



A Midsummer Update from the National Setting

Greetings!

Here are some summer highlights of the status of work in the National Setting. A lot is happening, and while this won't cover everything, it will give you some idea of what is unfolding right now.

- We have a new CFO. Nick Katzakis has arrived and begun his work with us as of July 1. He brings great experience, and has recently finished work with the Diocese of Chicago.
- We have a new Controller, Brian Tracey. He began his work with us in early June.
- We have completed our search for a new Director of CARD. We expect to publicly announce this appointment this week.
- The National staff spent a wonderful, much-needed, two days together on June 4th and 5th, first in full staff retreat on June 4th and then a full staff and family picnic on June 5th at Federated Church in Chagrin Falls.
- The Adese Fellowship program is in full swing. I had a chance to meet with the 13 leaders who are spending a year learning from mentors, coaches, business leaders how to run a new ministry/faith community. The leaders that are assembled for this are remarkable, and the vision they have is expansive and inspiring. Please feel free to contact either Chris Davies or Patrick Duggan to learn more about this.
- We have recently launched a third cohort in the National Setting's Leadership Development program geared to inspiring innovative leadership and creative thinking about the science of management. This program was made possible by the philanthropic achievements of the Shaping Our Future Campaign to which several Conferences and Board members have supported. This cohort is focusing on deepening the culture of collaboration across the National Setting in order to nurture robust program development. I am very encouraged by the direction they are heading in.
- Our Social Media coordinator, Keren, designed a FB campaign two weeks ago to see if we could try and raise funds over a weekend for a justice initiative. She posted an invitation on our Social Media pages to try and raise funds for keeping Families Together, and in one weekend we brought in over \$20,000. We are now contacting leaders throughout the UCC who work directly with impacted families to see how this money can be put to best use. We expect to try more of this in the future.
- On September 18th-21st, the National Setting will host a workshop for the Council of Conference Ministers, Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity. This event will be offered in partnership with Lilly's Lake Institute on Faith and Giving and will take place in

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Rev. John C. Dorhauer
General Minister and President

Rev. Traci D. Blackmon
Executive Minister
Justice and Witness Ministries
Local Church Ministries

Rev. James A. Moos
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Wider Church Ministries

Cleveland.

- Synod planning is moving forward in full swing now. As we come out of the summer months, our staff will gradually begin to focus more and more heavily on that. Registration is expected to open in November. Be expecting more news on this.
- Vetting is underway for a location for the 2021 General Synod.
- NYE planning has advanced to the point where we know where and when it will be held: the dates will be July 22-25 and the location will be the Purdue University campus.
- In follow up to the From the Ground Up: Reimagining Theological Formation summit held in April, seven small groups organized at that event are continuing to meet from now through early spring 2019. Each group is centered on a particular “Game Changing Pathway”, and is working to identify 2-4 promising pathways forward for theological formation. In spring 2019, all event participants and small groups will engage in a web conference to collaborate around findings. The seven pathways include Engaging Technology, Resourcing Ordained Clergy and Laity to Advance Theological Formation, Marks/Benchmarks and Systemic Endorsements, Integrating and Activating the Biblical Platform for Justice, Deepening Community and Contemplative Practice, Resources Local Churches to Support Theological Formation, and Process and Cultural Change. A full plenary report from the April event is attached, and will be posted to ucc.org by fall.
- The National Setting is in the process of completing an asset mapping exercise that is attempting to identify all resources available to support our Local Churches. This is an enormous undertaking. Our CARD team will report this week to Sr. Staff on the initial findings. Later this summer we will share these findings with the newly created Ministry Advisory Council (this Council is where all team leaders and directors in the National Setting meet in consultation about our collective work). It will take us some time to put this in a manageable file, but we hope to be able to share a comprehensive report on National Setting resources for the Local Church with both the Board and CCM by October.
- The Pilgrim Press was founded four hundred years ago as an act of religious resistance and continues today as a bold witness for Christian faith that challenges the status quo. Our books support Christians who take their faith and their commitments to the world seriously, joyfully, and generously. With three imprints (The Pilgrim Press, United Church Press, Open Waters) at our disposal under The Pilgrim Press brand, the United Church of Christ’s publishing ministry is well-positioned to nurture spiritual growth, cultivate religious leadership, and provoke our collective soul for the sake of a just world. Under the leadership of Rachel Hackenberg as Managing Editor, The Pilgrim Press has set its sights on the following goals by the end of 2020:
 - ❖ to triple its annual release of titles (from three books in 2017 to ten books in 2020) under three imprints, setting the expectation to grow our catalog beyond 2020;
 - ❖ to raise the shared sense of “ownership” among United Church of Christ members and partners for The Pilgrim Press through writing workshops, author events, General Synod presence, and a capital campaign;
 - ❖ and to build The Pilgrim Press’s reputation as an excellent producer of stimulating books that ground our faith and strengthen our collective resolve for social change.

- The UCC's 2017-2018 cohort of Young Adult Service Communities interns (11) are completing their term in July. They have been serving in four local program sites around the country. The UCC/Alliance of Baptist's Summer Communities of Service interns (11) are serving in five local program sites around the country. Alumni of the Summer Communities of Service have participated in leadership at three of the four Regional Youth Events.
- Fifteen young adult international Partners in Service volunteers are completing their year of service in UCC settings in the United States. The 2018-2019 volunteers are from Germany, Belgium, South Korea, and France.
- Disaster Recovery mission trip sites are hosting volunteer groups in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. Long-term disaster recovery in each of these locations is in full-swing with the UCC integrally involved with numerous collaborative partners.
- Refugee Justice Sunday materials launched on June 20th, World Refugee Day, provide liturgy, sermon notes, advocacy portals, and access to participation in year-round refugee accompaniment and hospitality.
- The Global Ministries Caribbean Initiative continues through the end of 2018, highlighting stories, resources, and advocacy opportunities guided by Partner churches and organizations in Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and Colombia.
- Global Ministries has been present and active with partners on peace, history, and the future in Japan; peace and reunification on the Korean peninsula; interfaith and intercultural dialogue with Egyptian partners; the freedom of religion and belief in Sri Lanka and Southern Asia; human trafficking in Southern Asia; displaced and refugee response, especially Syrians in the Middle East and beyond; and in interreligious dialogue both globally and in the US.
- Between Oct. 2017 and March 2018, Global Ministries appointed 59 mission co-workers (plus 37 Associates), who serve at the invitation of partners through accompaniment and serving in areas of critical presence, in 37 countries.
- A new curriculum called Sacred Conversations to End Racism (SC2ER) has been piloted and will soon be released for use in all settings of the United Church of Christ.
- Here's a summary of some MESA's work in progress:
 - ❖ Manual on Ministry - Sections 1 and 2 of the new manual are moving from content editing to final review. We continue to anticipate a fall release of all three sections of the new MOM.
 - ❖ Authorizing Ministry for the 21st Century: AM21- The working group remains active, this year's event will be in San Diego, California December 10th-14th with a theme of "Wisdom for Well-Being"
 - ❖ A Sure Foundation: a new resource for the clergy and congregations (Pastoral Relations Committees, Social Media Boundaries, Departure Ethics etc) is available for purchase from [UC Resources](#).
 - ❖ Diversity Videos: In response to the General Synod Resolution "Affirming and Supporting the Authorized Ministries of Under-represented Clergy in Local Congregations" MESA is working with UCC partners as well as Good City Concepts and Crossroads to produce a series of diversity awareness videos for search committees.

- ❖ Local Church Profile: As part of our on-going effort to resource the search and call processes of the United Church of Christ MESA is working with Centric Consulting to provide a digital platform for the UCC Local Church Profile.
 - ❖ Endorsements: The UCC Endorsements Office continues to process applications for various professional and governmental agencies. The UCC continues to be an active presence in the Association of Religious Endorsing Bodies and will be present this week at the Association of Professional Chaplains annual meeting.
 - ❖ Ministerial Profiles Portal: At the close of June 2018 there were 11,223 unique users for the UCC Ministerial Profile System.
- Here's a summary of work in progress in the Office of Philanthropy, Technology, Identity and Communication:
 - ❖ Website Growth: As of June 30th, ucc.org had 2.6 million page views, representing an increase of 200% over the same period in 2016, the last non-Synod year, which was used for accurate comparison.
 - ❖ Building the Platform to Power a Thriving 21st century UCC: The UCC Everywhere Project: Currently, some 34% of UCC churches do not have websites, and a higher percentage do not have the ability to take online donations. UCC Everywhere solves these problems by offering free websites to all UCC churches through an innovative monetization and content sharing strategy. UCCE websites are fully optimized for Google visibility and UCC News, putting valuable content in thousands of new locations. The first phase of the UCCE project will culminate in September 2018 when the first round of prototype websites will be presented to conference ministers who will gather in Cleveland for a philanthropy conference. Following a subsequent period of review and refinement, at least 25 UCCE websites will be built in time for a project presentation at General Synod in June 2019, after which the project will be rolled out denomination wide.
 - ❖ Annual Fund: As of June 30th, the UCC Annual Fund is ahead by 25%. This is largely due to the success of the 2018 Spring Appeal which is performing 60% better than the 2017 Spring Appeal. To-date, dollars raised for the Annual Fund total nearly \$105,000.
 - ❖ Marketing: Part of our newly focused effort on marketing strategies includes aggressively positioning voices from across the United Church of Christ to be heard in larger audiences. I asked Connie Larkman to share with me some samplings of how this is manifesting itself. This has some length to it, but it is only a sampling of what she was able to get done for us in June and July:
 - The United Church of Christ was one of the first denominations mentioned in a recent Houston Chronicle report about religious groups condemning the Supreme Court ruling on the Muslim travel ban. <https://www.chron.com/life/houston-belief/article/Religious-groups-condemn-SCOTUS-ruling-on-Trump-13030256.php>.
 - Dorhauer was also named in a Texas Monthly article about public figures criticizing the DOJ family separation policy. <https://www.texasmonthly.com/news/public-figures-family-separation-policy/>

- Traci Blackmon was one of three African American women of faith featured in a CBS Interfaith Special on the Race for Equality. <https://www.cbsnews.com/video/reclaiming-history-a-movement-for-equality/>
- Traci was also cited for UCC work on the Poor People's Campaign, <https://religionnews.com/2018/06/25/poor-peoples-campaign-ends-with-vows-to-keep-organizing-and-protesting/>
- Several UCC clergy around the in Minnesota and in D.C. were in the news for arrests tied to the PPC.
- Cleveland media have been covering the efforts of Pilgrim UCC as a sanctuary church, and their interfaith vigil on Father's Day to reunite immigrant families
 - <http://wksu.org/post/cleveland-interfaith-gathering-fathers-day-prays-reunification-immigrant-families#stream/0>
 - <https://www.clevescene.com/scene-and-heard/archives/2018/05/01/tremonts-pilgrim-congregational-united-church-of-christ-becomes-sanctuary-to-aid-father-facing-deportation>
- Three Cleveland television stations covered the Keep Families Together prayer vigil held by a Canton church, where both myself and Bentley deBardelaben were invited to participate.
 - <http://www.ucc.org/news/ohio-church-brings-people-together-to-oppose-immigration-policies-06252018>
- And in Maryland, the Frederick News-Post picked up on the same type of reunification vigil.
 - <https://www.fredericknewspost.com/news/politics-and-government/health-and-welfare/residents-hold-frederick-vigil-for-reunification-of-families-separated-at/article-84360dc2-ef13-5c8a-bed9-80ba1191eaa8.html>
- The Minnesota Star Tribune picked up on Minnesota church efforts to stop a new Enbridge Oil pipeline.
- <http://www.startribune.com/minnesota-religious-leaders-oppose-new-enbridge-oil-pipeline/484501501/>
- A Seattle church close to a federal detention center where immigrants are housed held a community prayer vigil covered by KOMO, a local television station.
 - <http://komonews.com/news/local/faith-leaders-denounce-zero-tolerance-immigration-policy-it-is-a-horrifying-nightmare>
- Fosters.com, the online news source for the Manchester New Hampshire Daily Democrat published a Dorhauer letter supporting a local pastor's efforts to support members of her congregation in danger of being deported. <http://www.fosters.com/news/20180622/another-view-rev-sandra-pontoh-lauded-for-her-courage>
 - <http://www.fosters.com/news/20180620/indonesian-helpers-clergy-banned-from-ice-office>
- Several media outlets picked up on the story of California church pledging not to call the police, a piece first published in United Church News.

- <http://insider.foxnews.com/2018/05/31/oakland-california-church-urges-congregation-never-call-police>
- Earlier this spring, I was contacted for an article on the changing face of theological education.
 - <https://religionnews.com/2018/05/11/more-seminary-students-leave-the-master-of-divinity-behind/>
- The Boston Globe and other Massachusetts media outlets picked up on the efforts of a Springfield congregation offering sanctuary to an immigrant over objection from the Mayor.
 - <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2018/04/05/springfield-church-sheltering-family-inspected-amid-dispute-with-mayor/t4JUe7CIDg3YiubpmJhI0L/story.html>
 - <http://www.ucc.org/news-despite-mayor-s-objections-city-council-votes-to-support-sanctuary-massachusetts-church-004112018>
- The Seattle Times picked up on the efforts of Cathedral of Hope pastor Neil Cazares-Thomas recruited by the city of Dallas to help persuade Amazon to local its second headquarters there.
 - <http://www.ucc.org/commentary-ucc-pastor-we-need-to-be-present-to-effect-change-04302018>