



NEW BEGINNINGS E-BLAST



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Message from the Conference Minister

Rev. Molly Carlson

Tired of the Pandemic?

Throughout American history, our people have lived through extended times of want. The last century has brought us WWI, The Great Depression, WWII, and some might argue that Prohibition could make the list. Now we are living through the global coronavirus pandemic and there is no end in sight.



I am ready for this to be over and I know most of you are too. I grieve that things aren't getting back to normal. I have experienced denial, anger, bargaining, depression and fleetingly, and acceptance. But the acceptance doesn't stay put and I cycle through the process again.

I do not like wearing a mask. I love hugs. I miss worship and singing with gusto. I might even go so far as to admit resentment that I left one ministry with not one in-person good-bye and started a new ministry with limited opportunity for face-to-face relationship building. ZOOM just isn't the same.

Yet, as a Christian, I am committed to Jesus' teaching in Mark 12:30-31:

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Reflection from the Associate Conference Minister for Vitality, Transformation, and Sustainability

Rev. Michelle Hughes

Sometimes Being "right" is Irrelevant!

These are complex times, fraught with anger, bitterness, violence, systemic injustice, illness, and death. There is much we can agree on. We agree that indeed Black Lives Matter in a world that has rendered people who are melanin blessed as problematic at best and less than human at worst. We agree something must change.



We know that this ideology -- racism- is foundational to what has “made America”. We know that we are more alike than different. We know power has been abused.

But who is right? Black, Red, or Blue? I recall something I used to make my students recite when I taught at Queen of Peace High School: “...*sometimes being right is irrelevant*”. It is irrelevant if, in the quest of “being right” relationship is broken, and the village destroyed. It is irrelevant if, in the quest of “being right” harm is inflicted upon the innocent. It is irrelevant if the quest of “being right” does not foster deeper understanding and new ways of being.

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Report from the Illinois Conference President

Mr. David Holston

We are a team! Two hundred forty churches all over Illinois (and one in Indiana), within five associations, in 1964, formed the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ. If you go to our web page, you can find out about our history, our makeup, our mission, and our core values. Fifty-six years later, a few changes to the wording probably can be updated. However, we are still bound together in a common goal, “***promoting congregational health and vitality and pursuing God’s peace and justice.***”



Over the last years, a spirit of mistrust has permeated in our conference as we hear concerns regarding, race, sexuality, urban versus rural versus suburban, and other covenantal items of diversity. In his book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Patrick Lencioni lists five items that split organizations (teams) and suggest ways to address them. The MLT staff last year studied this book together, and I would submit several learnings to you for your discernment.

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The Art of Failing Successfully

Rev. Kimberly Wood, Acting Associate Conference Minister

Has your church been trying new things? In this season called COVID, we have all been challenged to figure out how to do things differently. Whether it has been trying different platforms for online worship, looking for new ways to stay connected, finding “safe” ways to share communion, finding a program that lets us sing together virtually without sounding like the babble at Babel, or creating new protocols to still be able to deliver meals and provide groceries to those in need. We’ve all been trying new ways to do ministry, to be church, to be a presence of Christ. Sometimes, our efforts have reaped great benefit. And sometimes – well, not so much.



Even before Covid-19 struck and church “as we have always done it” became a sacred memory, churches were trying new things, new programs, new structures, new schedules, new models for mission and outreach, and new worship ideas. Many times, these endeavors created exciting new opportunities for ministry or offered new possibilities that allowed the congregation to thrive. But as many times, and probably more, these valiant attempts ended without the positive results, the hoped-for outcomes, the needed vibrant response. Thus,

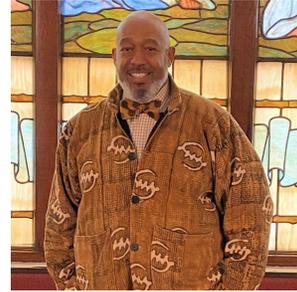
they were marked as failures. But were they?

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The Malady of Dis-Trust

A Reflection by Rev. Dr. Terrill Murff, Associate Conference Minister

Fifty-three years ago - on April 14, 1967—the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King gave a captivating speech which he titled “*The Other America*” at Stanford University. King addressed race, poverty, and economic injustice. King said: *For in the final analysis, the riot is the language of the unheard. And what is it that America’s failed to hear? It’s failed to hear that the plight of the Negro poor has worsened over the last few years. It has failed to hear that the promises of justice and freedom have not been met. It has failed to hear that large segments of white society are more concerned about tranquility and the status quo than about justice, humanity, and equality, and it is still true. It is still true that these things are being ignored.*



Even after the widely viewed George Floyd murder, African American males continue to be murdered at the hands of police. Most recently, the Kenosha, Wis., murder of Jacob Blake (by Kenosha Police) in front of his children has excited huge protests, in the normally tranquil city of Kenosha, Wis. Civil unrest will continue until the persistence of racially biased excessive policing is replaced with trust and transparency. We must remain invested in creating opportunities in employment, healthcare, and education.

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From the Chicago Metropolitan Association

Remembering Sammie: Her Life and Being

Service remembering Sammie Dortch whose sudden passing was felt by her friends and colleagues in the Chicago Metropolitan Association, Illinois Conference, Community Renewal Society and especially in Off the Pews, the program she had helped establish.

Remembering Sammie: Her Life and Being
Sept. 18, 2020, 11:00 a.m.
Apostolic Church of God,
6320 S. Dorchester Ave., Chicago Ill. 60637

Remembering Sammie

Her Life and Being

When:
September 18, 2020 / 11 am

Where:
Apostolic Church of God
6320 S Dorchester Ave,
Chicago, IL 60637

A Note from Sammie:

Sammie Dortch wished that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to a social service fund to support the family counseling ministry at the Apostolic Church of God.

*For more details call
Carol Stanley-Robbins 773.642.1791*



There will be social distancing and the use of masks during this service. A note from Sammie: Sammie Dortch wished that in lieu of flowers, donations be made to a social service fund to support the family counseling ministry at the Apostolic Church of God.

From the Prairie Association

Retirement Announcement

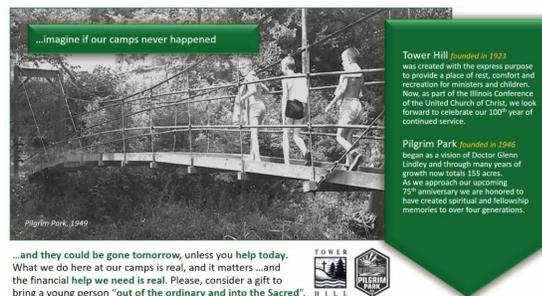
Few people in Shabbona have the visibility of the Rev. James Allen. Pastor Jim, as he is best known, preaches and teaches at Shabbona United Church of Christ. In addition, Pastor Jim serves as Chaplain to the Shabbona Volunteer Fire Department and American Legion Post 654. Pastor Jim believes churches should be community focused and, along with great lay leadership from folks like Doug Bend, assisted in establishing the annual Summerfest tractor pull, an unusual event not often thought of as a “religious” activity. Pastor Jim is also thankful for the many (Sandy, Marie, Karen, Tom, Bryant, and others) who were involved in transforming a former local clinic into the United Neighborhood Center. Now, after 15 years of ministry with the Shabbona United Church of Christ and to the wider community, Pastor Jim, and wife Carol, who also serves as the parish nurse, are retiring.



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2020 is an exceptional year and unfortunately not in a positive way. In March we foresaw a stoppage of planned events and tasked ourselves on how to bridge the gap in our fiscal budget. We responded by offering camp facilities for vacation rentals in safe and practical ways. This change in direction to bring in cash flow has been effective but is still **far short of the needed funds**.



Today we are asking for an investment that camp will still be here tomorrow, giving campers the chance to hear God’s voice in the wind, the waves of Lake Michigan, the babble of a creek and in the laughter of other campers. This truly offers a camp experience to bring them **“out of the ordinary and into the Sacred”**. We have sincerely appreciated your support in the past **and prayerfully anticipate your continued support**.

You can donate directly at: <https://outdoorministries.campbraingiving.com/>

Feeding our Demons

Rev. Brandyn Simmons

It’s no secret that many of our churches are in conflict. The discussion of whether to return to in-person worship and how to safely do that has only exacerbated that conflict for many. For those who are part of the system, it is hard to see the “balcony view” and get a perspective of what is really happening.

At face value, it seems that there are just a bunch of bitter people in a toxic environment who want nothing other than to have *their* way seen to fruition. With many of the churches I am working with, I am finding that there are methods to get to the core of what is really happening.



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Happenings Around the Conference



On Aug. 17, Burr Ridge United Church of Christ hosted their first mobile food pantry in partnership with Lyonsville Congregational United Church of Christ and the West Suburban Community Pantry. They served 61 households: 61 children, 116 adults, 34 seniors for a total of 235 people. Bernie's Book Bank donated Family Bags of books for distribution. *Photo credit: [Burr Ridge United Church of Christ](#) (Facebook page)*



Youth from St. Luke Union Church in Bloomington and leaders traveled to Pilgrim Park in Princeton, Ill., for a day of service, fun and root beer. The project for the day was to reconstruct the prayer labyrinth that had been washed out during a rain storm earlier this spring. *Photo credit: [St Luke Union Church](#) (Facebook page)*

Poor, low-income people have the power to reshape the election, new study shows

Written by Connie Larkman

Poor, low-income people have the power to reshape the election, new study shows.

Poor and low-income voters across the country have the power to impact the outcome of the United States presidential election and 16 U.S. Senate races, according to a national study released recently by the Poor People's Campaign.



The [groundbreaking study](#), "Unleashing the Power of Poor and Low-Income Americans: Changing the Political Landscape," was written by Robert Paul Hartley, an assistant professor at Columbia School of Social Work. It underscores how quickly an election can change if low income Americans who are less likely to vote actually cast a ballot.

[Read More](#)

LEEAP announces 2021 Funding Cycle

Our Conference Local Evangelism, Envisioning and Planting/LEEAP extends to our churches and associations an opportunity to request funding for new church starts and the revitalization of existing congregations.

If you and/or your church wish to submit a request, please contact the Illinois Conference at (708) 344-4470; e-mail ilconfmichelle@gmail.com. The application can be downloaded by going to the Illinois Conference website (www.ilucc.org). The deadline for a request for calendar year 2021 is Nov. 1, 2020.

Our Help Is Needed

Rev. Roger Dart, Illinois Conference Disaster Response Coordinator

My message today is to put forward an appeal. We are all aware of the several disaster events of recent days. What stands in the way of our making a physical response through volunteer labor is the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic disaster. That event has placed severe safety limitations on us.



For the moment, we must respond in a more 'virtual' way, through the mechanisms that already exist that extend our 'reach'.

Read more about Iowa: <https://religionnews.com/2020/08/20/in-iowa-hard-hit-churches-and-faith-based-organizations-rally-to-help-out-in-wake-of-derecho-storm/>

Read more about Louisiana: <https://religionnews.com/2020/08/27/hurricane-laura-disaster-relief-southern-baptists-chainsaws-united-methodist-how-to-help/>

The good news is that we are getting assistance from our national Disaster Ministry and Church World Service.

[Read More](#)

From our covenant Partner, Advocate Aurora Healthcare



The Little Things: Help stop the spread of COVID-19

The little things in life often mean the most. It's the same with social distancing, just 6 feet helps slow the spread of COVID-19. And wearing a mask, not a big deal right? Small actions can keep us all safe. When you do the little things you can stop its spread.



You are our Heroes

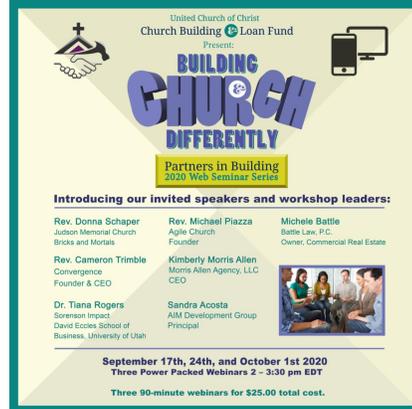
Every generation has its heroes - those who are called upon to stand for others, to put others before themselves and to run toward danger with courage and compassion. These heroes save lives, and change us all, forever.

Building Church Differently - Partners in Building Event

Partners in Building (PIB) is a multi-day training event, where leaders from congregations are invited to attend and engage in various informative presentations and workshops that are facilitated by UCC Church Building & Loan Fund.

Due to the COVID 19 Pandemic, we are transitioning Partners in Building to an online platform. Join us on

Sept. 17, 24 and Oct. 1, 2020 (select one workshop per day, per person). Participants will have the opportunity to hear from and engage with experts including a variety of topics: Impact Measurements, Navigating Land Use, Repurposing Resources for Mission, Faith Based Entrepreneurs, Fund Raising, Social Media & Marketing and so much more.



United Church of Christ
Church Building Loan Fund
Presents
BUILDING CHURCH DIFFERENTLY
Partners in Building
2020 Web Seminar Series

Introducing our invited speakers and workshop leaders:

Rev. Donna Schager Judson Memorial Church Brooks and Mortals	Rev. Michael Piazza Agle Church Founder	Michele Battle Battle Law, P.C. Owner, Commercial Real Estate
Rev. Cameron Trimble Convergence Founder & CEO	Kimberly Morris Allen Morris Allen Agency, LLC CEO	
Dr. Tiana Rogers Sorenson Impact David Eccles School of Business, University of Utah	Sandra Acosta AIM Development Group Principal	

September 17th, 24th, and October 1st 2020
Three Power Packed Webinars 2 - 3:30 pm EDT
Three 90-minute webinars for \$25.00 total cost.

[Register Here](#)

In the Media

[Small protests, loud voices calling for equal justice](#)

[Sisters in Faith Leadership: Our seven-step pledge to help bring about racial equity and 'true justice'](#)

[Burr Ridge church begins offering food for many with its first food bank](#)

[Here are some Chicago-area religious services to stream online](#)

Employment Opportunities

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

Conference and UCC Calendar for September

September 2: [Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders during Coronavirus Pandemic](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. The Illinois Conference Ministry Leadership Team invites you. Tracy Heilman and Mitch Kloster will be on hand to tell us more about their fundraising efforts and camp during COVID.

September 9: [Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders during Coronavirus Pandemic](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. The Illinois Conference Ministry Leadership Team invites you. We will focus on Get Out The Vote efforts. Sandy Sorenson from the UCC Washington DC office will be with us with more information from <https://www.ucc.org/ourfaithourvote>.

September 16: [Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders during Coronavirus Pandemic](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. The Illinois Conference Ministry Leadership Team invites you.

September 16: [Ecclesiastical Council For Sylvia Miller](#), 7:00 p.m. via Zoom hosted by First Congregational Church of La Grange. Chicago Metropolitan Association Cluster Four will convene an Ecclesiastical Council to discern the readiness for ministry of Sylvia Miller.

September 18: [Remembering Sammie: Her Life and Being](#), 11:00 a.m. at Apostolic Church of God, 6320 S. Dorchester Ave., Chicago Ill. 60637

September 23: [Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders during Coronavirus Pandemic](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. The Illinois Conference Ministry Leadership Team invites you.

September 30: [Conference Chat: Devotions and Conversation for Clergy and Lay Leaders during Coronavirus Pandemic](#), 3:00 p.m. via Zoom. The Illinois Conference Ministry Leadership Team invites you.

Upcoming Events

October 24: [Western Association Fall Meeting](#), 9:00 to 11:30 am via Zoom.

November 13-14: On behalf of the United Church of Christ Mental Health Network Mental Health Network [WISE Conference](#), sponsored and hosted by the Indiana-Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ, via Zoom. Registration link and more details will be available in the coming weeks.

Update on Illinois Conference Offices Gradually Re-Opening

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!



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Our Church's Wider Mission

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