



WE PRESS ON

2020 North Central Jurisdictional Conference
of The United Methodist Church



**2020 North Central Jurisdictional Conference
Episcopal Nominee Information
for
Rev. Dan Schwerin**



Name: Dan Schwerin

Conference: Wisconsin

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Current Appointment: Senior Pastor, First UMC Waukesha

Family: My pronouns are he, him, and his. I am divorced and have worked hard on my well-being and healing. I have an adult daughter and son in committed relationships and three above average grandchildren.

Background and Experience:

Formal Education and Significant Continuing Education:

- Self-Differentiation and Writing from the Bowen Center for the Study of the Family (2019)
- Ambiguous Loss & Resilience by David Bowman from the University of Wisconsin (2017)
- The Use of Relational Meetings in Ministry, Dr. Angela Cowser, GETS (2016)
- Clergy Coaching from Don Mendenhall (2013)
- Staffing and Supervision by Susan Beaumont from the University of Wisconsin (2013)
- Transitional Interim Ministry Specialist (TIMS) Certification and UMEA Endorsement (2011)
- UM Board of Discipleship New Church Development Training (1996)
- Perkins School of Theology Mentor Program (Systems Theory focus) (1992-94)
- M. Div. Perkins School of Theology (1989)
- B.A. Carroll College (1985)

Ordination Dates and Conference of Which You Were a Member:

- Elder: Wisconsin Conference (1991)
- Deacon: Oklahoma Conference (1987)

Previous Work Experiences and Pastoral Appointments:

- First UMC, Waukesha, WI (downtown/urban/regional setting) (2007-present)
- Wisconsin Conference District Superintendent Metro North and Metro South Districts (2004-2007)
- Wisconsin Conference District Superintendent Metro South District (2002-2004)
- Still Waters, Jackson, WI, (founding pastor, suburban setting) (1996-2002)
- Parfreyville UMC, Parfreyville, WI (rural and vacation setting) (1990-1996)
- Stephens UMC, Duncan, OK (racially mixed neighborhood setting) (1985-1990)

Connectional and Ecumenical Church Experiences:

1. Current:

- Wisconsin Conference Committee on the Episcopacy chair (2016-present)
- Wisconsin Conference Delegation to General Conference co-chair (2019-present)
- Bishop's Task Force on the Way Forward chair (2019-present)
- Wisconsin Conference Institute of Congregational Development faculty (2018-present)
- Family Systems & Centering Prayer Group co-chair (2008-present)
- Wisconsin Conference Board of Laity Faith Alive faculty (2016-present)
- NCJ Urban Ministry Network (2002-2008), chair (2008-present)
- South East District Circuit Leader SE10 (2007-present)

2. Previous:

- Clergy Coach for Self in Systems Thinking (2017-2018)
- Wisconsin Conference Committee on the Episcopacy (2012-2016)
- Wisconsin Conference Delegation to the North Central Jurisdictional Conference (2012, 2016)
- Wisconsin Conference Task Force on Redistricting and Structure (2012-2013)
- General Conference Funding Patterns Task Force (2004-2008)
- Bishop's Response Team (2003-2008)
- Metro South and Metro North District Superintendent (2002-2007)
- Milwaukee Ecumenical Judicatory Leaders (2002-2007)
- Wisconsin Conference Board of Congregational Development (1996-2002)

Community Service Activity:

1. Current:

- Waukesha Association of Religious Leaders (2007-2017), chair (2017-present)
- SOPHIA (Wisdom interfaith justice network) Waukesha County (2011-present)
- Nonprofits started or incubated at First UMC Waukesha since 2007:
 - Healing Hearts of Waukesha County (grief support for children and families) (2009-present)
 - St. Vincent de Paul Coming Together to Get Ahead (leaving generational poverty) (2015-present)
 - Greater Milwaukee El Sistema (helping kids access music and community) (2016-present)

2. Previous:

- Healing Hearts of Waukesha County (grief support for children and families) (2009-present)
- St. Vincent de Paul Coming Together to Get Ahead (leaving generational poverty) (2015-present)
- Greater Milwaukee El Sistema (helping kids access music and community) (2016-present)

Publications, Awards, Honors:

- ORS, a poetry collection published by Red Moon Press (2015)
- The Haiku Foundation Touchstone Award for Distinguished Books (2015)
- General Board of Global Ministries Innovative Ministries Award for Refugee Ministry (2002)
- Denman Award for Evangelism (2002)
- Wisconsin Conference Vital Congregations Award (1994)

Special Interests and/or Hobbies:

- Family, grandchildren
- Poetry (writing and hosting a writing group)
- Reading

- Fishing
- Brewers, Packers, and Bucks fan

Faith and Leadership

Describe Your Understanding of the Nature and Mission of the Church:

The church is the body of Christ at work for the healing of creation. The body of Christ is always giving its life away in our mission to make disciples of Jesus for the transformation of the world. God's self-giving sustains the church to invite, form, and send disciples of Jesus to make known the kin-dom of God. The moral imagination of Jesus calls us to a kin-dom that is fully welcoming, open, and affirming that all people are of sacred worth. The church must experience the transformation of salvation as it becomes a vehicle for it, and so it must be at the forefront of dismantling racism and structures that exclude or demean women and/or persons who identify as LGBTQIA+. We must have the courage to audit our own systems and structures, as well as to allow God to make all things new. Like the body of Christ, the church is broken and blessed, and offered sacramentally to all people that Christ would be made known.

Share Your Vision for The United Methodist Church:

I have a vision that The United Methodist Church would become more like the flow of a labyrinth than a settled institution. We have a relational God made known in Jesus who walks us all to the center for the life we find there. Christ leads us to transformation that sends us back to the margins – to bring the center out to the margins. When we are in relationship with those on the margins, we become changed. Love would have us carry the margins back to the center to equip the ministry we share. There are no barriers in a labyrinth: all are welcome. Such a journey puts us shoulder to shoulder, integrates the margin with the center, and calls us away from the shadows of hierarchy. People are not left on the margins.

I have a vision that we bring the center outward to the world and the world to the center we know in Christ. God is in process with us and we are in process with God, always being moved and challenged. Since 2019 I have thought most often about the kin-dom being like a mother or father always talking with children and calling them to be at home with each other, the near ones and far ones, the privileged and the prodigal, here to enjoy our kin-dom with each other. I would invite each of us to know Christ the center daily and bring the center to the margins – both change us with a personal and social holiness that makes Christ known. I am grateful for changes in my own thinking born out of relationships with queer friends, persons of color and refugees. I learned so much about a variety of cultures and my presence and functioning in them from being a superintendent in Milwaukee. We are changed by relationships in ways that make Christ known. I am most excited by ministry that makes this flow real in creation. Having grown up in a stepfamily, I know living as a sibling is holy and rewarding work.

Describe Your Concept and Style of Leadership:

I believe that these days call for spiritual leaders who need to (1) develop healthy and inclusive community, (2) experience our own transformation to equip healing and inclusive community,

and (3) move healthier organizations toward the mission we share. Across my ministry I have helped those in my span of care become healthier, more vital and transformative.

Those who continue to serve in local church settings know much has changed and how the church is more vulnerable than ever. In the past decade I have experienced how effective leaders see the adaptation – the internal and external shifting that the organization needs. Often problems scream but opportunities whisper how perceived issues reveal to us the shifts we need to make. A leader mines her or his principles in order to stay grounded, and yet remains connected. This differentiation is lifetime work.

I am a person with a relational theology and style of leadership. At the heart of it, Jesus made relationships that revealed God's possibilities. I believe ministry happens at the speed of relationship and our relationships make Christ known. Since I started a new church, my mission statement has been Isaiah 42:1-4: "Here is my Servant whom I uphold..." I am a servant, and glad to be almost invisible in order to equip others. I am a learner and entrepreneur balanced by wiring as a contemplative. I deal with conflict early, openly, and try to work in ways that no one feels like they are a winner or loser, but a member of the body of Christ. Those on my staff know I keep things light.

Describe Your Gifts and Graces:

Wherever I go, with God's help: (1) we get healthy, (2) we create a learning community, (3) we develop innovative ministry, and (4) we grow stewardship. I am grounded and entrepreneurial. Every one of my days starts with *Lectio Divina* in the psalms – I take a line with me for the day. Today's is from the first verse of Psalm 93: "God is girded with strength." So, for example, I began today thinking what strength we have, and how I am girded for the things in my calendar – and I put that line in my phone. Then I start the day writing one poem. I create before I manage.

With God's help, as a student-pastor, I shepherded a church to become racially mixed, double in size and become a strength in an economically challenged neighborhood. Next, I led a congregation to quadruple in size and renovate its building and discipleship system for the population expansion they were experiencing. Then I started a new church that became self-sustaining and built its first building during my six-year pastorate. In that new ministry we relocated, loved, equipped, and integrated nine Bosnian Muslim families into the community after the Balkan wars in the mid to late 1990s. As a superintendent, I served on two cabinets and started new congregations in that role. I worked to create a pilot program to help the Wisconsin Conference make healthy and effective cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments. In my current setting, I have shepherded a congregation after a financial breach of trust. We have developed a strong discipleship system, as well as launched and incubated several nonprofits. These nonprofits support families dealing with grief, equip families out of generational poverty, and teach children to learn an instrument and play in an orchestra. We have created an environment of beloved community and collaboration across our nonprofit partners. We have a remarkable staff and church leadership team. We have provided leadership in the community as the city responds to a growing population of those living homelessly, and we have incorporated many of those struggling with homelessness into our ministry. Prior to 2019, and in the most Republican county in Wisconsin, we led First UMC in a process to become and live as a

reconciling congregation in The United Methodist Church. We simply go deeper than labels. Prayer is a large part of our worship experience, and our engine. We have paid off two mortgages, and we are beginning another capital campaign. Several of the clergy who have served here have gone on and done exceptionally well in nonprofit management, clergy leadership, and development work. I fall in love with the ministry wherever I am sent and have enjoyed the fruits of long-term appointments.

Describe How You Have Experienced the Call to the Episcopacy and How God Has Prepared You for the Episcopacy:

Colleagues and conference leaders encouraged me to pray and consider a calling to the episcopacy previously. I have prayed about my readiness and calling on and off for several years. As General Conference 2019 was drawing to a close, I started to receive emails asking me to pray about offering myself to serve in the next delegation, and whether I might offer my life as the church discerns who is being called to episcopal leadership. I have been praying more resolutely and deeply, and I hear God calling me to be open. I was not seeking this. Having served on two cabinets and in conference leadership since then, I had to pray about the toxicity in The United Methodist Church, and my readiness for differentiation in relationship to the toxicity. In that time of prayer, God reminded me I wasn't eager about becoming a pastor either, but I love ministry deeply. This current discernment grew legs when my colleagues elected me as the first clergy delegate for the 2020 General Conference. After that I set up two clearness committees – a Quaker discernment process – and God has continued to strengthen and sustain my openness to the church's discernment. Our delegation opened the endorsement process to any elder in the Wisconsin Conference, and in their discernment, they have chosen to endorse me in this process. I believe they were looking for a person who had a long-standing record of advocating for full LGBTQIA+ inclusion, someone who has an entrepreneurial spirit and experience leading difficult things. I trust the church to listen to the Spirit. I absolutely love serving First United Methodist Church in Waukesha and the nonprofit environment we have engendered. If the church calls me to serve as an episcopal leader, I will do as I have always done: fall in love with the people and place God has called me and blossom with them to bear the fruit we are called to become. If not, I will go on loving my opportunity to serve First United Methodist Church in Waukesha.

We need to be authentic and relational with people. The landscape is increasingly secular and will continue to be. We simply must make relationships that make Christ known across differences. We will need to be open to let go of processes that are not helping us invite, form, and send disciples of Jesus – or equipping us as we learn how to pastor. Today's bishops will need to lead us to heart changes about honoring diversity and external changes for long-cherished structures – but when we let go of the Egypt inside and around us, we are more able to be led by love.

How has God prepared me for this consideration? Not a single day of my life has been wasted. My parents' divorce when I was a boy formed me in the experience of a blended family. My home church was a rural congregation of 25 people who kept helping people hear a calling to serve as clergy. My first congregation was in an economically challenged and racially mixed neighborhood, and instead of closing, we grew a congregation that helped integrate and

strengthen the neighborhood. I have served in rural and vacation areas and a suburban new church setting. I have also helped deal with breaches of trust and buckets of church dysfunction. Grace and decades of systems practice have helped me grow a strong, healthy sense of self from which to lead and serve. Presently, the bishop's task force is engaging an audit with The General Commission on Religion and Race so that our systems and structures can remove barriers that engender racism, and we have engaged a conference wide conversation about human sexuality. Since my endorsement, God has found me with the Jesus Prayer as a more constant companion and guide. God will use my 'yes,' wherever the church discerns it. Thank you for this consideration. May the peace of Christ be with you.

Endorsements:

Wisconsin Conference Delegation to General and Jurisdictional Conference

Episcopal Election Covenant has been signed and received by 2020 NCJ Secretary, Rev. Paul R. White.

Episcopal Candidate Forum:

The Rev. Schwerin will be participating in the North Central Jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy (NCJCOE) video forum. This forum will consist of a fifteen-minute interview with each episcopal candidate who elects to participate. All interviews will be posted on the North Central Jurisdictional (NCJ) website on or around April 1, 2020.