



Missouri Mid-South Conference United Church of Christ

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Uniting Congregations for Ministry and Mission in Missouri, Arkansas, and Memphis, Tennessee

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2019 Conference Annual Staff Reports

Rev. Tyler Connoley, Minister for Search and Call Discernment

For the past several months, I've been preaching a sermon based on Mark 4:35-41. The story we all know is one of Jesus saying to the disciples, "Get in the boat, we're going to the other side." It's only after rowing out into the water that the disciples see the storms arise and the boat begin to rock. At first, they forget they have Jesus with them, but eventually they wake Jesus up and he brings peace. I've been preaching this sermon in churches in transition, reminding folks in the pews that they are not alone in the boat. We're in the boat with Jesus. However, as usually happens with ministers, I've also been preaching to myself.

I am now in the final quarter of my contract with the Missouri Mid-South Conference. The time between last CAG and this one marked the middle portion of my journey as Minister for Search and Call Discernment. There have been some boat-rocking moments, especially regarding transitions in conference ministry staff, but Jesus has been in the boat offering words of peace and wisdom. We are in this boat with Jesus.

A couple of our successes from this year:

- **Shared Ministry:** In the past year, we've had six churches that have begun sharing a pastor with another church. Each of these shared-ministry situations has had its own path. Zion in Troy and Immanuel in Wright City continue an arrangement with the Rev. Kelsey Peterson that began as a summer trial. The Rev. Brad Urban accepted a new call to Prince of Peace in St. Louis as he continues his bivocational ministry at Carondelet. And, most significantly, Good Shepherd in St. Charles and Emmanuel in Weldon Spring posted a position together, and the Rev. Tiffany Pitman accepted a call to both churches. Other churches and ministers are seeing new ways they might accept Holy Wisdom's call to experiment and play with shared ministry.
- **Position Postings:** We now post all of our open positions at the Opportunities Page at ucc.org. We've streamlined the process for posting short-term and very-part-time positions, so ministers both within and without our region can see what positions are available within the Conference. We've also worked with the COMs in all three Associations to make it easier for available substitute preachers to have their contacts listed on the MMS Web site.

A couple of our challenges for the coming months:

- Steward Program: Our Search and Call Steward program continues to be a vital part of the Search and Call process in the Missouri Mid-South. However, we've had some stewards leave to do ministry in other settings, and I am in the process of seeking some more wise and wonderful people who are willing to offer a calming presence to our churches in search. Some of you have already heard from me. If you think this is a volunteer opportunity you might like to pursue, please reach out to me.
- Planning for the Future: As my contract comes to a close, I am spending a good deal of time making sure our systems are strong and the foundations are in place for whatever comes next. I want to do what I can to ensure we're ready for the next phase of our Conference's ministry.

A Personal Note: Many of you have asked me what my plans are after my contract ends in October. The short answer is, "I don't know." If you've spent much time with me, you know I believe good discernment is done in community. The Conference Council is discerning how they intend to staff the MMS, and I'm discerning God's call. At some point, there will also be a Search Committee that will be part of the discernment team. I trust the Spirit of Wisdom to guide us as we discern what ministry looks like for the Missouri Mid-South Conference of the UCC, and whether or not I'll be serving on the MMS conference ministry staff after October.

Rev. Dr. Douglas Anders, Staff Liaison to Committees on Ministry

It has been my honor to serve as part of the Missouri Mid-South Conference Staff, serving as Liaison to Committees on Ministry in the St. Louis (two COMs) and Eastern Association. I have been serving since August 2018 on a temporary, part-time basis.

Among my ministry responsibilities:

- I. Attend monthly meetings of three Committees on Ministry, resourcing and assisting the Committees in their ongoing oversight and credentialing of ministry work.
- II. Work with Committee on Ministry Co-Chairpersons to follow-up on Committee work after each monthly meeting.
- III. Work with Association BAT (Boundary Awareness Training) Trainers to coordinate the schedule of BAT training in all three Associations.
- IV. Attend Zoom meetings of the (Conference) Covenanted Ministry for Committees on Ministry. I attended the Annual Retreat of March 22-23 in Columbia, MO.
- V. Meet monthly with Conference Staff on Ministry Issues. Meeting with Ginny Brown Daniel, Tyler Connoley, Jane Fisler Hoffman (COM Liaison for Western Association). Respond to additional work assignments from these ongoing conversations. I also meet monthly for a Zoom meeting of the entire Conference staff.

- VI. Work on particular Ministry Issues, seeking to better coordinate the work of all four of our Association Committees on Ministry (recommending uniform procedures at times).
- VII. Help Committees on Ministry conduct Situational Support Consultations (when needed) and to handle specific concerns which come to the Committee on Ministry related to Association clergy and churches.
- VIII. Attend-Represent the Conference at services of Ordination and Installation when Conference Minister-Ginny Brown Daniel is unable to attend.
- IX. Assist to connect clergy inquiring about ministerial authorization in the UCC. To help them understand our process and structure for inquiring clergy from other denominations or no denomination.
- X. When my schedule allows to visit churches of the St. Louis and Eastern Associations on Sunday morning, strengthening the covenantal relationship with local churches.
- XI. To stay informed of the work of MESA (national UCC) to be aware of new resources, guidelines, recommendation about ministry issues coming from the national UCC.

Our Associations Committees on Ministry have hard-working and committed members, who handle challenging and demanding agendas. They work diligently to provide the needed oversight, encouragement and support for our churches and clergy.

**Rev. Dr. Jane Fidler Hoffman, Staff Liaison to the Western Association
Committee on Ministry (WA COM)**

Grace and peace to you all!

Since August of 2018, it has been my privilege to serve as the Conference staff liaison with the Western Association Committee on Ministry. It has been an interesting and challenging experience. The best part is working with the excellent members of the COM who give so much time, competence and spiritual work to the important tasks of their ministry. As many of you who read this know, a very broad way to describe their work is the authorization and support of persons in ministry and local churches in the UCC. But there is SO much more to it and it has been my role to seek to guide and support the COM team in their work. Sometimes my part is to ask questions about process and remind the folk about UCC resources, including our Conference Minister and national staff.

A key focus of the WA COM in these months has been trying to get clarity about some of its past actions and records and a great deal of progress has been made. Different members of the COM take on primary responsibility for tracking and handling communication and follow-up with different aspects of the work---Members in Discernment (discerning call to ordained ministry); licensed pastors (serving one congregation, annually reviewed); Boundary training and Racial Justice and Equity training for all authorized ministers; annual Information Reviews for all authorized ministers. At each meeting the COM

addresses these matters (depending on timing and needs), often meeting with one of the individuals in some part of the process named. Those interviews are key and your COM is essential in working to assure that persons serving our churches and in other settings are meeting standards of the United Church of Christ.

Racial Justice Equity training is a new and vital part of our Conference ministry work. Along with Boundary Training, all authorized ministers will be required to take RJE training within the next two years and our COM is developing resources for the provision of this training in Western Assoc.

But again, that is not all. The WA COM also handles difficult clergy fitness reviews, a long, intensive and painful process and the last year was challenging. Another 'review' is a time of support and exploration with local churches and pastors to seek strengthening of relationships.

An exciting possibility of a new church start is another part of the COM work, engaging with a host church and new leadership. Sharing in ministry with our Marshallese congregations in Arkansas continues to be a frontier of cross cultural learning, geography and development of relationships.

Allow me to thank you and our Conference Minister for this privileged opportunity. Having retired from Conference Ministry, I know what Ginny faces with fewer staff. I am honored for this period of time to serve with the rest of your Conference staff, ALL part time except Ginny and our Camp directors. All together we are working with God and you in discerning who we are called to be for the future of God's mission through this Conference.

Jeremy Force, Outdoor Ministries Director, Camp MoVal

Financials

- The 2018 budget year ended with about \$1,000 surplus.
- We have completed selective timbering on the camp property which raised about \$67,000. Some of this revenue was used in our operating budget in 2018.
- The 2019 budget was revised to reflect current financial needs of the camp's operation.

Summer Camp & Outdoor Ministry Programs

- Camp attendance for the 2018 was 335 participants and about 80 volunteers throughout the summer program.
- We hosted both of CMSE and CYE with attendance of 79 adults and youth at CYE and 51 youth and adults at CMSE.
- We hosted our annual Women's Retreat with 79 women in attendance from across our conference.

- I have been visited 12 local churches and the hospitality was wonderful. I hope this helps the camp maintain a connection to our local churches.
- The camp has received a small grant to help us start a day camp program in 2020.

Operations

- We have had several small work groups out over the last year. They finished the floors in Lakeside Lodge, stocked firewood, painted, prepped the pool, many small projects and they have done much cleanup around the camp facility.
- Pinewood is under renovation thanks to a generous gift from Columbia UCC.
- Last summer our High Ropes course was finished with a complete update.
- We are currently working on plans to renovate Hilltop Lodge.
- Each year we also evaluate what upcoming projects will need to be addressed.

Staffing

- Marci and I are the only year-round staff with others brought as needed.
- I am getting better at updating our social media weekly, I am trying to keep this content fresh.

MoVal Task Force

- We have completed almost a year of hard work, which included tremendous research and many long discussions, including visiting all three associations.
- The strategic plan is almost completed and will be ready for presentation at our Annual Gathering in 2020.
- We will continue to meet as needed over the next year to complete our assignment.
- Phase I will be brought to this year's Gathering, this is the recommendation to sell some of the southern property that is part of the total Camp MoVal property.

Thank you all for your continued support of Camp MoVal and our Outdoor Ministry. Your continued support through OCWM helps to control the cost of our programs and all the other support makes ministry possible for all our churches and the wider community.

Rev. Nathan Fulk, Director, Shannondale

"The Summer is off to a great start! Shannondale has hosted many different groups from around the UCC with more to come! The Shannondale Mission Immersion Trip is approaching fast and we are looking forward to having folks from all over the Conference join us here!

Our yearly Men's Fellowship Retreat went extremely well, with lots of men coming together to teach, learn, grow, and fellowship. Paul Koch wrote a great summary for the Disciples of Christ newsletter:

“Shannondale Men's Retreat Spans the Decades of Life”

This annual important gathering returned to the beautiful Ozarks of Shannon County May 3-5. The rugged terrain and subsequent opportunities yielded many encounters for fellowship, important mission work, incredible re-creation, and especially spiritual growth found with the help of God working through each other and Creation. Each man present hearkened Jacob at Bethel to gaze upon a vast star-filled sky (which cleared up as a God-given gift after clouds covered the landscape all day) and reflect on the theme: Return to the Wilderness: God Will Speak to You; Come Hear/Here for Yourself.

The retreat began with each man sharing a response to "why are you here and what do you want to receive this weekend?" As we went around the room, it was noted that each decade of mature life was represented by handfuls each of men there in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, and 70s. (80s next year?) Occasions of mentoring and youthful energy complemented all that happened.

Next year's retreat is already scheduled at Shannondale for May 1-3!

As schools in the area release for the summer, so concludes our after-school program, Timber Time. We want to send a HUGE thank you to all individuals and who have donated books and other things, the kids loved all of it! "

Rev. Courtney Chandler, Youth Events Coordinator

Congregations visited: St. Paul in Oakville, St. Peter's in Ferguson, St. John in Chesterfield, St. John BEM, Friedens UCC in St. Charles, Church of the Master in Florissant, St. Lucas in St. Louis.

Planned events for youth at CAG 2018, including decorating pillow cases and collecting items to take to Love, Inc.

Monthly meetings with the Youth Covenanted Ministry Team in various locations.

Regional Youth Event Planning Team where we had around 250 youth and adults. This event was in June of 2018 at Grinnell College in Iowa. Arranged transportation for the youth from the MMSC and a few Disciples. We had around 44 youth and adults from the MMSC. Wrote the small group curriculum and led a small group at RYE and led an improv workshop.

Represented the MMSC at a youth gathering for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Missouri where I led the improv workshop again.

Worked with youth leaders from the North County area on getting youth together for the Festival of Sharing at Immanuel UCC in Ferguson.

Attended the fall association meeting for the Eastern Association.

Attended and led a workshop at the fall Western Association meeting and again at the spring meeting.

Co-Directed the Middle School Event at Camp MoVal in November for 47 youth and adults.

Wrote bible study for the Young Adult Retreat at MoVal which was in January.

Co-Directed the Conference Youth Event for high school youth during February where we had 70 youth and adults in attendance.

Attended a meeting with the Lafayette Cluster in the Western Association to talk about planning a youth event.

Providing people materials needed for planning youth events.

Planned and led a lock-in for youth in the Northwest Association at Southwood in Raytown for 18 youth and adults.

Plan events for youth at CAG 2019, including joining Meredith Jackson and Isaiah 58 Ministries for our service project.

Cindy Birkner, Youth Ministry Resource Coordinator

Sept. 1, 2018 through May 31, 2019 activities:

Youth leader discussion groups

6 total, 3 on Suicide Prevention, 3 on Owning THEIR Own Faith

Youth discussion groups

6 total, Friedens UCC, St. Charles- Confirmation Class, Columbia UCC- Young Adult Group, Columbia UCC- HS Sunday school, Friedens Peace, New Melle- 24 Hour Famine, St. Paul's Oakville- HS small groups, Columbia UCC- Suicide prevention for HS youth

Retreats:

4 total, Confirmation retreat- for youth, Conference Youth Event- for youth, Youth leader retreat- for adult leaders, direct high school camp

Church services attended

12 total, Friedens UCC, St. Charles – 2, Shannondale UCC, Columbia UCC, Peace UCC- Webster Groves, Southwood UCC, St. John UCC, St. Charles- Youth led worship, Zion UCC, Union- Confirmation led worship, Zion UCC, Union- HS led worship, Grace UCC,

Wentzville- Youth led worship, Zion UCC, Union- Rite of Confirmation Service, Friedens UCC, St. Charles- Rite of Confirmation Service

Safe Church Training:

1, Friedens UCC, St. Charles

Prayer Paths:

3 total, St. John's UCC, Bem, Peace UCC, Hartsburg, St. James UCC, Morrison

Association meetings attended

5 total

Pulpit supply:

2 total, Columbia UCC, St. John's UCC, Bem

Building Community:

I have also worked with churches to build relationships among those in their area:

Columbia UCC and Peace UCC- Hartsburg will be going on a mission trip together.

Columbia UCC is joining forces with other UCC churches as well as DOC churches in the area to have youth events as well as invite them to the Suicide Prevention Session in August.

**These relationships formed at the youth leader retreat as well as the Owning THEIR Own Faith discussion.

Continuing relationship with the youth who attended the Confirmation Retreat in September:

I attended the youth led worships as well as Rite of Confirmation service for 2 of the 3 churches that took part in the retreat.

By attending these youth led worship services, we are proving to the churches that the conference supports and is proud of what they do. Following those services, I had discussion with the youth that included invitation to HS camp this summer and CYE next year.