

September 2019



NEW BEGINNINGS E-BLAST



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Report from the Interim Conference Minister

"Connected to Each Other"

Rev. Justo González II

In the play "Last Session" the lead character who is dying sings, "Connected" to each other. It has spoken to me for over 20 years. It speaks to the need for community, relationships of mutuality, trust, respect and mutual accountability. "Connected to each other. We should all be connected to each other... We will always be connected to each other."

The Manual on Ministry in its Theological Grounding section states, "God 'calls the worlds into being', giving life and purpose to creation, to persons, and to communities. Throughout the biblical stories and across generations, God calls us to belong to God and to respond to God's grace by belonging to one another. Such belonging together (being in covenant with one another) relies on the initiative and grace of God... In Jesus Christ, the covenant is made new. By the Holy Spirit, the covenant is widened and strengthened."

Relationship and Covenants:

Everything begins with a commitment to intentional relationship building. Like most who participate in the UCC, we have ALL heard "covenant." Yet, like most, it wasn't until I spent time with my mentors, took our History and Polity Course, and spent time with Conference Staff, our local Committee on Ministry (COM), Ministerial Excellence Support and Assessment (MESA) and the Manual on Ministry (MOM), that I discovered the essence of what I have always known to be true. "Covenant—the commitment of God to God's people, of the people to God, of the people to one another as the Body of Christ—is foundational to our UCC identity...God's covenant with creation and humankind inspires deep and binding commitment in relationships within and beyond the Church... The Church is called together by God; all members and settings of the Church are interrelated,

sharing a common identity as the Body of Christ. The covenantal relationships between parts of the Body of Christ are characterized by mutuality, transparency, accountability, and a desire to represent Christ together for the glory of God.”

[Read More](#)



We recognize that transition can be difficult. In light of the resignation of Rev. James Olson as Acting Associate Conference Minister of the Illinois Conference, the Council of the Fox Valley Association has felt the impact that this transition is having on individuals and the association as a whole. Regardless of whether we are prepared for

change, it inevitably draws feelings of uncertainty and grief to the surface of our lives and the organizations for which we care deeply. Unexpected transition amplifies that grief, because we do not always have a full picture of what led to those transitions. Perhaps we fear that something is deeply wrong, or that a person or institution is acting in bad faith.

When it comes to staff transitions, it is this uncertainty that we feel most pointedly, because we are in that difficult bind in which our desire to understand what happened and the wider church’s commitment to good boundaries meet in ways that sometimes feel unsatisfying.

The Personnel Committee, Conference Council and Illinois Conference staff must hold the confidentiality of personnel, not just because it is legally required of them (as it is with all organizations), but because it is the ethical thing to do. Because of this, the wider community may not know all of the details surrounding staffing changes. It is tempting to fill the empty spaces with mistrust, fear, or anger.

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Report from the Illinois Conference President

The Search Committee to conduct the national search for the next Acting Associate Conference Minister for the Illinois Conference has been called together. The period for collecting Profiles has closed, and review has begun. The position is “Acting” as we realize that the configuration of staff we have today is not matched to our current budgetary constraints.



The minimum configuration of members of the Search committee is carefully prescribed by our By-Laws. Rev. Justo González II, Interim Conference Minister acts as chair of the team. Mr. Mike Linder, as Past Conference President also represents the Fox Valley Association. Rev. Chuck Maney, as the Conference President also represents the Prairie Association. Rev. Bob Sherman, serves as the Personnel Committee Chair and also represents Western Association.

Rev. Melody Seaton, serves as representative of the Eastern Association. Chicago Metropolitan Association has two representatives. Ms. Juanita Bradley and Ms. Myra

Taylor represent CMA. The Rev. Dr. Marilyn Pagan-Banks was added to the minimum alignment to bring a wider representation of the diversity in our Conference.

Rev. Charles Maney
Illinois Conference UCC - President

Demystifying Hospice

Rev. Brandyn Simmons

I often travel to do panel discussions and presentations with the Illinois Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (ILHPCO). Along with the president and vice president of ILHPCO, we get a number of recurring questions. I would like to address a few of these FAQs here. In a future article, I will include a rubric comparing hospice and palliative care.



Does hospice make you die faster?

No. Hospice does not effect the speed of the dying process. The primary focus is to keep the individual comfortable with the best quality of life possible. The key is quality over quantity, but it is generally believed that people on hospice live a longer, more meaningful life than one who is not on hospice.

What services are provided?

The hospice team consists of a doctor, nurse, certified nurse's aide, chaplain, social worker, bereavement coordinator, and on occasion, a music, art, or pet therapist. The idea of hospice is to provide care for the wholeness of one's being. These services are most often offered *in the home* of the patient and allow for aging and dying in place.

Should we wait until just before death to start hospice?

[Read More](#)

Happenings Around the Conference



St. Paul UCC, in Monee, has welcomed Rev. Thom Bower as an interim pastor and Mary Rose Linker as the new Children, Youth and Family Minister.



The Peoples Church of Chicago - 26th annual Billy Hand Robinson's Labor Day picnic. For the women and men of the city who are homeless. Nearly 340 meals were

Photo credit: David Holston



Rev. Kimberly Wood welcomes her grandchild Theodore “Teddy” Michael Motz on Friday, Sept. 6, 10 lbs 5 oz. Both baby and mother are doing well.

served.

Photo credit: Bonnie A. Perry



Rev. Justo González II was honored and grateful for the warm welcome from Pastor Mark Binder and the People of God at Bethlehem UCC in Sutter, Ill.

Honoring the Living Legacy of Faith UCC in Chicago

Rev. Julie Jane Capel, Pastor and Mr. David Billingham, Leadership Team and Financial Secretary



I ask that you imagine sitting next to your grandmother, granddaddy or a beloved elderly neighbor who is *only* a century old. Looking into their wise eyes – slightly hidden by bifocals – and inviting them to go on a domestic mission trip that focused on compassion, mercy, justice and Jesus. They will have to sleep on a cot, shower at the YMCA and volunteer until two hours past their usual bed time. Now imagine that your beloved senior citizen sits back in their chair, eyes shut and carefully speaks into existence the words that should have been obvious in the first place.

“I am not in that stage of life anymore. My heart still beats for the Kingdom of God. My blood still boils over injustice. My ears still itch for promptings from the Holy Spirit. My tears are still shed for who have not experienced freedom in Christ. My feet still tap in worship. And my mouth still praises our Creator and Sustainer.”

Read More

LEEAP announces 2020 Funding Cycle

Our Conference Local Evangelism, Envisioning and Planting/LEEAP 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 .

DON'T BE LATE! Deadline is Oct. 1

Marc Lamont Hill to Keynote Palestinian Advocacy Charity Event in Chicago

Dr. Marc Lamont Hill, an award-winning journalist and bold advocate for social justice and Palestinian rights, will present the keynote address at Bright Stars of Bethlehem's 15th Anniversary Gala on September 29th at the Chicago Cultural Center.

Dr. Hill will be joined by Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, Palestinian theologian, social entrepreneur and Bright Stars' cofounder.



The theme of their presentation is, "Why bother with Palestine?"

Learn more about the event at: brightstarsbethlehem.org/15thcelebration

School for Ministry January 2020 Cohort Application



ARE YOU READY TO ANSWER THE CALL?

Is God tugging at your heartstrings to step up to a higher calling? Does your church have a need that you are equipped to fulfill? **The School for Ministry (SFM) can help you discern your calling and guide you through a curriculum to help you develop your skills for ministerial leadership.**

The School for Ministry offers:

- Foundational religious education.
- Leadership development for laity.
- Nurturing spiritual formation among aspiring ministerial leaders.
- Continuing education for ordained ministers.

Register for the January 2020 SFM Cohort. We would love to have you join us on this journey of discovery!

Visit cciwdisciples.org or contact lorrie@cciwdisciples.org for more information.



The Climate Strike: Faith for the Future UCC Webinar on Faith Communities

The next [UCC Creation Justice Webinar](#)

will focus on the upcoming global climate strike on September 20. Already, the strike is shaping up to be one of the largest mobilizations in the history of the climate justice movement. The UCC Council for Climate Justice is a national co-sponsor of this strike which is taking place in over 265 locations across the United States. Learn more about the climate strike and how faith communities are getting involved from an interfaith panel of speakers. The webinar is on September 10 at 1:00 p.m. ET, but sign-up even if you cannot make it, so that the video recording can be sent to you. [Register now!](#)



The Climate Strike Faith for the Future

A Creation Justice Webinar
in Preparation for
September 20th



Spanda Retreat

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

Come and join us 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:

CROP Hunger Walks

Stepping up to end hunger since 1969

Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the national CROP Hunger Walk movement, CROP Hunger Walks continue to raise millions of dollars each year to help end hunger and poverty through long-term sustainable approaches to significantly reduce or eliminate hunger. In each CROP Hunger Walk community, 25% of money raised comes back to local agencies. Across the country, over 1600 local agencies receive funds from CROP Hunger Walks



This year some 800 communities nationwide are joining together in interfaith CROP Hunger Walks around the theme "Stepping up to End Hunger Since 1969."

For more information or to find a local Walk at www.crophungerwalk.org .

Prayer Request

Those recently ill or hospitalized...

We also keep in our prayers the following request:

Please keep Rev. Dr. Jorge L. Morales, as well as his wife Martha, along with their wider family in your prayers as Jorge will be undergoing a surgical procedure this month.



Illinois Conference Women's Retreat

It's not too late to register for the Illinois Conference Women's Retreat at Pilgrim Park, September 27-28. Enjoy time with women from across the state in the beautiful fall setting provided by our church camp.

Click below for registration information:

[9th Annual Women's Retreat Info and Registration form](#)

[Click here to register on-line](#)

OPTIC is leading an effort to redevelop UCC.org

The Office of Philanthropy, Identity, Technology, and Communication (OPTIC) is leading an effort to redevelop ucc.org . The process will include surveys such as this one and convening of focus groups and subject matter experts in order to gather input from throughout the church. OPTIC is committed to making the redevelopment process an

inclusive one and as responsive as possible to the needs of everyone who relies on ucc.org for information.

Right now we ask that you weigh in as we work our way through web development firm (vendor) selection, so that we can begin this process. Your input will make sure that our choice is a good fit for all involved.

Please answer these six brief questions by September 20, 2019 about your experience with ucc.org . The survey should take 5 minutes or less.

Thank you in advance for your responses.

UCC.org Redevelopment Survey

Churches in the Media

[St. Paul UCC in Monee Welcomes Two New Pastors](#)

[Celebrate International Day of Peace Sept. 21 in Geneva](#)

[Grace Cafe Returns to Elmhurst Churches for 13th Season](#)

Employment Opportunities

Click links to view [Ministerial opportunities](#) and [lay employment opportunities](#) within the Illinois Conference.

Conference Calendar for September

September 9: [Ecclesiastical Council for Marian McKinney](#) , 7:00 p.m. at Trinity Hospital, Chicago.

September 15: [Glenview Community UCC Building Renovation Dedication](#) , 10:00 a.m. at Glenview Community UCC, Glenview.

September 15: [Avalon Park Community Church 123rd Church Anniversary](#) , 10:45 a.m. at Avalon Park Community Church, Chicago.

September 20: [2019 Illinois Conference of Churches Annual Assembly, "Ministerial Alliances: the Cornerstone of Ecumenism"](#) , 8:00 a.m. at Wesley United Methodist Church, Bloomington, Ill.

September 21: [St. John UCC in Palatine host 45th Annual Craft Fair and Flea Market](#) , 9:00 a.m. at St. John UCC, Palatine.

September 22: [Service of Farewell and Release for Rev. Michelle Hughes](#) , 11:00 a.m. at Pilgrim Congregational Church UCC, Oak Park.

September 22: [Service of Ordination for Chad O'Neil](#) , 3:00 p.m. at Community United

Church of Christ, Champaign.

September 22: [Never on a Sunday \(morning\)! First Congregational of Evanston UCC 150th celebration concert](#) , 3:00 p.m. at First Congregational UCC, Evanston.

September 27-28: [9th Annual Illinois Conference Women's Retreat](#) , Pilgrim Park Camp, Princeton.

September 28: [95th Anniversary Dinner for Church of the Good Shepherd Congregational UCC](#) , 5:00 p.m - 9:00 p.m. at Kingsley Hall, Chicago

September 29: [Installation Service for Rev. Dave Bateman](#) , 3:00 p.m. at St. John's UCC, Hampshire-Harmony.

Upcoming Events

October 1-2: [Clergy Day Away](#) with Barbara Brown Taylor at Pilgrim Park, Princeton.

October 9-10: [ATIIM 28th Annual Gathering](#) with Rev. Dr. Robin Meyers. Theme for this conference: "The Challenge of Ministry in Times of Divisiveness".

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

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."

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.

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THE ILLINOIS CONFERENCE UCC E-BLAST is published by the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ, 1840 Westchester Blvd., Suite 200, Westchester, IL 60154. The Rev. Justo González II, Interim Conference Minister; Carmen Torres, Editorial Assistant. Copy may be sent to: iiconfcarmen@gmail.com.

This communication is made possible by your contributions to

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