

2025 Annual Celebration SCHEDULE

Thursday, October 30, 2025

Trainings:

9:00a – 3:00p	Boundary Awareness Training – Rev. Diane Weible
10:00a – 4:00p	MESA/COM’s -Rev. Elizabeth Dilley/Rev. Melanie Oommen

Friday October 31, 2024

8:00a – 5:00p	Check-In / Registration 8:00 a.m. Visit covenanted partners display tables/Fellowship
10:30a – 11:30a	Opening Worship – The Many
11:15a – 12:00p	<u>Group A Workshops</u> <u>Lay Lead Congregations</u> – Rev. Melanie Oommen <u>IL Conf 2025 Budget Discussion</u> – Scott Peterson/Rocky Sheneman <u>Camp Forward</u> - Amy Wildermuth / Rev. Tracy Heilman/ Mitch Kloster <u>Governance</u> - Jon Prain / Jon Gilbert Martinez <u>The Many</u> <u>Preaching in Uncertain Times</u> - Rev. Dr Ozzie Smith <u>Little Church by the Wayside</u> <u>Spiritual Growth</u> - Keith Clark Hoyos <u>Partnering in the Community</u> – Rev. Dr. Susan Mitchell <u>Metamorphosis (Church Transitions)</u> -Rev Shernell Edney/Rev. Dr. JJ Flagg <u>Love of The Children</u> – Amanda Herman <u>Our Whole Lives</u> - Christina Fairman <u>Manual on Local Church (Faith Info)</u> - Rev. Melanie Oommen
12:00p – 1:00p	Lunch
1:15p – 2:00p	<u>Group B Workshops</u> <u>Manual on Local Church (Faith Info)</u> - Rev. Melanie Oommen <u>Spiritual Growth</u> - Keith Clark-Hoyos <u>Little Church by the Wayside</u>

Preaching in Uncertain Times - Rev Dr Ozzie Smith
The Many

Stewardship- Kay Quinney Burnard/ Larry McCure

Metamorphosis (Church Transitions)-Rev Shernell

Edney/Rev. Dr. JJ Flagg

Environmental Justice – Rev. Dr. David Russell

Partnering in the Community (CBL&F) –Rev. Dr. Susan Mitchell

Camp Forward - Amy Wildermuth /Rev. Tracy Heilman / Mitch Kloster

2:15p – 2:45p **Gather in Sanctuary - Celebrations**

3:00p – 5:30p **Business Session 1**

6:00p – 9:00p **Banquet**

Saturday Nov 1, 2025

8:00a – 8:30a **Breakfast-** (provided by host church)

8:30a – 10:00a **Worship (Keynote)** – John Dorhauer

10:15a – 11:45a **Business Meeting Session 2**

Communion - MLT

12:15p – 1:00p **Lunch**

Departure

PROPOSED AGENDA

Annual Celebration Business Meeting (2025)

Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ

Business Session Part 1 (Friday Afternoon, October 31,2025)

1. Call to Order Juanita Bradley, Conference President
2. Establishment of Quorum Nancy Fraley & Juanita Bradley
3. Opening Prayer
4. Test votes
5. Appointment and Election of a parliamentarian for this meeting
6. Approval and Adoption of Special Rules of Order and Meeting Covenant
7. Appointment / Election of Tellers (Person to count votes, if needed)
8. Approval of the Agenda for the 2025 Annual Business Meeting
9. Approval of the Minutes of the 2024 Annual Celebration
10. Motion to receive, and place on file, written reports of the Conference staff members, Associations, Camps, Conference officers, committees, task forces, teams, and similar entities (with the exception of the financial reports, budgets, Nominating committee report, and Camp Forward report).
11. Report of the Conference President – Juanita Bradley (10 minutes)
12. Report of the Interim Conference Minister – Terrill Murff (10 minutes)
13. Nominating Committee Report and Elections – Eric Quinney-Burnard
14. Reports from Lily Grants:
 - A. Thriving Pastors-TPIRC – Melody Seaton
 - B. Thriving Congregations-Transitions – Shernell Edney Stilley
15. The meeting shall be in recess until the call of the Chair on Saturday Morning (November 1, 2025)

Business Session Part 2 (Saturday Morning, November 1, 2025)

16. Business Meeting called back into session Juanita Bradley, Conference President
17. A Time of Prayer
18. Presentation and approval of Camp Forward Implementation – Amy Wildermuth
 - a. Transfer of Property to the be formed Pilgrim Park Association.
 - b. Endorse the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of the new Pilgrim Park Association as reflective of the Illinois Conference’s desired new relationship with the Pilgrim Park Association.
 - c. Endorse the Covenant between the Illinois Conference and the Pilgrim Park Association as reflective of the parties’ hope to maintain a relationship with mutual commitments and obligations to one another.
 - d. Approve the revised purpose of the Tower Hill Camp Association as reflected in the revision to Article III of the proposed Amendments to the Articles of Incorporation for the Tower Hill Camp Association.
 - e. Endorse the Amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws as reflective of the new relationship between the Illinois Conference and Tower Hill Camp Association and, by this endorsement, encourage the current Board of Trustees to vote to approve them to vote to approve them.
 - f. Endorse the Covenant between the Illinois Conference and the Tower Hill Camp Association as reflective of the parties’ hope to maintain a relationship with mutual commitments and obligations to one another.
 - g. Authorize the Conference Board of Directors to approve any necessary technical or non-major changes to the language of any documents as we go through the filing and approval process.
19. Financial Reports & Discussion – Scott Peterson & Rocky Sheneman
20. Presentation and Approval of the 2026 Budget
21. Any other business or announcements
22. Ajournment

SPECIAL RULES FOR THE 2025 ANNUAL CELEBRATION BUSINESS MEETING

Debate and discussion during the business meeting shall conform to the following provisions:

- A. Delegates, and others wishing to be recognized, shall obtain use of a microphone, address the presiding officer and identify themselves by name and local church (or other represented entity).
- B. Pro and con microphones (and microphones for other purposes) may be designated by the presiding officer.
- C. A Delegate may not speak on an issue and conclude by moving the previous question.
- D. A Delegate may not present a combined motion to close debate on an amendment to a motion and to close debate on the main motion.
- E. No one may speak to the same debatable motion (or speak to the same matter being discussed by the assembly) more than twice-- except to answer questions from the floor or to answer questions from the presiding officer.
- F. Unless brought by a committee (or other recognized body of the Illinois Conference), a maximum of two minutes for the first speech is allowed to the maker of a motion. If a motion (or report, or presentation) is being brought by an Illinois Conference committee or other body recognized by the Illinois Conference, the presiding officer shall establish the length of the initial speech or initial presentation to be made on behalf of the committee. (See also, Item "M"). All subsequent speakers are limited to two minutes each.
- G. During timed floor debates (and during timed periods of discussion) speakers will be informed that their allotted time has expired and they will be asked to relinquish the microphone. (If they continue to speak, the microphone may be turned off).
- H. When time restrictions on speakers are required by these Special Rules, an extension of time may be granted by the presiding officer to the following persons:
 - a. Speakers requiring translation into English from another language (time needed for the translation shall not be counted in the time allotment) and speakers who require sign language translation;
 - b. Speakers whose fluency in English is limited and for whom translation is not available;
 - c. Speakers with conditions which negatively affect mobility and/or speech.
- I. Opportunity will be provided for two Delegates speaking in favor and two Delegates speaking in opposition to a motion before an amendment can be made.

- J. A motion to limit or extend the time allocated for debate (or to limit or extend the time allotted for a period discussion) is, itself, undebatable; such motion requires a second and two-thirds vote unless decided by general consent.
- K. Non-delegates, not otherwise authorized to speak, may speak only by two-thirds vote of the assembled Delegates.
- L. In order to expedite the proceedings (and in order to eliminate unnecessary additional voting), when someone “Calls the previous question”, before recognizing that motion, the presiding officer will first seek to otherwise QUICKLY ascertain if the assembly is ready to proceed to a vote on the motion or amendment that is already before the assembly (without having to conduct a formal vote on a “motion to call the previous question”). See also, Item “M”, below. Also note, a person must first be recognized by the presiding officer and “have the floor”—before making a “motion to call the previous question”. (You can’t just shout out such a motion at anytime-- from anywhere in the room—and expect the assembly to address your motion).
- M. A decision made by the presiding officer can be overturned in the following manner:
 - a. There is a motion and second made “to appeal [from] the decision of the chair”.
 - b. A brief discussion can then take place.
 - c. If the motion to appeal the decision of the chair passes by a 2/3 (two-thirds) majority vote, the decision of the presiding officer is overruled.
- N. Voting shall conform to the following provisions:
 - a. Most items can (and will) be determined by a voice vote. (Example: “All in favor signify by saying ‘Aye’ –opposed ‘Nay’”).
 - b. The presiding officer may also state these (or similar) words: “If there is no objection – (pause) --so ordered”. During the pause, the presiding officer will listen and look – in order to ascertain if anyone is objecting. If no one objects, the matter is approved (without a formal vote being taken).
 - c. Votes shall be decided by the Delegates present and voting. Abstentions shall not be counted in the total. (Example: On a motion, if 75 delegates vote “Yes”, 25 delegates vote “No”, and 12 delegates “Abstain” –the total votes cast will be 100—not 112. Thus, a “simple majority” would be 51 votes and “a 2/3 majority” would be 67 votes).
 - d. If the presiding officer, or any delegate, wishes for the actual votes to be counted—all they have to do is to immediately call for a “division of the house” or “division”. The presiding officer will conduct the vote again—and have the delegates stand, or raise their hand (or use some similar way) to indicate their vote. The official tellers will count the votes.

- e. In order to have a [paper] ballot (sometimes called a “secret ballot”), there should be a motion and second to have a paper ballot. The motion is not debatable. If a majority vote to have a [paper] ballot—a [paper] ballot will be held. The tellers shall distribute, collect, and count the ballots.
- f. There shall be a “teller” committee. The committee members (and chairperson) of the teller committee will be appointed by the presiding officer and approved by a simple majority vote of those delegates who are present and voting. The teller committee shall distribute, collect, and count the ballots. The tellers shall also count the votes if there is a “division of the house” and votes are to be counted. The chairperson of the teller committee will inform the presiding officer of the vote count and the presiding officer will announce the vote totals.
- g. Voting by electronic means shall be permitted. The presiding officer, in consultation with technical advisors, shall determine the electronic voting method to be used. The electronic voting method may change (or evolve) during the course of the meeting in response to changing situations and in response to “lessons learned” during the meeting.

COVENANT of HOSPITALITY AND WELCOMING for the Illinois Conference, UCC

Seeking to be faithful together, we covenant with one another to be attentive to these guidelines as we make decisions for the Illinois Conference. In a spirit of trust and love, we will:

Give them a hearing (John 7:51)

Listen before answering (Proverbs 18:13)

1. Treat each other respectfully so as to build trust, believing that we all desire to be faithful to Jesus the Christ.
 - We will keep our conversations and communications open for honest exchange
 - We will not ask questions or make statements in a way which will intimidate or judge others
2. Listen. Listen. Listen.
 - We will try not to formulate what you want to say while someone else is speaking
 - We will NOT assume the motivations or experiences of others
 - We will seek clarification if needed
3. Be open to new learnings from various perspectives.

Hospitality: Extend Hospitality always to strangers and guests

“for I was a stranger and you welcomed me: - Matthew 25:35

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to stranger, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it” – Hebrews 13:2

4. Receive invited guests with loving hospitality as someone invited to your own home or church.
5. Show a welcoming attitude of ministry to all guests.
6. Help to create and sustain a welcoming, hospitable respectful and caring environment, setting for the invited.

Speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15)

7. Share our concerns in a spirit of love and respect in keeping with Jesus’ teaching.
8. Focus on ideas and suggestions instead of questioning people’s motives, intelligence or integrity.
 - We will not engage in name-calling or labeling of others prior to, during or following the discussion.
9. Speak for ourselves only, expressing our own thoughts and feelings, referring to our experiences. We will avoid broad generalizations.

Maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3)

10. Seek to stay in community with each other though the discussion may be vigorous or full of tension.
 - We will be ready to forgive and be forgiven
11. Respect the decision of the majority, and if we disagree with it and wish to change it, work for that change in ways which are consistent with these guidelines.
12. Include our disagreements in our prayers, not praying for the triumph of our viewpoints, but seeking God’s grace to listen attentively, to speak clearly, and to remain open to the vision God holds for us all.

Illinois Conference Annual Celebration

November 1 & 2 2024

First Congregational Church

Western Springs – hybrid meeting Minutes

Business Session part 1 – Friday November 1

Call to Order – Jon Prain called the meeting to order at 2:53 after an inspiring worship service.

Establishment of Quorum – with the assistance of Conference Office staff, it was determined 208 people had registered, with 162 voting members in addition to the 10 people who had signed up and attended boundary training on Thursday. There were 26 visitors and/or speakers registered.

After an opening prayer, people were given an opportunity to test vote to make sure everything was working properly, particularly for the on-line attendees.

Appointment and Election of Parliamentarian for this meeting

Norman “Smitty” Williams was introduced as an experienced parliamentarian and a professional consultant, having served at the last 2 General Synods.

Hank Fairman moved to elect Norman Williams as parliamentarian for the 2024 Annual Celebration business meeting; Mary Newcomb seconded.

AC 11-1-01

vote on above motion

PASSED

Approval and adoption of special rules of order and meeting covenant.

Jon announced the special rules of order shall be the same as the last time. Speakers will be able to speak twice on an issue unless a question was put forth. To call a question, the speaker must do so from the neutral mike and then for the vote to count, must be passed by 2/3 majority.

Shaun Hillman moved the Illinois Conference adopt and abide by the rules contained in the document entitled: Special Rules for the 2024 Annual Celebration Business Meeting. Mark Binder seconded.

AC 11-01-02

vote on above motion

PASSED

Additionally, Jon asked “shall the members of the Illinois Conference adopt and agree to abide by the behavior guidelines contained in the document entitled: Covenant of hospitality and welcoming for the Illinois Conference, UCC.”

Bob Meinershagen moved we adopt the motion, Catherine Erwin seconded.

AC 11-01-03

vote on above motion

PASSED

Appointment/Election of Tellers

Shall the following persons serve as tellers for the 2024 Annual Celebration Business Meeting? Bob Meinershagen (Western), Catherine Erwin (Fox Valley), Carol Currier-Frighetto (Eastern), Michelle Hughes (CMA) and Jennifer Amy-Dressler (Prairie) Associations.

Juanita Bradley moved and Ramona Bamgbose seconded.

AC 11-01-04 vote on above motion PASSED

Jon offered an addition to the proposed agenda for the addition of a motion for the Illinois Conference adopt an emergency resolution to acknowledge and affirm Faithful Stewardship of Our Whole Lives (OWL) and Advocacy for the comprehensive sexuality education as 13b.

Dave Bateman moved we adopt the proposed agenda for the 2024 Annual Celebration Business meeting be adopted as amended, Carol Currier-Frighetto seconded.

AC 11-01-05 vote on above motion PASSED

Shall the minutes of the 2023 Illinois Conference Annual Celebration be adopted as presented? Sue Harvey so moved; Wilbert Watkins seconded.

AC 11-01-06 vote on above motion PASSED

Motion to receive and place on file the written reports of the Conference staff members, Associations, camps, Conference officers, committees, task forces, teams and similar entities (with exception of financial reports, budgets, nominating committee and Camp Forward reports).

Terrill Murff amended his report to include Mark Binder, Jr. as an active participant on the Annual Celebration committee. Gilbert Martinez moved to accept and place on file the written reports as amended; Connie Leader seconded.

AC 11-01-07 vote on above motion PASSED

Conference President's report

Jon Prain stated he started in January 2018 as vice moderator and how the Conference has struggled and changed during COVID and the multiple changes that have taken place during his tenure. He thanked Tom Norwalk, the council, committees and many others for their support, cooperation and hard work. There's more work that needs to be done; we need to treat each other better, work on antiracism, and LGBTQIA+ recognition and support. He's proud of the unanimous vote to appoint Terrill Murff as Interim Conference Minister, how Council was able to express their feelings and support each other, even in disagreements. He encouraged us to continue to work at being the Illinois Conference, keep each other accountable and that together, we are *Stronger Together*.

Interim Conference Minister's report

Terrill Murff stated he doesn't like to be in the spotlight, and prefers to work in the background. He thanked God for the leadership of Jon, and recognized how difficult the work can be at times, but that when we work together, there's joy. He encouraged us to see Jesus in each other and build trust with one another. He is glad for the hard work of Molly Carlson, Jon Prain, Bob Poor, et. al. for setting up a fantastic foundation for future growth. He noted that many churches want more connection with the Conference and said it is valuable to be able to talk with and hear each other.

Terrill is thankful for the MLT, and called the other two (2) Association ministers his sisters. With three (3) daughters and his “sisters”, he’s learned how to listen more meaningfully, even when the conversations are difficult and how to stay graceful with each other when disagreeing. He asked (rhetorically) how can we rebuild trust with those who have been hurt by church and that we need to find ways to hear each other differently. Moving forward, he wants to rebuild trust, love each other, change the toxic culture and build on God’s love and care for a healthier church.

He thanked Chuck Maney for his assistance in moving the Conference forward and for his non-anxious presence. Terrill said we need to learn to be thermostats that control the temperature of the spiritual atmosphere rather than thermometers.

Jon thanked Chuck Maney, Bob Poor, Cristine Vesely, Juanita Bradley and Ramona Bamgbose for their hard work; saying they’re a team who often worked 40-60 hours a week.

David Holstein sent his greetings to the gathering from on-line.

After a short break, we reconvened to address the additional motions; one on STAR and the other OWL. They each need 2/3 vote in order to pass. Conference Council recommends they both be adopted.

STAR coalition

Harriet Dart introduced herself as the chair of Justice & Witness committee in CMA. She then spoke on the Small Town and Rural Coalition (STAR) amendment and explained how rural life is very different from city life and often internet is difficult to receive. Western, Eastern, and Prairie Associations are part of our Illinois Conference covenant and often assumptions are made that are not true, so the Associations tend to get ignored. When National distributes materials to the churches, they are often not appropriate and the small town and rural pastors have to interpret how to apply them to their situations. The floor was opened for questions/comments.

One questioned whether UCC would create a new group or ministry that would take funds from other resources? All funding is in place, they just need a formal acknowledgment. There will be a General Synod resolution that would approve any money before it is spent.

Another said that this is a needed resolution because often the church is the only voice in the community and independent advocacy is important. Someone else added that as smaller churches seek to be more inclusive, there aren’t enough resources for them and they feel like they don’t have a voice within the larger church. Another added that small city churches are just like the rural churches, yet they continue to thrive and be present in the community, and supported this resolution. Others online also expressed their support. The Justice and Witness committee presented the following motion.

“Shall the Illinois Conference declare its support for the prudential resolution from the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference Board of Directors that is currently entitled: The Small Town and Rural Coalition United Church of Christ requests to be recognized as a formal group?”

AC 11-01-08

vote on above motion

PASSED unanimously

Emergency resolution on Faithful Stewardship of OWL

The second item on the emergency resolution, (13b) was brought forth. Jon said the Executive Committee had to decide whether to bring this to the body but it is up to the gathered people to decide if they want to discuss it. Therefore, the Executive Committee asks whether it should be discussed? The motion from Executive Committee is:

“Should the delegates of the 2024 Annual Celebration consider “an emergency resolution of the Illinois Conference to acknowledge and affirm the resolution faithful stewardship of Our Whole Lives and Advocacy for the comprehensive sexuality education in faith communities through interfaith collaboration. A resolution of witness be presented at General Synod 35?”

AC 11-01-09

vote on above motion

PASSED

Hank Fairman led the discussion on the emergency resolution. He stated its been six (6) General Synods since Illinois Conference has put anything before a General Synod, and that it's been a 50-year journey to become radically inclusive. We should celebrate the work that's already been done and keep doing it. OWL is one of the best teaching tools on human sexuality and Hank recommends we take it to our churches. OCWM helps to support it, and Hank feels this program has changed lives. For more information, the Illinois Conference UCC website has a link for more information. The floor was then opened for discussion.

Someone asked “why are we doing this”? If not passed, OWL would continue to do their work, however, it wouldn't let others know we're in favor of it. Someone else said the conversations started over 30 years ago, however because of many being afraid to talk about our bodies, it's been difficult to have honest conversations, especially with youth. Many have also left the UCC because of fear of what this might mean. Someone else raised the point that anyone who has taught this course has been rewarded with a sense of joy due to affirmation of God's love.

A question was raised, what happens if we don't pass the resolution? Nothing, National Church would still offer the program as each church chooses what curriculum they teach. The curriculum is offered on-line; however, one must be trained before they can teach it.

Next motion is: “Shall the Illinois Conference adopt” an emergency resolution of the Illinois Conference UCC to acknowledge and affirm the resolution faithful stewardship of Our Whole Lives and Advocacy for the comprehensive sexuality education in faith communities through interfaith collaboration. A resolution of witness be presented at General Synod 35?” (On-line results: 19 yes, 2 no; in house: 75 yes, 1 abstain) Therefore, it is deemed to have been passed.

AC 11-01-10

vote on above motion

PASSED

This portion of the business meeting is recessed and to be followed by the banquet/social at the Holiday Inn Countryside. We will reconvene tomorrow, Saturday at 8:30 am with our keynote speaker.

After dinner, Rev. Deborah Owens was posthumously awarded the Chalice award. Rev. Barbara Lohrbach was also presented (in person) with a Chalice award. We heard presentations from the United Church Fund and Tuthill, on finance and one from the Tuthill committee before we heard closing remarks.

Saturday, November 2, 2024

After our guest speaker, Rev. Rhina Ramos gave an inspiring speech, the Illinois Conference Annual Celebration was called back into session at 9:34 am by Jon Prain and opened with a word of prayer.

Nominating Report and elections

Santina Poor presented a slate of nominees and expressed her hope and desire that committee chairs would encourage those nominees to show up and participate in the work of our Conference. Santina then moved that the Conference nominating committee report (on page 47 of the AC booklet) slate be approved. The question was raised if there were any nominations from the floor, seeing there are none, Eric Quinney-Burnard then moved nominations be closed. Ramona Bamgbose seconded.

AC 11-02-01 vote on above motion PASSED

Shall the Illinois Conference elect the persons named in the report of the Nominating committee (with the exception of the General Synod delegates) to the offices and terms listed?

AC 11-02-02 vote on above motion PASSED

General Synod Delegates

Santina then moved the Illinois Conference accept the slate for the class of 2025-2028 delegates as presented. The question was raised if there were any nominations from the floor, there are none.

Monica Howell moved we close the nominations, Catherine Erwin seconded.

AC 11-02-03 vote on above motion PASSED

The committee then recommended “the Illinois Conference accept the slate of General Synod delegates for the class of 2025-2028 and authorize the Conference Council and Interim Conference Minister appoint any remaining (unfilled) delegate positions.”

AC 11-02-04 vote on above motion PASSED

Illinois Conference Revised Constitution and By-laws

Jon said there are over 250 positions in our Conference and 40 on the Council that are not easily filled. It’s not good practice to fill a position just because of a quota and during the 2020-’21 year, Council started to look at how to address this. Previously, any request was delayed in committees and urgency was lost. As an example, Tower Hill needed to have some work done immediately but due to the constraints of committees, it was tied up.

Conference Council appointed a committee to look at the process and start clean. Barbara Lohrbach initially led the committee with the assistance of Benna Bell, Gloria Cox, Kathy Hummel as secretary, Molly Carlson, Jon Prain and Juanita Bradley. Hank Fairman took over when unforeseen circumstances caused Barbara to step down. Later, Mary Newcomb finished the work when Hank took his sabbatical.

Amy went on to explain the Conference annually gives \$500 thousand to each camp but is recommending a 5-year gradual decrease in funds, allowing the camps to financially split from the Conference. They would keep their insurance and health benefits. We would still have a connection, with an annual giving Sunday for the camps, and access to programs shall continue.

Discussion followed. Ernie Potter believes the camps need to have continued support. Someone asked what if this is not passed? The land at Tower Hill will not be used as a camp, but we have a chance to revisit the documents and relationship, and there will be no immediate change. Chuck Maney apologized that the Conference didn't provide the budget or tools the camps needed for better support but pledged to work with them in the future. Another voiced a concern regarding finances, and was assured the money is safely managed by three (3) different accounts by the Council (FAB). Several told of how the camps have changed lives and because their first experience was at Church camp, have entered seminary. The question was called and after a prayer, vote was taken. 132 yes and 1 opposed.

AC 11-02-08

vote on above motion

PASSED

Financial Reports

Bob Poor and Cristine Vesely have rebuilt the financial team and straightened out the finances. A new financial company was hired in June and the transition is moving along well. Both Bob and Cristine's terms are up, however, Cristine will continue to be available behind the scenes if needed. A new software system has been implemented and the new finance manager may have some questions. A new financial handbook was written in 2021 and some of the policies need clarification. It was hoped that a new staff spending policy would be written, however due to the amount of change in the Conference, it was not accomplished but hoped that could be done in the near future.

Bob presented the 2024 budget found on pages 48 – 53 in the handbook. The Conference has \$4.5 million invested with a 5% yearly draw from restricted accounts in order to keep a balanced budget. He reiterated we have the necessary amount of money needed in an account for the camps.

All previously held properties have been sold, therefore the (property) committee has been put on hiatus. OCWM is a priority and the expected \$1.1 million was not attained in 2024, therefore, it has been reduced for the 2025 budget as found on page 51. The Conference has received a second Lilly grant for TPIRC 2025 and pastoral transitions is fully funded by Lilly.

Juanita Bradley moved to accept the financial report for the first half of 2024, Chuck Maney seconded.

AC 11-02-09

vote on above motion

PASSED

The 2025 budget was discussed next. Conference \$1.23 million total budget and \$1.22 million in expenses. With a 5% draw of \$49 thousand from investments and \$20 thousand from miscellaneous income, it is expected we will be able to keep a balanced budget. Bob explained the camps, TPIRC and pastoral transitions budgets. Someone asked how many years can we

withdraw from savings to balance the budget? At the rate of \$250 thousand, approximately four (4) years. Chair asked if we were willing to adopt (accept) all five (5) budgets as presented?

Hank Fairman moved that we receive and refer to audit the proposed budgets for 2025, Wilbert Watkins seconded.

AC 11-02-10

vote on above motion

PASSED

Other Business/announcements

Jon praised the gathered body for the increased trust in the Illinois Conference and said without it, we wouldn't have been able to vote in acceptance with such high numbers for the proposed motions.

Kathy Lawes then spoke about how since 2010, when she was given the Pastoral responsibilities for the Association, she has had a close relationship with Jon. She praised him for his wisdom, belief and dedication to prayer and suggested we continue that (prayer) into all future Annual Celebrations from now on. He was then presented gifts from the Conference for his service.

Juanita Bradley was called up to be given the ceremonial banners, a signed copy of Robert's Rules of Order and the gavel with a wooden box to keep it in. She thanked God for the opportunity to serve then thanked her mentors and supporters, Jon and CMA. Conference officers were then installed before the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Fraley

REPORT OF THE ILLINOIS CONFERENCE PRESENT

Juanita Bradley

Peace and blessings to all of you, my fellow workers in the vineyard for the Kingdom of God. Welcome to you at this time that we set aside every year where we celebrate the work we do all year for Kingdom building. This is my first year of serving in the position of the president of the Conference, and while it has been a very challenging one, I have had the privilege of working with some of the most incredible people who are serious about this work. My heart is filled with gratitude, both for this opportunity and for the experience. As I was growing up, working in the cotton fields of Arkansas, I never had any thought of being in such a position. My roots are deep in the Baptist tradition, born and reared, and I'm sure most of you realize that there was not then, and not very much now, respect for women in any leadership position there. But God lead me to the United Church of Christ where I've been able to work in leadership positions both in my local church and in the wider church beginning with the Chicago Metropolitan Association's Council, and staying true to my rearing, I've always done my best. And so now, I invite you to join me in this very important work, especially those of you who are not presently involved, but have some time you're willing to give to the work we do here in our Conference.

As we celebrated in 2024, we passed a vote for our new Constitution and Bylaws, as well as the recommendation of the Camp Forward Task Force to have the two Conference camps become two separate and independent 501(c)(3) organizations with the expectation that they would continue to have a strong connection to the Conference. Following the passing of these two (2) votes we have had two (2) implementation Task forces working and I want to hold them up and give a special thanks to them because it was very hard work indeed and they gave it their all. First the Governance Implementation Team members; Gilbert Martinez, Hope Molozaizy, Warren Goetsch, Lesa Braham and Douglas Roberts. Second the Camp Forward Implementation Team members; Amy Wildermuth, Renita Ward, Chuck Maney, Hank Fairman, Jasmine Taylor, Tracy Heilman and Mitch Kloster. In addition to these very efficient and hard-working people, I can't thank Jon Prain enough. He was contracted to walk with these Teams because as the immediate past president of the Conference, he was with both these initiatives from their inception, and if you know Jon, you know that he pays attention, remembers and always does what's best for God's church and His people. I was his vice president and I'm thankful to God that I had him as an example of how this work should be embarked upon and carried out. I'm also thankful that I can still call him, if I need help, and he will answer.

The statement I made above that I've always done my best is what I continue to live my life by. Some of you who know me well enough know that I am a Gospel and Worship song fanatic, and my favorite song right now is "Final Answer" by Tamala Mann. The best line in the song simply says, 'my final answer is yes', yes to your will and yes to your way which means I'll always do my best with the work God has called me to do. This is my promise to you as well.

Faithfully submitted,
Juanita Bradley

REPORT OF THE INTERIM CONFERENCE MINISTER

By Rev. Dr. Terrill N. Murff

Greetings to the members of the Illinois Conference. It has been my pleasure and a blessing from God to serve you as the Interim Conference Minister. 2025 has been a year of transition. I would like to begin by celebrating the Conference Leadership of Juanita Bradley and Emily Mitchell who have curated a sense of calm and collaborative leadership throughout our Conference. The Ministry Leadership Team (MLT) continues to work hard to provide needed resources and to meet many of the needs of our local churches and clergy. This includes congregational resources along with Pastoral care and nurture.

We contracted the leadership skills of Jon Prain to facilitate the implementation of two (2) of the most critical initiatives that the Conference has undertaken since its inception; new Governance, and the independence and operation of our two (2) camps (Pilgrim Park and Tower Hill). The exhaustive work of both the Governance Implementation Team and the Camp Forward Team has made tremendous strides towards implementation of both major initiatives for 2026.

Responsibilities and Duties

The focus of my first year as Interim Conference Minister was to concentrate on the Responsibilities and Duties outlined in my Call Agreement as specified by Conference Council and Personnel. These responsibilities and duties include:

- Oversight of the Ministerial and Office Support Staff, assets and budget of the Illinois Conference in conjunction with the Personnel Committee and Conference Council.
- Provide emotional stabilization for the Conference by bringing about healing and trust.
- Be the point of contact for all Conference Committees, task forces, and Association Councils.
- Provide primary but not exclusive staff leadership in the areas of programs and events.
- Represent the Conference in ecumenical and interfaith communities in the wider society.

Like many of our kindred Conferences, financial support from our member congregations continues to decline. The reality is that this is more than a twenty-year-old trend. As you all know, we have half of the staff that we had more than ten (10) years ago. The work of the Illinois Conference is supported by contributions which come from our member congregations through Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM). Approximately 40% of our member churches contribute to OCWM annually. Much of the work of the MLT, newly created Board of Directors, Finance Board, and Community and Vitality Ministry; is to develop better and stronger relationships with our member churches.

Trauma Informed Culture

Much of my work as Interim Conference Minister in 2025 and beyond, utilized many of the components of "Trauma Informed Culture." My work was focused on different ways of integrating compassion, empathy, safety and respect into every interaction, every decision and how we plan to govern ourselves throughout the Conference. During 2025 and throughout 2026 I will continue to emphasize empathic leadership, collaboration, trust, mutual respect and accountability will be the pillars upon which my ministry within the Illinois Conference will be

built upon. This work will focus on creating a more empathic and nurturing culture throughout our Conference which identifies, recognizes and develops gifts in others.

I will work to focus our collective efforts in 2026 and beyond on creating new and unique revenue sources. I will also focus my efforts on the following:

Pastoral Care:

Healing Trust Issues & Strengthening Relationships: Continue to address trust issues across the Conference and build stronger relationships between Associations, churches, and the Conference.

Trauma-Informed Care: Continue the ongoing work on trauma-informed care within the Illinois Conference culture.

Administration:

Management: Focus on MLT/Staff management and effective communication

Working with Board of Directors, Associations & their committees:

Implementing new governance

Discuss and determine the relevancy of Cluster gatherings

Meeting Effectiveness: Work to improve attendance and preparedness at Board and Association meetings.

Outreach & Ecumenical Work:

Continue the collaborative work of the United Church of Christ with both our current Covenanted Partners along with establishing new Covenanted Partners.

Self-Care:

Focus on modeling intentional ways to deepen my spiritual journey so that I may offer the best version of myself to the staff and throughout the Conference.

Proclamation (Preaching):

Continue to be present with many of our member congregations and bring vision and purpose by preaching when invited.

IT/Communications (report from Sarah Lohrbach):

As some of you may already know, there have been several big projects on my plate for quite a while! Late this spring, we were finally able to hire a temporary part-time communications person to take over doing the bi-weekly newsletter so that I can shift my attention to these large and important projects. Diane was a great addition and was able to hit the ground running. The two (2) projects I have been focused on this year are:

1. File Migration: Setting up a SharePoint Intranet Hub for the Conference which will become our new cloud-based file server to replace our current on premises one that is around 15+ years old and no longer supported by Microsoft. This also includes the start of another big project in cleaning up and organizing our Conference files (including church and clergy files).
2. Database Migration: Building a new custom database to replace Realm which has never worked for us the way we needed it to. We are moving to Servis AI (formerly Free Agent CRM). This will also replace Realm as our donor management system. The building is about 90% done. Before importing data into the new database I am also doing a significant data cleanup to make sure we are importing the most current and accurate data

possible (knowing it will still not be perfect because we have over 200 churches and between 700-900 people we are importing into the new system). I am currently in the data clean-up and importing phase.

The goal is to have these two (2) projects complete by mid-January if possible (or at least complete enough that we can begin settling into the new systems). Once these projects are complete, the next major project will be moving towards a new website for the Conference and Associations.

Administration (Naomi Else):

MESA (Ministerial Excellence Support and Authorization) worked to merge the old web-based data collection system which was used to maintain and centralize congregations, authorized ministers, Associations and Conference record keeping system called the Data Hub, onto the same platform as the Ministerial and Local Church Profiles system and renamed it DAD (Database and Directories). This transition experienced many glitches and hiccups (some pieces did not work as anticipated; staffing permissions caused unexpected issues, bugs that cropped up took more time than expected to resolve.

CARDD (Center for Analytics, Research and Development and Data), MESA and Suran has worked tirelessly to address concerns, fix bugs and worked to build out improved capabilities of this newly improved system.

We have provided our annual yearbook information and have yet to receive the 2025 compiled annual Yearbook. As issues continue to persist with the DAD, we have little reliance on the accuracy of the information provided by the new DAD. We have found inaccuracies in necrology information (forcing us to maintain our own necrologies by hand. We have also experienced inaccuracies in our authorized ministers' records, which requires checking and then verifying our records DAD's records with our known records.

Work and improvements continue within the national setting.

Operations (Lauran Smith)

JITASA- is our outsourced bookkeeping and accounting firm who has expertise in working with religious and non-profit organizations. I meet on a weekly basis with Lauran Smith, Scott Peterson, and the account manager to provide updates, proper coding and classification of our transactions. We have had a fair share of hiccups, with coding and class designation, slow and delayed bill payment (utilizing Bill.com as a cloud-based bill payment service). We have also experienced snafus with Bill.com regarding client notification delays, operational nuances which impede payment efficiencies, and other systematic challenges which we are slowly overcoming.

Illinois Conference Annual Celebration Report

This year's Illinois Conference Annual Celebration was held at First Congregational United Church of Christ in DeKalb. I sincerely thank our hosts for their generosity, flexibility, and hospitality. The spirit of partnership was evident as we collaborated with Thriving Pastors in Revitalizing Congregations (TPIRC). Their generous sponsorship, along with support from other partners, enabled us to offer four engaging workshops—including *The Many*—while keeping registration costs affordable.

We welcomed about 165 participants in person, with more joining online. Our buffet meal accommodated various dietary needs, a small but meaningful way to show care for each other. As always, many hands made light work, and I am thankful for everyone who served, planned, and prayed behind the scenes to make this gathering a success possible.

Looking ahead, our 2026 Annual Celebration will take place on the first full weekend in November to avoid Halloween. The committee continues to consider technology needs for presenters, recognizing that while these tools enrich our gatherings, they can also limit which churches are able to host. Meeting in our congregations keeps us connected across the Conference and helps us experience the warmth and diversity of our shared ministry—something a hotel venue, while convenient, simply cannot offer. And, of course, hotel rentals come with a much higher cost tag.

My heartfelt thanks go to the Annual Celebration and Planning Committee for their creativity, humor, and dedication; to our Technology Team for their steady and skilled support; and to the Conference Office, Rev. Sarah Lohrbach, Naomi Else, Rev. Lawes, and Rev. Murff for their guidance and encouragement. Together, your efforts created a time of learning, laughter, and connection that reflects the very best of who we are as the Illinois Conference.

Respectfully,

Rev. Elizabeth Hartung, ACPC Chair

Annual Report
Conference Disaster Response Coordinator (CDRC)
Illinois Conference
United Church of Christ

October 16, 2025

Beginning in January of 2025, my activities include monthly Zoom gatherings of our national DCRCs, except for the month of May, when I attended our national gathering in Cleveland, at our national church home.

Our virtual monthly gatherings are primarily for meeting any new coordinators and sharing information about new events or experiences and possible needs for multi-conference assistance. A short presentation by a member of one of our associated denominations or agencies is often included.

April 28-30, I attended our national CDRC gathering that was held at our national church offices in Cleveland.

Our meeting included, for the first time, a day with our UCC Emotional & Spiritual Response Chaplaincy Team, during which we learned more about what services each of us provides and how our different roles are integrated during an event.

This meeting also resulted in the creation of a team of the "old-timer" CDRCs (I am included in that team) who have served for longer periods of time and involved in a variety of disaster events. Our team's task is to share our experiences and knowledge with the considerable number of new coordinators who have little or no experience.

May 18 -22 I attended the annual conference of the National Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster, where I represent the UCC on the Donations Committee. Additionally, I attended five (5) other workshops dealing with different aspects of response, such as formation of Long-Term Recovery Groups, Mass feeding, Volunteer management, Coordinating with local Emergency Managers, and The Role of Emotional & Spiritual Care. I greatly appreciate our Conference's financial support in this situation.

Our Conference has been most fortunate over the past year to have experienced no disaster events that required a major response. One local flooding event created the need for about 100 CWS Cleanup Buckets which we were able to supply from existing inventory in several local churches.

An issue that has arisen in recent weeks is the status of Church World Service. This past spring, their warehouse in New Windsor, Maryland was closed. The status of their other warehouse in Arkansas is not known, and my recent attempts to deliver a supply of kits to their collection warehouse in Elgin have had no response. I am aware that their offices in Elkhart, IN are still in operation. Due to the uncertainty around CWS' status, I am postponing a planned trip to the Little Rock, AR location at 'Ferncliff' until sometime next spring.

On the national scene, in August our national coordinator announced that there is now a church near Asheville, North Carolina that has created lodging facilities for about 16 volunteer workers. I will put a formal request for volunteers into "Faithful Fridays" by the end of October, and will prepare the necessary documents for registration. This program will very probably last for at least five (5) years, perhaps longer.

I will also promote the idea of a multi-church project of assembling CWS Cleanup Bucket Kits using the CWS-provided pallet of supplies. The pallet of supplies will create about thirty kits, and is available directly from CWS for about \$2100.

Finally, we continue to maintain our UCC participation in the Illinois VOAD and the Northeast Illinois COAD (Community Organizations Active in Disaster). As there are several new regional COADs across the state, I am seeking people who will volunteer to represent us on these newer organizations. A list of those COADs will be forthcoming.

Finally, as of this morning at 10:16 AM, our Conference was a registered participant in the Great Central U.S. ShakeOut earthquake exercise. I hope you participated!

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Roger Dart
CDRC
Illinois Conference

SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL POSITION				
TOTAL ASSETS		12/10/2024	8/31/2025	NOTES
CURRENT	Bank Accounts	\$505,129.47	\$291,306.13	Byline (4) (GO Ch & Sav / TPIRC / P.T.)
	Petty Cash Funds (camps)	\$3,000.00	\$3,000.00	Nominal \$1,500 / camp
	UCF Accounts (investments)	\$4,888,138.76	\$5,206,429.79	
	Prepaid Expenses	\$5,248.11	\$1,534.55	
	Mortgages Receivable	\$100,875.45	\$85,315.11	Malta, Iglesia Fuente
	Undeposited Funds	\$214,791.41		
	SUB-TOTAL	\$5,717,183.20	\$5,587,585.58	
FIXED ASSETS	Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment	\$0.00	\$25,517.16	
	Buildings	\$1,119,419.25	\$1,119,419.25	
	Land	\$245,823.86	\$245,823.86	
	SUB-TOTAL	\$1,365,243.11	\$1,390,760.27	
	TOTAL ASSETS	\$7,082,426.31	\$6,978,345.85	
TOTAL LIABILITIES				NOTES
CURRENT LIABILITIES	Accounts Payable	-\$33,252.50	-\$88,464.21	
	Payroll Withholdings	-\$31,757.35	\$0.00	
	Credit Card Balances	-\$1,336.63	-\$5,562.49	
	Camp Deposits	-\$39,907.00	-\$33,723.50	
	TOTAL LIABILITIES	-\$106,253.48	-\$127,750.20	
	TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$6,976,172.83	\$6,850,595.65	

SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES					
GENERAL OPERATING FUND		12/31/2024	8/31/2025	BUDGET	%
REVENUE	OCWM	\$889,048.04	\$404,850.48	\$900,000.00	44.98%
	Other Income	\$576,835.00	\$18,482.59	\$130,783.93	14.13%
	Transfer from Sold Properties		\$0.00	\$200,000.00	N/A
	TOTAL INCOME	\$1,465,883.04	\$423,333.07	\$1,230,783.93	34.40%
EXPENSES	Salaries/Wages	\$597,533.16	\$379,530.97	\$477,526.60	79.48%
	Other Benefits	\$247,905.98	\$134,901.57	\$184,440.37	73.14%
	Professional Expenses	\$56,248.52	\$13,574.30	\$32,000.00	42.42%
	Outside Services	\$82,689.84	\$0.00	\$85,700.00	0.00%
	Employer Paid Expenses	\$9,996.23	\$0.00	\$9,700.00	0.00%
	ACM Search / Relocation	\$16,006.60	\$0.00	\$20,000.00	N/A
	TOTAL HUMAN RESOURCES	\$1,010,380.33	\$528,006.84	\$809,366.97	65.24%
	Administration & Fees	\$60,022.41	\$61,101.06	\$103,500.00	59.03%
	Communication	\$34,472.19	\$54,001.29	\$30,800.00	106.30%
	Office			\$20,000.00	
	Property/Facility Expenses	\$21,276.19	\$16,312.56	\$20,000.00	81.56%
	Program				
	Ministry Support	\$230,678.99	\$28,469.09	\$190,500.00	14.94%
	TOTAL NON-HR EXPENSES	\$346,449.78	\$159,884.00	\$364,800.00	
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,356,830.11	\$687,890.84	\$1,174,166.97	58.59%
	NET TOTAL	\$109,052.93	-\$264,557.77	\$56,616.96	

ODM FUND		12/31/2024	8/31/2025	2025 BUDGET	%
REVENUE	TOTAL REVENUE (Contribution)	\$31,098.84	\$12,930.00		
EXPENSES	Administration & Fees	\$107.52	\$24.00		
	Communication	\$2,659.45	\$0.00		
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,766.97	\$24.00		
	NET TOTAL	\$28,331.87	\$12,906.00		
PILGRIM PARK FUND		12/31/2024	8/31/2025	2025 BUDGET	%
REVENUE	Contributions	\$33,136.50	\$2,650.00	\$35,000.00	7.57%
	ODM Camps & Retreats	\$36,013.75	\$27,748.16	\$42,000.00	66.07%
	UCC Church Activities	\$24,188.50	\$13,096.00	\$35,000.00	37.42%
	Non-UCC Church Activities	\$12,136.00	\$16,754.60	\$50,000.00	33.51%
	Non-Church Activities	\$201,889.00	\$78,386.50	\$220,000.00	35.63%
	Other Income (inc 5110)	\$99,508.79	\$13,639.01	\$51,000.00	26.74%
	TOTAL REVENUE	\$406,872.54	\$152,274.27	\$433,000.00	35.17%
EXPENSES	Salaries/Wages	\$192,922.36	\$157,315.82	\$220,000.00	71.51%
	Benefits (Annuity / Insurance)	\$67,252.29	\$76,037.64	\$96,000.00	79.21%
	Professional Expenses	\$1,155.84	\$4,217.34	\$3,000.00	140.58%
	Outside Services (IT / Maintenance)	\$12,702.33	\$24,520.31	\$5,000.00	490.41%
	Employer Paid Expenses	\$18,923.97	\$0.00	\$0.00	N/A
	TOTAL HUMAN RESOURCES	\$292,956.79	\$262,091.11	\$324,000.00	80.89%
	Food & Refreshments	\$93,295.93	\$34,201.35	\$66,000.00	51.82%
	Supplies/Fees	\$53,867.75	\$8,022.68	\$8,500.00	94.38%
	Communication	\$8,743.74		\$0.00	N/A
	Property/Facility Expenses	\$54,554.67	\$48,936.41	\$27,256.74	179.54%
	Insurance		\$24,106.50	\$26,500.00	90.97%
	Ministry Support	\$48,420.05	\$5,484.97		N/A
	Other Expenses		\$6,397.12	\$9,700.00	
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$551,838.93	\$389,240.14	\$461,956.74	84.26%
	NET TOTAL	-\$144,966.39	-\$236,965.87	-\$28,956.74	

TOWER HILL FUND		12/31/2024	8/31/2025	2025 BUDGET	%
REVENUE	Contributions	\$34,293.75	\$8,629.62	\$35,000.00	24.66%
	ODM Camps & Retreats	\$68,599.43	\$60,178.56	\$88,000.00	68.38%
	UCC Church Activities	\$88,207.50	\$76,884.00	\$104,500.00	73.57%
	Non-UCC Church Activities	\$72,863.00	\$48,579.67	\$79,000.00	61.49%
	Non-Church Activities	\$53,439.80	\$78,613.30	\$99,000.00	79.41%
	Other Income	\$229,687.84	\$117,829.84	\$148,000.00	79.61%
	TOTAL REVENUE	\$547,091.32	\$390,714.99	\$553,500.00	70.59%
EXPENSES	Salaries/Wages	\$183,650.35	\$153,015.83	\$207,900.00	73.60%
	Benefits (Annuity / Insurance)	\$67,854.80	\$62,052.32	\$85,500.00	72.58%
	Professional Expenses	\$7,199.82	\$1,155.84	\$5,000.00	23.12%
	Outside Services	\$47,577.73	\$16,570.04	\$40,000.00	41.43%
	Employer Paid Expenses	\$15,040.51	\$0.00	\$0.00	N/A
	TOTAL HUMAN RESOURCES	\$321,323.21	\$232,794.03	\$338,400.00	68.79%
	Food & Refreshments		\$59,413.24	\$78,000.00	
	Supplies/Fees	\$75,786.77	\$15,445.77	\$13,200.00	117.01%
	Communication	\$9,608.32		\$0.00	N/A
	Property/Facility	\$48,300.37	\$66,336.56	\$58,000.00	114.37%
	Insurance		\$24,106.50	\$47,300.00	
	Ministry Support	\$79,027.26	\$10,376.10	\$500.00	2075.22%
	Other Expenses		\$18,596.77	\$17,800.00	
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$534,045.93	\$427,068.97	\$553,200.00	77.20%
	NET TOTAL	\$13,045.39	-\$36,353.98	\$300.00	

TPIRC FUND		8/31/2025	2025 BUDGET	%
EXPENSES	Salaries/Wages	\$50,476.18	\$164,000.00	31.77%
	Professional Expenses	\$1,632.31		
	Outside Services	\$12,725.00	\$36,000.00	35.35%
	Employer Paid Expenses	\$0.00	\$0.00	
	TOTAL HUMAN RESOURCES	\$64,833.49	\$200,000.00	32.42%
	Administration (Supplies/Maint)	\$3,907.27	\$3,500.00	111.64%
	Communication			
	Ministry Support	\$7,149.00	\$6,500.00	109.98%
	Indirect Costs	\$0.00	\$32,277.00	0.00%
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$75,889.76	\$242,277.00	31.32%
PASTORAL TRANSITIONS FUND		8/31/2025	2025 BUDGET	%
EXPENSES	Salaries/Wages	\$134,975.95	\$226,796.63	59.51%
	Professional Expenses	\$5,453.01	\$9,000.00	60.59%
	Outside Services	\$450.00	\$30,000.00	1.50%
	Employer Paid Expenses	\$0.00	\$0.00	N/A
	TOTAL HUMAN RESOURCES	\$140,878.96	\$265,796.63	53.00%
	Administration (Supplies/Maint)	\$5,836.60	\$6,000.00	97.28%
	Communication			N/A
	Ministry Support		\$2,000.00	0.00%
	Other	\$0.00	\$27,500.00	0.00%
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$146,715.56	\$301,296.63	48.69%

Illinois Conference United Church of Christ
United Church Fund Balances
As of August 31st, 2025

	Beginning Balance \$45,658.00	Income	Expense	Ending Balance \$45,900.00	\$ 2,026 Draw
401 LEEAP	\$76,020.90	\$19,161.82	\$47,500.00	\$47,682.72	\$ 1,126
405 Prairie Assoc Money	\$45,522.00	\$6,774.18	\$5,963.00	\$46,333.18	
406 Fox Valley Assoc Money	\$66,122.42	\$3,256.59	\$0.00	\$69,379.01	
420 Brown Grant ODM	\$98.70	\$8,509.87	\$0.00	\$8,608.57	\$ 1,126
501 CC Directed UCF	\$466,118.87	\$46,610.21	\$0.00	\$512,729.08	\$ 15,550
502 ICUCC Sold Properties	\$450,136.36	\$45,012.01	\$0.00	\$495,148.37	\$ 19,781
503 PP Renewable Energy	\$14,615.19	\$1,461.47	\$0.00	\$16,076.66	
504 Frantzen Continuity	\$156,819.42	\$19,733.47	\$0.00	\$176,552.89	
801 Bayler	\$122,920.94	\$12,291.65	\$0.00	\$135,212.59	\$ 5,567
802 General Operating (Council Directed)	\$281,521.33	\$28,151.13	\$0.00	\$309,672.46	\$ 11,104
803 E Green Schlrsip	\$4,017.30	\$531.71	\$900.00	\$3,649.01	
804 Harding	\$2,368.88	\$236.87	\$0.00	\$2,605.75	\$ 107
805 Heinburger	\$2,213.75	\$221.37	\$0.00	\$2,435.12	\$ 100
806 Leonhart	\$312,483.65	\$31,247.25	\$16,100.00	\$327,630.90	\$ 14,870
807 Leopard	\$28,516.73	\$2,951.58	\$0.00	\$31,468.31	\$ 1,335
808 ODM Scholarship	\$13,279.72	\$1,327.93	\$0.00	\$14,607.65	
809 Pilgrim Park	\$15,334.23	\$1,533.36	\$0.00	\$16,867.59	
810 Rice	\$4,427.51	\$442.74	\$0.00	\$4,870.25	\$ 200
811 Schmidt	\$14,758.39	\$1,475.79	\$0.00	\$16,234.18	\$ 668
812 Slater	\$7,379.19	\$737.90	\$0.00	\$8,117.09	\$ 334
813 Tower Hill	\$62,392.82	\$8,488.98	\$0.00	\$70,881.80	
814 Tuthill	\$635,233.78	\$63,521.10	\$46,128.05	\$652,626.83	\$ 30,120
815 Hope Scholarship	\$37,238.34	\$3,723.69	\$0.00	\$40,962.03	
816 TPIRC Lilly Grant	\$745,147.68	\$15,107.58	\$0.00	\$760,255.26	
817 Pastoral Trasition Lilly	\$1,292,595.02	\$118,154.06	\$100,000.00	\$1,310,749.08	
Total Permanent Restricted	\$3,581,829.26	\$290,144.69	\$163,128.05	\$3,708,845.90	

Illinois Conference UCC

2026 Budget

12/31/25

	2025 Budget	(Est)	2026 Budget	% Change
Revenue				
OCWM	\$ 900,000	\$ 660,000	\$ 825,000	-8.3%
Friends of the Conf	\$ 10,000	\$ 19,163	\$ 20,000	100.0%
Interest Inc	\$ 7,000	\$ 5,710	\$ 6,000	-14.3%
Misc Income	\$ 20,000	\$ 5,000	\$ 10,000	-50.0%
Lilly Grant Reimbursables	\$ 43,947		\$ 43,947	0.0%
5% Draw from Restricted				
Accounts	\$ 49,836	\$ 49,836	\$ 46,435	-6.8%
Sold Properties Transfer	\$ 200,000	\$ 200,000	\$ 300,000	50.0%
General Operating Transfer	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 10,000	
Total Cash In	\$ 1,230,783		\$ 1,261,382	2.5%

Illinois Conference UCC

2026 Budget

12/31/25

	2025 Budget	(Est)	2026 Budget	% Change
Personnel Expenses				
Salary and Wages	\$ 477,526	\$ 484,519	\$ 513,024	7.4%
Benefits				
Retirement	\$ 66,583	\$ 48,015	\$ 71,823	7.9%
Other Benefits	\$ 107,886	\$ 106,032	\$ 116,635	8.1%
Total Benefits	\$ 174,469	\$ 154,047	\$ 188,459	8.0%
Total Personnel	\$ 651,995		\$ 701,483	7.6%
Outside Services				
Accountant / Bookkeeper	\$ 80,000	\$ 44,820	\$ 45,000	-43.8%
Computer Support	\$ 500	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,000	900.0%
Contracted Maintenance	\$ 200	\$ -	\$ 500	150.0%
Total Outside Services	\$ 80,700		\$ 50,500	-37.4%
Employer-Paid Exp				
Workers Comp	\$ 1,200	\$ 12,657	\$ 11,000	816.7%
Employer FICA	\$ 8,500	\$ 23,100	\$ 23,724	179.1%
Total Employer-Paid Exp	\$ 9,700		\$ 34,724	258.0%
Administration				
P&L Insurance	\$ 1,200	\$ 9,300	\$ 3,000	150.0%
Supplies & Maintenance	\$ 4,500	\$ 720	\$ 2,000	-55.6%
Equipment Leases	\$ 6,000	\$ 4,809	\$ 5,000	-16.7%
Legal	\$ 5,000	\$ 5,294	\$ 7,500	50.0%
Audit	\$ 18,000	\$ -	\$ -	-100.0%
Computer Equipment	\$ -		\$ 2,500	
Total Admin	\$ 34,700	\$ 20,122	\$ 20,000	-42.4%
Fees				
Bank Service Fees	\$ 3,000	\$ 2,109	\$ 2,000	-33.3%
Payroll Fees	\$ 6,100	\$ 8,760	\$ 9,000	47.5%
Taxes and Fees	\$ 50	\$ 2,021	\$ 2,000	3900.0%
Total Fees	\$ 9,150	\$ 12,890	\$ 13,000	42.1%
Professional Expenses				
Vehicles	\$ 16,000			
Travel	\$ 10,000	\$ 16,594	\$ 24,000	
Hospitality	\$ 6,000			
Professional Development	\$ 8,000			
Total Professional Expenses	\$ 40,000	\$ 16,594	\$ 24,000	-40.0%

Illinois Conference UCC

2026 Budget

12/31/25

2025 Budget (Est) 2026 Budget % Change

Communication

Digital Tools	\$ 22,000	\$ 4,500	\$ 5,000	-77.3%
Telecom	\$ 7,900	\$ 20,000	\$ 12,000	51.9%
Website Expense	\$ 500	\$ -	\$ 500	0.0%
Mailing Expenses	\$ 1,000	\$ 1,200	\$ 1,200	20.0%
Total Communication	\$ 31,400	\$ 25,700	\$ 18,700	-40.4%

Property

Rent	\$ 18,000	\$ 18,000	\$ 18,000	0.0%
Utilities	\$ 2,000	\$ 1,555	\$ 1,600	-20.0%
Total Property	\$ 20,000	\$ 19,555	\$ 19,600	-2.0%

Ministry Support

National Allocation of OCWM	\$ 180,000	\$ 135,000	\$ 165,000	-8.3%
Church & Ministry	\$ 5,000	\$ 3,000	\$ 2,500	-50.0%
Conference Council & Exec				
Comm	\$ 500	\$ -	\$ 400	-20.0%
Covenanted Partners	\$ 5,000		\$ 3,500	-30.0%
Council of Conf Ministers	\$ -	\$ 7,500	\$ 7,500	
Gift and Party Exp	\$ 500	\$ -	\$ -	-100.0%
Lilly Reimbursement (TPIRC)	\$ 110,405		\$ 125,000	13.2%
Less 2026 "Camp Forward"				
Payments to Camps			\$ 80,000	
Total Ministry Support	\$ 301,405	\$ 145,500	\$ 383,900	27.4%

Total Expenses **\$ 1,265,906**

Total Operating Income

(Deficit) **\$ 51,733** **\$ (240,361)** **\$ (4,524)**

Annual Conference Nominating Report: 2025

On November 2, 2024, during the Annual Celebration business meeting, Rev. Hank Fairman gave the report from the then “Governance Committee”. He announced that their task, after nearly four (4) years is completed and the information and suggestions will be handed over to what has been known as “Anchor”. Anchors was a task force to set definitions and format for the new Conference Governance. I will not go into the detail of the New Governance structure as both Rev. Jon Prain and Rev. Gilbert Martinez are most knowledgeable and would be a good resource for all questions.

Once the Anchor had the “committee” format ready, then that format was handed to the Conference Nominating Committee on August 9, 2025. Calling a nine-member Nominating Committee together took a bit of coordinating, but we all met via Zoom on August 24, 2025. Gilbert gave us a well-informed presentation of what the Governance structure is. (Thank you, Gilbert and Jon, for being a great resource for us during this time.)

Each member(s) was/were responsible for Nominating the Conference slots from their respective Association. As Hank Fairman stated to the Nominating Committee last Annual Meeting pertaining to the Nominating task for 2025: “this will be challenging, and your work will be cut out for you this first year.”

I want to commend the Nominating Committee members for their energy and dedication to pursue and fulfill this challenge. We did as best as able to invite individuals who have a passion and gift for specific committees and teams while adhering to the “Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, Inclusion and Justice Statement”.

I also would like to thank all those who said “yes” when asked to serve for the 2026 year. Attached is the 2026 slate. As this report was submitted on October 17, there are still openings for which the 2025 Nominating Committee will work with the 2026 Nominating Committee to complete before the end of this year.

Thank you to the Nominating Committee:

Gilbert Martinez and Gloria Cox	CMA
Ken Webster and Tim White	Western
Hank Fairman	Prairie
Paige Wolfanger and Robin Thomas	FVA
Tom Norwalk and Eric Quinney-Burnard	Eastern

Yours in Christ
Eric Quinney-Burnard

SLATE OF ILLINOIS CONFERENCE POSITIONS TO BE ELECTED AT THE 2025 ANNUAL CELEBRATION

All positions are to be nominated by the Conference Nominating Committee, with input and suggestions from the designated Associations if a position is to be representing an Association--and elected at the Conference Annual Celebration.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (All terms are for TWO Years)

The Board of Directors shall administer the affairs of the Conference between business meetings of the Conference and have such powers and duties as are usual and customary to a Board of Directors under the laws of the State of Illinois, unless restricted or prohibited by these Bylaws

President: Juanita Bradley (Not being elected in 2025. Term Expires 2026)

Vice-President: Emily Mitchell (Not being elected in 2025. Term Expires 2026)

Secretary: Rev. Jon Gilbert Martinez (CMA) (Term Expires 2027)

Treasurer: Scott Peterson (CMA) (Term Expires 2027)

FROM CHICAGO METROPOLITAN ASSOCIATION

Dr. Wilbert Watkins (Term Expires 2026)

Sue Harvey (Term Expires 2026)

Rev Kim Shelton (Term Expires 2027)

Debbie Kent (Term Expires 2027)

FROM EASTERN ASSOCIATION

Rev. Shawn Hilman (Term Expires 2026)

Rev. Doug Zimmerman (Term Expires 2027)

FROM FOX VALLEY ASSOCIATION

Rev. Paige Wolfanger (Term Expires 2026)

_____ (Term Expires 2027)

FROM PRAIRIE ASSOCIATION

_____ (Term Expires 2026)

_____ (Term Expires 2027)

FROM WESTERN ASSOCIATION

Rev. Mark Binder (Term Expires 2026)

Mary Newcomb (Term Expires 2027)

ALSO ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

- CHAIRPERSON OF THE CONFERENCE FINANCE COMMITTEE:

(Elected for a term of one (1) year by the members of the Finance Committee)

- CHAIRPERSON OF THE CONFERENCE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

(Elected for a term of one (1) year by the members of the Human Resources

Committee)

- CHAIRPERSON OF THE CONFERENCE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

(Elected for a term of one (1) year by the members of the Nominating Committee)

STANDING COMMITTEES

CONFERENCE FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Conference Finance Committee promotes and preserves the financial integrity of the Conference, overseeing committees and teams that manage and promote financial development and stewardship of the Conference's fiscal and real properties.

FROM CHICAGO METROPOLITAN ASSOCIATION

Harlette Smith

(Term Expires 2026)

Rae McCray

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM EASTERN ASSOCIATION

Rev. Rocky Sheneman

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM FOX VALLEY ASSOCIATION

Frank Zavaski

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM PRAIRIE ASSOCIATION

Rev. Dave Bateman

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM WESTERN ASSOCIATION

Ken Webster

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

CONFERENCE HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Conference Human Resources Team promotes fair and just labor practices for all persons employed by the Conference and oversees such committees and teams that assist in this administration. They shall recommend employment policies, job descriptions, evaluation guidelines, and salary structure.

FROM CHICAGO METROPOLITAN ASSOCIATION

Rev. Dr. Marilyn Pagán-Banks

(Term Expires 2026)

Rev. Dr. Regena Caldwell

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM EASTERN ASSOCIATION

Bev Obert

(Term Expires 2026)

Rev. Eric Quinney-Burnard

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM FOX VALLEY ASSOCIATION

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM PRAIRIE ASSOCIATION

(Term Expires 2026)

Rev. Muriel Morley Jahn

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM WESTERN ASSOCIATION

Shelby Eitenmiller

(Term Expires 2026)

Rev. Santana Poor

(Term Expires 2027)

CONFERENCE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Conference Nominating Committee gathers the members of the Conference to be considered for election by the Conference at its annual meeting, except for those whose nominations are provided by the Associations.

FROM CHICAGO METROPOLITAN ASSOCIATION

Rev. Gloria Cox

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM EASTERN ASSOCIATION

Rev. Terri Smith (tentative)

(Term Expires 2026)

Rev. Tom Norwalk

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM FOX VALLEY ASSOCIATION

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM PRAIRIE ASSOCIATION

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM WESTERN ASSOCIATION

Rev. Jan Johnson

(Term Expires 2026)

Rev. John Prain

(Term Expires 2027)

MINISTRY TEAMS

Each Ministry Team is composed of at least five members and a maximum of ten members elected from at least three associations by the Conference at the Annual Celebration. Each Ministry Team shall elect from its members a Chair and Vice Chair for a two-year term.

[EDITORIAL NOTE: IDEALLY, there would be two (2) members from each Association. Thus, this list of positions to be elected in 2025 is set up with the goal of two (2) persons from each Association.]

COMMUNITY AND VITALITY TEAM

(AKA “Program Innovation Events”)

The Community and Vitality Team discerns and drives the ministry that creates leadership development, Pastoral Excellence, and deep relationships in and among the local churches and Associations.

FROM CHICAGO METROPOLITAN ASSOCIATION

Joycelin Fowler

(Term Expires 2026)

Rev. Ashley Dowden

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM EASTERN ASSOCIATION

Patricia McCure

(Term Expires 2026)
(Term Expires 2027)

FROM FOX VALLEY ASSOCIATION

Rev. Selena Blackwell

(Term Expires 2026)
(Term Expires 2027)

FROM PRAIRIE ASSOCIATION

Rev. Karen Karczewski

(Term Expires 2026)
(Term Expires 2027)

FROM WESTERN ASSOCIATION

Rev. Martin Nussbaum(needs verification)
Rev. Mary Alice Sutter

(Term Expires 2026)
(Term Expires 2027)

JUSTICE AND WITNESS TEAM

The Justice and Witness Team discerns and drives the ministry of advocacy and action to bring the world into a more just, equitable, and inclusive image of God's realm.

FROM CHICAGO METROPOLITAN ASSOCIATION

Daryle Brown
Rev. Titus Bryant

(Term Expires 2026)
(Term Expires 2027)

FROM EASTERN ASSOCIATION

Amanda Kittel

(Term Expires 2026)
(Term Expires 2027)

FROM FOX VALLEY ASSOCIATION

Amy Allen

(Term Expires 2026)
(Term Expires 2027)

FROM PRAIRIE ASSOCIATION

Ali Groen
Rev. Eric Ogi

(Term Expires 2026)
(Term Expires 2027)

FROM WESTERN ASSOCIATION

Rev. Duane Lahti
Ursula Webster

(Term Expires 2026)
(Term Expires 2027)

CHURCH CONNECTIONS TEAM

(AKA "Local Church Team")

The Church Connections Team discerns and drives the ministry that supports the care and connections between the local churches, the pastoral leaders, and the structures that support the interconnected ministries of the Conference

FROM CHICAGO METROPOLITAN ASSOCIATION

Rev. Troy C Underwood

Doug Roberts

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM EASTERN ASSOCIATION

Dan Waterman

Rev. Carol Currier-Frighetto

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM FOX VALLEY ASSOCIATION

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM PRAIRIE ASSOCIATION

Rev. Alex Garncarz

Rev. Tyler Spellious

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM WESTERN ASSOCIATION

Rev. Becky Emerson

Rev. Lauren Pagett

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

WIDER ENGAGEMENT TEAM

The Wider Engagement Team discerns and drives the ministry of connections within the United Church of Christ and across our ecumenical partners.

FROM CHICAGO METROPOLITAN ASSOCIATION

Jeni Fabian

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM EASTERN ASSOCIATION

Liliana Terlep (tentative-18 years old)

Nancy Wheeler

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM FOX VALLEY ASSOCIATION

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM PRAIRIE ASSOCIATION

John Omerod

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

FROM WESTERN ASSOCIATION

Rev. Tyler Yost

Rev. Carol Hoke

(Term Expires 2026)

(Term Expires 2027)

OUTDOOR MINISTRY REPORT 2024-26

The Outdoor Ministry has been responsible for the organization of the camps, for supporting the Camp Directors and for overseeing the finances. Both camps have had busy years with an even larger variety of ages and groups using the facilities.

At Pilgrim Park, the solar panels have been installed, are up and running which will reduce costs for years. At Tower Hill, a cell tower was recommended to add needed wireless communication ability. We are looking forward to its completion this year.

The camps continue to update and modernize the camp facilities. We thank all of you who have donated your prayers, time, and talents for these projects and for your dedication. Our visitors can feel the love, beauty and the presence of God.

Church's, women and men's groups, summer camps as well as sewing groups, bands, etc. all love being at these camps. Beginning in November, the Fall Fundraising Campaign will start. On behalf of all the children and adults who find camps a special place with God, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for considering a contribution.

Jean Wildermuth
Chair

IL CONFERENCE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE ANNUAL CELEBRATION REPORT

10.15.2025

Chair Report

Personnel was charged with focusing on completing our Personnel Policies and Employee Handbook that was years overdue. We are happy to report that on April 5, 2025 the Employee Handbook was voted and passed by the Illinois Conference Council and is now enacted. Personnel is also responsible for the evaluation of our ICM and on Sept. 5 the Personnel Chair along with our Conference Council President and Vice President successfully completed this evaluation with Rev. Dr. Terrill Murff. New focus areas have been identified for the next evaluation cycle (no later than Feb. 2026 for months June - December 2025), and can be discussed upon request.

The Personnel Committee has only had 9 members on the committee, and is suppose to have 16 members according to the current bylaws. I am not sure how the new governance model impacts this committee but nominating for Personnel needs attention. Additionally, a concern that I have as the outgoing Chair of Personnel, from anyone who serves on this committee or in a Conference volunteer role, is conflict resolution skills between local church pastors/members and Conference personnel. In my role, I have fielded too many complaints about Conference personnel responsiveness to local church concerns. The assumption that I have heard time and time again, is that the Conference personnel are “not working” because it is taking them “too long” to respond to local church matters, and therefore folks have threatened to pull OCWM dollars away from the Conference.

This is a concern of mine given that I work closely with our ICM, MLT and have listened to the concerns of our Conference staff throughout my time as Personnel Chair. I have seen and experienced how hardworking our Conference personnel work and I have been pained to experience local church pastors and members as well as people who volunteer on Conference Council say these things about our employees. I think as the Conference moves forward we MUST work at validating the experience of folks who have concerns while reassuring them that our staff are working and just like many of our local churches... they are stretched thin, under-resourced and all too often experience having money be leveraged which only creates uncertainty and frustration.

As outgoing Chair, I implore us to understand the repercussions of these myths that our Conference staff are not working because if this continues... My fear is that we are creating the building blocks to not have a Conference.

Lastly, this is my last report as Personnel Chair. It has been a pleasure and a joy to work alongside you all for the common good of our churches and our Conference personnel. You all bless me with your faithfulness and commitment to this Holy work. Please continue to go forth in the spirit of ubuntu.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Ramona N. Gant

Chair of IL Conference Personnel Committee

2025 Annual Celebration

UCC Illinois Conference Stewardship Committee

First, a special thank you to all those promoting the stewardship of God's great gifts. Special thank you to the IL Conference churches giving to Our Church's Wider Mission. As the financial life blood of the IL Conference, OCWM is both vital and volatile—as is the ministry of the Conference's staff and approx. 190 churches.

The IL Conference Stewardship Committee serves on behalf of the member churches to uphold the commitment as God's stewards. The committee offers support through committee member visitation and consultation and the availability of programs for easy implementation in local churches. These programs help churches grow faithful stewards. In 2025, Stewardship Committee representatives attended all five (5) Association Fall Meetings promoting four (4) annual stewardship programs and encouraging churches to raise stewardship awareness.

Rising expenses for households today place a strain on their charitable giving. The Stewardship Committee is aware and strives to address these trends. Financial strain on the household impacts churches making tough decisions about budgeting ministry. Consequently, the Conference staff must face such cutbacks. Ultimately, OCWM is affected by lowered giving amounts.

It is more important than ever for local churches to not only support but also connect with the Stewardship Committee to work closely on the economic and demographic challenges affecting ministry. Faithfulness and commitment to serving our Lord is paramount; yet, to make a difference in our communities takes money and *humanpower*.

Gratitude is extended to the Stewardship Committee members and especially to Kay Quinney-Burnard. Kay resigned her service after five (5) years of dedication through innovating, supporting, and serving as Co-chair. One of her special gifts was presenting and preaching with passion and clarity! God's blessings on Kay as she pursues new directions of ministry and service.

Current members of the Stewardship Committee and their representation:

Larry McCure – Chair - ljm17746@gmail.com – Eastern Association

Rev. Harlette Washington - harlettesmithw@gmail.com – Chicago Metropolitan Association

Deborah Thrash - damcneil62@gmail.com - Chicago Metropolitan Association

Rev. Dave Bateman - dbatemanlbrn@aol.com – Prairie Association

Ken Webster - kenwebster2681@gmail.com – Western Association

Bob Meinershagen - bsinc70@comcast.net – Western Association

Stewardship Programs available on the IL Conference website under *Stewardship*:

Giving Tree Stewardship Program

Hospitality Stewardship Program

Tree-Mendous Faith Stewardship Program

Planting Seeds of Renewal Stewardship Program

Respectfully Submitted

Lawrence McCure, Chair

Report to the Illinois Conference Council

From: Wilbert O. Watkins, Tuthill Commission

Date: October 2025

Dear Members of the Conference Council,

I wanted to provide a brief update following the concerns noted in my August report regarding the distribution of Tuthill funds.

- **September 29, 2025** – Received an email from *Jennifer Shook* confirming that the Global Ministries check was received.
- **October 2, 2025** – Received a gracious thank-you letter from *Rev. Dr. LaMarco Cable* (President/CEO, Disciples Overseas Ministries/Global Ministries) acknowledging the Tuthill gift of **\$37,096.05**.
- **October 2, 2025** – Received an email from *Rev. Paula Bidle* confirming that the SIPAZ check was received from the Tuthill Commission and Illinois Conference.
- **October 3, 2025** – Received a gracious thank-you letter from *Rev. Bidle* (Treasurer, Servicio Internacional para la Paz) for the Tuthill gift of **\$9,032**.

In the past, Tuthill grantees have been asked to submit a 3–4 page progress report approximately nine months after funds were awarded. Given that these funds were distributed four months later than planned (September 29–October 2 rather than May 30, 2025), the Commission agrees that a February 2026 report is not appropriate in this case.

Recipients are, of course, welcome to reach out at any time with updates or questions.

A special work of thanks to Scott Peterson's communication and persistence over the last few weeks to ensure the Tuthill grant monies were finally distributed for 2025.

Peace and blessings,

Wilbert O. Watkins, Ph.D.

Tuthill Commission, Chair



Eastern Association Council

2025 Annual Report

Greetings Members of the Illinois Conference,

2025 has been a year of reflection and eagerness for the Eastern Association. Our governing council has maintained a steady cadence of meetings and discussion. We remain together to support each other and stay connected, when so much in the world is keeping us apart.

In September, we had our annual Fall Worship Celebration and Business Meeting at Plainfield Congregational. In our worship space, Rev. John Dorhauer challenged us to think about ‘what are we to say about these things (happening to and in the world around us)’ (*ref. Romans 8:31-39*). It was inspiring, and helped us reflect on who we are and why speaking up matters. At the business portion of that day’s meeting, we were able to confirm the Rosters for the Council and Committee on Ministry for the coming year, as noted here:

NAME	ROLE	CURRENT TERM	TERM ENDS
Shawn Hillman	Moderator	1 of 1	2026
Doug Zimmerman	Vice-Moderator	1 of 1	2026
Dan Waterman	Past Moderator	1 of 1	2026
Tom Norwalk	Secretary	1 of 2	2026
Rocky Sheneman	Member	2 of 2	2026
Patricia Morton	Member	2 of 2	2027
Alice Huebner	Member	2 of 2	2028
Lynette DuBord	Member	2 of 2	2028
Terri Smith	Member	1 of 2	2028
Carol Currier-Frighetto	Member	1 of 2	2028
Barbara Lohrbach	Member	1 of 2	2028
Ericka Crist	Member	1 of 2	2028

In the coming year, the EA’s focus will be CONNECTIONS. We are planning on visits with our member congregations to have meaningful discussions on ‘how we’re all doing’ as the church. By connecting more - with intent - we hope to inspire and learn from one another by hearing all the things that are going right with our churches, as well as all the opportunities we can learn from. The quantity of physical churches in our group, no matter the number, will not interfere with the quality of our mission and purpose.



Eastern Association Council

2025 Annual Report

We share – and ask for – prayers of love and support in our ministries for the coming year.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Hillman

Plainfield Congregational Church

Moderator – Eastern Association Council

Eastern Association Mission Statement

“We are called to love and serve God,
to be inspired by the Holy Spirit,
and to celebrate and embody the
healing, reconciling ministry of Christ!”

Prairie Association, Illinois Conference UCC

2025 Annual Report

Friends in Christ:

The Prairie Association has been continuing its re-covenanting movement throughout 2024-2025. We continue to see major changes in our congregations, both in new life and in celebration of ministries ending. We have taken the challenges of being a gathering of small town and rural churches seriously, supporting each other in stride. We have begun to rediscover the gifts of the Spirit that flow through our Association, like the autumn winds across the fields in which our congregations were planted, are growing, and (with God's blessings) will abound in future harvest.

To say that 2024-2025 in the Prairie Association continues to change would be an understatement. We continue to see the restructuring and ending in the ministry of long-tenured pastors. We mark the beginnings and end of searches for new ministry leadership. We honor that other searches were set aside, with the local churches focusing on discerning God's still-speaking revelation for their mission and ministry.

At our latest count, the Prairie Association is a covenant community of 34 congregations across the geography of our twelve counties. Our Committee on Ministry (with thanks to Rev. Jennifer Amy Dressler and Rev. Muriel Jahn), reports these statistics:

- Pastoral Leadership
 - Rev. Randy Nicholas (PCUSA) began serving the Crooked River Ministry partnership (First Congregational Church UCC-Pecatonica and First Congregational Church UCC-Rockton)
 - Rev. Martha Langford began serving Second First Church-Rockford
 - Rev. Rachel Kirk completed her time serving St. John UCC-Freeport
 - Rev. Ted Englesdorfer completed his time serving Union Congregational UCC-Somonauk
 - Rev. Laurie Allen completed her time serving Mayfield Congregational UCC-Sycamore
 - Rev. Ron O'Neil retired from his ministry with Granville UCC
- Authorizations in Ministry

Jack Briggs, First Congregational UCC-Lee Center; Jim Brow, First United UCC-Sheffield; Beth Carson, St. John's UCC-Belvidere; Betty Delgado, Trinity UCC-LaSalle; Becky Erbe, Second/First Church-Rockford; Alex Garnearz, Zion UCC-Peru; Jon Graham, First Congregational UCC-Spring Valley; Karen Karczewski, First Congregational UCC-Cherry/First Congregational UCC-DePue; John Omerod, English Congregational UCC- Big Rock; and Mike Slutz, UCC-Hollowayville continue their authorization in Lay Ministry.

Brian Eide (St. Paul's UCC-Hinckley) and Dale Sandell (Ebenezer/Salem UCC-Pearl City) were granted authorized as Lay Ministers.

Rev. Laurie Allen authorization in Lay Ministry, and Ordained to ministry, now serving outside of the association.
- Church Affiliation

Shabbona UCC has disaffiliated with the UCC.

Like our Illinois Conference, the need for renewal in our governance and ministry is the driver for our current and future years. With smaller congregations and fewer churches in our Association, our structure has many unfilled seats required, both for our Association and for those relating to the Illinois Conference.

At this spring's Association Meeting, we gathered again with the Western Association for a day of inspiration. This year, we were led by Rev. David Fraccaro, who inspired us with his work at *Lumonos*, a nonprofit dedicated to fostering "meaningful conversations and relationships that create purpose in life, belonging in community, and wellbeing in the workplace." It was an inspiring moment, showing us again that God's still-speaking Word is calling us into our future ministry together.

At this fall's Association Meeting, we gathered with a quorum of members in a virtual meeting on Zoom. This allowed us to conduct business for the first time in three (3) years. take the first steps in our re-covenanting, with a modification to our quorum rule. Also, we affirmed the resolution titled "Re-Covenanting as the Prairie Association," bringing us into an intentional dialogue on what we need as a covenant community to meet the current needs of the Association's governance and ministry.

Also, we hear from many of our local congregations that they are reviewing their local governance and evaluating their ministry models. This is the season in which we live and serve. And I, for one, believe it will be a productive and fruitful one in discerning God's call to the churches of the Prairie Association.

I also trust that we will listen closely to the Spirit's flame-filled inspiration on how to be more agile, while not suffering from pragmatism. Because, as Fred Pratt Green's hymn reminds us:

*The church of Christ, in ev'ry age
beset by change but Spirit-led,
must claim and test its heritage,
and keep on rising from the dead.*

May we be the change that we are needed to be, and keep listening to our God's Still-speaking voice,

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Hank Fairman,
on behalf of the Delegates of the Prairie Association

WESTERN ASSOCIATION REPORT TO THE 2025 ILLINOIS CONFERENCE ANNUAL CELEBRATION

The Western Association this year met at Pilgrim Park in a joint Spring Association meeting with the Prairie Association. This Fall the business meeting was at First Federated in Peoria. The Moderator for a second year visited all the churches in the Association with physical locations. This effort has been to try to get each local church to feel seen and know we as an Association know where they are and care. The Association Council continues to meet on Zoom monthly.

The Association has been blessed with the gift of the Leonharts which enables us to make grants each year to help churches with innovations and new mission outreach. This year the grants that were made included the following:

- ❖ St Peter's in Kewanee: \$600 to fund the creation of eight (8) Church World Service buckets for emergency relief;
- ❖ St Paul in Fowler: \$1500 for St Paul Snack Shack to be available at their playground for church and community children. The plan is for Sunday School children to replenish it as needed;
- ❖ Church of Peace in Rock Island: \$4000 to support their food pantry; And
- ❖ First Congregational in Springfield: \$10,000 to expand their digital presence to livestream and Zoom.

There are of course challenges in every year. Next year we will have to make some minor adjustments in the Western Association Constitution and By-Laws to make them more in line with the IL Conference Structure which goes into effect with the 2025 Fall Annual Celebration. There also is a continuing challenge of communication over financial issues with the Conference. In the last two (2) years (depending on how one counts) there have been 3-5 checks in the approximate magnitude of \$10,000 that have either been issued to or sent to the wrong church from the Leonhart Grants; an offering has yet, as of this writing, to be deposited into Western's account from our Fall 2024 meeting; for the second year there is some confusion over Conference receiving and paying Western's share of the Pilgrim Park Meeting (we have seen a withdrawal from our fund, but no income from what was collected and sent to the Conference). It is our hope that with the new structure such issues will lessen or cease to exist.

This report is one of my last official acts as the Moderator of Western Association (though with our structure I will remain as Vice-Moderator for the next year). I wish to thank the many people who work inside our Association and its churches for their assistance and patience in my two-year term --- and offer prayers for our incoming Moderator, Ursula Webster.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Mark C. Binder
Outgoing Moderator of the Western Association

Annual Meeting TPIRC Report 2025

Submitted by: Rev. Melody L. Seaton, Project Director

“The Thriving in Ministry grant was created to support pastors, so they can become better leaders in their congregations. If pastors are better leaders, this will equip their congregations to spread the gospel.”

-Chris Cobles, Vice President for Religion

Lilly Endowment

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### **Thriving Pastors in Revitalizing Congregations (TPIRC)**

Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ

#### **Pillars of TPIRC**

Leadership – Collegiality – Spirituality – Congeniality

#### **Components**

Generosity Officer

Micro-grants

Clergy Communities of Practice (CCOP) Group Meetings with other pastors once a month

Cohort Meetings (Combined gatherings with pastors and lay team) 2-3 times a year

Annual Education Summit

#### **Membership Report:**

- 25 churches involved in TPIRC
- 2 CCOP Facilitators

#### **Team Meetings:**

1/6, 1/22, 2/12 2/24, 3/4, 4/8, 4/29, 5/27, 6/17, 8/18, 8/29, 9/15, 10/9, 10/20

#### **Thriving in Ministry Lilly Endowment Gathering:**

March 24-27, 2025

## **Annual Meeting TPIRC Report 2025**

**Submitted by: Rev. Melody L. Seaton, Project Director**

### **Annual Planning Meeting:**

**7/31, 8/21, 9/4, 10/9, 10/23**

### **Cohort Meetings:**

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Meetings: 3/15**

**Presenter: Rev. Gregg Carlson**  
Senior Consultant, Director of Coaching & Contracted Services  
Convergence Networks  
**“Utilizing Sacred Spaces”**

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Meetings: 6/7**

**Presenters: Rev. Jeffrey Phillips**  
**“Lay Caregiving Ministry”**

This year has been a transition year. We moved from the original grant to the sustainability grant. We lost one (1) of our team members, Marz Rivera and gained two (2): Lindsey Svetlick (Coordinator) & Stephanie Moore (Generosity Officer). In this new grant, we removed the coaching component though we understood the benefit of it. Pastors weren't taking advantage of their expertise. Originally CCOP groups were going to be led by ACM's; however, with Rev. Carlson leaving and Rev. Murff's position only recently being filled, we continued with the two (2) facilitators: Rev. Dr. Kent Poindexter and Rev. Hank Fairman. The generosity officer position is new not only to the Conference but the Denomination. The past few months after Stephanie was hired have been spent connecting her with other Generosity Officers and helping her understand TPIRC and UCC. In addition, we have contracted a consultant to work with her from J & P Consulting.

We have also embarked on a combination meeting with the Conference. I shared with Rev. Carlson that I felt our Summit being in September followed by the Annual Meeting in October was asking too much of pastors and their lay teams. We also saw a decrease in attendance in the second year of our in-person Education Summit, and this was also expressed in surveys. Our initial plan was to move the Education Summit to Spring or Summer. I brought this to our new team, and it was

## **Annual Meeting TPIRC Report 2025**

**Submitted by: Rev. Melody L. Seaton, Project Director**

suggested that we work together with the Conference and only have one (1) meeting. We will assess how well this worked after it's over and determine if it will continue.

This was the first year of micro-grants. I felt that since we didn't have full participation in coaching and CCOP that we offer \$1,000 grants per church to pay for what best suits their needs. The grant application was streamlined and before another one (1) can be received, a summary needs to be completed.

Due to the many transitions and a new grant, the team will be taking some much-needed time next month to assess and if necessary, make some adjustments to the program.

**Associate Conference Minister for Pastoral Transitions:**  
**Annual Report 2025**

Rev. Shernell Edney

Hi, Everyone!!!! It's been a whole year, already?? That's, for lack of better words, WILD.

My report will cover the following topics: Personal Highlights, Experiences of Wholeness, What “Keeps Me Up At Night”, METAMORPHOSIS, Spirit Sightings, and My Prayer In This Moment.

**Personal Highlights:**

- The hiring of Rev. Dr. JJ Flag as the Relationship Manager to ILUCC Churches in Transition. He serves as support staff for the Lilly Grant while I serve as Director in addition to my ACM duties. He is **AAH-MMAAZZIINNNGGG!!!** (*Jan 2025*)
- Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference (*February 2025*)
- Presentation of Metamorphosis to IL Conf Council @ Pilgrim Park (*April 2025*)
- Brush Harbor: Clergy Retreat for Pastors of Color @ Tower Hill Camp (Co-founded by Rev. Michelle Hughes) (*October 2025*)
- Joining the Franklinton Center at Bricks Board of Trustees (*October 2025*)

**Experiences of Wholeness?**

My surprises in ministry never cease to amaze. I am always caught off guard at how our Conference staff job descriptions are all so detailed and yet at the same time nowhere near comprehensive of all we do and all we are called to be. I am at my most whole when I am at my most vulnerable with the Ministry Leadership Team. It is during the times of misunderstanding, confusion, and the seeking of answers that I am consistently met with grace, collaborative

thinking, and affirmation for who I am – just as I am. It is within the team, that even when we show up with “missing pieces”, we come together and all equal 100%.

### **What “keeps me up at night”?**

In terms of our churches: the vast urgency of “now”...correction, the vast urgency of “yesterday” is of constant concern. The anxiety is palpable as churches reach out to us to speak about their vibrant past, their unnamed current relativity, and the work necessary to script their own future.

My attempt at part of a “solution” (*...she said sarcastically. Knowing full well that for every solution there is, indeed, a problem waiting to be found...*) is METAMORPHOSIS!

Metamorphosis, while my brainchild, is a completely collaborative effort that could NOT be done alone. Should NOT be done alone. Will NOT be done alone. (*Did I mention how AH-MAZING Rev. JJ is, yet!?*)

### **What is METAMORPHOSIS?**

The program created for churches who are in “transition” (per the guidelines of the Lilly Grant for ILUCC) is defined as any church in the ILUCC that currently sits between the crossroads of the announcement of a Pastor leaving and the installation of a new Pastor.

Per the dictionary: **METAMORPHOSIS** - (n) - a change of physical form, structure, or substance especially by supernatural means; a striking alteration in appearance, character, or circumstances.

### **What is METAMORPHOSIS as it pertains to ILUCC Churches in transition?**

TL;DR: An innovative way at approaching Search & Call. Taking local churches beyond just filling out a profile and praying for a Pastor. Instead, inviting them to take a deeper look within and find out how God is still speaking to them in this very moment.

Longer Response: In our journey through life, we find ourselves constantly **remembering** the moments that have shaped us; each memory acts as a thread woven into the fabric of our

existence. As we reflect, it becomes essential to engage in **reassessing** our past choices and experiences, ensuring that we learn from our successes and failures alike. Ultimately, this leads us to a powerful transformation: **reimagining** the future with renewed vision and purpose, allowing us to dream bigger and pursue new possibilities with unyielding passion.

That being said, through Metamorphosis, the Pastoral Transitions team will be inviting our churches in transition to take holy risks and discover innovative pathways to commune with the Divine in new and profound ways.

Wanna know more?? Stop by our table at Annual Celebration, send an email to us at [PastoralTransitions@ilucc.org](mailto:PastoralTransitions@ilucc.org), or check your inboxes for the Faithful Fridays newsletter starting at the first of the new year for more information!

### **Spirit Sightings?**

I see Spirit every day! I most recently saw it when I was not only approved for medical leave to have a major surgery but repeatedly told to stop working when I would log on to meetings and respond to emails prior to my medical release date. I have seen and continue to see it when I encounter smiling faces on ZOOM that join me for 3-hour (minimum) meetings weekly. I feel it when I am having thoughtful dialog with local church leaders on the unseen possibilities of tomorrow. I feel it when I am stopped short of making an apology for doing the best I can – but rather told that I am enough and reminded that within covenant grace freely abounds. I encounter it when I am able to witness all of the Conference staff names that there are not enough hours in the day but still be pushed to care for themselves because who they are (not just what they do) really and truly matters. I cannot explain enough how only Spirit is responsible for the meeting and infusing of energies dedicated to seeing the Church continue to evolve and shine its brightest reflecting God's glory. On days when nothing else makes sense – it is always the Spirit that keeps us going.

### **What Is My Prayer in This Moment?**

My prayer is that we, as the ILUCC, and as people who are responsible for the care of one

another in this world – will work harder to learn and routinely speak each other’s language. To dwell in the discomfort longer than we may desire knowing that God will continue to cover and surround us through the pruning and shearing. I pray that the hope I’ve witnessed in the fierce determination of people to not die in the many ways that death is possible – endlessly reverberates and penetrates the hearts and minds of those who believe that the best has still not been witnessed. I pray for a collective faith that allows room for personal moments of doubt – knowing that doubt is necessary in order to truly believe. Also, for a shapeshifting faith that remains strong enough to weather the daily storms in which it finds itself resulting in a more powerful presence of peace and security. My prayer is for covenant to reach beyond paper and historically approved words – and to become tangible through deliberate acts of relationship and intimacy development. Essentially, to affirm the divinity of humanity in one another by seeing God’s reflection and proclaiming outwardly that, “It. Is. Good.” Amen.

## **Associate Conference Minister's Report**

### **Oct. 2025 From the desk of Rev. Michelle Hughes**

#### Current Projects:

- Scheduling meetings with each CMA Cluster
- Creating a comparative chart Interim Trainings and Resource list
- Updating church lists

#### Administrative:

- Weekly MLT Meeting
- Aug 18-19 / Oct. 28-29 MLT Retreat
- Oct -MESA Fitness Consultations
- Monthly CoM meeting
- FVA & CMA Council Meetings
- CMA Fall Meeting
- Oct 11 -Fox Vally Fall Meeting

#### Church Engagement:

- Aug. 3 – Hinsdale UCC (Synod Report)
- Aug. 17 – St. John's, Lyons service of Release (Kim Vasco Whisler)
- Sept. 28 – Church of Good Shepherd, Chicago 100th Anniversary
- Sept. 28 – Installation – Winnetka Community Church
- Oct. 12 – Preaching Engagement –Wellington UCC, Chicago Oct. 19 – Preaching Engagement – Eden UCC, Chicago

#### Pastoral Support:

- \*due to low participation, Pastors CCOP meetings for August were canceled.
- Meetings resumed Sept. 12, 2025, meeting every 2nd and 4th Friday
- Monthly Clergy & MID CCOP
- Oct. 18 – AAWIM (African American Women in Ministry/Chicago Circle

**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