

An Introduction to Annual Reports

Week after week "Mission Bite" reports on a vital ministry or mission of the Minnesota Conference - through programmatic or staff endeavors, through our many ministry and mission partners, and through our local churches. The Conference Bylaws say "to assist in fulfilling the strategic mission priorities of the Conference, specific programmatic functions of the Conference are carried out through **Program Ministry Teams and/or Task Forces.**" Through the first week in June, each "Mission Bite" will come from one of the Program Ministry Teams or Task Forces of the Conference. This will provide them an opportunity to tell you of the ministry and mission in which they have been engaged. These "Mission Bite" entries will serve as this year's "annual report" from each team, a public way to be accountable. More than seventy-five individuals from not quite that many local churches serve on nine Program Ministry Teams or Task Forces that address these Conference mission priorities:

- **Prophetic Witness:** Global Partnerships; Justice and Witness; Immigration; Open and Affirming/Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (ONA/LGBT); Emmaus Anti-Racism Leadership;
- **Nurturing Gifts and Leadership Abilities:** Professional Development of Authorized Ministers Team; Women's Ministries;
- **Healthy, Vital Congregations:** Evangelism Team - transitioning into a Vitality Team;
- **Christian Formation and Discipleship:** Faith Formation for Children and Youth.

These "Mission Bite" reports will be archived on the website both with past editions of COMMAntary and with Annual Meeting materials.

Mission Bite: from across the Minnesota Conference



2011 Open and Affirming Team Report **Open & Affirming Movement Marks 25th Anniversary**

The year 2010 marked the 25th anniversary of the United Church of Christ General Synod calling on all settings of the church to declare themselves "Open and Affirming." The UCC was the first mainline Protestant denomination to make a public welcome to those who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual, and we in the Minnesota Conference have been active partners in this ministry from the beginning. The tenth Open and Affirming congregation in the movement was First Congregational Church of MN, UCC in Minneapolis. In 1988, we adopted a non-discrimination policy which included sexual orientation. Spirit of the Lakes UCC was brought into the UCC in 1990 through our former Eastern Association, becoming the first predominately lesbian, gay, bisexual & transgender (LGBT) congregation within a mainline Protestant denomination. Minnesota has hosted two National Gatherings of the UCC Coalition for LGBT



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Concerns in 1992 and in 2003. When we hosted the 2003 General Synod in Minneapolis, that body affirmed the gifts and ministries of our transgender brothers and sisters in faith. We are one of 16 UCC conferences who have adopted an ONA statement. And, at last year's Annual Meeting this Conference called for marriage equality regardless of gender. The Minnesota Conference UCC has much to be proud of and to celebrate, but much more work is left to do. The mission of the ONA/LGBT Team is working with the Conference to live out its ONA covenant and to encourage member congregations to join with us in this mission of "Extravagant Welcome."

The ONA/LGBT Team set four objectives at the beginning of their 2010-11 work.

1. Increase the number of ONA congregations in the Conference
2. Increase engagement of existing ONA congregations in ministry to and on behalf of LGBT people
3. Increase education on issues faced specifically by our transgender brothers and sisters
4. Increase education on behalf of and visibility of our bisexual brothers and sisters

Most of this year has been an evaluation time for these objectives and they will inform and lead our work for the next year as well. We are making sure our records match with churches who have declared themselves ONA, asking our ONA churches what they are doing to live out their commitment to the LGBT community. We are looking at past and new ONA statements for a transgender welcome in their language, as well as making ourselves available for ONA education in general and specifically on bisexual and transgender issues.

We are fortunate to have two trained ONA consultants in Minnesota, Leslie Amundson and Marc Blakesley, who serve on the ONA/LGBT Team. They are in covenantal relationships with the Conference and the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns. Both Marc and Leslie were trained in the UCC national setting and have gifts and expertise to share with any congregation going through an ONA process or looking for new ways to live out their ONA commitment.

Since 1996, we have had an annual Minnesota Open and Affirming Celebration. This year the team is working with [First Congregational UCC](#) in Anoka to host this event on May 8th. More information about the celebration can be found later in this issue of COMMAntary. This is also the fourth year of the Minnesota Gathering, a time for ONA minded folk to gather in community and learn from each other before the Minnesota Conference Annual Meeting. The dates of the Minnesota Gathering are June 9-10 and [registration forms are available online](#). Rev. Vicki Wunsch will be using her skills from working in the ecumenical "Welcoming Church" movement to explore our theme: "Can We Talk?" Gifted musician Gigi Nauer will lead the gathering choir as well as community singing.



2010 ONA Gathering Participants



Minnesota Conference marches at the 2010 Twin Cities Pride Parade

This summer many of our churches will give witness to their welcome at the LGBT Pride events across the state. The third largest Pride celebration in the country is [Twin Cities Pride](#) which takes place in Minneapolis June 25-26. Many of our churches will be represented in the parade down Hennepin Avenue on Sunday. Bring your banner! Wear your church's t-shirt! Look for the UCC Coalition contingent and jump in. We will also have a booth in

Loring Park during the two day festival and will need volunteers to staff the booth. The registration fees for the parade and booth space have been paid by the MN Chapter - UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns.

These are days of celebration with 37 ONA churches in Minnesota, with six more engaging in some conversation. But what about the rest of the UCC churches in Minnesota? We celebrate the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell in the past year, but what about marriage equality? The front page news of bullying directed at LGBT youth, leading some to take their own lives is real and a place where our ONA ministry is needed. Is your church a safe place for those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender? Do they know they are safe? Do you have an ONA statement and, if so, how are you living out that statement? We celebrate, but we also evaluate and look for new ways to be witnesses to God's inclusive love for all in our world. Thank you for all you have done and will continue to do for our mission to be an Open and Affirming Conference.

Yours in service with and on behalf of the Minnesota Conference UCC,
2010-11 ONA/LGBT Team

Leslie Amundson, St. Anthony Park UCC, St. Paul
Marc Blakesley, Chair, Spirit of the Lakes UCC, Minneapolis
Martin Erickson III, Mayflower UCC, Minneapolis
Kathleen Remund, Minnehaha UCC, Minneapolis
Lawrence Richardson, Vice Chair, Parkway UCC, Minneapolis
Gretchen Roesler, Secretary, Spirit of the Lakes UCC, Minneapolis
Rex Wiederanders, First Congregational UCC, Zumbrota
Rick Wagner, Associate Conference Minister

Joys and Concerns

1. An Ecclesiastical Council for Doug Federhart will be held Tuesday, May 10 at 7:00pm at Minnehaha UCC/Spirit of the Lakes UCC (4001 38th Avenue S, Minneapolis). A light supper will be served at 6:00pm. To ensure a quorum for the council, please RSVP to the church at 612-729-7556 or office@spirit.org. Anyone who wishes to have supper before the Ecclesiastical Council is requested to so indicate with the RSVP.

2. Earlier this week we received notice of the death of Rev. Don Kelly. Rev. Kelly was born in 1932 and died at his home in Nowthen, MN on April 21 with his family at his side. A memorial service will be held at 11am, Saturday, April 30 at First Congregational UCC, Anoka.

He served a UCC church in Sauk Village, IL, but spent most of his career doing successful ministry outside the traditional church setting. Rev. Kelly was a founding member of Pilgrims UCC in Maple Grove and attended that church for many years before recently returning to First UCC, Anoka. He is survived by his spouse Dorothy Rae (Hiller) Kelly, two sons, a daughter and

eight grandchildren. Notes of sympathy can be sent to 19052 NW Wolfram St., Nowthen, MN 55303.

3. Oak Mound UCC in Moorhead, MN has had a significant amount of damage done to the basement of their building in the spring flooding season. Their basement sump pump failed, and that's what led to the 3 feet of water in the basement. This faithful church, which gives more than 10% of its operating budget to OCWM, does fundraising through pancake breakfasts and ice cream socials, and will be severely impacted by the flooding that has damaged their kitchen and appliances. Our thoughts and prayers are with the congregation as they move through this difficult time.

4. A note from Rev. David McMahill: "Many thanks for cards and words of encouragement that were so supportive during my recent surgery. Although the recovery has been a bit tougher than anticipated, the surgery itself was successful in freezing the small tumor."

Save the Dates!

SAVE THE DATES!

Cross+Training: Getting Fit for 21st Century Church Leadership
Fifth Annual Fall Leadership Event! **September 29-30, 2011** (1:30pm Thursday through 3:30pm Friday) at **Christ the King Retreat Center**, Buffalo, MN. Open to authorized ministers and lay leaders.

An open conversation with Rev. Geoffrey Black,
General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ
Friday afternoon, **November 18, 2011** at **United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities**. Open to UCC seminarians, authorized ministers, and lay members of local churches.

Details to follow. Mark your calendar now!

Seeking a few good folks

**SEEKING JUST A FEW (more) STRONG
UCC/MINNESOTA CONFERENCE "BACKERS"**
to cozy up to a 2-year position in one of the
following areas of our Conference life:

At our May 03 meeting, we will process these names along with others and will put finishing touches on the slate of 2013 nominees and appointees who will have 2-year terms. Delegates will be presented these names at the Conference Annual Meeting in June.

Nominating Work Group Secretary,
Rev. John Roschen

Pilgrim Point needs hospitality volunteers!

If you would like to spend some time up at beautiful Pilgrim Point this summer, read on...

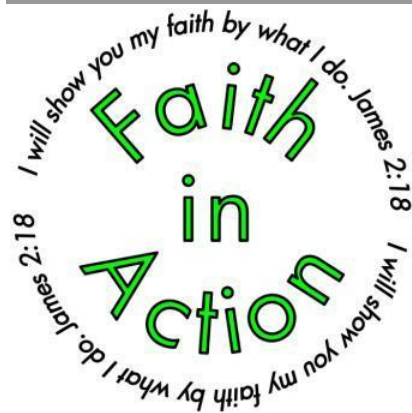
We are seeking volunteers to help with preparing meals and all-around hospitality during camps between July 8th and August 28th, as well as Labor Day weekend. In order for volunteers to have time to settle into the rhythm of the camp work, we need people who can stay a minimum of one week (from Sunday to Sunday).

As a hospitality volunteer, you will stay in the newly refurbished Gate House, enjoy the beautiful natural surroundings, and contribute to a very special experience for campers.

If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity to serve as a

volunteer at Pilgrim Point, please contact Robin Nelson at robinn@uccmn.org - looking forward to hearing from you!

2011 Annual Meeting



Don't forget to get yourself registered for the

2011 Annual Meeting!

A tentative schedule has been posted on the website - just click over to www.uccmn.org/annualmeeting to see the schedule, get registered, and read up on the resolutions and proposed bylaw changes. We'll see you there!

*****Only 10 days left to register at the early bird price!*****

Grants available from the Enduring Fund

Chapel Hills UCC in Edina is once again receiving grant applications for the Enduring Fund. An application [can be found by clicking here](#). Questions about the grants may be addressed to the church at chapelhillsucc@gmail.com, or by phone at 952-935-3025. Past grants have been awarded for a variety of activities from safe schools in Africa to lifts in church basements to webpage design.

Clergy Clusters in the coming week

Southeast Cluster: Tuesday, May 3, 11:30am
Peace UCC, Rochester

Northeast Cluster: Thursday, May 5, 11:30am
First Congregational UCC, Brainerd

Central Cluster: Thursday, May 5, 11:30am
Prairie Community Church, Lester Prairie

May Day Faith Action Vigil

May Day Faith Action Vigil
Ramsey County Detention Center
425 Grove St., St. Paul, MN
Sunday, May 1, 2011, 2:30-3:00pm

*Support Civil Immigrant Detainees
and their families of all nationalities
partnered this week by Mayflower UCC*

After the Faith Action Vigil join us for the
May Day March for Immigration Rights and Labor Rights
Starts at the St. Paul Cathedral, 4:00pm
marching to the Capitol

Have some tough insurance questions? Ask Cathy Green, Insurance Board CEO



We are excited to host Cathy Green, President and CEO of the Insurance Board on May 24th. She will share her perspective regarding the common church challenges.

Join us to hear some golden insurance tips and ask your toughest insurance questions.

What: The Insurance Board (IB) presents: **Spring-Time to review your church insurance policy.** (What is the IB you ask? The Insurance Board is a nonprofit corporation established by the participating

Conferences of the United Church of Christ.) www.insuranceboard.org

Who should attend: Ministers, Financial or Trustee Committee chairpersons.

When: Choose a time on Tuesday May 24th. The Insurance Board will conduct both meetings.

- 11:30am Lunch Meeting
- 7:00pm Coffee and Treats

Where: Falcon Heights UCC, 1795 Holton Street, St. Paul MN 55113

2011 ONA Gathering



Our church is considering becoming Open and Affirming (ONA) - what will that mean for our congregation's life and mission? My congregation has been ONA for years, but how can we live out a wider welcome? What does it mean to minister to a wider community in the spirit of our open and affirming commitments? These are some of the questions we will consider at the 2011 Minnesota Open and Affirming Celebration "Building Inclusion: Laying a Foundation for Welcome," held on **Sunday, May 8th, First Congregational UCC, 1923 3rd Ave S, Anoka.**

2:30pm: Workshops

1. "Anti-LGBT Bullying: A Faith Response"
2. "Who are the Bisexuals?"

4:00pm: Celebratory Worship Service

Our preacher will be the Rev. T. Michael Rock, pastor of Robbinsdale UCC, who is also a curriculum writer and trainer for the Our Whole Lives Human Sexuality program in the UCC. Music will be provided by First Congregational Church of Minnesota UCC, Mpls.

The "Open and Affirming" program within the UCC comes from a 1985 General Synod Resolution calling on all settings of the church to adopt statements of "openness" and "affirmation" towards gay, lesbian and bisexual people. A later General Synod in 2003 also called upon the church to acknowledge and celebrate the gifts transgender individuals bring to the church. There are currently 37 "Open and Affirming" UCC congregations in

Minnesota. The Minnesota Conference has also declared itself "Open and Affirming."

Want to go to camp?

PILGRIM POINT

camps & retreats,

**Playing and Living Joyfully this summer at
Minnesota Conference Sponsored Youth Camps!**

Middle School Week: July 10-16, 2011

[Online registration is now open](#)

Senior High Week: July 31-August 6

[Online registration is now open](#)

Camp costs: \$325 by April 30, after April 30 \$350

****Only three days left of early registration!****

Other opportunities this summer @ Pilgrim Point:

Wayzata Community Church sponsored camps:

Senior High: June 11-17, 2011

Junior High: June 18-23, 2011

Children's: June 24-27, 2011 or June 27-30, 2011

Cross Generation: June 30-July 2, 2011

[Click here for more information](#)

July Family Camp

sponsored by Union UCC, Saint Louis Park

July 17-22, 2011 [Click here for more information](#)

August Family Camp

sponsored by Mayflower UCC, Minneapolis & Saint Anthony Park UCC,
Saint Paul - postcard available [by clicking here](#).

August 7-12, 2011 [Click here for more information](#)

This fall's Minnesota Conference Retreats:

Men's Retreat: September 9-11

Women's Retreat: September 16-18

Does your church want to reserve a part of the camp for your own retreat or camp? There are still weekends and parts of weeks available! [Check it out here](#).

For general information on Pilgrim Point Camps and Retreats, visit the PCR website: www.pilgrimpoint.org.

Local Church Events

Check out all the events happening at our local churches across Minnesota on our [Local Church Events Calendar](#)! You can surf around the calendar to see what's coming up across the Conference. Just click on the title of the event in the calendar to get more details.

- Ongoing through May 14: [Cherokee West Art Fest, Cherokee Park United Church, Saint Paul](#)
- Wednesday, April 27: [Celtic Worship, St. Peter's UCC, Stillwater](#)
- Friday, April 29: [Trash to Treasure Sale, Cottage Grove UCC](#)
- Saturday, April 30: [Trash to Treasure Sale, Cottage Grove UCC](#)
- Saturday, April 30: [Spaghetti Dinner! Hazel Park UCC, St. Paul](#)
- Sunday, May 1: [Caring for the Caregiver, Union UCC, Saint Louis Park](#)
- Sunday, May 1: [Chicken BBQ and Plant and Bake Sale, St. John's UCC, New Albin](#)
- Sunday, May 1: [Evensong Service, St. Paul's UCC, St. Paul](#)
- Wednesday, May 4: [Fare for All Express, Hazel Park UCC, St. Paul](#)
- Wednesday, May 4: [Tapping into Living Water, Wellspring of Faith, Burnsville](#)
- Saturday, May 7: [Centering Prayer, Mayflower UCC, Minneapolis](#)
- Wednesday, May 11: [Tapping into Living Water, Wellspring of Faith, Burnsville](#)

Would you like your events to appear on this calendar? Just email Alison Bents at alisonb@uccmn.org. Simple as that!

Employment Opportunities

Check out the Employment Opportunities portion of the Minnesota Conference website. [Click here to see the listings](#).

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