

# Ecumenical Connection

A publication of the Illinois Conference of Churches



**February 2018**

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## **The ICC anti-racism team Illinois Christians Encountering Racism (ICER) sponsors Buses to Washington DC**

The ICER Team worked to provide Illinois citizens an opportunity to travel to Washington DC to take part in the anti-racism rally on the national mall on the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. Buses are planned for Carbondale, Springfield and LaGrange (Chicago suburb). Due to budget constraints, the buses must fill in increments of 56. The \$175 price per person includes transportation, a nonperishable sack lunch, bottle of water and t-shirt. The price includes no mark-up and does not cover website registration and PayPal fees. Refunds will be given if a bus does not fill. Deadline is March 1. The rally ACT to End Racism is sponsored by the National Council of Churches. There will be a memorial service in Memphis on April 4.

The ICC has agreed to handle registration for a Pan-Methodist bus leaving from suburban Chicago for members of the following denominations UMC, AME, AMEZ, CME, African Union Methodist Protestant and Union American Methodist Episcopal Churches. This bus is sponsored by those denominations, NOT the ICC. See the events tab on the ICC website for deadline and particulars on that bus.

## **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.

# 1st Annual Spiritual Leaders Retreat

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

Wednesday, April 25

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. \$20 includes light breakfast, lunch, snacks, materials and facilitators.

**Deadline is April 17.**

Questions? Contact Laurie Vial, Executive Director, at [laurie@illinoisconferenceofchurches.org](mailto: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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1608 W. Church St., Champaign, IL 61821 217-522-7099  
[www.illinoisconferenceofchurches.org](http://www.illinoisconferenceofchurches.org)

# 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.

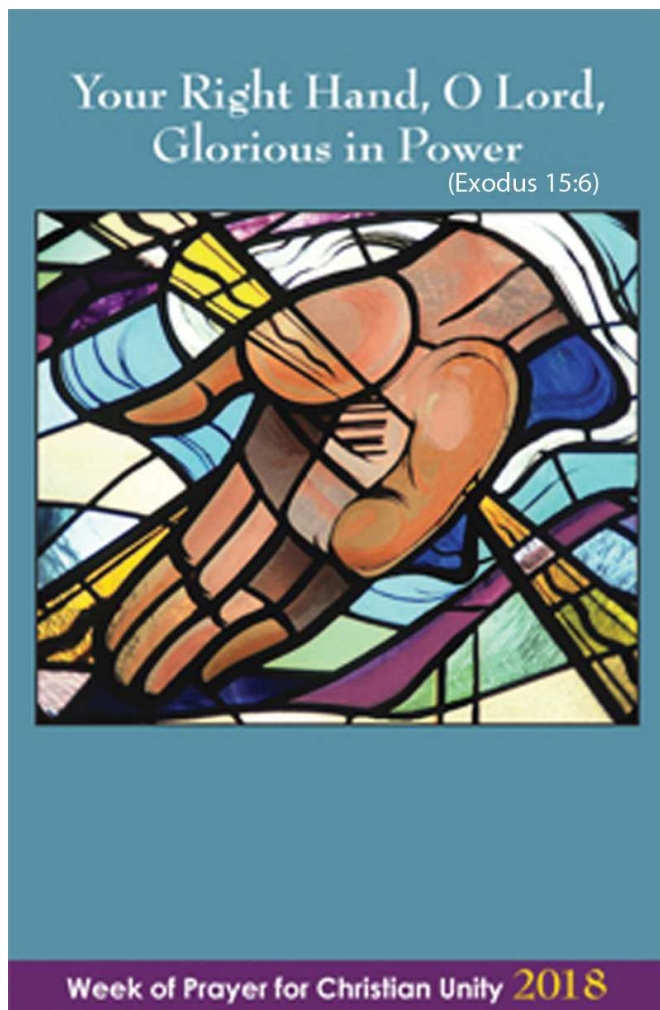
**St. Peter's UCC Church**

**905 S. Russell St.**

**Champaign, IL**

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

**Forum speaker Fr. Richard Chiola**



**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](mailto: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  
[www.illinoisconferenceofchurches.org](http://www.illinoisconferenceofchurches.org)

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## ***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/](http://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](mailto:laurie@illinoisconferenceofchurches.org) to join or ask questions.

God's blessings, Laurie



# 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.



## Advocacy Day at the State Capitol

Date: Thursday, April 26, 2018 -

Location: Buses from around the state converge on Illinois State Capitol Building, 401 S. Second Street, Springfield, IL

Join faithful people from around the state for a rally and the opportunity to educate your elected officials on the importance of promoting environmental justice in Illinois.

Sign up here to reserve your seat on a bus departing from one of many locations throughout the state!

The cost varies from \$15- \$30 per person and includes a T-shirt. Free tickets are available on the sign-up page if you are unable to afford a ticket at this time.

Please be sure to bring a reusable water bottle and lunch, and wear comfortable shoes for walking around the capitol building.

More details about bus pick up locations and departure times will be available at the Faith in Place event page as they are set. <https://www.faithinplace.org/events/advocacy-day-state-capitol-0>

## Faith Citizen Workshops

Faithful Citizen Workshops offer communities of faith the tools to become effective citizen lobbyists. Find a workshop near you at <https://www.faithinplace.org/events>

Faith in Place's Policy Director, Pastor Booker Vance is a respected voice for environmental justice at the State Capital and beyond. Hear, from him, how we can amplify faithful voices to encourage positive action by our legislative and policy making leaders. Building healthier communities has a public policy component and Pastor Vance can help us be good stewards of our power as citizens to work for our common home.

Faith in Place regularly conducts interactive workshops where people of faith learn about the legislative process in Illinois and discuss pending environmental policies. Through interactive exercises and presentations, these workshops identify ways people of faith can engage in the advocacy process consistent with the tenets of their faith.

Let's move the needle for environmental justice in Springfield!

## Resources for Faithful Citizens:

- Watch videos about how to prepare for Advocacy Day and how you can be a faithful citizen on our YouTube Channel!
- Please let us know if you would like to host a Faithful Citizen Workshop and we can send staff to support you!

## Earth Day is Sunday, April 22 -

Check your denominational resources for ways to celebrate the goodness of Creation and our calling to care for our neighbors through loving stewardship of Earth. Need local and timely illustrations of churches who are "blessed, as they are a blessing to others"? Check out the "Faith Partners" tab at [www.faithinplace.org](http://www.faithinplace.org). <https://www.faithinplace.org/faith-partners/success-stories>

**This can be observed any time during 2018. For additional information and materials see the website [www.geii.org](http://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).

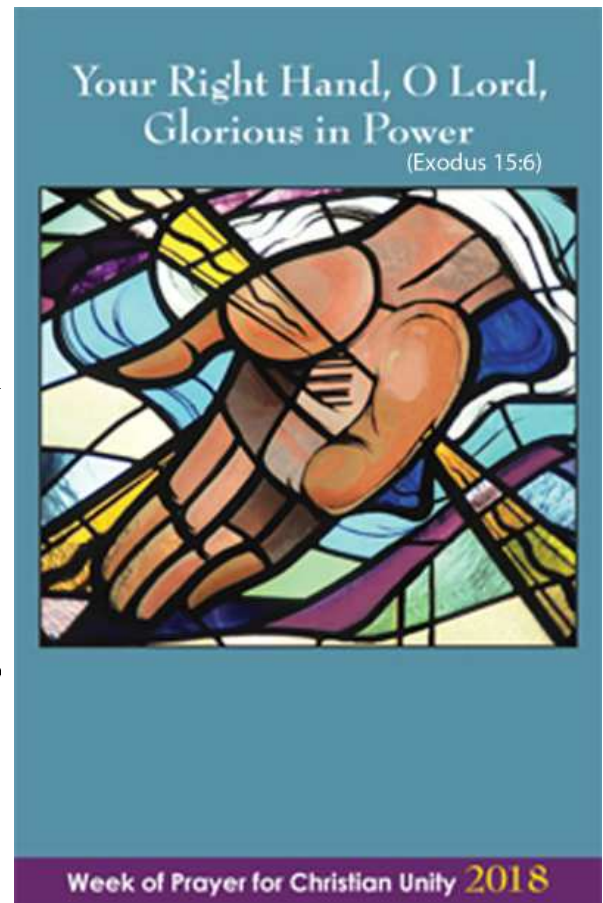
Our theme is a poetic expression. In the Bible, poetry is the form used in order to express an experience. And Israel uses this form frequently in Psalms and prophetic utterances. Where mere narration is unable to capture the depth of Israel's experience with God, they turn to poetry, for, more than 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**

**Silver Spring, Maryland**

**April 16-19, 2018**

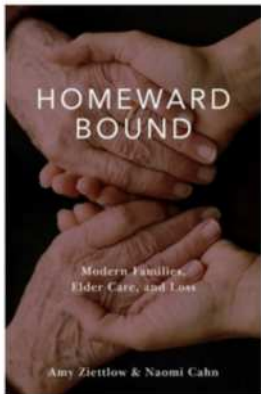
[www.nwcu.org](http://www.nwcu.org)



# 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 and 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)



## Position sought

Laurie Vial, executive director of the ICC, voluntarily reduced her time from full time to half time about 18 months ago to balance the budget. Her other employment ended in November. She is currently seeking a position that would dovetail positively with the ICC. The new position could be freelance, contractual, consulting or traditional and could range from half time to three fourths time. In addition to faith-based and nonprofit work, Laurie has a background in communications, energy conservation and agriculture. She has a website at [vialconsult.com](http://vialconsult.com). Or email her at [lbvial6@gmail.com](mailto:lbvial6@gmail.com) to request a copy of her resume or to suggest job leads. Laurie lives in Champaign but would consider living away from home one or two days a week and working remotely the remainder of the time.

# 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](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Illinois-Conference-of-Churches)



# 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. Dwight Bailey**

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

### **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:**

**Thursday, May 3, Joint Teams Meeting in Champaign-Urbana**

**Friday, Sept. 28 Annual Assembly St. Peter's UCC, Champaign**

**Illinois Conference of Churches**

**1608 W. Church St.**

**Champaign, IL 61821**

**[illinoisconferenceofchurches.org](http://illinoisconferenceofchurches.org)**

**Laurie Vial, executive director**

**[laurie@illinoisconferenceofchurches.org](mailto:laurie@illinoisconferenceofchurches.org) 217-522-7099**