

IL Conference Annual Celebration Workshops

BLOCK A - Wed. Oct. 19, 12-1:30 PM

Open & Affirming Congregations in the Age of Tik Tok

Presenter: Rev. Kirk Moore

During the pandemic, so many things about church changed quickly and dramatically. How do congregations, recently open and affirming or those that have been so for years, live into a new paradigm while still not forgetting, and sometimes clinging to the ways things have been even recently. Rev. Kirk Moore host's this timely workshop - one that looks at successes and challenges.

The Challenges and Future Fears of Immigrant Churches

Presenter: Rev. Godwin Kanagaraj

Immigrant churches are part of many denominations here in the USA. Most of these immigrant churches have been here for a long time. This poses very unique threats and at the same time opportunities. Opportunities are being able to maintain diversity and help the larger church to understand the different contexts of people from different parts of the world. At the same time, challenges are cultural assimilation that happens when the church has been for a long time, youth who doesn't understand the native language and get stuck between the two cultures. Also, the growing intolerance toward the immigrant community and visa issues further jeopardizes the effective functioning of the immigrant church. In this meeting, we will ponder both these aspects together and discern how we all can grow and step into the future together.

BLOCK B -Thurs. Oct. 20, 12-1:30 PM

Reconnecting Our Mental Health

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund

Join the UCC Minister for Disabilities and Mental Health Justice, Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund, to explore how our churches can help reconnect all ages to mental health support. Through storytelling based on her own personal experiences with mental illness in her family and research for her new book, *Blessed Youth: Breaking the Silence* about Mental Illness with Children and Teens, Sarah will guide us in conversations to help us find our way to wellness together. She will also share practical tools from the UCC Mental Health Network about how your church can be WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, and Engaged) for mental health.

When God Becomes Real: Lay Spiritual Life & Development

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Bobbie McKay, Ph.D.

This workshop will present the results of an original two-year study of spiritual life in congregations from various religions/denominations: Protestant (UCC and Episcopal), Catholic, Reform Jewish, and Muslim. The study, which included over two thousand participants from congregations across the United States, was conducted by Dr. McKay. Participants in the study also filled out an extensive, original nine-page questionnaire on the meaning of spiritual life. From these results, the Spiritual Life Team Program was designed to enable people to share these God experiences in a small group setting. This program is entirely spiritual in nature, not therapy, and powerfully transforming to the participants and their churches.

BLOCK C - Thurs. Oct. 20, 6:30-8 PM

A Stitch in Time

Presenter: Rev. Roger Dart

This presentation will be around the nature and need for a disaster response ministry element in every local congregation. That said, as my title suggests, I will use the metaphor of our communities resembling a loosely woven fabric such as 'homespun' to explore the how's and why's of this work. I'll also include a short video segment about the "Willing to Respond" campaign.

Faith & Tik Tok

Presenter: Minister Jamie Sladkey-Meehan

Tik Tok is an app used by billions of people all over the globe and is currently the #1 app used by teens. In the app, short videos are used to tell stories, do dances, pull pranks, and more. Tik Tok has been the source of many national trends, political campaigns, and local movements. This workshop asks the question "What can we learn about God, our faith, and ourselves on Tik Tok?" We will use Tik Tok videos, conversation, and scripture to answer these questions and explore deeper what faith and Tik Tok might have to do with one another. This workshop is targeted towards youth and young adults.

The Solar Alternative

Presenters: Minister Daryle Brown & Rev. Dr. Terrill N. Murff

As we witness the ever-mounting effects of climate change daily – thousand-year floods, extended droughts, raging wildfires, etc. – the pressure to DO SOMETHING grows. As the church, we have been charged with stewardship over God's creation, and if our daily news is any indication, we are not doing a very good job. One of the ways to positively affect climate change is the reduction of greenhouse gas in our atmosphere, and an important way to achieve this is the reduction of carbon emissions. This workshop will explore how churches show leadership in this area, explaining the technology, identifying key considerations, and provide an understanding of the cost considerations.

BLOCK D - Fri. Oct. 21, 12-1:30 PM

Ezekiel Project

Presenters: Rev. Susan Mitchell & Rev. Dr. Terrill N. Murff

In this workshop we will discuss the use and benefits of a "church assessment" tool that can be used as a discernment tool to reimagine and rebuild your church. The Illinois Conference is partnering with UCC Church Building and Loan Fund to invite local churches; to re-vision the concept of "church" through an innovative and comprehensive analysis and vision planning. This Project will invite churches to evaluate and re-examine how a local congregation uses their church for ministry and the true mission for which they have been called.

Friday afternoon sessions continued on page 3.

BLOCK D - Fri. Oct. 21, 12-1:30 PM (cont.)

Make Post-Pandemic Giving Stronger than Ever

Presenter: Rev. Andy DeBraber

Churches have been slowly adapting to how people give over the past 30 years. The pandemic has forced us to catch up. Learn about people's giving habits and practical strategies to strengthen giving to your church in a post-pandemic world. Attendees can expect to learn: how to make giving easier in your church – from anywhere (the pew, home, digital); what those who give respond best to; ways to ask for gifts that work; and the follow up that needs to happen to sustain that giving.

La Jornada/The Journey

Presenter: Claudia Orozco

This energizing workshop will engage the attendees of the need for housing of immigrant refugees coming into our country to make a better life and to help families to meet their basic needs to be able to begin again and be productive in the communities where they live. Claudia will speak about The National Youth Advocate Program, seeking loving families that open their hearts to thousands of minors that come escaping from violence, poverty, traffic and many other calamities of the human nature, the children and youth are coming from Latin America in large numbers. Claudia will also speak about her pet therapy. She is currently serving the youth aging out of our residential institutions, providing pet therapy with her dog Marlie, teaching them Spanish (her first language), providing Restorative Justice Practices, but most importantly taking an animal that gives unconditional acceptance and love to children growing up with none.

BLOCK E - Fri. Oct. 21, 6:30-8 PM

God's Creation and the Climate Crisis

Presenters: Rev. Don and Barb Schmidt

The aim of this workshop is twofold: to gather to celebrate God's beautiful creation and to define climate change and its effects, both present and future, on the planet and its people, especially those who are poor and disadvantaged. We will offer ideas that people and churches can use in efforts to conserve God's gifts and celebrate them amid this crisis. We will share with attendees an extensive list we put together of ways individuals and churches can "Help Save the Planet." Please come and share with us in this vital discussion.

Outreach Ministry with Assisted Living Facilities

Presenter: Rev. Mark Jacobs

This workshop is intended to provide the information and inspiration persons may need to create an outreach ministry to nursing homes, special care memory units, and assisted living and rehabilitation centers. The "field of dreams" model, that we will build church buildings and that people will come to them in order to worship is not as relevant to many as it once was. Especially for folks in assisted living facilities of every description, mobility is a problem. In the workshop, I will discuss the development of the idea of the ministry, the actual "nuts and bolts" of the process undertaken to create and evolve the ministry, the feedback, affirmation, and joy that I as a minister have received from those whose lives I have touched, and my vision of the ministry's future. It is my hope that the workshop will inform and inspire others to consider creating such a ministry in their parishes and in their metropolitan areas.