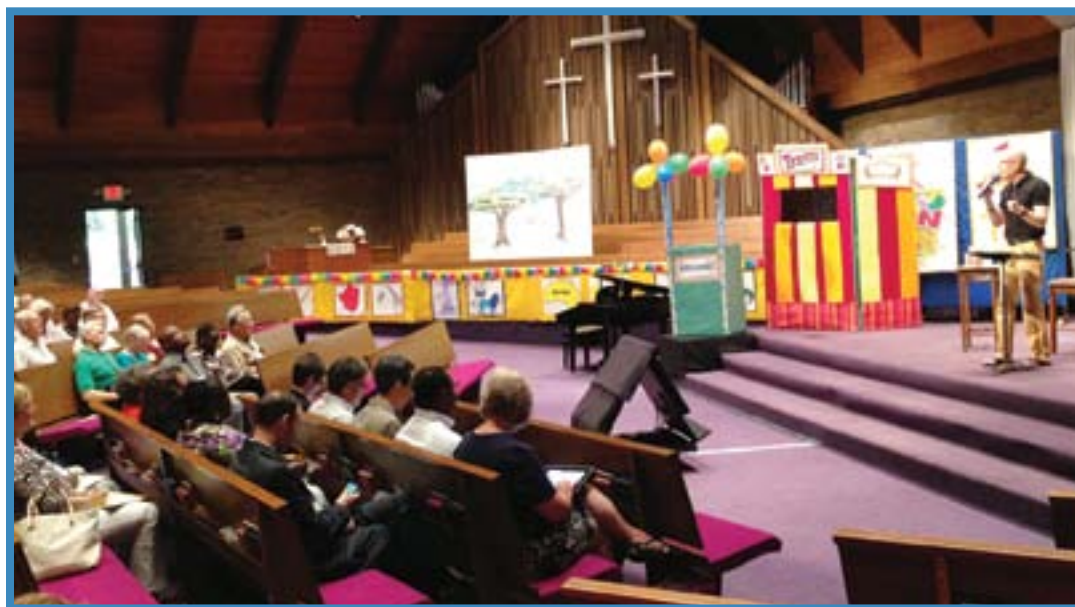
"This prayer ministry involves praying out loud for people who probably don't attend our church," said Rev. Taylor. "Their concerns may be small or great, but this can be a very positive and uplifting experience."

Church member Jill Orr came up with the idea for a prayer booth while serving on the worship committee. "We sit down with visitors, hear their requests and pray with them," Orr said. "Physical touch depends on the openness of the recipient. Some people may want to join hands. In some instances, we may lay hands on visitors, as the Holy Spirit leads."

The prayer booth is believed to be the market's first such offering in its 100-year history. The Aurora market is Illinois' oldest. Bilingual volunteers are also on hand offering prayers in both English and Spanish.

Rev. Taylor says the booth is a great way to connect with the community. "Prayer is the best wireless connection," Rev. Taylor said. "God answers knee-mail. He is only a prayer away."

In addition to free prayers on request, the booth also featured free bibles, prayer guides, bottled water and baked goods for freewill donations. The church will sponsor a second prayer booth from 8 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Sept. 14. The market is at the Metra station parking lot at 233 N. Broadway in Aurora.



REV. MIKE SLAUGHTER: Teachings on financial freedom

The average U.S. household credit card debt in 2013 has grown to \$15,325 and the average mortgage debt to \$147,924 according to government statistics. At the 2013 NIC United Methodist Foundation Summer Summit on Stewardship, the Rev. Mike Slaughter, author and lead pastor at Ginghamburg Church in Ohio, challenged participants to ask themselves, "How can we live more simply in this consumerist society so others can simply live?"

400 people attended the event on July 20 at Faith UMC in Orland Park and seven satellite locations across the conference including Zion, Princeton, Rochelle and Elgin. Another 150 people watched the event via satellite in Wisconsin at eleven sites including Janesville, Platteville and Minocqua.

Rev. Slaughter says that money matters need to be talked about in the church to help liberate people from the bondage of debt. He teaches his 10-10-80 plan. The first ten percent goes to God (tithe), the second 10 percent to the future i.e. a 401k plan, and the remaining 80% towards disciplined living while making sure money is set aside for emergencies.

He says he hopes pastors and lay persons in the church will start by looking at their own personal financial situations. "Until we become people that demonstrate trust in God and generosity and deal with our issues, our people won't follow," said Slaughter. "My hope is the leaders in the church

will say that I have to preach it with my life before I preach it with my words."

Slaughter also says pastors shouldn't avoid preaching on stewardship for fear it will turn people away. He says the key is to preach that "money follows mission not church budgets."

UM Foundation President, the Rev. Harry Nicol says Slaughter gives a challenging message for the church but believes it is the right message. "With regard to financial stewardship, I think he is right in emphasizing assistance to individuals to help them manage money in faithful ways which he says is liberating," said Nicol.

Nicol, who was pleased at this year's turnout, thanked Faith UMC for graciously hosting the main event and all those who made it possible.

For more information on Mike Slaughter's teachings on stewardship, he has a new book series for local churches, called *First: putting God first in living and giving*. It includes the book *Shiny Gods*, a leader's guide for children, students and small groups as well as an accompanying dvd. Visit www.cokesbury.com for more information.

If you would like to watch the live-streamed event, it will remain archived through August 20 at <http://new.livestream.com/accounts/4005732/events/2262510>. Several DVD copies will also be available to check out through the NIC Media Resource Center. Please contact Susan Gieseler at sgieseler@umcnic.org or 847-931-0710 ext. 17.



Rev. Mike Slaughter signed copies of his books during the lunch break at the UM Foundation Stewardship event.



Rev. Mike Slaughter spoke about financial freedom and the burden of debt at the UM Foundation annual stewardship conference at Faith UMC in Orland Park on July 20.

Volunteers needed in flood damaged Marseilles By Anne Marie Gerhardt

More than three months after the Illinois river breached the levee and gushed into the streets of Marseilles, Ill. causing widespread flooding and damage, residents are still trying to piece back their lives. The raging water flooded 200 homes in this small town, 75 miles southwest of Chicago, on April 18. Many of these houses still need repairs and cleanup, while a dozen will likely need to be torn down.

"FEMA came in and gave maximum payout to those homeowners who qualified which was really helpful," said the Rev. Carolyn Lukasick of Marseilles UMC Church. "However, a number of people still need help."

She said many in the community live within a low socioeconomic status and the disaster has added an extra burden. Dozens of homeowners, including families with young children, have been displaced. Twenty-five percent of the properties damaged were rentals. These landlords, many of them seniors, are out rental income which they rely on for their retirement.

Lukasick heads Marseilles' long-term recovery committee and is calling on volunteers to come in and help residents rebuild. She said her church had three feet of storm sewage backup but others fared much worse. "The real damage came when the levy broke. The river came in and turned one neighborhood into an entire bathtub. It literally washed away basement walls into the street," she said.

Several UM teams of volunteers from the NIC have already sprung into action and volunteered with cleaning, drywalling and painting such as Dixon First UMC,

Rochelle UMC, Gary-Wheaton and Community UMC in LaMoille. Lukasick says there's still months of work still to be done.

"Rev. Cynthia Zolk's church brought donations on at least two occasions to the Marseilles food pantry in the immediate aftermath of the flood," said Lukasick. "Rev. Mary Zajac at Minooka UMC promoted flood relief within her congregation, and their mission committee responded by sending a donation to Marseilles Flood Relief. Epworth UMC in Ottawa also donated several bins of emergency supplies and Rev. Nancy Rethford has offered pastoral care to support caseworker management."

"We need any and all types of volunteer labor," said Lukasick. "They can be VIM teams or even if they're not fully trained, we'll pair unskilled workers with trained leaders. We can also find housing and meal assistance for those who want to stay overnight."

Lukasick is thankful to the Bishop's office for helping to secure a \$10,000 grant from

the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) which will be used to buy building supplies such as drywall and lumber.

"As the next stage of rebuilding takes place, we will need help with electrical, plumbing, hanging drywall, mudding, priming and painting, she said. "There's no shortage of work."

If you would like to volunteer, contact Pastor Carolyn Lukasick by email PastorCarolynL@gmail.com or phone (847) 271-2733.



The Illinois River flooded neighborhoods damaging 200 homes in Marseilles during the heavy rains last spring.

Let's read together

Bishop Sally Dyck is encouraging every church to read "one book" this year which is *A People's History of Christianity: The Other Side of the Story* by Diana Butler Bass. For too long, the history of Christianity has been told as the triumph of orthodox doctrine imposed through power and hierarchy.

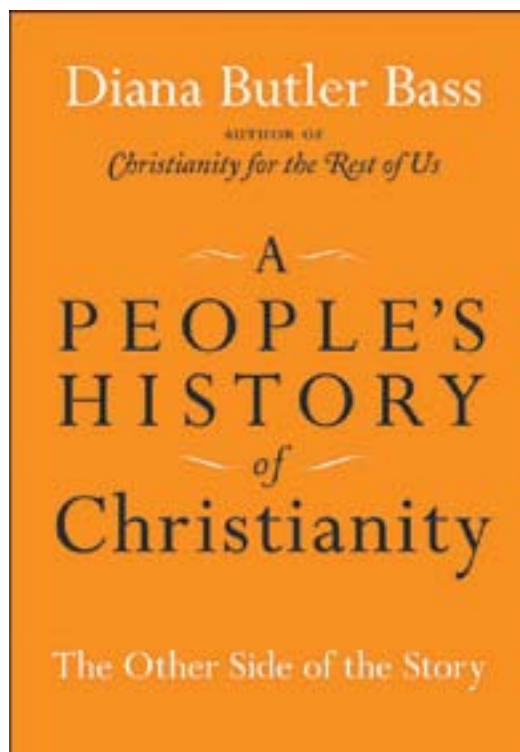
In *A People's History of Christianity*, historian and religion expert Diana Butler Bass reveals an alternate history that includes a deep social ethic and far-reaching inclusivity: "the other side of the story" is not a modern phenomenon, but has always been practiced within the church. Butler Bass persuasively argues that corrective--even subversive--beliefs and practices have always been hallmarks of Christianity and are necessary to nourish communities of faith.

In the same spirit as Howard Zinn's groundbreaking work *A People's History of the United States*, Butler Bass's *A People's History of Christianity* brings to life the movements, personalities, and spiritual disciplines that have always informed and ignited Christian worship and social activism.

A People's History of Christianity authenticates the vital, emerging Christian movements of our time, providing the historical evidence that celebrates these movements as thoroughly Christian and faithful to the mission and message of Jesus.

Butler-Bass will be the Bible study leader at the 2014 Northern Illinois annual conference. Look for more information in the coming months on book discussions and questions.

The NIC media resource center has several available copies to check out Contact Susan Gieseler at sgieseler@umcnic.org or 847-931-0710 ext. 17.



Accessibility Sunday November 10

The Book of Discipline calls for there to be an Accessibility Awareness Sunday each year and the Annual Conference, action was presented and approved to establish this on the second Sunday in November. This will be an opportunity for each congregation to lift up and celebrate all of God's people with accessibility challenges.

So, mark your calendars! This year the celebration shall be held on Sunday, November 10. Watch for tips on how to incorporate this into your worship on the NIC website www.umcnic.org. In 2014, there will be an Accessibility Awareness weekend, with many special events. This will be held on Saturday & Sunday November 8 & 9, 2014.

If you would like to learn more about how to improve the accessibility of your church buildings or how to have your worship be more inclusive, or if you would like us to visit your church, just send an email to Terry McDorman terry@dgfumc.org or call 630-968-7120 ext 212.

Mark your calendars for Youth Vision 2013!

Youth (Grade 6 - High School) are invited to attend Youth Vision 2013, Saturday, September 28th, 2013 at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Ill.

Registration starts at 9:30 a.m. with a continental breakfast. A Worship Service will begin our time together at 10:00 a.m. with a reflection presented by Chris Patterson, author of *21: The Epitome of Perseverance*.

Chris will share his experiences that took him from gang banging, drug dealing and prison to his transformed life. We will then offer two break-out sessions where youth can select topics ranging from teen anxiety and depression, ending gun violence, sexuality, Going Green, Mission Bolivia, Imagine No Malaria, Outdoor and Retreat Ministry Resources or Creative Spirituality.

Lunch will be provided and we will also offer tours of the Seminary after the event concludes at 1:30 p.m.

To register for Youth Vision 2013, please contact Rev. Dr. Barbara Javore, bjavore@yahoo.com or 847.835.0588. Cost for the event is \$10 per person.



Training August 24

Conference-wide Safe Sanctuaries Training to be held on Saturday, August 24, 2013 from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. at First UMC, 216 E. Highland Ave., Elgin.

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

A fee of \$25 will cover the cost of lunch, materials and background check.

The essentials of Safe Sanctuaries will be covered. Safety on the internet and in social media will be explored through some hands-on interactive activities. Participants are invited to bring their lap tops, tablets and smart phones.

To register online visit www.umcnic.org or for more information contact:

Linda Lowery at llowery@umc-cornerstone.org or 847-464-4673 ext. 11

Natarsha Gardner at ngardner@umcnic.org or 847-931-0710 ext. 16

What does Affordable Care Act mean for churches?

By Heather Hahn*

The U.S. health care legislation, commonly called Obamacare, likely will affect church finances and church employee health benefits for years to come.

But, a year after the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, United Methodist annual conferences in the U.S. still are grappling with how best to make use of the reforms.

Much will depend on the extent that conferences can use the online insurance marketplaces, which are scheduled to open for enrollment by Oct. 1. The options on the marketplaces are just starting to become public.

“Some conferences are seriously considering allowing covered lay workers and some covered clergy to opt out of the conference plan, essentially by allowing their local churches to opt out, ... to seek coverage on the exchanges,” said Andrew Q. Hendren, associate general counsel at the United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits. He is the agency’s expert on the Affordable Care Act.

But, to take advantage of the marketplaces, church benefits officers face a number of questions, including one that is distinctly United Methodist and that awaits an Internal Revenue Service ruling.

In the connectional system of Methodism, who counts as the clergy’s employer? Is it the church or ministry where a clergy member is appointed or is it the clergy member’s conference?

If the answer is the local church or extension ministry, then many clergy can shop in the insurance marketplaces and potentially qualify for federal subsidies. If the conference is the employer, then the conference likely will be on the hook for providing insurance benefits for clergy under the Affordable Care Act’s large-employer rules.

Hendren and others are quick to point out other questions remain about the new marketplaces. Chief among them is what insurance options will be available and at what prices.

For now, Hendren advises conferences “to take a cautious approach.”

At least one conference — Florida — plans to take the leap, sending lay local church employees onto the insurance marketplace next year. The Northern Illinois Conference will remain on its current health care plan for 2014.

How health insurance works now

In The United Methodist Church, conferences historically have had the primary responsibility for sponsoring or participating in a group health plan that covers full-time clergy and lay employees in the United States.

Local churches generally contribute to the health benefits of their pastor and other workers through apportionment payments, direct bills or a combination of the two. Church law, however, does not require health coverage for lay workers who are not employees of the annual conference.

Conferences devote about a quarter of their revenue each year to health plan benefits, according to the pension board. Conferences also frequently use substantial time at their annual sessions to discuss health benefits and concern about their escalating costs. Some United Methodist benefits officers hope that could be changing.

“It’s a fascinating place to be working because it’s so complex and completely different from what we’re doing now,” said Lonnie Chafin, the Northern Illinois Annual (regional) Conference’s treasurer. “But the potential is still huge.”

If more church employees can rely on the insurance marketplaces for benefits, he predicts that local churches in his conference will be able to afford to have more clergy appointed.

How insurance marketplaces work

A demonstrator holds a sign in front of the U.S. Supreme Court in favor of the U.S. healthcare legislation, which the court upheld last year. A 2012 file photo by Michelle Whittaker/United Methodist Board of Church and Society.

Here’s how the marketplaces — also called exchanges —

are intended to work. The law requires all 50 states and the District of Columbia to have health insurance marketplaces where people without insurance through their employer or some other program like Medicare can buy coverage from an array of private plans. The federal government will establish the marketplace in states that do not set up their own.

All insurance plans — whether in the marketplaces or not — must meet certain standards, such as selling coverage to everyone regardless of pre-existing conditions. New insurance policies will be mandated to cover preventive health measures without any cost-sharing from the patient.

Because these new marketplaces can pool large groups of people, the expectation is that the insurance options will be more affordable than what individuals or small businesses now can buy.

The federal government also will provide subsidies for individuals and families in the insurance marketplaces whose household income is between 100 percent and 400 percent of the federal poverty line. That translates to annual income between \$11,500 and \$46,000 for an individual or between \$23,500 and \$94,000 for a family of four. Amounts designated for housing or the rental value of parsonages are not included in calculating income, Chafin said.

For example, Chafin said, in the Northern Illinois Conference, 90 percent of the clergy would qualify for subsidies on the insurance exchange if the clergy member’s salary is the only source of family income.

“The difference between qualifying for (subsidies) and not is clergy spouse income,” Chafin said.

The marketplaces will not be an option for everyone. Employees must continue with their employer plan if the cost for their individual plan is less than 9.5 percent of household income.

The law also will require companies — including non-profits — with 50 or more full-time employees to provide health care insurance just as most do now. The Obama Administration announced July 2 that it would delay penalizing companies that violate the “large-employer mandate” until 2015.

However, Hendren noted, most United Methodist congregations have fewer than 50 employees. And it might be less costly to both the churches themselves and individual employees to use the marketplaces.

Chafin said he sees the possibility that more lay people will be able to pursue a calling to work at local churches since they’ll be able to get health benefits elsewhere.

A big unanswered question

Still, identifying the employer of United Methodist clergy remains tricky.

The United Methodist Church has about 14,800 retired clergy, and 31,760 active clergy in the United States. Most conferences require that full-time clergy be covered by the conference health plan.

The Book of Discipline, the denomination’s law book, asserts that clergy are not employees of a local church, district or conference. Their ministry is derived from Christ.

Church law also recognizes that for purposes of taxation, insurance and other benefits, governmental agencies may classify clergy as employees. The paragraph just does not specify what church entity is the employer, and the employer can vary depending on the circumstances. For example, clergy are self-employed for employment tax purposes.

The IRS applies a “common-law test of employment” to determine who the employer is under the health care law, Hendren said. The common law test examines numerous factors, including who provides a place of work, pays the salary, provides benefits, pays for work supplies and has the ability to terminate employment.

“Though many factors point to the local church or the charge conference being the employer for this purpose, the appointment and removal powers of the annual conference leave some ambiguity for elders and local pastors,” Hendren



A demonstrator holds a sign in front of the U.S. Supreme Court in favor of the U.S. healthcare legislation, which the court upheld last year. A 2012 file photo by Michelle Whittaker/United Methodist Board of Church and Society.

said. “The local church is arguably more clearly the employer of deacons under the rule.”

Hendren and other United Methodist leaders are working with the IRS to resolve the issue.

The United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits joined with benefit boards of other denominations in urging the IRS to apply the employment “shared-responsibility” rule at the local church level in all denominations.

“We hope that the IRS adopts that suggestion in a published final rule later this year,” Hendren said.

The delay in enforcing the “large-employer” health insurance rule gives the IRS more time to respond.

Another related question still is being worked out, Chafin said. That is whether conferences and local churches will be able to continue to distinguish between clergy and lay workers in what benefits they offer or whether the new law’s nondiscrimination rules will require that if you offer health benefits to one class of employees, those benefits must be offered to all.

What we know about the exchanges so far

The premium rates on state marketplaces are just becoming known.

The Washington Post reported in May that California has unveiled likely rates on its exchange that are lower than expected. On average, the newspaper reported, a person who chooses a mid-level plan can expect to pay around \$321 a month, about \$100 less than the amount projected by the Congressional Budget Office.

Oregon, Maryland, Vermont and Rhode Island also have released proposed premium rates for individual policies “that are surprisingly competitive with ... group plans like annual conference plans,” Hendren said.

In the near future, he said, United Methodist annual conferences may be able to reduce health coverage costs by allowing local churches to send lower-paid clergy and lay employees to the exchanges.

However, Hendren warns that conferences also should be wary of sending too many church employees onto the exchanges or they may have too small a pool of people to buy affordable insurance.

“The conferences will have to balance that potential savings with the risk to the remaining smaller plan made up of a few large churches and small churches with higher paid clergy and lay employees,” he said. “The smaller plan may be less cost-effective, and appointment frictions may develop as local churches may prefer premium tax-credit-eligible clergy over higher paid clergy — two concerns in a connectional system like ours.”

For an overview of health care reform rules from the United Methodist Board of Pension and Health Benefits visit www.gbophb.org.

*Hahn is a multimedia news reporter for United Methodist News Service.