

**Mission Bite: from across the Minnesota Conference**

*from the Rev. Dr. Karen Smith Sellers, Conference Minister*

**PREPARING FOR THE 50th ANNIVERSARY  
ANNUAL MEETING**

With the New Year comes the time to begin preparing in earnest for the 50th Anniversary Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ, set for June 8-10 at the College of St. Benedict in St. Joseph. The Annual Meeting Planning Work Group (AMPWG) and Conference staff are attending to the agenda, Bible study, exhibits, housing and meals, mailings, preachers and speakers, presentations and reports, registration, and workshops. Clyde Steckel and his team are at work on the Conference history project.



Drumming circle at the 2011 Annual Meeting

This week's "Mission Bite" encourages every Local Church and Authorized Minister to start now getting ready for this important gathering. Specifically, each Local Church is entitled to a certain number of lay delegates based on its membership:

| Membership | Lay Delegates | Youth/Young Adult Delegates |
|------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| 000-199    | 2             | 1                           |
| 200-399    | 3             | 1                           |
| 400-599    | 4             | 1                           |
| 600-799    | 5             | 1                           |
| 800+       | 6             | 1                           |



Rev. Allen Hilton leads bible study at the 2011 Annual Meeting

The Bylaws are clear that a lay delegate is entitled to vote at the Annual Meeting and all special meetings of the Conference, immediately following selection and until a successor is elected or the selection is revoked by the Local Church. They also specify that the manner of selection of lay delegates should be determined by each Local Church, but each delegate must be a member in good standing of that Local Church.

Many Local Churches identify their lay delegates through the regular nomination procedures, with election taking place at the congregation's annual meeting. Whatever your



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approach, I hope you will select delegates as early as possible so that as materials for the 50th Annual Meeting become available, every delegate will have adequate time to prepare. Delegates in each local church, particularly those participating for the first time, may also benefit from a meeting with each other and the local church pastor and other authorized ministers whose membership is in that local church.

For several years the AMPWG has been deliberating about how best to strengthen and support the delegate experience. Traditionally, a brief orientation session has been held just prior to the meeting, with mixed reviews. This year we will use this and the next several issues of COMMAntary to provide helpful information.



Gathering in a plenary session at the 2011 Annual Meeting

The most helpful first step is to become familiar with the [Bylaws of the Minnesota Conference](#). In particular, read Article V, Section 1 on the Powers of the Annual Meeting. You may also want to get acquainted with [The Resolutions Process for the Annual Meeting](#). The call for resolutions was sent to every Local Church and Authorized Minister in December, and the deadline for resolutions is in early March. Finally, you might want to take a look at the [Annual Meeting Rules and Procedures](#). These are voted at the beginning of each Annual Meeting, but they have not changed substantially during my time as your Conference Minister.



Greeting friends at the 2011 Annual Meeting

Finally, please take advantage of the opportunity to select a youth/young adult delegate. This year as we celebrate our past and look forward with anticipation to our future, we are especially interested in having young people present at the Annual Meeting. If you have not

heard about the special "50 for 50" plans through which the Ashley Endowment, will provide scholarship support for the first fifty youth delegates from each of fifty Local Churches of the Conference, [click here to learn more](#).

This promises to be an amazing and memorable anniversary Annual Meeting. We look forward to seeing you there!

## News and Information

### Joys and Concerns

1. First Congregational UCC in Austin will hold a service of closure and farewell for Rev. Elizabeth Endicott on Sunday, January 8 at 10:00am. The church address is 1910 3rd Avenue NW. An Epiphany Brunch will follow the service.

[National UCC Website](#)

[Join the email list for UCNews: Keeping You ePosted](#)

Join Our Mailing List!

News from the Wider Church

[United Church News](#)

Headlines from across the United Church of Christ

Right now: Leading the church with Core Values

[UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns](#)

Right now: Celebrate 25 years of Open and Affirming

[Global Ministries](#) of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ

Right now: GM Missionary, Carmelo Alvarez, to receive the Lifetime Achievement Award

[Association of United Church Educators](#)

Right now: Regional educator events announced

[Congregational Vitality](#)

Right now: Fair Trade Starter Kits available from Equal Exchange!

[Justice & Witness Ministries](#)

Right now: Are you participating in Community Supported Agriculture?

[Council for Health and Human Services Ministries](#)

Right now: Register now for the 74th Annual Meeting!

2. Our Brothers and Sisters in The Philippines are experiencing great losses with the recent flooding in Mindanao Province. Over 1,000 deaths have been reported so far, and many are still missing. Thousands have been left homeless and are in crowded evacuation centers with limited access to clean water. Please include the victims of the flood in your prayers over these next weeks and months to come.

The Minnesota Conference has a formal partnership with the Southeast Mindanao Jurisdiction (SEMJur) of the UCC-Philippines that calls on us to support them in prayer and ministry.

3. Shai Wise will be ordained Sunday, January 8 at 4:00pm at Plymouth Congregational Church (1900 Nicollet Avenue, Minneapolis). Clergy are invited to robe and wear red stoles. A light supper will be served following the ordination. Please RSVP to [maryc@plymouth.org](mailto:maryc@plymouth.org) or 612-871-7400 x 262.

4. An Ecclesiastical Council for Lawrence T. Richardson will be held at Minnehaha UCC/Spirit of the Lakes UCC at 4001 38th Avenue South, Minneapolis on Tuesday, January 10 at 4:00pm. In order to ensure quorum, please RSVP to the church at [office@spiritucc.org](mailto:office@spiritucc.org) or 612-729-7556. A light supper will be served following the Ecclesiastical Council. Lawrence, who is ordained by Full Truth Ministries, is seeking Privilege of Call in the United Church of Christ. Authorized Minnesota Conference clergy and lay representatives of Minnesota Conference UCC churches will be able to vote on Lawrence's readiness to circulate his ministerial profile in the UCC.

### Five for Five 2011 Deadline Set!

## Five for Five 2011 deadline set for Monday, January 9

Checks with gifts for UCC Basic Support (Our Church's Wider Mission), One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need, and the Christmas Fund will need to be received at the Conference Office by **Monday, January 9** to be counted toward your 2011 Five for Five tally.

Offerings we receive after Monday, January 9 will be credited, with gratitude, to your 2012 giving. Please help us with your understanding and your support, and by meeting this deadline for 2011 Five Funds gifts.

*Pastors and Moderators: please make sure this information gets passed on to your church treasurer.*

### Micro-grants are now available!

We are pleased to announce that the MN Conference Board of Directors has approved use of up to \$10,000 for micro-grants of \$300-\$800 from the Ashley Endowment of the MN Conference for congregations to do multi-congregational and/or community outreach events. Grants must support the ministry and work with children, youth and/or families. The application deadline is rolling. The grant application form with more information is available here:

[View and download the micro-grant application here.](#)

### 2012 Outdoor Ministries Ashley Grants

The MN Conference UCC is pleased to offer congregation grants for

intergenerational, youth, and children camps and retreats. The camps & retreats can be at Pilgrim Point in Alexandria, MN or at other locations - whichever best serves your local context of ministry.

[View or download the grant application form here](#)

Grant application forms are due by January 23, 2012. Please see the form for more information.

## Human Trafficking Awareness Day

JANUARY 11 IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING AWARENESS DAY

A brand new [issues paper by Minnesota's Joint Religious Legislative Coalition](#) reveals that human trafficking is a critical social justice issue, including in Minnesota where available data indicates that Minneapolis is the eighth worst city in the United States for trafficking of juveniles and Minnesota law enforcement says that sex trafficking of girls is happening in every city and every county in the state. This week's United Church of Christ [Keeping you e-Posted](#) provides a [direct link](#) to a way that you can take action against human trafficking. If you or the local church you serve or of which you are a member are interested in learning more about human trafficking, please notify the Conference Minister at [Karenss@uccmn.org](mailto:Karenss@uccmn.org). Through Justice and Witness Ministries of the United Church of Christ plans are underway for an immersion and study trip in late April to the Romero Center in San Ysidro, California to learn more about the sexual exploitation of women and children aspect of trafficking.

## Church Vitality in the new year!

As we begin a New Year, take a look at the national UCC Church Vitality Newsletter. Sign up, if you wish to receive the weekly e-newsletter from the national UCC with news about how your church can be alive, vital and spirited.

We all know that it's a tradition to make resolutions for the New Year. Instead of the usual "lose weight... stop smoking... eat better... exercise" resolutions, why not resolve to be more present in your church in 2012? There are some "be more present" resolutions that are a bit easier: attend worship more often, volunteer for a committee/board/team, and join a fellowship group. And, there are some that can be a bit more challenging:



\* Pray for your church (and its staff, members, and friends) every day of the New Year. ([Sign up for the "Still Speaking Daily Devotional"](#) to remind you to pray.)

\* Learn about the traditions of your church, where they began and if they still make sense today. If not, is it time for "new" traditions? How can you help to make that happen?

\* Dig into worship planning. Who does it and how? Is there a way for you to become involved on a short-term basis? Does your church have a worship planning team? If not, resolve to volunteer to be a charter member! ([Did you know that the national setting of the UCC provides weekly resources for worship planning?](#) Tell your pastor!)

\* Ask a friend to visit your church for worship, pretend not to know you, and then discuss with him/her later how he/she was treated. Then, take your findings back to whatever group is responsible for making people feel welcome. Hopefully you will be pleasantly surprised, but if not, then resolve to be a part of making things better. (Read "[Hospitality to the Stranger](#)" from [Alban.org](#))

\* Find out how your church relates to the Minnesota Conference UCC (and to other UCC churches in the area), and to the national setting of the church. Is there a way that you could help your church to strengthen those ties?

\* Prayerfully consider your financial support to your church. Would you give up your daily coffee a couple days a week and add that to your weekly support of your church? Imagine if everyone did something like that! Have you considered e-giving? If your church doesn't know about it, tell them how easy and inexpensive it is to get started. ([Find more information](#))

\* Ask how your church supports "[Our Church's Wider Mission](#)" and think of ways that your church might increase its support.

\* Encourage your fellow church members and friends to sign up for the [UCC Congregational Vitality](#) newsletter.

Resolve to make 2012 the year of your church with your help!

## Upcoming Events

### Save the Date: 2012 Fall Leadership Convocation!

*Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ is proud to present the Sixth Annual Fall Leadership Convocation*

***Tending to the Holy:  
Spirituality and Ministry Excellence in the 21st  
Century  
September 27-28, 2012***

**Christ the King Retreat  
Center, Buffalo, MN**



This retreat will focus on the relationship between spirituality and ministerial leadership, whether clergy or lay. In the course of the retreat, we will integrate theological reflection, spiritual practices, and practical guidance. We will blend personal reflection, silence,

body prayer, meditation, and large and small group sharing as we seek to embody faithful excellence as God's partners in healing the

world.

**Keynoters/Facilitators: Rev. Dr. Bruce Epperly and Rev. Dr. Katherine Gould Epperly**

Bruce and Kate Epperly are co-authors of a trilogy on ministerial excellence and spirituality: *Feed the Fire: Avoiding Clergy Burnout*; *Four Seasons of Ministry: Gathering a Harvest of Righteousness*; and *Tending to the Holy: The Practice of the Presence of God in Ministry*, selected as 2009 Book of the Year by the Academy of Parish Clergy.



Dr. Bruce Epperly is a leading process theologian, pastor, spiritual guide, author, and recognized leader in lay and pastoral faith formation. His most recent position was as Director of Continuing Education and Professor of Practical Theology at Lancaster Theological Seminary, where he directed innovative programs in pastoral spirituality and excellence for every season of ministry; lay and clergy theological education; and congregational transformation, worship, and adult education. He has written twenty-two books including *Holy Adventure: Forty One Days of Audacious Living and Starting with Spirit: Nurturing Your Call to Pastoral Ministry*. He speaks regularly throughout North America and has appeared on "Nightline," "ABC World News Tonight," and "PBS News Hour."

Dr. Kate Epperly has served churches in Arizona, Michigan, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania. A certified member of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, she now serves as a spiritual director and consultant for individual and congregational healing and wholeness.

Both are graduates of Claremont School of Theology and are ordained in the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ. Each has had Ordained Ministerial Partner Standing in the United Church of Christ.

### **Middle School Service Days**

***Serve others while making friends from around the MN Conference UCC! (6th-8th Graders)***

There are 3 upcoming service days:

- Saturday, January 28, **Henderson UCC**
  - Saturday, March 10, **Anoka UCC**
  - Saturday, May 12, **Pilgrim Point Camps & Retreats**
- (Each of the days are from 9:30am-3pm)

***Cost is only \$5 per person per service day!***  
Attend all 3 Service Projects & get a **FREE T-SHIRT!**

### **REGISTER NOW!**

**Henderson Service Day:** We will listen to Jesus' words and watch his actions of caring for the poor, the widows, the children, the ill, and the prisoners. We will follow him! We'll have some fun along the way and get to know each other with some games and activities. We'll

work on a variety of projects, all indoors, to care for the people Jesus asks us to.

*We are seeking **donations of 1-yard lengths of fleece** in a variety of bright colors and patterns. One of the projects we will be working on is tie-blankets for kids who are in the hospital.*

Groups interested in joining St. Paul's UCC Henderson for a lock-in the night before may contact Rev. Brigit Stevens at

[stpaul06@frontiernet.net](mailto:stpaul06@frontiernet.net)

Every location will have different kinds of projects and different sites so groups will need to be flexible, but all days will include: orientation to service projects, group building games, sack lunch, debriefing, closing worship

## National Youth Event 2012

The National Youth Event, held every four years, provides an opportunity for over 3000 youth to gather for worship, workshops, faith, fun and fellowship.

### "Imagine"

Held July 10-13, 2012 at Purdue University in Lafayette, IN

### **REGISTRATION OPEN NOW!**

Get your youth group organized and registered! **Registration is going to be done individually** through the conference at our subsidized price by clicking on the link above.

Registration fee includes:

- Transportation to and from the Twin Cities
- Full NYE Registration
- Housing
- An AWESOME conference T-SHIRT!!

**Register before February 1st and get a FREE pair of conference FLIP-FLOPS!!**

After registration, you can download the necessary forms by clicking [HERE](#). Either mail, fax, or email the completed forms to the conference ASAP. *We can mail you hard copies of the forms to be filled out upon request.*

*NOTE: Ignore national setting registration fee announcements since your registration is going to be subsidized through the conference. Questions? Contact Zac at [Zacn@uccmn.org](mailto:Zacn@uccmn.org) for details and answers*

## Winter High School CYE!

### Winter High School CYE 2012

**"Bullying & Your Faith" March 2-4, 2012**

**Held at Camp Koinonia in South Haven, MN.**

Enjoy a weekend with MN Conference youth as you discuss bullying with  
keynoter Alison Feigh.

[Click here](#) to read a short bio about Alison Feigh

Additionally, **Robin Nelson** will be joining with us to instruct Folk Dancing! So a big thanks to Robin for giving us the opportunity!

## **Register Online Today!**

*Event will begin at 6:30pm on Friday, March 2nd and will conclude at Noon on Sunday, March 4th.*

**Download the Authorization Form Here:**  
**Adult Form - Youth Form**

**Questions?** Email Zac at [zacn@uccmn.org](mailto:zacn@uccmn.org) or call the Conference Office at 612-871-0359.

### **Coming OUT 4 Marriage Equality: The Next Step**



Join other United Church of Christ members and our faith partners to continue the UCC movement for marriage equality and against the anti-LGBT constitutional amendment!

Our next gathering will be hosted by Parkway UCC, Minneapolis on Saturday, January 21st, from 9:30am-2:30pm. This half-day gathering will be a chance to examine and develop three objectives between now and the November 6th general election

where the Marriage Amendment will be on the ballot. Our objectives are:

- 1) increase the number of Open and Affirming (ONA) congregations within the state of MN
- 2) encourage existing ONA congregations to be public voices on justice concerns, specifically the marriage amendment
- 3) encouraging congregations to claim ONA values that offer healing and sanctuary, especially during the campaign.

RSVP your plans to attend at the [Facebook event page](#) or by emailing Oby Ballinger, [pastor@stpaulparkucc.org](mailto:pastor@stpaulparkucc.org).

Lunch will be provided as a thank you to all who participate.

Please bring your energy and your friends. We ARE the campaign for marriage equality, and together we will help Minnesota welcome the love and families of all God's people!

### **2030 Clergy - Justice Leaders Rising**

# 2030

CLERGY NETWORK  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

2030 Justice Leaders Rising is a leadership event for UCC clergy in their 20s and 30s. It will be held March 22 -26, 2012 in Washington DC and includes Justice Leaders Engaging and Developing (Justice LED) training followed by Ecumenical

Advocacy Days, an event that incorporates theological reflection, workshops and advocacy on a wide variety of policy issues. The event includes appointments to speak with Senators and Representatives.

[Registration is available here!](#)

## Upcoming Regional Retirement Seminar



## Pension Boards-UCC

In recent years, the Pension Boards has greatly expanded its efforts in Member Education, toward the goal of helping members realize the importance of planning throughout their careers for a financially secure retirement. A good time to review your retirement goals is when you are 10-15 years from your planned retirement date. With that in mind, we have planned a series of Regional Retirement Seminars designed to provide members age 50 and over - both clergy and lay - with important information to help make the transition to a new stage in life as easy as possible.

We invite you to attend the upcoming Retirement Seminar to be held on **Thursday, February 9, 2012 at Mayflower United Church of Christ, 106 East Diamond Lake Road, Minneapolis, MN 55419.** The event will begin with registration and continental breakfast at 8:00am and concludes at 4:30pm.

**To register for the event, please contact Sharon Thomas, Member Education Services Coordinator, at 800.642.6543, ext. 2712, no later than Tuesday, January 16th.**

A proposed Agenda is enclosed. The seminar is offered to you at no cost and a one-time \$100 stipend is given to each member to help defer your travel expenses. We look forward to seeing you on February 9th.

## Circle Training



### CIRCLE TRAINING Feb 3-5, 2012 at Hamline University

Learn about the circle process and how to facilitate circle dialogue in a training sponsored by the Dispute Resolution

Center of St. Paul. Jean Greenwood, Presbyterian minister and adjunct at United Theological Seminary, is the trainer. Circles bring people together as equals for dialogue in a safe and supportive, respectful, inclusive space for the purpose of decision making, problem solving, community building, healing, for example. [See flier for details.](#) For questions, contact Jean Greenwood: [green104@umn.edu](mailto:green104@umn.edu).

## Local Church Events

### 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](#)

- **Sunday, January 15:** [We Have a Dream, Union Congregational UCC, Elk River](#)
- **Friday, January 20:** [Friday Night Out: Islam and our Muslim Neighbors, St. Anthony Park UCC, St. Paul](#)

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

## *Employment Opportunities*

### **Employment Opportunities**

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

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