



NEW BEGINNINGS E-BLAST



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STEWARDSHIP IS...

Expressing Generosity by Rev. Gwendolyn V. Kirkland

**I give thanks to you, O LORD my God, with my whole heart,
and I will glorify your name forever.**

Psalm 86:12 NRSV

I was amazed in a recent meeting with a client and her niece. The client survived a stroke three years ago and as a result has aphasia, as well as some paralysis on her right side. Aphasia is a condition caused by an injury to the brain that may affect the ability to speak, read or write.

My client was highly functioning prior to her stroke, she is a retired educator and continues to enjoy her favorite past time, playing bridge. The aphasia makes communication with her fairly challenging. She knows what it is that she wants to say but she has a really hard time getting the words to come out.



[Read More](#)

Journey to Lent 2021 webinars

Lent begins Feb. 17. The Illinois Conference is providing help with preparing for Lent 2021 with 3 Free Interactive learning webinars on Jan. 6, Jan. 12, and Jan. 19. We care about resourcing the churches in this area, and we are pleased to offer you the chance to participate in Dr. Marcia McFee's "Journey to Lent 2021" webinars at no cost to you.



The TPIRC Program is providing access to three live webinars to help you prepare for Lent 2021 with Dr. McFee, a renowned worship designer, consultant, and educator.

#####

The first webinar on Jan. 6 was a planning retreat session to explore the historical and theological themes of Lent and help you envision a new worship series experience for your church. The Jan. 12 webinar will focus on Deep Structure, developing a design model to help you plan ahead and foster healthy collaboration skills with your worship team or volunteers. On Jan. 19, the final session on Spiritual Depth will highlight techniques for leading meaningful and memorable worship experiences.

All you need to do is register (at no charge) below. You can invite unlimited members of your worship team (or potential worship team members) to receive these communications as well. We encourage you to take advantage of this free offer made possible through our Conference registration link above.

[Register Here](#)

Take Care

Rev. Brandyn Simmons

“Should 20-20 be forgot in days of auld lang syne ...”

We have given 2020 it's hat, coat, and gloves and seen it to the door as we swiftly closed the deadbolt behind it. Good riddance. And yet, we must be reminded that it is not the mere turning of a calendar page nor the passing of time that brings about change.



If we are not intentional about exerting intentionality coupled with a new lens of perspective, we are doomed to walk a lap and find that we are right back where our journey began. If, as Plato said, complacency truly *is* the refuge of those who have lost the dream, then why should we - a people whose light shines in the darkness - give in to such lack of longing? We are called to so much more than this.

[Read More](#)

The Resilience of One Small Church

Perspective by Pastor Jennifer Amy-Dressler serving Open Table UCC in Ottawa

Not long ago, I attended a Zoom meeting with my state senator and twenty-some faith leaders, on COVID-19 and mitigation impacts on faith communities. My colleagues grieved limits to pastoral care, and how damaging isolation is to the vulnerable and struggling. One pastor finally admitted his doubts about mask effectiveness and explained that those who wish to wear masks through worship are seated separately in the sanctuary, while everyone else removes their masks.



[Read More](#)



"Get Away" to Pilgrim Park and Tower Hill to seek relief from the busyness of life, a place 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 greatly help our camps** with the financial resource of this short-term rental income.



Come Valentine with us! For February we are offering special rates for several rentals, and based on availability, it's the perfect reason to come **"out of the ordinary and into the Sacred!"**

B.R. Valentine 2021



These special offerings help families spend time together. Round up your Valentines to have a pajama party, make hot chocolate and create memories! Call Tower Hill at 269-426-3881 or Pilgrim Park at 815-447-2390 for details.

Come snuggle in with us for a couple 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!

Yearbook Online Reporting Information

As a member of the Illinois Conference, your church is asked to participate in the electronic Yearbook reporting for 2021. You will find two (2) documents in connection with reporting:

- 1) Church Yearbook Instructions – 2021 [click here](#)
- 2) 12 Important Reasons to Report Annual Church Data [click here](#)

If your church is unable to report electronically and needs to report using a paper form please contact Naomi Else at (708) 344-4470 or at ilconfnaomi@gmail.com.

12 IMPORTANT REASONS TO REPORT ANNUAL CHURCH DATA

- COVENANT** Cultivating UCC covenantal relationship with other Local Churches, Associations, Conferences, and National.
- UPDATES** Updating your church's contact information in the UCC Yearbook & Directory, UCCS, UCC, and on UCC's website.
- TRENDS** Contributing to denominational trends in the annual UCC Statistical Profile, which tracks overall membership, ministerial compensation, and church finances over time.
- RESOURCES** Helping your Conference, Association, and/or National understand your congregation from a statistical perspective in order to better provide appropriate support and resources.
- VOICE** Determining number of delegates your Conference can designate for General Synod, which is one of the essential ways your voice is heard on important issues.
- GUIDELINES** Assisting with benchmarks to determine appropriate church staffing configurations and compensation guidelines from the ministerial compensation data you provide.
- RECOGNITION** Supporting and equipping your church's OCWM and special offerings allows Conference and the National Setting to recognize and thank you on behalf of the wider church and to encourage future support.
- RESEARCH** Enabling CARDD to conduct statistical analyses that contribute to important research for all mainline denominations e.g. some of the research reported on CARDD's website.
- CONTRIBUTIONS** Calculating dues, or apportionments, that your church gives to your Association or Conference.
- FUNDING** Receiving funding from the National Setting? If so, annual reporting helps ensure continued financial support and its quality requirement for grant-receiving churches.
- VERIFICATION** Seeking loans through the Church Building & Loan Fund or Cornerstone Fund? These return your annual statistics for verification and clarification of information provided in the loan application.
- ARCHIVES** Creating a historical statistical record for your congregation that will long outlive current generations and that historians will be able to learn from in the future.

Individual data is not published but is used to accumulate the final statistics for the benchmarks.
Center for Analytics, Research & Development, and Data (CARDD)
700 Prospect Avenue East | Evanston, IL 60115-1100
www.ilconfnaomi.com | facebook.com/uccllc



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IN MEMORIAM: Rev. Betty A. Hornback

Friends, it is with sadness that we have received the news of the death of the Rev. Betty Hornback, on Thursday, Jan. 7, 2021. Betty was 83 years old and had been living with her daughter, Cathy, in Springfield, in hospice care.

The funeral service for Betty will be held via Facebook Live on Friday, Jan. 15, at 10:30 a.m. a link to the service will be distributed via e-mail. An in-person period of visitation will take place on Friday, Jan. 15, from 9:00 a.m. until the time of [service at Preston-Hanley Funeral Home](#), 500 N. 4th Street, Pekin, Ill. 61554. The interment of cremains will take place in February at Camp Butler National Cemetery in Springfield. Masks are required and social distancing protocols will be in place.



The family has requested that memorial gifts be directed to the ministries of the Western Association. Gifts may be made to the Illinois Conference UCC with "Betty Hornback memorial" on the memo line, and mailed c/o Prairie Association, 617 N. First Street, DeKalb, Illinois 60115.

[Read More](#)

Training Opportunities and Resources

Gift Acceptance Policy

United Church Funds

Imagine this scenario for a moment:

An unexpected package from a law firm arrives at a church's office addressed to the Pastor. Inside is a letter from an out-of-town attorney explaining that a person who was baptized and confirmed in the church nearly eight decades prior had recently died and left a portion of her sizable estate to the church, despite having moved across the country to attend college many years ago and never returning to her hometown. (Side note: Wouldn't that be a terrific surprise?)



[Read More](#)

New Resources to Support Houses of Worship

FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency)

Prompted by the realization that there still exists a level of tension around our government, Click the link below to view communication from FEMA for general conference circulation.

Roger Dart
Illinois Conference Disaster Coordinator

[Faith-Based Community Preparedness](#)

Strategies for Building Strong Communities

Advocate Aurora Health

All Faith Leaders are Invited to a Virtual Clergy Conversation on: 4 Strategies for Building Strong Communities (so you don't have to be everything for everyone) on Jan. 20, 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Join us for a forward-looking discussion around creating stronger, caring communities.

- a practical view of values, insights, visions and actions you can use moving into 2021.
- we will share resources, experiences and tips around connecting and engaging your organization with the communities you serve.

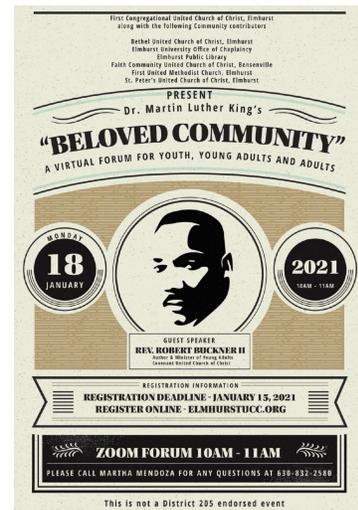
[Register here](#)

MLK 2021-"BELOVED COMMUNITY" a virtual Zoom Forum

MLK 2021 - "BELOVED COMMUNITY" a virtual Zoom Forum for Youth, Young Adults and Adults on January 18, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Register now to be a part of this virtual community forum. Guest speaker, the Rev. Robert E. Buckner II, will be presenting the principles behind Dr. King's nonviolence social change movement. Dr. King's great sacrifice and contributions were the driving force for establishing the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. Join us as we explore these principles and even their relevance today.

Register by January 15 at <https://elmhurstucc.org/mlk-2021/>



Employment Opportunities

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

Conference and UCC Calendar for January

January 13: [UCC Webinar - What's Possible?: Faith and Climate Policy in 2021](#), 12:00 p.m. 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.

January 13: [All Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. Presenters: Michele Richardson and Kathie Bender-Schwich from Advocate Aurora Health

January 18: [MLK 2021 - "BELOVED COMMUNITY" a virtual Zoom Forum](#) for Youth, Young Adults and Adults, 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

January 18: [Community Renewal Society Annual MLK Day - Bayard Rustin and Me: Getting All Our People Free](#), 10:00 a.m.-12:20 p.m., via Zoom. Virtual event will focus on Bayard Rustin's influence on Dr. King's legacy and feature a panel discussion.

January 18 or 22: [Empowering Communication: A Tool to Overcome Divisions and Liberate Love in Ourselves and Others](#) (Workshop 1), 11:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m. CT via Zoom.

January 20: [All Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom.

January 25 or 29: [Bridging Deep Divides: How Empowering Communication Builds Connection, Trust, and Community](#) (Workshop 2), 11:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m. CT via Zoom.

January 27: [All Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom.

January 27: [UCC Just Peace Committee](#), 6:00 p.m. via Zoom. The Just Peace Steering Committee will be hosting a webinar to invite Just Peace Churches (and those exploring becoming a Just Peace Church) to explore the important justice work ahead of us in 2021. Details and log-in instructions will be sent in the New Year.

January 30: [Ecclesiastical Council for MariBeth Welch Brainerd](#), 10:00 a.m. via Zoom. Convene by Chicago Metropolitan Association Cluster Three. [Click here to register in advance](#) for this meeting. After registering, you will receive a confirmation e-mail containing information about joining the meeting.

Upcoming Events

February 1 and 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 1: [Ecclesiastical Council for Marietta Hebert-Davis](#), 6:30 p.m. via Zoom. Convene by Chicago Metropolitan Association Cluster Six. Zoom information will be sent closer to the date.

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.

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](#)

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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