

# Covenant Communities for Pastoral Excellence (CCPE)

## Iowa Conference, UCC • 2013-14

*"The lesson emerging from every peer group project is that when clergy meet regularly in a 'community of practice' for intentional reflection on their ministry, they find that trust develops, anxieties diminish, and challenges turn into occasions for learning...Pastors are helping one another stay connected to the joy of ministry."*

Christina Braudaway-Bauman  
Christian Century

*"Let us consider how we might spur one another on toward love and good deed. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another."*

Hebrews 10:24-25

Nothing serves the churches of the Iowa Conference UCC better than the support, encouragement, and nurture of their pastors. There is no single relationship more at the heart of congregational health than its relationship with its pastor. There are, of course, many factors which contribute to congregational vitality, but absent healthy congregation-clergy relationship, it is incredibly difficult for the church to prosper. CCPE groups are a resource designed to enhance the congregation-clergy relationship.

CCPE is designed around the foundation of collegial learning, recognizing that "the expert is already in the room." Clergy have much to learn from each other and to teach each other, and in an environment of trust and covenant, the pressing issues of vocational ministry can be explored and addressed in ways that promote growth and excellence.

Values of CCPE:

- Support – These groups are designed to offer friendship and encouragement for individuals who have answered God's call to a work that can be isolating, lonely, and demanding.
- Accountability – These groups provide a safe context where colleagues hold each other accountable to high standards of commitment, participation, learning, and growth.
- Excellence – These groups are designed to facilitate the sharing of experience and wisdom in a trusting atmosphere where self-disclosure can be risked, thus opening the door for the possibility of remarkable professional advancement.

Within basic guidelines, each group will function in reflection of its own personality. The model of group leadership/facilitation is not precisely the same in every group. In no group, however, are the facilitators to be thought of as the "teachers" or "experts." Instead, it is the role of the facilitator to attend to group process and keep the group on track vis-à-vis the stated goals for learning and support.

LOCATION	MEETING DAY & TIME	FACILITATOR/CONTACT
Sheldon	First Thursday - 10:00am	Kelly Volk, captainbiology@hotmail.com
Eldora	Third Tuesday - 10:00am	Corey Larson, revcorey@heartofiowa.net
Reinbeck - Rotation of participants' churches	Third Thursday - 10:00am	Joel Love, reinucc@reinbeck.net
Cedar Rapids	Second Tuesday - 10:00am	Byron Henn, henn.byron@gmail.com
Burlington	4 <sup>th</sup> Tuesday - 11:30am	Chad Savage, savagec@mail.ic.edu
Grinnell (Grinnell UCC)	Third Thursday - 10:00am	Rich Pleva, rich@ucciaconf.org
Des Moines (Plymouth)	Third Thursday - 10:00am	David Ruhe, druhe@plymouthchurch.com
Atlantic- Rotation of participants' churches	Third Wednesday - 10:00am	Nancy Jensen, holycow1@mchsi.com
Non-Geographic/Online (Part-time Clergy)	Third Tuesday - 7:00pm	Reva Karstens, karstens@longlines.com

\*Check web calendar at [www.ucciaconf.org](http://www.ucciaconf.org) for specific location details.

There is a fee for participation for the full program year (October through May or June). Clergy are strongly encouraged to ask their congregation or ministry setting to pay this fee as an item of continuing education designed ultimately to benefit the church. Scholarship assistance is available in cases where the fee presents a true barrier to participation (speak with any member of the conference staff).

CCPE groups are covenant groups. Each group will draft their own unique covenant each year, using the suggested covenant which includes commitments about participation, mutual respect, risk-taking, and confidentiality, as a guide.

CCPE groups are specifically designed for individuals engaged in the practice of ministry. Clergy in specialized ministry are encouraged to participate. Retired clergy are also welcome, but are asked to respect the group's intentional focus on current ministry practice.

Individuals are encouraged to choose their own site of participation. Since the conference is geographically large and our congregations are in some places widely dispersed, most clergy will have only one viable option for face-to-face participation. For some, online groups may be the better, or only, realistic option.

For additional information, please speak with a member of the conference staff or with one of the facilitators. Written information and a copy of the model covenant are available on the website at: <http://www.ucciaconf.org/opportunities/pastoral-excellence/support-accountability-and-growth>.