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Message from the Illinois Conference UCC

Special Update: The State of the Conference

After several years of deficit budgets, the Illinois Conference has reached a financial state of alarm. Combined with the impact of the COVID-19 Crisis that has our churches doing most of their ministry remotely. The Conference and your congregations have cancelled many meetings and gatherings that might have provided income. Like many of you, the Conference has had to take action. These decisions were not taken lightly. Conference leaders have been consulted and together we decided on the course of action taken. We know that these decisions will cause pain for many. Making these tough decisions have also caused pain for us.

At our last Conference Council Meeting, on Saturday, April 4, 2020, it was necessary to formally cancel the 2020 Church Sponsored camp season. The Annual Meeting scheduled for Augustana College in June will not be held. The TPIRC (Thriving Pastors in Revitalizing Congregations) Summit scheduled for September 18-19, will not be held as an in-person event. However, save the original Summit dates September 18-19, as we're going to bring wisdom and grace to you by holding a Virtual Summit to resource you. Bottom line, we care too much about our children/grandchildren, families and you to potentially expose anyone to the threat of COVID-19. All these cancellations are about caring for you, the Saints of the Illinois Conference. No program or event is more important to us than your health, safety and well-being.

We are still conducting business as a Conference remotely. We will continue to support our congregations and individuals, while also supporting participating churches in the TPIRC initiative. We want to uplift and celebrate all of you who are serving your communities and working to meet the needs of your local communities. We appreciate you. We honor you. Thank you for being the face of Christ for those who encounter you or your congregations. Gracias.

Many of you are also experiencing financial and emotional stress, and we share your pain. We want you to know that we pray for you daily. You are not alone.

While some of you may not be able to financial support OCWM right now; we appreciate your continued prayers for us (as a conference). We would encourage those of our congregations that are able to share their financial resources in the form of OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission) contributions earlier in the year than usual. We would deeply appreciate your help. Some may be able to front all or part your OCWM support. Others may be able to make monthly contributions rather than waiting until the end of the year. If you are able, we ask your assistance.

Our Conference Minister and the Associate Conference Ministers Team are reaching out to our member churches and their pastors through a variety of means. These

include phone calls, texts, internet-based platforms, social media and Zoom. Each association has scheduled time to gather and mutually support each other. Everyone (Lay, MID or Clergy) is invited to participate in our weekly "ALL CONFERENCE CHAT" every Wednesday at 3:00 p.m. We are committed to staying in touch because we are here to resource and support you during this unprecedented time. We are battling against the perception of isolation, as we affirm our ongoing faith in the grace of God. Again, you are not alone. You never have been and never will be. We are a familia (family).

Our team is in constant contact with the national setting of the United Church of Christ, so that we might take full advantage of incentive programs to help us continue to provide health insurance to our staff throughout the pandemic. We have also had to make some very tough decisions that impact our staff. Some may already know that some staff have been temporarily laid off, others have had their positions temporarily (we pray) downgraded to half time, while others have had their work hours reduced. None of this has been easy. We recognize that these decisions impact many people, our staff and their families. We're not corporate America and so we mourn the decisions that we have had to make. We hoped there was a better way forward. At this point, we have not found it. We continue to work on this and will keep you updated. We have, however, amid everything going on made the intentional decision to continue to provide healthcare for any employee impacted by our decisions. We will strive to be able to continue this.

We ask your prayers for the Conference even as we pray for you, our churches, pastors, laity and leaders of the Illinois Conference churches.

With much admiration for simply being you and all you do to serve others.

We are,

Rev. Justo González II, Interim Conference Minister

Rev. Chuck Maney, Conference President

Change in TPIRC Summit Moved from Peoria to a Virtual Summit

On behalf of the Rev. Michelle Hughes, ACM for Vitality, Transformation, and Sustainability, Illinois Conference United Church of Christ this is an announcement to save-the-date for the TPIRC 2020 Summit:

Please be informed that due to the current COVID-19, the Illinois Conference Council has decided to move the TPIRC Summit from Peoria, Illinois to a Virtual TPIRC Summit on September 18-19, 2020. The summit, therefore, will still be taking place but in a virtual setting as opposed to gathering together in Peoria, Ill. This decision was made with the purpose of the well-being of our Pastors and attendees.

We will hold a **VIRTUAL TPIRC Summit** on September 18-19, 2020. We ask that you please continue to hold these dates.

As soon as we have more information, we will send out the information to everyone. If you have any questions and/or concerns, feel free to contact me at ilconfmichelle@gmail.com.



to: ilconfcarmen@gmail.com.

This communication is made possible by your contributions to

Our Church's Wider Mission

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