

**2016 Report of the Moderator and Chair of the Board of Directors
Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ
Rev. Cindy Mueller**

As some of you may be aware, I am serving a church as an Intentional Interim Minister in Anoka. My work in this church has proven to be a wonderful source of challenge as well as inspiration. I have found this to be true of my position as Moderator of the MN Conference UCC as well. I am grateful to our dedicated staff that serves us under the gifted leadership of Rev. Shari Prestemon, a hard working Board of Directors (BOD) and a Conference of churches committed to responding to God's call to see our world become all God intended it to be from the beginning.

As in any congregation, the challenges we face can either make us stronger or they can defeat us. This past year, the MN Conference has faced what may have appeared to be obstacles, and yet, we turned them into opportunities. Thank God for the Holy Spirit's nudging, as well as, God equipping us with the personnel, the leadership, the churches' support and the individuals necessary in carrying forward a mission of hope in these incredibly changing times for the church and our judicatories.

This past year the BOD has encountered several opportunities of its own, alongside the Conference. Since the BOD is charged to act on behalf of the MN Conference between Annual Meetings, we have sought to be faithful to God's calling as we seek to live out the priorities and core values of this conference/organization of churches. The covenantal relationship we have with the MN Conference churches and the national setting of our denomination is honored and taken very seriously as we go about our work on your behalf. We are thankful for the Holy Spirit's guidance as we seek to carry out the work we are charged with by this body.

Let me highlight some of the work we have accomplished this past year –

We meet as a BOD approximately 7 times a year. We are comprised of a group of dedicated individuals from both outstate churches and metro churches; clergy and laity. We work with our talented staff to ensure the ministry of our Conference not only continues, but thrives. One particular highlight was the Fall Leadership Retreat where all BOD, staff, committee, team, & work group chairs were joined at Pilgrim Point Camp by members from around the conference to further the conversation on Dismantling Racism. This was a deeply enriching weekend.

- After receiving a great deal of positive feedback and deep appreciation for the focus of the 2015 Annual Meeting of the MN Conference UCC, it was decided to expand upon that focus at this year's Annual Meeting. As we seek to dig deeper, may we continue to challenge ourselves to examine how God might be calling us to act as the church in an ever-difficult situation of dealing with the racial injustices of our time.
- Soon after the 2015 Annual Meeting delegates from our Conference (along with others from MN) joined Shari Prestemon and myself at General Synod in Cleveland. It was an incredible event where we were introduced to our new General Minister and President (GMP) John Dorhauer.
- As a "leading edge" Conference of the UCC, the BOD was asked to consider supporting new initiatives that our newly elected GMP John Dorhauer was proposing. We chose to accept this request and voted to help in strengthening our UCC.

- We established a working group of the BOD and asked that they develop a sustainable and streamlined Conference organizational/governance model(s) for consideration by the Conference Board of Directors. The future structure/governance model will strategically position us to provide bold and nimble leadership in the life of the MN Conference UCC and within the wider church. The work of this group is in its initial stages and once presented to the BOD and approved, it would then come before the Annual Meeting for a vote.
- The BOD overwhelmingly voted to support our own Tom and Monica Liddle, as missionaries to the Protestant Churches of East Timor. We also agreed to support their ministry with Conference assets in the amount of \$50,000 while also agreeing to match up to another \$50,000 that was raised from other donors. We were pleased to hear that the Liddles did in fact reach their fundraising goal (which was quite a feat) which means they will be leaving for East Timor this summer. We are happy to send them off with our blessing at the 2016 Annual Meeting. We will be receiving regular updates as a Conference on their ministry. Please hold Tom and Monica in your prayers along with their children as they respond to God's call for them to return to East Timor.
- A part of our regular responsibilities is to oversee the income and expenses of the Conference alongside our Finance Committee. This includes the oversight of Ashley Endowment earnings as well. Floyd Ashley's gift has empowered us to do a great deal to enrich and expand our ministry with children and youth in our Conference as well as throughout our denomination.
- As Moderator I take part in the annual evaluation of our Conference Minister along with the Personnel Committee. I was quite happy to learn once again (though I wasn't surprised) that there is a high level of confidence and deep appreciation for Shari within the Conference. The BOD has sought to support her in her ministry and share as appropriate in carrying our shared ministry forward.
- You may recall that last year the BOD contracted with a consultant to determine the feasibility of conducting a Conference-wide campaign to raise funds for making major improvements and additions to Pilgrim Point Camp (PPC) along with developing a Leadership Initiative program of enrichment for all members of the MN Conference UCC. Unfortunately, we learned that this is not a good time for us to conduct such a campaign. We did however, learn a great deal about the MN Conference from this feasibility study that has, and will continue to be, utilized by the BOD in several ways throughout 2016.
- I want to take a moment to thank the Rev. Garth Schumacher for all his efforts with us as Interim ACM. His work with the PPC committee and our Faith Formation team has been invaluable. We are fortunate to have him aboard during this time of transition.
- With that said, the BOD authorized a Search Committee to work with Shari to fill the position that Garth currently holds. Effective this summer that Search Committee will be receiving profiles and hope to fill the position later this year.

This is not an insignificant amount of work that has been accomplished by your BOD. I thank each of them for their dedication and commitment to a Conference we all so love. I want to especially thank Frank Bennett, Chelle Lyons-Hanson, Joe Thom and Nancy Johnson-Maloney for their efforts in helping strengthen our MN Conference. As their terms expire, I am grateful that they responded to God's call to serve in this way.

Lastly, I want to thank you all for allowing me the privilege to serve as your Moderator. I so appreciate being able to give back to the denomination I love.