



NEW BEGINNINGS E-BLAST



 JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

Advent Blessings, Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year

*May the light of the world heal all the wounds of 2020
and the hope, peace, love, and joy of the
Christ child lead us into the abundance of 2021.*

From your Conference Staff and Elected Leaders

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Molly Carlson	Michelle Hughes	Kathy Lawes
Kim Wood	Terrill Murff	Mitch Kloster
Keith Clark-Hoyos	Tracy Heilman	
Tara Cade	Karen Boyk	Matt Martinkus
Naomi Else	Wayne MacPherson	
Priscilla Rodriguez		
Jeri Edelberg	Julie Grendahl	Carmen Torres



The Conference Office will be closed from 12/24/2020 - 1/1/2021. In addition, all of the ACMs have much needed vacation scheduled at the end of the year. Conference Minister, Rev. Molly Carlson, will be on call for pastoral or congregational emergencies. She can be reached at ilconfmolly@gmail.com or (605) 760-2489. Molly will enjoy vacation the first week of the new year and all calls can be directed through your ACM or the Conference Office.

Message from the Illinois Conference President

Mr. David Holston

What a year it has been! As we look to the end of 2020, I am grateful for our new Conference Minister, Reverend Molly Carlson, and her strength of character and love of her church. I give thanks to our wonderful staff and appreciate how hard they have worked all year to serve our Conference and be transparent at all times. I am particularly grateful for the many friendships developed and grown as we work together to bring the love of Christ to our communities during this time together. I give God the glory for providing Grace to all of us and showing us



Telling Stories in the Light

Rev. Brandyn Simmons

We all have stories. Congregants, pastors, even churches - all of us have our narratives. But is it a true one? During this season of Advent, we are called to wait in expectation for the birth of the beautiful and hopeful. But does this mean that we must do so in complacency or passivity? Can't we be proactive and help along the birth process by writing good and true stories?

To paraphrase Meister Eckhart, what good does it do if Mary birthed God 2,000 years ago if we don't continue to birth God into the world every day?



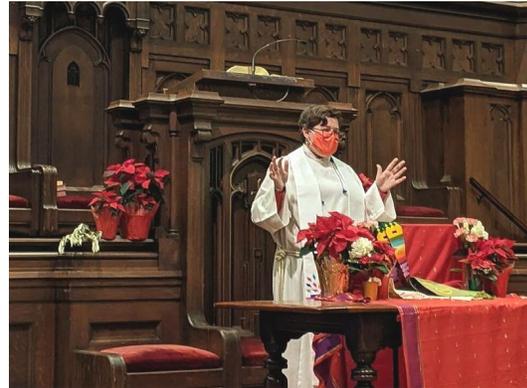
[Read More](#)

Happenings Around the Conference



Darlene Riddle, Marge Maynard, and Jay Baker members from Second Congregational UCC/First Presbyterian Church of Rockford on Dec. 4 prep food for the Jubilee Soup Kitchen. Thank you all for your gift of time and talent!

Picture credit: John Maynard at [Second Congregational UCC/First Presbyterian Church of Rockford \(Facebook\)](#)



Ally Vertigan who served First Congregational Church of Glen Ellyn as the church's work camp coordinator for four years was ordained on Sunday, Dec. 13, as a minister in the UCC. Ally is serving as a hospital chaplain at Rush hospital (a heroic position these days). Ally has expressed deep gratitude for FCCGE and all that she learned and the people she loves at our church.

Picture credit: [First Congregational Church of Glen Ellyn \(Facebook\)](#)

Illinois Conference UCC Streaming Churches

As a precautionary measure against spreading COVID-19, churches continue to live stream their Sunday worship services and holiday events. Click link below to join a live stream worship service. If you would like to have your church added to the list, please email Carmen at ilconfcarmen@gmail.com.



[Worship Live Stream Services](#)

Training Opportunities and Resources

Connect Your Church and Expand Your Reach

ACS Technologies Group, Inc.

Discover how you can develop two-way communication and connection with your entire church amid a global pandemic.

A valuable resource to help your church live-stream where it matters so you can grow your groups and your church when most others are shrinking.



[Download Your Free Copy](#)

Institute for Empowering Communication will offer Four Empowering Communication Workshops for Ministry Students and Clergy in 2021

Empowering Communication: A Tool to Overcome Divisions and Liberate Love in Ourselves and Others

(Workshop 1) - Jan 18 (Mon) or 22 (Fri)

In this workshop you will gain skills that deepen connection with yourself, the divine and others.



Bridging Deep Divides: How Empowering Communication Builds Connection, Trust, and Community

(Workshop 2) - January 25 (Mon) or 29 (Fri)

In this workshop you will amplify your pastoral care skills. You will learn how to hear criticism and identify the life-serving message within it.



Self Care that is Not Selfish: Five Steps to Healing, Renewal, and Moving Forward with Clarity

(Workshop 3) - February 1 (Mon) or 5 (Fri)

In this workshop you will learn Empowering Communication's unique five-step process to renew our hearts and minds.



Lead from the Heart: Step into Your Authority without Becoming Authoritarian

(Workshop 4) - February 8 (Mon) or 12 (Fri)

Learn how to be respectful and sensitive with others without giving up your voice.



[Click here for additional information and to register](#)

What's Next? A Resiliency Program

Advocate Aurora Health

"What's Next?" is a weekly resilience program that combines evidence-based scientific studies with encouragement from faith-based resources. Participants will gain tools to:

- build resilience amid the difficulties of life
- learn from their experiences
- use the knowledge they gain to nourish themselves and the world around them



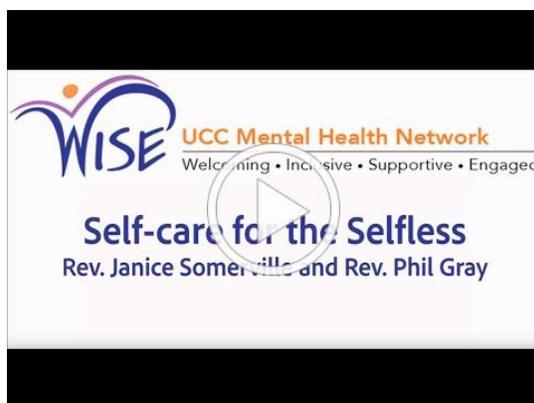
Attend any or all sessions offered on Wednesdays, beginning Dec. 16 through Dec. 30 at 6:00 p.m. LaShondria Purnell, RN, a faith community nurse with Advocate Aurora Health, facilitates "What's Next?" and looks forward to learning alongside you.

[Register Here](#)

Self-care for the Selfless

United Church of Christ Mental Health Network

How can we love our neighbor if we do not love ourselves? ... Can we, the pastoral leaders in our churches, learn to love ourselves and care for ourselves as we love and care for our neighbors? A topic not just for clergy – this workshop (*previous recorded*) is also for lay leaders who are concerned about the well-being of their pastors.



You are Invited to a Virtual Town Hall on the COVID-19 Vaccine

Advocate Aurora Health

Join Advocate Aurora Health on Wednesday, Dec. 16, at noon to get your questions answered on the COVID-19 vaccine. Is it safe? Who will get the vaccine first?

We'll provide the facts, discuss what we currently know and how Advocate Aurora Health is managing the distribution of the vaccine. We'll also share why wearing masks, maintaining social distancing and washing your hands will continue to be critical.

This Q&A will be hosted by Advocate Aurora Health CEO Jim Skogsbergh and he will be joined by our experts, including our Executive Medical Director of Infectious Disease and Prevention, Dr. Robert Citronberg.



[Click here to RSVP "Going." You will get a notification when the video goes live.](#)

[For additional COVID-19 vaccine information and resources, click here](#)

In the Media

[Eden United raising funds to replace sanctuary roof, fix organ](#)

[Frankfort church designated as village's first historic landmark](#)

[Congregation donates \\$270K to social-service organizations after historic Lake View church sale](#)

[St. Peter's Designated As Frankfort's First Historic Landmark](#)

[First Congregational United Church of Christ in Downers Grove buys neighboring church](#)

Employment Opportunities

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

Conference and UCC Calendar for December

December 16: [Facebook Live - Ask the Experts: COVID-19 Vaccine](#), 12:00 p.m., RSVP "Going" so you get a notification when the video goes live.

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

December 16: [What's Next? A Resiliency Program](#), 6:00 p.m. Hosted by Advocate Aurora Health.

December 17: [Blue Christmas Service](#), 2:30 p.m. Hosted by by the National Setting's Thursday's for the Soul in partnership with the Overdose and Drug Use Ministries as well as the UCC Mental Health Network.

December 23: [What's Next? A Resiliency Program](#), 6:00 p.m. Hosted by Advocate Aurora Health.

December 30: [What's Next? A Resiliency Program](#), 6:00 p.m. Hosted by Advocate Aurora Health.

Upcoming Events in 2021

January 4: [Ecclesiastical Council for Marietta Hebert-Davis](#), 6:30 p.m. via Zoom. Convened by Chicago Metropolitan Association Cluster Six. Contact Rev. Wayne MacPherson, Administrative Support Staff, Chicago Metropolitan Association at ilconfwayne@gmail.com for login information.

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.

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.

January 27: [UCC Just Peace Committee](#), 6:00 p.m.via Zoom. The Just Peace Steering Committee will be hosting a webinar to invite Just Peace Churches (and those exploring becoming a [Just Peace Church](#)) to explore the important justice work ahead of us in 2021. Details and log-in instructions will be sent in the New Year.

February 1 and 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.

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.

March 3: [Yearbook Online Submission Deadline!](#) The CARDD office is pleased to offer a Yearbook Help Line. The Help Line will be available Monday – Friday from 9:00 a.m.- 3:30 p.m. (Eastern Time) till March 3. The phone number is (216) 736-3837. The Yearbook Data Hub will be open to churches at noon on Jan. 6, 2021 and will remain available until March 3.

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!



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Our Church's Wider Mission

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