

**ACM Report to the Illinois Conference United Church of Christ  
Conference Annual Celebration  
October 31 – November 1, 2025  
First Congregational UCC, DeKalb  
Rev. Kathy Lawes**

**Associate Conference Minister for Authorization and Oversight with pastoral care responsibilities  
for Prairie and Western Associations**

*Grace and peace, Illinois Conference United Church of Christ!  
Come from the east and the west, the north and the south,  
and worship the God of our parents, the God of Jesus Christ. Amen.<sup>1</sup>*

A lot can change in a year! With the arrival of Rev. Dr. Michelle Hughes to our Conference staff in early 2025, my responsibilities have shifted from serving as “Associate Conference Minister for Authorization and Oversight with pastoral care responsibilities for Prairie and Western Associations” to staffing the Committees on Ministry of Eastern, Prairie and Western Associations, and offering pastoral care for the congregations and pastors of the Prairie and Western Associations. In the coming months I will work closely with Michelle and the Fox Valley Association CoM [chaired by Rev. Ruth Farrell] and the Chicago Metropolitan Association CoM [chaired by Rev. Dan Sather] to relinquish my staffing responsibilities with those committees.

Additionally, I’m called to support congregations and pastors from the time *a pastoral change is announced until the pastor’s call has concluded*. When a church begins their pastoral search process (for an interim pastor and/or called pastor), they are supported by Pastoral Transitions staffed by Associate Conference Minister Rev. Shernell Edney.

This ministry is rich and tangled and fulfilling and occasionally, well, overwhelming. I pray daily for the health and well-being of our pastors and congregations, for clarity of vision and purpose, and give thanks to God and colleagues for grace and support. I’m grateful for our Interim Conference Minister, Rev. Dr. Terrill Murff; for the CoMs in Eastern (chaired by Rev. Barbara Lohrbach), Prairie (convened by Rev. Jennifer Amy-Dressler), and Western (chaired by Rev. Tim White) Associations. I’m thankful to serve with the dedicated members of the Prairie and Western Association Councils. I’m also grateful for colleagues Rev. Tracy Heilman and Ms. Jeri Edelberg and the Tower Hill staff; and for Mr. Mitch Kloster, Mr. Matt Martinkus, Ms. Tara Cade and the Pilgrim Park staff, who so ably conduct their ministries of hospitality in beautiful settings; and for the ongoing support of our Westchester office-based colleagues Ms. Naomi Else, Rev. Sarah Lohrbach, and Ms. Lauran Smith.

What will the coming year bring? More change, I’m certain; and more opportunities to be the hands and feet of the Risen Christ. With gratitude to the Illinois Conference, the ministries and missions you support with your generous support of OCWM (Our Church’s Wider Mission) and your time, commitment and faith.

*Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage;  
hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted;  
support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people;  
love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.<sup>2</sup>*

Rev. Kathy Lawes

<sup>1</sup>United Church of Christ Book of Worship (2009 edition), Service of the Word II, Call to Worship, page 110

<sup>2</sup>United Church of Christ Book of Worship (2009 edition), Service of the Word I, Commissioning and Benediction, page 108