

61st Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference, United Church of Christ

June 9 - 10, 2023 College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, Minnesota

Hybrid Meeting Format (In-Person and Zoom)

PLENARY SESSION #1

GATHERING WORSHIP

The meeting opened with worship and a land acknowledgement.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Annual Meeting Planning Work Group (AMPWG) chair, Rev. Nora Elliot, welcomed delegates and visitors to the 61st Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference UCC. First time attendees were asked to stand and previous annual meeting attendees were asked to welcome them. Announcements were made:

- ~In an effort to conserve paper, all items are available on the website as well as through Sli.do, an app that will be used throughout Annual Meeting.
- ~Speak outs will be in person only. There will be five slots for 1 minute speak outs at the close of each plenary session and require advance sign up.
- ~Restrooms: on the Plenary Room level all bathrooms are gender neutral. Gender specific restrooms are available on the lower level.
- ~Voting instructions for the hybrid format will be explained later.
- ~A golf cart is available for access around the campus.

Conference Minister Rev. Shari Prestemon gave words of welcome and thanksgiving for this time together. She introduced the conference staff and Moderator Shawn Nuebel.

CALL TO ORDER

Moderator Shawn Nuebel called the 61st Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ to order at 11:04 a.m. on Friday, June 9, 2023.

CREDENTIALS REPORT

The Secretary of the Conference, Rebecca LeMenager, gave the credentials report: 116 delegates in person, 15 delegates online for a total of 131 delegates representing 47 churches. Moderator Shawn Nuebel declared a quorum for the 61st Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ.

TEST VOTE

Because of the hybrid format of the meeting, voting was done in a different format. A test vote was taken to ensure all members, both in person and online, understood the voting procedure.

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

Before the consent agenda was voted upon, it was noted that there were irregularities in the Registrar's Report. The Registrar's Report was removed from the consent agenda.

Rev. Nora Elliott made the following motion:

Motion (AMPWG): On behalf of the Annual Meeting Planning Work Group, I move for the approval of the consent agenda. Consent Agenda items include the standing rules and procedures for business sessions, the agenda for the 2023 Annual Meeting, the adoption of the written reports for 2023 – with the exception of the Registrar's Report, and the 2022 Annual Meeting minutes.

(MOTION CARRIED)

APPOINTMENT AND INTRODUCTION OF THE PARLIAMENTARIAN

Rev. Nora Elliott introduced James Snoxell, a member at St. Anthony Park United Church of Christ and moved for his appointment as Parliamentarian for Friday and Saturday.

Motion (AMPWG): On behalf of the Annual Meeting Planning Work Group, I move to appoint James Snoxell as Parliamentarian for the 61st Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference UCC and that he be given Voice Without Vote. **(MOTION CARRIED)**

RECOGNITION OF HONORED GUESTS & OTHER GRANTED VOICE WITHOUT VOTE

Conference Minister Rev. Shari Prestemon asked the following guests, if present, to please stand and presented the following motion:

Motion (AMPWG): On behalf of the Annual Meeting Planning Work Group, I move that these honored guests be approved Voice Without Vote at the 61st Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Rev. Michael Malcolm, Exec. Director, the People's Justice Council & Keynote speaker

Rev. Dr. Jim Moos, Exec. Director of Faith & Finance Ministries, The Pension Boards

Rev. Brooks Berndt, Minister for Environmental Justice, UCC National Setting

Josh Larson, UCC Insurance Board

John Severson, Oak Meadows

Cindi Beth Johnson, United Theological Seminary

Emily Myer, Ministry Lab

(MOTION CARRIED)

The Conference Minister also acknowledged and honored Rev. Dr. Clyde Steckel who has been present at every Annual Meeting since 1964. Conference Minister S. Prestemon made the following motion:

Motion (AMPWG): I move also that the following members of the Annual Meeting Planning Work Group, Ministers without current standing but serving in the Conference and other presenters be granted Voice Without Vote for the 61st Annual Meeting:

Connie Borchardt (Musician)

Rev. Dr. Stephanie Perdew (Damascus Project Director)

(MOTION CARRIED)

NOMINATING WORK GROUP REPORT

Associate Conference Minister Rev. Kevin Brown introduced members of the Nominating Work Group and explained the nature of their work. The Skills Bank Form was lifted up; all were encouraged to fill them out. The slate of candidates for Officers, BOD, Board Committees and Subcommittees and Work Groups of the Conference were lifted up. There were no nominations from the floor. The slate of candidates will be voted on at Saturday's Plenary #4.

OCWM, GIVING & THE GENEROSITY REPORT

Bob Olsen and members of the Development Committee listed just some of the programs and ministries made possible by the generous giving of individuals and churches in the Minnesota Conference. Attention was drawn to the generosity report, the churches who give to OCWM, churches who are 5 for 5 and the over 200 households who gave to *Friends of the Conference* this past year. Giving not only impacts the work we do in the Minnesota Conference but also in our National Setting and around the world.

DAMASCUS PROJECT

Director of the Damascus Project, Rev. Dr. Stephanie Perdew, intended to attend the meeting in person, but due to car trouble, she addressed the delegation via Zoom. S. Perdew began her time as director in January of 2023. She highlighted the focus and values of the Damascus Project, encouraged use of the website and setting up a free account to access course offerings and the social media platform.

SPEAK-OUT! (#1)

Rebecca Voelkel

Lyndale UCC, Minneapolis

Sacred Reckonings

Diane Haines

Mayflower UCC, Minneapolis

Immigration

Chris McArdle	Anoka UCC, Anoka	Halloween
Ryan Thelemann	Zion UCC, Le Sueur	Pastor Opening
Marc Blakesley	1 st Cong. UCC, Alexandria	O&A

RECESS *(Lunch and Rest & Renew Activities)*

PLENARY SESSION #2

Moderator Shawn Nuebel called the Annual Meeting back to order at 11:48 a.m.

TREASURER’S REPORT AND PROPOSED BUDGET

Treasurer Bob Sicoli presented the Treasurer’s Report for fiscal year 2023 and the proposed budget for fiscal year 2024 which will be voted on at Saturday’s Plenary session #3.

The following questions were raised:

Rosemary Rocha, Zion UCC, Le Sueur

Q: What is the line item “Room Rentals”?

A: Events where there is a need for boarding/overnight accommodations.

Paul Bauch, Peace UCC, Rochester

Q: Is there a salary increase for clergy?

A: Yes. The COLA increase proposed is 4.5%

Rick King, Falcon Heights UCC, Falcon Heights

Q: What is the surplus due to?

A: Income continued to be steady and even rise thanks to the generosity of our churches and individuals in the conference. We have continued to be able to cut expenses, and it has taken longer to come out of COVID than expected. Some activities have been canceled or had reduced numbers.

Treasurer B. Sicoli made the following motion on behalf of the Board of Directors:

Motion (Board of Directors): On behalf of the Board of Directors, I present the recommended Budget of the Minnesota Conference for fiscal year 2024 as printed and distributed to this meeting as an item of Business. **(MOTION CARRIED)**

COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

ACM Rev. Kelly Gallagher presented the 2024 Compensation Guidelines. The 2024 guidelines call for a 4.5% increase which is in accordance with the conference staff compensation increase. She also alluded to the fact that in the coming years, there may be updates to the compensation guideline document to be more helpful to churches as more of our churches are smaller, rural and have solo or part time pastors.

ANTI-RACISM INITIATIVE

Rev. Jane McBride, the chair of the recently appointed Anti-Racism Ad Hoc Group shared the work the group has begun. She named the ad hoc group members. She shared a bit about her own journey to understanding her own whiteness and explained why this work is important to her. She urged us, as a conference, to move from an attitude and understanding of this being “ad hoc” work to anti-racism as a way of being.

FAITH FORMATION

ACM Rev. Kevin Brown gave an update on Faith Formation. He challenged the conference and all its churches to stand against the myths we often hold about Faith Formation including that Faith Formation is about educating youth and children (Jesus welcomed children and educated adults. The church does the opposite), that if we do not have children in our congregation then the work of nurturing faith is not our responsibility and that Faith Formation is only about developing leaders for the church.

ACM Brown lifted up some of the upcoming events including the DC trip, Anti-racism training for Faith Formation leaders and the creation of a young adult cohort group.

OUTDOOR MINISTRIES

Rev. Sheri Nelson, Director of Outdoor Ministries gave an update on Outdoor Ministries in the Conference. She talked about where we have been by giving an overview of programming and events in the last year. Then she talked about where the Spirit is moving the Minnesota Conference's Outdoor Ministries forward. She highlighted some new endeavors such as creation justice focused programming and the newly formed Great Lakes Collaborative.

CONGREGATIONAL TRANSITIONS

Rev Cindy Mueller, Minister for Congregational Transitions (new title but same work), gave an update on search and call and legacy work in our conference. There are 16-20 searches at any time. She reminded us that all churches are in transition post COVID and the necessity for all churches to be able to articulate their mission as they move forward into this new paradigm.

EXPLANATION OF THE RESOLUTION READINGS PROCESS

Cecelia Alexander from the Annual Meeting Planning Work Group described the resolution process which included a hearing over Zoom during the workshop portion of Annual Meeting where amendments could be offered, next is a time of sharing the background and rationale which will take place shortly and later, there will be a time of debate and vote which will take place tomorrow.

C. Alexander called for any Timely Resolutions—resolutions dealing with issues or concerns about which there was no possible knowledge or information before the resolution deadline, and where a delay would render the resolution moot—to be presented. There were none.

C. Alexander invited Rev. Dan Judd, spokesperson for the Resolution: Full Funding of English Language Learners & Special Education Services in Public Education submitted by United Church of Christ in New Brighton to speak to the resolution and to answer questions of clarification only. The following question was asked:

Carolyn Pressler, UCC New Brighton

Q: Could this resolution to be brought forward to General Synod, and if so, what would be needed to do so?

A: Yes. There would need to be 5 congregations to be willing to sign on in support before the next General Synod.

UCC'S PENSION BOARDS PRESENTATION

Jim Moos representing the UCC Pension Boards gave a brief report. He specifically lifted up the Christmas Fund and thanked the individuals and churches who give so generously. He shared examples of the difference this makes in the life of those who have served the church. He also shared that a community credit union is in the works. It will be a separate entity.

SPEAK OUT! (#2)

Charlotte Frantz	Peace UCC, Duluth	Interim & Bridge Ministry
Nancy Giguere	1 st Cong. UCC, Grand Marais	Water Legacy
Sarah Campbell	Mayflower, Minneapolis	Workshop on Faith Based Organizing
Sheri Nelson	MN Conference	Pride Invite
Leslie Moughty	1 st Cong UCC, Brainerd	ADHD/Neurodivergent Clergy

RECESS (*Rest & Renewal Activities, Dinner with the State of the Conference Address, Karaoke, Sleep, Breakfast and Saturday Morning Bible Study*)

PLENARY SESSION #3

Moderator Shawn Nuebel called the Annual Meeting back to order at 9:02 a.m.

FINAL DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON THE 2023 BUDGET

Treasurer Bob Sicoli made the following motion:

Motion (BOD): On behalf of the Board of Directors, I move the adoption of this budget for the fiscal year 2024 for the Minnesota Conference, United Church of Christ be approved. **(MOTION CARRIED)**

FINAL DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON THE 2023 COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

ACM Rev. Kelly Gallagher made the following motion:

Motion (BOD): I move that the 2024 Compensation Guidelines be approved. **(MOTION CARRIED)**

FINAL DISCUSSION & ACTION ON RESOLUTION #1: SUPPORTING FULL FUNDING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

Hearing moderator, Rev. Leslie Moughty gave a brief summary of the discussion of the resolution during the resolution hearing and then called Allison Jones (New Brighton UCC), resolution spokesperson, to speak to the resolution. The following people spoke in favor of the resolution: Bryan Olson, Cottage Grove UCC; Ash Bull, United Faith Community, Buffalo; Noah Moore, The Associated Church, Owatonna UCC

Motion (A. Jones): I move the Adoption of the Resolution Supporting full funding of English Language Learners and Special Education services in Public Education. **(MOTION CARRIED)**

SPEAK OUT! (#3)

Kim Shaffer	1 st Cong. UCC, Mankato	Refugee Workshop
Bryan Olson	Cottage Grove UCC, Cottage Grove	Committee on Ministry
Nancy Hassett	Union UCC, Elk River	Sanctuary Church
Nathan Holst	Peace UCC, Duluth	Ordination Invite & Gratitude

RECESS (Break)

KEYNOTE ADDRESS AND TABLETOP CONVERSATIONS

Rev. Michael Malcolm, Exec. Director, the People's Justice Council delivered his keynote address. There was time for discussion in small groups around the tables as well as time for questions and answers with Rev. M Malcolm.

RECESS (Lunch and Rest & Renewal Activities)

Gathering Music

PLENARY SESSION #4

Moderator Sahwn Nuebel called the Annual Meeting back to order at 3:02 p.m.

UPDATE ON UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Rev. Dr. Molly T. Marshall gave an update on United Theological Seminary on its 60th Anniversary. She expressed gratitude for the relationship with the Minnesota Conference UCC and its support of students and academic rigor. She used Psalm 126 and the metaphor of planning seeds to spur us to think imaginatively about the future of the church and to encourage growth and new paths forward.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS, COMMITTEE AND WORK GROUP MEMBERS

ACM Rev. Kevin Brown, on behalf of the Nominating Work Group, made the following motion:

Motion (Nominating Work Group): On behalf of the Nominating Work Group, I move for the election of the slate of nominees for Officers, Board of Directors, Board Committees and Subcommittees, and Work Groups as presented. **(MOTION CARRIED)**

NEWLY MERGED CONGREGATIONS & CONGREGATIONS SEEKING STANDING IN THE MINNESOTA CONFERENCE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Rev. Cindy Mueller, Minister for Congregational Transitions, explained that Edina Morningside UCC and Linden Hills UCC have merged. She gave a little history of this process. Members of the church were invited to stand and be recognized.

Katherine Morin, on behalf of the Committee on Ministry, reported that the committee has had the privilege of accompanying two congregations in covenantal discernment and presented them to the Minnesota Conference for consideration in granting them standing as new congregations in the conference.

The first was United Faith Community in Buffalo, Minnesota. Authorized minister, Ole Olson shared a little of the history of United Faith Community, what they believe and how they serve. K. Morin made the following motion:

Motion (Committee on Ministry): On behalf of the Committee on Ministry, I move that the Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ acting as an Association grant United Faith Community in Buffalo standing as a local church member. **(MOTION CARRIED)**

K. Morin then announced that the second church seeking standing as a congregation in the Minnesota Conference is People's Congregational Church in Bayport. Their pastor, Rev. Clare Gromoll shared some history of the church, their mission statement and expressed appreciation for both parts of the church's identity: the NCCC and UCC. K. Morin made the following motion:

Motion (Committee on Ministry): On behalf of the Committee on Ministry, I move that the Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ acting as an Association grant People's Congregational Church in Bayport standing as a local church member. **(MOTION CARRIED)**

FINAL CREDENTIALS REPORT

Secretary Rebecca LeMenager read the final credentials report. 160 delegates representing 57 church and 18 visitors were in attendance at this year's Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ.

AMENITY REOLUTION

Nora Elliot, on behalf of the AMPWG called for the following Resolution:

On behalf of the AMPWG I propose the following resolution:

We gathered for this 61th Annual Meeting of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ from June 9-10, 2023.

We worshiped, sang, and learned together. We renewed and forged new relationships as we heard a call to begin imagining a church that serves the new generations need and mourns the losses of those routines that served us well for so many years. We heard challenge and comfort in both word and song. And, most importantly, we experienced God's presence in this sacred time together.

Therefore, be it resolved

That we express our gratitude for all who gathered here;

For our inspiring...

- *Keynoter Rev. Dr. Michael Malcom;
- *Musicians, worship planners and participants, Rev. Enno Limvere, Rev. Nathan, and Conie Blanchette
- *Visuals and space set-up, Rev. Robin, Jessica and the staff of St. Benedicts
- *Bible Study leader Rev. Brooks Brendt;
- *Preacher Rev. Nikki Frantz
- *Our voting delegates and each congregation represented here today
- *The audio/video tech team
- *Moderator and Chair of the Board of Directors, Shawn Neubel, who has led us, effectively and efficiently, through the business sessions of this meeting, as well as for Treasurer Bob Sicoli.

SPEAK OUT! (#4)

John Fiscus	Peace UCC, St. Cloud	Please Attend ordinations, ecclesiastical Councils and other events and milestones
Nikki Fontz	Edina Morningside/Linden Hills	MIDs
Connie Borchadt	Edina Morningside/Linden Hills	Workshop: Music That Makes Community
Charlotte Frantz	Peace UCC, Duluth	Thank you to Child care providers and all who brought children to Annual Meeting
Sheri Nelson	MN Conference	Outdoor Ministries

ADJOURNMENT

The 61st Annual Meeting (2023) of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ closed at 3:43 p.m. Closing Worship followed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca LeMenager, Secretary