



Missouri Mid-South Conference United Church of Christ

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

www.missourimidsouth.org

At the 2016 Conference Annual Gathering, I introduced our Conference Ministry Theme to be, “Living Our Change,” because I knew that there would be many changes throughout the Missouri Mid-South Conference, and I wanted to provide focus to our ministry together. I sought to align our Conference Ministry Theme with the 5 Mission Imperatives of the Missouri Mid-South Conference. To that end, my Conference Minister’s Report is arranged by the 5 Mission Imperatives using, “Living Our Change,” as my evaluative tool.

5 Mission Imperatives for the Missouri Mid-South Conference:

1. Cultivating and Nurturing Authentic Covenantal Relationships

- Worship Throughout the Missouri Mid-South Conference (MMS)
 - I worshiped at 38 churches between 2016-2017 (15 Eastern Association, 14 St. Louis Association, and 9 Western Association). I participated in two ordinations, five installations, co-officiated the Rev. Rayla Hogue’s memorial service, and dedicated the children and the Revs. Joshua and Tiffany Pittman.
- Personnel and Administrative Oversight
 - Conference Ministry Leadership Priorities
 - Throughout 2016, I discerned the needs of the conference and the resources provided by the Conference Ministry Leadership (Rev. Dale Parson and myself). I quickly identified numerous areas of duplication by Dale and me regarding our support to the search and call process as well as the four Committees on Ministry. Therefore, when Dale returned from his sabbatical, I introduced changes to our job responsibilities and prioritized them to gain better clarity of our job expectations. Please see pages 4 and 5 for a detailed account of these expectations.
 - Financial Challenges
 - 2016-2017 was a time of realization that MMS was not where we thought we were regarding Our Church’s Wider Mission (OCWM) receipts. Our income was far below projected income for OCWM and Friends of the Conference. We immediately sought to reduce daily expenditures. There were some expenses we could not eliminate. We have strengthened the OCWM Covenanted Ministry team with individuals committed to speaking to local churches about what OCWM does for their church and throughout the MMS.
 - Office Staff Reduction/Resignations
 - In March, I had to eliminate the part-time Administrative Assistant/Receptionist position held by Kris Scott. This was because of financial limitations to the MMS General Operating Fund. The subsequent month, our Office Manager, Renee Cordes, resigned after eight years of service. She gave me one week’s notice, and it took a month before I was able to hire a temporary Office Manager. In May, I hired Gail Rosenberg as our part-time temporary Office Manager. She is highly organized and already helping us streamline our work in order to efficiently serve our local churches of the conference. I plan to hire a full-time permanent Office Manager by August.
- Volunteer Receptionists
 - After Kris and Renee’s departure, I developed a MMS Volunteer Receptionist program, where a volunteer is the face and voice of the front office on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10 am to 2 pm. This ensured that Lorraine, the temporary Office Manager, or I don’t become overwhelmed with additional work. But more importantly, the Volunteer

Receptionists ensure that when you call or visit the conference office, you will be greeted by a person. I am thankful for Joyce Bathke, Karen Miller, Douglas Anders, Karen Safe, and Jane Porchey for their willingness to serve the conference in this capacity.

- Wider UCC
 - West Central Region of Conferences and Cabinet of Conference Ministers
 - I was elected the chairperson of the West Central Region of Conferences meetings (Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota, Kansas-Oklahoma, Minnesota, Northern Plains, and Missouri Mid-South Conferences).
 - This also means I represent the West Central Region to the Cabinet of Conference Ministers, which meets every two months.
 - I attended two in-person meetings with the Council of Conference Ministers as well as monthly Zoom video meetings. We meet in the winter (before the United Church Board), before General Synod, and in the fall (after Thanksgiving).
 - Cornerstone Fund
 - I joined the Cornerstone Fund board of directors at our March meeting. We have two in-person meetings per year (winter and fall).

2. Strengthening Congregations

- Search and Call
 - I developed the Search and Call Steward program and oversaw the transition of Conference Ministry Leadership responsibility to Dale Parson. We currently have eight MMS search and call stewards.
- Center for Progressive Renewal
 - We are currently in the last year of our three-year contract with the Center for Progressive Renewal. I met with Cameron Trimble in Atlanta and discussed the best usage of our contract through the end of 2017. We agreed to give every MMS church a membership to the Center for Progressive Renewal through 2017. This will enable churches to receive webinar resources as well as articles and blogs from the Center for Progressive Renewal.
- Presentations to Local Churches
 - I was asked to speak on the following topics at MMS churches: visioning, stewardship, Social Justice, and Open and Affirming.
- Eden Theological Seminary
 - I led a weekend LIFE class at Eden Theological seminary on baptism.

3. Supporting Authorized Ministers in All Settings

- Revisions to Manual on Ministry
 - The Ministerial Excellence Support Authorization Team (MESA) has been working with the Habbakuk Group for the past three years on significant revisions to the Manual on Ministry. There are good changes being proposed regarding the Marks on Ministry. There are also significant revisions related to the forms of Authorized Ministers in the UCC. I attended a conference in November that introduced these revisions. This event was AM21 (Authorized Ministers for the 21st Century). I then collaborated with the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference for our Committee on Ministry Retreat in May, where members of MESA introduced these revisions to the Manual on Ministry. There is much discussion about whether all of these revisions will transpire for the good of the UCC.
- Naomi Project
 - Statistics for mainline churches is that in the next 5-10 years a large amount of churches will close. Theologically we understand that death is a normal part of our life cycle. We are fortunate in the conference to have church members and ministers, who have walked the journey of closing a church as well as those who have skills and passion to close these churches with dignity. For this reason, I reached out to the Rev. Dr. Frank Proctor and we developed an initial task force to create resources and support for churches. Rev. Proctor has already interviewed all of the UCC conferences, who currently have a ministry to churches that are closing. He has also talked extensively to the Rev. David Schoen of the national UCC. Rev.

- Proctor brings all of this information to this task force. This task force would be present when a local church contacts the conference to ask for support as they close their church. This task force would provide a mentor to the church and minister
- It is named the Naomi Project as a way to acknowledge Naomi's example of perseverance in the midst of death and new life. The Naomi Project seeks to support and equip our MMS churches in the life, death, and resurrection of their ministry with us.

4. Improving Communication

- Hired the Rev. Nia Chandler as our Communications Consultant for 18 months
 - My goal in her contractual work is to provide the communications infrastructure that will allow the conference minister together in a streamlined fashion. This includes implementing Zoom video for MMS meetings, develop Online registration for the Conference Annual Gathering and other MMS events, and Website development for individual associations and Covenanted ministry teams.

5. Advancing a Mission of Advocacy for Peace and Justice

- Spoke at the Gateway ONA Coalition.
- Joined the Justice Witness Covenanted Ministry team to sign letters of justice within the state of Missouri and Arkansas.
- Met with the Rev. Stephen Copley of Interfaith Arkansas to learn about this vital ministry throughout Arkansas as they are committed to social justice in Arkansas. I also connected him with Faith, UCC, in Little Rock.
- Marched at Women's March in St. Louis
- Protested the Executive Order banning certain immigrants and refugees from entering the United States.
- Wore a hijab as my Lenten Spiritual Practice.

Whew! What a year for Living Our Change! I am grateful for our ministry together as the Missouri Mid-South Conference. May God continue to guide us in extravagant hospitality for all in the many years to come. Blessings,
Ginny



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Conference Ministry Leadership Priorities

Conference Minister Priorities:

- | | Conference Minister (CM) |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. Administration | |
| ○ Executive Committee and Standing Committees | CM |
| ○ Staff Oversight and Meetings | CM |
| ○ Personnel | |
| ○ Vision Implementation and CAPE | |
| ○ Conference Events | CM |
| ▪ CAG | |
| ▪ General Synod | |
| ○ Visioning | |
| 2. Committee on Ministry | CM |
| ● Eastern Association | |
| ● St. Louis Association COM: O | |
| ● St. Louis Association COM: Prep | |
| ● Western Association | |
| 3. Conference Council and Covenanted Ministry Teams | CM |
| ● Committee on Ministry | |
| ● OCWM | |
| ● Shannondale Carbon Credits | |
| 4. Emergency Pastoral Care to Clergy and Churches | CM |
| 5. Wider UCC | CM |
| ● Conference Minister Cabinet | |
| ● Cornerstone Fund Board | |
| ● MMS CHHSM Organizations | |
| 6. Associations | CM |
| ● Fall and Spring Meetings | |
| ● Clusters | |
| ● Council | |

Conference Ministry Leadership Priorities

Associate Conference Minister Priorities:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Search and Call | Associate Conference Minister (ACM) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stewards• All MMS Churches• Profile Validation• Non-MMS and Non-UCC Clergy Liaison | |
| 2. Conference Council and Covenanted Ministry Teams | ACM |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conference Ambassadors• Congregational Vitality• Older Adult | |
| 3. General Pastoral Care to Clergy and Churches | ACM |
| 4. Wider UCC | ACM |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• ACM Network• ACM Community of Practice | |
| 5. Associations | ACM |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fall and Spring Meetings• Clusters• Council | |