Join us for the 55th Illinois Conference Annual Celebration

Register ONLINE here!

A Message from our Conference President, Rev. Chuck Maney:

Delegates and Friends,

As you join us at the Conference Annual Celebration on June 7 and 8 at Elmhurst College, in this exciting time of new possibilities, the Conference Council extends a wide welcome to the full Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ. I firmly believe that the presence of God is most immediately available when good people gather together to celebrate our covenant relationship.

We will gather together to worship and to be inspired. We will enrich and encourage each other as we dream and take the actions that will define the next Chapter of life as the Illinois Conference UCC.

You will hear from the Interim Conference Minister, Rev. Justo Gonzalez II, who is working diligently to free the Conference from its moorings, and move us boldly into the open
waters, enabling us to bring the love of God to an anxious world, in new ways that the world can hear.

You will be exposed to the energy and enthusiasm of the Sustainability Committee, and you will have a chance to inspire them with your dreams, and guide them with your feedback. If we would move purposefully into the future, we count on the gathered community to discern God’s will. We desire action, but we are most effective when we are moving together and speaking the truth with love.

This year the Annual Celebration Banquet requires pre-registration, there will be no at the door admissions. These are the kinds of changes we have to accept if we would be efficient and respectful of each other.

We need you, and we need you to be present and alive to the possibilities that are before us. Please join us as we give life to our motto; “Love in Action: Life Together.”

God’s Peace be with you always,

Rev. Charles “Chuck” Maney
President, Illinois Conference

*Remember, a credit card payment is required at the time of registration this year. No banquet tickets will be available on site. Buy your banquet ticket NOW!*  

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

What an amazing experience of the Holy Spirit! On March 28-30, 2019 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, I was blessed to attend the “Universal Christ” conference hosted by the Center for Action and Contemplation and Fr. Richard Rohr. Rohr’s mind-opening words and presence along with Rev. Jacquie Lewis and John Dominic Crossan expanded the spirit within me. Rohr expounds on a theology that describes God in all things and all things in God ("pan-entheism"). As Rohr says, “God is not in me but I am in God and I existed in God from the beginning”. Crossan describes “evolution as the business and professional face of God”, i.e. we and creation are still evolving.

The conference design consisted of 1900 of us in the Albuquerque Convention Center seated at round tables of 8-9. We listened to presentations from Richard, “Dom” and Jacquie and we spent times just “sitting” in contemplation and in the presence of the Spirit. We also engaged one another at the tables in 2s and 3s and moved to different tables throughout the conference. I encountered such open, vulnerable and joyful folks at every table I visited.

Rohr preaches and practices inclusivity, saying that Christianity is anti-tribalistic and that Christianity is not “fear based but love infused”. He believes that today’s lust for certitude produces highly opinionated people and that all true knowledge of God is humble. Rohr believes that when we dictate faith and a literalistic Bible we are committing “spiritual PTSD.” Both he and Jacquie spoke about being our true selves, mistakes and all; that our faith in Christ does not ask us to be “perfect”.

All three speakers were concerned about seeing the evil that is in our world. Jacquie Lewis said we are still in the days of the Empire and we people of Christ must speak truth to power. To build God’s reign here we must first go inward and dispel the “lies” we have incorporated about ourselves, next come out and believe and be the truth we are; and finally reach out to the other, who is us, with love.

Crossan encourages us to see Resurrection as a process; that the Resurrection of the world began with Jesus Christ. And at Easter to see and believe that “not only was Christ raised but that we have all been raised.”
This experience will never leave me: whether it was the faces of believers or the challenging speakers; the laughter and the discussion; the “de-briefing” with wine at the end of the day or the many moments of silence and the warm welcoming hand of Richard Rohr as he held mine. I will never forget the many experiences of serendipity when things fell into place and new opportunities of spirit, mind and heart appeared. What a blessing!

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

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**Final message from Rev. Tom Norwalk**

Dear Illinois Conference Friends,

As I near the time of my retirement from my work in the Illinois Conference, I would like to share words of thanks and appreciation for the many ways I have felt such great support in the ministry I have shared within the Eastern and Western Associations as well as my staff support for the Angola Partnership Team, the Tuthill Commission, the Annual Celebration Planning Team and the Educators of the Illinois Conference. It has been a privilege to share ministry with many gifted Pastors and laity who have always sought to further the mission of God's Kingdom in the places they have been called. I have also grown and learned from many wonderful Conference Staff Colleagues over my eighteen years of service and have been invited by them to share work in a team setting. I am grateful for their collective wisdom and their dedication to discern where God is calling us to be as we live in a changing culture and understanding of church. We are so very blessed to have a wonderful support staff that tends to many details that without their dedication would be lost in the shuffle: so to Connie, Carmen, Naomi, Tracy, Julie, Wayne and Priscilla I offer a warm hand of applause and a heart full of gratitude. I also want to offer my thanks and praise for those who staff our two Camp and Retreat Centers - my life has been enriched at both Pilgrim Park and Tower Hill by those whose hospitality is superb.

I am forever grateful for the privilege of being a part of the Illinois Conference family and shall always keep each of you in my prayers so that the ministry shared here will always be of high caliber and of strong vitality. May God work through each of you in order that we may be God's hands and feet in the ways we serve.

Blessings,
Tom Norwalk

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**New Lock box announcement**

Our bank has informed us that there has been a system update that involves a change in the mailing address for our lock box receiving contributions. Please discard any previous editions of the remittance form you may have and use the form on our website. (Link: Remittance Form - 2019)

While the new address listed below is effective immediately with deposits made available to us in a new system, there will be a grace period during which the conference will receive funds submitted to the Wisconsin location using the bank’s old system. We truly appreciate your patience with us and our financial partners as we make this transition.

Feel free to contact Conference Controller Bill Serritella at (708) 344-4470 with any questions.
Rev. Dr. David Russell, Associate Conference Minister for Stewardship and Church Vitality Retirement celebration

See Retirement Invite Here

Disaster Ministries Urgent Appeal

You may have heard the news about very serious flooding in communities in Stephenson and Winnebago Counties in our state. There is also flooding in the Quad City area and in communities in Iowa along the Mississippi River.

More flooding are being anticipated.

Click here to see how you can help

Happenings at Annual Celebration...

2019 Annual Celebration Information Booklet

ANNUAL CELEBRATION: REGISTER NOW!
Conference Disaster Coordinators gathered in Puerto Rico

The UCC Conference Disaster Coordinators meeting held on April 2-3, 2019 had a record 22 participants from across the continental United States and Hawai'i.

A Conference Disaster Coordinator is a volunteer appointed by the conference to serve as a primary point of contact and team leader for a Conference Disaster Team (CDT). CDCs act as a liaison between the CDT, the conference and UCC Disaster Ministries. They are the backbone of UCC Disaster Ministries' domestic preparedness and long-term recovery efforts.

High on the group's agenda is the launch of a new church preparedness toolkit. Created collaboratively, the toolkit will be unveiled at UCC General Synod, meeting June 21-25 in Milwaukee, WIs.

Update on Tower Hill

We are hoping the new Retreat Center will be completed by the end of July. It will accommodate 28 guests. It is a bigger version of St. Philippus which sleeps 12 guests. Also, the 3 new Cottages that were completed last year have two bedrooms and two full bathrooms with a full kitchen and a screened in porch. Please call (269) 426-3881 to make a reservation or email towerhillcamp@gmail.com.

It is not too late to sign up for summer camp

Sports Camp at Pilgrim Park has limited spaces available but we are taking names for the wait list. The staff may need to be expanded to accommodate those on the wait list. Godstock at Tower Hill are taking names for the wait list, as well. All other camps have spots available as of May 21.

Register online soon!

REGISTRATION | EVENT CAMP SCHEDULE

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Tara, Outdoor Ministries,
Helpful tips on Website Content and Copyright

by Heather E. Kimmel
General Counsel for the
United Church of Christ

Many of you have heard me hammer on the topic of ensuring that you have a license for all the material that is on your website that you did not create. I am going to continue to raise this issue. Over the past year, our Conferences, and some of our Local Churches, have collectively paid thousands of dollars to settle claims of copyright infringement relating to stock photography or downloaded images for which you have not purchased licenses being displayed on websites. Some of these include claims for images which were removed, but still existed in accessible “archive” files. These “archive” files are accessible by the automated “copyright bots” that troll websites looking for infringing materials. Copyright claims are 100% preventable on a going-forward basis. Here are some tips...

How Are the Children?

How Are the Children? is a new video-based curriculum produced by the United Church of Christ Palestine Israel Network. It is essential viewing for United Church of Christ (UCC) congregations and conferences. Discover how Israeli practices of military detention affect Palestinian children, their families and their communities. Hear UCC national executive leaders bear witness to the injustices they have witnessed personally. See how the UCC and other denominations offer strong leadership in highlighting and challenging these abuses.

The Rev. Kim Whisler-Vasko, United Church of Christ Palestine/Israel Network (UCC PIN) Steering Committee member will be at Illinois Conference Annual Celebration exhibit area and available to answer questions.

Curriculum and background information here

Churches in the Media

At Gilead Church in Chicago, storytelling is central to worship

From the pulpit: April blizzards, May showers and June flowers?

Employment Opportunities

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

Become an Adese Fellow. Launch a sustainable venture to counter poverty through a year-long program of self-discovery, theological reflection and business development. Application deadline is June 15, 2019. Learn more, apply today.

Local Church Ministries is assembling a working group to reimagine the Manual on Church. Nominations are open now through July 1st, 2019. Learn about the nomination process.

2020 United Church of Christ’s National Youth Event will take place at Purdue University in West Lafayette Indiana July 22-25, 2020. For Youth AND Young Adults ages 12-22 to center on their faith, leadership, service and social justice. More info here to register.

Upcoming Events

June 2: Service of Ordination for Catherine Watkins, 3:00 p.m. at First Congregational UCC, Evanston.


June 9: Service of Installation for Rev. Dale Susan Edmonds, 3:30 p.m. at Trinity UCC, Deerfield.

June 15: Service of Ordination for Brian L. Clary, noon at Faith United Protestant Church, Park Forest.

June 17-19: Our Whole Lives Training for Facilitating Jr/Sr High OWL, at the Best Western Plus Milwaukee Airport Hotel and Conference Center, Milwaukee, WI. Sponsor by UCC Open and Affirming Coalition and National Offices of UCC.

June 18-20: National ONA Gathering in Milwaukee. Rev. Justo González II, Interim Conference Minister, will be one of the Keynote speakers.


June 21: Celebration of 10th Anniversary of Advocate UCC, Chicago, 7:00 p.m. at The Grand Ballroom Chicago.

June 21-25: United Church of Christ’s Thirty-Second General Synod at the Wisconsin Center, located in the heart of downtown Milwaukee.

June 24-28: Sea of Tiberias Summer Retreat at Eureka College, Eureka, Ill. Continuing education opportunity - Open to clergy and laity.

June 30: Rev. Dr. David Russell's Retirement Celebration, 4:00 p.m. at St. Paul UCC, Palatine.

July 14: Ecclesiastical Council for Jagan Samuvelraj, 3:00 p.m. at St. Matthew UCC, Wheaton.

July 17: Off the Pews/Advocate Youth Program: Live from the Heart, 8:30 a.m. - noon, Stein Auditorium Advocate Christ Medical Center, Oak Lawn (via video Conference).

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


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