Correction: Roger Hofer is leaving his licensed position at Saint John’s UCC, Humbird December 31, 2017.

The Christmas Fund Special Offering

Our joy at Christmas is a response to God’s promise of new life through the birth of Jesus. It is a joy we are called to share widely, through our witness and gifts, both to loved ones and to distant neighbors. “It wasn’t easy picking up the telephone to share with you my present situation. In fact, it was one of the most humiliating experiences of my life although it reminded me that grace still happens. Sometimes we as clergy persons lose sight of God’s grace when the negative stuff comes into our lives.” “…thanks so much for sharing your time and ministry with me. Your most gracious gift is appreciated more than words can say as I continue to live in the ‘meantime.’” These eloquent words are from a pastor who is the recipient of the caring and concern of those who contribute to the Christmas Fund Offering.

You have the opportunity to be a part of this ministry that cares for the active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ through your participation in this year’s Christmas Fund Offering.

Your gift to the Christmas Fund will not only assist pastors like the one above, but also provide for the Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums, Emergency Grants, and Christmas “Thank You” Gift Checks next December to lower-income retirees.

Your gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees whose low-income annuities make it difficult to meet increasing living costs. This is your opportunity to participate in God’s promise of renewal by enabling this ministry of compassion and care.

We celebrate with Congregational UCC, Mellen, as they move into their newly constructed church building.

The congregation had considered renovating and updating their old church building but found it to be too costly and would not have given them the kind of space they needed, so they decided to tear down their old building and put up a new church.

We send our blessings and hopes for new life in their church and community.
And in Eau Claire

On Sunday, Oct. 29, Plymouth United Church of Christ, Eau Claire broke ground for their new building. It was just over a year ago that their former building was struck by lightning and burned to the ground. For the past year they have found a home in another church’s building and have continued their faith life together. With great joy we celebrate with Plymouth UCC as they continue their journey together. [Link](http://www.wgow.com/story/36711360/eau-claire-church-one-step-closer-to-new-home-after-tragedy) [Link](http://cvpost.org/plymouth-ucc-break-ground-sunday-new-building-replace-structure-lost-fire/)

Northern WI Churches and the Economy

Rev. Rob MacDougall, NWA ACM

I have had a spectacular fall traveling to our Northwest Association, UCC churches. The colors have been beautiful and the temperatures unseasonably warm.

During my visits to clergy and local church members I try to ask questions about the life of their congregations and also about what is going on in their local communities and areas. There are a couple themes that get described over and over again. One theme is about the aging population in churches and in the communities where the churches are found. Another theme has to do with the economics of our northern communities and how small businesses are closing on a regular basis. People in the north say that everyone has to have more than one job to make it financially in the northern third to half of the state.

Marc Eisen recently wrote an article analyzing the economics and population changes in northern WI based on information collected by the Economic Innovation Group. From 2007-2015 of forty counties in the northern half of our state nine counties showed job creation, five stayed about the same and twenty two counties lost significant numbers of jobs. It is no surprise that many of these northern counties have unemployment rates above six percent and only three counties have unemployment below three point six percent. It is also true that many of these northern counties have a zero to more than six percent population loss between 2007-2015. It is also true that these northern
counties have greater portions of their population over the age of sixty five than the rest of the state and it is projected by 2040 that more than thirty percent of our northern counties will be populated by people over the age of sixty five. Kenan Fikri stated that “Wisconsin is suffering from a slow and steady rural depopulation.”

The things that many people in our churches are telling me about their northern WI life are echoed in the statistics that have been gathered. The aging and shrinking of our northern churches reflects what is generally happening throughout our northern communities.

One of the difficulties of life in our northern counties came up again in a conversation with Rev. Mary Snell Willis who serves our UCC churches in Land O Lakes and Phelps. We talked about the difficulty of poor phone reception and broadband width for internet service. We talked about young people who move out of northern counties, not because they don’t appreciated the beauty of the area and the gifts of living in rural and small towns, but because they can’t make a living there and they feel cut off from the rest of the world. I know that expanding broadband service has come up in the WI legislature over recent years. Some legislators have said that expanding broadband throughout the state is one of the most essential tools of economic development we could pursue.

The State of WI has established the WI Broadband Office to help facilitate the expansion of broadband service. This office has mapped out internet service throughout the state and it is no surprise that the counties with greatest job and population losses are mostly counties that are unserved by fixed internet service or they have low levels of service.

The connection between the wellbeing of our churches is significantly linked to the wellbeing of our communities. When our communities are strengthened, when people have jobs and the age of our communities are multi-generational there is greater wellbeing for all. Perhaps one effort our church members around WI could engage in, is advocacy for the expansion of internet access and strength. We are God’s people and have been given all that we need to live the full lives God has promised, but we are people who live in the world and we need to be smart and work together for the good of all. Contact the WI Broadband Office and find out what can be done to improve this necessary resource for our communities.

Blessings - Rob

Transitions/ Installations:

Sept. 10 – Rev. David Bowles installed at Ladysmith/Conrath UCC
Sept. 24 – Rev. Gloria Van Houten installed at Schofield UCC
Oct. 22- Rev. Kent Cormack installed at First Congregational UCC, La Crosse
October 29 - Rev. Topher Mehlhoff, Union UCC, Three Lakes

Interims:
Rev. JoBeth Marshall ended her interim at Osseo, UCC, Sept. 24
Rev. Wayne Drueck began half time interim at Rhinelander, UCC, on Oct. 1
Rev. Cathy Gibson-Christianson continues her interim at Prescott, UCC

Roger Hofer has left his licensed position at Saint John’s UCC, Humbird. Thank you for your years of serving the church.

Scott Crandall is recovering and has returned part-time to his position at Peace UCC, Stevens Point,

Rev Marina Lacheck has returned to the Madeline Island St John’s UCC from FMLA. Her husband Jim Kasperson continues to heal.

Dear colleagues and brothers and sisters in Christ of the UCC Churches of the Northwest Association:

Rev. Burt Williams will be installed as pastor of Roberts Congregational United Church of Christ on Sunday, November 19, 2017 at 3:30pm. The Church is located at 1001 Birch Drive, Roberts, Wisconsin, 54023.

Clergy are invited to robe and to wear red stoles; please arrive a half hour earlier if you plan to join the procession.

There will be a celebration dinner after the installation service. If you plan to attend the dinner, please RSVP by November 13 to the church phone (715-749-3225) or email (ruccsecretary@gmail.com).

We all need to be reminded that we are not in ministry by ourselves or in isolation. We are in service to Christ for the whole church. That includes, of course, that “great cloud of witnesses,” seen and unseen. On November 19 we are invited to be among that cloud in physical, tangible presence. I do hope that you will share in the joy of the people of Roberts Congregational United Church of Christ as Rev. Burt Williams is installed there.
Reformation Sunday in Neillsville

At worship today, Dr. Martin Luther (aka Pastor Jim Mohr) paid a visit and shared with us his perspective on the Reformation. After worship we celebrated Pastor Jim’s 45th Anniversary of his ordination. We are grateful at UCC Jim and Karen remain active members of our congregation.

Picture the Bible Workshop
First Congregational Church, River Falls
January 27, 2018

Picture the Bible engages learners and leaders in conversations that take Bible stories seriously and connects them to peoples’ lives in the world. Picture the Bible is a set of 36 images depicting 36 individual Bible stories. The images and related resources offer a creative approach to Bible study for learners of all ages. Picture the Bible adapts to a wide variety of settings, including: graded classrooms, inter-generational learning experiences, teen groups, and worship.

This workshop is designed for pastors, Christian educators, and lay church leaders and volunteers. The workshop will:

- Outline a theological and developmental foundation for biblical literacy and interpretation
- Introduce Picture the Bible resources

New OCWM Resources Available

Many have seen the statistical information that 75% of all financial gifts from our Wisconsin churches to Our Church’s Wider Mission (OCWM) remain in Wisconsin to support the services and ministries of the Wisconsin Conference. This support has a positive impact in multiple ways on the individual churches within our Conference.

We know of many of these. Providing assistance with pastoral transitions, equipping congregations in ways to improve their vitality, offering clergy care through individual mentoring and collegial support groups, providing lay leadership training through the Lay Academy, supporting of Youth Ministries, offering outdoor ministry programs through Pilgrim Center & Moon Beach, and guiding congregations through periods of conflict or change are but a few of the services and ministries that are made possible by our support of OCWM.

The difficult challenge often heard from Pastors and Lay Leaders is how to effectively create an understanding within their membership of the benefits their church receives through financial support of OCWM.

This challenge is being addressed by an OCWM Communication Committee and Conference staff working to create several educational resources. These resources have been developed to aid in communicating a better understanding of how our OCWM gifts are utilized and their impact on individual churches. We urge you to review and utilize the print and video resources on our Conference website. [http://www.wcucc.org/resourcemanager/conference-giving/](http://www.wcucc.org/resourcemanager/conference-giving/)

It is hoped that you will find these helpful during this time of stewardship conversation, budget discussions or at anytime you choose to provide the important message of how we all benefit from our support of OCWM.

David R. Cook, member of First Congregational UCC, Menomonie, has self-published a small book, Anthology of Alzheimer’s Caregiving. Mr. Cook has collected his writings about his journey with
Offer strategies for facilitating conversations at the intersection of life and faith
Be interactive, inspiring, engaging, and practical
Provide a time of fellowship and sharing
Include a luncheon

More information

Save the date - February 3, 2018

The Licensed Minister's retreat will be held Saturday, Feb 3rd, 2018 at St. Stephens UCC, Merrill.
Information about licensure,

Save the Date – April 21, 2018

The NWA Annual Meeting is set for Saturday, April 21, 2018 at First Congregational United Church of Christ, Eau Claire. Please plan to attend,

WHAT IS
THE “DIVISION OF THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD?”

The Division of the Mission of the Church in the World is one of three committees for the Northwest Association. Its name is long for “mission committee.” First, we are a scholarship committee, providing funds for mission trips and work camps—like the ones to Back Bay and Pine Ridge.

Second, we promote the 5 for 5 fund-raisers from National—Our Church’s Wider Mission, One Great Hour of Sharing, Neighbors in Need, Strengthen the Church, and the Christmas Fund. We are the go-to committee to ask the questions that your parishioners might have when you start your campaigns, such as, why are they important and how do we serve God through them? You are not alone with your computer or tablet in planning your 5 for 5 campaigns.

Third, we are a clearing house on mission—that means you can call us or email us when you are searching for the key piece needed to make the information you get from the internet work for your church’s special mission project. We look for ways to make it easier for churches to network and see where another church’s ideas fits onto their own or to find other partners when a project is too big for one church or community to take on alone. To this end we are planning an informal directory of those people in the local church who are passionate about mission. Look for committee member Karen Brzezinski’s call.

Fourth, call or email us when you need help clarifying or shifting through the information on the internet about difficult issues like immigration—like what’s the difference between a refugee and an immigrant, who are “dreamers?” We’re also a sounding board for figuring out the next step to take that fits your congregation. For instance, we’ve been talking to churches that have had conversations about “Welcoming Immigrants.” These NW churches have approached the subject in several ways—one is having a dinner with table discussions each lead by a facilitator who has a set of commonly asked questions, another is having art educators make basic designs for posters about stereotypes and misconceptions about immigration with the congregation getting together and decorating them (we will be hearing more about such projects) and one has resettled a mother and her four children from Guatemala. In this edition of the NW WORD, members of River Falls will describe their experiences doing that.

Rev. Elizabeth Hazel, chair, morrinhazel@ptcnet.net, 715-744-2373, for more information
Ms. Karen Brzezinski, karencbrz@gmail.com
Rev. Bill Colby-Newton, bill.colbynewton@gmail.com
Rev. L. Scott Crandall, peaceuccchurch@gmail.com
Ms. Cindy Halfen, cindy.halfen@gmail.com
Ms. Sue McBride, suemcbride1@gmail.com

Mr. Cook’s writings include reflections, poetry and articles he has shared over the internet. Mr. Cook would like to share the stories of his life with Anne, with others. He is making his book available to purchase for the cost of printing and shipping. You can contact him at David Cook, davecook@wwt.net, or 715-505-2998.

His wife Anne as they journeyed through the stages of her Alzheimer’s disease together. Mr. Cook's writings include reflections, poetry and articles he has shared over the internet. Mr. Cook would like to share the stories of his life with Anne, with others. He is making his book available to purchase for the cost of printing and shipping. You can contact him at David Cook, davecook@wwt.net, or 715-505-2998.

His wife Anne as they journeyed through the stages of her Alzheimer’s disease together. Mr. Cook’s writings include reflections, poetry and articles he has shared over the internet. Mr. Cook would like to share the stories of his life with Anne, with others. He is making his book available to purchase for the cost of printing and shipping. You can contact him at David Cook, davecook@wwt.net, or 715-505-2998.

More information
**Disaster Ministries**

The UCC Disaster Ministries has geared up for long-term recovery work as the result of hurricanes, fires, and earthquakes. Your contributions mean providing community support for holistic recovery, repairing homes for families, and restoring dignity for the most vulnerable who have lost everything in the wake of catastrophic events. 100% of funds designated for disaster relief to the United Church of Christ are used for disaster relief and rehabilitation programming. Donate through your local church or Disaster Ministries, [http://www.ucc.org/disaster](http://www.ucc.org/disaster).

**Community Dialogues and the Politics of Difference**

**December 5th**

**United Presbyterian Church**

**730 Cedar St, Wisconsin Dells**

You won’t want to miss the 2017 Wisconsin Council of Churches Annual Meeting this year. Make plans to attend this meeting and engage with other Christians to strengthen ecumenical relationships, increase awareness of critical needs within our state and country, and identify opportunities to take action - individually, in our congregations, and in our communities.

In addition to the opportunity to hear from Dr. Katherine Cramer and learn how place-based identities profoundly influence how people understand politics, we will also be welcoming our new executive director, Rev. Kerri Parker who will share her vision for the organization.

[More information](#)

---

**From our newsletters**

**Nekoosa Rummage Sale**

Nekoosa United Church of Christ
205 Market Street
Nekoosa, WI 54457
Nov. 2 & 3 – 8:00am-4:00pm
Nov. 4 – 8:00am-12:00noon

**First Congregational UCC River Falls**

**Adult Trip to New York**- Pastor Chris will again be leading an adult trip to New York City in early May. Based on the trip many of our youth have taken, it will focus on the immigration experience of many of our ancestors as well as include lots of traditional tourist sights. Included sights are Ellis Island, Statue of Liberty, Chinatown, 9-11 site and museum, Rockefeller Center, Lower Eastside Tenement Museum, Central Park. Please use the sign up sheet to register your interest.

**Planning Your Good Funeral**- Remember the old saying: The only two things that are certain in life are death and taxes? Your accountant can help you with the tax part, but who will help you with the death part? We will. On Sun, Oct 22 during the 9:00 am Adult Forum, Pastor Chris will lead an hour long class on how to plan your good funeral. Since death is inevitable why not plan for

**St Paul’s UCC Ellsworth**

**Gobbler’s Gallop 5K/1K Family Fun Run**

A fun run for the Pierce County Food Shelf sponsored by St Paul's Youth Group

Join us on Thanksgiving morning November 23rd, 2017 at 8:00 AM, starting and ending at Nilssen’s Foods.

**COOKIE WALK** The Guild will be holding its first ever cookie walk on December 16th from 9 o’clock to 11 o’clock. The public will be invited so we need lots of cookies. Thank you in advance.
a good funeral? In our time together, we will cover things like the difference between a funeral, memorial service and celebration of life; writing obituaries; leaving a legacy; grief and helping those left behind. Join us to plan your good funeral.
Bi-Vocational Ministry Incubator
April - November, 2018

Increasingly, congregations can no longer afford a full-time, fully-supported pastor. And pastors are needing to wrestle with tough questions about how to sustain themselves while being faithful to their sense of call. The Bi-vocational Ministry Incubator provides a safe space where pastors can dig deeper into these questions, hone skills for doing ministry in a different way, develop tools to guide a congregation into making a transition into a more shared model of ministry, and find the courage to explore options.
Pulpit Supply October 2017
Churches should be fair and forthright in agreeing upon honorarium and travel expenses for persons they invite to provide pulpit supply. The Conference Division of Church and Ministry suggests a minimum of $125 plus mileage reimbursed at the IRS current rate; for 2017, that would be 53.5 cents per mile. Where a church has two points and two services, you should consider a minimum of $175 plus mileage.

Conference staff persons serve the local congregations in a variety of ways in the normal performance of their duties. Honoraria are not accepted, and travel costs are covered by the Conference travel budget. Except in emergencies, Conference staff cannot provide pulpit supply; however, the staff welcomes opportunities to preach for special occasions or to meet with members of the congregation.

Please note: Persons licensed to the NW Association and ordained pastors are authorized to administer the Sacraments.

EAU CLAIRE TO TWIN CITIES AREA:
Rev. Elizabeth Hazel, 1060 Marian Lane, Park Falls, WI 54552 (willing to drive 3 hours) 715-744-2373 morrinhazel@pctcnet.net
Rev. Carol J. Heckmann, 1789 County Road E E, White Bear Lake, MN 55110 651-269-4950 cj.heckmann@yahoo.com
Rev. Jeanny House, 1342 Glenn Place #2, Eau Claire, WI 54703 715-577-5542 jeannyh@fastmail.fm
Rev. Sandee Kosmo, 3214 Chasewood Lane, Eau Claire, 54701 715-834-2112 skosmo14@msn.com
Rev. Norm Luecke, Bruce, WI (willing to travel 2 hours) 925-639-1652 normluecke@yahoo.com
Rev. Dick Olmsted, 613 Spruce Drive, Hudson 54016 715-531-0374 drolmsted@gmail.com
Stephen P. Ottman, 733 First Street, Plum City 54761 715-647-3501 h 715-495-2017 cell s_ottman@hotmail.com
Rev. Charles Wolfe, 715-441-7362 chaswolfe411@gmail.com

SUPERIOR-ASHLAND AREA:
Deanne Allen, 14240 S. Riverside Road, Cable, WI 54821 715-798-5097 woodyspirit@gmail.com
Pastor Gary Gilbert, Licensed to the NW Association, 2051 Pinewood Drive, P.O. Box 1921, Eagle River, WI 54521 715-479-2908 home garygilbert41@charter.net
Bill Handy, 715-682-0168

Rev. Elizabeth Hazel, 1060 Marian Lane, Park Falls, WI 54552 (willing to travel 3 hours) 715-744-2373 morrinhazel@pctcnet.net
John Thompkins, johnval@reagan.com 715-372-4543.

Rev. Donald B. King, W7995 Perkinstown Ave., Medford, WI 54451 715-785-7635 sdking@tds.net
Rev. Norm Luecke 925-639-1652 Bruce, WI (willing to travel 2 hours) normluecke@yahoo.com
Rev Bob Rice, robertsrice@msn.com 405-642-6118 (Eagle River area)

LA CROSSE AREA:
Rev. Betsy Miller-Ruben, millernu@triwest.net 608-534-6043
Rev. Micah Schlbohm, N10188 Buckeye Drive, Necedah WI 608-547-7225 Willing to preach in the "triangle between LaCrosse, Wausau and Necedah.) revmicah.schlobohm5@gmail.com
Rev. Mark Stahlhut, 2106 West Ave. S, La Crosse WI 54601 608-298-3185 or 608-317-5735 (work cell) mstahlhut@msn.com
Rev.Tom Uphaus, 2650 N Pine Creek Rd, La Crescent, MN 55947 507-895-2152
tuphaus@acegroup.cc

WAUSAU AREA:
Rev. Dale Bishop, 511 Sundstein Rd., Eagle River, WI 54521 715-479-1152 dbishop511@frontier.com
Rev. Don Baumann, 2202 Zimmerman Street, Wausau, WI 54403 715 571-6329 donbfishing@gmail.com
Rev. Wayne C. Drueck, 1811 Perry Drive, Schofield, WI 54476 715-355-8895 home 715-212-8376 cell harleyrev@gmail.com
Rev. Emerson Coy, PO Box 67, Lac du Flambeau, WI 54538 715-588-3487 ecoy@dftribe.com
Rev. John Eldred (UMC), 4403 North Lakeshore Drive, Wausau 54401 715-359-5078 home 715-370-6822 cell bramblyhill@yahoo.com
Pastor Gary Gilbert, Licensed to the NW Association, 2051 Pinewood Drive, P.O. Box 1921, Eagle River, WI 54521 715-479-2908 home garygilbert41@charter.net
Rev. Elizabeth Hazel, 1060 Marian Lane, Park Falls, WI 54552, (willing to travel 3 hours) 715-744-2373 morrinhazel@pctcnet.net
Rev. Donald B. King, W7995 Perkinstown Ave., Medford, WI 54451 715-785-7635 sdking@tds.net
Rev. Norm Luecke 925-639-1652 Bruce, WI (willing to travel 2 hours) normluecke@yahoo.com
Rev. James Mohr, 35 Hewett St., Neillsville WI 54456, 715-743-7626 jmohr@tds.net *Note: I would be available to drive to any place
Rev Bob Rice, robertsrice@msn.com, 405-642-6118 (Eagle River area)
Rev. Micah Schlbohm, N10188 Buckeye Drive, Necedah WI 608-547-7225 *Willing to preach in the "triangle" between LaCrosse, Wausau and Necedah. revmicah.schlobohm5@gmail.com
Rev. Pat Tucker, 511 Sundstein Rd., Eagle River, WI 54521    715-479-1152
ptucker511@frontier.com
Mary Wright, bmw@tznet.com    715-325-3602