Rev. Dr. James J. Olson, OCC, Acting Associate Conference Minister serving the Fox Valley Association and Chicago Metropolitan Association Announces His Resignation

The Rev. Dr. James J. Olson, OCC, has resigned as the Acting Associate Conference Minister serving the Fox Valley Association and Chicago Metropolitan Association as of September 1, 2019.

The Rev. Kimberly Wood will temporarily serve the congregations and leadership of the Fox Valley Association.

We wish Jim well in his new endeavors.

Is It Really You?
Rev. Brandyn Simmons

I can think of so many times when I set a goal and struggled to bring it to fruition, just to suffer along the way. The goal would be a noble one, a good one. But, yet, it wouldn’t feel right. It wasn’t that I wasn’t capable of achieving it, but more so that I wasn’t gifted for it and it wasn’t me. And here lies the key piece: if we are setting goals that don’t reflect who we really are, then we will suffer the stress and cognitive dissonance that come as a result.

When I moved back from Japan in 2006, I was armed with an MBA, consulting experience, and a mastery of the Japanese language. So, naturally, it only made sense that I should start a consultancy that served Japanese companies. And so I did. But, I was MISERABLE! Sure, I had all the tools that led to the logical conclusion
that this is what I was meant to be doing, but I was a little off.

At the core of my being, or in my True Self, I wasn’t made for pointing out people’s problems and telling them how to fix them. I may not have been able to articulate my theology very well at the time, but I believed in the humaneness and blessedness of creation and that God had not only already placed the answers in our hearts, but that we had gifts to build upon, not problems to be solved. Eventually, I would discover coaching and do many of the things I did in consulting, but just from a different approach and methodology.

What about you?

Has your ego ever led you to take on a project or apply for a position that seemed like the next best step in your upward mobility? Did you get the position just to realize that you hated it? Perhaps not because there was anything inherently wrong with the position itself, but it just wasn’t you.

Happenings Around the Conference

St. John’s UCC in Peotone through their annual corn roast purchase and filled 71 backpacks for children in need in school district 207U.
Photo credit: David Holston

St. Paul’s UCC in Hinckley along with the Hinckley Area Food Pantry has begun packing food bags for children in the Hinckley-Big Rock Elementary School. Bags will be filled with enough food for the children over the weekend during the school year.
Photo credit: St. Paul’s UCC, Hinckley

News from the Prairie Association

Rev. Martin Nussbaum was installed as pastor and teacher of First United Church of Sheffield on June 9. Welcome, Pastor Martin!

The United Church of Byron will welcome Mr. Tyler Spellicous, Member in Discernment in the Western Association of the Illinois Conference, as their Designated-Term Pastor. Rev. Jesse Tanner concluded his ministry there on June 30. The Committee on Ministry is grateful for former committee member, Mr. Fred Asche of Pearl City, for leading the farewell liturgy with the congregation.

Rev. Muriel Jahn returns to the ministry of St. John’s UCC, Belvidere, following a three-
month sabbatical during which time Parish Associate Pastor Beth Carson stepped in for worship leadership, pastoral care, programming and administration.

The home church of Association Moderator Rev. Bill Riegel - English Congregational UCC in Big Rock - hosted the Conference Council meeting on Aug. 10; the congregation was pleased to provide a warm welcome and hospitality to the leaders of the Conference.

The congregations of Zion UCC, Peru (Pastor Alex Garncarz) and St. John UCC, Freeport, (Rev. Hank Fairman) are gearing up for participation in the TPIRC Initiative.

Rev. Judy Harris has been called as half-time interim pastor by First Congregational UCC in Pecatonica, and will begin this ministry on Sept. 1. The congregation bid farewell to Revs Duane and Christena Hoffman, who had served the congregation for 13+ years, in late April.

The United Church of Christ - 3 Great Loves

Christopher Grundy's theme song for the 3 Great Loves initiative of the United Church of Christ. Video premiered at the 2019 UCC General Synod in Milwaukee.

(Commissioned by the UCC's Missouri Mid-South Conference.)

Clergy Day Away with Barbara Brown Taylor

Ordained, licensed, and commissioned clergy as well as in care students (members in discernment) from all around the Illinois Conference are invited to attend the Illinois Conference Clergy Day Away on October 1-2, 2019 at Pilgrim Park in Princeton, Illinois. The leader will be Barbara Brown Taylor.

Limited financial assistance may be available; please contact your Associate Conference Minister for information.
28th Annual ATiiM Conference:

You are invited to join the 28th Annual Conference for the Association of Trained Intentional Interim Ministers (ATiiM) on Oct. 9-10, 2019 at Starved Rock Lodge & Conference Center in Utica, Ill. The theme for this conference is: The Challenge of Ministry in Times of Divisiveness.

This year Rev. Dr. Robin Meyers serving Mayflower United Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, OK, will join us as our keynote speaker. Rev. Dr. Robin Meyers speaks nationally and internationally on a variety of topics from the perspective of a progressive Christian pastor, best-selling author, professor and peace activist. Dr. Meyers is the author of eight books about religion in American society, and has become widely known as an advocate for peace and justice and radical hospitality as the focus of faith, not creeds and doctrines that one “believes” in exchange for post mortem benefits.

LODGING: Last day to book a reservation at Starved Rock is Sunday, September 8, 2019.
REGISTRATION: Registration deadline is Oct. 1.

Illinois Conference State Income Tax Exemption Letter

If you haven’t received an updated Illinois Tax Exempt letter, please contact the Illinois Conference office at (708) 344-4470 or email ilconfcarmen@gmail.com.

PLEASE note that the State issued two documents but a 3rd page with the additional statement regarding covenant will be included.

Blessings,
William J. Serritella
Controller, Illinois Conference of the UCC

MissionInsite Information

EMBRACING OUR NEIGHBORS: Enrollment is open for local churches that are ready to use technology to embrace their local community residents. MissionInsite is a Church Demographic Program that provides information about local residents from a variety of sources. The enrollment fee to participate in this program is $15.00 annually. Contact our Conference office, Carmen Torres, at (708) 344-4470 or ilconfcarmen@gmail.com for more information and to enroll your church.

Churches in the Media

Hip-hop pastor-scholar to give UCC lecture on media justice Oct. 17

Church in a gay bar: Queer Chicagoans find ways to merge religion and identity

Morton Grove to celebrate interfaith peace fest to promote harmony after attacks
Click links to view Ministerial opportunities and lay employment opportunities within the Illinois Conference.

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**Conference Calendar for August**

August 20: [Southside Caregiver Support Group](#), 10:00 a.m. at United Church of Hyde Park, Chicago.

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 25: [Jim Worthing International Gospel Soloist in concert](#) presented by First Congregational UCC, Sterling.

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

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**Upcoming Events**

September 9: [Ecclesiastical Council for Marian McKinney](#), 7:00 p.m. at Trinity Hospital, Chicago.

September 20: [2019 Illinois Conference of Churches Annual Assembly: "Ministerial Alliances: the Cornerstone of Ecumenism"](#), 8:00 a.m. at Wesley United Methodist Church, Bloomington, Ill.

September 21: [St. John UCC in Palatine host 45th Annual Craft Fair and Flea Market](#), 9:00 a.m. at St. John UCC, Palatine.

September 22: [Never on a Sunday (morning)! First Congregational of Evanston UCC 150th celebration concert](#), 3:00 p.m. at First Congregational UCC, Evanston.


September 29: [Installation Service for Rev. Dave Bateman](#), 3:00 p.m. at St. John's UCC, Hampshire-Harmony.

October 1-2: [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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