

The Ministry Lab opens doors, explores new ways to resource churches

The Ministry Lab — an ecumenical organization that serves United Methodist, United Church of Christ, and Presbyterian churches in Minnesota — will open in June at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. It is a place that fosters experimentation, innovation, and creativity for churches as they seek to remain vibrant and relevant.

At The Ministry Lab, which takes the place and expands the reach of the Resource Center for Churches (RCC), church leaders will be able to consult with staff that brings an understanding of changing ministry contexts and knowledge of current, outstanding resources, digital and traditional. Leaders will have access to United's Spencer Library and the collection of the RCC, which will close in the Minnesota Church Center at the end of May. The Ministry Lab will also lift up innovative practices and develop fresh approaches to faith formation.



The Ministry Lab currently co-develops and co-hosts the bi-annual ConNext Summit and periodic ConNext Community Events, designed to inspire progressive Christian faith formation leaders as they network and cultivate innovative and sustainable ministries with children, youth, and families. Through its partnership with United, The Ministry Lab hopes to provide continuing education services for clergy and lay leaders — possibly in the form of workshops, conferences, or learning cohorts — and create avenues to lift up creative ideas from its users.

All Minnesota Presbyterian clergy, staff, and lay leaders have access to The Ministry Lab's wide variety of outstanding ministry resources and free consultation through their apportioned dollars.

"I believe The Ministry Lab will be a valued partner to church leaders seeking curated resources and creative approaches to ministry by sparking their imagination and helping ministry come alive in their own unique contexts," said Christa Meland, president of The Ministry Lab board of directors. "The Ministry Lab is a place for church leaders to dream, explore, innovate, and discover new ideas to bring back to their churches as they seek to make disciples and help individuals take the next step in their faith journey."

Resource Center for Churches executive director Lizabeth Bougie — who has played a key role in the creation of The Ministry Lab and will oversee it this summer — plans to retire in the fall, and The Ministry Lab's board of directors is working with United to conduct a search for a new leader. Later this year, the board will also assemble a 20- to 30-person advisory board consisting of members of each denomination that it serves. The advisory board's role will be to give input that helps determine the future direction of The Ministry Lab, ensure that it meets the needs of its constituents, and identify new resourcing opportunities.

"The rapid change and challenges of local church leadership demand access to innovative ideas and methods for creating an entrepreneurial culture rooted in valued traditions in the community church," said United President Lewis P. Zeidner. "Together, United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities and The Ministry Lab will provide local church leaders a place to incubate new ideas, develop tools, and collaborate with subject matter experts to help nurture stronger, more vibrant faith communities. The United team is excited to utilize its new location and creative space in St. Paul to host its partnership with The Ministry Lab in service to this important work. A core value of United is to nurture lifelong learning for faith leaders, and the Ministry Lab is an important model for supporting such exploration and growth."

The Ministry Lab will host an open house at its new location at United Theological Seminary (767 Eustis St., Suite 140) this fall. This summer, it is

open for visits and consultation Tuesday through Thursday, noon to 4 p.m., and by appointment: info@rcc-mn.org. Obtain directions and parking information [here](#).