

Iowa Conference
United Church of Christ

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April 16, 2008

Greetings from Iowa!

Thank you for your interest in the Associate Conference Minister position for Eastern Iowa.

At the website for the Iowa Conference (www.ucciaconf.org), you will find two items that the ACM Search Team has prepared: a brief profile (including a position description) and an application form. Interested applicants should complete the following steps:

1. Have your ministerial profile sent directly to:
The Rev. Joel Love
225 Broad Street
Reinbeck, IA 50669
319/788-6434
reinucc@reinbeck.net
2. Complete the application form (3 questions) and email them to: reinucc@reinbeck.net.

THESE MATERIALS ARE DUE TO ME NO LATER THAN JULY 1, 2008.

The committee has set the following tentative and hopeful schedule:

1. Receive all profiles and supporting materials by July 1, 2008;
2. Conduct initial phone interviews between July 31 and August 15;
3. Conduct face-to-face interviews between August 20 and August 30.

We hope to have our new ACM in place by December 1, 2008.

The Iowa Conference is an exciting place to be in ministry! The land is beautiful and the people are serious about responding to a Still-speaking God. Our challenges as a conference are great, but no more so than the challenges of any other covenant community committed to ministry in the 21st century. I am pleased and inspired by the ways our Conference Minister, Rich Pleva, and the Conference Board of Directors are leading us as we seek to listen, discern, and act with focus and resolve to the hopeful presence and voice of our Still-speaking God. The Search Team is looking for an ACM with the skills and hardiness to join this task.

Blessings on your continuing journey as you listen, discern, and act!

Blessings and grace to you,

The Rev. Joel Love, Chair
Iowa Conference Associate Conference Minister Search Team

Position Description

Associate Conference Minister Iowa Conference, United Church of Christ

As the world around us changes, the fundamental message of Christ's church stays the same. Our methods of sharing the "Good News," however, must always be well considered, flexible and accessible to those God calls us to serve. In the same way, this position description is open to on-going negotiation and change as our churches and the conference live into new times and situations.

Title: Associate Conference Minister (ACM) for Eastern Iowa

Personal Qualities: The ACM will evidence the following qualities in her/his personal life and relationships:

- He/she will be a person of deep and evident **faith**;
- She/he will possess the necessary **courage** to face challenges directly and with clarity;
- He/she will evidence **integrity** (essential oneness) in relationship with those with whom he/she works and lives;
- She/he will possess acquired **wisdom** to the extent that clergy and lay leaders will seek the ACM's counsel;
- He/she will be **skilled** in the practice of local church ministry and **knowledgeable** about the ways of organizations;
- She/he will hold all persons in genuine **respect**, both those with whom she/he agrees and those with whom she/he disagrees.

Given that these expectations are ambitious and never perfectly attainable, the ACM will also understand and accept his/her own limitations, be able to laugh at him/herself and laugh with others and model a healthy ability to seek, as well as offer forgiveness as situations warrant.

Responsibilities: The specific responsibilities of the ACM will be determined in ongoing negotiation with Conference Minister, but will initially include:

- Initiation and support of structures for the intentional professional development of authorized ministers in the Northeast, Eastern, and Southeastern Associations. At minimum this includes the skill to facilitate clergy covenant groups for support, accountability and growth;
- Support of the Committees on Ministry and Advisory Councils in the Northeast, Eastern, and Southeastern Associations;
- Support of the Search and Call process in all congregations in the Northeast, Eastern, and Southeastern Associations;
- Other conference-wide responsibilities as may be assigned by the conference minister.

In addition, each member of the Ministerial Staff of the Iowa Conference is responsible to:

- Consistently and engagingly interpret the ministries of the conference and other settings of the wider church and advocate for generous financial support of same by local churches and individuals throughout the conference;
- Participate collegially in meetings of the Conference Board of Directors, Conference Commission on Ministry, periodic staff meetings, and other organizational responsibilities as may be assigned by and/or negotiated with the Conference Minister.

Accountability: The ACM will be called by the Iowa Conference Board of Directors and will be accountable to the Conference Minister in the day to day exercise of her/his ministry.

Other Qualifications: The ACM will be an authorized minister of the United Church of Christ or will be able to obtain authorized ministerial standing within one year of appointment to the position.

Work Location: The Associate Conference Minister for Eastern Iowa will live at and work from a location not presently determined in either the Northeast, Eastern, or Southeastern Associations. That location will be determined in negotiation with the Conference Minister and Board of Directors.

Compensation: The ACM for Eastern Iowa will be compensated according to the Iowa Conference Personnel Policy.

Iowa Conference, UCC

Recent History and Current Ministry Focus

Early in 2006 the Board of Directors of the Iowa Conference adopted the following statement of mission priorities for the staff and board of the Iowa Conference:

1. The Conference will emphasize in program and staff allocation the development, growth and support of effective and transforming pastoral leaders;
2. The Conference will efficiently support the search and call process in our local churches;
3. The Conference will offer support and resources to our associations as they attend to their responsibility to form and authorize ministers for pastoral leadership;
4. The Conference will facilitate conference-wide ministry to youth and adults in settings beyond the local church;
5. The Conference will be faithful in its covenant relationship with all settings of the United Church of Christ and the church ecumenical.

The specificity of these priorities goes beyond what is typically found in similar mainline church statements. We are clear that in a time of diminished resources, we have limited ability to do all (the usually good and important) work which has historically been attempted by regional church bodies. We affirm the value of those multi-faceted ministries, but in the Iowa Conference it is our intention to focus our resources more narrowly so we may maximize our potential to positively impact our local churches. To put it another way, we hope to do a few things very well, rather than to attempt a wider constellation of work and not succeed in doing any of them particularly well.

We are forced to make these kinds of choices because of real fiscal limitations. It may help to understand the origins of these challenges. Judicatories throughout the UCC and in mainline traditions generally are facing various sorts of budgetary stress. The origins of the challenges in the Iowa Conference include those common in other places (an aging and declining local church membership, sometimes dissatisfaction with the actions of other wider church bodies, failure to effectively teach principles of generosity, etc.), but also include our own unique history.

About a decade ago the conference began planning for an ambitious expansion of the existing camping facility at Pilgrim Heights Retreat Center in order to make year around programming available in an adult-friendly context. Fundraising was undertaken for a project which was originally projected to cost about \$1.1 million dollars. Churches and individuals in the Iowa Conference donated about \$1.2 million and the project was begun on that basis. For a variety of reasons the project ran hugely over budget. Eventually the conference invested all its liquid reserves (about \$1 million) into the project and borrowed an additional \$800,000 at which point the project was stopped. By that time construction was largely, but not entirely completed.

The consequences for the conference have been profoundly difficult in two broad areas. First of all, the direct fiscal consequences have been severe. Before the project was

undertaken the conference earned interest on the approximately \$1 million dollars of reserves. That interest income supplemented the operating budget. By the time the building project was ended, that investment income was gone (which amounted to a loss of income of approximately \$50,000 per year) and instead the conference was paying monthly principle and interest payments of approximately \$65,000 per year. The combination of lost income and increased expenses negatively and immediately impacted the conference budget in an amount well in excess of \$100,000 per year. The consequences of that loss have been severe given the overall size of our operation. The conference has found it necessary to reduce its staff (we now have two ACM positions instead of the 3 we had at the beginning of 2006), we eliminated funding for all boards and committees except the Board of Directors, the Commission on Ministry and the Annual Meeting Planning Committee (though a small amount of that funding has since been restored), we reduced our support of the national church from 46% to 36% of gross OCWM receipts, and we made other smaller operational cuts throughout our work. Most drastically, in 2007 the decision was made to divest ourselves of ownership of Pilgrim Heights. The consequences of that decision (anger, sadness, regret, confusion, and more) are felt most acutely (though not exclusively) in the eastern part of the conference, and it will be important for the new ACM who works in that part of the conference to have the ability to work respectfully and honestly within that immediate context.

The second consequence has been a diminishment of trust. Any large project which turns out so badly is bound to produce hard feelings and various degrees of alienation and anger. The drastic steps taken to address the crisis have diminished trust in a mostly different part of our constituency. The public manifestations of anger have been few, but behind the scenes many instances of reduced trust can easily be found. It is in this context that conference leadership and staff must work with the highest levels of transparency and integrity in order to rebuild the foundation of trust necessary for our work to again prosper.

In 2005 the Iowa Conference called Rich Pleva as its new conference minister. Rich brought with him the conviction that a judicatory can most effectively leverage positive change in its churches by focusing its resources on the pastoral leaders of those congregations. His experience in the Prairie Association of the Illinois Conference was focused particularly on leadership development and he has brought that same experience and vision to the Iowa Conference.

The person we seek to call as our newest Associate Conference Minister will be a person who shares this vision. We intend to call a person who has the gifts and experiences to empower pastors to become leaders – the kind of leaders who willingly embrace the transformative responsibilities of the pastoral office as much as they embrace the caring responsibilities.

Recent Highlights in the History of the Iowa Conference

In 1985 the Iowa Conference hosted the 15th General Synod of the United Church of Christ on the campus of Iowa State University in Ames. With the help of over 800 volunteers from all over the Conference, the 15th General Synod became a “legend” in the annals of UCC history as a special time and place.

In 1991, the Pilgrimage and CENTER/LEARN programs were initiated. Pilgrimage supports adults in enriching their spiritual journey while CENTER/LEARN provides training in Christian Education, theology and ministry. CENTER is a two year program for persons who wish to be better prepared as church educators. LEARN is a three year program for non-ordained persons wishing to enhance their theological education.

In 1993 a resolution was passed to include a young adult from each church as a voting delegate to the Annual Meeting.

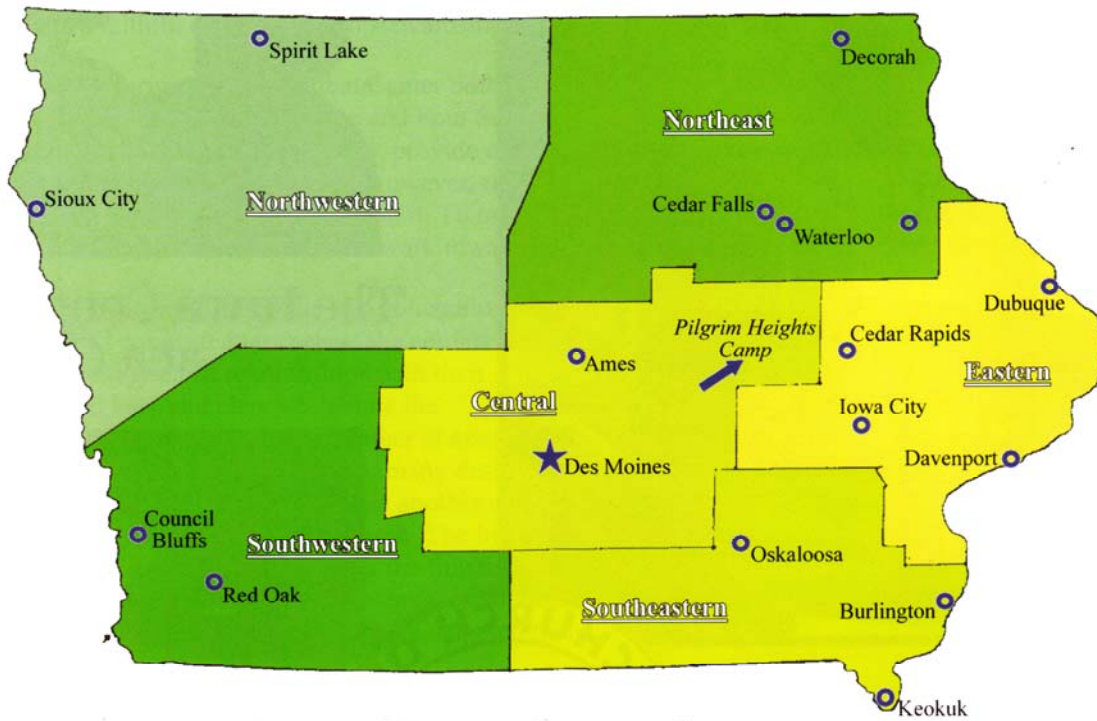
In 2000, the Iowa Conference hosted the National Youth Event—again on the ISU campus in Ames following the theme, “Living in Christ, Creating our Future.” Approximately 2500 youth from around the nation attended and were served by hundreds of volunteers, again, from all over the Iowa Conference.

In 2007 the conference authorized the divestiture of ownership of Pilgrim Heights Camp and Retreat Center. This was a painful and controversial decision. The authorization to divest ownership included a stipulation that first priority in any sale/transfer be given to a newly organized corporation which would continue to operate the facility as a Christian camp in relationship (though not exclusive relationship) with the Iowa Conference. In January, 2008, operational authority for the camp was transferred to Our Sacred Space, Inc., and ownership will transfer to OSS at such time when the external debt on the property is retired.

Also in 2007, the Conference approved a budget which authorizes the creation of a new professional staff position for Youth and Young Adult Ministries. A search is in progress for this new staff person.

Church Statistics – 2007 Numbers

Association Name	Members	1-50	51-100	101-200	201-400	401-600	600+	# of Churches
Central	7793	4	3	6	8	3	1	25
Eastern	7172	5	4	9	11	4	0	33
Northeast	7925	6	6	11	15	2	0	40
Northwestern	5691	8	14	15	7	0	0	44
Southeastern	2603	3	4	4	5	0	0	16
Southwestern	2900	3	4	11	3	0	0	21
Total	34,084	29	35	56	49	9	1	179



Special Programs of the Iowa Conference

CENTER/LEARN/SEARCH. CENTER/LEARN/SEARCH (CLS) is a lay ministry study program of the Iowa Conference of the United Church of Christ. Started in 1991, the program offers biblical, theological, and historical study opportunities, along with practical courses covering many aspects of local church life and ministry. CLS also welcomes participation by members of the Presbytery of Des Moines, PC (USA), and the Mid-American Baptist Churches, ABC/USA.

CENTER (Christian Educators, Nurtured, Taught, Enriched, Resourced) is a two-year track for those who wish to be better prepared as church educators. CENTER was developed for persons who desire to be involved in the education program of a local church, either as an employed lay educator or as an informed volunteer. Successful completion of the CENTER program also fulfills the educational requirement for those who choose to apply for certification as a church educator in the United Church of Christ, a denominational credential for those whose employment is in church education.

LEARN (Lay Education for Adults in Religion Now and the future), a three-year track for non-ordained person, was designed in response to laity who were interested in opportunities for spiritual growth and theological study. In addition, there was a recognition that some persons might become “license-able” upon completion of the LEARN program. The Associations in the Iowa Conference have determined that the LEARN program meets appropriate educational criteria for persons who might apply for licensing to serve in a setting where ordained leadership is not available and/or affordable.

SEARCH (??) provides opportunity for individuals to enroll in one or more of the courses offered in CLS without committing to the entire program.

Pilgrimage. The Pilgrimage consists of a series of three retreats in which participants are provided an opportunity to gain greater awareness and appreciation of God, of God’s love, and of the many ways God is open to us.

Retreat #1: Helps individuals develop sensitivity to God, to study God’s word, and to see how it applies in their daily lives. It offers tools to help participants open up their awareness to God’s presence.

Retreat #2: Provides participants with additional tools. The emphasis is on the use of solitude, and the presence of vocation contributing to one’s sense of Christian spirituality. The retreat includes eighteen hours of solitude (silent witness), a time to be alone or silently with others.

Retreat #3: Provides the participants with the opportunity to creatively interact with God amidst the ordinary and the extra-ordinary events of life.

Persons enrolled in the LEARN program are required to complete Pilgrimage as a part of their course of study.

Compensation information and terms of employment for prospective ACM's

The Iowa Conference will compensate the ACM for Eastern Iowa according to the Personnel Policies of the conference.

In brief, the policies dictate these terms:

- Cash Salary:** ACM's will be compensated within a range of 75 – 90% of the compensation of the conference minister (currently \$67,465), based on skills and experience. For purposes of other benefit calculations, this amount is the “salary basis.”
- Housing allowance:** The ACM may request a portion of his/her “cash salary” be designated housing allowance.
- Social Security offset:** 7.65% of “salary basis”
- Pension:** 14% of “salary basis”
- Health Insurance:** Fully funded for the ACM and his/her family (if needed)
- Group Life & Disability:** Fully funded
- Professional Travel:** The conference will provide an automobile for conference related travel and pay expenses related thereto.
- Professional Expenses:** Other professional expenses will be reimbursed on a vouchered basis up to the amount budgeted.
- Vacation:** 4 weeks annually
- Continuing Ed:** Up to 2 weeks annually with \$700 budgeted for expenses related thereto.
- Moving expenses:** Paid
- Sabbatical:** 3 months of sabbatical provided with full salary and benefits after each 5 years of service.

For more particulars, please consult the Conference personnel policies which will take precedence over any and all other representations.

April 2008

Search Committee Bios

Becky David

A little bio. I am currently Dir. Of Spiritual Care services for Genesis Health System in Davenport Iowa. I was ordained last september after a long discernment. I received my MPS and my M.Div from Loyola Chicago, am a certified Spiritual Director and have been in healthcare chaplaincy almost 12 yrs. I live with Jennell, my partner of 16 years. I love to read, golf, travel. I look forward to meeting you all.

Dennis Eastin

Rev. Dennis C. Eastin, serves as Pastor of Ankeny United Church of Christ, in Ankeny, Iowa. Currently he serves on the Board of Directors of the Iowa Conference and is chair of the Personnel Team, he also serves on the Board of Directors of Our Sacred Space –Pilgrim Heights. He has served in Iowa 17 of the 20 years he has been serving in the capacity as a pastor. During his time in the church he has focused on pastoral ministry to smaller congregations. Dennis is married to Kathy Eastin – a Pharmacy Supervisor at Iowa Methodist in Des Moines, and they have two boys, Cale 11 and Joel 9. His hobbies include wood working and spending time with the family at Husker football games.

Eileen Johnson

Eileen Johnson is a semi-retired licensed UCC Pastor living in Parkersburg. She just completed an interim at St. Paul's UCC, Cedar Falls on March 31. Eileen recieved her BA in religion from Wartburg College in 1981 and has been licensed since 1989. Before, and since entering the ministry, she has been a Christian educator. Currently she is the Chair of the Nominating Committee of the NE Association, a member of the Iowa Conference Nominating Committee. In the past she has served on the Board of Directors, been a Synod delegate, past moderator of the NE Associaton and served on numerous Association and Conference Committees. Eileen is also a writer.

Her husband, Henry, is a farmer, now retired. They are parents of three children, Sheila, Doug and Regina; grandparents of six and great-grandparents of three. One grandson, died from Duchennes Muscular Dystrophy in 2006 at age 19.

Eileen's hobbies include genealogy, collecting rocks and flower gardening. She is also active in the Democratic Party.

Ron Kuhlman

Ron Kuhlman is a layperson and member of the Cedar Falls United Church of Christ. He is currently in his second year as President of the congregation and successfully chaired the Open and Affirming committee, which resulted in the approval of a resolution adopting that status. He is also on the Northeast Association Church and Ministry Committee. He is a long-time UCC'er with ties to the Zion UCC church in Hubbard, Iowa, and Eden UCC in Cedar Rapids, Iowa as well. His personal philosophy fits well within the UCC outreach, as he wants to liberally apply God's love to all persons. He and his wife, Barbara, will have been married over 40 years and have four married children and 11 grandchildren. His hobbies include golfing, fishing, and racquetball.

Joel Love

The Reverend Joel Love, M. Div., serves as Pastor of Union Congregational United Church of Christ in Reinbeck, Iowa. He has served on the Board of Directors of the American Red Cross, as Advisor to the Iowa Conference United Church of Christ Youth Council, and currently serves

as Secretary of Central Association of the Iowa Conference United Church of Christ. Joel's ministry has been driven by his passion for social justice and church unity, his love for the church and its traditions and a desire to give voice to those at the margins. He is married to Jayne Love, an elementary school teacher in Reinbeck, and together they are parents to three sons, B.J., Jon and Geoff. He is a musician and an avid golfer.

Dean Moberg

My name is Dean Moberg and I serve as Licensed Pastor to St. Paul's United Church of Christ in West Burlington. I am a graduate of Center/LEARN (Before Search was added). I served for five years as Licensed Pastor to St John's UCC, (1992-1997) six years as pulpit supply to SE Association (1997-2003) and St. Paul's UCC (2003-present). I have also served on SE Association Nominating Committee for four years with two years as its chair. I currently serve on SE Association Committee on Ministry and sit as chair of that committee. I also serve on the Commission On Ministry at the Conference setting. I have been a part of the UCC since 1969 with membership at Zion UCC Burlington until beginning my service as a Licensed Pastor. I have been married for 35 years to Jeri and have two children, Rob, 27 and Kendra, 23. My interests outside of the church include music and amateur astronomy. In my former life I was a Machinist for the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad. I now serve St Paul's in a full time capacity.

Charles Platz

Charles Platz is a lay member of Congregational United Church of Christ, Iowa City, IA. He has served on the Mission Board and the pastoral search committee, and is a member of the church choir and the United Campus Ministries Board of Directors. He is currently on the Iowa Conference Board of Directors and the Eastern Iowa Association Committee on Ministry. He is a retired University of Iowa faculty member (Department of Pathology, College of Medicine), and is currently working part time for the Iowa State Cancer Registry. He is married to Jo Ann Benda, also University of Iowa faculty, who continues to support him in the manner to which he has become accustomed. His extracurricular interests include reading, model trains, and the Chamber Singers of Iowa City.

Rich Pleva

Rich Pleva began his ministry as Iowa Conference Minister in October, 2005. In this role he works with the Iowa Conference staff and with the pastors and 180 congregations of the Iowa Conference, United Church of Christ. Before coming to Iowa, Rich served for over eight years on the staff of the Illinois Conference, where he was called to work with the 43 congregations of the Prairie Association in the northwestern part of the state. He also has 19 years experience as a local church pastor, having served churches in Wisconsin and Florida. Rich is married to Ruby, a banker in the Des Moines area. He has three young adult sons, each with a corresponding daughter-in-law and is awaiting with hope the day when granddaughters might join the family! He is a long-time (and long-suffering!) Chicago Cubs fan.

Jeanne Tyler

Some bio on our involvement in the UCC and in the Iowa Conference. I moved here along with my husband to serve St. Paul UCC in Keokuk as co-pastors. I served for 6 years on the UCC Disabilities Ministries. I served for 6 years on Local Church Ministry representing persons with disabilities. I was active in the Nebraska Conference. I co-founded Ne Conference Disabilities Ministries. I have written for Common Lot. I am looking forward to serving on this search committee.

