



2012 ANNUAL REPORT

MAKING THE FAITH OUR OWN



MINNESOTA CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

OUR MISSION

THE MINNESOTA CONFERENCE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST INVITES AND EQUIPS INSPIRED CHRISTIAN LEADERS AND COMMUNITIES



The Constitution of the United Church of Christ “affirms the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God.” With your support in 2012, the Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ made the faith its own in a variety of powerful and transforming ways.

In partnership with the Center for Progressive Renewal, we enhanced our congregational vitality program. We also launched a new faith community for youth, young adults, and people in periods of life transition. We helped eighteen congregations complete ministerial searches and installed twelve clergy. We energized fifty leaders from across the state at a leadership retreat, fed the spiritual lives of sixty leaders at our annual convocation, and rejuvenated youth ministry staff through the certification school at Pilgrim Point Camp. We provided grants for churches to do mission work, sponsored Justice LED Training, and joined with ecumenical

and interfaith partners to defeat two proposed constitutional amendments.

Your support in 2012 strengthened the Conference’s capacity and enhanced our effectiveness in equipping clergy and laity to lead; reaching out to the needs of the world through compassionate service and justice; sustaining healthy, vital congregations; and strengthening faith formation across generations.

As we move into 2013, my final year as your Conference Minister, I am humbled by your support and commitment to the Conference over the seven years I have been in this role. I am profoundly grateful for all we have accomplished together.

Looking to the future, our energy is high and we are poised for growth, expansion, and external impact. I am excited to about the Conference’s direction and its plans for faithful ministry for the 21st century.

Thank you for everything you’ve given to the Conference and for making the Conference a priority in your life.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Karen Smith Sellers
Conference Minister

CREATING & SUSTAINING HEALTHY, VITAL CONGREGATIONS.



“As congregations strive for relevancy in a changing culture, the resources, tools, trainings, and personal care from the Conference are instrumental. Thank you.” **REV. CHRISTY E. DEW**, Sr. Pastor, Union Congregational UCC, St. Louis Park and VRV coaching group participant

Shift UCC Brings a Spiritual Community to People in Periods of Transition

by REV. ELENA LARSSEN, Associate Conference Minister

The UCC is dedicated to meeting people where they are and inviting new groups of people to be a part of the church. In the past, we’ve focused our “new church” energy on buildings, but now we’re focusing on populations, too. An essential piece of that is small ministries that target specific affinity groups. In 2012, we launched Shift UCC to do just that.

Shift UCC is a new kind of church community that focuses on reaching people in periods of transition, and specifically LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender) people of color. It doesn’t have a building and it’s not your typical church experience. The Conference trained its pastor, Rev. Lawrence T. Richardson, and gave him the resources he needed to get Shift UCC off the ground.

Shift UCC reaches people who aren’t comfortable in a church setting

or have no experience with church. For many of them, being a part of a spiritual community is new. Shift UCC events can have from 16-65 participants. Almost everyone is under 40, most are LGBT people of color, and many are unemployed. It’s a population that’s disadvantaged in society and may have felt rejected by religion in the past. In Shift UCC, they feel welcome and accepted.

At the Conference, we believe that the gospel and church is for everyone—whether or not they have a physical building. Part of the role of the church is to turn the world upside down, and Shift UCC is an excellent example of that. Here, people who have been disenfranchised in the world are empowered to lead.

Vitality, Renewal, Vision Program Helps Congregations Flourish in Difficult Times

by REV. ELENA LARSSEN, Associate Conference Minister

In 2012, the Conference launched our own, in-house VRV (Vitality, Renewal, Vision) program as part of our strategic shift toward promoting healthy, vital congregations. Each congregation has a basic need to have well-attended worship, good finances, and a strong mission, and VRV helps them get there. Through VRV, the Conference provides congregations with seminars, coaching groups, and one-on-one consultations. Pastors who participate walk away feeling energized and knowing how to do their ministry in a time of great change. Lay people participate, too, and learn ways to improve the life of their congregation. So far, over 25% of Conference churches have taken part in VRV. These are difficult times for churches, but, through VRV, the Conference is helping congregations flourish.

“I am richly blessed by the ministry tools, leadership training, coaching, and resources that are available for clergy and congregations in the Minnesota Conference UCC. The Conference is deeply committed to building and being community through empowering leaders to do inspired and innovative ministry.” **REV. LAWRENCE T. RICHARDSON**, Pastor, Shift UCC

EQUIPPING CLERGY AND LAITY TO LEAD.



“I’m coming away with hope for transformation for the church.” **REV. NICOLE HAVELKA**, *Associate Conference Minister for Youth & Young Adults, Iowa Conference*

Youth Leaders ‘Renewed’ & ‘Transformed’ at Certification School

by WADE ZICK, Associate Conference Minister of Faith Formation for Children and Youth

In August, fourteen lay leaders and clergy gathered at Pilgrim Point Camp in Alexandria, MN to take part in the second annual Certification School for Progressive Christian Youth Ministry. The school was led by Rev. Jim LaDoux, author of *Surface to Soul*, and the students were in their own words “transformed,” “renewed,” “resourced,” and “excited” as they re-engaged their ministry settings.

Students learned about engaging youth in scripture, using spiritual types in youth ministry, and progressive Christian theology. They received valuable resources including individual

coaching, a resource syllabus, webinars, and books. Their experience culminated in a retreat where they presented a ministry plan.

One certification school success story is that of alumni Nicole and Eric Matejcek, the children and youth ministry directors for Associated Church in Owatonna. They have used their ministry plan to assist parents in their role as the primary faith formation persons for their children; engage youth and children in serving; and create a faith-nurturing place for children, youth, and families.

“I’m excited about all the new ways of understanding my team and my leadership abilities.”

REV. LAURIE CRELLY,
The Congregational Church of Rochester, Director of Christian Education and Youth

“I’m excited to implement new ideas in my church to help my families cultivate spiritual growth at home.”

AARON LAUER, *Minister for Children, Youth and Families, 1st Congregational Church of MN UCC*

6

ordinations

12

installations

18

UCC congregations completed searches for new pastors or ministerial staff

2

congregations hired interims

8

congregations had an interim pastor for all of 2012

STRENGTHENING FAITH FORMATION ACROSS THE GENERATIONS.

25%

of congregations have participated in a VRV program or event

80

people learned to energize their congregation's ministry at ReVision

35

participants got ongoing support for revitalization at ReVision ReVisited

92

people from 25 congregations learned about marketing, membership growth & welcoming guests at ChurchCraft

60

leaders from 30 small churches learned ways to make their churches more effective

9

pastors enrolled in coaching groups to sustain their congregations

Youth and Adults Create a Safe Home for a Grandfather

In June, the Conference provided twelve youth and adult members of St. Anthony Park UCC in St. Paul a grant for their mission trip to work with Habitat for Humanity in Luck, WI. Here is their story, as told by Lori Alford, Director of Faith Formation at St. Anthony Park UCC.

With the Conference's support, we returned renewed from our "Mission From God." Our joint effort with Amery Congregational UCC began as soon as we reached Amery. Although the Wisconsin church had just returned from their yearly mission trip, they felt called to extend their mission experience by becoming a host church. As we arrived, they were there to make us feel at home immediately. Throughout the week, we could not have asked for more gracious hosts! Amery provided meals, a connection for us to have showers, and even inflatable beds for a few of our youth.

Our work through Habitat for Humanity took us to the "exotic" locale of Luck, WI, to work on residing a home. As many experienced mission trip sojourners will share, nothing went according to our plan at the job site, but rather God's plan was revealed to us. The house was over a hundred

years old and the rot we found within the structure was significant. Our job became one of patience and endurance, rather than the full-scale makeover as we had envisioned. At the end of the day, what became most obvious was that we were creating a safe structure for a grandfather, a father, and a new friend. The group learned that all can be endured when we do it for a friend in need.

Without the support of the Conference and Amery Congregational Church UCC, our transformation through service would not have happened. We are so very grateful for partners that help us reach higher than we can go alone. SAPUCC is already thinking "How will we do this next year?" A very good question, as we reflect on being Christians in this sometimes murky world.

Thank you for the gift of the grant! Lives were changed and hope was restored.



INCREASING CAPACITY FOR COMPASSIONATE SERVICE & JUSTICE ACTION.

UCC Makes History as it Helps Defeat the Marriage Amendment

REV. OBY BALLINGER of Community UCC in St. Paul Park, MN contributed to this report.

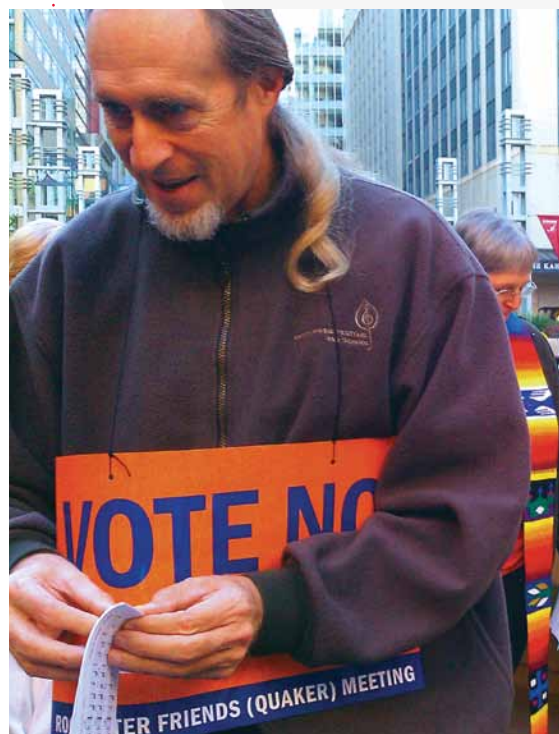
When the Minnesota legislature voted to put a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage on the ballot for November 2012, the UCC quickly got involved. Minnesotans United for All Families, an advocacy group dedicated to defeating the amendment, was born and the Conference Board set up a “Vote NO Fund” to collect donations for the organization.

In June 2012, Rev. Oby Ballinger from Community UCC in St. Paul Park began working as a part-time UCC organizer at Minnesotans United. He and eight other faith community organizers led over 70 conversation trainings throughout the state, equipping people of all denominations to have conversations about why they opposed the amendment as people of faith. They held three “clergy calling clergy” phone banks and assembled 100 clergy for trainings across the state.

UCC members also worked together to coordinate their congregational efforts. They hosted campaign events, offered space for phone banks, joined as coalition partners in the campaign,

raised money, and held worship services for prayer and support. Individual churches showed faithful opposition to the amendment through Pride activities, hosting art exhibits, putting up banners, flying rainbow flags, and even organizing a flash mob.

At its Annual Meeting the Conference announced it would receive contributions to the “Vote NO Fund” to support the organizing work of Rev. Ballinger. Two weeks before the election, the Conference donated \$5,000 from a fund designated for telling the story of the UCC through media. This financial commitment echoed the contributions of time and talent given by UCC members and congregations throughout the campaign. We shared the UCC’s long-standing tradition of faithful support for LGBT people. We put faith into action and made a visible witness for God’s love by advocating for equal treatment. As a result, the marriage amendment was defeated on November 6, 2012—the first time any such amendment has been defeated at the ballot box. Together, we made history.



“This victory belongs to you and thousands more like you who talked to a voter, who put up a sign, who told the truth about this amendment. You made something great happen. And Minnesota will never forget.” DAN MCGRATH, *Executive Director for TakeAction Minnesota*

MAKING THE FAITH OUR OWN

UCC Protects Voters as it Helps Defeat the Voter ID Amendment

by DWIGHT WAGENIUS, co-chair of the Conference's Justice and Witness Team

In April 2012, the Minnesota legislature voted to put a voter ID amendment to the state constitution on the November ballot. If it passed, the amendment would place unnecessary burdens to voting by eligible voters—and likely decrease voter turnout. As many as 200,000 voters could have been disenfranchised by the amendment.

Over 200 Minnesota religious leaders came together to create a coalition called Prophetic Voices Minnesota to defeat the voter ID amendment. We had our work cut out for us; when the campaign began, 80% of polled voters supported the amendment. At its Annual Meeting, the Conference voted to support and fully participate in the Prophetic Voices campaign, oppose the amendment, and encourage Conference congregations to do the same.

The Conference Justice and Witness Team got to work. Side by side with Mayflower Church UCC, we sent Prophetic Voices information to and called all Conference congregations, recruited phone callers and

doorknockers, promoted Prophetic Voices in Conference newsletters, convened two forums at Mayflower to educate and train UCC congregations, provided speakers to churches, provided access to sermons and worship materials, made lawn signs available to congregations and individuals, and prepared materials for letters to the editor.

Our hard work paid off. In November, Minnesota voted no on the voter ID amendment. The Prophetic Voices campaign had worked with secular organizations to move the percentage of polled voters from 80% affirmative when the campaign began to less than 50% on Election Day.

Prophetic Voices reached more than 2.4 million people and its efforts were key to defeating the amendment. A more just and inclusive democracy starts with everyone being able to fully participate. The Conference joined this movement with the courage of our convictions and our belief that every voice should be heard. And now every voice will be heard.

“There is no doubt that people of faith, and leaders from all faith traditions, played a pivotal role... Without that support, I don't know if we would have succeeded.”

ERIC FOUGHT, *Communications Director for Our Vote Our Future*

“Our faith called us to build a state where values of love & inclusion drove our politics rather than fear and suspicion. And we joined a long line of prophetic voices, putting our trust in God, and we took action. And these choices led to a moment of liberation, life, and hope.”

DORAN SCHRANTZ, *ISAIAH Executive Director and Prophetic Voices leader*

DONOR PROFILE

What the Conference Means to Us

AN INTERVIEW WITH REV. FRANK BENNETT AND MARY LENARD,
DONORS TO THE CONFERENCE

WHAT DO YOU WISH OTHER PEOPLE KNEW ABOUT THE CONFERENCE?

We wish people knew what a fantastic team of professionals and volunteers are leading the Conference. The Conference is frequently a behind-the-scenes organization, so it's easy to miss what a huge impact it has on UCC congregations and individuals. The Conference has powerful programs that have lasting impact on both clergy and congregations across the state—like its programs to support faith formation, clergy development, and vital congregations.

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH THE CONFERENCE?

Frank joined Wayzata Community Church in 1996 and Mary in 2010. Over time both of us came to understand more about the Conference. The Conference is a participatory organization, and we really felt like we wanted to dedicate our resources, time, and talent to help the Conference grow across Minnesota. We felt it was our Conference and that it was important to support it. We hope others also feel that ownership and want to support the work of the Conference.

WHY IS THE UCC IMPORTANT TO YOU?

We feel we can faithfully represent the UCC because it embraces everyone and encourages people with a spectrum of beliefs and interpretations to gather in faith and love. In the UCC we're encouraged to develop our faith life and empowered to search our own hearts, souls, and minds for what we believe. As a denomination and a community of faith we have diverse beliefs, yet we're all called to live, worship, and serve together.

We think there's great power in that. The UCC respects the individual, but also recognizes the power of community. It lifts up both simultaneously. The UCC welcomes everyone, period. That is the core of our belief—that Jesus welcomed everyone, period.

WHAT DO YOU TELL OTHERS ABOUT THE CONFERENCE?

We tell them that the Conference has visionary leadership and makes good use of every single resource it gets—human or financial. We tell them that the programs are targeted around our shared mission and values, which reflects the will and vote of the people who make up the Conference. The Conference is an effective organization for congregations and individuals to come together and share ministries that are making an impact on the community level, such as the ministry for Advanced Care Planning and end-of-life pastoral care which we are developing at Wayzata Community Church and sharing with other churches.

WHAT DO YOU MOST VALUE IN LIFE?

We believe it's important that everybody has a voice and a chance to be a part of the community, to be seen and heard. We believe the only way to lasting peace is through justice. The most important thing is that we try on a daily basis to live out the Christian commandment, to love our neighbors as ourselves. Without compassion and regard for all of our



**SHOW YOUR
COMMITMENT:
DONATE TO
THE CONFERENCE**

The Conference relies on individual donors like you to build healthy, vital congregations, equip clergy and laity to lead, strengthen faith formation, and increase capacity for compassionate service and justice. Please make a gift today that reflects your commitment to the Conference mission. Simply return the enclosed envelope or donate online at www.uccmn.org/donate.

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neighbors, we think this would be a world without hope. We want to help bring God's light into the world by living out that commandment.

HOW DOES YOUR PHILANTHROPY REFLECT YOUR VALUES?

We value authenticity and integrity in service, and this helps guide our giving. We want our gifts to reflect what we put into practice and believe. We try to target our giving towards organizations and people that are working effectively to make the world a more just and peaceful place. This includes our local church and the Minnesota Conference.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO PASS ON TO FUTURE GENERATIONS?

We are all in this together and so we have to work to make this world a better place. Frank's grandfather said to him when he was young, "I don't care what you do in life, just make sure the world is a better place when you go than when you found it." We try to teach our kids that it's not about "me," it's about "us." We have to care for each other and work together to get along.

WHEN YOU LAST MADE A DONATION TO THE CONFERENCE, HOW DID IT MAKE YOU FEEL?

Happy. Proud to support an organization doing tremendous work. It makes us feel hopeful that our

donation will contribute to the future of the Minnesota Conference UCC—to ensure there is a future.

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL SOMEONE WHO IS THINKING ABOUT DONATING TO THE CONFERENCE?

That this a great faith-based organization that makes effective use of every donation. That their donation would have significant impact, and it would be tangible evidence of their support for their denomination and the work that it does supporting congregations, members, and clergy as we work to bring peace on earth a little closer to reality.

WHY DO YOU DONATE TO THE CONFERENCE?

We give because we continue to be impressed with the results the Conference is able to achieve and the programs it offers with the resources it has. There are some organizations that do little with a lot of money, and then there are organizations like this Conference that do a lot with so little. We're enjoying the benefits of being members of the UCC, we view it as our responsibility to support it. It's part duty, but it's also wanting to ensure that the UCC has the resources it needs to grow and develop. A donation to the Conference has tremendous impact on 135 churches and over 31,000 members. It's really hard to find another organization where you can make that kind of impact.

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 on how to remember the Conference in your will or retirement plan, check the "planned giving" box on the enclosed envelope or contact Kimberly Sanberg, Financial Development Specialist, at development@uccmn.org or 612-871-0359.

FINANCIALS

INCOME & EXPENSES (FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2012)

EXPENSES		INCOME	
Stewardship & Financial Development	\$26,936	OCWM	\$646,854
Administration	\$267,811	Association Dues (Per Capita)	\$124,977
National Share of OCWM	\$260,663	Individual Gifts to Conference	\$81,932
Pilgrim Point Camp Operations	\$220,367	Individual Gifts to Pilgrim Point Camp	\$49,540
Annual Meeting	\$80,211	PPC Registration and Rental	\$126,706
Increased Capacity Justice & Witness	\$90,231	Annual Meeting Registration	\$62,050
Faith Formation	\$260,988	Other Income	\$15,746
Leadership Development	\$146,685	Other Registrations	\$49,140
Healthy, Vital Congregations	\$144,778	TOTAL	\$1,156,945
Regional National & Ecumenical	\$46,823		
TOTAL	\$1,545,494		

BALANCE SHEET (FISCAL YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2012)

ASSETS		LIABILITIES	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$165,438	Accounts Payable	\$85,818
Certificates of Deposit	1,680,231	Accrued Expenses	40,131
Accounts Receivable	10,500	Long Term Debt	38,530
Pledges Receivable, net	85,213	TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$164,479
Notes Receivable	2,600		
Prepaid Expenses	49,009	NET ASSETS	
Investments	7,210,003	Unrestricted - Undesignated	1,568,668
Property and Equipment, Net	955,305	Unrestricted - Board Designated	899,745
TOTAL ASSETS	\$10,158,299	Temporarily Restricted	902,897
		Permanently Restricted	6,622,510
		TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$9,993,820

TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

\$10,158,299

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STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

SUPPORT & OTHER REVENUES

Contributions	\$998,520
Program Service Fees and Other	267,657
Payments to National Office for OCWM	(260,663)
TOTAL SUPPORT & OTHER REVENUES	1,005,514

EXPENSES

Program	\$1,157,305
Management and General	255,503
Fundraising	39,856
TOTAL EXPENSES	1,452,664

NON-OPERATING ACTIVITIES

Interest and Dividends	110,302
Realized Gain (Loss) on Investments	22,827
Unrealized Gain (Loss) on Investments	1,029,667
Interest Expense	(1,378)
Investment Management Fees	(7,809)
TOTAL NON-OPERATING ACTIVITIES	1,153,609

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS (NET INCOME)

\$706,459



Photo Credit: Scott Keehn

INDIVIDUAL & CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT

ALL DONATIONS ARE FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2012

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

Leadership Circle

\$5,000 or More

Rev. Frank Bennett
& Mary Lenard
Kuhmeyer Family Foundation
of the Saint Paul Foundation

\$2,500-4,999

Rudolf & Diann Anders
Hildegard Bunge
Marion Bunge
Lisa Lindesmith
Rev. Dr. Karen Smith Sellers
& Rev. Richard Sellers
Rev. Richard & Dr. Mary Wagner

\$1,000-2,499

Rev. Tara Bauer
Conee Biggs
James & Barbara Bock
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Rev. Victor Hallberg
Rev. Norma Rae Hunt
& Rev. Garth Schumacher
Rev. Sandy Johnson
Becky & Dan Kruse
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Wallace & Margaret McKay
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& Rev. Dr. Jeff Palmer
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Peter Norum
Barbara & Robert Peterson
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Rev. Parker & Al Trostel
Walser Family Foundation
Wade Zick

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Janet Bartz
Dawn Carlson Conn & Jim Conn
Rev. Kathy Gibson Christensen
& Bob Christensen
Rev. N. Charlene Johnson
Mary Kaser

Rev. Gary & Kathleen Kasten
David Kettering
Revs. David & Jane McMahon
Gigi Nauer & Rev. Robin
Raudabaugh
Alan Naylor
Judy Rose

\$250-499

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Guttermann
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Craig & Mariana Shulstad
James & Ellen Snoxell
Rev. Nancy Swanson
Revs. Howard & Betsy Tobak

\$100-249

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& Phil Hattie
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Rev. Obadiah Ballinger
Jane & Tom Barthell
Rev. Lisa Bodenheimer
Robert Boone
Rev. Marlin Danielson
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Up to \$100

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Deb Adams
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Rob & Janie Ator
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Adam Gordon
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Joan Peterson
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Rev. Rosemary Rocha
Dr. Mary A. Rogers
Kiely Todd Roska
Rev. Herb Rotunda
Billie Schacht
Elizabeth Schmidt
Helen Schoen
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Walter Seidlitz
Izabella Sempari
Hans Simons
Douglas Spike

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Alice Strobel
Todd Stroessner
Helen & Gene Stukel
Kathy Stutzman
Roy & Lois Swanson
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Nathan Syverson
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Kay Myhrman Toso
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Peter Stucki & Heather Vietz
Carol & Hugh Wagner
Rev. Wendy Ward
Zilla Way
Betty Wentworth
Rev. Victoria Wilgocki
Eugenia Williams
Kay Wilshusen
Evelyn Wilson
Sarah Yetter
Jill Zats

Friends of Pilgrim Point Camp

\$1,000 or More

Hildegard Bunge
Marion Bunge
Annette Matzen
Judy Reiss

\$500-999

Don & Arlene Fancher
Robert Hatlestad
Kim & Jan Shaffer
Wade Zick

\$250-499

Rev. Gary & Kathleen Kasten
Carrie O'Neill
Ruth & Donald Plackner
Shannon Rhatigan
Ellsworth Simon
Patricia Stone
Donna Wolff

\$100-249

Shari Alm

Anne Anderson
Hobart & Charlotte Anderson
Rev. Marilyn Benson
& Tim Wulling
Robert Boone
Linda Bradley
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