

Ecumenical Connection

A publication of the Illinois Conference of Churches



August 2018

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Everyone welcome to gather for dinner the evening before Annual Assembly

Many of those who attend our Annual Assembly are in town the Thursday evening before. We are organizing dinner at a restaurant for fellowship and conversation. **This is open to everyone.** Each attendee will pay their own bill. Please RSVP by email to laurie@illinoisconferenceofchurches.org with **Annual Assembly Dinner** as the subject - just indicate how many people. Please do not use any other words in the subject line - please respond by 10 a.m. on Thursday. We will meet at Destihl at 6:30 p.m. at 301 N. Neil St, Champaign. Ask for the ICC table. Parking is available across the street in a city lot (feed the meter) or in a garage at the corner of Randolph and Hill (one block away) - the restaurant validates parking.

Please register for Annual Assembly prior to Sept. 23. Hotel block expires Sept. 6. Complete details next page. Thank you!

Team members needed

The ICC operates with five teams: Leadership, Public Policy, Annual Assembly Forum (planning the Forum) Illinois Christians Encountering Racism (ICER) (anti-racism) and Interreligious (a newer team trying to deepen our relationship with other faiths). While all of our teams welcome new members, our ICER team is in particular seeking new members. Our Interreligious Team is seeking new members, particularly those of other faiths. These teams meet mostly by conference call and only a few times a year. If the mission of any of these teams speaks to your heart please contact Laurie at laurie@illinoisconferenceofchurches.org for more information.

You can all be Ecumenical Partners!

The Illinois Conference of Churches voted to forge a new membership structure. Previously, the governing bodies of denominations, located in Illinois were members – judicatories and they continue to be the foundation of our organization.

But the ICC is broadening this structure. Going forward, individual persons, individual congregations or churches (regardless of its judicatory being a member) and organizations, can become ecumenical partners and attend Annual Assembly where they will have a voice at the table. Voting is done by consensus and will continue to be the responsibility of the judicatory leaders and delegates.

All members and ecumenical partners must agree with the Mission Statement of the ICC:

“The Illinois Conference of Churches seeks to be an inclusive community of churches that celebrates and makes visible our sacred bonds of unity in Christ. We will do this by: Promoting an honest sharing and understanding of both our common and divergent theological convictions; and Making public, prophetic witness to Christ’s love for all people, particularly by addressing poverty and racism. To these ends the members of the Illinois Conference of Churches proclaim our common faith in Jesus Christ. In word and deed, we give expression to Ephesians 4:5 – there is “...one Lord, one faith, one baptism...” – as we unite in cooperative ministries.”

To become an ecumenical partner please fill out and submit the form on the website under “news” electronically, or download and print the form to mail. By submitting or mailing this form you attest that you agree with the mission statement. Thank you for your generous support of the ICC.

2018 Illinois Conference of Churches Annual Assembly “Christian Healing in a Fractured World: An Ecumenical Perspective on Polarization in the USA 2018.”

Dinner the evening before at 6:30 at Destihl in downtown Champaign - open to all! Please pay for your own dinner.

Friday, Sept. 28

8 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Worship 9 a.m.

Forum 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Business meeting 2 p.m.

St. Peter's UCC Church

905 S. Russell St.

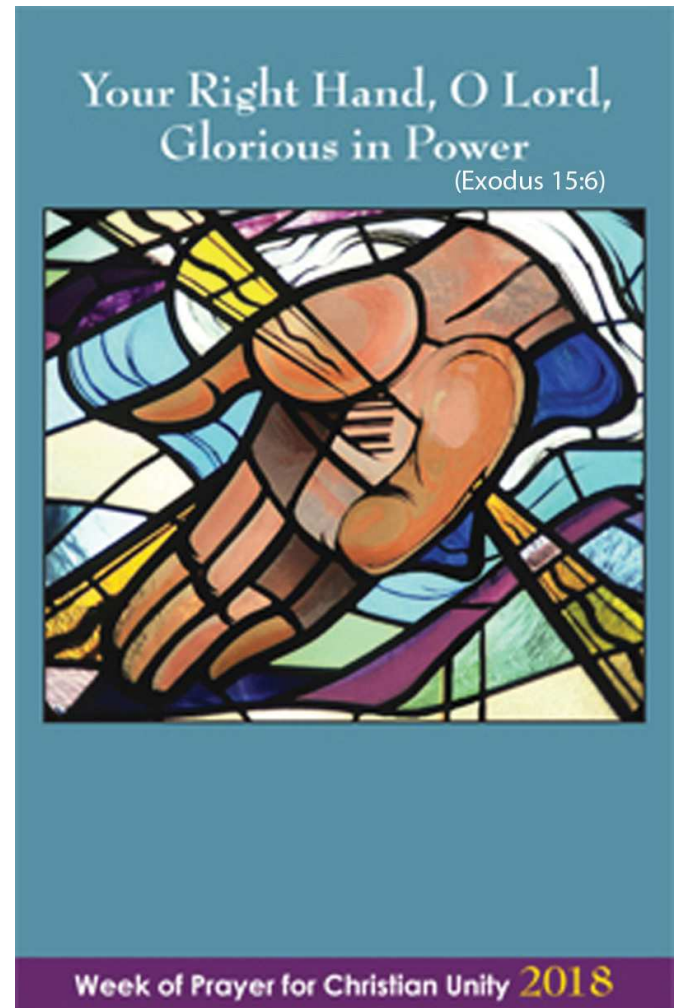
Champaign, IL

*Light breakfast 8-9 a.m.
Lunch noon - 1 p.m.*

Rev. Kevin Kessler, District Executive at Illinois Wisconsin District Church of the Brethren, will deliver the message during morning worship.

Forum speakers:

Fr. Richard Chiola, a retired Catholic priest and Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and Professor Brian Gaines of the University of Illinois Political Science Department.



Bring books you no longer need for a book swap.

For a copy of any proposed by-law changes go to our website under “events” or request a copy by email, after Sept. 1.

Register online using the events tab on our website. \$10 for students, \$45 for all others, includes breakfast, lunch and materials. Deadline Sept. 23.

Questions? Contact Laurie Vial, Executive Director, at laurie@illinoisconferenceofchurches.org or at the phone number below.

Lodging: Rooms are blocked at Wingate by Wyndham 516 W. Marketview Dr., Champaign at \$80 plus tax. 217-689-4714. Rooms must be booked prior to Sept. 6 to assure the discounted rate.

1608 W. Church St., Champaign, IL 61821 217-522-7099

**Illinois
Conference
of
Churches**



ICC unveils possible Chicago Bronze and “One Voice” concerts

As announced in our previous issue, the Illinois Conference of Churches will embrace fundraising in addition to donations to fund its valuable work in Illinois. The ICC operates on an annual budget of \$44,000. After this year’s Annual Assembly we will publish our 2019 budget in each newsletter as the back page in our continuing effort to be transparent.

The renowned Chicago-area bell choir, Chicago Bronze, has an opening in their Christmas calendar. We are seeking a Chicago area church to donate their sanctuary to the ICC (or at low cost) for a concert on Dec. 8, 2018. This date may quickly disappear. Tickets sales for this concert would go the ICC. Please contact Laurie immediately if you could help us out in this way. In 2019 and future years, the United Methodist Temple has invited us to use their sanctuary for this endeavor. Thank you United Methodist Temple!



Our other fund raising tool will also revolve around music. We will be holding One Voice ecumenical concerts all over the state. Pastor Joel Jackle-Hugh of United in Faith Church, Pana, and their choir director Whitney Hill have generously volunteered to host our first concert. We have conversations going in Peoria and other cities in Illinois.

The basic format for these concerts, which will include Christian music of all genres, plus some solos and congregational singing, will be a choir director from any church in the community and a church volunteering its sanctuary. The ICC will pay a stipend to the choir director, organist/pianist and sound board system operator. A free will offering will be taken with proceeds going to the ICC. Some concerts will also include special instruments such as brass or drums.

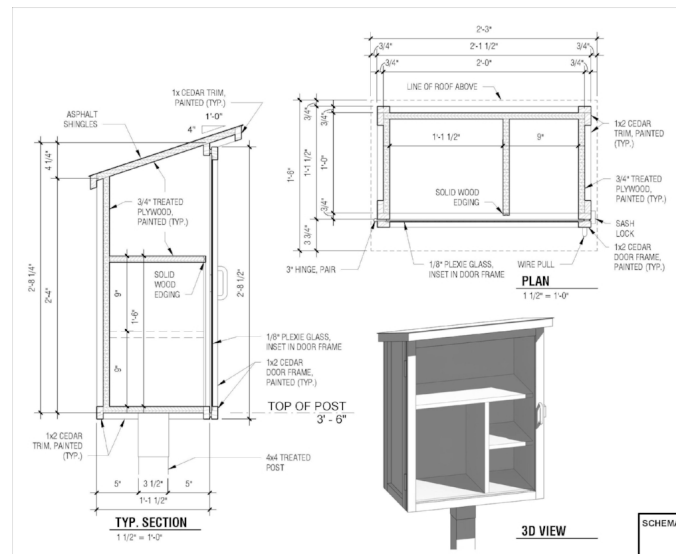
Music has always been an important part of ecumenism. Singing at our Annual Assembly worship service is always a beautiful blending of voices praising God amongst pastors and lay people of many diverse Christian backgrounds.

Please watch future newsletters for announcements of dates of upcoming One Voice concerts. We hope you will consider hosting a concert in late 2018 or in 2019. If a concert is held in your area please promote it to potential choir members and get the word out to attend. Please contact Laurie for more information.

Little Free Pantry

Are you aware of the Little Free Library concept in your area? The ICC is interested in learning more about the Little Free Pantry movement. <http://www.littlefreepantry.org/>

If your church has jumped on this bandwagon let us know. Send us a photo of your pantry and some anecdotes. Watch this newsletter for updates throughout the year.



Our partner in faith and care for the environment - Faith in Place

We urge you to go to their website **faithinplace.org** and check them out and find events all over the state of Illinois.



Green Team Summit 2018 Saturday, Sept.22, 2018 The Field Museum in Chicago

Learn how to mobilize your House of Worship to take better care of the Earth with a Green Team!

Join us at The Field Museum in Chicago on Saturday, Sept. 22 for our Third Annual Green Team Summit. This event will convene hundreds of people of diverse faiths from neighborhoods across Chicago and cities across Illinois for an action-packed day of connecting and networking about environmental justice.

Whether your house of worship is just starting to think about sustainability or has a long history of going green, you are invited to join us for this event that will give you the tools, resources, and inspiration needed to spark meaningful change in your community.

For registration and full details go to <https://www.faithinplace.org/get-involved/green-team-summit>.

Compliments....and thank yous!

During a recent conference call of Illinois Christians Encountering Racism (ICER) the team had a discussion on compliments. Do you give them? Do you receive them? If you receive them how do they make you feel? The group set as a goal to give more compliments in their daily lives. I think this could also include thank yous. Since we reach a wide percentage of Christians in Illinois, if we all took this on as a goal, we could spread a lot of positive feelings in the state. Be sincere. Be genuine. But increase the number of times a day you give a compliment or a thank you. And if you receive one, receive it humbly and graciously - don't deflect it. Maybe next issue we will have some stories about how this opened you to more of God's grace - what a glorious experience!



Nov.1 - 7, 2018

Task Force on End-of-Life Decisions unveils plans

The Illinois Conference of Churches has taken on a major new project to assist all of our denominations to help their congregations better prepare for and deal with end-of-life issues. **We started this program by encouraging churches to participate in the Donor Sabbath to increase awareness of organ and tissue donation. The Donor Sabbath is the second weekend of November each year. We encourage your church to start a discussion and plan to participate from now on. The website is www.donatelife.net/nds/.**

Members of the Task Force will soon meet for two half day sessions to plan a page on our website with materials covering issues such as:

- hospice
- living wills
- wills
- advance planning
- funeral planning
- green funerals
- and much more

While this is a sensitive topic, it's one that our members and friends face through the loss of loved ones, and eventually themselves. As Christians we want to give our members the tools and information to ease these decisions whenever possible.

This was voted on at our November 2016 Leadership Team meeting and was the focus of our Joint Teams meeting in May of 2017. Alicja Lukaszewicz-Southall, one of our Leadership Team members, is chairing the Task Force. She invites you to join her in exploring these topics and rolling them out to our churches. E-mail laurie@illinoisconferenceofchurches.org to join or ask questions.

God's blessings, Laurie



This can be observed any time during 2018. For additional information and materials see the website www.geii.org.

2018 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Exodus 15:6 "Your Right Hand, O Lord, Glorious in Power"

By Rev. Dr. Gerald F. Rafferty, S.T.D.

Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Scarsdale, NY

Your Right Hand, O Lord, Glorious in Power (Exodus 15:6) The theme for this year's week of Christian Unity expresses praise and awe of God and specifically of His power. The first thing to note here is that the statement is addressed to the "LORD." This is no vague reference. In most English language bibles, LORD in all capital letters means that the original Hebrew has the personal name of YHWH. The reference then is very specific and calls immediately to mind that the One at work is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who has been a part of this people's life and who has invited them into an intimate relationship signified by His sharing of His name (cf. Ex 3:13-20).

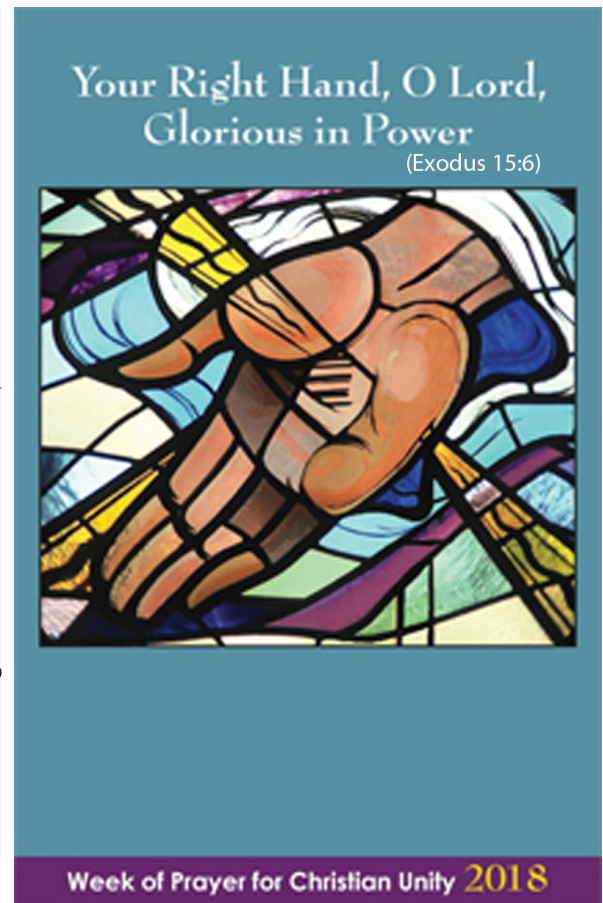
Our theme is a poetic expression. In the Bible, poetry is the form used in order to express an experience. And Israel uses this form frequently in Psalms and prophetic utterances. Where mere narration is unable to capture the depth of Israel's experience with God, they turn to poetry, for, more than just describing their experience, they literally invite the reader to share it. And poetry gives voice to a deeper meaning and understanding than narrative.

Ancient poetry and song go hand in hand. And as such the form is most often used in the context of communal celebrations including liturgical worship. This poetic line, extolling YHWH's might, is part of a larger Hymn of praise in Ex 15:1-21. It appears after the children of Israel have witnessed the miracle of the Red Sea, in which God has caused the destruction of the army of Pharaoh and thus guaranteed that His people are now free from bondage and free to take up their call to worship Him and live as His people, in the land He has promised to their ancestors (see Genesis). With the army defeated, Israel can now fulfill its God-given destiny.

The Hymn is Israel's response to God's saving work. Israel's song of praise to God for victory over the Egyptian army in Ex 15:1-21 is one of the more ancient hymns in the OT. Most believe that parts of the text can indeed be dated early in Israel's life. But as we have it the Hymn has been enhanced.

The context for our thematic statement (Ex 15:6) is definitely in the form of a Hymn of praise, enhanced by the theme of Thanksgiving. This hymn has a narrative introduction in 15:1a and supplement in 15:19-20 which leads to the repetition of the call to praise in v. 21.

The Hymn found in Ex 15:1b-18 follows a pattern of a call to praise followed by a listing of reasons for this praise. In vv 3-10, the specific events at the Red Sea are recounted and extolled. Then, in vv. 11-16, the events of



The National Workshop on Christian Unity



St. Louis, Missouri

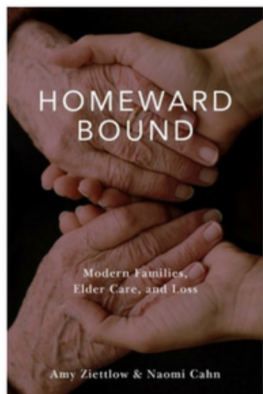
April 1-4, 2019

www.nwcu.org

Book Corner

Rev. Amy Zietlow is an ELCA Lutheran pastor serving Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Decatur. She is a member of our End-of-Life Decisions Task Force. She co-authored this book, *Homeward Bound: Modern Families, Elder Care, and Loss*, on a related subject and spoke about it at our Annual Assembly.

If you know of a book that has an Illinois tie or is related to the work of the ICC please recommend it for a future Book Corner. Thanks. Laurie



Homeward Bound

By Amy Zietlow and Naomi Cahn

(Oxford | 2017 | 232 pages | \$29.95 | 9780190261092)



Email Media list sought

A friend of the ICC recently shared their media email list with the ICC - thank you so much. It is not a comprehensive list that covers the entire state. If you have an up-to-date email list for most all media in Illinois - newspaper, radio stations, TV stations etc, please share it with us for our public policy work. Thanks very much.

Rally in the Rotunda

In the Spring of 2016 the Illinois Conference of Churches held a Rally in the Rotunda of the state capital and prayed for the passing of the state budget. The Public Policy Team, together with the Leadership Team of the ICC, would like to make this an annual event. We may hold this event on our own or join forces with one of our partner denominations or Faith in Place to strengthen their legislative day. Watch for details this fall when we set the date for spring of 2019.

Please forward our newsletter and share a link to our website on yours

Some exciting and positive progress has happened with the ICC in recent months due to clergy reading our newsletter. Pastors have felt called to join teams, committee and task forces that speak to their passion. Churches have asked to share resources. Congregations have reached across the street to work together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

This all happens because judicatory leaders share our newsletter with their pastors and congregations. Thank you! If you are not already doing this, please remember to forward our newsletter on.

On a related note, please consider putting a link to our website on yours! We're all in this together! Thank you. www.illinoisconferenceofchurches.org

BlacKkKlansman - a new movie is out at the theatres

Please investigate this thought-provoking movie and consider going and having a discussion about it. None of our team members (that I know of) have seen it so while we are not recommending it - it is getting good reviews. Hopefully we can share a review in future issues and you can catch it on DVD if necessary.

News snapshots



Judicatory visits and major meetings

Laurie Vial, executive director of the Illinois Conference of Churches, is traveling around the state and meeting individually with all Judicatory executives.

Another of Laurie's goals is to attend the major meetings of each denomination and where possible have an information table in the exhibition space. Please help out the ICC by communicating about your major meetings and forwarding registration forms for exhibition space. She could also address these gatherings and bring a brief greeting from the ICC.

Looking forward

Another goal of the ICC Leadership Team is to be more proactive. And the major focus of the ICC is alleviating racism and poverty. The Leadership Team seeks other ways to become more involved statewide. If you have a suggestion, please contact Laurie.

Would you like to join an ICC Team?

If you would like to serve on the Public Policy Team, the Illinois Christians Encountering Racism (ICER) Team, or help plan next year's Annual Assembly Forum – e-mail Laurie Vial and let her know. We also have a new Interreligious Team. If you would like to suggest someone to serve on this Team, please contact Laurie.

Grants

Now that the Illinois Conference of Churches will be seeking grants to supplement denomination donations in our working budget, we need you to be our eyes and ears. If you hear of appropriate grant opportunities from foundations or your own denomination, please notify the executive director. Thank you for helping in this way.

Donations/Pledges

The Illinois Conference of Churches relies on the generous donations of its 13 member Christian denominations for financial stability. Other generous supporters are affiliated members and individual congregations as well as the generosity of individuals.

Thank you for keeping current with your donations. Please contact the executive director if you need an update on your status.

Is there a way for Judicatories to share more resources such as training sessions?

The Christian Church Disciples of Christ has led the charge by opening their annual anti-racism training to anyone in our 13 member denominations. Everyone is watching their budget including travel budget and trying to be good stewards of the environment by not driving as much. If your denomination has a training session, a special speaker, an event, a workshop or any other "happening" that you would like to open to your fellow ICC members, please let us know. We will promote these events on our website and in our newsletter. Our Leadership Team would really like to grow this opportunity for more ecumenical encounters. And we'll all meet more brothers and sisters in Christ and have more networking opportunities.



Like us on

Facebook!

Keep up with the Illinois Conference of Churches and be prepared to

have a little fun along the way.

www.facebook.com/pages/Illinois-Conference-of-Churches

The ICC released the following public statements on June 19 and June 23, 2018

The ICC Leadership Team signed onto this statement

Faith Leaders Statement on Family Separation

Recently, the Administration announced that it will begin separating families and criminally prosecuting all people who enter the U.S. without previous authorization. As religious leaders representing diverse faith perspectives, united in our concern for the wellbeing of vulnerable migrants who cross our borders fleeing from danger and threats to their lives, we are deeply disappointed and pained to hear this news.

We affirm the family as a foundational societal structure to support human community and understand the household as an estate blessed by God. The security of the family provides critical mental, physical and emotional support to the development and wellbeing of children. Our congregations and agencies serve many migrant families that have recently arrived in the United States. Leaving their communities is often the only option they have to provide safety for their children and protect them from harm. Tearing children away from parents who have made a dangerous journey to provide a safe and sufficient life for them is unnecessarily cruel and detrimental to the well-being of parents and children.

As we continue to serve and love our neighbor, we pray for the children and families that will suffer due to this policy and urge the Administration to stop their policy of separating families. (signed by many faith leaders)

Later, the Public Policy Team wrote and the Leadership Team released this statement:

The Leadership Team of the Illinois Conference of Churches urges their congressmen and senators to lead the charge in taking further action and allocating funds to reunite 100 percent of separated immigrant families as quickly as possible. The Team invites other faith communities and all citizens of the United States to join them in this effort in pressuring the Federal government to take this action swiftly. Child abuse should not be used as a negotiating tool or tolerated under any circumstances and anything less is unacceptable.

Council of Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church issues a “A Call to Conscience”

Editor’s note: the “we” in this article is the AME Church speaking.

The AME Council of Bishops is issuing a “Call to Conscience: Forward to Action” Rally to be held on Thursday, Sept. 6 at 9 a.m. in Washington, DC., We are seeking to secure Lafayette Park, across the street from the White House. On Wednesday, Sept. 5 we invite denominational and judicatory leaders, clergy and laity to join us for a strategy and briefing session. In the afternoon we will meet with Congressional leaders, and visit the offices of our Senators and Representatives. While the call is being issued by the African Methodist Episcopal Church, it is our hope and prayer, that other faith communions will join us, in addition to leading Civil Rights and justice organizations, as well as citizens who are guided by their conscience to seek justice, and promote God’s kingdom on earth.

Sunday, Sept. 2 – Social Justice Sunday

Ministers across the nation are asked to preach sermons related to social justice and the “Call to Conscience” (suggested music, scriptures, litany’s will be provided). Press Release will go out announcing “Social Justice Sunday

Every Sunday from Sept. 9 to Nov. 4, ministers, lay leaders will provide for voter registration, and remind of upcoming election. Dependent upon each state, churches will organize for early voting, particularly for seniors.

Wednesday, Sept. 5 (Reid Temple AME Church, Glenn Dale, MD)

9 a.m. – 7 p.m. – Briefing, visits to Capital, worship

Thursday, Sept. 6

9 a.m. – Assemble Lafayette Park

10 a.m. – Call to Conscience Vigil – Lafayette Park

12:30 p.m. – Lunch – Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC

2 p.m. – Press Conference – Metropolitan AME Church, Washington, DC

Sunday, Nov. 4 – Voters to the Polls Sunday

Ministers will preach or urge their congregants to vote on Nov. 6

SAVE-THE-DATE

2nd Annual Spiritual Leaders Retreat

(for college and university Spiritual Leaders, Chaplains, Campus Ministers etc. in Illinois. This is an interreligious opportunity)

Thursday, April 11

9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Eureka College

Cerf Center Terrill Room

300 E. College Ave., Eureka, IL

Free parking east of the Cerf Center in the gravel lot.

9 a.m. Light Breakfast

10 a.m. Program begins



Please share with anyone who would benefit from this experience and have them email Laurie Vial to be added to the database.

Networking, networking, networking

Spiritual Leaders will have the ability to contact each other throughout the year through a private Facebook page where they can post concerns and receive suggestions.

Bring books you no longer need for a book swap.

Sponsored by Eureka College and the Illinois Conference of Churches

Register online using the events tab on the ICC website. Registration includes light breakfast, lunch, snacks, materials and facilitators.

Deadline is April 1.

Questions? Contact Laurie Vial, Executive Director, at laurie@illinoisconferenceofchurches.org or at the phone number below.

Lodging: Sleep Inn Washington, IL (309) 481-0450 is the closest lodging.

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www.illinoisconferenceofchurches.org

Teams of the Illinois Conference of Churches

We welcome new members to our teams. Please contact Laurie Vial, executive director, with questions or to join a team.

Leadership Team

Rev. Gary McCants, co-chair

African Methodist Episcopal Church
4th Episcopal District
Springfield

Rev. Wally Carlson, co-chair

United Methodist Church
Great Rivers Conference
Peoria Heights

Dr. John Charlton, treasurer

American Baptist Church
Great Rivers Region
Chatham

Fr. Kevin Laughery

Catholic Church
Diocese of Springfield
Troy

Rev. Galda McCants

African Methodist Episcopal Church
4th Episcopal District
Springfield

Dr. George Johnston

Presbyterian Church – USA
Southeastern Illinois Presbytery
Monticello

Rev. Megan Dean

United Methodist Church
Northern Illinois Conference
Bartlett

E. Garnet Fay

Religious Society of Friends
Oak Park

Rev. Sharon Patton

Christian Church, Disciples of Christ
Region of Illinois/Wisconsin
Charleston

Greg Krohm

Catholic Church
Archdiocese of Chicago
Wilmette

Fr. George Pyle

Greek Orthodox Church
Springfield/Champaign

Alicja Lukaszewicz-Southall

Episcopal Church
Diocese of Chicago
Wauconda

Rev. Catiana McKay

United Methodist Church
Northern Illinois Conference
Galena

Annual Assembly Forum Team

Rev. Wally Carlson, chair

United Methodist Church
Great Rivers Conference
Peoria Heights

Rev. Catiana McKay

United Methodist Church
Northern Illinois Conference
Galena

Fr. Bob Flannery

Catholic Church
Diocese of Belleville
Carbondale

Rev. Robert Sherman

United Church of Christ
Illinois Conference
Kewanee

Illinois Christians Encountering Racism (ICER)

Rev. Kevin Laughery, co-chair

Catholic Church
Diocese of Springfield
Troy

Rev. Galda McCants, co-chair

African Methodist Episcopal Church
Springfield

Rev. Mark Harkness

United Methodist Church
Northern Illinois District
Walnut

Martha Herrin

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Region of Illinois/Wisconsin
Stewardson

Rev. Christine Hopkins

Episcopal Church
Diocese of Springfield
Champaign

Rev. Megan Dean

United Methodist Church
Northern Illinois Conference
Bartlett

Rev. Sharon Patton

Christian Church, Disciples of Christ
Region of Illinois/Wisconsin
Charleston

Continued on next page

Interreligious Team

Rev. Catiana McKay, chair

United Methodist Church
Northern Illinois Conference
Galena

Dr. John Charlton

American Baptist Church
Great Rivers Region
Chatham

Fr. Kevin Laughery

Catholic Church
Diocese of Springfield
Troy

Hakan Berberoglu

Niagra Foundation
Chicago/Peoria

Alicja Lukaszewicz-Southall

Episcopal Church
Diocese of Chicago
Wauconda

Greg Krohm

Catholic Church
Archdiocese of Chicago
Wilmette

Fr. Bob Flannery

Catholic Church
Diocese of Belleville
Carbondale

Rev. Joel Jackle-Hugh

Presbyterian Church USA
and United Church of Christ
Pana

Public Policy Team

E. Garnet Fay, chair

Religious Society of Friends
Oak Park

Robert Gilligan

Catholic Church
Archdiocese of Chicago
Chicago

Rev. Gary McCants

African Methodist Episcopal
4th Episcopal District
Springfield

Rev. Wally Carlson

United Methodist Church
Great Rivers Conference
Peoria Heights

Rev. Dr. John Rickard

Presbyterian Church - USA
Blackhawk Presbytery
Oregon

\$\$\$\$\$ Thank you for your generous response to our 2018 pledge drive. If you have not yet filled out and returned your pledge card please do. To see a copy of our current budget or a recap on donations, please email and request a copy. Donations are always welcome - one easy way to donate is to use PayPal on our website. Again, thank you for your generous gifts.

Date to remember:

Friday, Sept. 28 Annual Assembly St. Peter's UCC, Champaign with dinner the evening before.

Illinois Conference of Churches

1608 W. Church St.

Champaign, IL 61821

illinoisconferenceofchurches.org

Laurie Vial, executive director

laurie@illinoisconferenceofchurches.org 217-522-7099