



Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ

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Greetings, Illinois Conference!

It is with great joy that we prepare to welcome our Intentional Interim Conference Minister, Rev. Justo González II. Rev. González will begin his time in the Illinois Conference on Monday, October 29, 2018. His first few days with us will be spent meeting staff, settling into his office, and going over information with Acting Conference Minister Rev. Char Burch before she finishes her time with us and heads back home to Tennessee. Justo then jumps right into our busy activity and meeting schedule.

I am excited about this covenanted time with Justo! He brings amazing skills, training, experience, and knowledge to the Illinois Conference. He also brings an enthusiasm, energy, and creativity to the role of Interim Conference Minister that will serve us well in this time of transition. Most important, he is filled with a passion for ministry and a dedication to supporting and empowering the local church that I believe is crucial as we explore who we are as the Illinois Conference, United Church of Christ.

So, what will Justo do while serving the Illinois Conference as Interim Conference Minister? In part, this is an easy question to answer. He will carry out the responsibilities designated to the Conference Minister by our Constitution and By-laws and as expounded upon in the Conference Minister job description. However, as those of you who have served in an interim capacity or been engaged in church through an interim process know, there is much more to it than that.

We are in a time of transition in the Illinois Conference. For the past 18 months, we have been in an information-gathering phase. Two teams, focused on different aspects of how we live out our life together as a Conference, collecting input from committees, groups, and individuals. What they have heard repeatedly is that it is time for change! Now, we must discern who God is calling the Illinois Conference to be and how to best serve our local churches. Justo, in partnership with the Conference Council, will work hand in hand with the Conference to discern what that change is and how we can make it happen. He will then help us to begin implementing those changes.

We don't know where such discernment will lead us. There could be implications on staffing and realignment of job descriptions to better meet the needs of our Associations and local congregations. There could be recommendations brought forth to change how we are designed as a Conference. There could be conversations with our covenanted partners, other Conferences, the UCC National Setting, and even our siblings in denominations with whom we are in communion to find innovative and more effective ways to support the local church in living out Christ's ministry in the world. We don't know what that looks like, but with Rev. González, our amazing Ministry Leadership Team and staff, I am confident that we will find out together. God will guide us, and the Holy Spirit will embolden us.

I want to thank Rev. Char Burch for her incredible leadership as our Acting Conference Minister. She has provided steadfast and compassionate direction and support these past six months, helping us to prepare for this next phase of transition. Please join me in wishing her Godspeed. Thank you, Char. You have truly been a blessing to the Illinois Conference! Siblings in Christ, I ask that you keep Rev. González, and all of us together as the Illinois Conference, in your prayer as we begin this important work together. Please welcome Justo warmly. I know that he is looking forward to serving as our Interim Conference Minister!

Blessings and Peace,

Rev. Kimberly Wood
President, Illinois Conference UCC

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