

Focus on Death and Dying Committee seeks members and new name

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 will start a formal look at this program by encouraging churches to participate in the Donor Sabbath to increase awareness of organ and tissue donation. The Donor Sabbath is Nov. 10-12, 2017. In 2018 we plan to provide 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 Leadership Team meeting and was the focus of our Joint Teams meeting in May. Alicja Lukaszewicz-Southall, one of our Leadership Team members, is chairing a short-term committee focused on this project. She invites you to join her in exploring these topics and rolling them out to our churches. E-mail laurie@illinoisconferenceofchurches.org to join the committee.

God's blessings, Laurie



Fr. Flannery speaks on ecumenism at Lutheran gathering

By Fr. Robert Flannery

As a representative of the Catholic Church, I am extremely grateful and honored to have been asked to bring ecumenical greetings to all of you gathered here for your **annual Central-Southern Illinois Synod Assembly of the ELCA**. I know that every annual meeting of your Synod, as in our diocese, is important and hope-filled. This year's gathering is especially significant and meaningful since it takes place during the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, the first major anniversary to occur during an ecumenical age. Happy Anniversary and congratulations to you all!

Fifty years ago in 1967, the 450th Anniversary was observed only two short years after the close of the Second Vatican Council in 1965. During the Council, the doors and windows of the Catholic Church were flung open to renewed possibilities and new beginnings. At that moment in history -- outreach, dialogue and collaboration with members of other Christian traditions, communions and even other world religions, began for us Catholics, reforming our way of being Church, much after the example and lead of you, our Lutheran friends, our sisters and brothers in Christ. It was most appropriate that the first official Catholic bi-lateral dialogue, begun in 1967, was with you, the Lutherans! Happy 50th Anniversary and thank you for being there with and for us!!

When Pope Francis traveled to Lund, Sweden this past October for Reformation Day and the beginning of this year's historic anniversary observance, he participated in a Joint Commemoration of the Reformation at the Lund Lutheran Cathedral. There Bishop Dr. Munib Younan, the President of the Lutheran World Federation, and Pope Francis, leader of the Catholic Church, signed a joint statement calling on Lutheran and Catholic parishes and communities, among other urgings, to be bold and creative, joyful and hopeful in their commitment to continue the great journey ahead. Together they prayed for forgiveness, healing and reconciliation. I am extremely grateful that the parish I pastor, Saint Francis Xavier in Carbondale, has experienced that joyful hope on the way to closer unity since we began our covenant relationship with Epiphany Lutheran Church in Carbondale back in 1999-- the time of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification between the Lutheran World Federation and the Vatican. And now for a couple of short announcements: I have been involved for nearly twenty years in a variety of capacities with the Illinois Conference of Churches. The ICC just had a combined teams' meeting in Bloomington last week, so I also bring you greetings from the leadership of our statewide, ecumenical network. Thank you for your Synod's participation in this collaborative body! On Friday, September 22th of this year, the Illinois Conference of Churches' Annual Assembly will be held at the First Baptist Church in Bloomington, Illinois. The preacher for the service will be your very own Bishop John Roth. The guest speaker will be Dr. Martin Marty who will address his new book, *Martin Luther and the Day That Changed the World*. I hope you will be able to join us for this great occasion!

I also invite you and your congregations to attend the Commemoration Service Observing the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation being held for the greater St. Louis and surrounding areas. It will take place at the new Cathedral Basilica on Lindell Boulevard in St. Louis, Sunday, October 29th, at 7 pm. Synods and Dioceses around the entire region will be represented at this festive occasion. The following morning at the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis, Bishop Don McCoid, past chair of the ELCA Ecumenical and Interreligious Office, and Bishop Denis Madden, past chair of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' counterpart, will give a panel discussion related to the Anniversary observance; will also share how far we have progressed toward unity; and lastly, tell us what looms in the immediate and distant future. These two bishops, a number of other bishops, as well as many pastors and numerous laity from the wider will be present at the event the night before at the Saint Louis Catholic Cathedral.

In closing, I am truly blessed to be among you today, witnessing to the power of the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit who guided Martin Luther 500 years ago in his efforts to reform the Church; the same Holy Spirit who also guided Pope Saint John XXIII in calling together the leaders of Vatican II more than fifty years ago to do the same. May this same Spirit continue to guide us as we together, hand in hand, do our part today in building the kingdom of God in our world. May God bless all of you gathered for this annual meeting as you elect your leadership for the future and also discuss many other important matters in the life of the Church and in your Synod. My parishioners and I promise to be praying for all of you during these days. Blessings, Grace and Peace!

Please share with others !!!

2017 Illinois Conference of Churches Annual Assembly “United in Christ: Reconciliation and Commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation.”

Friday, Sept. 22

8 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Worship 9 a.m.

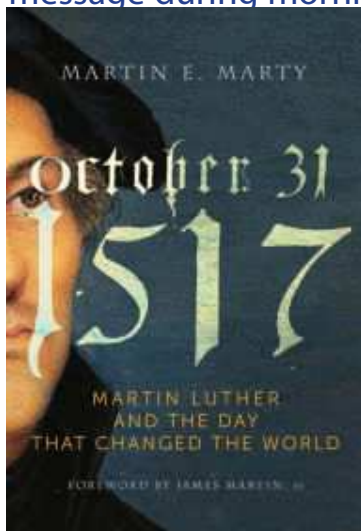
Forum 10 a.m. -2 p.m.

Business meeting 2 p.m.

**First Baptist Church
2502 E. College Ave., Bloomington, IL**

(If you are no longer the delegate or if there are any changes in your contact information please let us know! Thanks.)

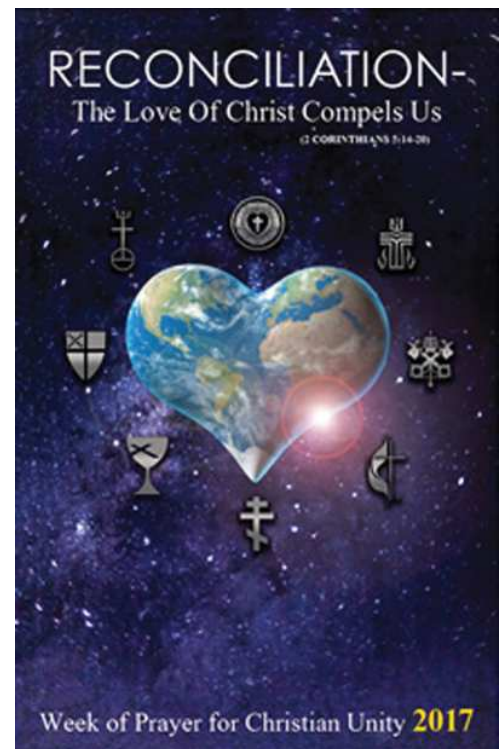
Bishop S. John Roth, Central/Southern Illinois Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in American, will deliver the message during morning worship.



Our Forum presenter:

Dr. Martin E. Marty author

of “October 31, 1517: Martin Luther and the Day that Changed the World” - published in 2016.



Submit a nomination for the Rev. Donald E. Mason Ecumenical Award by Sept. 1

Earlybird registration \$35 until midnight Sept. 1 - no exceptions!

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 or e-mail to request a registration form. \$10 for students, \$45 for all others, includes breakfast, lunch and materials.

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

Lodging: Rooms are blocked at Eastland Suites 1801 Eastland Dr, Bloomington at \$85 plus tax. 309-662-0000. Rooms must be booked prior to Sept. 15 to assure the discounted rate.

**Illinois
Conference
of
Churches**

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

www.illinoisconferenceofchurches.org

All Teams gathered in Bloomington in May for our annual Joint Teams Meeting. The day began with worship using the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. We built a wall of rocks on the altar and then we tore it down and built a circle instead....



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.

We are seeking nominations for the Rev. Donald E. Mason Ecumenical Award which will be presented at Annual Assembly from now on. For a simple nomination form, due Sept. 1, 2017 please email us and request one. The award recognizes ecumenical initiatives of individuals, leaders, local churches, judicatories, or other organizations which serve to: nurture growing relationships among Christian churches through worship, education, and fellowship; and generate ecumenical witness and mission expressing the reconciling love of Jesus Christ. ***Thanks.***

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.

Save the Date for the Second Annual Green Team Summit!

Our Second Annual Green Team Summit will convene hundreds of people from neighborhoods across Chicago and cities across Illinois for an action-packed day of learning, connecting, and networking about environmental issues.

Last year, our inaugural Green Team Summit brought together over 300 Green Team members, clergy, citizen activists, environmentalists, and students. People traveled from neighborhoods throughout Chicago, Waukegan, Naperville, Bloomington, Peoria, Champaign, and beyond to hear inspiring speakers, attend workshops, and learn from sponsors' exhibits.

Join us on Sunday, Oct.15, 2017 for this exciting event!

To register or to sponsor the event, see <https://www.faithinplace.org/events/2017-green-team-summit>

Solar Houses of Worship See the Light!

May and June saw the dedication of three solar installations at houses of worship in Champaign, Urbana and Peoria. These projects will prevent hundreds of tons of carbon from fouling the atmosphere in the years to come, as well as freeing up thousands of congregational dollars for programming and mission. Read more here <https://www.faithinplace.org/news/journey-%E2%80%9Cleeding%E2%80%9D-solar-panels> and here <https://www.faithinplace.org/faith-partners/unitarian-universalist-church-peoria>. All three were financed by Power Purchase Agreements. Faith in Place can help you explore solar for your house of worship.

Non-Profit Green Lending Program

Congregations who would like to improve energy efficiency, add solar or water preservation features now have a new option for financing. A partnership between Faith in Place, the Treasurer's Office of the State of Illinois and Everence Federal Credit Union connects non-profits low-cost loans that can be used for upgrades ranging from solar installations and rain gardens, to programmable thermostats and lightbulbs. Read more here about the program: <https://www.faithinplace.org/our-programs/nonprofit-green-lending-program> .



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.



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

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.

ICC to host conference for college chaplains

The Leadership Team has learned the college chaplains in Illinois feel a need to meet together once a year to network and share common concerns. Please notify Laurie Vial, our executive director, to give her contact information for chaplains in your denomination or any that you know. This event will be hosted by a Christian college and sponsored by the Illinois Conference of Churches. Please forward this information to any chaplains that you know. Please put Chaplain in the subject line.

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.

This can be observed any time during 2017. For additional information and materials see the website www.geii.org.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2017 Theme

PREPARATION: Observing the Week of Prayer

Reconciliation - The Love of Christ Compels Us

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity gives Christians an annual opportunity to continue their quest for the unity they already share in Christ. It is also a time to gather in praise of the Triune God and to deepen the understanding of the ecumenical movement. By joining in this annual celebration Christians raise their voices, hands and hearts to God seeking the fulfillment of the prayer of Jesus, the Son of God, "that they all may be one."

The Week of Prayer also invites those who participate to use it as an opportunity to examine the effectiveness of the ecumenical movement in seeking to end the divisions among Christians. From the smallest to the largest communities, from all cultures, races and language groups, from all the baptized to all those in ordained ministry, the Week of Prayer is also an opportunity to ask examine the level of support they have given to this important movement in the life of the Church. An accounting of each Christian's discipleship and faithfulness to the proclamation of the Gospel—the good news of reconciliation—can be taken every year during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

What follows are some suggestions that we hope can assist Christians in the experience of observing the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and celebrating the 2017 theme of "Reconciliation – The Love of Christ Compels Us" (2 Corinthians 5:14-20) This is by no means a comprehensive listing. We hope that as you create your own opportunities of prayer for Christian unity you will share those with others. Each new experience of prayer and gathering provides the Christian faith community with opportunities to grow in our understanding of one another as we celebrate our unity and common mission. (See the website for more information.)



The National Workshop on Christian Unity

Silver Spring, Maryland

April 16-19, 2018

www.nwcu.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
Canton

Dr. John Charlton, treasurer

American Baptist Church
Great Rivers Region
Springfield

Fr. Kevin Laughery

Catholic Church
Diocese of Springfield
New Berlin

Rev. Galda McCants

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Dr. George Johnston

Presbyterian Church – USA
Southeastern Illinois Presbytery
Rantoul/Monticello

Rev. Megan Dean

United Methodist Church
Northern Illinois Conference
Bartlett

E. Garnet Fay

Religious Society of Friends
Western Yearly Meeting
Chicago

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Region of Illinois/Wisconsin
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Greg Krohm

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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
Chicago, Rogers Park

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Canton

Rev. Catiana McKay

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Marianne Stowers

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Springfield

Fr. Bob Flannery

Catholic Church
Diocese of Belleville
Carbondale

Rev. Robert Sherman

United Church of Christ
Illinois Conference
Kewanee

Illinois Christians Encountering Racism (ICER)

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Diocese of Springfield
New Berlin

Rev. Galda McCants, co-chair

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Springfield

Rev. Dwight Bailey

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Rev. Mark Harkness

United Methodist Church
Northern Illinois District
Walnut

Martha Herrin

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Stewardson

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Champaign

Rev. Megan Dean

United Methodist Church
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Bartlett

Rev. Sharon Patton

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

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Interreligious Team

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United Church of Christ
Illinois South Conference
Highland

Dr. John Charlton

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Springfield

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Hakan Berberoglu

Niagra Foundation
Chicago/Peoria

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Canton

Rev. Michael Winters

Presbyterian Church - USA
Chicago Presbytery
Oak Lawn/Oak Park

Rev. Dr. John Rickard

Presbyterian Church - USA
Blackhawk Presbytery
Oregon

\$\$\$\$\$ Thank you for your generous response to our 2017 pledge drive. If you have not yet filled out and returned your pledge card please do. To see a copy of our current budget 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. 22 Annual Assembly in Bloomington

Illinois Conference of Churches

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Laurie Vial, executive director

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