

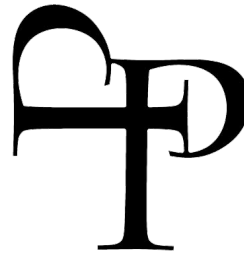


Wisconsin Conference Life Newsletter

April 6, 2017

Small is Big Again: Reclaiming Small Church Ministry

by *The Parish Paper*



Although megachurches garner a great deal of attention, these supersized congregations comprise only a small fraction of all worshipping communities in the U.S. The current estimate is that only about 1,650 megachurches (worship attendance exceeds 2,000) dot the landscape out of a total 330,000 congregations across America. In fact, most churches are small: two out of three Protestant churches attract less than 100 worshipers in a typical week. Some scholars predicted that megachurches would essentially put small churches out of business. But the percentage of large churches as part of all churches is growing slowly while the number of small churches has remained stable. While the church's larger mission continues to be carried out by many small worshipping communities, small churches may get locked into self-criticism. However, more congregations are embracing the strengths associated with their small size. As one congregation proclaims: **"We're not just any small church. We're the small church that's here!"** [Read more](#)

Creation Calls Us to Care! Resources for Creation-Centered Worship



The Green Group of the Wisconsin Conference would like to thank Rev. David Huber, pastor of Plymouth UCC in Eau Claire, and Kathy Bartilson, member of Namekagon UCC in Earl and current Lay Academy participant, for their creative efforts in developing a worship liturgy for Earth Day. We commend this [worship service and additional resources to you for your use on Earth Day](#) or any other day throughout the year when your congregation celebrates the wonder of creation.

The Green Group's primary focus is to encourage and support congregations in the Wisconsin Conference as they do what they can to care for creation. For more information on the Green Group, contact [John Helt](#) or [Tisha Brown](#).

In This Issue

[Creation Care resources](#)

[Thursday workshop](#)

[Annual Meeting 2017](#)

[Climate March](#)

[Charles Rota turns 100](#)

[500th Reformation anniversary](#)

[Break the Silence Sunday](#)

[Conference Transitions](#)

SHIFT

Check out the **SHIFT BLOG** for inspiration! Read about & share congregational shift stories.

Church Spotlight



St. Peter's UCC, **Saukville**

This Southeast Association church is led by interim pastor

Thursday Pre-Conference Workshop: Sparking Creativity and Expanding Vision

Thursday, June 8, 10am-4pm at Green Lake Conference Center

Paul Nixon, co-author of *Weird Church*, will lead this year's pre-conference workshop, Sparking Creativity and Expanding Vision. Church leaders seeking to break out of established patterns of thinking will find this workshop valuable. Participants will develop a broader vision of what the church of the 21st century can do and be and will gain knowledge and acquire tools in three key areas to use in their home churches.

Consider bringing a team from your congregation. Give your leadership group an opportunity to practice thinking outside the box and learn new tools valuable for working together on new initiatives in your church.

Last year **St. John's UCC in Elkhart Lake** sent four people to the pre-conference workshop. This became the catalyst that sparked a new ministry in their church. Follow-up conversations after the workshop resulted in creation of monthly "Mission Sundays" that engage the entire congregation in performing service to the community in unique ways each month. **Rev. Melinda Feller** offers a suggestion to others: "Take advantage of these (learning) opportunities, and then trust the Holy Spirit because you don't know where it will lead you." This year St. John's is sending **seven** people to the pre-conference workshop! They expect this year's workshop to get them to the next step in their Shift journey.

The workshop is broken into three topic areas:

- Weird Church
- Readiness 360
- Mission Possible

[Learn more about the workshop here](#)

Annual Meeting 2017

Highlights

June 9-11, 2017

Green Lake Conference Center

Here's some of the exciting things in store at this year's annual meeting:

- Rev. John Dorhauer, President and General Minister of the United Church of Christ
- Rev. Everett Mitchell, pastor and circuit court judge
- Share Fair showcasing innovative ministries in Wisconsin Congregations
- Inspiring worship with Gary Rand
- Workshops to build your knowledge and skills

Check it all out at wcucc.org/annualmeeting or [download the](#)



SHIFT: Our Unfolding Story

Craig Modahl. Formed in 1868, the congregation will celebrate their 150th anniversary in 2018. The church is the site host for the Saukville Community Food Pantry.

CONFERENCE CALENDAR

Check the Conference [calendar](#) for upcoming events.

The Parish Paper

This month's Parish Paper is "[Small is Big Again: Redaiming Small Church Ministry](#)." Access this issue and archived issues [here!](#)

Quick Links

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Is your church considering an Open and Affirming Process? The Wisconsin Conference has a committee to help! Please feel free to use us as resources for your discussions and preparations. Contact [Micah Schlobohm](#) of the Wisconsin Conference UCC Committee on Ministry with LGBTQ Persons.

[brochure here.](#)

Join the Climate March in Washington, DC, on April 29th

A climate march in Washington, DC, on April 29th is being organized by the same broad coalition of groups that brought together more than 400,000 people for the 2014 climate march in New York City. The UCC Council for Climate Justice along with the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries are official co-sponsors for the upcoming march. We want to have a strong UCC presence at this march. [RSVP](#) to join the UCC contingent and receive updates from the Rev. Brooks Berndt, UCC Minister for Environmental Justice. One can also look online for the nearest [sister march](#).

[UCC Sign-Up Webpage](#)
[Sister March Webpage](#)



There is also a [Facebook page for ONA churches in Wisconsin.](#)

Got News?

Let us know! If you have something you'd like considered for publication in *Wisconsin Conference Life*, email [Nola](#) at the Wisconsin Conference.

Rev. Charles Rota Celebrates 100th Birthday

Congratulations, Rev. Charles Rota, on turning 100 on April 17!

Charles graduated from North Central College, Naperville, Ill. and Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill. He served United Methodist churches before becoming pastor of Lake Edge UCC, Madison. After that he served churches in Illinois, Minnesota, Texas and New London, Wis.



Charles continues to enjoy good health, a sharp mind and walking without assistance devices!

We are invited to send him birthday greetings at his home in Oakwood Village Prairie View:

Rev. Charles Rota
5815 American Pkwy. #407
Madison, WI 53718

500th Anniversary of the Reformation

Save the date!

It's not every day that we get to celebrate a shift as BIG as that of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century. But this year our Conference joins the rest of the Western world to recognize Martin Luther's hammering start of the Protestant movement five hundred years ago.



On **Saturday, October 28**, at the Trost Center in DeForest, the

historical committee of our Conference will sponsor two **presentations from noted Reformation scholars**, have lunch together, and hear from our own Wisconsin pilgrims who will have recently returned from Luther's Germany. **Margaret Bendroth** of the Congregational Library in Boston, and **Lee Palmer Wandel** of UW's history department will help us focus on the contemporary relevance of this half a millennium old shift that some have regarded as more revolution than reformation. More information is forthcoming, but please put this "once in a lifetime" event on your calendar now!

Break the Silence Sunday

April 23, 2017

Break The Silence Sunday is an effort to open up a conversation within the church about rape and sexual assault. Within the context of our faith communities we hope to:



- acknowledge the reality of rape and sexual violence in our world;
- support survivors by creating a place where they can tell their stories, feel loved and supported, and find encouragement on their healing journey;
- commit ourselves to the work of changing the world, creating a future where rape is a memory.

[Break the Silence Sunday website](#)

[2017 Break the Silence Sunday liturgy materials](#) (PDF)

Free Hymnals

Is your congregation in need of any copies of the red Pilgrim Hymnal? First Congregational UCC in Madison has 150 copies to give away. Please contact [Kristin Kanitz](#) if you have any interest.

Conference Transitions

Searching Churches

- No churches have recently begun new searches. To see all searching churches, [click here](#).

Installations and Ordinations

- **Rev. Missy Holdorf Miller** was installed at First Congregational UCC in Wisconsin Rapids on April 2, 2017.

In Memoriam

- **Lois Randall**, mother-in-law of Rev. Rob MacDougall, passed away on March 28, 2017. [Obituary](#)
- **Omar Engen**, father-in-law of Rev. Ken Schaub, passed away on April 3, 2017. [Obituary](#)

The Conference Transitions feature appears monthly in the Wisconsin Conference Life. Please share your transition information, including church anniversaries, with the newsletter editor by emailing

[Nola.](#)

This newsletter is made possible by contributions to Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support.

The Wisconsin Conference UCC is an [Open and Affirming Conference](#).

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