Mary's Musings

June 10, 2021

This week, I invite you to consider how our diversity of experiences and perspectives makes us stronger as a Church. When you encounter a difference of opinion in the church, ask questions and seek to understand their perspective, rather than shutting down the conversation.

Peace,
Mary

Mary's Schedule

6/10/21 Travel to Memphis, TN
6/11-12/21 Meetings with churches and pastors in Memphis, TN
6/13/21 Worship with First Congregational UCC, Memphis, TN
Attend Rev. Debra Tracy's afternoon installation service and picnic with blue grass music, Christ Evangelical UCC, Cape Girardeau, MO
6/14/21 Travel to MA and Observe Sabbath
6/15-17/21 Work from home office in South Hadley, MA

**Damien's Schedule**

6/11/21 Observe Sabbath
6/13/21 Worship with Evangelical UCC, Boonville, MO and St. Johns UCC, Billingsville, MO
6/14-16/21 Work from home office in Columbia, MO
6/17/21 Eastern Association Committee on Ministry Meeting

**Weekly Devotion**

**Ordinary Time**
During this season after Pentecost, join us for a video devotion premiering at 10 a.m. each Wednesday to be a witness to someone's experience with God during this "Ordinary Time."

View June 9 Devotion with Nathan Fulk, Executive Director and Pastor of Shannondale Community Center

**From MMSC Office**

**Let's Take the General Synod Challenge**

By participating in the first-ever Congregational Challenge – a friendly competition designed to encourage attendance at the upcoming virtual 2021 General Synod July 11-18, our congregations can help bring bragging rights home to MMSC.

During the registration process, a leaderboard will show a tally based on the percentage of attendance, by congregation, within each conference.

Winning conferences will be announced July 15 during the General Synod Evening of Celebration.

**MMSC Churches Display Traveling Gun Violence Memorial**

Five MMSC churches are participant hosts of a statewide Traveling Memorial to Missouri Children Killed by Guns in 2020, on display now through July in the St. Louis area.
The display will be at Samuel UCC, St. Louis, Mo. June 27-July 5 and Peace UCC, Webster Groves, Mo. July 9-16.

Starting in May with Grace UCC, O'Fallon, Mo., the display moved to Friedens UCC, St. Charles, Mo. and Kirkwood UCC, Kirkwood, Mo.

Representing 46 Missouri children killed by gun homicide in 2020, each T-shirt in the display represents the age and gender of the child killed. The outdoor art installation is visible to passersby without inviting people to gather as a group, thereby also satisfying COVID-19 precautions.

Constructed by the Missouri Chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, the memorial's goal is to call attention to children killed by gun homicide in 2020 and inspire others to take action to prevent deaths in 2021 and beyond.

In Missouri, firearms are the #1 cause of death among children; nearly 100 Missouri children die by firearms every year when all forms of gun violence are combined: homicides, unintentional shootings, and suicides.

Camp MoVal Discernment

Camp Mo-Val Discernment Sessions
9-11 a.m.
June 12 and 26, July 24,
Aug. 7 and 21, Sept. 11

The first session kicked off the Appreciative Inquiry process for Camp MoVal Saturday, May 22 with Brandyn Simmons, founding Director of Generations Care Partners and UCC Pastor.

You can view the recording here and still participate; however, subsequent upcoming sessions will require attendance and will not be recorded for public access.

By assigning participants into small groups, Simmons will moderate all sessions, give assignments, and ask questions to help us discern, dream, and explore what can be.

To join the next session June 12 and all remaining sessions, register here each time. In general, we are reserving a two-hour block of time for each session, but we may not use the full two hours.

Give to Medical Debt Relief

Your generosity is much needed for Medical Debt Relief to benefit Springdale, Ark.; Memphis, Tenn.; and Shannondale, Mo., where one of our outdoor ministry sites is located.
Friday - Kathie (off)
Damien (Sabbath)
Mary (Sabbath)

Contact Numbers for MMSC Personnel

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314-575-1951

Bill Bourdon
636-583-2730

Julie Darnold Atkins
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Nathan Fulk
573-858-3284

Damien Lake
616-723-5468

Mary Nelson
314-252-8132

Kathleen Rainey
314-918-2602

Guidelines Updated for Staff to Travel

Conference staff can travel for in-person worship and meetings with the following conditions:

- The church meets minimum CDC guidelines for wearing masks and socially distancing.
- The church invitation is for a significant meeting or worship.
- Staff member is comfortable traveling at the time.

Please know staff can always decline in-person invitations for their own health and safety with the offer to record a greeting and/or attend virtually.

A similar effort hosted by the St. Louis Association in 2019 to raise funds throughout the Conference to help relieve medical debt, which is the #1 cause of personal bankruptcy in the United States, inspired this initiative.

Because the pandemic temporarily sidelined all efforts, we are now committed to completing this act of grace and mercy. Please give generously through Aug. 1.

Learn More on How to Direct Your Gift

Upcoming Training

Online Boundary Awareness Training
9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 7

Participants must have access to a computer with a webcam and microphone, broadband wired or wireless internet access (3G or 4G/LTE works best), and access to Zoom.

Register HERE

Learn More

Our neighboring Illinois South Conference also will offer Boundary Awareness Training via Zoom 8:30 a.m. to noon, Monday, July 19. To register, email Christy Pursell.

"Anti-Racist Practice Group"
A Monthly Brown Bag Lunch

Meeting Monthly
Fourth Tuesday, June 22
11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Register HERE

This new group for pastors and lay leaders has three goals:
1. Continue our own learning
Racial Justice & Equity Training for Authorized Ministers

To verify when you are due to complete this training every three years, contact your Committee on Ministry chair(s). Many St. Louis Association clergy members are due by the end of 2021.

Pre-approved opportunities will appear in the eCourier. If you seek other opportunities, you must request pre-approval by email to Lillian Lammers or Leon Sharpe.

When you complete this requirement, please send documentation by email to Kathleen Rainey. If you don't complete the training, the Committee on Ministry will contact you.

Volunteers Needed

Climate Justice Working Group
Renewable Energy, Recycling and Creating Green Environments
You can help churches across the Conference become more environmentally friendly.

Disaster Relief Team
Flooding, Tornadoes, Snowstorms and Other Natural Disasters
If you are experienced with disaster relief, you can help churches across the Conference.

To volunteer, email Bill Biedenstein

Racial Equity Task Force

Conference Council recently created a Racial Equity Task Force to:

- Assess current policies and practices that enable or prevent racial equity in the MMSC
- Present a report at the 2022 Conference Annual Gathering (CAG) on their assessment of our racial equity reality
- Recommend a Racial Equity Strategic Plan to include short-term and long-term goals

Eastern Association Task Force Members
Jamie Mercer (lay), St. John's-Bem UCC, Owensville, MO
Laura Mignerone (clergy), St. John UCC, St. Clair, MO
Eric Moeller (clergy), St. Peter's UCC, Washington, MO

St. Louis Association Task Force Members
Cecelia Johnson Powell (lay), First Congregational UCC, Memphis
Leon Sharpe (lay), Christ the King UCC, Florissant, MO
Bella Winters (clergy), Epiphany UCC, St. Louis, MO

Western Association Task Force Members
Randy Hundley (lay), Ivanhoe UCC, Raytown, MO
Tammy Linningham (lay), Southwood UCC, Kansas City, MO
Rushan Sinaduray (clergy), The Oasis UCC, Jefferson City, MO

Resources and Gatherings

United Church of Christ Musicians Association (UCCMA)
Prior to General Synod, this conference will offer workshops on topics of music, worship, community, and technology along with worship services, networking opportunities, and a concert for musicians, pastors, and lay leaders.

As a grass-roots national organization with more than 200 members, the United Church of Christ Musicians Association (UCCMA) aims to serve all who "minister through music and the arts."

Take advantage of the online format, lack of travel expenses, and access to all conference content one month following the event.

Missouri Mid-South Conference Leaders to Serve General Synod

- **Rev. Michelle Higgins**, Senior Pastor and Teacher at St. John's Church (The Beloved Community) in St. Louis, MO, will preach Wednesday, July 14, at 8 p.m. EDT.
- **Cindy Birkner**, MMSC Youth Ministry Coordinator, will lead a suicide awareness workshop Friday, July 9 at 2 p.m. EDT, focusing on how to have a healthy, productive discussion with someone who may be considering suicide.

We give thanks for our Conference leaders, who continue to accept God’s call to serve the United Church of Christ. Let us hold them in our prayers.

Missouri Mid-South Conference Members on General Synod Slate

Our conference has the following members on slate at General Synod to be nominated to the UCC Board:
- Joyce Bathke, Member of Faith UCC, Wentzville, MO
- Rev. Bethany Ruhl, Clergy, Member of Southwood UCC, Raytown, MO

Also, Rev. Rushan Sinnaduray has been nominated as the Assistant Moderator of a future General Synod. Our prayers and delegate votes go with each of you.
Additional General Synod Agenda Highlights

Keynote Speakers

- Monday, July 12, at 8 p.m. EDT: Valarie Kaur, filmmaker, civil rights lawyer, Sikh activist and leader of the Revolutionary Love Project.
- Friday, July 16, at 8 p.m. EDT: Rev. Adam Russell Taylor, who leads Sojourners, a social-justice movement based in the nation’s capital.

Preachers for Worship Services Open to All

In addition to MMSC minister Rev. Michelle Higgins preaching Wednesday, July 14, the following will preach at two other worship services:

- Sunday, July 11, at 5 p.m. EDT: Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr. will preach opening worship. One of the “Wilmington Ten,” Chavis is author of “Psalms from Prison” and led the UCC Commission for Racial Justice in the 1990s. He is now president and CEO of the National Newspaper Publishers Association.
- Sunday, July 18, at 6 p.m. EDT: Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, UCC associate general minister, Wider Church Ministries, and co-executive of Global Ministries.

Wider UCC

If you missed this conversation last month, you can still hear from leaders of Purple Churches, or churches that have members across the theological/social/political lines, about how they show up authentically with each other in the midst of difference. Click image to view.

Evangelical & Reformed Heritage Sunday
June 13

Resources are available for celebrating the continuing legacy of historic E and R churches throughout the Conference. You'll find liturgy, prayers, suggested hymns, and bulletin covers and inserts.

Click logo to learn more.
UCC’s Council for Health and Human Service Ministries (CHHSM) and Council on Racial and Ethnic Ministries (COREM) are bringing a Synod Resolution of Witness to delegates calling on the church to declare and respond to racism as a public health crisis.

Before delegates debate and vote on the resolution at this summer’s biennial meeting, a new resource will help all settings of the church deal with and process the harsh realities of systemic racism and its consequences on people’s lives, health and well-being.

**Reason to Have Hope: A Public Health Response to Racism** was created by Rev. Dr. Elyse Berry, CHHSM’s associate for advocacy and leadership development, with input from COREM.

Available in June, this multi-part, online, interactive course will be accessible through CHHSM website’s **Advocacy Center** and **Anti-Racism Center**.

Learn More