

DMA Spring Meeting

17 May 2025

First Congregational Church of Rochester



“Courage, Covenant, and Care: Moving Forward Together”

“I’ve commanded you to be brave and strong, haven’t I? Don’t be alarmed or terrified, because the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” *Joshua 1:9 (CEB)*

Keynote Address and Panel Discussion

“Multiracial Democracy vs. Authoritarianism”

Break

Business Meeting

Communion Service

Luncheon & Display Tables

Program

8:45 Lead-in Music (Traci Bartell & Lisa Young)

9:00 **Welcome & Overview** – Dr. Galen Fisher, Moderator

- Opening Prayer - Rev. Scott Cunningham, Pastor, FCC
- Music: *O Lord* by Mabury and Williams, (Vocalists: Kim, Traci; Keyboard: Lisa)
- Courage, Covenant, and Care: Moving Forward Together & Joshua 1:9 & Remembering Rev. Dr. Gary Bennett – Rev. Anthony Carter, Vice Moderator
- Introduction of Panel Moderator and Keynote Speaker – Dr. Galen Fisher
- Keynote Speaker – Prof. Peter Hammer, Wayne State Univ. School of Law
- Panelist Introductions, Panel Moderator - Rev. Kim Newport, RISE UCC,
- Justice Witness on LGBTQ - Stephanie Lange, LMSW, RISE UCC
- Justice Witness on Immigrant Rights - Melanie Harner, LMSW, WICIR
- Panel Discussion

10:55 Panel Discussion concludes

Meeting Break with music (Hymn # 453, *Called as Partners in Christ's Service*)

DMA Business Meeting

11:10 Call to Order - Dr. Galen Fisher, Moderator

- Registrar's Report/Quorum - Ms. Angela McCarroll
- Approval of Agenda - Dr. Galen Fisher
- Approval of 2024 Spring Meeting Minutes - Dr. Galen Fisher
- Nominating Comm. Report & Election – Rev. Anthony Carter, Chair
Vote to confirm Rev. Traci Bartell to Linking Board as Member-at-Large
- Treasurer's Report & Budget Vote – Ms. Ashanti Berry/Dr. Galen Fisher
- Mission Area Team Reports - Dr. Galen Fisher
- Committee on Ministry – Rev. Meg Wilson
- Social Justice - Dr. Paul von Oeyen
- Youth – Stephen Johnson (Galen Fisher)
- Covenant – Mr. Dan Steeves,
- Speak Out - Mr. Dan Steeves

12:00 **Business Meeting Adjournment**

Communion Service – Rev. Carrie Orlando (Zion) & Rev. Doyll Andrews (Armada)
with music, *All Belong Here* by Rand & Rand. (Vocalists: Kim, Traci, Lisa)

Charge – Rev. Anthony Carter, Vice Moderator

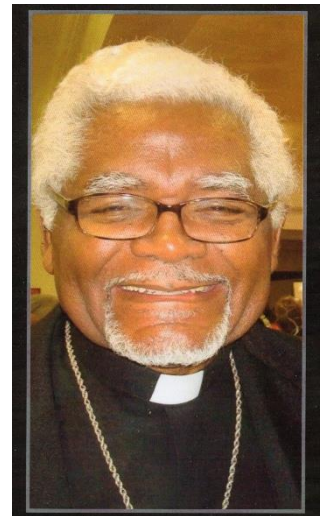
Closing Prayer – Amity LoVette, FCC Moderator

Lunch & Display Tables in Fellowship Hall

Remembering Rev. Dr. Gary Muthamaki Bennett

A "Celebration of Life" Memorial Service was held for our colleague in Christ, Rev. Dr. Gary Muthamaki Bennett (11/15/1939 - 4/8/2025), at the Shine of the Black Madonna.

Rev. Bennett was a stalwart in our DMA Social Justice Team and had graciously shared his many experiences in dealing with racism through the DMA "Sacred Conversations" and teaching many of us how to be "anti-racist." This goes along with his long history at the Shrine in being a fierce advocate for Civil Rights and Voting Rights. Rev. Bennett has served on our DMA Linking Board for several years including being a past Moderator. He strongly supported the concept of Autonomy of the Associations in the United Church of Christ in the context of Covenant with all settings of the Church.



The DMA Social Justice Team has long supported Rev. Bennett's "Called-to-Care" model of pastoral ministry and is looking forward to continuing this as part of his legacy at the Shrine of the Black Madonna. We sorely miss him, but know he is at home in Christ.



Keynote Address

“Multiracial Democracy v. Authoritarianism”

Keynote Speaker: Prof. Peter J. Hammer

**Faculty Director of the Damon J. Keith Center for Civil Rights;
Professor of Law; A. Alfred Taubman Endowed Chair**

Peter J. Hammer was named the A. Alfred Taubman Endowed Chair at Wayne State University Law School in fall 2018. Hammer has taught at Wayne Law since 2003 and is the director of the Damon J. Keith Center for Civil Rights. The Keith Center is dedicated to promoting the educational, economic and political empowerment of under-represented communities in urban areas and to ensuring that the phrase "equal justice under law" applies to all members of society.



Hammer has become a leading voice on the economic and social issues impacting the city of Detroit and has added new courses to the law school curriculum on "Race, Law and Social Change in Southeast Michigan" and "Re-Imagining Development in Detroit: Institutions, Law & Society."

Hammer has expertise in the fields of domestic health law and policy, as well as international public health and economic development.

Panel Moderator: Rev. Kim Newport
Pastor, RISE UCC

Rev. Kim Newport obtained her Bachelor of Science in Religion and Psychology from Belmont University and a Masters of Divinity from Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Detroit. Rev. Kim also obtained certification in Social Justice Leadership from United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities.



Rev. Kim is known for her activism throughout Macomb County with Black Lives Matter and Macomb County Pride. She has spent over twelve years studying various disciplines of liberation theology and has spoken at many churches educating congregations on the open and affirming process for LGBTQ+ individuals. She is the pastor of Rise United Church of Christ.

Panelists

Stephanie Lange, LMSW

President Camp Talahi
Moderator, Rise UCC

Melanie Harner, LMSW,

Washtenaw Interfaith Coalition for
Immigrant Rights

Stephanie is a lifelong UCC member with a deep passion for social justice that she has been able to turn into a very rewarding career in social work. She has focused her efforts throughout the tri-county area for 30 years and across Michigan since 2007. Whether it is teaching Sunday School, running camp, or teaching Mental Health First Aid, you can usually find her doing SOMETHING to help others. Stephanie is also a mother, daughter, wife, and sister.



Melanie Harner is a co-founder of the Washtenaw Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights (WICIR), a ministry of the Ypsilanti First Congregational UCC. WICIR was formed in 2008 in response to very aggressive action by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) against one Washtenaw County immigrant community. Melanie was on the scene when a large, violent raid occurred on Palm Sunday afternoon in a mobile home community in Ypsilanti. At the invitation of Ypsilanti First UCC, many people from many faith communities rallied to assist this neighborhood. Our work continues today on a much larger scale as the atrocities facing immigrants have increased. Melanie is a school social worker, bilingual and very much involved with immigrants in our area. She does Know Your Rights training for groups of unauthorized people and speaks frequently to groups to educate and enlist ally support as we are called to welcome those most vulnerable. She, with others, provides support and services to those facing possible detainment and deportation.



Nomination for Member-at-Large

Rev. Traci Bartell

Pastor at Rise UCC

Rev. Bartell has a Master of Divinity degree from Central Seminary a Bachelor of Music degree from Western Michigan University. She taught for over 25 years in both private and public schools teaching music to children of all ages. She graduated with honors from seminary in May of 2021 and was ordained on August 7, 2022. She served as co-pastor of Rise UCC from its inception through April 30, 2025. She is grateful for her years of experience as Director of Music Ministry at First UCC, Richmond and First Congregational UCC, Rochester. Currently, she works as the Enrollment Coordinator for Romeo Community Schools where she assists families to make sure all children and young people are ready and able to begin school. Traci will continue to serve God's people and God's creation through work with the DMA and various justice centered non-profit organizations.



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