



NEW BEGINNINGS E-BLAST



 JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

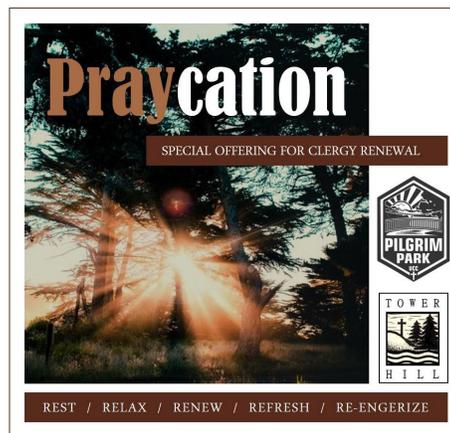
Message from the Outdoor Ministries

Rev. Tracy Heilman, Site Director, Tower Hill Camp & Retreat Center

Mr. Mitch Kloster, Site Director, Pilgrim Park Camp & Conference Center

We know the burden that our clergy are bearing during this pandemic time. We know of the additional grief they are carrying as well as the additional work they are doing as they learn new technologies to adapt. We want to offer our clergy the opportunity for some time of renewal and rest. We have cottages and cabins available at no cost.

These are self-contained facilities where clergy and their household can step away from the ordinary and enter into a sacred space. (We would gladly accept donations towards the cleaning fee, but do not want finances to keep any clergy from accepting this invitation.)



We would love and appreciate if clergy would use this setting for recording a portion of a worship service. Consider recording a reading of the scripture passage, pastoral prayer, offering, etc.

Please contact us directly if you would like to take advantage of this special "Praycation" offering.

Be well,
Tracy and Mitch

Tower Hill: (269) 426-3881 or ilconftracyth@gmail.com

Pilgrim Park: (815) 447-2390 or pilgrimparkmanager@gmail.com

A Very UCC Christmas: 2020

Brought to you by the United Church of Christ National Setting

The staff of the national setting has work on a Christmas Pageant and full worship service. Eleven digital hymns, a movie and a pageant of lessons and carols, produced by the national setting of the United Church of Christ, are available to local churches for Advent and Christmas.

A UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
CHRISTMAS PAGEANT 2020



Brought to you by the National Setting of the United Church of Christ



WHY I GIVE TO THE CHURCH

Chuck Dill

I give because my mom makes me
and it feels good to do.

Like paying for a delicious meal
and you get a doggy bag too.

This particular café dishes what I like and need
both feeding souls that hunger but also plants a seed.

Love for all is preached here and that is what I crave
I was born with that spirit in me and I'll take it to my grave.

I give because of the way you give
the way you sail this ship.

This church serves overwhelming meals
I should leave a better tip.

St. Mark UCC in Chicago Heights has always been a faithful congregation. Rev. Cheryl Roberts, Pastor of St. Mark UCC received the above poem during their recent stewardship season. Chuck Dill is the son of Dorothy Dill, a faithful member of St. Mark UCC who has served the Chicago Metropolitan Association and the Illinois Conference for many decades. Dorothy is the "my mom" of the poem.

Happenings Around the Conference



A group of volunteers from St. John United Church of Christ in Kankakee travel to Biloxi, MS last month to aid and work with Back Bay Mission in helping with Hurricane recovery. *Picture credit:* [Back Bay Mission \(Facebook Page\)](#)



What Love in action does at Plainfield Congregational UCC in Plainfield. The Stars of Hope program at MorningStar Mission received two trunk loads of gifts, lovingly adopted, shopped for, wrapped and tagged by church members. *Picture credit:* [Plainfield Congregational UCC, Plainfield \(Newsletter/Facebook Page\)](#)

Educational Programs Designed for White Church Members Who Want to Learn About Their Power to Change Structural Racism

Justice and Witness Ministry of the Chicago Metropolitan Association

The Justice and Witness Ministry of the Chicago Metropolitan Association of the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ has put together educational programs plus other resources for White church members who want to learn about structural racism and how to help bring about change.



[Visit website](#)

Training Opportunities and Resources

United Church of Christ Mental Health Network and NAMI - Mental Health Tools and Resources



Transforming Communities Through Hope

In an exceptionally difficult year, more people than ever before are struggling with their mental health.

1 in 5 adults in the United States lives with a mental health condition. 5 in 5 people have mental health, and deal with emotions like stress, worry, grief and burnout.

NAMI is partnering with faith communities across Illinois, building their knowledge and skills to minister to those who are hurting in different ways.

Faith communities are already doing this work—breaking bread, feeding and clothing people, comforting those who grieve. Partner with NAMI to learn new skills to help you in this journey, and gain a long-term ally and resource you can call for support.

NAMI IS OFFERING:

- A free, virtual mental health education session for your faith leadership or congregation through NAMI's "Bridges of Hope"
- Long-term partnership and a resource you can rely on for help for those you serve support.

To partner with NAMI's "Bridges of Hope", visit namichicago.org/faith or call 833-626-4244.



[Visit website](#)

News from UCC Mental Health Network's Annual Board of Directors Meeting

Saludos!

The UCC Mental Health Network is excited to announce that at our recent Board of Directors meeting, we set forth the following goals for the coming year:

- Creation of a quarterly newsletter
- Development of videos, discussion guides, and other digital materials, covering the connection between racism, discrimination against LGBTQIA+ individuals, and mental health injustice. This initiative is funded through a generous 2020 UCC Genesis Grant
- Becoming an Open and Affirming ministry.

As we embark on the forthcoming year, the MHN Board asks you to hold us in prayer as we work with faith communities worldwide to create *A Just World for All*. To join us in becoming WISE with regards to mental health, substance use disorders, and other brain disorders, please reach out to us at wise@mhn-ucc.org.

Paz y bendiciones,
Jon Gilbert Martinez, M.Div.,
MHN Board Vice-Chair

[@UCCMHN](#) MHN-UCC.ORG

Inside this Edition

- Coping with the Holidays pg 2
- Resources for Help pg 3
- Board Transitions pg 4
- WISE Church Updates pg 5

[Click to here read newsletter](#)

Faith-based Organizing Training for Justice Four Theological Framings of Resistance as Discipleship

The United Church of Christ and the National Council of Churches have joined forces to offer faith-based organizing training to the wider church and beyond. During this Advent season of viral pandemics, racial injustice, economic uncertainty, physical isolation, and socio-political strife, how does one prepare for what is to come? Advent is the season Christians are called to prepare for the coming of Jesus in the world and, with Jesus, the in-breaking of justice. What distinguishes faith-based organizing from other trainings is our reason why. These trainings are built on a foundation of discipleship.

ADVENT
A SEASON OF PREPARATION
FAITH-BASED ORGANIZING TRAINING FOR JUSTICE

FORMAT
4 ADVENT SUNDAY AFTERNOONS
4 INTERACTIVE ORGANIZING TRAININGS
4 THEOLOGICAL FRAMINGS OF RESISTANCE AS DISCIPLESHIP

WHEN
NOV. 29
DEC. 6
DEC. 13
DEC. 20
4PM - 6PM EDT

TRAINERS
REV. VIRGINIA SHAW
REV. TRACY HOWE
REV. OSWALDO SANCHEZ
REV. SETH WOODRUFF
REV. DR. VICKI LOVE

MODERATOR
REV. DR. VICKI LOVE

THEOLOGICAL FRAMERS
REV. TRACY BLACKMON | REV. ALBERTA ALEXANDER
REV. DR. LESLIE COPELAND TUNE | SANDY SORENOHN

REGISTRATION FEE
\$25 PER PERSON OR \$40 FOR ALL 4 SESSIONS
\$199 GROUP RATE

AN OFFERING OF JUSTICE & LOCAL CHURCH
MINISTRIES OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
WITH THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

[Click here to Register](#)

From our covenant Partner, Advocate Aurora Health

COVID 19 and Flu Resources for Your Faith Community

Protect Yourself

And Your Community



Influenza (Flu) is not just a bad cold. It is an illness caused by flu viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness and can lead to missed days at work or school and even hospitalization. Some people die from flu each year. The best way to protect yourself and those around you is by getting a flu shot each year.

Although the most effective way to prevent the seasonal flu is to be vaccinated, the 2018-2019 seasonal flu vaccinations were low across the Black (39%), Hispanic (37%), and Asian (44%) ethnic groups.



Getting the flu shot can help keep you and your community healthy!

Who should get a flu shot?

- People with chronic health conditions
- People living in overcrowded homes
- Children 6 months of age and older
- People 65 and over
- Pregnant women

What are common Flu Symptoms?

- Fever, muscle aches, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headaches, body aches, and fatigue



AdvocateAuroraHealth

See flyer in [English](#)

Flu Myths vs Flu Facts

MOST COMMON MYTHS SURROUNDING THE FLU SHOT

MYTH: Flu shots are not proven to prevent the flu.

FACT: You are at least 70% less likely to become infected with the flu virus.

MYTH: You can get the flu virus from the flu shot.

FACT: Flu viruses in flu shots are inactivated and therefore can not cause infection.

MYTH: The flu shot will protect me from every type of flu virus.

FACT: The flu shot is designed to protect against the highest circulating strains of the flu.

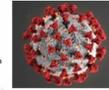
MYTH: I never get the flu, I do not need the flu shot.

FACT: By getting the flu shot, you protect yourself and others because you are less likely to spread the flu.

See flyer in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)

COVID 19 Resources

The spread of COVID-19 is a rapidly evolving situation. Continue to check the [CDC website](#) for up-to-date information and guidance.



See a list of COVID-19 resources specifically for faith communities in [Illinois](#) and [Wisconsin](#), including resiliency resources, mental health resources, guidance on safely reopening your house of worship and more.

The Advocate Aurora Health COVID-19 [hotline](#) at 1-866-4-HEALTH is staffed by clinicians who can answer questions about symptoms and determine the next steps in care.

Our online [COVID-19 Symptom Checker](#) is the best way for patients to find the care they need. By answering a few simple questions, they'll quickly learn what they need to do next - from seeing a provider with a video visit - 24/7 - to contacting their doctor.

The Advocate Aurora Health [LiveWell app](#) offers virtual appointments and virtual visits with physicians 24-hours a day.

The Advocate Aurora Health COVID-19 Resource Center in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) provides the most up-to-date information, tools and resources, including the [policies for visiting patients in our hospitals](#), a COVID-19 Symptom Checker, CDC resources, [www.youcan donate, volunteer, and help](#) - and more.

Flyers to Download and Share

Show Love, Stay Home

How to Stay Safe Dining at a Restaurant [English version](#)

How to Stay Safe at Gatherings and Cookouts [English version](#)

How to Stay Safe at the Gym in [Spanish](#)

How to be Safe at Home in [Spanish](#)

How to Stay Safe at Work in [Spanish](#)

How to Stay Safe on Public Transportation in [Spanish](#)

Phase 4 Reminders [English version](#) and [Spanish version](#)

How to Protect Yourself and Others While Traveling in [English](#)

[Click](#) to download this COVID-19 resource flyer

Faith and Mental Health Specialist and Liaison Services

Amy McNicholas, LCPC, [Faith and Mental Health Specialist for Advocate Aurora Health](#), is committed to supporting the emotional well-being of faith communities through a variety of programs and services:

- Individual clergy consultations
- Informational webinars (topics to fit your needs)
- Online support groups
- Virtual Mental Health First Aid
- Emotional well-being resources

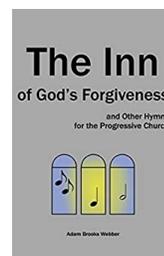
Please email or call if you need support: amy.mcnicholas@aah.org or (630) 929-9103.

The Inn of God's Forgiveness

Adam Webber

Adam Webber, pastor of Open Prairie UCC in Princeton, has created a beautiful resource of hymns, essays, and companion videos entitled "*The Inn of God's Forgiveness*". It is available now at [Adam's online store](#). You can also purchase the "*The Inn of God's Forgiveness*" (paperback and Kindle version) at [Amazon.com](#).

All proceeds support the ministries of Open Prairie UCC in Princeton.



Generations: A Journal of Faith and Finance

The first issue of a new Pension Boards online publication, Generations: A Journal of Faith and Finance, addresses a variety of current issues related to the places in our personal and corporate economic lives where the values of faith intersect with our financial obligations and opportunities. The inaugural issue is themed: "Mobilizing Resources for Change."

[Read it here >>](#)



In the Media

[Coalition working on homeless issues in Jefferson Park, seeks public bathroom at or near CTA Terminal](#)

[Chicago church releases a beer for Advent — and the end of the world](#)

[Oregon has shown us how to finally end the war on drugs](#)

Article published recently written by Alexander E. Sharp who is a CMA United Church of Christ minister and executive director of Clergy for a New Drug Policy.

[‘We’re not asking for any more than what we are already deserved’](#)

[Young advocates form green team to bring new trees, healthy food to South Side neighborhoods](#)

Employment Opportunities

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

Conference and UCC Calendar for December

December 5: [To the Clergy and Laity of the Eastern Association and The Committee on Ministry of the Eastern Association, Illinois Conference, United Church of Christ reminds you to register for and attend the Ecclesiastical Council for Matthew Wolf](#), 3:00 p.m. via ZOOM. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing the Zoom link for joining the event. If you need assistance registering, please contact Rev. Kim Wood at (630) 707-9991. [Register here.](#)

December 8: [Clergy Conversation Isolation- The Covid and its impact on older adults](#), 10:00 a.m. via Zoom. Advocate Faith and Health Partnerships invite all faith leaders to a virtual clergy conversation on social isolation of older adults.

December 9: [The EPA in 2021: Prioritizing Moral Accountability - UCC Webinar](#) 12: 00 p.m. via Zoom. This webinar is co-hosted by the Rev. Dr. Brooks Berndt of the United Church of Christ Environmental Justice Ministry and the Rev. Michael Malcom of Alabama Interfaith Power & Light and the People's Justice Council.

December 9: [All Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom.

December 9: [LGBTQIA+ Platform discovery session](#), 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. Join Rev. Jason Carson Wilson and learn more about how you can work with Community Renewal Society to create a safer and just world, where all LGBTQIA+ people live with dignity, live in peace, and enjoy equality.

December 12: [Chicago Community Chorus Holiday Concert](#), 6:45 p.m. via YouTube. This free concert features holiday music for every musical taste, from Hebrew and Mexican folksongs to gospel. Something for everyone!

December 13: [Festival of Giving at St. John UCC, Palatine](#), noon to 4:00 p.m.

December 16: [All Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom.

Upcoming Events in 2021

January 6: [All Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom.

January 18 or 22: [Empowering Communication: A Tool to Overcome Divisions and Liberate Love in Ourselves and Others](#) (Workshop 1), 11:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m. CT via Zoom. Sponsored by Institute for Empowering Communication. Facilitators: Rev. Joel Westby and Rev. Leslie Ritter-Jenkins.

January 25 or 29: [Bridging Deep Divides: How Empowering Communication Builds Connection, Trust, and Community](#) (Workshop 2), 11:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m. CT via Zoom. Sponsored by Institute for Empowering Communication. Facilitators: Rev. Joel Westby and Rev. Leslie Ritter-Jenkins.

February 1 or 5: [Self Care that is Not Selfish: Five Steps to Healing, Renewal, and Moving Forward with Clarity](#) (Workshop 3), 11:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m. CT via Zoom. Sponsored by Institute for Empowering Communication. Facilitators: Rev. Joel Westby and Rev. Leslie Ritter-Jenkins.

February 8 or 12: [Lead from the Heart: Step into Your Authority without Becoming Authoritarian](#) (Workshop 4), 11:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m. CT via Zoom. Sponsored by Institute for Empowering Communication. Facilitators: Rev. Joel Westby and Rev. Leslie Ritter-Jenkins.

July 11-18: [2021 General Synod 33 - Rooted in Love](#)

Update on Illinois Conference Offices

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



DONATE NOW!



THE ILLINOIS CONFERENCE UCC E-BLAST is published by the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ, 1840 Westchester Blvd., Suite 200, Westchester, IL 60154. The Rev. Molly Carlson, Conference Minister; Carmen Torres, Editor. Copy may be sent to: ilconfcarmen@gmail.com.

This communication is made possible by your contributions to

Our Church's Wider Mission

Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ | (708) 344-4470
1840 Westchester Blvd., Suite 200, Westchester, IL 60154