



NEW BEGINNINGS E-BLAST



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Message from the Conference Minister

Rev. Molly Carlson

Conference is US... not THEM

Every time I hear the comment “the Conference doesn’t really do anything for me”, or a similar comment with the same basic meaning, I experience a sense of dissonance. Maybe this is because some of us are working from different understandings of what the Conference is.

When I speak about the Conference I am meaning all of the members of all of the churches, all of the pastors and authorized ministers, and all of the covenant partners related to the United Church of Christ in Illinois from the Wisconsin border to just south of Decatur and Springfield. We have some staff and some elected leaders that serve the Conference and work very hard to guide and support our shared work.



[Read More](#)

Six-Month Stewardship Initiative

Rev. Michelle Hughes, ACM, Transformation, Vitality, & Sustainability
Rev. Melody Seaton, Chair Stewardship Committee

John Westerhoff suggests the following:

Stewardship is about giving up the love of possessing and practicing a life of simplicity; of developing the habit of giving things away; of buying only what is absolutely necessary; of rejecting anything to which we are becoming addicted; of learning to enjoy things without owning them; of developing a greater appreciation of and respect for the natural world; of rejecting anything that will result in an injustice for others.

(Grateful and Generous Hearts, pp.33-34)

As we work to encourage stewardship throughout the Illinois Conference, we are aware that too many of our churches and its members are disconnected from the life of the Conference. We acknowledge the need for relationship building and a recasting of the understanding of stewardship. With this planned initiative our objectives are as follows:

Report from the Illinois Conference President

Mr. David Holston

September Council meeting was the next step in living our promise of Transparency. Progress is slow but we are progressing.

Fourteen years of financial filing is about 50% done and we grateful for our volunteers for their efforts. We signed a contract this week with a Financial Manager for the next six months who will help us to transition to new software and begin to revamp our financial systems as well as provide training to key staff and committees.



[Read More](#)

Your VOTE Matters



The UCC Our Faith Our Vote Our Voice team has put together several great resources including a webinar series (the first one is included here). Learn all you need to know and ideas to share with your community here: <https://www.ucc.org/ourfaithourvote>

Open Your Doors

We recognize and appreciate that outreach ministries may extend beyond a weekly service. Our churches embrace ministry in many forms: food distribution programs, providing

shelter for those in need, and so much more. All of this good work is such a wonderfully expansive view of ministry. However, opening your doors beyond weekly worship opens your congregation to additional risk.



INSURANCE BOARD
Partners in Protection

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Thriving Pastors in Revitalizing Congregations Education Summit is days away

The **Thriving Pastors in Revitalizing Congregations** (TPIRC) Education Summit is days away. Attention TPIRC Pastors, TPIRC Church Groups, Coaches, Clergy CCOP Facilitators, and Interested Clergy summit will begin Thursday, Sept. 17, and end Saturday, Sept. 19.

Please go to the link below and register.

Once you register, in addition to 3 plenary sessions, you will be allowed to select two workshops.

[Register Here!](#)



Week 11 and **approaching 48%** of our fundraising goal as the loss of planned activities and campers has greatly stressed our financial resources. Your gift is not just a donation, it is a statement in changing a young person's life, bringing them **out of the ordinary and into the sacred**. Please take this opportunity to donate directly at: <https://outdoorministries.campbraingiving.com/>

Pilgrim Park, the camp started as a mission...



Pilgrim Park in 1946

...began as a vision of Dr. Glenn Lindley and the Northern Area for the Illinois Conference of Congregational-Christian Churches. Through his efforts and vision of his two sisters they donated the original 30 acres of land where most of the buildings are located.

Additional forest and prairie acreage was purchased, which now totals 155 acres. Coming up on their 75th anniversary Pilgrim Park is honored to have created spiritual and fellowship memories to four generations of families.

Tower Hill, while walking on the beach...



...you may have seen a young girl transform a piece of driftwood into a mighty ship that she piloted across a vast sea, conquering epic obstacles along the way. You may have seen a group of strangers become life-long friends over a late-night campfire on the beach. You may have seen a timid child become brave as he stepped out into the water. If you ever walked on Tower Hill Beach, you have felt the spirit of God hovering over the waters, blessing you with Her Presence

Reverend Tracy Heilman
Tower Hill / Site Manager

Just Do It!

Rev. Brandyn Simmons

So now we just wait until things get back to normal. Just need to sit back until it's safe to reopen again. But why? Isn't there anything that we can do to be proactive? How about working on those leadership skills?

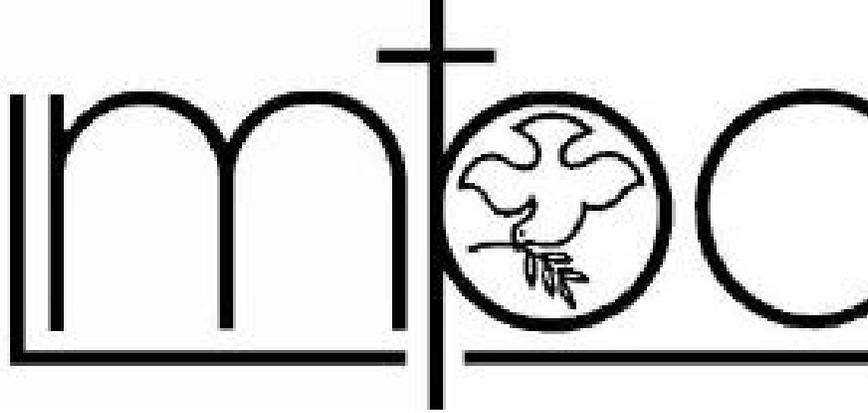
When considering the skills that are required to lead a church, just like leading any organization, there are *hard skills* and there are *soft skills*. Some of the hard skills needed might be financial, business, HR, theological, writing, etc. Some of the soft skills might be emotional intelligence, asking powerful open-ended questions (coach approach to leadership), deep listening, mindfulness, empathy, etc. Then there are those that fall in between and help to develop both like learning about Appreciative Inquiry and Family Systems Theory.



Now that you have identified the skills, what do you need to do to develop them? Can they be done on the job or do you need to some formal training?

[Read More](#)

VALUABLE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES



Leadership and Anxiety in the Church

September 24, 2020 from 9:00am CT to 4:00pm CT

Participants will look at the challenges presented by the rising levels of anxiety experienced in churches today, as well as the role that self-differentiated leadership plays in calming such anxiety. Works of fine art are integrated at various points to facilitate theological reflection. This workshop will be repeated on December 3, 2020.

Conflict Transformation Skills for Churches

October 23, 2020 from 9:00am CT to 4:30pm CT

Although a normal part of life, conflict is usually seen as something negative. Acquire the knowledge and skills to transform conflict into a force for positive change and spiritual growth. This event will be repeated on Nov. 7, Nov, 21, and Dec. 5, 2020.

All events will be conducted online via Zoom. For maximum benefit, we encourage members of the same congregation to attend as a group. Significant discounts of up to \$50 per person are available! For details regarding fees and discounts, please consult the [CTS Discount Coupon](#), [HC Discount Coupon](#), or the [LAC Discount Coupon](#).

NAMI-Mental Health First Aid Training - Youth Version

This FREE ON-LINE training for Youth Mental Health First Aid is designed to teach parents, family members, caregivers, teachers, school staff, peers, neighbors, health and human services workers, and other caring citizens how to help an adolescent (age 12-18) who is experiencing a mental health or addictions challenge or is in crisis. Youth

Mental Health First Aid is primarily designed for adults who regularly interact with young people. The course introduces common mental health challenges for youth, reviews typical adolescent development, and teaches a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations. Topics covered include anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including AD/HD), and eating disorders. ALL participants must register no later than OCTOBER 10TH! CEU's are also available. REGISTER AT:

<http://namidupage.org/events/youth-mental-health-first-aid-online-st-john-ucc-only/>

YOUTH VERSION
(Virtual on-line class via Zoom)
Saturday, October 17th
9:30am—2:00pm

Participants must register and enroll no later than one week prior to the class start in order to for them to complete their self-study portion of the class. [REGISTER HERE](#) This is class is FREE & CEU'S are available!

Embrace Living Communities Acts Quickly to Protect Residents During Pandemic

Embrace Living Communities, provider of 26 affordable housing communities in northern Illinois and UCC Council for Health and Human Service Ministries agency, has worked tirelessly over the last six months to put a plan and new protocols in place to keep their residents and staff safe during the COVID-19 outbreak.



Embrace Living Communities
Affordable. Welcoming. **Home.**

Since the beginning, their leadership team has met frequently to stay on top of the quickly evolving updates from the CDC.

[Read More](#)

LEEAP announces 2021 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 and the revitalization of existing congregations.

If you and/or your church wish to submit a request, please contact the Illinois Conference at (708) 344-4470; e-mail ilconfmichelle@gmail.com. The application can be downloaded by going to the Illinois Conference website (www.ilucc.org). The deadline for a request for calendar year 2021 is Nov. 1, 2020.

From our covenant Partner, Advocate Aurora Healthcare

Flu Vaccines

Be sure to get your flu vaccine this year as a key part in maintaining your health during this time of COVID19.

Keeping yourself healthy is the best defense against exposure to this virus. The healthier you are, the less likely you will get critically ill if you are exposed.

COVID-19 Virtual Care Program



We're partnering with the State of Illinois to offer a virtual care program for Illinois residents recovering from COVID-19 at home so they can do so safely. The program is available to all residents who are confirmed, are likely COVID-19 positive, or anyone who thinks they have been exposed.

This program is available at no cost to you, no matter where you receive your primary care.

The program offers:

- Daily virtual check-ins via our LiveWell app or MyAdvocateAurora website for a period of 14 days
- Educational information
- 24/7 alert monitoring and support
- A free home monitoring kit, including a thermometer, face masks and other materials

If you're an Illinois resident,
call **866-443-2584** to enroll.

Campus Ministry Expanding Reach in COVID Response

Rev. Nate Brantingham, Director of Campus Ministry UIUC

Way back in Genesis 2, verse 18, one of the first things God ever says to humanity is: "It is not good for [people] to be alone." I keep coming back to that in my thinking. College/University is supposed to be this amazing time for the development of our young people, and social development is just as big a piece of that as educational development. Now most things are online and many students' course loads are entirely remote. Popular hangouts, including our campus ministry office, are closed. It can feel lonely and isolating and challenging. God is right. It is just not good for us to be alone. Distanced and safe? Sure! But not alone.

[Read More](#)



As people of faith, we know how stories carry the meaning of life, the power of what is true for us. We hear and tell ancient stories of scripture and bear witness to each other about how we experience God.

Where is the power of story in your ministry? How can stories change perspectives, draw us together, reduce conflict, and help us care about one another?

Learn more:

*Sermons that connect
Small groups that engage
Fellowship that is meaningful
Evangelism that is magnetic*

In our shared journey, it is our shared stories which bind us together.

This event is intended to enrich the lives of all clergy, as well as lay leaders and anyone who wants to tell better stories.

[Click here](#) for Conference details and registration information.



Rev. Rebecca Anderson comes to storytelling via stand-up comedy, playwrighting, and preaching. She's been on Snap Judgment (radio), The Broad Experience (podcast), and a Risk! live event. In Chicago, Rebecca has worked with companies and events like [2nd Story](#), [The Moth](#), [This Much is True](#), [the Truth or Lie series](#), and [Do Not Submit](#). An ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Rebecca co-pastors [Gilead Church Chicago](#) and has led workshops at the General Assembly (CCDOC) and General Synod (UCC).

Presented by the Association of Interim Ministers (AIM)

From Our Disaster Preparedness Team

We are registered for the [Great Central U.S. ShakeOut!](#)

Here are some tools and tips

to help you plan and promote the best drill possible:

1) See the [Resources](#) page for **drill broadcasts**, web graphics, earthquake safety guides, and drill manuals. Visit the [How to Participate](#) page to learn how to plan your drill and get prepared. We also have a special page with [COVID-19 considerations](#) for adapting your drill in 2020.

DISASTER MINISTRIES



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

2) Spread the word on Facebook, Twitter, and ! other social media platforms with **#ShakeOut!** And follow us, too:

- Facebook: [Facebook.com/greatshakeout](https://www.facebook.com/greatshakeout)
- Twitter: [@ShakeOut](https://twitter.com/ShakeOut)
- Instagram: [GreatShakeOut](https://www.instagram.com/GreatShakeOut)
- YouTube: [youtube.com/greatshakeout](https://www.youtube.com/greatshakeout)

3) Learn from and share the [Earthquake Safety Video Series](#) with co-workers, family, and friends!

If at any time you need to update your information, please go to <http://www.shakeout.org/centralus/login/> and enter your e-mail address and your password.

If you have other questions about your registration, or the ShakeOut in general, please e-mail shakeout@cusec.org.

Be in touch with our Disaster Preparedness leader, Roger Dart at dartrc@gmail.com with questions.

In the Media

[WE HAVE A JOB TO DO: Get to the Polls and Vote this Election](#)

[Column: After historic Aurora church sold, congregation moves next door to continue outreach](#)

[Here are some Chicago-area religious services to stream online](#)

Employment Opportunities

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

Conference and UCC Calendar for September

September 16: [Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders during Coronavirus Pandemic](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. The Illinois Conference Ministry Leadership Team invites you.

September 16: [Ecclesiastical Council For Sylvia Miller](#), 7:00 p.m. via Zoom hosted by First Congregational Church of La Grange. Chicago Metropolitan Association Cluster Four will convene an Ecclesiastical Council to discern the readiness for ministry of Sylvia Miller.

September 18: [Remembering Sammie: Her Life and Being](#), 11:00 a.m. at Apostolic Church of God, 6320 S. Dorchester Ave., Chicago Ill. 60637.

September 19: [Children and Youth Speak: Your Vote Matters](#), 2:00 p.m. (Central Time). This webinar is co-hosted by the Rev. Dr. Brooks Berndt of the United Church of Christ Environmental Justice Ministry and the Rev. Michael Malcom of Alabama Interfaith Power & Light and the People's Justice Council.

September 23: [Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders during Coronavirus Pandemic](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. The Illinois Conference Ministry Leadership Team invites you.

September 29: [Virtual Workshop: How to Become a Climate-Resilient Church](#), 5:00 p.m. (Central Time) via Zoom. This webinar is co-hosted by Communities Responding to Extreme Weather and Creation Justice Ministries.

September 30: [Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders during Coronavirus Pandemic](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. The Illinois Conference Ministry Leadership Team invites you.

October 24: [Western Association Fall Meeting](#), 9:00 to 11:30 am via Zoom.

November 13-14: On behalf of the United Church of Christ Mental Health Network Mental Health Network [WISE Conference](#), sponsored and hosted by the Indiana-Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ, via Zoom. Registration link and more details will be available in the coming weeks.

Update on Illinois Conference Offices Gradually Re-Opening

Illinois Conference staff has returned to the office on a limited basis. Half of the staff are in the office on their schedule days to allow for physical distancing. When not in the office, staff will continue to work from their homes. The office will remain closed to the public until further notice. Please remember you can always reach us by [e-mail](#) and let us know how we can be helpful.

Visit our website



DONATE NOW!



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This communication is made possible by your contributions to

Our Church's Wider Mission

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