

2017 Annual Report

Conference Minister, Reverend Shari Prestemon

I begin this Annual Report with continued gratitude for this ministry we have together in the Minnesota Conference. This is a healthy, vital place with faithful & energized congregations, clergy, and members all focused on being the Church God calls us to be. We are of course not immune from the challenges faced by Christ's Church everywhere in these rapidly changing days, but I believe we are facing them with courage, care, and deep discernment. And we are certainly not standing still! These are just a few of the highlights of our ministry together over the last year.

- ❖ We received United Faith Community in Buffalo as a new "ministry connection" of the Conference
- ❖ We welcomed Reverend Kevin Brown as our new Associate Conference Minister for Faith Formation with Children & Youth.
- ❖ Lori Alford joined our staff team as the new Program Director for Pilgrim Point Camp.
- ❖ We commissioned and bid farewell to Tom, Monica, Hannah, and Simon Liddle as they began their global mission service in East Timor, thanks in part to generous fundraising across the Conference for their mission appointment with Global Ministries of the UCC and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- ❖ 80 youth and adult advisors attended National Youth Event in Orlando, Florida, wowed by the worship and learning and fellowship of this fantastic national UCC event
- ❖ 999 individuals and 52 congregations benefited from our outdoor ministry at Pilgrim Point Camp
- ❖ The Conference became fully divested from fossil fuels in 2016, a commitment made at our 2013 Annual Meeting and completed well ahead of the 5-year schedule that had been set
- ❖ The Board of Directors approved a new set of strategic objectives for the Conference, instilling new purpose and focus into our ministry
- ❖ The Board of Directors also directed resources to a new part-time staff position dedicated to lay leadership development in the Conference. Reverend Vicki Wunsch began her ministry with us in that role in March.
- ❖ Our prophetic witness for justice was abundant and clear, as Conference staff, teams, congregations, and individual members advocated, protested, and physically showed up amid multiple issues that emerged during the year

Nurturing our covenant relationships in the wider UCC is central to my ministry as Conference Minister. In that regard, I serve on a number of Boards of Directors in the life of the wider UCC, striving to connect the national setting and our local United Theological Seminary to the concerns of local congregations and Conferences and also working to bring the good news of our wider ministries back to the Minnesota Conference.

I celebrate all the ways we are connected in the UCC; we can do far more together than we could ever do apart! We do well to remember this in times such as these, and to seek out even deeper relationship and collaboration between local congregations, Conferences, national settings, and our seminaries.

May our ministries continue to be faithful and bold, and may all we do bear witness to a God that is generous, loving, unfailingly gracious with us.