

Rev. Dr. James J. Olson - Acting Associate Conference Minister



The Rev. Dr. James J. Olson, OCC, is originally from the Boston area, and was baptized and raised in the UCC at First Congregational Church, Randolph, Massachusetts. His undergraduate degree is in Hospitality Administration from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He earned his M.Div at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, the S.T.M. and D.Min degrees from Boston University School of Theology. He has also done academic work at Regent's Park College, Oxford University. Dr. Olson has served churches in Minnesota, Vermont, Connecticut and here in Illinois. Additionally, he served as the Associate Dean of Religious life at Marsh Chapel, and as a lecturer in the School of Theology, both at Boston University. Converting his dissertation to a publishable work remains an unrealized goal.

He is a brother of the Order of Corpus Christi, a covenantal order within the United Church of Christ rooted in the theology and ideals of the Mercersburg movement; a liturgical and theological renewal movement of the late 19th c. in the German Reformed church, one of the predecessor bodies of the UCC.

Dr. Olson serves as the president of his seminary Alumni association, and has served on the board of the UCC Coalition for LGBT concerns. He has also served for most of his ordained life on the Committee on Ministry in whichever Association he has served. Most recently, he has been the co-chair of the clergy Fitness Review Response Team here in the Illinois Conference.

Dr. Olson is married to the Rev. Darrick D. Jackson, a Unitarian-Universalist minister who currently serves as the Interim Associate Executive Director of the Unitarian Universalist Minister's Association, and as a member of the faculty at Meadville-Lombard School of Theology. They live in the Edgewater neighborhood of Chicago, surrounded by a lot of dusty books, and their two rescue cats. Dr. Olson enjoys cooking, classical and very early American jazz and big-band music. He sings regularly in a large concert choir in Chicago, and has performed with choirs all over the world. He enjoys visiting his parents who still live in Massachusetts in the summer, and Florida in the winter. He has one younger sister, and several nieces and nephews.