



**WISCONSIN  
CONFERENCE**  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## Wisconsin Conference Life Newsletter

June 22, 2017

### Shift: Our Unfolding Story - a Spectacular Gathering!

by Franz Rigert



SHIFT: Our Unfolding Story

This year's Annual Meeting was full of energy and passion! United Church of Christ **General Minister and President John Dorhauer** gave a keynote address, inspiring us to recognize the important voice of the UCC on issues of inclusion, justice and compassion. **The Honorable Rev. Everett Mitchell**, Dane county circuit court judge and pastor of Christ the Solid Rock Baptist Church, gave a stirring message about racial justice, encouraging us to study and understand the systemic effects of "white privilege" and reach out with the intentionality of fostering interracial relationships.

The highlight of our plenary business sessions was an overwhelming **vote of affirmation declaring ourselves an Immigrant Welcoming Conference**. The work of studying immigration, advocating for those in need of asylum and the resettlement of refugees continues in many of our congregations.

We shared in **wonderful worship moments**, anchored by musician **Gary Rand** and his vocal ensemble **The Many**. Delegates enjoyed perusing exhibit booths and (new this year) a **Share Fair!** This was an opportunity to visit 20 table displays featuring innovative and creative ministries throughout our conference life. So many ideas and contacts were exchanged as presenters enthusiastically shared stories of thriving ministries, many of which are community based with partnerships beyond the local church. Special thanks to those who offered workshops and faith formation options, and to all who tended booths or volunteered in any capacity to make *Shift: Our Unfolding Story* a spectacular event! I offer particular gratitude to our Conference Staff. They are an amazing team who invested their hearts and lots of time and energy!

One last highlight . . . Kerri Parker and I gave a sneak preview of **an invitation we will issue on July 4th at General Synod 2017** in Baltimore. This presentation is our official welcome to the entire UCC to join us in Milwaukee for General Synod 2019 - June 21-25, 2019. We had some fun with a Happy Days theme, and joked about our many Wisconsin stereotypes. But then we got serious by

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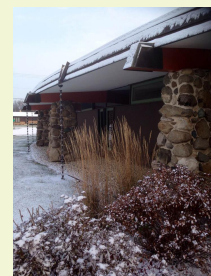
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### Church Spotlight



[St. John's UCC, Random Lake](#)

Rev. Ann Utke is the pastor of this Southeast Association church. The church building, the congregation's third building built in 1964, is a one-level, crescent-shaped structure with a natural, fieldstone wall forming the entire inner

acknowledging the deep racial divide across our state, and particularly in the city of Milwaukee. We showed a video affirming the dream of a diverse city in which all God's people have opportunities for a good and safe and sufficient life. We also made a commitment, heartily endorsed by our Board of Directors, that we intend to work on this issue. Over the coming months we will encourage our congregations and clergy to engage in a time of study and conversations in order to cultivate a deeper awareness of our own prejudices.

I invite you to visit our website to find several [discussion guides](#) available for facilitating conversations about race.

This is tough work, and I recognize the vulnerability it takes to dialogue about issues that can sometimes make us feel defensive. Yet, I hope you will prayerfully consider it.

Summer blessings to you all!

Franz

## Video Highlights from Annual Meeting

If you weren't at the Wisconsin Conference UCC Annual Meeting last week, you can still enjoy some of the meeting highlights. We have posted videos of some meeting segments on our website. These are "can't miss" presentations; you'll be glad you took the time to view them.

- **Rev. John Dorhauer**, President and General Minister of the UCC, offered a very inspiring and motivating keynote. John's passion for justice came through in heartfelt stories. Learn more about the vision of the UCC in this video. [Click here to watch](#)
- On Friday evening, **Franz spoke about "Our Unfolding Story."** He shared thoughts on how we can move forward while remaining rooted in our spiritual values and faith traditions. *"We can re-envision the church as mission bound... a verb, suggesting a radical transformation... Church, as the delivering of justice. Church, as the outpouring of compassion... Church, as the overturning of systems of inequality and prejudice... For God is still calling us, Church, onward."* [Click here to watch](#)
- **Franz's Sunday sermon** offered wise words for our lives, asking us to hold a "both-and" perspective. This sermon excerpt sets the stage: *"The story of God's goodness and grace throughout history is a story of expanding possibilities, of widening welcomes and broad inclusion . . . it's not a story of diminishing and restricting and excluding. The story of God's open-ended Spirit (which blows where it will blow) is BOTH-AND (permission giving), NOT either-or (parameter limiting)."* If your congregation hasn't already seen the video Franz provided before annual meeting, feel free to share this version with them. [Click here to watch](#)
- As requested, we also have the **slides from Rev. Everett Mitchell's** moving presentation on Saturday morning, for those who were present to hear him. [Click here to view slides](#)

curve with a stone baptismal font, communion table and pulpit and an asymmetrical cross at the front. William P. Wenzler was the architect of this unique church.


## CONFERENCE CALENDAR

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

### Blue Choir Robes

Immanuel United Church of Christ has around 20 blue choir robes we would like to sell. They are just cleaned and in excellent condition. If you are interested, contact [Diane Vanderkin](#).

## Quick Links

Forward this email to a friend 



## Newsletter archive

[Newsletter Sign Up](#)



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.

Also: check out the

# New Wisconsin Authorized Ministers Compensation Guidelines

by Rev. Rob MacDougall

Not many UCC members in Wisconsin ask how the authorized minister's compensation guidelines get updated. But when churches are calling new pastors and when church personnel committees are trying to figure out what to do for their pastor's raise, the guidelines are nice to have available.

[Keep reading](#)

[Facebook page for ONA churches!](#)

## 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.

## Join the Disaster Ministries Volunteer Pool



United Church of Christ

Wisconsin Conference

The Wisconsin Conference Disaster Ministries would like to start a pool of disaster response volunteers, should disaster strike in Wisconsin. If you are interested in being a volunteer in whatever capacity (physical labor/clean-up, communications, volunteer support, relief to community, presence) please email [Christina Schoenwetter](#) or call her at 608-445-8305 with the following information:

- Name
- Phone Number
- Email address
- Local Church
- Association
- Type of work or skill-set willing to volunteer

## Interim Ministry Training Institute

October 2017 - May 2018

The Interim Ministry Training Institute (IMTI) offers training for those who want to be intentional about preparing for the privilege and responsibility of guiding a congregation through a time of transition and change. An interim pastor does not bring their own "agenda" to impose upon a congregation, but rather respects the church's needs, context, and culture.

[See training brochure](#)

## Creation Care Team

by John Helt

I was minding my own business last fall, driving my cousin's enormous John Deere tractor pulling a tiller up and down the rows of a soybean field in Iowa, when Tisha Brown called. I grew up on a noisy John Deere B with only two cylinders ("Poppin' Johnny," it was called) and no air conditioned and sound-proofed cab. I couldn't have heard a cell phone ring if I had one. But that was 50 years ago, and this time, my phone rang mid round and I heard it and answered the call. Would I be interested in helping convene a Wisconsin Conference Creation Care Team?

[Keep reading](#)



## Connect with Creation Care

by Bob Ullman  
Wisconsin Conference Creation Care Team member

Summer is a great time to connect with the creation care legacy of Wisconsin by stopping at sites that honor the lives of environmental pioneers Aldo Leopold and John Muir. Instead of the Dells, consider stops at the [Leopold Center outside Baraboo](#) and [John Muir County Park](#) (the boyhood home of the "father of the National Parks" and the Sierra Club). As long as you're in the Baraboo area, you won't want to miss the [International Crane Foundation](#) as well. These are all educational and "holy" pilgrimage sites - a wonderful way to spend a day (or two).

## Free Webinars for Your Church

The next free webinar sponsored by the Insurance Board is "**Fire Prevention and Protection for Churches**," July 12, 2017.  
[Register and view more webinar opportunities here](#)

## Your Gift to Back Bay Mission Could Be Doubled!

A generous donor has offered to match up to \$10,000 for Back Bay Mission's client sustainability programs. That means your gift to the Mission could be worth twice as much!



Back Bay Mission's client sustainability programs meet the immediate needs of the poor and marginalized of the Mississippi Gulf Coast and help people begin their journeys out of poverty. This year, we're raising \$150,000 for three of these vital programs: Bridges Out of Poverty, our community health partner, and our veterans support fund.

Until August 31, 2017, up to \$10,000 in gifts to these programs will be matched!

You can learn more about these programs, and make your gift, on [the Mission's website](#)

## Conference Transitions

### Searching Churches

- **First Congregational UCC, Watertown**, is seeking a full time Senior Pastor
- **The Crossing Campus Ministry** in Madison is seeking an Executive Director
- To see all searching churches, [click here](#).

### New Calls

- **Rev. Jim Klein** has been called as interim pastor at Bethel UCC in Elkhart Lake, effective June 1, 2017
- **Rev. Topher Mehlhoff** has been called as part-time pastor at Union Congregational UCC in Three Lakes, effective June 4, 2017. Topher also serves Community UCC in Saint Germain.

## Installations and Ordinations

- **Rev. Mary Snell Willis** was installed at Ebenezer UCC, Land O' Lakes, on June 4, 2017

## Anniversaries

- **Fitchburg Memorial UCC** celebrated their 100th Anniversary on June 10, 2017

## In Memoriam

- **Rev. Robert Thoma** passed away on May 27, 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](#).*

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

Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ  
4459 Gray Road | DeForest, WI 53532  
[mail@wcucc.org](mailto:mail@wcucc.org)  
[www.wcucc.org](http://www.wcucc.org)