Report from the Interim Conference Minister

We Are Moving Forward: Silo Busters!
Rev. Justo González, Il

Your life changed yesterday and is changing even as you read this piece. I’d like to share with you some of the changes that are happening within the conference. My commitment to the Illinois Conference is to speak truth and to shine a light on that which does not serve us well and is holding back the process of transformation that must be made for the good of the conference. If the conference does not transform it will surely die stuck in old ways of being and power structures that do not allow us to become who we publicly say we want and need to be. As is common in most organizations no one is opposed to change as long as everything stays the same. We cannot afford to stay the same.

As you read the article feel free to send me your comments, questions, joys and/or concerns. I can be reached at ilconfjusto@gmail.com.

Changes to how our Associate Conference Ministers Engage throughout the Conference:

Team Approach to Ministry: No more Silos.

In the past many Conferences and Associate Conference Ministers (in the old days called Association Ministers) have had a silo approach to their work and ministry. Indeed, the
Illinois Conference is no different than other organizations where silos have thrived to protect the self-interest of some or one. The politics of silos and self-interest must end and end now.

To that end and with the support of the Conference Personnel Committee, we are working on creating a more effective team approach within our judicatory staff. Our new Call/Contract Agreements have put in new standards/expectations for our present and future ACM’s and Judicatory team. We are implementing a Hybrid Associate Conference Minister model of leadership. Each association will continue to have a primary ACM assigned to them. This means that every association will continue to have a lead ACM for their associations.

Yet, we are also breaking down silos by:

Clergy, Coach Thyself
Rev. Brandyn Simmons

In a recent episode of On Being, Krista Tippett interviewed her leadership coach, Jerry Colonna. During this conversation, Carl Jung was quoted: “Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life, and you will call it fate.” I encourage you to give it a listen as it can be impactful for our vocation: https://onbeing.org/programs/jerry-colonna-can-you-really-bring-your-whole-self-to-work/

As clergy, we are taught in seminary not to “bleed on our congregations.” This is a mindset that leads to many of us being insulated and guarded from our congregants. It is also a healthy mindset in terms of boundaries and avoiding a shift in pastoral-congregational dynamics. In our last Chicago Metropolitan Association Meeting, our colleague Rev. Vince Amlin preached that there was a middle way. We can actually be vulnerable and relational without being unhealthy.

What would it look like if we were to be vulnerable and start to bring the unconscious to the conscious? How would we even start to do the inner work to realize what we are holding on to? What is inside affects what we do on the outside. “Hurt people, hurt people” and other such adages are true.

One place to start is asking ourselves some powerful questions. This is one of the core practices of coaching as is deep listening. As we go about our days, we are always having conversations in our heads. We ask ourselves questions, but for some reason we tend to come up with the same answers which lead to the same actions. But what if we were to get curious about the questions themselves and start to change them?
Outdoor Ministries expresses thanks for support

The Outdoor Ministries Committee is grateful for the support shown to our ministry through two recent offerings. At the opening worship at Illinois Conference Annual Celebration at Elmhurst College where $1,700 was collected, and the recent farewell service for Associate Conference Minister Rev. David Russell at St. Paul United Church of Christ in Palatine where $1,148 was given.

Outdoor Ministries has yet to meet since the offerings, but it is likely most of the money will go to our scholarship fund, which helps about 20 percent of children and youth afford the camp experience. Thank you for helping them have mountain top experiences.

Brett Johnson
Chair, Outdoor Ministries

Happenings Around the Conference

Youth Mission group from First Congregational UCC in Downers Grove travel to Miami, Florida to work with the Haitian community.

Members of Wellington Avenue UCC in Chicago trained and meet with Refugee One before welcoming refugee family earlier this month.

The Illinois Conference and several pastors of the United Church of Christ participated at the End Money Bond Rally at the State Capital advocating for justice.

Lights for Liberty Rally. The Rev. Cyndy Ash, Pastor at Jubilee Farms
St. Paul UCC in Pekin dedication of commissioned art

On June 30, 2019, St. Paul UCC in Pekin, welcomed artist, R. Rashad Reed, who gave a testimony on how he uses his God-given talents. As reported at St. Paul’s Worship and Spiritual Life meeting in April 2019, Ryan was commissioned by Dr. John and Mrs. Gayle Cooper to create a work of art that celebrates St. Paul receiving the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ Local Evangelism, Envisioning and Planting (LEEAP) grant in March of this year. This beautiful hand carved work was blessed and dedicated to the church. The work depicts and features these UCC symbols: the cross, the crown, the orb, and the “God is Still Speaking” comma.

R. Rashad Reed is a Peoria-native whose artistic talent has been honed through a process of formal education and apprenticeship. In describing the focus of his artistic efforts, Reed identifies his work as contemporary figurative sculpture and expressive portraits and paintings.

28th Annual ATiiM Conference:
"The Challenge of Ministry in Times of Divisiveness"

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.

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.
9th Annual Illinois Conference Women’s Retreat

The Illinois Conference 9th Annual Women’s Retreat will be on Friday, Sept. 27 – Saturday, Sept. 28, 2019 at Pilgrim Park Camp in Princeton.

There's a song called, “I Am the Church,” whose refrain also tells us we are the church together, all of us who follow Jesus. This year's theme is "Be the Church: From the Book of Acts to Infinity and Beyond"

Join us for a 23-hour get-a-way to relax while engaging God's Holy Spirit as we reconnect with old friends, make new friends and even bring along some friends. There is plenty of time to unwind, study the Bible in experiential ways, get to know one another, walk around the park and the labyrinth, take a nap, and shop the great selection from Global Villages. Even Jesus needed to get away for a while, and so do you so you can be fully present the rest of the time.

Info and Registration form  Register on-line

LEEPAP announces 2020 Funding Cycle

Our Conference Local Evangelism, Envisioning and Planting/LEEPAP extends to our churches and associations an opportunity to request funding for new church starts, ministry projects and the revitalization of existing congregations.

The application can be downloaded by going to the Illinois Conference website (www.ilucc.org). The deadline for a request for calendar year 2020 is Oct. 1, 2019

If you and/or your church wish to submit a request, please send to Carmen Torres at ilconfcarmen@gmail.com. For questions, please contact the Rev. Michelle Hughes, Associate Conference Minister for Vitality, Transformation and Sustainability at the Illinois Conference at (708) 344-4470; e-mail ilconfmichelle@gmail.com.

Churches in the Media

Bartlett church receives grant for clergy renewal program

Rally Takes Aim at Immigration Detention Centers

Black LGBTQ Activists Launch Foundation Seeking Equity In Boystown — And Beyond

Employment Opportunities

Click links to view Ministerial opportunities and lay employment opportunities within the
Conference Calendar for July

July 21: God's Love for Invisible People, presented by Rev. Kirsten Peachey of Advocate Aurora Health, 8:00 a.m. at First Congregational UCC in Elgin.

July 28: Rev. Justo González II, Interim Conference Minister, 10:15 a.m. will be preaching at Zion United Church of Christ, Peru.

July 28: Service of Installation for Rev. David Inglis, 3:00 p.m. at St. John's UCC, Union.

Upcoming Events

August 1 and 2: Generations in Harmony: Music Workshop Generations in Harmony II, 6:30 p.m. at Kenwood UCC, Chicago

August 3: Farewell Concert for Senior Pastor Rev. Lisa Goods, 5:00 p.m. at Kenwood UCC, Chicago. Join Kenwood UCC for an evening of beautiful music and powerful worship as they bid farewell to their Senior Pastor Rev. Lisa Goods. Reception to follow. All are welcome.

August 4: Rev. Justo González II, Interim Conference Minister, 10:00 a.m. will be preaching at St. Peter's UCC, Champaign.

August 5-9: Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders (MSTI), St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Glen Ellyn.

August 11: Rev. Justo González II, Interim Conference Minister, 8:15 a.m. and 10:15 a.m. will be preaching at First Congregational UCC, Elgin.

August 18: Rev. Justo González II, Interim Conference Minister, 10:15 a.m. will be preaching at English Congregational UCC, Big Rock.


October 2: Clergy Day Away with Barbara Brown Taylor at Pilgrim Park, Princeton.


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

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