Report from the Interim Conference Minister

SELF-CARE? WHAT IS THAT?
I CANNOT SAY NO! People Need Me.
(Hint: YOU NEED SABBATH. WE ALL NEED SABBATH)
Rev. Justo González ll

When does the slow season start? It surely was not this past summer and the pace ONLY seems to be picking up rapidly.

We Are Tired:

Similar to many of you, we too are tired. The Conference Staff has been asked to do more with less resources and everyone seems tired. I know that our ACM’s, support staff, camp staff and I feel it daily. We’re not breathing, relaxing, acknowledging life before us or giving ourselves time to chill. We ignore ourselves, our families and our needs because there is ALWAYS ONE MORE THING TO DO. We are guilty. We aren’t good to ourselves. We ignore this reality so I want to bring it to the light.

You Too Are Tired:

Our pastors and laity are also exhausted. We are over worked and most of us have forgotten what self-care is and how to care for ourselves and our loved ones. WE are doing a horrible job caring for ourselves, our loved ones and families. Many of our committed lay people are also giving so many hours of their lives to their local congregations, associations, their communities and our conference. I thank you for your generosity. Now stop it. And slow down.

The stroke I had in June taught me that it is NOT SELFISH TO CARE FOR MYSELF OR MY FAMILY. SELF-CARE IS A GODLY ACT. IT IS NOT SELFISH FOR YOU TO CARE FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR LOVED ONES.

REPEAT AFTER ME, ...
Thriving Pastors in Revitalizing Congregations (TPIRC) Summit
Rev. Kimberlee Whisler-Vasko

The TPIRC Summit held in Peoria, Ill., offered powerful keynote speakers as well as relevant and informative workshops as vital inspiration for our team to begin working together towards revitalization of our congregation.

When our team gathered to assess and begin processing what we had learned, we discovered that many were surprised that problems our church has experienced were not unique. It was a tremendous learning opportunity to hear from others and gain a greater understanding that we are not alone in the struggles we face. Our core “take-aways” from this 1st Annual Leadership Summit are:

- “Dream Big Outrageous Dreams!” - Rev. Molly Baskette shared about a fire that had occurred at her church. Our church had recently experienced an accident that significantly damaged our sanctuary and traumatized our small and struggling community. She used the example of the church wanting to have an impact on the issue of homelessness that led to a vision and mission to “end” homelessness in the community!
- “Conflict in and of itself is NOT a bad thing and change is a constant as part of a healthy dynamic environment; without change we die.” - Rev. Anita Bradshaw

Read More

Report from the Illinois Conference President

In the last E-Blast we named the Search Committee to conduct the search for the next Acting Associate Conference Minister for the Illinois Conference. This search is for the position serving Chicago Metropolitan Association (CMA) where Rev. Dr. Vertie Powers will retire at the end of the year. The Rev. Carol Currier-Frighetto has agreed to chair the Personnel Committee on the resignation of Rev. Bob Sherman, and will take his place on this Search. Rev. Matt Hunt has been added to provide a voice from Western Association.

The remaining members are: Rev. Justo González II, Mr. Mike Linder, Rev. Chuck Maney, Rev. Melody Seaton, Ms. Juanita Bradley and Mr. Robert Buckner. The Rev. Dr. Marilyn Pagan-Banks was added to the minimum alignment to bring a wider representation of the diversity in our Conference.

Just to keep you on your toes, a second Search Committee has been named and are organizing to conduct the search for the next Conference Minister. That Committee will
be chaired by Mr. David Holston, the Vice Chair is Ms. Juanita Bradley. Also serving are Rev. Chuck Maney, Rev. Charlene Hinkley, Rev. Santina Poor, Rev. Jamie Hawley, Rev. Carol Currier-Friggietto, Ms. Kay Quinney-Burnard, and the Rev. Emily Mitchell. We have asked the Nominating Committee to seek 1 or 2 additional members to broaden the diversity represented.

At this time the Conference is not moving immediately to replace the position vacated by the resignation of Rev. Dr. James Olson. During this time, Rev. Kim Wood is providing Staff support to both Eastern and Fox Valley Associations, and Rev. Kathy Lawes responds to both Prairie and Western Association, and Rev. Vertie Powers remains identified with CMA.

Rev. Charles Maney
Illinois Conference UCC - President

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Burnout

Rev. Brandyn Simmons

Burnout. I don't have to tell you that it's a real thing. Clergy. Caregivers. Congregations. Leaders. No matter the role, we've experienced burnout at some level.

One of the most challenging aspects about stress and burnout is that they are self-perpetuating. When we are feeling stressed, we tend to operate from our amygdala. We get tunnel vision and can only see what is right before us and tend to put a doomsday slant on whatever we see.

Even the most intelligent people, when stressed, do not have the emotional intelligence (EQ) to keep their thoughts from spiraling out of control. Although the answers may be readily available for solving a problem, there is very little function from the prefrontal cortex because they are in fight-or-flight mode. As answers are harder to come by, stress is increased, burnout ensues, and the situation is perpetuated.

Another byproduct of operating from the amygdala is the impostor syndrome. That little voice that says, "You're going to ruin this" or "You're not good enough to handle this" resides in that part of the brain. If you start to buy in to that voice that tells you that you are incapable of doing anything right, it is very difficult to have the confidence that you can actually find the answers.

Did you ever notice that your memory is not up to par when you are stressed? This is because our perceptions are processed in the prefrontal cortex and then eventually stored in the hippocampus (to simplify the explanation). If we are working from the amygdala, it is nearly impossible to create or retrieve memories. This also leads to difficulty in solving difficult situations because we can't remember how we dealt with them in the past or how we have learned/heard/read about handling them.

So how do we reverse or avoid burnout?

Here are some simple steps to stave off and undo this ugly cycle:
Happenings Around the Conference

Installation Service of Reverend David Bateman as Pastor and Teacher at St. John’s UCC, Harmony (Hampshire).

Clergy Day Away was held Oct. 1-2, 2019 at Pilgrim Park in Princeton, with special guest Barbara Brown Taylor.

There is an addition to the Pilgrim Park family! Lena Elise Kloster born Sept. 17, 6 lbs. 9 oz., and all are healthy. Even dad Mitch.

Federated Church in Sycamore welcomes new pastor the Rev. Eric J. Ogi. "I am so excited to be at the Federated Church of Sycamore," Pastor Eric says. "In a divided and divisive time, this is a community of diverse perspectives that takes seriously God's call to be a force for social justice in the world.

United Church of Christ Palestine Israel Network

The Rev. Kimberlee Whisler-Vasko and the Rev. John Thomas, both members of the UCCPIN Steering Committee, are spearheading an initiative in the Illinois Conference to develop an Illinois PIN focusing on equipping and empowering UCC members to become advocates in their congregations and with public policy makers for a just peace in Palestine and Israel. Supported by a $2,500 grant from the Justice and Witness Ministry of the Illinois Conference, the goal of the project is to recruit and train twenty-five advocates in 2020 who will commit to developing ongoing relationships with members of...
the Illinois Congressional delegation in order to provide a continuing religious voice for justice for Palestinians living under occupation.

The advocacy work will be informed by two General Synod resolutions sponsored by UCCPIN: “A Call for the UCC to Advocate for the Rights of Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation,” passed in 2017, and “A Call for the UCC to Take Actions Toward a Just Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” adopted in 2015, as well as by recent UCCPIN statements focusing on human rights as the lens through which to view the conflict. In addition to support for advocacy, the organizers will also prepare educational displays and resources that can be taken to congregational, Association, and Conference gatherings.

Rev. Whisler-Vasko is pastor of St. John’s United Church of Christ in Lyons, Illinois. Rev. Thomas retired in 2016 from an administrative and teaching role at Chicago Theological Seminary which followed his ten-year term as General Minister and President.

Look for us @UCCPIN on Social Media.

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**First Annual Summer Fine Arts Camp "The Arts Work!"

As a recipient of the Illinois Conference LEEAP Grant, St. Paul United UCC of Pekin sponsored the First Annual Summer Fine Arts Camp - *The Arts Work!* at St. Paul UCC on Aug. 5-9, 2019. This beautiful facility overflowed of children's creativity with over 60 participants in grades 2nd-8th. On the last day of camp, families were treated to an Italian dinner with children’s artwork adorning the Fellowship Hall. Following dinner, a packed sanctuary enjoyed an all camp showcase performance featuring the children on choir chimes, singing, and creative movement. In addition, a triptych painted by the children was gifted to the church. On Aug. 11, St. Paul acknowledged all who contributed to this special week with a very special service - Camp Appreciation Sunday. A link to the opening number is found on The Arts Work! at [St. Paul UCC facebook](#).

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**St. John UCC Lincoln Scholarship Program**

St. John UCC in Lincoln is once again this year pleased to be able to offer the St. John Christian Service Scholarship to UCC ministerial students or missionary students.

Please note the application are due back at St. John United Church of Christ, 204 Seventh Street, Lincoln, Ill., 62656 or email to stjohnucclincoln@yahoo.com by Oct. 11.

[St. John UCC Lincoln Scholarship Information](#)
UCC Creation Justice Churches Webinar
“Lessons from the Frontlines: Sisters in the Struggle for Justice”

The next Creation Justice Webinar on Oct. 8, 2019 at 12:00 p.m. will feature four African American women who are leaders in the environmental justice movement: Leslie Fields from the Sierra Club, Adrienne Hollis from the Union of Concerned Scientists, Jacqueline Patterson from the NAACP, and Heather McTeer Toney from Moms Clean Air Force. We will focus on the moral center of the movement: frontline communities that suffer the most from environmental harms. Even if you can’t make it, register to receive a video recording. Sign-up for the webinar now!

Spanda Retreat
Come and discover your True Self to create a life of meaning, serenity, and joy!

Come and join us on Oct. 27-28 on the beautiful shores of Lake Michigan on our next retreat! For the first time, the Spanda retreat is being opened to lay folk. Are you clergy, a caregiver, or someone who just wants to get the most out of life? Then this retreat is for you. In this 24 hour retreat you will identify your True Self, name your False Self (ego) and begin the journey of creating an intentional life and vocational plan based on who you REALLY ARE. In essence, we are going to create space for your Spanda moment when your True Self emerges and stress, cognitive dissonance, and fear are overcome. This huge investment in yourself comes at the nominal price of $149, so register soon!

Register online here!

Generations Care Partners Foundation is a 501c3 CHHSM member that provides education and resources to churches, clergy, and people of the Illinois Conference UCC. Please take this brief (nine question) survey to help us better provide the resources that you need:

GCPF Workshop/Retreat Survey

Churches in the Media

Pastors Wash Immigrants’ Feet To Honor Their Difficult Journeys

Aurora church’s ‘clothes closet’ serves community

St. John UCC to host Solar 101 information session
How One Church In Chicago Is Supporting Black Businesses

Freeport church installing solar energy system

St. Peter’s UCC Welcomes Ben Westphal as New Music Director

Marigold Hero: Sharon Samuels Reed brought safety, change to Pekin

Employment Opportunities

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

Conference Calendar for October

October 6: Grace UCC 5th Anniversary Concert "God has Brought us a Mighty Long Way", 3:00 p.m. at Grace UCC, Sauk Village.

October 6: Service of Ordination and Installation of Jagan Samuvelraj, 4:00 p.m. at Christ Tamil United Church of Christ, Wheaton.

October 7: Ecclesiastical Council for Marian McKinney, 7:00 p.m. at Lincoln Memorial UCC, Chicago.

October 8: UCC Creation Justice Churches Webinar: “Lessons from the Frontlines: Sisters in the Struggle for Justice”, 12:00 p.m.


October 10: Violence Ain't Cool, 7:15 p.m. at Avalon Park Community Church, Chicago. Keynote speaker Dr. Frank Carpenter Jr.

October 12: Time to Celebrate! CMA 32nd Synod Resolution Celebration, 2:00 p.m. at Trinity Community UCC, Berywn.

October 15-17: Great Lakes Association of United Church Educators (GLAUCE) 2019 Conference at Lake James at Pokagon State Park, Ind.

October 16: A Just Harvest 2019 Annual Award Benefit, 6:00 p.m. at Mayne Stage, Chicago.


October 19: Mayfield Church in Sycamore hosts Pancake Breakfast, 6:30 a.m. at Mayfield Church, Sycamore.
October 19: **Joint 2019 Fall Meeting of Eastern Association and Western Association** at First Congregational UCC, Decatur.

October 19: **Chicago Metropolitan Association 2019 Fall Meeting** at Chicago Theological Seminary, Chicago.

October 19-20: **Becca Stevens of Thistle Farms/Nashville at Winnetka Congregational Church.** The Mission of Thistle Farms is to heal, empower female survivors of human trafficking, prostitution, and addiction. "Love Heals" is the motto of Thistle Farms and we are in a world in need of healing.

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.”

October 20: **Benefit Concert for the Music Ministry of St. Paul UCC** featuring The Heritage Ensemble in Concert and St. Paul Choir, 4:00 p.m at St. Paul UCC, Pekin.

October 23: **Clergy Case Consultation Group Development Conference Calls**, 6:30 p.m. Sponsored by Advocate Health Care to promote congregational emotional well-being through clergy and mental health care provider collaboration and consultation

October 27-28: **Spanda Retreat**, 4 p.m. at Tower Hill Camp, Sawyer, Mich.

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**Fall Association Meetings**

**Eastern and Western Associations Joint Fall Meeting**

The joint Fall Meeting of the Eastern and Western Associations of the Illinois Conference is Saturday, Oct. 19, 2019 at First Congregational UCC in Decatur, at 9:30 a.m. The joint planning committee has been working hard to design a meaningful and exciting event that will engage us through worship, fellowship, and facilitated skill-building. This is a Fall Meeting you won’t want to miss!

**Information and Registration**

**Chicago Metropolitan Association Fall Meeting**

The Chicago Metropolitan Association Fall Meeting “Inside Out: Sharing Our Gifts” will be held Saturday, Oct. 19, 2019 at Chicago Theological Seminary, 1407 E. 60th St., Chicago, IL 60637. Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. Welcome and Worship begins at 9:00 a.m. Preacher: Rev. Dr. Zachary Moon, Associate Professor of Practical Theology, Chicago Theological Seminary.
Fox Valley Association Fall Meeting

The Fox Valley Association will gather for its Fall Meeting on Sunday, Oct. 20, 2019 at First Congregational UCC, 1047 Curtiss Avenue, Downers Grove, at 1:30 p.m. The Theme is “Truth Telling: To Make More Visible God’s Love & Justice” with the Rev. Scott Oberle as our worship leader and keynoter. There will be two one-hour energizer sessions focusing on one of several Justice & Witness topics.

Information and Registration

Upcoming Events

November 2: Prairie Association Fall Meeting, First Congregational Church, Sterling. More information to follow.

November 9: Songs in the Key of Love: CMA Sings the Word, 3:00 p.m. at Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Oak Park.

December 22: Service of Farewell and Release for Rev. Dr. Vertie Powers, 4:00 p.m. at Westchester Community Church, Westchester. Reception to follow.

Featured speakers at the Annual Celebration of the Illinois Conference June 4-6, 2020: Rise Up & Build!
Visit our website

DONATE NOW!

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