



A Brief Profile of The Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ

The Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ was established in 1964 as the result of the consolidation of the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Conference of Illinois.

The Illinois Conference is a United Church of Christ Covenant Community Promoting Congregational Health and Vitality and Pursuing God's Peace and Justice.

Our Illinois Conference is made up of 253 churches, approximately 650 clergy and 70,839 members. It is a covenant community with racial/ethnic diversity, urban/suburban/rural distinctions. It is a diverse, inclusive open and affirming, welcoming of all faith community seeking to be evermore faithful to our Still Speaking God.

Our Conference has two camping facilities: Tower Hill Camp and Retreat Center in Sawyer, MI, and the Pilgrim Park Camp and Retreat Center in Princeton, IL. All are invited to journey "from the ordinary into the Sacred" experiences through our outdoor ministry programs.

There are strong ecumenical ministry partnerships such as: the Angola Project, Illinois Maya Ministries, the Immigration Task Force and other related partnerships.

The Illinois Conference is recognized for its commitment to and engagement in new and renewed church development, for having and establishing congregations that are welcoming of all peoples and for living the values of inclusiveness and diversity that are part of our UCC commitment.

Our Illinois Conference partners and provides financial support and other types of support to approximately two dozen mission partners that provide community service such as feeding programs, emergency shelters, grass-roots organizing and others.

Affiliated institutions within our Conference boundaries include: Advocate Health Care, Elmhurst College, Chicago Theological Seminary, Community Renewal Society, CONSECRA Housing Network, Council on Health and Human Services of the United Church of Christ, UCAN and others.

The Illinois Conference Ministry Leadership Team

The Illinois Conference Ministry Leadership Team is made up of our Conference Minister, four Associate Conference Ministers, the Associate Conference Minister for Stewardship and Church Vitality, Conference Controller, and two invitees: Chair of Outdoor Ministries and a Local Church Pastor. The team helps provide clarity in proclaiming the theology of the United Church of Christ, guiding the mission and vision of our Conference along with Conference Council and working as a team in the linking, coordinating and communicating of our ministry.

Other Conference Staff

The Illinois Conference staff includes the two Camp Site Managers (and their staff), three full-time administrative assistants (two in Westchester and one in CMA), three part-time

administrative assistants (search and call coordinator, web-site manager/bookkeeper and E-News Editor). Our Conference has offices in Westchester (18 miles west of Chicago's Loop), Peoria, DeKalb and Chicago.

Chicago Metropolitan Association Description

The Chicago Metropolitan Association is a rainbow of persons, communities and cultures: urban and suburban congregations, congregations that are large and small with members that range from those who are wealthy to those who are economically challenged. The theological, historical, ethnic and sexual-orientation diversity of the United Church of Christ is well represented here. The Chicago Metropolitan Association has many interest groups: Pacific Islander/Asian American Ministries, Ministers for Racial, Social and Economic Justice, United Black Christians, Hispanic Caucus, UCC Coalition for Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgendered Concerns and the Association of Trained Intentional Interim Ministries. There is a strong history of ecumenical and interfaith activities in the Association, as well as strong justice-oriented alliances.

The Chicago Metropolitan Association is comprised of 98 churches, 2 new church starts and 2 churches seeking affiliation with the UCC. We currently have over 375 clergy with standing within the Association. There are currently nearly 60 persons within the Discernment/Formation process toward Authorized Ministry. In addition, we recently updated our Covenantal Expectation between the Association, its churches and members. The Chicago Metropolitan Association is served by both Associate Conference Minister Rev. Dr. Vertie Powers since 2012 and Acting Associate Conference Minister, the Rev. Dr. James Olson, since 2016. The Association Administrative staff person is the Rev. Wayne McPherson.

Eastern Association Description

The Eastern Association of the Illinois Conference is blessed with the ministries of its 38 churches in the geographical area south of Rte. 80 and east of Rte. 39. They vary in size with the most southern churches being in Champaign and Decatur. Our congregations build on a variety of perspectives, history and vision as they share ministry in rural agricultural communities, small town and mid-sized city congregations, as well as our two university settings. We seek to be an Association of faithful pastors and lay members who work to strengthen the vision and ministry of our local churches, to support opportunities for service in the wider church and to empower leadership development so that we may be and become more fully the Church of Jesus Christ.

The Association is served and led by members of the Association Council and Committee on Ministry who are partners promoting congregational health and vitality and in providing resources for strengthening church leadership. Associate Conference Minister, the Rev. Tom Norwalk, has served the Eastern Association since 2001, providing assistance to local congregations as they search for pastoral leadership, offering support and guidance for pastors and congregational leaders, gathering with congregations and leaders in time of celebration and working to build relationships that fulfill God's call to new possibilities.

Fox Valley Association Description

The Fox Valley Association was formed in 1992 from churches in the former Northern Association and the Chicago Metropolitan Association, a geographical area of collar counties to the north and west of Chicago. We are in an area that is quickly losing its rural

atmosphere, an area that includes the fastest-growing county in the state, McHenry County. An influx of new homes and communities means a wonderful potential for growth in our churches.

The Fox Valley Association is comprised of 43 churches. Our Design for Ministry (Bylaws) calls for two distinct and equal committees to improve caring for, nurturing, resourcing, walking with and challenging both our ministers and our churches: the Committee on Ministry and the Committee on the Church. Currently, we have 15 persons within the process of formation/discernment of Authorized Ministry. We have approximately 100 clergy. The Design also provides for the opportunity for new Association-wide issues or projects to be lifted up and become ministries of, and supported by, the Association for as long as the issue or ministry is relevant. The Rev. Dr. James Olson recently became the Acting Associate Conference Minister for the Fox Valley Association

Our Justice and Witness Committee is engaging us in learning how we might live the resolutions from General Synod 30, currently focusing on mass incarceration, gun violence, and sustainable living. Our vision is to be in “covenant relationship working together toward spiritually healthy, vital congregations; enlisting and nurturing persons for and in authorized ministries; partnering with Conference and national ministries, UCC-related institutions and ecumenical and inter-faith bodies; witnessing and acting locally and globally for justice and peace; and organizing our life together for the greatest faithfulness and effectiveness.”

Prairie Association Description

The Prairie Association gets its name from the windswept prairie grasses and the vast fields of corn and soybeans that stretch as far as the eye can see; but the Prairie Association also encompasses local churches in urban settings, in college and university towns and manufacturing plants. We enjoy our proximity to Pilgrim Park Camp, near Princeton, as well as the diversity of our local church settings and ministries. The 38 churches in the geographical area west of Rte. 39 and north of Rte. 80 reflect the theological diversity of the United Church of Christ and, like our brothers and sisters throughout our denomination, are seeking God’s guidance to serve God’s people faithfully in our varied settings.

Our churches are served faithfully by licensed and ordained ministers, and we are blessed with the energy and vigor of several emerging leaders preparing for licensed ministry. The Ministry Team for Authorized Ministers (MTAM) meets monthly to provide oversight for our authorized pastors as well as guidance, support and nurture for those answering God’s call to serve. The Association is “governed” by the Ministry Team for Association Administration, a core group of four elected leaders providing vision, administrative follow-through, and leadership for the Spring and Fall meetings of the Association. The Rev. Kathy Lawes has served the Prairie Association as Associate Conference Minister since 2006.

Western Association Description

The Western Association located in central west Illinois reflects the diversity of theology and traditions, in the 36 congregations of this Association; Open and Affirming churches, Just Peace congregations and churches whose discernment of faith is expressed more conservatively. The most southern church in the Western Association is in Quincy and the most north-western church is in Rock Island. Congregations with strong roots in the Evangelical and Reformed traditions are covenanted partners in ministry with those of Congregational Christian backgrounds, and joined by churches that have been birthed since

the 1957 founding of the United Church of Christ.

Bound together by a love for Jesus Christ and a commitment to serving God's people, our active and retired clergy support one another through regular cluster meetings. The Association is governed by the Association Council, with elected lay and clergy representatives from the five clusters. Charged with the administrative oversight of the Association committees, the Council also engages in discernment and visioning of the Association's ministries and resources, and works to facilitate communication between the Illinois Conference Council and the churches of Western Association. Committees that report regularly to the Council are the Planning Committee, the Leonhart Committee, the Nominating Committee and the Church and Ministry Committee.

The Rev. Tom Norwalk and the Rev. Kathy Lawes have served as Associate Conference Ministers for the Western Association since 2010. The Conference and Associations are blessed with the consistent presence of Ms. Connie Owens, who serves as coordinator of clergy profiles for the pastoral search and call process. Ms. Owens has served as the Administrative Assistant for the Western Association since 1988 and Illinois Conference Placement Coordinator since 2010.

The Outdoor Ministries

Our Illinois Conference has two camps. The Tower Hill Camp is located in Sawyer, Michigan and Pilgrim Park Camp in Princeton, Illinois. Tower Hill is known for the Lake Michigan shores and beach, the wonderful pines and sand. The upper conference center which connects the dining room, chapel and lodging are Pilgrim Park's main attractions along with the pool and river canoeing. The camps are run under the direction of two very capable Site Managers.

ILLINOIS CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST POSITION DESCRIPTION

TITLE: Acting Associate Conference Minister for Stewardship and Church Vitality

NOTE: What follows is not intended to be a complete listing but a general outline of areas of responsibility for this position.

RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Serve Jesus Christ and the Church by facilitating the implementation of the Illinois Conference Mission Statement in ministries of Stewardship, Evangelism, New and Renewed Church Development.
2. Provide staff leadership and coordination of Our Church's Wider Mission and the Stewardship Ministries of the Illinois Conference.
 - a. Recruit, train and supervise volunteer Stewardship Consultants for Conference- wide deployment.
 - b. Develop and distribute resource materials.
 - c. Provide consultations with local churches regarding Stewardship.

- d. Facilitate conversations on Planned Giving within the Illinois Conference.
 - e. Coordinate activities in support of Our Church's Wider Mission.
2. Provide staff leadership and coordination for Local Evangelism, Envisioning and Planting (LEEAP).
 - a. Facilitate Evangelism gatherings for clergy and lay leaders within the Illinois Conference.
 - b. Facilitate the evaluation of funding applications for revitalization efforts of existing congregations and the development of new church starts.
 - c. Collaborate with assigned Associate Conference Ministers to assist local churches facing legacy decisions.
 - d. Partner with the United Church of Christ National Office for Local Church Ministries in developing and supporting new church start projects in the Illinois Conference.
4. Represent the Illinois Conference at national events and in others settings designed to address Evangelism and Church Development.
5. Participate in collaborative efforts with the Ministry Leadership Team (MLT) and members of the support staff.
6. Other duties as assigned by the Conference Minister.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

All staff of the Illinois Conference United Church of Christ are covered by the Illinois Conference Employee Handbook (personnel policies). The Interim Associate Conference Minister shall be accountable to the Conference Council and the Personnel Committee through the Conference Minister.

QUALIFICATIONS:

The Acting Associate Conference Minister shall be an ordained minister, with standing in an Association of the United Church of Christ.

Upon assumption of office, the Acting Associate Conference Minister shall become a member of a congregation which has standing in an Association of the Illinois Conference.