



# NEW BEGINNINGS E-BLAST



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## Report from the Interim Conference Minister

### "I Bet You Didn't Know All of This: Insights into What's Going On"

Rev. Justo González II

Hello Siblings in Christ/Mis Amigos en Cristo:

It has been a busy time here at the Conference Center:

- Our laser focus is on creating a collaborative culture where intentional one on one relationship building is priority 1. I have been working with our Associate Conference Ministers and modeling throughout the conference relationship building with all levels of the church, the broader community partners we're engage with or need to be in relationship with and diverse constituencies we seek to serve as the People of God. Relationships. Relationships are the key. Relationships matter!

Over these last few months:

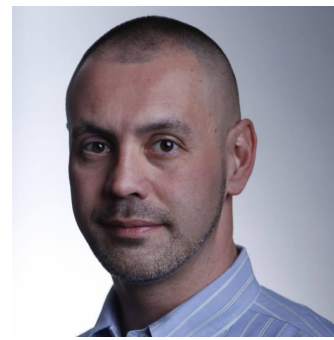
- I have had the honor to worship and preach at three different congregations per month and have had several listening forums and Q&A sessions with local church leaders. You matter. Thank you for allowing me to learn from you.
- We have begun the transition of living into our new Associate Conference Minister of Vitality, Transformation and Sustainability ministry and position description. This was approved in January by Personnel and then by the Executive Council. The Rev. Michelle Hughes has been called to this ministry. Since her call by the Illinois Conference, she has been giving us approximately 20-30% of her time per week. We negotiated with her congregation, a deal similar to what was negotiated with Mokena when Rev. Kim Wood was called. Pilgrim Congregational UCC agreed to let her begin her transitional work here on a limited part-time basis. They will continue to pay her salary and benefits. She is keeping a log of the hours that she is putting in and we will reimburse them based upon that percentage. Michelle formally begins Sept. 1, 2019, as a full time employee of the Illinois Conference. Please be patient with her she hasn't formally begun.
- "Coaching. This is Justo's agenda and I don't agree." Let me take a moment to address this myth. ...

[Read More](#)

## Ministering to an Aging Congregation

Rev. Brandyn Simmons

Have you ever been approached by a congregant for caregiving resources? Have you noticed the struggles of congregants as they care for their aging parents? Perhaps you yourself are caring for an aging parent. Many clergy woefully ill-equipped to address these issues. Some have gone to their adjudicatory body for resources just to find that there aren't any.



The sad truth is that, as clergy, we are not taught to minister to aging congregations. End of life issues, aging spirituality, eldercare system navigation - all of these things await us when we enter ministry when we just spent our whole seminary experience being told to "go out and get the young people."

This is why Generations Care Partners Foundation exists. We are here to provide resources to clergy and congregations about all facets of elder caregiving so that churches can thrive and caregivers can find peace. We do this through workshops, retreats, and presentations.

Elder care should always begin with a conversation - preferably before it starts. It is highly encouraged that dialogue begin well before a caregiving situation arises while the senior is still cognitively and physically able to maintain their own agency.

So, what does this look like?

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## Happenings Around the Conference



Two dozen youth joined seminary students, [Vernon Gardens](#) and [Off The Pews](#) board members in July for day of local youth empowerment and connection to the earth and each other. They learned about growing food, solar energy, rainwater catchment systems, beekeeping and social justice. A celebration at the garden to conclude this project will take place on Aug. 9 at 10:00 a.m at Vernon Park Gardens, 6025 S. Vernon Ave., Chicago. More info contact [harrietcdart@gmail.com](mailto:harrietcdart@gmail.com).



We had a pretty incredible Summer Staff this year! Thank you all on behalf of Pilgrim Park and the Illinois Conference UCC for putting in the long hours to make it the best summer possible for our campers at Pilgrim Park and Conference Center!

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## Across Illinois, a movement for pretrial justice is growing

Rev. Harriet Dart



Thank you for making your voices heard by signing the petition to Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Pretrial Practices at the Illinois Conference. Over 1500 signatures were presented to the commission before the June 30 deadline.

Right now, thousands of people are incarcerated in Illinois jails simply because they cannot afford to pay money bonds. More than 90% of people in Illinois jails are detained pretrial—a considerably higher rate than the national rate of 67%. This wealth-based pretrial incarceration disproportionately hurts impoverished people and Black and Brown communities.

Across Illinois, a movement for pretrial justice is growing. The **Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice** gained momentum on July 13, 2019 during the People's Convening for Pretrial Freedom in Springfield, Ill. Illinois Conference Interim Minister Rev. Justo González II and several UCC pastors gathered with people from across the state to share knowledge, build relationships, and develop strategies to end unjust pretrial practices and build toward a more just future in our state! The convening featured workshops from experts on electronic monitoring and risk assessment tools, an art-making session, and a panel discussion. The rally concluded with a march to the Sangamon County Jail.

[Read More](#)

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## UCC Webinar on the Youth Climate Movement as a Moral Force

On Fridays throughout the world this past year, students walked out of classrooms and went into the streets to compel action in addressing the climate crisis. What started as a one-person protest by Greta Thunberg has grown to a movement of millions in over 160 countries and at least 2000 locations. Youth are now calling upon adults to join them for a week of action in September. This month's [Creation Justice Webinar](#) will prepare us for action by featuring Jamie Margolin, the 17-year-old who has been at the forefront of the youth climate movement in the United States. She led the call for last year's youth climate march, and she is a co-founder of the youth organization Zero Hour. The webinar will be held on Aug. 15 at 1:00 p.m. ET, but a recording will be sent out to all who register. [Register today!](#)



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## Want to help support summer adventures that will allow youth to get "off the streets"?

*Off the Pews: Faith in Action* has received a **\$5,000** pledge to be used as a Matching Challenge Grant. This Challenge Grant has been given to stimulate a "friendly" competition among members in the faith-based and the broader communities in which youth and older adults served by OTP live. The program was conceived by Cluster Six to offer young people alternatives to the violence that results from the accumulative impact of long-term trauma and exposure to violence. As the organization expands its reach within the Chicago Metropolitan Association, *Off the Pews* will focus on raising funds to create programs that address several systemic issues, e.g., intersection of poverty, racism, under treated mental and physical health issues. OPT is collaborating with community partners to achieve this goal.



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## LEEAP announces 2020 Funding Cycle

Our Conference Local Evangelism, Envisioning and Planting/LEEAP extends to our churches and associations an opportunity to request funding for new church starts, ministry projects and the revitalization of existing congregations.

The application can be downloaded by going to the Illinois Conference website ([www.ilucc.org](http://www.ilucc.org)). The deadline for a request for calendar year 2020 is Oct. 1, 2019

If you and/or your church wish to submit a request, please send to Carmen Torres at [ilconfcarmen@gmail.com](mailto:ilconfcarmen@gmail.com). For questions, please contact the Rev. Michelle Hughes, Associate Conference Minister for Vitality, Transformation and Sustainability at the Illinois Conference at (708) 344-4470; e-mail [ilconfmichelle@gmail.com](mailto:ilconfmichelle@gmail.com).

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## Churches in the Media

[From the Pulpit: Mistreating immigrants violates the will of God](#)

[Bethel United Church of Christ youth group takes annual mission work trip to Pine Ridge Indian Reservation](#)

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## Employment Opportunities

Click links to view [Ministerial opportunities](#) and [lay employment opportunities](#) within the Illinois Conference.

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## Conference Calendar for August

August 3: [Generations in Harmony II Concert](#), 5:00 p.m. at Kenwood UCC, Chicago. Join Kenwood UCC for an evening of beautiful music.

August 4: [Farewell Reception for Rev. Brian Byrne](#), 10:45 a.m. at St. Paul UCC, Pekin. Morning service is at 9:30 a.m. All are welcome.

August 4: [Farewell Service for Senior Pastor Rev. Lisa Goods](#), 3:00 p.m. at Kenwood UCC, Chicago. Join Kenwood UCC for an evening of beautiful music and powerful worship as they bid farewell to their Senior Pastor Rev. Lisa Goods. All are welcome.

August 4: Rev. Justo González II, Interim Conference Minister, 10:00 a.m. will be preaching at [St. Peter's UCC, Champaign](#).

August 4: [Summer Concert with Richard Bruxvoort-Colligan](#), 6:00 p.m. at St. John's UCC, Lyons. For ticket info [click here](#).

August 5-9: [Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders](#) (MSTI), St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Glen Ellyn.

August 11: Rev. Justo González II, Interim Conference Minister, 8:15 a.m. and 10:15 a.m. will be preaching at [First Congregational UCC, Elgin](#).

August 18: Rev. Justo González II, Interim Conference Minister, 10:15 a.m. will be preaching at [English Congregational UCC, Big Rock](#).

August 24: [Morton Grove Community 4th Annual Family Peace Fest for Hope and Harmony](#), 12:00 p.m. at Morton Grove Civic Center, Morton Grove

August 25: [Service of Farewell and Release for Rev. Dr. Michael Sykes](#), 10:00 a.m. at Faith United Protestant Church, Park Forest.

August 25: [Service of Installation for Rev. Jed Watson](#), 3:00 p.m. at Peace Memorial Church, Palos Park.

August 26-29: [Quilt Retreat](#), sponsored by Pilgrim Park Camp, Princeton.

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## Upcoming Events

September 27-28: [9th Annual Illinois Conference Women's Retreat](#), Pilgrim Park Camp, Princeton.

October 2: [Clergy Day Away](#) with Barbara Brown Taylor at Pilgrim Park, Princeton.

October 9-10: [ATiM 28th Annual Gathering](#) with Rev. Dr. Robin Meyers. Theme for this conference: "The Challenge of Ministry in Times of Divisiveness".

October 19: [Joint Fall Meeting of Eastern Association and Western Association](#) at First Congregational UCC, Decatur. More information to follow.

October 20: [Fox Valley Association Fall Meeting](#), 1:30 p.m. at First Congregational UCC, Downers Grove. The theme of the meeting is "Truth Telling: To Make More Visible God's Love & Justice."

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