



 JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

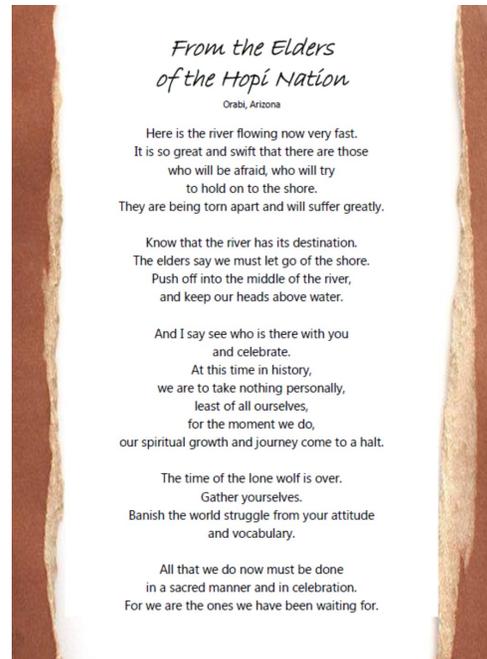
## Elders of the Hopi Nation, "In a Sacred Manner"

### Reflection on the Covid-19 Vaccine

Rev. Kimberly Wood, Acting Associate  
Conference Minister serving Eastern and Fox  
Valley Association

A couple of weeks ago, I read these sacred words from the Elders of the Hopi Nation. They have served me in many ways – as the center of a personal reflection time, a wedding message to a family member, and a devotion for a meeting. Believe it or not, these words woven into such palpable images have also served as the foundation for a conversation about the Covid-19 vaccines.

It is no secret that the vaccinations that have been designed to impede and, hopefully, someday eradicate this Coronavirus that has so fully impacted our lives exist in a swirl of controversy. Who can get a vaccine and who cannot? Who should get a vaccine and who should not? Who has access and who has none? Who wants one and who does not? We have gone from shortage of vaccines to mass production, from select groups to the general population of adults and now, to anyone 12 years of age and older. Many of us pounced to register the minute sites opened, and others of us wait – perhaps for the FDA to move the status from “emergency approval” to “approved,” perhaps until a few more of our friends and family jump in, perhaps until we can figure out the online registration systems or call our own doctor’s office for an appointment. The river is “flowing now very fast...” and there are those who are afraid, clinging tightly to the shore. It can be a scary thing, not knowing everything that is downstream, desiring complete certainty.



[Read More](#)

### Reflection The Wait is Over!

Rev. Dr. Terrill Murff, Acting Associate Conference Minister serving Chicago Metropolitan  
Association

*"We are the ones that we have been waiting for."* Earthquakes, homelessness, hunger, violence, global warming...leading to violent storms, tornadoes, and many more violent hurricanes. COVID 19 virus that has caused a global pandemic for more than a year. Local

State Government orders to “Shelter In,” resulting in business failures, closed church doors, a prolonged period of self-isolation leading to depression, loneliness, and suicide. The Elders from the Hopi Nation...tell us to ... *“Gather yourselves...Banish the world struggle from your attitude and vocabulary.”* They tell us that everything that we do must reflect the “sacred.” Everything that we do, must be done in celebration.

Beloved, we have had a year of solitude to reflect on the call of God on our lives. This solitude reminds me of those (in the book of Acts) who gathered in the Upper Room to “**wait.**” Those who gathered were “sheltered in” together. They were instructed by Jesus to “**wait** for the Promise...” (Acts 1:4)

Prior to the Pandemic... we all lived life at “breakneck” and an unsustainable pace. The Pandemic slowed the whole world down, “sheltered us in” and cautioned us from gathering. We are entering the liturgical season of Pentecost (the birth of The Church). “**The Wait Is Over.**”

[Read More](#)

---

## From the Chicago Metropolitan Association

Chicagoland has been riddled with waves of crime. Drive-by shootings on the expressways (Dan Ryan, Eisenhower, and I-57), drive-by shootings in front of funeral homes, shootings in gas stations, and shootings in fast-food drive-through. To also mention carjacking in areas from the gold-coast to many of the suburbs. Caught in the crossfire of many of these crimes have included the shootings of innocent, infants, children and teens.

Rev. Anthony Williams has been tirelessly working his passion of anti-violence work and social-justice-related activism. Rev. Williams worked with William McCarthy in 2018, to craft a “Resolution of Witness” (which was aimed to reduce violence) which was presented at; General Synod 32. This Resolution of Witness was unanimously passed at General Synod 32. Rev. Williams subsequently hosted a series of workshops to bring light to this Resolution and personally reached out to State Legislators to address this issue.

From May 2018 through March 2021 this issue was pressed by Rev. Anthony Williams. Rev Williams and his supporters from other UCC congregations through meetings, correspondence with legislators, trips to Springfield and addresses delivered by UCC clergy and lay persons in the Rotunda of the Illinois state capitol building, to urge the state to specifically address violence as an official public health issue, deserving of full public support.

[Read More](#)

---

## Conference Resources for Building/In-Person Re-Entry

Ministry Leadership Team of the Illinois Conference

While there is no one answer that fits every congregation and ministry setting when it comes to preparing for and maintaining re-entry into your buildings, office spaces, and Sanctuaries, there are several resources that are available to help you as you prepare both people and physical spaces for in-person gatherings. We have compiled a list of resources to assist you as you continue to both be vigilant and move forward in responding to the Pandemic. Please visit these sites and links for helpful information, and don't hesitate to contact us to be of further assistance:

### [Advocate/Aurora Health – “Safely Reopening Our Doors”](#)

Recently, Advocate Aurora Health, one of our ministry partners in the Illinois Conference, provided a comprehensive resource for safely re-opening our buildings for worship and gathering.

### [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

The CDC is the United States' health protection agency. There is a wealth of information on their website, which is regularly updated. Click on the “Coronavirus Disease 2019” banner on their home page. You will find several areas for review, including information for businesses and office space, guidelines for individuals regarding returning to work, how the vaccines impact our process moving forward, guidelines for interaction and activity for people who have been vaccinated, and much more.

[Click here to view additional Resources for Building/In-Person Re-Entry](#)

---

## **Thriving Pastors in Revitalizing Congregations at First Congregational UCC in Lockport**

Mr. Lawrence McCure

Our church is a member of the Thriving Pastors in Revitalizing Congregations (TPIRC) Cohorts Group 2 which met on April 17. The meetings begin with a time for sharing information about the programs and ministries that are currently taking place in each church. Rev. Michelle Hughes, TPIRC Project Director, requested that our church provide a report on some of the intentional ministry projects that we have organized over the last year. Despite the pandemic restrictions closing our church building for thirteen months, the ministries have launched several innovative programs.



Two members of the TPIRC team also work on our Mission Ministry, which sponsored and staffed a pop-up truck food distribution last fall as an outreach initiative. They agreed that having a food drive that is accessible on a regular basis would be even more beneficial because of its success. After some brainstorming, they decided to support a micro food pantry. One of the Mission Team's husband built a weather-resistant large micro food pantry, which will be dedicated to service on Sunday, May 23. Members of the church have been asked to sign up to monitor and stock the micro pantry for a week. Members will also be asked to donate non-perishable items based on the seasonal weather.

[Read More](#)

---

## **Becoming**

Rev. Brandyn Simmons

There is no shortage of stories of becoming in the Bible. The very beginning of the book leads with a story of becoming: creation. That which wasn't becomes in a process of intention, cause, effect, relationship, and so much more. In her book *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming*, Catherine Keller says:

If something becomes, it is not what was before. Genesis - a becoming text, a text of becoming, an unfinished narrative - is not a



replication or rearrangement. Always again there arises an element of the unprecedented. Does the new not come in this sense from nothing? Are we not created from this nothing - the bottomless shadow, tomb, or womb of ourselves?

To be created from the “bottomless shadow, tomb, or womb of ourselves” is a nod to process-relational theology wherein the individual is constantly being birthed from the previous versions of the self toward paths that are intentionally chosen and acted upon in relationship with God and one another. Through a loving invitation and not coercion, the individual is naturally drawn in relationship toward God and toward their own best and truest self.

[Read More](#)



## It's time to sign-up for Family Camp!

It's time to sign-up for Family Camp! Tom is looking forward to welcoming our family campers on Friday, July 23rd until Sunday, July 25th. When asked why he agreed to lead our camp: “This has been a very difficult year for everyone as we make our way through covid and build back our relationships including our families. I see this camp as a well-deserved and relaxing way to help reconnect for everyone! I am excited to share the wonder that is Tower Hill camp. It is a magical place to enjoy and just be! I am looking forward to meeting new families and helping to connect them with others!” Come join us, call today to reserve at (269) 426-3881.



**TOWER HILL CAMP**

**FAMILY CAMP**

Sign up! Camp is coming soon:  
**July 23<sup>rd</sup> to July 25<sup>th</sup>**

This year's camp will be led by Tom March. Tom has a long history with Tower Hill camp. He has been on staff with HUG camp for 14 summers. 5 years ago, Tom saw the need to include the younger brothers and sisters of the HUG campers and started HUG Tenderfoot as the camp Director with 5- to 8-year-olds for two nights of camp.

Tom is in his final days of his Masters program to become a board-certified Behavior Analyst. For over 15 years Tom has had a passion of working with children and adults on the spectrum of autism and even founded an autism swim program that is used at different YMCAs and park districts throughout the states.

Currently Tom is the Special Services Lead Instructor and Head Coach of the North Suburban YMCA Special Olympics Swim Team and certified autism personal trainer and coach for Exercise Connection which is a fitness program designed for those on the spectrum of autism along with other special needs.

Tom's certifications include 10+ years as an American Red Cross Lifeguard Trainer as well as CPR for the professional rescuer trainer.

[Visit Illinois Outdoor Ministries](#)

## Training Opportunities and Resources

### Legal Advice for Churches

Heather E. Kimmel, General Counsel of the United Church of Christ

“Can a church require a member to disclose whether the member has been vaccinated?” (Or even, can a church require its members to be vaccinated?) Here is my response.

The answer is yes, a church can require that. A church is a private membership organization and can impose any requirement on its members (within reason). A church is also not subject to HIPAA (except in very specific circumstances such as when it has a parish nurse program or is providing licensed counseling services under the auspices of the church or maybe dealing with medical information of employees—who are not under consideration here).

But just because we can do something under the law doesn't mean we should do it. Frankly,

it's not the church's business whether a person decides to get vaccinated or why, and requiring disclosure of that status will create two classes of members who will be treated differently—is that what the church wants to do? If someone says “no,” then what will the church do? Say “why?” That gets into pretty private territory.

I understand some churches want this information so that they can return to in-person worship. That decision may be better made based on the conditions in the community, including continued compliance with CDC guidelines. That way, the church can say “we are worshipping in person, socially distanced, with precautions in place; attend if you are comfortable,” and not need to concern itself with whether a member has chosen to protect themselves by getting vaccinated.

---

## Faiths4Vaccines National Summit

Announcement shared by the National Council of Churches

On behalf of [Faiths4Vaccines](#), we invite you to join us for the [Faiths4Vaccines National Summit](#) on May 26, 2021 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. EDT.



Join the National Summit for the largest multi-faith gathering to support equitable and far-reaching vaccine distribution in the United States. Faith leaders and faith-based organizations in attendance will receive training, resources and empowerment to engage their communities to ensure equitable vaccine access, combat hesitancy and potentially use their houses of worship as vaccination sites.

Faith leaders, faith communities, and medical professionals are leading efforts to respond, recover from the unprecedented health crises facing our nation and the world. Now, equipped with a life-saving vaccine, we have the chance to bring this devastating, and all the suffering it has caused, to an end.

Now is the time to partake in open and honest dialogue between faith leaders and county, state and national health officials to identify opportunities for faith-based institutions to further engage and support local communities to increase vaccination rates.

[Click here to register for the event](#)

---

## Uptown Rally Against AAPI Racism

Susan Thomas, Public Relations and Communications Manager, Archdiocese of Chicago

Sponsored by the Uptown Clergy Group, Peoples Church of Chicago and neighborhood churches. Below is the media coverage from the rally:

[Religious groups rally in Uptown against racism facing Asian American and Pacific Islander communities](#)

Chicago Tribune

[Group and Faith Leaders Rally Against Asian Attacks](#)

FOX 32 -9:04 p.m. on May 2, 2021

[Uptown faith community rallies against anti-Asian hate](#)

NBC 5 – 5:03 p.m. on May 2, 2021

[Uptown faith community rallies against uptick in anti-Asian hate](#)

WGN – 5 p.m. on May 2, 2021

[Uptown faith community rallies against uptick in anti-Asian hate](#)

WGN on May 2, 2021

[Stand Against Hate - Uptown protest calls for stop to racist violence](#)

ABC 7 – 5:00 p.m. on May 2, 2021

[Stand Against Hate - Uptown protest calls for stop to racist violence](#)

ABC 7 on May 2, 2021

---

## Adese Fellowship Applications being Accepted

The Adese Fellowship is a catalytic experience that supports emerging spiritual entrepreneurs in launching enterprises that create a just world for all. Adese was designed to equip outside-of-the-box leaders who imagine all kinds of ventures new models of ministry, nonprofit organizations, social or spiritual enterprises, or for-profit business ventures that advance the mission of the church in unprecedented ways. They are accepting applications from individuals whose ventures are in the seed or incubator stages.



Deadline: June 18, 2021 at 11:59 p.m. EDT (Midnight)

[Click HERE to apply for the 2022 Adese Fellowship](#)

---

## In the Media

[Local Pastor Calls On President Biden To Declare Violence A Public Mental Health Crisis, As Gov. Pritzker Has Done](#)

[Indian Head Park officials rule out Lyonsville Congregational Church for village use](#)

---

## Employment Opportunities

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

[St. Paul UCC, Belleville seeks Director of Faith Formation and Care](#)

[First Congregational UCC in Elgin seeks Administrative Assistant](#)

[Off the Pews seeks Executive Director](#)

---

## Conference and UCC Calendar for May

May 19: [Stronger Together as One Conference. The best conversations to learn from each other](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. Ms. Veronica Kyle, Statewide Outreach Director, Rev. Cindy Shepherd, Central Illinois Outreach Director and the Faith in Place Team will be our guest speakers. Meeting ID: 899 3000 2174, Passcode: 965913, dial by your location: (312) 626 6799 (Chicago).

May 20: [How the Community Can Be the Solution to Human Trafficking](#), 10:00-11:30 a.m. The Rahab's Daughters team works to provide education about human trafficking to members of our community. Rahab's Daughters Executive Director, Sharmila (Sam) Wijeyakumar will be leading the conversation. Sponsored by Rahab's Daughters and the Chicagoland Trauma Informed Congregations Network.

May 21-22: [1.5-day Conflict Transformation training](#). This course is designed for

congregational leaders focusing on the most practical approaches to managing conflict within a faith community. Facilitator: Rev. Cameron Trimble, Mediator, and CEO, Convergence. Click here for additional [information and to register](#).

May 22: [Faith Day at the Wrigley Field COVID-19 Vaccination Site](#), 9:00 a.m.-noon, at American Airlines Conference Center at Gallagher Way, 1101 W. Waveland Ave., Chicago. How to participate: If your congregation or community organization is interested in participating in Faith Day, click [here](#) or contact [Amy McNicholas](#). Download flyer in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

May 22: [Bowen Family Systems Theory Educational Group for Religious Leaders](#) (course begins). Your journey companions are the Rev. Dr. Penny Taylor, LCSW, and the Rev. Dr. Bill Ressler, LCSW from the Center to Awaken Kindness.

May 23: [Strengthen the Church \(STC\) suggested offering date](#). The Strengthen the Church (STC) Offering reflects the shared commitment of people across the United Church of Christ to cooperatively build up the UCC.

May 25: [Get to Know the United Church of Christ Musicians Association](#), 2:00 p.m. Eastern (1:00 p.m. Central) The United Church of Christ Musicians Association, Inc. (UCCMA) is a non-profit, national organization with a membership made up of musicians, clergy and interested laity.

May 25: [What Does it Mean to be a Spiritual Leader During Times of Crisis?](#) Six Monthly Sessions on the 4th Tuesday of the Month, beginning May 25, from 1:00-3:00 p.m. (May 25, June 22, July 27, Aug. 24, Sept. 28, Oct. 26). Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) Educators from Advocate Aurora Health invite you to an opportunity to reflect on our times and what it means to be a leader.

May 25: [TikTok Ministry: Faith in the World](#), 2:30 p.m. via Zoom. TikTok Pastors Rev. Timothy Sylvia and Rev. Sarah TevisTownes lead congregations and have literally millions of engagements online. Join the UCC for a conversation about TikTok, how ministry is happening creatively, and a celebration of the ways our Faith moves outside of the buildings and traditional expectations upon it.

May 26: [Faiths4Vaccines National Summit](#) on May 26, 2021 from 12:00 p.m. (Central Time).

May 26: [Stronger Together as One Conference. The best conversations to learn from each other](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. Illinois Conference Update. Meeting ID: 899 3000 2174, Passcode: 965913, dial by your location: (312) 626 6799 (Chicago).

May 27, June 3 and 10: [Hybrid Ministry in a Post-Pandemic Church](#), 9:00 - 11:00 a.m. CDT. Join Faith+Lead is Luther Seminary's host, Ryan Panzer, and an engaged learning cohort of faith leaders live and online.

May 27: [Disabilities, Mental Health, and Racial Justice](#), 2:30 p.m. via Zoom. May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Join international disabilities scholar Rev. Dr. John Swinton and UCC's Minister for Disabilities and Mental Health Justice Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund for a theological and practical conversation about God's calling for us to create communities of radical belonging and liberating love.

---

## Upcoming Events

June 2: [Copyrights and the Church with CCLI and CCS](#), 2:00 p.m. Eastern (1:00 p.m. Central) via Zoom. Want to be sure that you are using music legally online, in person, and in print? Join us for a webinar with Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) and their

sister company Christian Copyright Solutions (CCS). Learn about the individual blanket licenses and bundles they offer and ask questions about your usage. Hosted by [Practical Church Resources](#).

June 2: [Stronger Together as One Conference. The best conversations to learn from each other](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. Pat Stein, Illinois Representative, Shawn Polzin, Risk Advisor and Farnaz Ansari Berna, VP of Marketing and Sales from the Insurance Board will be our guest speakers. Meeting ID: 899 3000 2174, Passcode: 965913, dial by your location: (312) 626 6799 (Chicago).

June 8: [Both/And: Maximizing Hybrid Worship Experiences For Online and In-Person Audiences](#), 2:00 p.m. Eastern (1:00 p.m. Central). As we begin to think about reopening our church buildings, we want to consider how we can create worship for two audiences at the same time: those who are in the pews, and those who are on their couches. How do we keep both audiences engaged so that neither one feels like they're spectators? [Practical Church Resources](#) will be partnering with Jason Moore of Midnight Oil and Convergence, formerly The Center for Progressive Renewal to bring you these two events.

June 9: [Stronger Together as One Conference. The best conversations to learn from each other](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. Steve Welker, Moderator of the Association of Interim Ministers will be our guest speakers. Meeting ID: 899 3000 2174, Passcode: 965913, dial by your location: (312) 626 6799 (Chicago).

June 9-10: [Online Church Conference](#) hosted by Rev. Kim Keat with experts from many denominations who walk participants through the practical work of thriving in a hybrid church world. You can learn more [here](#).

June 16: [Stronger Together as One Conference. The best conversations to learn from each other](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. Jay Wittmeyer, Executive Director, Lombard Mennonite Peace Center will be our guest speaker. Meeting ID: 899 3000 2174, Passcode: 965913, dial by your location: (312) 626 6799 (Chicago).

June 23: [Stronger Together as One Conference. The best conversations to learn from each other](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. Rev. Michael D. Jones, CMA Committee on Ministry will be our guest speaker. Meeting ID: 899 3000 2174, Passcode: 965913, dial by your location: (312) 626 6799 (Chicago).

June 30: [Stronger Together as One Conference. The best conversations to learn from each other](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. Illinois Conference Update. Meeting ID: 899 3000 2174, Passcode: 965913, dial by your location: (312) 626 6799 (Chicago).

July 8-10: [United Church of Christ Musicians Association Conference 2021: Brave New World](#), This conference will be offered in an all-virtual format. [Registration](#) is open!

July 11-18: [2021 General Synod 33 - Rooted in Love](#). Registration is open — be ready for this summer's Special Edition General Synod.

September 23: [Strides for Peace Race](#), 6:00 p.m. Advocate Aurora Health is sponsoring the annual Strides for Peace Race Against Gun Violence held in Chicago and virtually this year.

---

## 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



DONATE NOW!



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](mailto:ilconfcarmen@gmail.com).

This communication is made possible by your contributions to

***Our Church's Wider Mission***

Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ | (708) 344-4470  
1840 Westchester Blvd., Suite 200, Westchester, IL 60154