

General Synod 2015 – Workshops

Alethes (“Alethes”: Greek, “truth, something that cannot be denied.”)

John M. Schluep, of the Warriors’ Journey Home: Listen – Speak – Heal organization, will encourage clergy and churches to fulfill the 2013 General Synod resolution for congregational support of veterans. Attendees will gain a better understanding of the military service’s impact on veterans, and learn how to respond to the needs of veterans and their families.

The Rev. John M. Schluep, D.Min., Warriors’ Journey Home, Senior Pastor of First Congregational Church of Tallmadge, OH, and author of Soul’s Cry

Break the Silence About Mental Illness

Help eliminate society’s stigma around mental illness by starting a mental health ministry at your church. Learn from the experiences of Lund and Johnson. Take away a model covenant for mental health in your church and a tool kit of helpful and practical strategies.

The Rev. Sarah Griffith Lund, ordained UCC and DOC minister, author of Blessed Are the Crazy: Breaking the Silence about Mental Illness, Family, and Church, and member of the UCC Mental Health Network

The Rev. Alan Johnson, co-founder of the Interfaith Network on Mental Illness and chair of the UCC Mental Health Network

Building a Connected Congregation through Multi-Generational Worship Experiences

Learn how to build a successful multi-generational worship experience for your congregation. Guided by Gina Harvey of Mayflower Congregational Church UCC, a church that developed and practices this kind of worship, attendees will plan an actual worship experience and engage in hands-on activities. Workshop will conclude with a sample worship experience.

Gina Harvey, Music Director and Ministerial Intern, Mayflower Congregational Church UCC, Englewood, CO

Faithful Action in a World of Economic Injustice: Why We Need to Get Involved and What We Can Do

As Christians we are called to act on injustices. This includes economic injustice. Rasell and a team of colleagues from Justice and Witness Ministries will give examples of some of these economic injustices and explain how attendees can engage in faithful and effective action by promoting ministries of economic justice within their congregations and conferences.

Edith (Edie) Rasell, Minister for Economic Justice, UCC Justice and Witness Ministries

Global Ministries’ Middle East Initiative

At General Synod, Global Ministries will launch the 2015-2016 18-month focus on the Middle East. Get up to speed on this Initiative with a presentation giving an introduction, information about the UCC’s history, current partners, and ongoing engagement with issues in this region. Attendees will also learn what they can do to become involved.

Dr. Peter Makari, Executive for the Middle East and Europe, UCC Global Ministries

Global Warming

This presentation will help spread awareness and educate attendees on the real threat of global warming and its effect throughout Asia and the Pacific region. Presenters will report on the scientific community’s latest findings and will encourage front-line solutions and ways members of UCC local churches can take action and get involved.

*Laiiula “Ula” Sao, Pacific and Asian American Ministries
Rev. Silander Kachusy*

If You're Reading This, You Can Help Someone Who Can't

Adult literacy tutor Rob Shindler shows how easy it is to learn how to teach an adult to read. Through his work with Literacy Chicago and the stories he shares from his book, *Hot Dogs and Hamburgers: Unlocking Life's Potential by Inspiring Literacy at Any Age*, attendees will become inspired and empowered to also become adult literacy tutors.

Rob Shindler, attorney, and author of Hot Dogs and Hamburgers: Unlocking Life's Potential by Inspiring Literacy at Any Age

New Perspectives on the Church's Ministry with Those in the Second Half of Life

Retirees need spiritual ministry, too. This workshop, presented by Long-Higgins of United Church Homes, will address the needs and expectations of elder members and highlight ways local congregations can reach out and embrace this important group. You will also learn from the shared stories of churches and partnerships that are already doing this ministry.

The Rev. Beth Long-Higgins, United Church Homes, Inc.

Our Whole Lives: Finding God in Sexuality Education

Explore the connection between sexuality and spirituality with the *Our Whole Lives* (OWL) curriculum. The UCC coordinator and trainers will provide an introduction to *Our Whole Lives* and share with you how this sexuality education program is enriching UCC churches. You'll be equipped with valuable information to help you decide if *Our Whole Lives* is right for your church.

Amy Johnson, UCC Our Whole Lives Coordinator

The Rev. T. Michael Rock, Our Whole Lives Trainer

Lynn Young, Our Whole Lives Trainer

Thea Mateu, Our Whole Lives Trainer

The Power of Story: (En)Countering Narratives and Risk in the Age of Trayvon Martin

This presentation of passionate narratives, images, and reflection, will invite attendees to listen to the shared experiences of mothers raising young African American sons in an age where being "at-risk" crosses socio-economic boundaries. They will come away with a better understanding of this justice issue and how churches can construct a new, affirming narrative.

Dr. Leah Gunning Francis, Ph.D., M.Div., lecturer and preacher

Que Tod@s Sean Un@/ That They May All Be One (John 17:21): Hispanic and Latin@ Ministries in the United Church of Christ

Learn about the existing models for ministry with Latin@ in the United Church of Christ and gain new insight into the gifts these vibrant Latin@ ministries can offer the wider church. Will include a panel discussion with various leaders of Latin@ ministries. Attendees will be empowered to move forward and implement the strategies they've discovered in their own ministry.

Thea Mateu, Council for Hispanic Ministries

Radical Welcome: Breaking the Barriers in Sunday Worship for People with Special Needs

"Parables" is a worship service designed by Wayzata Community Church in MN to be inclusive of children, youth, and adults with disabilities and special needs. Learn firsthand from Neugent, who launched the "Parables" program, how your church can use this concept to connect with and welcome persons with disabilities and special needs in your own community.

The Rev. Leslie Neugent, Minister at Large, Wayzata Community Church, Wayzata, MN

Seven Secrets to Congregational Growth

Church growth experts Trimble and Piazza of the Center for Progressive Renewal, who have conducted numerous courses and webinars on the subject, share the top 7 secrets they've found are most essential for growing churches. They will show you how adopting these practices can directly benefit your church, save you time and money, nurture spiritual formation, and more.

The Rev. Cameron Trimble, Executive Director and CEO of the Center for Progressive Renewal

The Rev. Michael Piazza, Director for Congregational Vitality for the Center for Progressive Renewal

The 10 Commandments/Suggestions for Engaging, Enriching, and Expanding Online Communities in Unexpected Places

Your church can attract an online audience and engage them in creative online ministry. In this workshop, staff of Extravagance United Church of Christ offer an in-depth explanation of social media platforms and online demonstrations and share 10 practical ways clergy and churches can expand their ministry through online outreach.

The Rev. Nicole Havelka, Extravagance UCC Minister for Digital Programs

The Rev. Jo Hudson, Gathering Pastor, Extravagance UCC

Kimberly Knight, Extravagance UCC Minister of Digital Communities

Time Marches On: The Long Road of Disaster Recovery

Join Christopher Marlin-Warfield, Back Bay Mission Church Relations Associate, to explore disaster recovery from the beginning through the challenges that still remain after recovery, and what churches can do to help communities over the long term. Will include an update on the Mississippi Gulf Coast since Katrina as an excellent example of what the Mission is doing post-recovery.

Christopher Marlin-Warfield, Church Relations Associate of Back Bay Mission

Tools for Turning Your Congregation Around

This workshop will focus on the concept of church redevelopment and provide the tools for implementation. Attendees will learn about Beneficent Church, which almost closed its doors in 2009, but instead began a process of redevelopment. Since then, it has quadrupled worship attendance, tripled giving, and added 100+ members.

The Rev. Nicole Grant Yonkman and the Rev. Dr. Todd Grant Yonkman, co-ministers of Beneficent Congregational Church, Providence, Rhode Island

Transgender Inclusion: Opportunity for Congregational Revival

Did you know that transgender inclusion can actually deepen a congregation's faith? This workshop will help churches, both ONA and non-ONA, take their first steps toward welcoming members of the transgender community. Barbara Satin shares the basics about gender identity and expression and best practices for learning experiences focused on transgender inclusion.

Barbara Satin, Institute for Welcoming Resources

UCC Congregations as Centers for Christian Just Peacemaking

This workshop will educate attendees on the UCC's historic Just Peace witness. It will give updates on recent ecumenical affirmations of Just Peace Theory and what the UCC is currently doing to renew this identity post 9/11. Churches will learn how they can renew or become a Just Peace church.

The Rev. Michael Neuroth, Policy Advocate for International Issues, UCC Justice and Witness Ministries, and 2-3 members of the UCC Just Peace Table

Using Social Media to Advocate for LGBT Justice in the Local Church

Building on the success of Believe Out Loud's on-line presence (150,000 subscribers), this workshop will offer practical advice to local church leaders who wish to promote LGBT justice through social media. It will also give next steps, such as how to make the leap from social media to community-based action, and ways local churches can coordinate efforts with the UCC Coalition and other UCC entities.

James Rowe and Alison Amyx, from Believe Out Loud

The Valerie Russell Lecture

This presentation will honor the legacy of Valerie Russell, whose work with the marginalized and oppressed through the UCC and the City Mission Society of Boston made a huge impact on children and families suffering and struggling as victims of racism. The recipient of the Valerie Russell Scholarship will be announced during this time.

Darlene Sowell, President and CEO, Neighborhood Houses of St. Louis

The Voices of the Comfort Women

The Japanese military "comfort women" during World War II is considered one of the worst human trafficking crimes in history. Yoon Mee Hyang of the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan gives its historical background, shares some of the victims' stories, and ultimately presents this tragedy as an opportunity to help end the brutality of violence against women.

Yoon Mee Hyang, Korean Council for Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan

Why is My Youth Group Not Growing?

Join Steve Hockstra, who has been in youth ministry for over 20 years in several different Protestant denominations, for a conversation about the common causes of youth group decline. Attendees will also participate in a discussion on how to cure this problem within their own congregations.

Steve Hockstra, Director of Youth Ministries at First Congregational Church of Hudson, Hudson, OH

Why Young People Keep Leaving the Church, as Told by Young People

Learn firsthand, from a panel of youth and young adult UCC members, why so many young people are leaving communities of faith. There will be a Q & A session which will give attendees the opportunity to interact with the panel to further understand the issue and obtain suggestions on how they can reach out and embrace this vital demographic.

Julia LeBrell, Council for Youth and Young Adult Ministries

Youth and Sunday School: We Can Do Better

This workshop is for Christian educators who teach youth and are looking for more effective ways to connect the basics of teaching to a topical-based content approach for students. Learn, hands-on, with Nissia as he walks attendees through a youth Sunday school lesson and transforms it into an engaging, fun, relevant, and faith strengthening experience.

Nathanael Vissia, Director of Christian Education at UCC at Valley Forge and creator of rfour.org, a website offering free access to over 175 Sunday school lesson plans