

## **Rev. Dr. Terrill N. Murff - Acting Conference Minister- Report**

I would like to publicly commend Molly Carlson's visionary and innovative work which has helped to solidify a stronger foundation within the Illinois Conference. Conference Finances are clear and user friendly (thanks also to Bob Poor's leadership with FAB and Cristine Vesely's experience with non-profit Accounting). Molly's leadership has; allowed for the formation of a group to spearhead and prayerfully implement a new governance structure; curated another group to create a new vision for the Camps; and wrote and received a second Lilly grant for Thriving Congregations in Transition. The Illinois Conference is blessed to have two (2) innovative Lilly grants that will provide cutting edge resources to the local churches. Jon Prain, and Juanita Bradley's leadership have the IL Conference heading in the right direction.

August 1<sup>st</sup> was my official start date as Acting Conference Minister. I have thoroughly enjoyed this opportunity to share my gifts with Conference leadership. During my short time as Acting Conference Minister I have had many discussions with Support Staff and MLT about how to make improvements in our workflow process and how to improve upon building improved relationships with the local church. The major theme in discussions with both groups (through my lens of interpretation) is to improve the service that we provide to the local churches, Associations, and the Conference. This can be accomplished, in large part, with a staffing change resulting with the hire of two (2) positions.

Molly and the Office Support Staff had recommended the hire of a part-time position to handle Conference-wide communication (i.e., Faithful Fridays, Monthly newsletter, etc...). This temporary hire will allow for the full concentration and completion of the Church Management System currently being developed by Sarah Lohrbach.

### **Church Management System Update**

Sarah has been diligently working to maintain the "Conference-wide Communications" aspect of her responsibilities while also providing office staff IT support and "build" a customized "data management system" called *Free Agent*. Free Agent will replace the Church/people management aspect of REALM.

Sarah is almost done with "building the basic platform" for our new database which will manage our 204 churches, 500 clergy, and our donors with a goal of complete conversion by the end of the year 2024.

### **Bookkeeping**

JITASA- which means..."*The Spirit of Serving Others*," is one of the nation's largest bookkeeping and accounting services for non-profits organizations. JITASA is our outsourced contracted bookkeeper for the financial operations of the Conference. The Chart of Accounts has

been merged with the new JITASA account numbers being assigned. Onboarding training has been completed and we are now “running live.”

BILLS.com-is an online “bill pay” service that seems to be very effective and efficient. It has been smoothly integrated into our bookkeeping system through JITASA and has seemed to streamline that portion of our Conference’s financial operation.

Timetastic - is an online time management system which is used to manage “time-off” for staff. This has been working well and provides a “visual” to manage vacations, sick days, and time off.

### **MLT**

The Ministry Leadership Team and I have had several planning meetings to discuss how to better manage our current workloads along with meeting many of the current expectations of the churches of the Illinois Conference. We have reviewed our current portfolio’s and have agreed to readjust the workloads to best serve the local churches of the Conference. This resulting “re-adjustment” will require the hire of an Associate Conference Minister. Details will follow with respect to the “Reset” of the duties and responsibilities of the ACM’s.

### **Annual Celebration Planning Committee**

Thank you to this year’s Annual Celebration Planning Committee: Jon Prain - Conference President, Elizabeth Hartung - Chair, Jana Chwalisz, Tim White, Charing Wei-Jen Chen, Troy Underwood, Jasmine Taylor, Kim Grice, Nanette Dixon, and Jagan Samuvelraj. Special thanks to the Office Support Staff: Sarah Lohrbach (registration and optics), Lauran Smith (book-keeping) and Naomi Else (administration).

We are excited that we have three (3) major sponsors: Community Renewal Society has agreed to provide **\$3500** in sponsorship while the Financial Ministries of the UCC (Insurance Board, United Church Funds, Pension Board, Cornerstone and Church Building & Loan Funds have agreed to sponsor \$500 each (**\$2500** total). The third sponsorship is Advocate Health.

Sponsorships from our Covenanted Partners help to reduce much of our overhead and serve to allow reduced registration costs for our attendees.

Respectfully Submitted 10/19/2024

Rev. Dr. Terrill N. Murff