

# Leap of Faith

Saturday, December 14, 2019

## MEETING NOTES

### KEY DATES AND ACTION STEPS

- **Share Sample Admin. Council Resolution with your Church Council.** If your Admin. Council is prepared to vote Yes to going through a Discernment Process, please let David Braden ([debraden@gmail.com](mailto:debraden@gmail.com)) or Sue Laurie ([susanq89@comcast.net](mailto:susanq89@comcast.net)) know so that we can keep track of the status of each church.
- **Winter Warming on Saturday, January 18, 2020** from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Community UMC in Naperville. Register now at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/82012237811>
- **Leap of Faith Third Gathering: Saturday, February 15, 2020** at Northbrook UMC. Save the date. Details to follow.

**Attendees: 14 Faith Communities; 35 People**

#### **Co-Facilitators**

David Braden  
Sue Laurie

#### **Grace UMC in Logan Square**

Gretchen Harringer  
Bryan Zera

#### **Park Ridge – First UMC**

Julie Bruno

#### **Berry Memorial, Chicago**

Marlene Morton

#### **Grace UMC in Naperville**

Nadia Kanhai

#### **Prince of Peace UMC**

Marci & George Evans

#### **Broadway UMC, Chicago**

Felipe Foucher  
Satia Grange  
Rev. Alka Lyall  
Paula Roderick

#### **Irving Park UMC**

David Foster

#### **United Church of Rogers Park**

Jen Schmidt

#### **North Shore UMC**

Lisa Goodale

#### **Urban Village Church**

Cathy Ritacco

#### **Downers Grove – First UMC**

Rev. Anna Voinovich

#### **Northbrook UMC**

Nancy Bartell  
John Berdahl  
Gretchen & Brian Boyer  
Karen & Dan Glazer  
Carol Konvalinka  
Alice Lonoff  
Rev. Sherrie Lowly  
Nancy & Greg Metzler  
Rev. Margaret Moyer

#### **Evanston – First UMC**

Philip Carihfield  
Beth Swanick  
Nancy Pendergrass

#### **Faith UMC in Dolton**

Mary Atkins  
Cynthia Richardson

### Advent Devotional

Advent holds a space for our grief; all of us are not only wounded by the evil in the world but contributors to it. We need a space to reflect and grieve. Live into Advent as a defiant act of hope. — Rev. Sherrie Lowly

### See the following Handouts:

- “New England Model” Handout

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

- Details of the Traditional Plan
- Details of the denominational plans submitted to the 2020 General Conference

### Small Group Discussion Questions on Methodism / Wesleyanism

1. What has it meant historically to be Methodist (for you)?
2. What about Wesleyan Christianity is important to you?
3. What inspires you in the Methodist/Wesleyan tradition?
4. What would you leave behind from the Methodist/Wesleyan tradition?

### Large Group Discussion on Methodism/Wesleyanism Summary

#### What is important/keep:

- Connectionalism
- Open Communion Table
- Commitment to Social Justice
- Commitment to Mission
- Social Principles, i.e., historical support for organized labor
- Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Experience, and Reason
- Congregations that fly the rainbow flag (it’s been a tool for evangelism)
- Music
- Everybody matters including children
- **Outspoken**, regardless (despite disagreement); if people weren’t listening, that’s on them.
- We don’t all have to think alike
- Wesleyan understanding of Grace (prevenient, justifying, sanctifying)
- Let’s create possibility of something that doesn’t look like what we have now

#### What We’d Leave Behind:

- Unity/united, uniting (words used now and historically to separate others out)
- Institutional hierarchy
- Not operating as Christians
- Cross and Flame logo—it’s a burning cross
- Some churches have money because of where they are; other don’t and despite their ministries, they get stuck

### Learnings

- Heritage: Denominations have lifespans
  1. Methodist Episcopal Church (1784-1939: 155 years)
  2. Methodist Protestant Church (1828-1939: 111 years)
  3. Methodist Episcopal Church, South (1844-1939: 95 years)
  4. Methodist Church (1939-1968: 29 years)
  5. Evangelical Church (1800-1946: 146 years)
  6. Church of the United Brethren in Christ (1889-1946: 57 years)
  7. Evangelical United Brethren Church (1946-1968: 22 years)
  8. **United Methodist Church (1968-??~52 years)**
- “United” is not an adjective in the UMC. The UMC was founded in 1968 from the merger of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) Church. “United” comes from EUB heritage.
- Iliff president shared that Iliff has been weened off their Methodist Education Fund. They are less dependent on it and they are welcome to all. Garrett, and Drew are moving in the same direction.
- What changes in 2019?

In effect, nothing substantive. **We have lived under the Traditional Plan for decades – (a) homosexuality incompatible with Christian teaching, (b) ban on ordination, and (c) ban on marriage.** What has changed is **enforcement.** Now, the powers that be can go after bishops, boards of ordained ministry, and anyone else who breaks the Discipline as it relates to queer people.

### UM-Forward & St. Andrew’s UMC Gathering in Highlands Ranch, CO

- We are not alone in talking about disaffiliation
- Approximately 100 people on Day 1 and 60 people on Day 2, from 24 annual conferences
- UM-Forward is working on creating a new Methodist/Wesleyan expression in which churches that decide to disaffiliate from the UMC may plug in
- There are monthly conference calls for the Exilic Community where representatives from each regional jurisdiction reports on progress in their annual conference. *If you would like to join these conference calls, please let David or Sue know.*

### Section 2555 of the *Book of Discipline* on “Disaffiliation”

- 2019 General Conference adopted a new paragraph providing for disaffiliation due to disagreements related to the denomination’s policies
- As of November 1, 2019, the Judicial Council has ruled this paragraph to be constitutional. However, the Council will reconsider the provision during its Spring 2020 gathering.

- In the interim, if Paragraph 2555 remains law, then local churches have until 2023 to decide whether to disaffiliate.
- See Handout on Paragraph 2555 for actual text of the provision

### Small Group Discussion Questions on New England Plan

1. What about the New England Model would you keep?
2. What about the Model would you eliminate or change?
3. What are your thoughts about timelines? – What’s important to cover before Annual Conference 2020?

### Large Group Discussion on New England Plan Summary

- We should table the sessions on Conference connections, Clergy considerations, and Finances until after General Conference. Before General Conference, we should help our churches focus on our polity, oppression, theology to clarify our values so that we know who we are and what we stand for as we enter the future.
- Eight (8) months of discernment is so UM; eight months is too long. The time is now to take action.
- What do we want our Annual Conference to do regardless of GC? Is there AC legislation we should be drafting?
- We do know what GC is going to do. It’s going to do more harm as it has for decades. Let’s move toward disaffiliation and focus our energy on making that work. GC has not changed; talking for years. Let’s decide to leave and do it.
- Disagreement in the room, with some expressing a desire not to disaffiliate.
- Remember: What we are talking about is churches having a **discernment process** related to disaffiliation.
  1. We do not all need to be on the same page.
  2. How can we foster dissensus and still hold each other as we move forward together.
- Question: How is the New England Conference responding to the 11 churches publicly discerning disaffiliation?  
Answer: The churches have experienced resistance and delay from the Conference.
- Question: What might we expect from our own Northern Illinois Conference?  
Answer: Bishop Sally has indicated that she will not accept charges related discrimination of queer people. However, churches have reported misinformation during annual charge conferences related to the Trust Clause and Disaffiliation procedures. Editorial – It’s hard to believe DS’s are acting without the Bishop’s blessing.
- The UMC is a global church. What “connectionalism” will exist in a new denomination? How do we not leave people behind?
- One of the basic issues is lack of integrity. We say one thing (open hearts, minds, doors) and do another. Institutionalize disintegrity.
- Leap of Faith – good name. We are imagining in faith. Perhaps similar conversations were had before 1968. Discerning values that we want to take with us into the new. We

do have fear. But if we are imagining what we want to affiliate with, we have a blank canvas. We can create a connectional expression, we can create an open church. Questions of what we value and what we want to let go of. Let's not let fear hold us back. Feel it and leap into creating the future together. We also talked about a horizontal structure of leadership in Denver.

### Evaluating Today's Work

- We should advertise to every congregation in NIC. UVC attendee is willing to help communicate to DSs and congregations.
- Disappointed and grateful to learn the NIC is not as open and supportive as we thought.
- Please use two tables to sign in and start promptly.
- Grateful for size of gathering today, sense of support, Sue and David's preparation
- How can we support each other; Sherrie offered Northbrook as a place to meet; asking how can we support each other?
- Invite others!
- Start with prayer or meditation to get everyone present.

### Action Plan

- Sue and David want to identify a number of congregations from NIC that agree to go through a discernment process related to disaffiliation. New England identified these congregations and then publicly announced their intentions in a Press Release. The public announcement helps connect churches in our conference so that we are not alone and can help one another.
  1. Go back to our congregations to see if they agree to go through a discernment process.
  2. David will provide sample Resolutions for Administrative Councils.
  3. Note: The Administrative Council is an appropriate body to make a decision on behalf of the congregation to go through the discernment process. The Book of Discipline requires a congregation's membership to vote on disaffiliation itself at a special charge conference – most of our congregation's aren't there yet. But many of our church's Administrative Councils may be ready to vote Yes to go through a process of discernment.
- **Leap of Faith Third Gathering: Saturday, February 15, 2020 at Northbrook UMC.** Meeting will not repeat today's content but likely will focus on introducing concepts of intersectionality of oppression and liberation. We will also check in on where churches are in deciding whether they will go through the above discussed discernment process. 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.

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#### Google Docs

- As requested during the meeting, a Google Docs folder has been created to host the flyers, handouts, and notes from Leap of Faith gatherings
- Anyone with the link below should be able to access the Google Drive Folder:  
<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18wiqrWpT3pSggAJJ1P3czAfpZC93Y8kK?usp=sharing>

#### NIC Reconciling Task Force

- The Task Force leadership team has been kind enough to host information related to Leap of Faith online on their website: <http://www.nicreconciling.org/leap-of-faith.html>

#### Resources:

W. Astor Kirk. *The Politics of Ending Church Discrimination: The United Methodist Story*. Lulu.com, 2010 (ISBN: 978-0557225989).

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

Heather Hahn, "As GC2020 Nears, Fewer Keep to the Sidelines," *UM News* (Dec. 10, 2019), <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/as-gc2020-nears-fewer-keep-to-the-sidelines>.

Sam Tabachnik, "'We Do See the Evil': Western Bishops Declare Safe Harbor for United Methodist Clergy as Restrictions on Same-sex Marriage Take Effect," *Denver Post* (Dec. 1, 2019), <https://www.denverpost.com/2019/12/01/united-methodist-lgbtq-bishop-karen-oliveto/>.

Lloyd Brumfield and LaVendrick Smith, "Methodist Conference Sues SMU over University's Steps to Redefine Its Relationship with the Church," *The Dallas Morning News* (Dec. 7, 2019), <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/faith/2019/12/08/methodist-conference-sues-smu-over-universitys-steps-to-redefine-its-relationship-with-the-church/>.

Benediction – Paraphrased from 2 Corinthians 3: 3

You are a letter of Christ.

Written not on tablets of stone.

But on tables of human hearts.

Written not with ink

But with the spirit of the living God.

**WINTER WARMING 2020**

NEW FORMAT:  
9:30 AM - 4 PM  
PANEL, LUNCH,  
WORSHIP  
NETWORKING &  
COALITION BUILDING

January 18, 2020  
\$25 / \$12 students  
Community UMC, Naperville  
Parking & Childcare Provided  
[www.nicreconciling.org](http://www.nicreconciling.org)  
*Walk-in Registrations welcome up to capacity*

JAY WILLIAMS  
TYLER SCHWALLER  
ALKA LYALL  
MARCUS BRIGGS-CLOUD

# TRAILBLAZING

## THE NEW UNITED METHODISM

- **Keynote Speaker:** Rev. Tyler Schwaller
- **Preacher:** Rev. Jay Williams
- **Worship Leader:** Marcus Briggs Cloud

**REGISTER NOW!** <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/82012237811>

**Save the Date: Mark Miller Workshop**

Saturday, March 7, 2020

9:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. Workshops & Rehearsals

in the Evanston First UMC Sanctuary

<https://faithatfirst.webconnex.com/MarkMiller>

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### **What is “Leap of Faith”?**

The purpose of this gathering is to bring together local churches and communities in the Northern Illinois Annual Conference that are 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.**

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.