



NEW BEGINNINGS E-BLAST



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Message from the Conference Minister

Rev. Molly Carlson

July 27, 2020

Friends of the Illinois Conference,

As I sit down to write a few lines to you today, I set aside the packing tape and cardboard that is keeping me busy this last week in Nashville. On Thursday, I plan to head out of town, leaving friends and colleagues that I have grown to love over the last year as I have served as Interim Minister at Eastwood Christian Church in Nashville.



My 19-year-old daughter, Sierra, my 12-year-old miniature poodle, Charlotte, and I will make the trek together. My husband, Michael and our son Adam will remain in Oregon for a few more months as they prepare our house to sell and take care of Adam's last semester of high school. We are VERY much looking forward to living in one place together again.

Until my family reunites, Sierra and I will be living in Malta in the apartment that used to be the parsonage at Malta Congregational Church. This building housed one of our congregations that ended its public ministry early in 2019. The property currently belongs to the Illinois Conference and I am grateful to be able to make it my temporary home. I'm not sure where in the Conference my family will finally settle – but I'm looking forward to starting off west of DeKalb in the Prairie Association.

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Message from the Illinois Conference President

The Parable of the Camel

Thanks for your warm welcome and notes of encouragement. 2020 has been a challenging year thus far and promises to be a year we will long remember and not anxious to repeat. Despite the challenges, the Illinois Conference is resilient. We are moving forward, strengthening our ministries, and serving God in many new ways. We are learning from the lessons of a pandemic, and discerning diversity is not achieved overnight, nor without growing pains. Moses led his "Tribe" for 40 years before they were able to reach the promised land, and for many in our democracy, it has been much longer.



And with that thought in mind, I offer the "**Parable of the Camel.**"

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Exile or Wilderness

A Reflection by Rev. Kimberly Wood, Acting Associate Conference Minister

I was having a conversation with a family member who lives in another region of the country. We check in with one another regularly to see how we are doing during this pandemic time. Often, our conversations turn to church. Her heartfelt inquiries, expressions, and desires are those share by many people in our Illinois Conference congregations:



"When are we going to get to come back to church?"

And "We miss church."

Or "It is time to start church again!"

One comment, though, stood out as we were talking. Her church, like many others, was weighing the options of opening their church building for small group gatherings. When considering the reasons why they might take this step, one person stated that being out of the church building so long was like being "in exile" from the church. That image really struck me!

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News from the Chicago Metropolitan Association

It's an interesting time in the life of the church but it's also a time of changes in pastoral leadership in the CMA.

In Cluster One, Rev. Ann Rosewall concluded her ministry at First Congregational UCC of Evanston on July 1, the same day that Rev. Timothy Stevens began as Interim Pastor. Tim is the former Chaplain at Northwestern University and served as Interim Pastor at St.

John's UCC in Mokena. On Aug. 31, Rev. Emily Snowden's time as Pastor of The Congregational UCC of Arlington will come to a close.

In Cluster Two, Rev. Susan Harlow retired from her position as Senior Pastor of The Peoples Church of Chicago. Rev. Rudra Dundzila was installed as Senior Pastor of the congregation. He had just concluded his time as Interim Pastor at Wellington Avenue United Church of Christ. Rev. Ann-Louise Haak is now the Pastor at Wellington.

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Update from the CMA Justice and Witness Team

The Chicago Metropolitan Association Justice and Witness Team will focus efforts on the pressing issue of racial justice and put "on hold" related issues of poverty (including the 2020 census and the Fair Tax on Illinois' fall ballot) and housing insecurity.

We encourage congregations to look at the resources provided [here](#) through The Chicagoland Trauma Informed Congregations Network.

The team voted to endorse the Fair Tax Amendment and take actions to encourage the member congregations and the communities they serve and in which they live in to get educated and vote on the proposal. [Join the movement](#) to rebuild our state by adding your name.

The CMA Justice and Witness Team voted to support the principles for bail reform stated by the Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice.



Week 5 and we are just approaching 25% of our fundraising goal as the loss of planned activities and campers has greatly stressed our financial resources. Your financial gift is not just a donation, it is a statement in helping to change a young person's life, bringing them "out of the ordinary and into the sacred". Please take this opportunity to donate directly at: <https://outdoorministries.campbraingiving.com/>

...why is Tower Hill special to your group?



Tower Hill Men's Retreat

Our Men's Group has gathered at Tower Hill for our Spring Retreat for over 25 years now. We take the weekend to stop and reflect on what is important to us. We talk, we pray, we laugh, we cry. On Saturday night we have a bonfire, we take something that we need to let go of, we write it down and toss it in the fire. The friendships and support that have been made here are the foundations of our faith.

Mike Cusack
Pilgrim Faith UCC
Oak Lawn, IL

...these gatherings could end tomorrow, unless you help today. What we do at Outdoor Ministries is real and the financial help we need today is real. Please consider a monetary blessing that will move us into tomorrow. Go to: <https://outdoorministries.campbraingiving.com/> to help support this fellowship.

...how does Pilgrim Park create lasting memories?



Pilgrim Park Friends

Pilgrim Park has provided the perfect get-away for our "church ladies" for several years now. Not only does this location provide a comfortable place to sleep with delicious meals, it also provides extended outdoor areas to enjoy. We come to renew our friendships, connect with others in a peaceful environment, gathering to reconnect with God at the campfire or in the beautiful Cleveland Chapel. We fondly cherish these Pilgrim Park memories.

Sue Peterson
Congregational UCC
St. Charles, IL

...it could be gone tomorrow, unless you help today. What we do here at Outdoor Ministries is real and the financial help we need is real. Prayerfully consider a monetary blessing that will support us, go to: <https://outdoorministries.campbraingiving.com/> today and thank you.

I was running on the bike trail along McCormick Avenue where there are multiple sculptures brilliantly displayed along the way. It's an almost daily route that I take between my house and my gym to make sure I get in my cardio. I had often marveled at the works of artistry, but that day I noticed something that I hadn't seen before.



As I got closer, I could see that it was a simple wooden sign with two posts and a piece of plywood in between. It was still far enough away that I couldn't make out what it was there for, but I figured it was for posting announcements and such. As it became clearer, I could make out something spray painted on the plywood. I could feel a visceral reaction of anger well up from within: "Why couldn't people leave things alone? Why do they feel the need to put graffiti on everything?"

When I finally came up upon it, I could see the single word that was painted there. It wasn't fancy or calligraphic. It was simple, yet beautiful: *Ubuntu*. That's it. Just one-word spray painted on a piece of plywood.

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Happenings Around the Conference



San Lucas UCC, Chicago, continues their weekly mission to feed the unhoused, provide clothing, and helping count EVERYONE in our community in the 2020 Census. *Photo credit: [San Lucas UCC, Chicago \(Facebook page\)](#)*



Pilgrim Faith UCC in Oak Lawn calls the Rev. James Bowman Harris as their New Pastor. The church feels God has brought Past James to lead them into the next chapter. His first Sunday with them will be Sept. 6, 2020.

2020 McCormick Theological Seminary Distinguished Alumni

We would like to congratulate the Rev. Jorge Morales, former Conference Minister of the Illinois Conference of

the United Church of Christ upon his recognition by his Alma mater McCormick Theological Seminary, as a distinguished alumni.

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School for Ministry 2021 Cohort Application

As part of a structured, 3-year program leading to a Certificate in Pastoral Ministry, the S4M can help you discern your call and develop your gifts for service in a range of congregational settings. The curriculum consists of four major components; namely, a January Spiritual Discernment Retreat, Online coursework through Phillips Theological Seminary, an Intensive Summer Retreat, and Cohort Group support. New classes begin January 2021.

Please visit our [website](#) for further information, or contact Rev. Lorrie Reed, Executive Director at lorrie@CCIWdisciples.org.

2021 School for Ministry Cohort

Do you feel called to be a source of calm in the middle of the storm? Are you willing to be a shepherd who feeds God's people during a spiritual drought? Do you believe you have gifts for ministerial leadership?

The School for Ministry can help you discern your call and develop your gifts for service in a range of congregational settings.

"This ministry provides a tremendous opportunity for caring, compassionate individuals to explore ways to better serve those who are searching for peace and hope."
- Cohort Participant



We're now accepting applications for admission to the 2021 School for Ministry Cohort. New classes begin in January, 2021

APPLY NOW!

For more information:
visit cciwdisciples.org/school-for-ministry

Contact:
Rev. Lorrie Reed at
lorrie@cciwdisciples.org



UCC Our Faith Our Vote Resources

The UCC Our Faith Our Vote website ourfaithourvote.org provides a host of resources to support faith-based, nonpartisan election engagement through voter registration efforts, issue education resources and ideas to mobilize voters and protect voter rights.

This year they added the [Civic Action Center](#) to the campaign, which allows voters to check on their voting registration status, register to vote (in most states and D.C.), and find polling information.



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UCC launches "Recovering Hope" emotional care resources during COVID-19

Disasters are stressful for survivors and caregivers alike, including the pastors and chaplains to whom survivors turn for spiritual and practical help. The COVID-19 pandemic is no exception. This long-running disaster is taking an enormous emotional toll on millions of people, sparing no one as they and those around them suffer sickness and death, isolation and loss of community and livelihoods.



In response, a multidisciplinary United Church of Christ team is launching "[Recovering](#)

[Hope](#),” which is rolling out resources for emotional and spiritual care to pastors, chaplains and other church leaders, congregants, vulnerable communities and beyond.

Notice Regarding Blackbaud Data Breach

The National Setting of the United Church of Christ values its relationship with you, and the protection of your personal information is of paramount importance to us. We are writing today to provide information about a data security breach recently experienced by our vendor, [Blackbaud](#), which provides support for our stewardship and philanthropy engagement programs.



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Insurance Board serving UCC Churches

What You Should Expect from Your Church's Insurance Company and Introduction to Insurance Board



A Program that is Tailored to Churches and Affiliated Ministries

We know you have a lot of options when it comes to choosing the right financial solutions and resources including church insurance. Does your current provider specialize in houses of worship?

[Read More](#)

In the Media

[St. John's Church Council in Lyons and their Green Facilities Team receive certification for reducing their worship facilities carbon footprint](#)

[Sun is nature's free gift to all](#)

['Rockford Takes Flight' is a mural for the community](#)

[Here are some Chicago-area religious services to stream online](#)

Employment Opportunities

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

Conference and UCC Calendar for August

August 11: [SANKOFA: Reaching Back and Stepping Up](#), 2:30 p.m. A conversation with

Rev. Dr. Allan Boesak & Rev. Dr. Curtiss DeYoung, co-authors of the book: Radical Reconciliation: Beyond Political Pietism and Christian Quietism. Maryknoll: Orbis.

August 12: [Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders during Coronavirus Pandemic](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. The Illinois Conference Ministry Leadership Team invites you.

August 18: [Building Bridges of Faith Across Political Divides](#), 2:30 p.m. In a time when our nation is becoming increasingly more socially, politically, and spiritually divided, what does our faith require of us?

August 19: [Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders during Coronavirus Pandemic](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. The Illinois Conference Ministry Leadership Team invites you.

August 25: [Tuesdays for Nurture: Supporting Your Pastor so They Can Support You](#), 2:30 p.m. Webinar series which we faithfully focus on education for the people of God.

August 26: [Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders during Coronavirus Pandemic](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. The Illinois Conference Ministry Leadership Team invites you.

August 26: [Police Operations, Practices and Racism](#), 7:00 p.m.- 8:30 p.m. Guest presenter André L. Watkins shares his knowledge and expertise on policing, as he addresses our concerns about police operations, practices and racism. Hosted by Pilgrim Congregational Church in Oak Park.

August 27: [Thursdays for the Soul: Sacred Boundaries Sacred Boundaries](#), at 2:30 p.m. A webinar series to care for the whole church.

August 31: [A Capital Campaign in COVID-19?!](#) The expanding definition of capital and the changing definition of campaign. FREE, one-hour webinar to discuss this very question at 1:00 p.m. Central Time. The webinar is FREE, but [registration](#) is required.

Update on Illinois Conference Offices Gradually Re-Opening

Illinois Conference staff has returned to the office on a limited basis. Half of the staff are in the office on their schedule days to allow for physical distancing. When not in the office, staff will continue to work from their homes. The office will remain closed to the public until further notice. Please remember you can always reach us by [e-mail](#) and let us know how we can be helpful.

Visit our
website



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