There is Change in the Air in 2020

2020 will be an important year for the Illinois Conference. The Conference Minister Search Committee is aimed at presenting a candidate for a vote in June at the Annual Celebration, and the work is on schedule.

I continue to have great hope for the improvements to our infrastructure promised by the church software REALM. The implementation phase is way behind the expected schedule, and there is no sense in pointing fingers. The goals are clear: we will have improved ability to update and report on the Conference’s financial position, and be responsive to those folks who rely on us to manage their endowments and ministry funds; and we will provide a coordination of local church data that serves our ministries that is accessible, in a stable and useful format, and can simplify the process of updating. When the infrastructure is in place, it will be much easier to coordinate communication from and within the Conference and develop the means of delivering resources to local congregations and special interest groups, the way computers are supposed to serve people today.

The Sustainability Committee has a new subcommittee devoted to carefully reviewing our present structure in its strengths and weaknesses and recommending the kinds of improvements that will make our life together more efficient and responsible.

This is a very exciting time to be involved in the life of the Illinois Conference. I am excited about our Annual Celebration as we continue to develop the specific schedules and agendas. We will not only present our candidate for Conference Minister, but will hear from Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer, the denomination’s General Minister and President. We will also hear from the Rev. Felix Villanueva, Conference Minister to the Southern California-Nevada Conference and a key instructor training the Coaches that support the TPIRC/Lilly pastors and lay teams. I hope that you are also excited for our time together, and communicating that to the folks you know and love in the Conference.
Staying Fit
Rev. Kim Wood, Acting Associate Conference Minister

I’ve been focusing a lot on my physical fitness these days. I’ve changed my diet to help my body work more efficiently and effectively. I’m trying to be more intentional about exercising again (although my gym app will tell you that I need to do a better job). And, I’m paying attention to my sleep habits—as a parent and a pastor, this is new territory. Along the way, I have learned an important lesson (sometimes the hard way): some things that have worked for me in the past don’t necessarily work for me now. Life has changed—what I’m doing, where I live, my schedule. And my physical self has changed—it functions differently and needs different care than when I was in college, before I had children, even a few years ago!

As I’ve worked to make these changes to stay physically fit, I’ve learned something else that is invaluable. I also need to be intentional about staying fit in faith and ministry. And guess what! Some things that have worked for me in the past don’t necessarily work for me now. It isn’t that the ways I used to care for myself spiritually, to prepare myself to minister to and with others, to hold myself accountable for Sabbath time and give myself respite, were wrong or didn’t work, or even that some of them don’t work now. But sometimes, just as in our diets, our exercise regimens, and our sleep schedules, we need to reassess and make some adjustments to be our healthiest physical selves, so, too, do we need to stay attuned to how we can best be faithfully fit. And it may require us to make some changes.

Is your camper signed up for the summer yet?

Pilgrim Park Camp
June 30 - July 2
July 12 - 18 (Tenderfoot)
Tower Hill Camp
July 19 - 25 (Tenderfoot)

Outdoor Ministries Event Schedule
Registrar Online Here
Rev. Justo González II, Interim Conference Minister, was honored to be part of the worship experience at Plainfield Congregational Church on Feb. 23 and thanks Rev. Dr. Melbalenia Evans and the People of Plainfield Congregational Church for their gracious welcome. Picture credit: Plainfield Congregational Church UCC

The Manager’s house at Tower Hill Camp has new flooring, and the manager couldn’t be more grateful to the Westchester Community Church Men's Group: John Mendoza, Pete Becerra, Eric Else, Kirk Weinberger, Hans Straub, Ron Cecconi, Ted Stenger, Richard Frandsen, Dan Stenger, Ed Monahan, Craig Marousek and Pastor Joe! Picture credit: Tower Hill Camp and Retreat Center Facebook page

The men of Oak Lawn Pilgrim Faith UCC checking out the new Retreat Center at Tower Hill Camp. A generous gift from this church paid for the furnishings. Thanks Pilgrim Faith! Picture credit: Tower Hill Camp and Retreat Center Facebook page

With an extra day in February St. John UCC in Lyons planned a Leap Day Night Ministry service Project, Pot Luck, Overnight Family Lock-in & Pajama Day Sunday! #Lyonsucc#Loveofneighbor#Loveofcreation #Loveofchildren Picture credit: St. John’s United Church of Christ in Lyons, IL Facebook Page

Message from the Justice and Witness Committee of the Chicago Metropolitan Association Illinois Conference UCC

Does your congregation minister to people who are homeless? Veterans? Foreign born residents? Retirees who winter out of state? College students? Farm families? People living in large apartment complexes or other large housing units? All these groups are at high risk of being under-counted. Learning more about the coming Census and why it is vitally important will help you answer questions from the people whom you serve. The State of Illinois and Cook County recognize that a successful census will be aided by faith communities. Here is a link to a useful video that in clear and simple language helps people understand the census and why it is important to be counted. Please consider showing it during adult education
TPIRC APPLICATIONS ARE STILL OPEN

We are still accepting TPIRC (Thriving Pastors in Revitalizing Congregations) applications. We currently have 10 openings. If you are interested in participating in the TPIRC, please click link below and fill out the application. Submit application to the Rev. Michelle Hughes, ACM for Vitality, Transformation, and Sustainability at ilconfmichelle@gmail.com. Deadline for application: March 15, 2020.

Benefits of the TPIRC

UCC Matching Grants for CWS Kits

Again in 2020, UCC congregations assembling Church World Service Emergency Cleanup Buckets and other CWS Kits may apply for UCC Matching Grants of up to $250 from UCC Disaster Ministries. Deadline: January 31, 2021. Members of the denomination can assist hurricane and other disaster relief efforts by pre-assembling these supplies that are warehoused by CWS, ready to be shipped at a moment's notice when the need arises.

Click here to apply for your $250 Matching Grant for making CWS Kits

UCC Disaster Ministries Information

2019 UCC Disaster Ministries highlights

Just published! UCC Disaster Ministries: Helping Rebuild Homes and Lives in 2019. See how generous contributions from across the United Church of Christ totaling more than $1 million have provided relief and long-term recovery to disaster survivors across the U.S. and around the world. Click here to download the report (PDF).

Volunteer in Disaster Recovery - Compassion in Action

Your service as a UCC Disaster Recovery Volunteer helps people rebuild their physical homes and is an act of presence that demonstrates the commitment to walk beside people as they seek to rebuild their lives. Together, we can be the body of Christ in the world. UCC Disaster Ministries has arranged the following opportunities for mission groups to help homeowners in the intermediate and long-term recovery process. Serve as a group or as an individual for week-long periods. Click here for more info and to volunteer.

A Disaster Preparedness Manual for Churches

Is your church prepared to withstand a natural disaster and to help your congregation and community in the aftermath? Do you want to be prepared but don’t know where to start?
Being ready just got easier, thanks to the new “A Disaster Preparedness Manual for Churches” from United Church of Christ Disaster Ministries and the Insurance Board, a property and liability insurance program for the UCC and other churches.

Join a Webinar on Palestine Advocacy on March 10

Staff members from Eyewitness Palestine & the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights are hosting a digital workshop, "Palestine Advocacy," on how to impact the US Congress to transform US politics towards support for justice in Palestine. The webinar will be Tuesday, March 10, 8:00 -9:30 p.m. ET, 5:00 - 6:30 p.m. PT. Join this webinar to hear from Palestinian policy experts on their visions for the future, learn grassroots advocacy skills so you can help advance that vision, and plug into the nationwide strategy to advance an end to U.S. military funding and the beginning of full congressional support for Palestinian rights.

To sign up for the webinar, go [here](https://example.com).

In the Media

In 2020, Illinois church urges village to answer the census and vote

As debt mounts and congregation dwindles, 130-year-old church in Hyde Park seeks a path forward

Observance of Lent at St. John UCC in Lincoln

Black History Saved My Life: How My Viral Hate Crime Led to an Awakening. Book written by the Rev. Melody Seaton's son that is available on Amazon. Black History Saved My Life: How My Viral Hate Crime Led to an Awakening is the compelling autobiography of Ernest Crim III, an educator, speaker and activist, who recorded and was the target, along with his wife, of one of the most widely publicized hate crimes in the Trump-era.

12 Little Libraries Built In Elmhurst Area - St. Peter's United Church of Christ in Elmhurst is seeking children's book donations.

Women of Bethel United Church of Christ to host annual Spring Tea April 25 in Elmhurst

Community members reflect on ways accessibility impacts homeless services

‘Ask & You Shall Receive:’ The Pastor, the Plane Ticket and NBC 5 Responds
Employment Opportunities

Click links to view Ministerial opportunities and lay employment opportunities within the Illinois Conference.

Conference Calendar for March

March 4: **Yearbook online Submission Deadline!** The Help Line will be available Monday – Friday from 9:00 a.m.- 3:30 p.m. (Eastern Time) ending on March 4, 2020. The phone number is (216) 736-3837.

March 7: **Mental Health First Aid Training**, 8:00 a.m. at Community UCC in Champaign.

March 8: **The Walk - A Contextual Bible Study in Lent**, 9:30 a.m. hosted by United Church of Hyde Park in Chicago. Every Sunday in Lent (March 1 to April 5).

March 8: **Commissioning of Linda Morgan** as Faith Community Nurse, 10:15 a.m. at Community United Church of Christ in Champaign.

March 12-14, 2020: **Nourishing Wellness: Refresh, Replenish, Renew.** A Holistic Wellness Retreat for Clergy and Members in Discernment in the Illinois Conference, in Techny Towers Conference and Retreat Center in Techny, Ill. (*Registration for this event is now closed.*)

March 13: Avalon Park Project Against Violence host a discussion on **HR0433 Violence as a Health Crisis**, 12:00 p.m. at Avalon Park Community Church in Chicago.

March 14: **End Money Bond Teach-In**, 10:00 a.m. at San Lucas UCC in Chicago. Kimball Avenue UCC and San Lucas UCC in collaboration with the Coalition to End Money Bond are hosting this event.

March 14: **St. Luke UCC holds Annual Chili Supper Fundraiser**, 4:00 p.m. at St. Luke UCC in Beecher.

March 15: Pilgrim’s Chancel Choir and Friends will present **Haydn's "The Creation": An Oratorio**, 4:00 pm at Pilgrim Congregational Church in Oak Park.

March 21: **NAMI Mental Health First Aid Training -Youth version**, 9:00 a.m. at St. John's UCC in Lyons.

March 29: **Ecclesiastical Council for Colin Knapp**, 3:00 p.m. at Northfield Community Church in Northfield.

March 31: Free Webinar: **Planned Giving to Support Mission and Ministry**, 7:00 p.m. EDT. Lead by Andrew B. Warner, CFRE, serves as a Generosity Outreach Officer of the national setting of the United Church of Christ.

Upcoming Events

April 24-27, 2020: **Ecumenical Advocacy Days** gathering "Imagine! God's Earth and
People Restore" in Washington, D.C.

April 25: Western Association Spring Meeting at Trinity UCC in Quincy. The Rev. Dr. Terrill Murff, Associate Conference Minister serving the Chicago Metropolitan Association will be the featured speaker.

April 25: Bethel UCC Women present 22nd Annual Spring Tea, 12:30 p.m. at Bethel UCC in Elmhurst.

April 25: St. John's UCC in Belvidere celebrates ONA Recognition, 2:00 p.m. at St. John's UCC in Belvidere. Rev. Justo González II will be speaking at his recognition ceremony. All are welcome.

May 2: Lighthouse Foundation’s – Coming Out Celebration, 11:00 a.m. at Lighthouse Church of Chicago.

May 2: Chicago Metropolitan Association Spring Meeting. Watch here for further information as it becomes available.

May 2: Prairie Association Spring Meeting at English Congregational UCC in Big Rock.

May 3: Eastern Association Spring Meeting, 2:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m. at St. John UCC in Beecher.

May 9: Fox Valley Association Spring Meeting, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. at the Northern Illinois Food Bank in Geneva.


June 20: 2020: Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival. Mass Poor People’s Assembly and Moral March on Washington will be a generationally transformative gathering at the US Capitol in Washington DC.


July 22-25, 2020: United Church of Christ’s National Youth Event at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind. Registration is Now Open.

Visit our website

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