

Illinois Conference UCC E-Newsletter



From the Conference Minister

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

May God's grace and the love of the Christ abide with you in 2017 and always.

Yes, 2016 has come to an end, and some seem to be pleased that the year has ended. Whatever our thoughts may be about 2016, it is behind us. God saw us through it and has brought us to this New Year, one that we pray will bring new Epiphanies to our lives, family and loved ones.



We are reminded that there were occurrences and decisions made that will have implications for the present and future. The past year may have had occurrences that we would rather forget, yet it also had wonderful, blessed ones. There are things we want to remember and from everything we can find new learning for better living and serving. Valued learning from the past helps us to resolve to be better Christians and servants of the Christ and God's creations. I pray that what we have learned and what God has revealed will serve us well, as Christians and members of the wider community.

This past year our UCC General Minister and President, along with denominational leaders, provided a new purpose and vision for our United Church of Christ. This is a discerned and Spirit-lead outcome of who we want to be and how we want to witness in 2017 and years to come until God provides further revelation.

The following is what has been cast as the purpose, vision and mission of our Church:

Purpose statement from the Gospel of Matthew: To love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves.

Vision statement: United in Christ's love, a just world for all.

Mission statement: United in Spirit and inspired by God's grace, we welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.

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QUICK LINKS TO WEBSITES

[Chicago Metropolitan Association](#)

[Eastern Association](#)

[Fox Valley Association](#)

[Western Association](#)

[Prairie Association](#)

[Pilgrim Park](#)

[Tower Hill](#)

QUICK UPDATES

Outdoor Ministries

*Tower Hill Camp and
Retreat Center*

[2017 Facility Rates](#)
[Event Schedule](#)

*Pilgrim Park Camp and
Conference Center*

[2017 Facility Rates](#)
[Event Schedule](#)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Years ago, an organizing colleague and friend stated to me that we humans are very good at identifying and stating those values we claim as ours, but that we must realize how challenged we are to live by those values.

I invite prayers for our living well-informed about the past and Spirit-driven to witness in the present and time to come, making the world a better place for all. May we live spiritually, in God's grace, passionate about our love of God and in vibrant relationship with our neighbor.

May we all witness to justice for all.

Rev. Dr. Jorge L. Morales
Conference Minister

**Illinois Conference UCC
History, Theology, and
Polity Class**

Session One:

March 31-April 1, 2017

Pilgrim Park, Princeton

Session Two:

May 5-May 6, 2017

Pilgrim Park, Princeton

Session Three:

June 8-June 9, 2017

Elmhurst College, Elmhurst,

[Click here to view more information](#)

**Illinois Conference
Annual Celebration**



**Report from the Interim Associate Conference Minister for
Stewardship and Church Vitality**

Healthy churches need healthy pastors

That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. (Luke 24:33, NRSV)

After Jesus' death, the disciples really "gathered together". Of course throughout Christ's ministry, he gathered them together many times. And so, we, the church, gather together. But where and when do pastors "gather together"?

Pastors shepherd, reach out, teach, serve, counsel, challenge, lead, listen, bless and more. But where does the pastor receive ministry? She/he leads worship, but where do they worship?

Years ago, I remember attending an Alban Institute leadership seminar with Roy Oswald. Midway through the second day, he asked the group of 125 pastors which ones of us saw a Spiritual Director. I was one of the 50% that didn't raise my hand. I found out that day how important it is for ministers to have someone(s) to go to, be with, and reflect with about the joys and concerns of ministry. How can we pastors ask and encourage others to grow in faith if we don't practice the disciplines of spiritual growth ourselves.

In 2017, the Illinois Conference is expanding our ministry of **Clergy Communities of Practice** (CCoP). These are small groups of pastors that meet once a month for support, to develop their practice of ministry and for worship. They are different from Clergy Clusters in that they are intentionally focused, usually smaller and closed for one year at a time to develop trust and confidence. Too often our pastors operate alone, feel alone and even behave like lone rangers. That can lead to an unhealthy pastor-congregation relationship.

The Wisconsin and Massachusetts UCC Conferences have large CCoP ministries. The Massachusetts Conference did a study showing that pastors in these groups serve congregations with fewer conflicts, and these pastors stay in ministry longer than the average pastorate. Pastors need a place to be together, learn, grow spiritually and be healthy pastors.

If you are a lay leader, support your Pastor attending a CCoP group (see p.g. 3 of our [Guidelines for the Call and Support of Ministry](#)). If you are a Pastor, contact me about joining a CCoP group. (If there are some pastors who are interested in facilitating a CCoP group, please contact me soon at ilconfdavid@gmail.com or (708) 344-4470).

Healthy churches need healthy pastors.

Rev. Dr. David Russell
Interim Associate Conference Minister
for Stewardship and Church Vitality

News from Eastern Association

The Eastern Association gathered for an Ecclesiastical Council at Grace United Church of Christ in Sauk Village on Dec. 4 in order to examine Lorrie Reed, an Ordination Candidate of the Eastern Association. Lorrie shared an excellent presentation of the fundamentals of her Ordination Paper and theological understandings which were followed by questions from the gathered body of the Association. A unanimous vote affirmed the recommendation of the Eastern Association Committee on Ministry, which stated that Lorrie is prepared for Ordination in the United Church of Christ. A service of Ordination is in the planning stages, after a call to staff ministry at Grace UCC in Sauk Village is completed.



Lorrie Reed (right), Candidate for Ordination.

We are pleased to share that First Congregational UCC in Decatur has called Rev. Ryan Travis to become their next settled Pastor, following the service of worship on Jan. 8. Ryan will begin his new ministry in Decatur on Feb. 20, 2017. We look forward to welcoming him into the Eastern Association family.

SAVE THE DATE! The Eastern Association Spring Meeting will be held at Grace United Church of Christ in Sauk Village on Saturday, May 6.

News from Western Association

The Western Association was pleased to share in a service of Installation at Union United Church of Christ in Moline on Sunday, Jan. 8, 2017, when Pastor Lisa Williams was Installed as the Pastor of the congregation. Rev. Kathy Lawes and Mary Newcomb, Member of the Western Church and Ministry Committee, led the Installation portion of the service.

SAVE THE DATE! The Western Association Spring Meeting will be held at First Congregational UCC in Springfield on April 22, 2017. Rev. Bryan Sirchio will be the special guest and keynoter at our meeting.

Applications sought for Conference Archivist

Are you passionate about the history of the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ and its history? Do you love digging through boxes of dusty tomes searching for Baptismal, Confirmation and Marriage records? Does the smell of lignin and old leather make your heart sing? Then you might just be an ideal candidate for Conference Archivist.

We are seeking an individual or individuals with the above passions, and perhaps some record-keeping, library or archivist experience to be Conference Archivist. This volunteer position, an appointment of the Conference Minister, will begin immediately upon identifying a qualified individual or individuals.

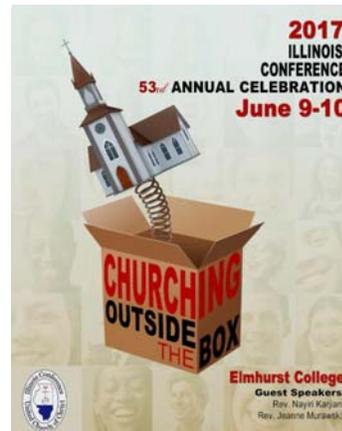
To apply, send a letter of interest to:
The Rev. Dr. James J. Olson, OCC

Acting Associate Conference Minister
Fox Valley Association and Chicago Metropolitan Association
Illinois Conference, United Church of Christ
1840 Westchester Blvd., Suite 200
Westchester, IL 60154
(708) 344-4470 x229

Volunteer for the Conference Annual Meeting

Greetings, Grace & Peace:

A lot of time and effort goes into planning the Illinois Conference Annual Celebration! The planning of the Conference Committee is going well, but there is still so much to be done. That's why we're writing to request...to ask you if you could spare some time to work with us on behalf of this year's celebration, "Churching Outside the Box." We think of the Annual Celebration as not only a time to renew acquaintances, fellowship with our current church members and make new friends across the Illinois Conference, but also as a time of learning and of uplifting worship experiences.



There's no special expertise required to volunteer, and you don't have to have a major degree. All you need is a willingness to serve, and believe that volunteers play a vital role in the life of our church community. If you believe this, there is a place for you to be connected, and be involved! There's a lot to do, and we need your help. Our teams of need are:

Stage Hands

Hospitality

Energizers

Cookie Baking

CHILDCARE

Youth Programs

Prayer and Meditation

Look forward to receiving more details soon. To volunteer at the Annual Conference will be one of the most fulfilling things you have ever done. If you would like more information to join the cookie share program [click here](#).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Warm Regards,
Sis. Marva Campbell-Pruitt
Marvacpruitt@gmail.com
Volunteer/Hospitality Team

Rev. Thom Parrott Sheffer
Team Leader

Updates from Tower Hill Camp and Retreat Center

Dear Friends of Tower Hill:

Greetings of grace and peace to you.

It's a new year and a time to reflect on the past and look to the future at Tower Hill Camp and Retreat Center. We are grateful to the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ and Outdoor Ministries Committee for the vision, purpose and leadership that guide our staff toward faithful service and care of this facility. In 2016, we made many new friends and we're blessed to welcome many old friends back to Tower Hill. We would like to thank them all for the continued financial, physical and emotional support of this very sacred place.

2016 evolved into a year of change and of decisions. The Seasonal Cottage closure and the impact on families encouraged us to look at building usage and possible restructuring. Now, in 2017, we can begin to showcase exciting changes; changes made possible thanks to the efforts of the Chikaming Open Lands group and the funds from the resulting Conservation Easement agreement.

Late last fall, renovations started on the three A-Frames adjacent to Edwards Lodge. The former youth bunk rooms are now comfortable family-style accommodations that are climate controlled, sleep six, offer a full bathroom, sitting area and amenities including a flat-screen TV, DVD player, a microwave oven, compact refrigerator, coffee maker and coffee supplies. Bed linens and towels are provided as well.

Beginning Feb. 1, the A-Frames may be rented individually or in combination with other buildings. We welcome families, church, ministry, business and school groups to experience this place that will take you "Out of the Ordinary and Into the Sacred."

We look forward to your stay with us in 2017. Call (269) 426-3881 or email Towerhillcamp@gmail.com to make your reservation. [Click here to access the 2017 rate chart](#) and [event schedule](#). Please review and contact us if you have any questions.

Thank you for your continued support,

Sincerely,
Douglas C. Pompey
Site Manager

Website Available Free to UCC Churches

In an effort to make online communication easier and more effective for every United Church of Christ congregation in 2017, the UCC's web partner, Ministry Designs, is giving away websites to every local church that needs one to kick off the New Year.

"It is our goal to help as many UCC churches with their websites as possible," said Tyler Rominger of Ministry Designs. "Our partnership has gone so well over the last couple of months and we've built so many amazing relationships that we wanted to completely eliminate the start-up cost and remove any barrier for other churches to get started with a great website."

In this offer, which runs from Jan. 1 through Feb. 15, Ministry Designs is offering to help create a website for local churches using one of four designs created specifically for UCC congregations. That service, when sold to the public, usually costs \$1,000. Previously discounted to \$500 as part of the UCC Stillspeaking 2.0 Toolkit, for the next 45 days, there are no set up costs. To be clear, churches will still be responsible for a minimal monthly hosting fee of \$35, which also includes support, system updates, unlimited storage, unlimited pages, and unlimited emails.

"After several years of frustrating website design dilemmas, we finally found Ministry Designs," said Brenda Caswell of Bethany Church UCC in Randolph, Vermont. "Like many smaller churches, we don't have a large budget for a web design person so it was important to find a company that made eye-catching websites; offers an easy to use program so even a person with no web design experience could learn how to use it; and has real people to answer questions when necessary. They helped transfer pages from our old site to our new one; they have been responsive and patient with us as we navigated the process and I love their [Youtube channel](#) which allowed me to learn about



specific editing tools, as necessary without being overwhelmed. The whole process has been smooth and feedback from our congregation on the final product has been wonderfully positive."

Once the website is up, Ministry Designs' content management system can be revised by directly by people at the church, users with little or no web experience. The company also provides churches with the knowledge and the tools to update and maintain their site.

"Since I don't work on the website daily, the tasks aren't always fresh in my mind, so a quick call here and there doesn't seem to bother Ministry Designs," said Karol Collins of St. Paul's UCC in St. Louis Missouri. "We have saved ½ time because we can make all the changes ourselves. On our previous site, we had to send in changes and wait for the updates to be made by someone out of town, which sometimes could take days or weeks."

Churches interested in taking advantage of this offer, or looking for more information should check out the company's [UCC page](#). They have four themes built specifically for the UCC, with 18 looks that work for any faith community. After February 15, the start-up costs revert to \$500.

"Having a quality website in today's day and age is a requirement for success however you define it," said Rominger. "We look forward to serving as many UCC churches with our award-winning tools and world-class support as we can!"

--Connie Larkman

Participate in annual yearbook data collection

Once again it's time for our churches to participate in the annual yearbook data collection.

To login to the UCC Data Hub please go to <http://datahub.ucc.org/>. For instructions on how to submit data [click here](#).

The church's ID number is the Conference number (16) followed by the church's number. When you go into the system for the first time, "password" is the default password. Please change your password as soon as you enter the DataHub.

If your church is unable to complete electronically or you need additional assistance contact your Association Office. The deadline for online submission is March 8, 2017.

Thanks for all you do to help getting church records updated and accurate for the Illinois Conference.

Chicago Metropolitan Association: Rev. Wayne Macpherson at ilconfwayne@gmail.com

Fox Valley Association: Naomi Else at ilconfnaomi@gmail.com

Prairie Association: Rev. Kathy Lawes at ilconfkathy@gmail.com

Eastern and Western Association: Connie Owens at ilconfconnie@gmail.com

The time is now: Seven ways to jump - start your Advocacy in 2017

"The time is always right to do what is right." Martin Luther King, Jr.

The words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., spoken decades ago, are as true today as they ever were. Moving into a new year, one that holds tremendous challenges and opportunities, your faithful advocacy is now more important than ever.

We are here to partner with you - to support you, struggle with you,



celebrate with you and share your story as we work for justice and peace in 2017 and beyond.



Ready to get to it? Here are seven ideas to jump-start your advocacy in 2017:

1) Strengthen the Movement:

Invite at least 10 friends to join the UCC Justice and Peace Action Network. Share the link to join ([ucc.org/join the network](http://ucc.org/join-the-network)) or [download a sign up sheet](#) and collect signatures in your congregation and send it back to us at ucctakeaction@ucc.org.

2) Support Each Other:

Reach out to others in your congregation and local community who are doing justice work. Pray together. Create safe space for healing and recharging. Find ways you can support each other's efforts throughout the year. Also "like" our [Facebook page](#) to connect with other UCC advocates and find events and resources.

3) Learn & Advocate:

Ask important questions and deepen your knowledge of the important policy issues and their impact on the most vulnerable in our communities. We have highlighted a few of the major policy issues likely to see action in the coming months. While not an exhaustive list, you can click here to find out more about several specific policy issues in these key areas:

- [Immigration](#)
- [Health Care](#)
- [Environmental justice](#)
- [Human rights](#)
- [Global Peacemaking](#)

4) Build Relationships:

Reach out to and establish relationships with key decision makers at all levels of policymaking - from school boards, to city councils, to state legislatures, to members of Congress and the new Administration. Introduce yourself as a member of the United Church of Christ who cares about justice and the common good. [Enter your address here to find your elected officials.](#)

5) Show Up:

Participate in and organize your own public witness events. Many national events, such as the upcoming Women's March on Washington in January have coinciding local and regional events. [\[Learn more about the UCC presence at the Washington, DC gathering.\]](#)

6) Take Your Advocacy to the Next Level:

Plan to attend the [2017 Ecumenical Advocacy Days conference](#) in Washington, DC, April 21-24, 2017. The theme is "Confronting Chaos, Forging Community," addressing the challenges of racism, materialism and militarism. Our very own UCC General Minister and President John Dorhauer will be delivering a keynote address at the conference. [Click here to learn more and register.](#)

7) Remember That Your Voice Matters:

Although the advocacy landscape for the year ahead will hold challenges and uncertainties, there are things we can count on - our voice is as important as it ever was, and as difficult as the way forward may seem, we have the gifts and tools we need for the work. We are surrounded and uplifted by our courageous and prophetic UCC justice witness over the years, and by the great cloud of witnesses who have struggled before us. We are not alone - the transformative spirit of God moves in, through and among our community and communities.

In taking up the challenge to bring healing to a broken world, I think often of the teaching of Rabbi Tarfon, words that have helped sustain me when my spirit is weary: "It is not incumbent upon you to finish the task. Yet you are not free to desist from it." And so it is, in such a time as this, as we follow the arc of the universe that bends toward justice.

We look forward to working and witnessing together with you!

Courage in the struggle for justice and peace,

[Sandy Sorensen](#)

Director, United Church of Christ Washington Office

Report from the Angola Partnership Team

The Illinois Conference has been in partnership with the Evangelical Congregational Church in Angola (IECA) since 2004. There have been delegations of Angolans and Illinoisans back and forth, most recently with six people travelling to Angola in the late summer of 2016. Representing Union Church of Hinsdale were Rev. Mike and Janine Solberg. Representing Trinity UCC in Chicago were: Rev. Cedric and Michelle McKay and Edward and Doris Davis. Several projects, identified as priorities by IECA, such as the provision of 1,000 Bibles, the building of a primary school and of housing for seminary students, have been completed.

IECA has identified current priorities of developing educational, medical and agricultural services for the people of Angola. These projects expand on IECA's mission to build avenues for peace and justice after more than a generation of war.

In 2017, we are working together on an exciting goal, one of IECA's current priorities, the founding of a university at Dondi, a former mission station on the central plateau of Angola. Our Angolan partners have named four administrators of this university to travel to Illinois for several months starting in March. They will study English and university administration. They want to meet many people, especially in UCC churches, and to see various parts of Illinois.

Perhaps your church would like to host one or more of these partners. Perhaps you want to know more about the development of the university or other priorities. Perhaps you just want to know more about the Angola Partnership. Contact either Nancy Reed, Convenor of the Illinois Partnership at nreed8603@yahoo.com or (708) 574-5046 or Rev. Tom Norwalk, Illinois Conference staff person at ilconfom@gmail.com or (815) 768-5511.

--Nancy Reed

Back Bay Mission 2017 and 2018 information

Back Bay Mission Accepting Applications for the 2017 Shari Prestemon Social Justice Internship

The Shari Prestemon Social Justice Internship provides people between the ages of 19 and 35 with a unique opportunity to participate in a 10-week summer program tailored to their interests. Drawing on the Mission's long experience in community engagement and advocacy for justice, the internship will nurture participants' passion for social justice and develop their appreciation for the church's role in seeking social justice.

Applications must be submitted by March 1. Notifications will be made by March 31.

You can learn more about the internship, and download an application, on the Mission's website.

Link: <https://thebackbaymission.org/2017/01/apply-for-the-2017-shari-prestemon-social-justice-internship/>

Back Bay Mission opens 2018 Mission Trip Calendar

Back Bay Mission's 2018 mission trip calendar opened at midnight central time on January 1, 2017. You can reserve your mission trip week by emailing the Mission's volunteer coordinator at volunteercoordinator@thebackbaymission.org. The Mission accepts reservation requests only through email. The 2018 calendar is available on the Mission's website.

You can learn more about mission trips at Back Bay Mission here.

Link: <https://thebackbaymission.org/2017/01/the-2018-mission-trip-calendar-is-open/>

2017 Illinois Conference Annual Celebration June 9 and 10

SAVE THE DATE!!!



ILLINOIS CONFERENCE ANNUAL CELEBRATION

June 9 & 10, 2017

Elmhurst College
Frick Center
190 Prospect St.
Elmhurst, IL 60126

Panel Discussion
Friday Afternoon.

Friday worship led by
Nayiri Karjian

Saturday worship led by
Jeanne Santucci Murawski

Registration materials will be sent Spring 2017!

Each church shall bring one (1) adult delegate and one (1) youth delegate.
Churches with 800 or more members shall have one (1) additional adult delegate and one (1) additional youth delegate. Youth delegates need only pay for their meals, the meeting and lodging (i.e. Youth Lock-In) are free.

LOGOS: Inspiring Model of Ministry

An Inspiring Model of Ministry

Logos

March 29, 2017 at
St. Johns United Church of Christ,
Chesterfield, MO



Who Should Attend?

Faith Formation Volunteers, Faith Formation Church Staff, Pastors, Parents, Faith Formation committee and ministry team members or anyone desiring to create a more actively intergenerational faith community.

Participants will attend an actual Logos program and then reflect on and discuss what they saw with the church's Logos' leaders.

For registration and more information go to: <http://events.uccpages.org/logos.html>

LOGOS - is a weekly intergenerational experience for young people that creates an arena where all ages, together, can learn about, experience, and practice the art of Christian relationships, critical for developing life-long disciples.

<http://www.genministries.org/pages/logos-all-about-logos>

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.

Conference e-mail and website information

Listed below are the e-mail addresses and the website information:

Illinois Conference general e-mail: ilconferenceucc@gmail.com

Conference Minister Jorge Morales: ilconfjorge@gmail.com

Interim Associate Conference Minister (Stewardship and Church Vitality)

David Russell: ilconfdavid@gmail.com

Associate Conference Minister (Prairie\Western) Kathy Lawes: ilconfkathy@gmail.com

Associate Conference Minister (Eastern\Western) Tom Norwalk: ilconftom@gmail.com

Acting Associate Conference Minister (Fox Valley\CMA) James Olson: ilconfjames@gmail.com

Associate Conference Minister (CMA) Vertie Powers: ilconfvertie@gmail.com

Conference Controller Bill Serritella: ilconfbill@gmail.com

Tower Hill Camp: towerhillcamp@gmail.com

Pilgrim Park Camp: odmregistrar@gmail.com

Illinois Conference support staff:

Naomi Else: ilconfnaomi@gmail.com

Carmen Torres: ilconfcarmen@gmail.com

Wayne MacPherson (CMA): ilconfwayne@gmail.com

Tracy Diehl (Prairie): ilconftracy@gmail.com
Connie Owens (Western): ilconfconnie@gmail.com
Accounting (Conf.): ilconftracy@gmail.com

Please visit the Illinois Conference website at www.ilucc.org.

The Illinois Conference now is on [Facebook](#); look for us.

Also, [online giving](#) now is available on the website.

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This communication is made possible by your contributions to

Our Church's Wider Mission.



Illinois Conference UCC | 1840 Westchester Blvd. | Suite 200 | Westchester | IL | 60154