



NEW BEGINNINGS E-BLAST



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Message from the Conference Minister

Rev. Molly Carlson

Friends,

OCWM (Our Church's Wider Mission) is the primary mechanism for local churches to support and fund Conference ministry as well as the national and international ministries of the United Church of Christ. From support for congregations in pastoral transition, to authorization and oversight of authorized ministers, to conflict resolution, to consulting, problem-solving, coaching, team building, training, and opportunities to be in relationship with other UCC Congregations - your OCWM gifts are the PRIMARY source of income to fund the work of your Conference staff.



We had to close our books on Jan. 13, 2021, and nearly 100 of our 240 congregations had contributed nothing to OCWM in 2020. Some of you have reached out and asked about the normal end of year notifications about getting that last check-in or estimating giving for 2021 - and those did not go out. I hope we can figure out some better ways of working together as 2021 unfolds.

[Read More](#)

NEWS from Thriving Pastors in Revitalizing Congregations

Rev. Michelle Hughes, Project Director/TPIRC

The Thriving Pastors in Revitalizing Congregations (TPIRC) Initiative has 38 participating churches across the state.

I am pleased to announce that next week, - The Lilly Foundation is featuring our TPIRC Program and highlighting one of our TPIRC Congregations (St. John's UCC in Lyons) during their annual national Thriving Congregations conference. A videographer was

sent to interview Rev. Kimberlee Whisler-Vasko and myself as project director over the holidays. We are so pleased that they were so impressed with our endeavors that we are among those they chose to highlight.

Please welcome [Rev. Dr. Kent Poindexter](#) as the new Coaching Coordinator for this initiative, and [Ms. Kathy Brown](#) as our new administrative assistant.



[Read More](#)

Community Organizing for Revitalization

Rev. Brandyn Simmons

One of my congregants recently said that churches are doing plenty of good charity work for those who are in need, but little work to change the systems that made them need in the first place. I would say that's a fair assessment.

There are numerous justice outlets in addition to charity work such as movement, protest, political/advocacy, and community organizing.



In my opinion, one of the best methods of lasting and meaningful change is community organizing (CO). In CO we are looking to create relational power in places where it is lacking in order to construct fair and equitable systems by organizing people and money. By using tools such as relational meetings (one-on-ones), actions (any intentional movement toward achieving the goal), and power analyses (determining who *really* holds power within a system) we can win power for those who need it.

[Read More](#)



SnugFest at Pilgrim Park and Tower Hill

Join **SnugFest at Pilgrim Park and Tower Hill** and B.R. Valentine to unwind, relax and recharge! We have many rentals available with lodging ranging from 2 to 6-bedroom units to complete retreat areas. This is **a great chance for close families to "get away" in a safe manner and help our camps** with the financial resource of this short-term rental income.



Come snuggle in with us for a couple of days taking the time to hear God's voice in the wind, the waves of Lake Michigan, the babble of the creek. Come enjoy activities that range from having hot chocolate and reading a book to eagle watching at Pilgrim Park to cross country skiing at Tower Hill. Call **Tower Hill** at (269) 426-3881 and **Pilgrim Park** at (815) 447-2390 for rental details.

Eden UCC in Chicago Building Relationships

Featured in 'Chicago Tonight' in Your Neighborhood: Jefferson Park

"We're really focused on building relationships in a way that honors sharing stories and respecting other people's values," Belile said. "We may not agree on everything, but my congregation is leading the way with other neighborhood organizations who care about bringing people together, to solve problems even when we don't agree on everything."



[Read More](#)

Please Welcome Our Newest ONA Church in the Illinois Conference



Please join us in welcoming All About Jesus UCC - Ministries in Monee as a new Open and Affirming Congregation (#1693). Their ONA covenant was adopted on Sept. 27, 2014. They were accepted as an ONA congregation as a New Church Start. All About Jesus UCC-Ministries is now part of the largest and fastest-growing LGBTQ-affirming church movement in the world.

Andy Lang, Executive Director
Kimi Floyd Reisch, Program Minister

Money Matters

The Illinois Conference continues to bring and work on resources for being stronger together. Money Matters - a weekly conversation about money and ministry in the Illinois Conference United Church of Christ.



This weekly communication will give insights into generosity, Conference finances, and being stronger together.

[Money Matter Vol. 3 \(current issue\)](#)

Training Opportunities and Resources

Paycheck Protection Program Assistance

Illinois Conference UCC

Thom Parrot-Sheffer and Larry McCure are available to assist Illinois Conference churches to help explore answers to questions about the new round of PPP loans and about loan forgiveness for the first round. They are volunteers and will not know every answer - but they have some training and insight into how to find answers to questions they don't already know!

Thom can be reached at: tparrottsheffer@gmail.com

Larry can be reached at: ilconlarry@gmail.com

[Read More](#)

Boundary Awareness Training Opportunities via Zoom

As you're aware, all persons with authorized ministerial standing in an Association of the Illinois Conference must complete an approved course on clergy boundaries/ethics every three years in order to maintain "good standing". Some of us may be out of compliance with this requirement as we've had fewer opportunities during the pandemic to take in-person training, and not all of the online offerings have been approved by each Association's Committee on Ministry.

Our colleague, the Rev. Laurie Hill, pastor of St. John UCC in Lincoln, is a trained facilitator and is offering the following opportunities via Zoom for the completion of this requirement:

[Read More](#)

Restorative Justice and Talking Circles Practice Sessions

Justice and Witness Ministry of the Chicago Metropolitan Association and Nehemiah Trinity Rising

The Justice and Witness Ministry of the Chicago Metropolitan Association and Nehemiah Trinity Rising invite you to experience how restorative justice practices build relationships, changing mindsets about conflict and healing our communities. Circle Keepers from Nehemiah will lead four different circles via Zoom that are open to all on Feb. 11, 2021 and Feb. 18, 2021 at 9:00 a.m.-10:30 a.m.: Social Wellness-Building relationships session and 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.: Micro-mini Restorative Justice session.



Registration is required and information will be sent closer to the date.

Questions? Please e-mail Rev. Harriet Dart at harrietcdart@gmail.com

[Click here for more information](#)

Youth: 2021 Virtual Winter Program

Off The Pews

Off The Pews: Faith in Action is happy to announce a new program for 25 kids from middle school through high school ages. The program will run for 10 weeks, and it starts with a group orientation Zoom session on Saturday, Feb. 13, at 10:00 a.m.



OTP is partnering with the Hyde Park Art Center for the next five weeks (starting Feb. 20) in an art project related to "Vision Boards" or "Collages for Justice" (some materials provided) that will help participants learn to give voice to their dreams and/or concerns.

[Click here for more information and to register](#)

Consolidated Appropriations Act Part II: Copyright Small Claims Act

Heather Kimmel, General Counsel of the UCC

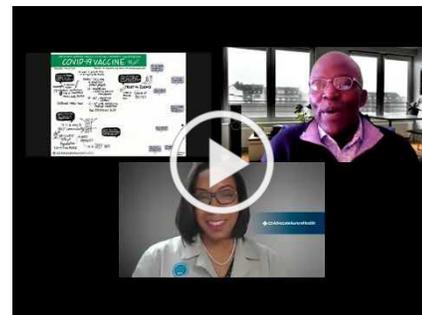
As you may be aware, our churches, Conferences, and other settings occasionally receive communications that claim they are infringing the copyright of particular works, usually photographs or other materials posted on the setting's website. In today's circumstances, however, we could also begin to see claims related to the streaming of music and other works as many churches are holding worship virtually. In many cases the setting has posted the material without knowledge or intent of infringing a copyright, but that is not a defense to a claim of infringement. In some cases the setting takes the risk that the copyright owner will never bring suit due to the large expense and simply ignores the communication. In some cases the church assumes the communication is fraudulent or a scam, and ignores it. In other cases the setting may negotiate a much lower settlement.

[Read More](#)

Living Well Community Conversation: COVID-19 Vaccine

Advocate Aurora Health

Advocate Aurora Health's Living Well Virtual Community Conversation: Covid-19 Vaccines. A special thank you to our distinguished panelists and moderator who shared their time, knowledge, and expertise.



In addition, Advocate Aurora Health is sharing supporting Covid-19 Vaccine resources:

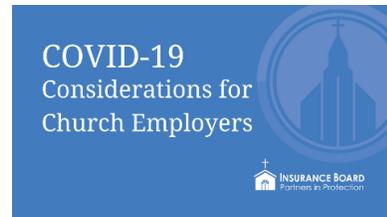
- [Covid-19 Vaccine Information & FAQ](#)
- [Top 10 things to know about the vaccine](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccine news & insights](#)
- [COVID-19 Resources and News](#) the latest issue of health enews, a news service of Advocate Aurora Health.

COVID-19 Considerations for Church Employers

Insurance Board

In Case You Missed It: "COVID-19 Considerations for Church Employers" featuring Dean Rocco, Partner with Wilson Elser. Please see the link to the recording below, along with a resource to assist your ministry with planning and preparedness.

- Webcast: [COVID-19 Considerations for Church Employers](#)
- Resources: [Covid-19 Planning Preparedness and Worksheet for Churches](#)



COVID-19 Considerations For Church Employers

COVID-19

Watch Video

[Free Online Training and Information for Church Leadership](#)

Becoming WISE

The United Church of Christ Mental Health Network

Are you ready to take the next step in advocating for mental health? Do you want to begin the education process in your congregation?

[Click HERE to START your WISE Journey.](#)



Wisdom Conversations 2021: Ministry and Dementia

United Church Homes

Rev. John and Dr. Susan McFadden will present Ministry and Dementia: In this fourth annual event, they will explore ways to be in ministry with and support for those who are experiencing cognitive decline and their caregivers.



The Series beginning at 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. (Central) include:

- Feb. 2: Dementia: What we Know. What we don't know.
- Feb. 9: Dementia: What is "normal" aging and what is not.
- Feb. 16: Ministry and Dementia: New opportunities for meaning and joy

[Click link here for additional information and to register](#)

In the Media

['Chicago Tonight' in Your Neighborhood: Jefferson Park](#)

[WATCH NOW: Century-old St. Peter's United Church of Christ wins first designation from village](#)

[Rockford church opens overnight cafe for homeless residents](#)

[King Remembered At Church Where He Preached: Amid 'Divided' America, We Must 'Fight Together' For Justice](#)

[South suburban schools gather virtually to honor the life of Dr. Martin Luther King](#)

['Liberal churches' are potential targets during inauguration protests, UCC warns](#)

Employment Opportunities

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

Conference and UCC Calendar for February

February 1: [Ecclesiastical Council for Marietta Hebert-Davis](#), 6:30 p.m. via Zoom. Convene by Chicago Metropolitan Association Cluster Six.

February 2: [Retired Clergy: Boundary Awareness Training Opportunities](#), 9:00 a.m. -11:00 a.m. via Zoom.

February 2: [United Church Fund Q4-2020 Town Hall Meeting](#), 4:00 p.m. (CT) via Zoom.

February 3: [All Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. Our guest will be Michael Readinger from our National Council for Health & Human Service Ministries (CHHSM).

February 5: [Self Care that is Not Selfish: Five Steps to Healing, Renewal, and Moving Forward with Clarity](#) (Workshop 3), 11:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m. CT via Zoom.

February 7-9: [2021 Winter CareGivers Retreat](#), Tower Hill Camp and Retreat Center. Step away from your responsibilities as caregiver for a time of rest, to reflect and be renewed. [Click here to register.](#)

February 8 or 12: [Lead from the Heart: Step into Your Authority without Becoming Authoritarian](#) (Workshop 4), 11:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m. CT via Zoom.

February 10: [UCC Webinar—Evangelical Christianity and the Climate Crisis](#), 12:00 p.m. via Zoom. 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.

February 10: [All Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom.

February 11: [Restorative Justice and Talking Circles Practice Sessions](#), 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.: Social Wellness-Building relationships session and 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.: Micro-mini Restorative Justice session. The Justice and Witness Ministry of the Chicago Metropolitan Association and Nehemiah Trinity Rising invite you.

February 13: [AUCE's Virtual 50th Anniversary Celebration](#), 12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m ET via

Zoom.

February 14: [Service of Installation for Dr. Jesse Tanner](#), 2:00 p.m. The event will be live streamed on FCC's YouTube page <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheFCCElgin>.

February 17: [All Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom.

February 18: [Restorative Justice and Talking Circles Practice Sessions](#), 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.: Social Wellness-Building relationships session and 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.: Micro-mini Restorative Justice session. The Justice and Witness Ministry of the Chicago Metropolitan Association and Nehemiah Trinity Rising invite you.

February 21: [Active Clergy: Boundary Awareness Training Opportunities](#), 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. via Zoom.

February 21: [Service of Ordination for D'Angelo Smith](#), 5:00 p.m. Zoom information closer to the event.

February 23: [Active Clergy: Boundary Awareness Training Opportunities](#), 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. via Zoom.

February 23: [Ecclesiastical Council for Keitric Emory](#), 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. Convene by Chicago Metropolitan Association Cluster Five.

February 24: [Active Clergy: Boundary Awareness Training Opportunities](#), 9:00 a.m. -12:00 p.m. via Zoom.

Upcoming Events

March 2: [Preventing Targeted Violence in Faith Communities: A Behavior-Based Approach](#), 1:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. Free virtual Zoom training. Register by Feb. 24. at specialevents@atg.state.il.us with your full name, title, organization, and email address.

March 3: [Yearbook Online Submission Deadline!](#) The CARDD office is pleased to offer a Yearbook Help Line. The Help Line will be available Monday – Friday from 9:00 a.m.- 3:30 p.m. (Eastern Time) till March 3. The phone number is (216) 736-3837. The Yearbook Data Hub will be open to churches at noon on Jan. 6, 2021 and will remain available until March 3.

July 11-18: [2021 General Synod 33 - Rooted in Love](#)

CONFERENCE CALENDAR

Update on Illinois Conference Offices

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



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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. Molly Carlson, Conference Minister; Carmen Torres, Editor. Copy may be sent to: ilconfcarmen@gmail.com.

This communication is made possible by your contributions to

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