

# Leap of Faith

Saturday, November 2, 2019

## MEETING NOTES

### KEY DATES COMING UP

- Special Session of Annual Conference on **Saturday, November 16, 2019**. Deadline to register is November 13, 2019. Visit: <https://www.umcnic.org/specialsession>
- **Leap of Faith Second Gathering: Saturday, December 14, 2019, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Northbrook UMC. Save the date. Details to follow.**
- **Winter Warming on Saturday, January 18, 2020** from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Community UMC in Naperville.

### Attending

David Braden and Sue Laurie, co-facilitators  
Marlene Morton, Berry Memorial UMC, Chicago  
Phil Carihfield, First UMC Evanston  
Abbey Ogunbola, First UMC Evanston  
Julie Bruno, First UMC Park Ridge  
Ed Hanson, First UMC Park Ridge  
Adrian Hill, First UMC West Dundee  
Rev. Sherrie Lowly, Northbrook UMC, host church  
Nancy Bartell, Northbrook UMC, host church  
Lisa Gooddale, North Shore UMC, Glencoe  
Rev. Scott Himmel, North Shore UMC, Glencoe  
Herb John, Wesley UMC, Aurora  
Bob McKnight, Wesley UMC, Aurora

### What is “Leap of Faith”?

While we do not know what is going to happen at the 2020 General Conference, we as local congregations can go through an intentional process to determine our values and prepare for what comes next. We can pack our bags and line up at the door—we won’t know all of the “doors” available to us until after General Conference 2020, but we can rest assured that we’ve done the work to make informed decisions.

The purpose of this gathering is to bring together local churches and communities in the Northern Illinois Annual Conference that may be considering leaving The United Methodist Church denomination. We know that many members of our local churches are no longer willing to remain a part of the denomination that refuses to embrace fully LGBTQ+ persons and their families. **We are inviting local churches in Northern Illinois to consider going through an official discernment process—modeled on the process developed in the New England Annual Conference—to determine whether they desire to remain or leave the denomination.**

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#### See the following Handouts:

- “What Did General Conference Do” Handout (Content from Greater Northwest Episcopal Area with commentary from David Braden)
- Draft Northern Illinois Conference Identity Statement, which will be presented at special session of Annual Conference on November 16, 2019
- “Section 2553 of the Book of Discipline on Disaffiliation” Handout
- **“New England Model” Handout**
- “Loved and Liberated Proclamation” from UM-Forward
- “New Expressions Worldwide Plan” from UM-Forward

#### Individual and Small Group Discussion Questions

1. What is the mood/sentiment in your church concerning the UMC?
2. Have people voiced a desire to leave at your church?
3. What is your congregational “stomach” for disaffiliation, i.e., leaving the denomination?
4. Any initial reactions to the New England Model?
5. Questions about the New England Model?
6. Would your church consider it or a process for considering leaving the denomination?
7. Who from your church community have you lost due to UMC policies?
8. Who might be gained if congregations left the denomination?
9. Who might you lose if your congregation left the denomination?

#### Large Group Discussion Summary

- We thought that there would be more leadership from the Annual Conference or national RMN for action plans in Northern Illinois, but that hasn’t happened.
- The work will have to be more grassroots.
- Are there differences between the New England and Northern Illinois Annual Conferences that would make implementing the New England model more difficult in Illinois, such as urban/rural differences, congregation sizes, regional cultures, etc.?
- “I’m surprised about who is here – it’s not churches I would have expected.” – making new connections with other churches
- We’ve been disaffiliating for years – many people have already left
- “I don’t want to leave the church that’s mine.”
- Where do people go who leave? Usually, nowhere – meaning not another church.
- If we disaffiliated, who might come back? Who could we invite back?
- “Disaffiliation” has negative connotations. How can we “affiliate”?
- Desire to discuss more about what’s good about Methodism and Wesleyan heritage

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- In our current state, we aren't doing the work of a global church

### **Bike Rack (Ideas to come back to at a future gathering)**

- Details of the Traditional Plan
- Details of the denominational plans submitted to the 2020 General Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota (May 5-15, 2020), including (a) UM-Forward's N.E.W. Plan, (b) Connectional Table Plan, (c) UM Next Plan, and (d) Indianapolis Plan
- Vote at 2012 General Conference in Tampa, FL to "agree to disagree: 39% to 61%

### **Evaluating Today's Work**

- Appreciated having an agenda, but being fluid about timeframes
- Good participation from those present – everyone had voice
- Appreciated the hard print copies of materials
- Liked the New England Model – provides structure to congregational discernment process
- Consider additional venues through the Conference to get the word out
- Consider virtual meetings in addition to in-person gatherings
- Provide more lead time to invitations
- Be more explicit about the group's purpose
- Who's not here that should be? Where are the millennials?

### **Action Plan**

- Special Session of Annual Conference on **Saturday, November 16, 2019**. Deadline to register is November 13, 2019. Visit: <https://www.umcnic.org/specialsession>
- **Leap of Faith Second Gathering: Saturday, December 14, 2019 at Northbrook UMC.** Meeting will not repeat today's content but likely will focus on the New England Model and how to adapt it to Northern Illinois. The hope is that we can craft a model and action items for local congregations to take. Save the date. Details to follow.
- **We need help with invitations.** Personal invites help increase the likelihood that guests will come. Once details are confirmed for our next gathering, we will send out a flyer. Please consider who you might invite from your own church, but especially who you might also know from another church that you think should be at our next meeting.
- **Winter Warming 2020. Saturday, January 18, 2020** from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Community UMC in Naperville.

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#### Resources:

*Following are samples of biblical and theological writing that date back to the 1990s – to stress that excellent work concerning heterosexism/homophobia has been offered for decades. We realize these are dated – more recent work exists, has improved in inclusion of transgender and intersectional justice concerns.*

Tex Sample and Amy E. DeLong, eds. *The Loyal Opposition: Struggling with the Church on Homosexuality*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000 (ISBN: 978-0687084258).

*Finishing the Journey: Questions and Answers from United Methodists of Conviction*. Dallas, TX: Northaven UMC, 2000 (ISBN: 0-9679481-0-X).

Marilyn Bennett Alexander and James Preston. *We Were Baptized Too: Claiming God's Grace for Lesbians and Gays*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996 (ISBN: 978-0664256289).

*The Church Studies Homosexuality: A Study for United Methodist Groups Using the Report of the Committee to Study Homosexuality*. Nashville: Cokesbury, 1994 (ISBN: 978-0687783793).

New England Model Resources: <https://www.ne-discerners.org/resources>

*Created in 2019 as an 8 month process due to particular NE Annual Conference decisions.*