



E-NEWSLETTER



From the Conference Minister

Greetings Sisters and Brothers,

May the grace of the Christ, the love of God and the Communion of the Holy Spirit abide with you and with all.

"Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God."
2 Cor. 9:10-11

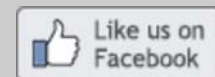


The Christ of Havana is the fourth largest sculpture representing Jesus of Nazareth in Havana, Cuba.

God provides the means for us to work out our salvation. We believe that one of the ways we can achieve that is by being generous and thankful for all that we have. We live in gratitude to God who is the source of all - life and all that has been trusted to us. The goal of a faithful Christian in life should be to be an extension of God's love and generosity - to God and Christ alike.

As the holidays approach, we must be thankful for all that we have, given we live in a world where so many are in need. Recent natural disasters, hurricanes, earthquakes, and mass killings have provided ample opportunities for us to respond with generosity and also to show gratitude for the safety, well-being, and abundance of resources we have.

I personally have been challenged in how to respond, given my own abundance. I, as you, have followed the



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

A Gathering of Chicago Voices

Sunday, Nov. 12, 2017
2:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.,
Hyde Park Arts Center
5020 S. Cornell
Chicago, Ill.
Free event

[Click here](#) for more
inf and tickets

Retirement Celebration

plight of the many peoples. Those of Puerto Rico, often puzzled by the fact that the island is so geographically close yet so far, in the minds of many North Americans. Many did not, and may not yet know, that Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory and that the people there are U.S. citizens. One might wonder how they can be without food, water, light and other basic human needs while being a part of us and so close. They are not alone, as the islands of the Caribbean are in the same state of affairs.

Mexico, also so close, suffered repeated earthquakes and disaster, has such great poverty, next door to one of the richest, most powerful nation of the world. Its people are exploited and at the same time seen by many as a threat.

Cuba, from where I have just returned, so close to the U.S. that a plane flight is merely 40 minutes; it is 90 miles from Florida. Its people are being choked by poverty and embargoes, living without many basic human needs.

We, as a nation and our people would be much more generous with our neighbors, if we were better informed. Let us not be boxed in the past, limit ourselves by fear or disinformation, but be filled with love and compassion for the "other".

Let us pray as we celebrate the coming holidays, that our generosity and love extend to others in ways that result in "thanksgiving to God" and demonstrate that we -- having been blessed by God -- can be a blessing to others, near and far.

I pray that we all have blessed, joyous and generous holidays,

Rev. Dr. Jorge L. Morales
Conference Minister

Rev. Mary Gay McKinney

Saturday, Nov. 25, 2017
2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.,
Open Prairie UCC,
25 East Marion Street
Princeton, Ill.
RSVP:
mail@openprairie.org
or (815) 872-5150

**Our Whole Lives
(OWL) Training**

Jan. 25 - 27, 2018
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
First United Church of
Oak Park
848 Lake Street
Oak Park, Ill.
[Click here for more inf](#)



Report from the Associate Conference Minister for Stewardship and Church Vitality

"God does great things, and unreachable, marvelous things without number." (Job 5:9)

I am so grateful and thankful for the uncountable ways God blesses us!

- I give thanks for the many faithful folks in our churches, who work every day to follow Christ as best they can.
- I give thanks for the churches that are seeking to renew and revitalize and the birthing of new and innovative models for "church".
- I give thanks for the many pastors who seek to lead with spirit the people of God.

- I give thanks for the staff of the Illinois Conference who are passionately committed to serving the church.
- I give thanks for the wider Body of Christ that we are seeking peace, reconciliation and justice--all with help of God's grace and love.
- I give thanks to God for my family, my health and my ministry with the people of God.

At this time of Thanksgiving, I can never forget the blessings surrounding us, which remind me that God is still actively with us despite the horrible acts of violence and debilitating disasters. It gives me hope that, despite wars, disasters, hatred, injustice and evil, there is a sacred center of love seeking to unite our world and that God is still pulling the cosmos toward the Divine. This hope strengthens my resolve to live and act with love in the face of the world's pain and brokenness.

I am reminded that God offers us a theology of abundance. Jesus told the Disciples, at the feeding of the 5,000, to feed the people--not to send them away to fend for themselves. The Disciples were worried about not having enough. They were thinking scarcity. Jesus knew that God's way is abundance. Being thankful and doing my best to live gratefully, I remind myself that there is enough--that God's way is the way of abundance. We have enough! We are surrounded by blessings! Thanks be to God!

In partnership and faith,

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

Fox Valley Association Fall Meeting was held in Bensenville

You missed it! If you did not attend the recent Fall Meeting of the Fox Valley Association, you missed a superb day!

The meeting, held at Faith Community Church in Bensenville, began with a gathering time and light breakfast provided by the members of FCC. Moderator Frank Zavaski opened the meeting promptly at 9:30 a.m., with a welcome and prayer from Host Pastor the Rev. Catherine Balk, and a declaration of quorum from clerk the Rev. Emily Mitchell. Minutes were approved; the Rev. David Bateman put the proposed Illinois Conference budget before us for consideration (motioned, seconded and approved), and a number of announcements and speak outs were accomplished with dispatch. The Rev. Dr. James J. Olson, FVA Associate Conference Minister, recognized several donors to the recent Conference capital campaign.



From left to right: Huxley Joseph, Christ Tamil, President; Rev. Godwin Raj, Pastor; Frank Zavaski, FVA President and Rev. Dr. James J. Olson, FVA Associate Conference Minister leading the Rite of Reception.

We then got on with the important business of the day--the reception of Christ Tamil church as a full member congregation of the Fox Valley Association, Illinois Conference, United Church of Christ.

Tim Burke, representing the Committee on the Church, made the formal motion to accept and welcome Christ Tamil. He then detailed the two-year process of

discernment that COTC and CTC went through. Following this, representing CTC, several members and Pastor the Rev. Godwin Raj spoke of their internal discernment and desire to become a UCC congregation. The CTC website was shown, and a fascinating description of their program, worship, outreach and educational programs were discussed.

With thunderous applause, CTC was accepted as a full UCC congregation.

After a short break, CTC treated us to a lively and enjoyable bi-lingual worship service, both in Tamil and in English. Frank Zavaski joined the children for their story and lesson. Pastor Godwin spoke passionately on 1 Peter 2:1-10. Members of the congregation led us in singing, both in Tamil and in English. Dr. Olson led the Rite of Reception, presenting Pastor Godwin and CTC President Huxley Joseph with a certificate from Cleveland, recognizing their new status. The day ended with a FANTASTIC lunch of Indian food and a real time of fellowship.

Thank you to everyone who helped make this meeting such a success: the people and pastor of Faith Community Church for hosting, the people and pastor of Christ Tamil Church; and all those who led and participated in the organizing of this meeting. We welcome Christ Tamil and look forward to many years of ministry together!

Note: *Special moments capture at the Fall Meeting can be viewed on the [Illinois Conference UCC Facebook page](#).*

"Voices Still Speaking" was theme of CMA Fall Meeting

"Voices Still Speaking" was the theme of the CMA gathering on Oct. 21, 2017. Faith United Protestant UCC in Park Forest was the setting. For many, it was the first visit to this spacious, light-filled church.

We were welcomed by Host Pastor Rev. Michael Sykes, Conference Minister Rev. Dr. Jorge Morales and CMA Moderator Rev. David Stewart.

In worship, the sounds of the Faith Bell Choir and the Voice of Faith Senior Choir filled the sanctuary. Rev. Sykes officiated at the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The message was "Voices from Our History," a play by Rev. Tamera Keller-Love, which used the words of historical persons in UCC history: Rev. Lemuel Haynes, first ordained African-American man; Rev. Antoinette Brown, first ordained woman; Rev. William Johnson, first ordained openly gay man.



Cast of "Voices from our History," the voices from UCC history. From left: Rev. Tamera Keller-Love (author), Alisha Lee (Rev. Antoinette Brown), Jamie Frazier (Rev. Lemuel Haynes), Richard McKinney (Rev. William Johnson).

Rev. Dr. Vertie Powers, Associate Conference Minister, spoke of her vision for the CMA, which covenants with congregations, clergy, Members in Discernment, and historically-related institutions to provide resources, advice and counsel. To that end, the CMA is in conversation with these people to see how that will look and what will work.

Our Keynote Speaker was Dr. Stephanie B. Crowder, Associate Professor at Chicago Theological Seminary. With the words of her message "Think BIG" on our hearts, we

attended energizers led by people who "think big":

- Immigration, Rev. Sara Wohlleb, Interfaith Community for Detained Immigrants;
- Homelessness, Tina Rounds, Director of BEDS Plus Care;
- LGBTQ Issues, Pastor Jamie Frazier and The Light House Church of Chicago;
- Environmental Creation, Rev. Dr. Terry Gallagher of www.SustainingCreation.org;
- Mass Incarceration, Daryle Brown of The Next Movement;
- Restorative Justice, Vicki Casanova, Human Rights Watch and Michelle Day, CMA Justice and Witness;
- The New Poor People's Campaign, Illinois Conference Justice and Witness Committee.

Food and fellowship followed, as attendees pondered the voices we had heard and celebrated the gracious hospitality of Faith United Protestant Church.

Note: Additional pictures can be viewed on the [Illinois Conference UCC Facebook page](#).
Picture credit to Rev. Michelle McNamara.

Joint Fall Association Meeting held in Bloomington

The Eastern and Western Associations gathered for a joint Fall Meeting on Oct. 21, at St. Luke Union Church in Bloomington. Rev. Andy Gifford and the ladies of St. Luke, shared warm and generous hospitality for our time together.

We hosted Rev. Gregg Carlson of the Center for Progressive Renewal and shared in opportunities and resources to renew the vision of congregational life as strategies for renewal were shared and demonstrated. Rev. Leah Robberts-Mosser of Community United Church of Christ in Champaign led us in worship, as we began our morning, using several prayer stations and moments of contemplation to center our day's activities. She, along with members of Salem UCC in Quincy and St. John UCC in Lincoln, also participated in a panel discussion of the ways the Center for Progressive Renewal has engaged with their ministries and helped them to shape new visions for renewal.



Rev. Andy Gifford welcomes attendees to St. Luke Union Church in Bloomington.



Keynoter the Rev. Gregg Carlson of Center for Progressive Renewal.

Note: Additional pictures can be viewed on the [Illinois Conference UCC Facebook page](#).

Prarie Association gathered in Earlville for Fall Meeting

All were invited to the Fall Meeting of the Prairie Association, hosted by Rollo Congregational Church UCC in Earlville, on Saturday, Nov. 4. We were warmly received by the congregation, worshiped God with joy, and engaged in a challenging and thoughtful presentation on "Drawing on Deep Wisdom" by accomplished speakers Rev. Kirsten Peachey and Nancy Sayer.



Rev. Kirsten Peachey

Complexity and uncertainty are driving our world, congregations, and our Association. We want our churches and Association to thrive and grow even in the midst of disruption. How do we draw on the deep wisdom we already carry about what creates life and vitality in our families, congregations and communities? How do we cultivate a culture in our Association that is self-aware, open, welcoming, and creative?

Over the next two years, we will use time during our fall and spring Association meetings for clergy and lay people to explore these questions together. We will engage in practices from the "Art of Hosting" and "Theory U" that focus on Being, Receiving, Contributing, and Co-Creating that will help us draw from the deeper wisdom of the spirit that creates health and life in our Association." (Nancy Sayer)

Nancy Sayer, LCPC, PCC, is the Director of SamaraCare Consulting in Naperville. She has provided coaching and consultation to many pastors and congregations of various denominations. Her colleague in this unique ministry is Rev. Kirsten Peachey, a UCC clergy person serving as the Director of Congregational Health Partnerships for Advocate Health Care, where she supports faith communities in their role as places of health and wholeness for their members and the communities they serve.

Note: Additional pictures can be viewed on the [Illinois Conference UCC Facebook page](#).

News from the Eastern Association

First Congregational UCC in Dwight and Emington Congregational UCC has called Rev. Grant Speece to serve as their settled Pastor. Grant began his ministry there in late September, and we look forward to his ministry in these two congregations as well as the Eastern Association.

We share our thanks and best wishes with Rev. Thom Parrot-Sheffer, who concluded his ministry with Plainfield Congregational UCC on Sunday, Oct. 29. Thom is planning a lot of family time as well pursuit of new interests into the near future. We are grateful for his ministry in our midst and look forward to his continuing representation from the Eastern Association of our Association Council and Conference Council.

Rev. Paul Kirker, who serves Good Shepherd Community Church in El Paso, will be celebrating the 35th Anniversary of his Ordination at a service planned for Nov. 12. We look forward to celebrating with Paul and the congregation on this special day.

Rev. Deborah Owen has been called to serve as settled Pastor of St. Peter's UCC in Champaign, after having served as Designated Pastor. We look forward to a time of recognition in a Service of Installation soon.

St. Peter's UCC in Champaign has called Mark Jacobs to serve in a role within the congregation and as a mission partner with several assisted living facilities in the Champaign-Urbana area, providing Pastoral Care services. Mark has been approved for Ordination by the Eastern Association, and a date of Dec. 10 has been set for an Ordination/Installation service for Mark at St. Peter's.

Giving Campaign through #ILGIVE



On November 28, the Illinois Conference is participating in a giving campaign called **#ILGIVE**. This 24-hour campaign is part of the global #Giving Tuesday initiative. **#ILGIVE**, as organized by Forefront (formerly the Donors Forum) is specifically to support Illinois non-profits.

Please stay tuned to your email, and look to see updates as this exciting campaign highlights Illinois Conference initiatives we would like you to support on November 28!

SAVE THE DATE!!! NOVEMBER 28!!!

THANK YOU

"Think BIG" was CMA keynoter's theme

Dr. Stephanie Crowder, Associate Professor of Theological Field Education and New Testament at Chicago Theological Seminary, was the keynote speaker at the CMA Fall Meeting, "Voices Still Speaking." We were exhorted, enthralled and empowered by her message "Think BIG."

Her biblical text was the story of the five daughters of Zelophehad in Numbers 26. In that patriarchal society, the daughters had to fight for their inheritance because their father had no sons. With a spirit of boldness, they pled their case to Moses who upended tradition and ruled in their favor.

The biblical voices of boldness, insight and courage were linked with contemporary and historical voices: the women of color in "Hidden Figures" who contributed to the US Space Program; the voices of the women in "Colored No More: Reinventing Black Womanhood in Washington, DC,". Also, Anna Julia



Dr. Stephanie Crowder

Cooper, Mary Church Terrell, Fannie Barrier Williams, Nannie Helen Burroughs, and Lucy Slowe who, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, used their influence to reach down to pull others up, as they transformed their city, and the voices of the "Black Lives Matter" movement that have brought awareness to issues of systemic violence and injustice.

What unites these voices are:

- a spirit of boldness that speaks truth to power even in the face of threats,
- a spirit of insight that knows what changes are needed, knows its history, has done its research and its due diligence,
- a spirit of "thinking big" that knows small minds and small ideas do not bring about the growth, change, and justice desperately needed in our communities and in our churches.

The voices of the great cloud of witnesses - past, present, and future - say to us: Be bold. Be insightful. Grow.

Updates on Pilgrim Park and Tower Hill Camp

This has been a summer and fall of sprucing up at our two camps and retreat centers. Building projects were going on even as we served campers, youth and adult retreats from our churches and outside groups.

Construction continues on three new cottages at Tower Hill in Sawyer, Mich., with hopes they will be available for use in 2018. Stay tuned as reservations will open once a firm completion date is in sight for the structures, located just across from the playground on the main entry road.

There's a new roof on one of the A-Frames as well, thanks to the work of the Morales family (yes, including our Conference Minister). They were at Tower Hill, Sept. 17 to 20, to remove layers of roof and put up a new one, managing the work well despite the sharp angles. Site Manager Douglas C. Pompey reports they did an excellent job.

Upgrade projects were also undertaken at Pilgrim Park near Princeton, Ill., this fall, thanks to a nice family donation, Site Manager Mitch Kloster reports. The garden that was between the entrances to the dining hall and Upper Conference Center has been replaced with a beautiful deck. It is so beautiful that one of our churches was moved to donate furniture for it, once members saw the completed project.



The Morales family removing layers of roof to A-Frame at Tower Hill.



View of the new deck at Pilgrim Park.

An expansion is planned for the Conference Center, and a campaign to fund it should be underway in 2018. Please be prayerfully considering how you and your church can help support this project.

For more information on Outdoor Ministries, be sure to visit the website at www.il-outdoorministries.org.

Environmental Task Force announces updates for the Fall

Do you remember when the first lawsuit against the big tobacco companies was filed? Remember the accepted wisdom of the time was that nobody could take on these big corporate interests and win even though it had long been obvious that tobacco kills? And then the lawsuit did the impossible & won?

Well there's an even bigger David Vs Goliath lawsuit unfolding in our time.

It's called "Our Children's Trust" and it's a group of children suing the Federal Government for gross negligence in protecting their future from the ravages of Climate Change.

Our Children's Trust is a global campaign elevating the voice of youth in legal forums and in the media to secure the legal right to a healthy atmosphere and stable climate system on behalf of all present and future generations. The legal actions they support are youth-led, science-based, against governments at all levels demanding that they enforce constitutional and public trust legal rights to a stable climate system.

The youth are seeking a Judicial declaration that the aggregate actions and current climate policies of the U.S. government violate fundamental constitutional and public trust rights and asking the Court to order the U.S. government to conduct consumption-based inventory of CO2 emissions and to phase out fossil fuel emissions with the goal of drawing down atmospheric CO2 to below 350 ppm by the year 2100.

Talk about a challenge! But then the young boy David only needed a small stone and a big faith in God to topple Goliath.

The two primary legal bases for this lawsuit are the Public Trust Doctrine & Constitutional Protections. The Public Trust asserts that Government is trustee of natural assets; Present and future citizens are beneficiaries of natural assets and the Government has a firm fiduciary obligation to protect natural assets. The constitutional protections assertions are grounded in the 5th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution which guarantees that citizens will not be deprived their rights to life, liberty, and property without due process of law and that it guarantees equal protection of the laws for all citizens.

The Children's Trust lawsuit has survived the initial attempts by the Federal Government and Fossil Fuel Corporations to be dismissed and it will proceed to trial tentatively scheduled for February 2018.

Our national based UCC "Council For Climate Justice" is encouraging support for these efforts to hold the government responsible to take action to protect our children's future. It would be great to see our congregations preach on this effort in January. It would be amazing if we had our youth do these sermon messages. For additional info, contact Rev. Dr. Terry Gallagher at terrenceggallagher@hotmail.com.

Authors to bring God to life in CMA

The Chicago Metropolitan Association has authors who are bringing God to life again and, to some, for the first time, as we make sense of life's changes in today's world. They are:

The Rev. Dr. Bobbie McKay is the author of *The Unabridged Woman: A Guide to growing Up Female; Whatever Happened to the Family: A Psychologist Looks at Sixty Years of Change; Healing the Spirit: Stories of Transformation; Taking a chance on God: exploring God's Presence in Our Lives*. Dr. McKay is a member of Glenview UCC and a popular speaker and retreat leader.

The Rev. Nannette Banks has published a collaborative article Lament, Gospel, Response, written for the 2017 WellSprings: A Journal of United Methodist Clergywomen. Rev. Banks is the Director of Alumni/ae and Church Relations at McCormick Theological Seminary.

The Rev. Matt Fitzgerald is a frequent contributor to The Christian Century. He has published the following articles among many others: God among the Imperfect: The Holy Family didn't meet the ideal either; Thunderous Yes: Preaching to the Easter Crowds; Shocked by Grace: A Visit to Death Row. He hosts Preacher on Preaching, a Century podcast. Rev. Fitzgerald is the Senior Pastor of St Paul's UCC, Chicago.

The Rev. Dr. Otis Moss 111, is the author of *Blue Note Preaching in a Post-Soul World; Finding Hope in an Age of Despair; Redemption in a Red-Light District; Preach! The Power and Purpose Behind Praise, among many others*. He is the Senior Pastor of Trinity UCC, Chicago.

Please check in with us in the next edition of the Illinois Conference E-Newsletter for another sampling of the CMA authors.

News and Updates from the Prairie Association

Julie Eklund was ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament at her home church, Spring Creek UCC in Rockford; Martha Brunell, pastor of Mayfield Congregational UCC, preached at the service. Julie is serving as the pastor of Redeemer UCC in Sussex, Wisc., where she will be installed on Sunday, Nov. 5, at 3:00 p.m., at which time Gary Stillwell will offer the charges to the congregation and the pastor.

Alex Garncarz was installed as pastor and teacher of Zion UCC, Peru, on July 23; former interim pastor Kay Harding preached, and a combined choir of members of several local churches provided special music.

Becky Erbe was installed as Associate Pastor at Second Congregational - First Presbyterian Church, Rockford; there was great energy as Becky invited children to participate in this special service.

Ted Engelsdorfer was installed as pastor and teacher of Union Congregational UCC, Somonauk, following the interim ministry of Rev. Chuck Maney, who preached the installation sermon. The choir - bolstered by the participation of the former interim pastor and newly-installed pastor, offered beautiful music.

Following the events at Charlottesville, Hank Fairman, pastor of St. John UCC, Freeport, organized a community response and vigil; over 250 participants met in the community's Debate Square to light candles and pray and offer peaceful witness.

Open Table UCC in Ottawa has opened a LGBTQ teen drop-in center.

Federated Church, Sycamore, celebrated the retirement of their pastor, Dennis Johnson, and called Kent Ulery to serve as interim pastor and teacher.

Ivan Schoen concluded his ministry at Spring Creek UCC, Rockford, and the church council has called Steve Welker as interim minister.

Mary Gay McKinney will retire from ministry at Open Prairie UCC, Princeton, on Nov. 26; the congregation has called Adam Webber to begin ministry there on Dec. 1. Mary Gay's retirement marks 40 years in ordained ministry. All are invited to join Open Prairie UCC in celebrating with her from 2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 25, at the church at 25 E. Marion St., Princeton. Please phone (815) 872-5150 for more information or directions. As part of this farewell celebration, a "Pastor Roast" will take place at 3:30 p.m.

The Prairie Association has adopted an updated Organizational Covenant. Bill Riegle, pastor of English Congregational UCC, Big Rock, is the Association Moderator.

Mayfield Congregational UCC is early in the process of collecting 800 pounds of plastic bottle caps for two recycled benches for their Monarch Waystation. The congregation would appreciate your help. Any clean recyclable plastic lid will do from a water bottle, pill bottle, shampoo, laundry detergent, peanut butter, whipped cream, mustard, bottled tea, etc. You would not believe how many plastic lids we toss every day. Be in touch with Martha Brunell at marthabrunell@gmail.com with questions or if church members can help with picking up a quantity of lids. This is a great project for your congregation or any smaller group within it. Thanks!

Union Congregational UCC, Somonauk, is hosting a Spaghetti Supper on Wednesday, Nov. 15, from 4:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. Adults \$10, \$7 kids ages 4-10.

Christkindlmarkt at Open Prairie UCC, Princeton, is a part of Princeton's Holiday Open House weekend, from 9:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 18. Homemade cookies from recipes around the world, Christmas crafts and ornaments and German lunch items are but a part of the offerings. And, back by popular demand, the gingerbread station where children of all ages can make a gingerbread house to take home! This event is at 25 E. Marion St., Princeton. Please phone (815) 872-5150 for directions or with questions.

Shabbona UCC hosts their annual Turkey Dinner on Thursday, Nov. 16. Dine-in or carry-out, this meal is famous for its home cooked flavors and freshness. The church is located at 104 E. Navajo Ave.

The Association continues to pray for Betty Delgado, pastor of Trinity UCC, LaSalle, as she battles multiple myeloma; and for Dennis Johnson, retired pastor, as he pursues treatment for the ongoing effects of Agent Orange.

Bethel United Church of Christ "Elmhurst Speaks" Series Hosts Story Club

On Thursday evening, Nov. 9 at 7:00 p.m., Story Club is coming to Bethel United Church of Christ in Elmhurst. Story Club is an evening of true stories told live. Its manifesto is simple: "We gather because we are hungry and desperate for the feelings that come from a well-told true tale: the feeling of understanding, the feeling of learning about the world and, most of all, the feeling of deep and honest connection."

In the gospel of Matthew, the Disciples ask Jesus a simple question, "Why do you tell

stories?" Jesus responds, "I tell stories to create readiness, to nudge the people toward receptive insight." (The Message) As Jesus knew, stories nudge us to new insights and greater connection far more effectively than hard facts or reasoned arguments. Dana Norris, founder of Story Club, wrote this, "When you hear a story your brain changes. Your neurons begin to mirror those of the teller. You are affected. You become more than you. Stories are our primary mode of constructing our identity and sharing it with others. Stories are how we make sense of the chaos of the world."

It is in this spirit that Bethel's program series, Elmhurst Speaks, welcomes Story Club to our Welcome Center. Story Club is a storytelling gathering that features a mix of experienced storytellers with an open mic opportunity for anyone who wishes to share their story. Here's how Story Club works: you can attend as an audience member and have the experience of hearing real stories told live. Or, you can join in the storytelling by preparing an eight-minute story to share. The theme will be Happy Accidents and Silver linings. The storytellers will be invited to share stories from the bright side. You'll hear tales of how sometimes when a door slams shut, another swings wide open; bad news gone good!

Story Club is geared for 14+ years old. There will be a free will donation of \$10 to support PADS, one of Bethel's Human Concerns mission partners. We hope you can join us!

Bethel UCC is located at 315 E. St. Charles Rd. In Elmhurst. Church facilities are fully accessible and parking is available behind the church; please enter from St. Charles Rd. or Huntington Lane off Poplar. Contact the church at office@bethel-ucc.org or call (630) 279-4040 for more information.

Call to Action: SB 1657 Gun Dealer Licensing: Gun Safety, not Gun Control

Did you know that here in the state of Illinois, gun dealers do not have to have a state license to do business? If you open a restaurant, you have to have a license. If you want to cut hair, you have to have a license. If you want to groom dogs and cats, you have to have a license. However, if you sell guns, rather than get a license from the state, you get a Federal Firearms License (FFL). The federal license is then issued and enforced by the bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. That doesn't seem bad, but the problem is that, on the average, the ATF only inspects gun dealers once a decade. Would you eat at a restaurant that was only inspected every 10 years?

The majority of gun dealers operate responsibly, but 90 per cent of crime guns in the U.S. can be traced back to 5 per cent of gun dealers; 17 per cent of the guns used in crimes in Chicago were supplied by three gun shops. We don't want to stop good people from legal purchases, but how do we stop illegally obtained weapons from getting to people who do bad things?

If this information seems like something you would like to act upon, there is more information available about SB 1657, the Gun Dealer Licensing Act. If passed, the Act, would give Illinois the ability to encourage better business practices among gun dealers and hold corrupt dealers accountable. It includes measures such that would help prevent illegally trafficked firearms from entering our communities.

Nationwide, 26 other states have enacted some sort of gun dealer licensing to fill gaps in federal license laws. Increased legislation of gun dealers to prevent straw purchases has been associated with an 84% decrease of guns from those dealers used in crimes.

You may think that what I'm describing comes is too political, or comes from one political view, but a recent poll in Illinois showed that 85 percent of Illinois voters, including more than 77 percent of Illinois gun owners, said they support requiring gun dealers to be licensed by the state. In addition, it found that more than 93 percent of voters support requiring background checks for gun dealer employees. This legislation will go to the Illinois House for a full vote soon. So, you are invited to contact your state legislator.

This bill is due for a vote on Nov. 10, 2017. Learn more at www.ilgvp.com.

Thank you!

Rev. Selena Blackwell

GLAUCE holds 2017 Conference

The Great Lakes Association of United Church Educators held its annual fall conference at Indiana Pokagon State Park. Ronda Bower (CMA) presented a hands-on introduction to Messy Church. Pat McCure (Eastern) conducted one of the workshops. Pat was elected to a second term as Illinois Conference rep.



Pictured are those attending from the Illinois Conference and the Illinois South Conference.

GLAUCE announces Save the Date: Oct. 9-11, for the 2018 Conference to be held at Techny Towers in Chicago. The theme will be "Sacred Conversations about Race" and the keynote speakers will be Rev. John C. Dorhauer, UCC General Minister and President, and Rev. Traci D. Blackmon, UCC Acting Executive Minister, also Justice and Witness Ministries. Conference is open to all church educators, volunteers and clergy.

For more information go to the national web site: www.auce-ucc.org.

To join contact Lisa at Lhart@wcucc.org. For Illinois Conference, contact Pat at psm1122kipper@gmail.com.



Happy
Thanksgiving

- Illinois Conference Staff!

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

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