

Mission Friends

of the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ

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May 2021

Friends,

Today I invite you to participate in the good work of the Illinois Conference.

The Illinois Conference is all of the members of all of the churches, all clergy and all covenant partners affiliated with the United Church of Christ located in the northern half of Illinois. The work of the Conference - that is the work of the body as a whole - is to support local churches being *stronger together*. The Conference hires staff, myself and others, to lead, manage and coordinate this work - but it is the work of ALL of us.

The Illinois Conference supports local churches being *stronger together* by supporting pastoral transitions. It is always a big deal when a pastor retires or resigns. Whether the situation is celebratory or hurtful, both the congregation and the pastor need support. The Conference is there with pastoral care, training, an interim ministry network, a system for connecting searching churches with searching pastors that are authorized within the UCC and more. Our churches are stronger because of our process and work supporting pastoral transitions.

Our hardworking Committees on Ministry support local churches being *stronger together* as we nurture members in discernment and those exploring a call to ministry. These committees oversee the authorization of ministers - making sure our clergy are living lives consistent with the Ordained Ministers Code (ethics) and the Marks of Faithful and Effective Ministry (guidelines for ministry within and on behalf of the United Church of Christ). Our churches are stronger because our clergy are held to high standards throughout their entire ministry.

Our camps support the work of local congregations by providing life changing experiences for young and old alike. Through programs, retreats, weeks of church camp, praycations, campcations, mission trips, learning opportunities and more - our outdoor ministry program supports more than just our youth. Yet it is our youth that are the underlying reason we invest so much into Tower Hill and Pilgrim Park camps. Our churches are *stronger* because *together* we continue to inspire young people to lives of spiritual leadership as well as the ongoing nurture of folk of all ages.

The congregations of the Illinois Conference are *stronger together* through the pastoral care and leadership of the Ministry Leadership Team (MLT). When crisis hits, you don't call the Ghostbusters - you call your ACM (Associate Conference Minister.) The MLT hosts several weekly meetings that bring together different groups for support, learning, information sharing, prayer and more. We support Associations, Clusters, Communities of Practice, Justice and Witness committees and more. Our churches are *stronger together* with these shared resources of wisdom, guidance, hosting and support.

I could go on and on with more examples and illustrations of how the Conference helps our local congregations be stronger together. It is gifts from people like you that allow us to do all of these different ministries. The vast majority of the money that allows this work to be done comes from our member churches through OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission). However, we also value and rely upon the support of our individual donors through our Mission Friends offering. We have donors that give monthly, annually or through one-time gifts. We have donors whose employers match their gifts. 100% of these donations stays here in the Illinois Conference to support churches being stronger together.

Today, I invite you to become a Mission Friend of the Illinois Conference. Whether this is your first gift or this is a regular part of your charitable giving, this is your chance to help the 240 congregation of the Illinois Conference be stronger together. Please use the enclosed envelope or donate through our website at ilucc.org.

In gratitude for our shared ministry,

Molly

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Conference Minister

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