



The United Methodist Church

CHICAGO AREA EPISCOPAL OFFICE

77 West Washington Street • Suite 1820 • Chicago, Illinois 60602
Office: (312) 346-9766 x 702 • Fax: (312) 214-9031

Sally Dyck
Bishop

E-mail: bishop.dyck@umcnic.org

Rev. Arlene W. Christopherson
Assistant to Bishop, Ext. 713
E-mail: achristo@umcnic.org

Date: May 15, 2015
From: Bishop Sally Dyck
Resident Bishop, Northern Illinois Conference
Re: NIC Children's Table Initiative and Champions for Children Recruitment

So How Are the Children?

The dire reality is that many children in the Northern Illinois Conference face a complexity of issues created by extreme economic stress and poverty, leaving families in a daily struggle to provide a loving, secure, and safe environment for their children. The congregations and UM agencies throughout the NIC serve as a life-giving and radical source of God's love and hospitality for children and families facing these daily challenges for survival.

My purpose for writing you is two-fold. The first is to introduce an important new collaborative, a conference-wide program launching in the Fall of 2015, called the "**The Children's Table.**" The goal of the Children's Table initiative is to provide accessible and equal opportunities for education, and healthcare through collective resources which transform churches and communities so that children can live in a safe, healthy, food-resourced, and protected environment. This lofty goal is one that will not be accomplished overnight, but only through the dedication of all our efforts over the next several years!

The agencies, boards, and ministry areas of the NIC, who seek to serve and meet the needs of children within our conference borders, will be serving as support to local congregational efforts by resourcing this important initiative. They include:

- Board of Church and Society
- ChildServ
- MYSI
- United Methodist Men
- United Voices for Children
- Rosecrance
- United Methodist Women
- NIC Children's Ministry

Secondly, I am recruiting your participation, together with other passionate advocates for children across our conference, in providing leadership as a **Champion for Children**. If you participated as a Child Advocate in years past, that role is transitioning to **Champions for Children** focused on:

Welcoming, Valuing, Informing, Engaging, Inspiring, and Influencing
our congregations and communities to create a world where children's daily experience is peaceful, loving and respected as a beloved child of God.

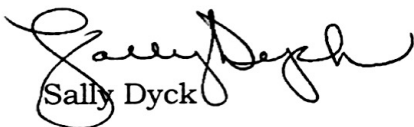


We encourage you to review the information which you can find on the NIC website by clicking on www.umcnic.org/ChildrensTable, secure a leader as a **Champion for Children**, and join us in this initiative. Information will also be available during annual conference June 14-16.

Please mark your calendars to attend the first of two retreat and training events for **Champions for Children** on **Sunday October 11, 2015 from 3pm-6pm at Oak Park First United Methodist Church, 324 N. Oak Park Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302** You may register online or at conference. .

We hope you will be inspired and impassioned to join in this collaborative venture to unify our voices on behalf of children and families across our local congregations and the communities we serve.

In Christ,



Sally Dyck

SJD:mla

Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church
Champions for Children Initiative

Quick Facts: The rate of poverty in Illinois among children is 24.6% of children with those under the age of 5 being most affected by poverty. (1) Urban poverty in Illinois (14.5%) remains higher than rural poverty (9.7%). (2) Illinois children of color are disproportionately affected by poverty. White (non-Latino) 10.8%, Asian 11.3%, Latino 27.8%, African American (44.6%) live in poverty. (2)

Purpose: To provide passionate Christian leadership that cultivates a holistic approach to ministry with children and families, creating and supporting programs, providing resources, and building relationships that promote justice for children in the church and the wider community.

Role of the Champions for Children: *Welcome, Value, Inform, Engage, Inspire, and Influence* their congregations and communities to create a world where children's daily experience is peaceful, loved and respected as a beloved child of God. This work should be prioritized by individuals or teams based on the context and experience of the local Church setting.

Goal of the Children's Table Initiative: To provide resources which transform churches and communities, so that children live in an environment that is safe, healthy, food-resourced, protected, making available accessible and equal opportunities for resources, education, and healthcare.

Welcome All Children

- ✓ Evaluate annually how your congregation welcomes, nurtures, prays, and provides opportunities of faith formation for all children.

Value All Children

- ✓ Create avenues and roles for children to participate in ministry, worship, and mission within your congregation and community.

Gather Information, Share, and Educate

- ✓ Collect, share and communicate reliable information with your congregation and community to create an informed and empowered public regarding the multiple and complex issues impacting children and families. Including but not limited to: child poverty, homelessness, mass incarceration, human trafficking, physical and mental health, violence, and access to good education.

Engage the Church within the Community

- ✓ Engage, identify, strategize, and recruit to organize with others (Educators, Civic, Government, Business, Faith Congregations, Healthcare providers) for needed change that will empower children to live safely and with resources required for vibrant and promising lives.

Inspire New Opportunities

- ✓ Access training and tools to learn about your communities, identify service gaps that can be filled to meet the needs of children and families and to strategize who, what, where and how of their churches and communities to fill the gaps for the desired change.
- ✓ Discern your Church's vision for children in the Church and the community. Select one or more things your Church is already doing and can do for the coming year.

Influence Public Policy

- ✓ Build relationships with elected public officials regarding legislation and public policies with the question, "Is this in the best interests of children and their families?"
- ✓ Communicate public policy that provides support for the health and well-being of all children and families at the local, city, state and national level.

Assessments and Reporting

- ✓ Monitor, assess, and report to your local congregation, communities, and the Conference on the impact actions have had on positively affecting the lives of the children and families on an annual basis.
- ✓ Actively participate and share activities and resources with the other Champions for Children through Conference networking opportunities.

Covenant for Champions of Children: Assistance, Support and Resources

The Sponsoring entities: NIC Children's Table, NIC Board of Church and Society, United Voices for Children, ChildServ, Rosecrance, MYSI Corporation, United Methodist Women, United Methodist Men, NIC Children's Ministry pledge to:

1. Assist Champions for Children collect reliable information regarding issues and challenges facing children and families in their local communities;
2. Advise on ways to effectively share information to educate their church, community and other constituents in their vicinities;
3. To provide training, tools and technical assistance in applying what has been learned from the gathered information/data to create an infrastructure for effective, productive change for children and families in their communities;
4. To provide the tools and resources necessary to build and maintain professional relationships with community leaders and public officials who impact public policies;
5. To provide a communication platform to host available resources, tools, public officials contact information, best practices, shared action reports, etc.
6. To provide timely information on needed action concerning legislation that can affect children and families.
7. Provide models of organizing and share best practices from around the NIC.

Sources:

1. Social IMPACT Research Center. (2013). *Illinois's 33%: Report on Illinois poverty*. Chicago: Authors. http://www.ilpovertyreport.org/sites/default/files/uploads/Illinois_33percent_PovertyReport_FINAL.pdf
2. Terpstra, A., Clary, J., Ruiz Soto, A., & Rynell, A. (2014, January). *50 Years Later: Report on Illinois Poverty*. Chicago: Social IMPACT Research Center at Heartland Alliance. ILPovertyReport.org • [socialimpactresearchcenter.org](http://www.ilpovertyreport.org/sites/default/files/uploads/PR14_50%20Years%20Later_FINAL.pdf)
http://www.ilpovertyreport.org/sites/default/files/uploads/PR14_50%20Years%20Later_FINAL.pdf