

# BEHOLD, I AM DOING A NEW THING!



**2013  
ANNUAL REPORT**



MINNESOTA CONFERENCE  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

*about the*  
**CONFERENCE**

Our **mission** is to invite and equip inspired Christian leaders and communities. Our **core values** are faithfulness, stewardship, empowerment, innovation, and justice. Our **bold inspirational goals** are to:

- » Create and sustain healthy, vital congregations
- » Equip clergy and laity to lead
- » Strengthen faith formation across the generations
- » Increase capacity for compassionate service and justice action



It's strange to write this letter for the 2013 Annual Report when I only had the privilege of being your Conference Minister for a small portion of that year. Yet perhaps that fact simply makes the year's theme ring all the more true: behold, God is doing a new thing!

God is always doing a new thing, sometimes in spite of us, but more often through us and with us. It can be a source of tremendous comfort to know that God is working ceaselessly to bring about renewal even in the midst of what we often experience as hopelessly "stuck" moments in our own lives or the lives of our congregations. Yet that certain promise can also lend anxiety, when God's renewing work brings uncomfortable change or raises questions we feel ill equipped to answer.

Let's face it: these are times of deep and wide change for the church. We struggle at times to discern what God is asking of us. We wonder what our role might be moving forward, as congregations and disciples—and as a Conference. The Church in all its expressions faces daunting questions of vitality, viability, and future.

Yet the words of scripture remind us that our God is One who makes a way in the wilderness and produces water in the desert. In other words: there is a road

forward; things may not be as they seem. Trust God to carve the path. Know that God is working, even now, to create new possibility.

As I page through the stories and testimonials of this Annual Report, I see evidence of God's renewing and transforming work everywhere. It's there when a congregation sees its community's need clearly, and finds an innovative way to respond. It's there in all the places where we gather for mutual support and learning, when pastors convene to share and encourage excellence, when campers of many generations fill the grounds of Pilgrim Point and have their spirits revived. It's there when congregations venture out in mission and find strengthened faith and transformation of witness in the journey. Every time we seek together to discern God's will and our purpose and possibility in God's world, the Spirit of God is powerfully at work in us and through us.

Barb Peterson said it beautifully in this report's donor spotlight: "The journey is never over. There's always more to learn and discern." Exactly. That "new thing" of God is constantly unfolding. The path winds before us. And who knows what God might do? What a joy it will be to discover that path together in the Minnesota Conference!

May our ministries be a blessing, to each other and to our world,

*Shari Prestemon*  
Reverend Shari Prestemon



## PILGRIM UCC IN BENSON LAUNCHES FREE LUNCH PROGRAM, FEEDS HUNGRY KIDS

More than 50% of children in Swift County, where Pilgrim Congregational UCC in Benson is located, qualify for free or reduced lunches – and without school lunches in the summer, they might go hungry.

Seeing the need in his community, Pilgrim's Pastor Will Warnock took action. He suggested the church apply for a USDA grant to feed kids during the summer. The church did and was awarded the grant, which reimbursed them for the number of meals served.

They got to work right away. Pilgrim UCC publicized the lunch program through local church bulletins and flyers in the elementary school. Because of the high percentage of low-income families in the area, Pilgrim UCC is an "open site" where people don't have to show proof of eligibility to be fed.

The turnout was huge. A whopping 48 children came to Pilgrim UCC for lunch each weekday this summer. On some days, as many as 65 kids came for a meal. To make lunch fun for the kids, the congregation had a different theme each week, like sports or "talk like a pirate," and games to engage the kids.

The kids loved the food, especially the pizza burgers and tater tot hot dish. The dairy association even donated a soft-serve ice cream machine, which was enormously popular. (Kids could get a cone *after* the regular meal.)

In addition to the USDA grant, Second Harvest Heartland awarded Pilgrim UCC \$3,000 for non-food items to help upgrade the church's kitchen. Other contributors stepped forward as well, including The Benson Foundation, the local electrical co-op, a dairy association, and local business leaders, most of whom are not members of Pilgrim UCC.

Pastor Warnock credits lay leader Mary Flower, who he describes as "chief cook, organizer, and the person who gets things done," with helping make the free lunch program a success. At first, some church members had doubts about whether the program would be used or even abused. After the first few days, though, all doubts vanished. Now there is great energy and enthusiasm for this program both in the church and the community.

The free lunch program was so successful that Pilgrim UCC had more volunteers than they needed, with members from the local Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches stepping forward. Things went so well that an ecumenical effort is underway to organize a year-round evening meal one night a week for people in the community.

We commend Pilgrim Congregational UCC for looking outward into the community, seeing a need, and taking the initiative to create this essential ministry to feed hungry children.

CONGREGATIONAL  
*spotlight*

**"For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me."**

MATTHEW 25:35



## CHURCH LOOKS TO A 'FUTURE OF RENEWED GROWTH' WITH CONFERENCE'S SUPPORT

When Moderator Murray Lufkin came to the Conference in the spring of 2013, the situation was tense at Mendota Heights UCC. Their minister had left and they desperately needed a new one to unite their congregation. Associate Conference Minister Rev. Rick Wagner got to work immediately. He helped the congregation find supply pastors, offered support and advice for getting through the transition, and launched a successful search for a transitional pastor.

Although it's not as visible as some of our other ministries, behind-the-scenes work the Conference does to support congregations through times of transition and uncertainty is one of our most crucial roles. We meet with struggling pastors and congregations, give them advice, connect them with essential resources, and help them transition to new leadership when they need to.

With the Conference's support, Mendota Heights UCC is looking toward a bright future.



When Mendota Heights UCC needed a pastor to unite its congregation, the Conference helped them find Rev. Deris Rice, pictured above.

**“Thank you for all the help the Minnesota Conference UCC has given to us... We are looking forward to a future of renewed growth.”**

**MODERATOR MURRAY LUFKIN,  
MENDOTA HEIGHTS UCC**

*Dear Pastor Rick,*

*Thank you for all the help the Minnesota Conference UCC has given to us during our recent troubles. You and the Conference staff have been a tremendous source of comfort, good advice, and help. You helped us find pulpit supply pastors, provided a situational support consultation with the Committee on Ministry, and launched a successful pastoral search for a part-time Transitional Pastor.*

*Under our new Transitional Pastor our situation has stabilized, and we are looking forward to a future of renewed growth, both spiritual and numerical.*

*Looking back over the forty-seven years that my family and I have been members of Mendota Heights United Church of Christ, the Minnesota Conference has always been supportive and helpful. Even in the best of times, we have always benefited from the advice, encouragement, and literature provided by the Minnesota Conference UCC.*

*So thanks again to you and your colleagues for all your help, both present and past.*

*God bless you all,  
Murray Lufkin, Moderator  
Mendota Heights United Church of Christ*

## MICRO-GRANTS FUND MISSION TRIPS AND FOSTER SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Mission is at the core of the UCC's identity, and it is a primary focus for us as a Conference. When young people go on mission trips, they have life-changing experiences, learn to embrace diversity, and grow in their spirituality.

Every year, the Conference awards \$10,000 in micro-grants to support the mission work of our congregations. Our grant recipients' feedback drives home the immeasurable value of mission for congregations, individuals, and communities.

**“Learn to do good;  
seek justice, rescue  
the oppressed...”**

ISAIAH 1:17

“Fourteen youth and adults from Falcon Heights UCC shared a week on Staten Island, NY in July. We helped with Hurricane Sandy relief efforts, worked in a food pantry, served food in a soup kitchen, spent time with kids at a day program, and so much more! Our time on Staten Island was eye-opening for many of us and life-changing for all of us. Thank you, MN Conference, for helping make this possible!”

**REV. BRANDON PERRINE, FALCON HEIGHTS UCC, ST. PAUL, MN**



“Cottage Grove UCC would like to thank the MN Conference UCC for making it possible for our youth to follow God's leading and participate in the Society of St. Andrew's gleaning network in Kansas City this summer. The Holy Spirit has been moving in our youth and adult participants since their return from the mission trip and a new food saving ministry has been started in our community! Thanks again for all of your support and prayers.”

**THE CGUCC MISSION TRIP TEAM, COTTAGE GROVE, MN**



“Twenty-six youth and adults from Peace UCC in Duluth traveled to Denver for a week at the end of July to work with a nonprofit called Discovering Opportunities for Outreach and Reflection. Each day we rose early and went to different agencies to work – places like a shelter, day camp, food bank, soup kitchen, and day program for adults with traumatic brain injuries. Here are some highlights from our youth.”

**REV. KATHY NELSON, PEACE UCC, DULUTH, MN**

“My highlight of the trip was seeing all the smiling faces of the people we helped, especially the children. It was just good to know that what we're doing really was making a difference in their lives.” **MINA**

“While volunteering with adults with disabilities on my last day, I got to witness a man walking for the first time after 26 years. That is something I will remember forever.” **ELLA**

“The thing I will treasure most is meeting all the different people. The whole thing was a great experience I'll hold on to for a long time.” **CLAIRE**





**“THE JOURNEY IS NEVER OVER”**

**ROBERT AND BARBARA PETERSON ARE LONG-TIME UCC MEMBERS AND IN THE CONFERENCE’S LEADERSHIP CIRCLE. THEY LIVE IN HUDSON, WI AND ATTEND UCC NEW BRIGHTON.**

**LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE OF THE CONFERENCE, WHAT ARE YOU MOST ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT?**

We’re excited about the Conference’s new direction with a greater focus on mission. As leaders within our own church, we’ve encouraged and fostered mission work for 40 years. We’ve always felt the Conference should be mission-oriented. Everything else will follow if you have a focus on helping others.

**HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN MISSION WORK?**

**BARB:** I went to Pilgrim Point Camp the first year the Conference owned it. As a college student, I was part of a group of eight young women that traveled the state teaching summer church school for UCC churches that didn’t have the resources to do their own programs.

**BOB:** My first mission experience was with a group of Minnesota Presbyterian teenagers who traveled to Appalachia to help renovate a community building in a very poor community. When I was the Moderator of the Eastern Association in the 1980s, I saw that while our local church had the resources to provide mission and work camp experiences, smaller churches like the rural ones Barb and I both grew up in, didn’t.

We started leading youth Habitat for Humanity work camps for Minnesota UCC youth in 1988, first to Kentucky, then to Kansas, North and South Dakota, Canada, and Michigan. We also led adult work camps to Mississippi and South Carolina. Over the years we have had volunteers from over 27 churches join us on these trips. This will be our 27th year of leading UCC people from Minnesota to experience the joy of helping others and to learn about the differences and the similarities between people in our country.

**BARB:** Bob’s first overseas trip with Habitat for Humanity was to Mongolia in 2004. Since then, we’ve traveled to Nepal, El Salvador, New Zealand and Kyrgyzstan together. We feel it is very important to help those outside of the US, too, and to learn what it is like in other countries where there is not adequate housing. It helps us to appreciate how much we have here in the US.

**HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE CONFERENCE?**

**BARB:** We joined UCC New Brighton when I was 29 and Bob was 30, and we started serving on boards and committees almost immediately. There were members at New Brighton who were very connected with the

**BE A FRIEND OF THE CONFERENCE: DONATE TODAY**

The Conference relies on individuals like you to create healthy congregations, equip clergy to lead, and strengthen faith formation for youth and adults. Donors who give a total of \$1,000 or more annually, or at least \$84/month, are members of the Conference’s Leadership Circle. Their generous gifts ensure the Conference’s work will continue for years to come. Please make a gift today that reflects your commitment to the Conference’s mission. Simply return the enclosed donation envelope or donate online at [www.uccmn.org/donate](http://www.uccmn.org/donate).

Conference and someone put our names forward as people to get involved. I served on the Conference's OCWM Committee in the '80s. I'm currently on the Board and Chair of the Development Committee.

**BOB:** I started out on the Conference Finance Committee. Then I was the Moderator of the Eastern Association Council and, as Moderator, I was part of the Board of Directors of the Conference.

### WHAT ROLE HAS THE UCC PLAYED IN YOUR LIVES?

**BARB:** Bob grew up Presbyterian and I was raised in a Congregational church in southwest Minnesota. We met at the University of Minnesota, where there was a campus ministry that both Presbyterians and UCC were part of. We've always been connected with our churches, and with our wider church. When we were in our 20s, Bob was in the military and we moved often. No matter where we were, we sought out UCC churches. At those churches, we found people who shared our values and our passion for mission.

### WHY IS THE UCC IMPORTANT TO YOU?

**BOB:** The UCC is the only mainline denomination that truly is open and accepting of everyone without reservation or restrictions. It is also the only church that is positioned to take advantage of the direction this country is moving towards creating equality for everyone.

**BARB:** One thing that appeals to me about the UCC is the role of women – like the fact that our first woman clergy person was ordained in the 1800s. I appreciate that women have a voice and all we need to do is use it to be heard. I also value the openness to each of us finding our own faith journey. And the journey is never over. There's always more to learn and discern.



### WHAT IS YOUR PHILOSOPHY ON PHILANTHROPY?

We're proponents of the SSS strategy for managing our resources: share, save, spend – in that order. We attempt to live that out personally, and we believe our local church and the Conference should do the same: give before we spend on ourselves. Since the mid-1980s we have tried to give at least 10% to support the church and other charities and now that we are retired, we find we can give even more. We believe that if you focus on mission and others first, everything else will follow.

### WHY DO YOU SUPPORT THE CONFERENCE?

We support the work of the Conference because we know there are essential ministries that local churches can't carry out on their own. We give to the Annual Fund because we know that there needs to be an infrastructure in place to support the UCC in Minnesota. We need to have capable, talented, committed Conference staff, and they need resources to do their work in supporting the churches of the Conference. We are excited about having a Conference Minister who knows the benefits of mission and helping others. We know that in giving to the Conference, we are ensuring the future of the UCC in Minnesota and the world.

## MAKE A PLANNED GIFT: JOIN THE LEGACY CIRCLE

Did you know making a planned gift is an easy, meaningful way to provide for the Conference's future? Join the Legacy Circle by making a bequest or other planned gift to the Conference. For more information about how to remember the Conference in your will, check the "planned giving" box on the enclosed envelope, call 612-871-0359, or email [development@uccmn.org](mailto:development@uccmn.org). Is the Conference already in your will? Let us know!

**“I drove away from my Ministerial Excellence Group feeling heard, renewed, a little bit smarter, and grateful for the people in our group. They are good, good people and it is a gift to be able to travel together in our various ministries, with humor and tears and stuff in between. Thanks for forming these Ministerial Excellence Groups.”**

**REV. VICTORIA WILGOCKI, PASTOR,  
ST. ANTHONY PARK UNITED  
CHURCH OF CHRIST**

## **PASTORS DISCOVER HOPE, VISION, RENEWAL WITH LEADERSHIP TRAINING**

Like all people in leadership positions, ministers need support, resources, and training in order to problem-solve in challenging situations, stay up-to-date on new technology, and help their congregations thrive. To that end, the Conference offers an array of leadership training opportunities, including Ministerial Excellence Groups, for clergy throughout Minnesota.

In leadership trainings, an Associate Conference Minister or consultant facilitates conversations on leadership best practices, how to deal with challenges, and tactics for revitalizing ministries and congregations. Pastors who are part of the Conference’s leadership trainings walk away with hope, a greater focus on ministry, and a clearer picture of how to lead.

The impact of renewed leadership ripples through a minister’s congregation. Churches whose pastors have gone to leadership trainings report increased attendance at church, greater giving from congregants, and a church more focused on mission and ministry. When a leader is revitalized, so is the church.



## **CAMPERS EMBRACE DIVERSITY WITH ‘RADICAL HOSPITALITY’ AT PILGRIM POINT CAMP**

Radical hospitality is at the center of who we are as the UCC: radically welcoming of all people, equally. Pilgrim Point Camp is open to all and this year we broadened the camp’s reach to welcome more intergenerational ministries. Pilgrim Point chose “Radical Hospitality,” which embodies so much of who we are, as the theme for this year’s camp season.

Staff and volunteers demonstrated radical hospitality at Pilgrim Point with fresh-baked chocolate chip cookies at registration, sidewalk chalk greetings around camp, and worship that incorporated Jesus’ acts of radical hospitality, like footwashing.

Over 100 youth from thirty congregations, along with sixteen adult leaders, attended the two weeks of

Conference-sponsored youth camps. Programming, which was centered on Radical Hospitality, invited campers to think about how they are hospitable to one another, visitors at church, and individuals who are different than they are either in ability, sexual orientation, or race. Throughout the summer, campers walked away prepared to embrace diversity and respect all people.

Pilgrim Point Camp continues to serve as a vital resource for the congregations of the Minnesota Conference. After a season of vitality and growth in 2013, we look forward to welcoming even more campers and churches with our radical hospitality in the coming year.



**“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”**

MATTHEW 6:21

## FINANCIALS

FISCAL YEAR ENDING  
SEPTEMBER 30, 2013

### BALANCE SHEET

| ASSETS                          |                     |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| Cash and Cash Equivalents       | 270,314             |
| Certificates of Deposit         | 1,681,211           |
| Accounts Receivable             | 17,178              |
| Pledges Receivable (net)        | 204,318             |
| Notes Receivable                | 1,500               |
| Prepaid Expenses                | 24,277              |
| Investments                     | 7,545,008           |
| Property & Equipment (net)      | 931,572             |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                    | <b>\$10,675,378</b> |
| LIABILITIES                     |                     |
| Accounts Payable                | 163,524             |
| Accrued Expenses                | 42,416              |
| Long-term Debt                  | 35,166              |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                    | <b>\$241,106</b>    |
| NET ASSETS                      |                     |
| Unrestricted - Undesignated     | 1,677,608           |
| Unrestricted - Board Designated | 810,659             |
| Temporarily Restricted          | 1,344,139           |
| Permanently Restricted          | 6,601,866           |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                    | <b>\$10,434,272</b> |

### STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

| SUPPORT & OTHER REVENUES                 |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| Contributions                            | 1,258,908          |
| Program Service Fees and Other           | 239,970            |
| Payments to National Office for OCWM     | (292,764)          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                             | <b>\$1,206,114</b> |
| EXPENSES                                 |                    |
| Program                                  | 1,183,159          |
| Management and General                   | 257,356            |
| Fundraising                              | 70,541             |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                             | <b>\$1,511,056</b> |
| NON-OPERATING ACTIVITIES                 |                    |
| Interest and Dividends                   | 109,979            |
| Realized Gain (Loss) on Investments      | 30,181             |
| Unrealized Gain (Loss) on Investments    | 644,958            |
| Interest Expense                         | (1,224)            |
| Investment Management Fees               | (8,423)            |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                             | <b>\$775,471</b>   |
| <b>CHANGE IN NET ASSETS (NET INCOME)</b> |                    |
|  | <b>\$470,529</b>   |

**INDIVIDUAL & CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT**

**INDIVIDUAL DONORS**

**\$10,000 or More**

Hobart & Charlotte Anderson<sup>++</sup>  
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Thom & Diane Haines<sup>++</sup>  
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Dennis Busche<sup>+</sup>  
Kathryn Butler  
Rev. John Buttrey<sup>+</sup>  
Tomi Calhoun<sup>+</sup>  
Mary Ann Callahan  
Rev. Ralph Colby  
Dawn Carlson Conn & Jim Conn  
Phil (deceased) & Elsie Cook<sup>+</sup>  
Rev. Molly Cox<sup>++</sup>  
Ernest Cutting<sup>+</sup>  
Jean & Ray Daniels<sup>+</sup>  
Pam DeMarce  
Tonia & Colin Dirks<sup>+</sup>  
Rev. Beth Donaldson  
Ruth Draut<sup>+</sup>  
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Rev. Richard Eick  
Marv Enslin  
Cynthia Fermanich<sup>+</sup>  
Margaret Flolid  
Rev. Timothy Forester  
Barbara Fox<sup>+</sup>  
John Fox  
Julie & Richard Fraser<sup>++</sup>  
Betty Fritz<sup>+</sup>  
Robert & Rebecca Galkiewicz<sup>+</sup>  
Rev. Richard & Jane Gerber<sup>+</sup>  
Rev. Bob Griggs<sup>+</sup>  
Clare & Justin Gromoll<sup>+</sup>  
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