

# Northern Region News

Northern Region of the Wisconsin Conference  
United Church of Christ

July 2025

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## Northwest Wisconsin Association Dissolved

At a June 7 special meeting of the Northwest Wisconsin Association, the body voted to dissolve and turn over all its assets and its records to the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ. The unanimous vote occurred during a special breakout session at the June 6-7 Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Conference.

The Wisconsin Conference's other three Associations took the same action during the same hour.

The Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ will now act as a Conference-wide Association for all ecclesiastical purposes. These tasks include receiving new clergy into standing as they are called to churches and other ministry settings in the conference, maintaining accurate lists of member congregations and ordained ministers, recruiting, supporting, and ordaining new clergy and Licensed Ministers, and performing disciplinary reviews as needed.

Ordained UCC ministers who held their standing in the Northwest Wisconsin Association will now hold their standing in the Wisconsin Conference acting as an Association.

Because the Conference now acts as an Association, local congregations will not need to immediately amend or rewrite their Constitutions and By-laws. Local churches are encouraged to update this language the next time they amend or rewrite their governing documents.

Conference and Association leaders decided that dissolution was necessary because it has become difficult to find enough suitable volunteers to do the work all three of the NWWA's Divisions, especially the Division on Church and Ministry.

The former Northwest Association assets will be held in trust to benefit congregations in what is now the Northern Region of the Wisconsin Conference. Camp Scholarships for members of Northern Region Churches will continue, as well as Continuing Education grants for clergy.

The Northwest Wisconsin Association was founded in 1962 as part of the work to bring together the previous judicatories of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church. The new Northern Region brings together 58 of those congregations.

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Welcome to the first issue of **Northern Region News**, bringing stories of our Northwoods UCC churches. Bill Clyma continues as editor. You can e-mail him at [pastorbill111@outlook.com](mailto:pastorbill111@outlook.com).

## First Congregational UCC-Menomonee Receives Award

First Congregational UCC of Menomonee has received the Community Advocate of the Year Award from the Qube, the University of Wisconsin-Stout's headquarters for LGBTQIA+ students and allies in the Menomonee community. The award recognizes contributions from individuals and groups that foster the vibrancy of queer life on campus.

The congregation recently strengthened and reaffirmed its Open and Affirming Covenant, inviting LGBTQIA+ students to a safe and welcoming worship

space. Congregation members are also visiting with students at The Qube on Hot Chocolate Wednesdays, bringing muffins, donuts and other treats to share.

First Congregational UCC's members are committed to providing support for LGBTQIA+ students, especially at a time when more of these students say they feel threatened and unsupported.

The church's Pastor, Moderator, Vice Moderator, and chairperson of the Open and Affirming Committee, received the award at Qube's May 1 awards banquet.

## From the Desk of Michael Jones, Associate Conference Minister

Dear Pastors and Local Churches of the Northern Region,

As you have already read and may have known, the Northwest Association voted unanimously to dissolve at our Annual Association meeting, which was held as part of the Wisconsin Conference Annual Meeting.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the meeting and to all of those serving on the former Executive Committee of the NWA. Your leadership and support have been vital, and the NWA's care and support of its pastors will continue on in the new structure.

Some of the changes in our region that have occur or will occur are:

- The 58 churches that had Local Church Standing in the NWA now have Local Church Standing in the Wisconsin Conference acting as an Association.
- The work of the NWA Division on Church Ministry will continue through the summer until it hands off all oversight, support, and



authorization duties to the newly formed Wisconsin Conference Committee on Ministry on September 1.

- The ministerial scholarships and other grants that the Conference has always offered will stay the same.
- The newly named Northern Region of the Wisconsin Conference will be the same geographical area as the NWA.
- My role as your Associate Conference Minister for support of pastors and local churches and search and call will be the same.
- Future gatherings for Northern Region affinity groups, Conference-wide affinity groups, Conference-wide clergy, and Northern Region clergy will be announced.

It has been my pleasure to be your Associate Conference Minister over the last two and a half years in the NWA, and I look forward to more years to come together as the Northern Region!

If you have any questions, please reach out.

Every blessing,

Michael

# First Congregational UCC Creating New Model

Only three years ago, First Congregational UCC in Park Falls had a full-time pastor that they shared with a church just up the road. But the relationship wasn't working. They chose not to renew the



contract with their pastor.

But what next? They couldn't afford a full-time pastor, and found the prospect of a search a little frightening.

Then Associate Conference Minister Rob MacDougall called Laurie Fox, the church's moderator, and suggested she call Amanda Edwards, a new seminary graduate who was visiting her parents at their nearby lake cottage. She even offered to do virtual services from her later home in Ripon when she began her next called ministry.

One thing led to another. Amanda recommended a classmate, C.J. Dates, was doing a specialized ministry in upstate New York. He was willing to offer

some virtual worship services for them.

Add to this Emerson Coy, a retired Disciples of Christ Minister not far away in Lac du Flambeau and Jill Lemke, an ELCA hospital chaplain who lives in Woodruff.

About half of the congregation's worship is in-person, and the other half is virtual. Every Sunday morning, church members and visitors gather near the chancel or the big screen television to worship and praise God.

Moderator Laurie Fox reports that the congregation enjoys this arrangement and it has drawn new people. The congregation purchased a new large-screen television and a digital sign for outside the building. Announcements about the preacher of the day appear on the sign and on church's internet calendar. A local pianist provides musical leadership for the hymn singing during the digital services. An Information Technology person from the local school system helps them when those electronic and internet challenges become daunting.

Laypeople lead the congregation's Christmas Eve Service of lessons and carols, which has become a cherished community event.

"You can't be afraid of change," Fox tells others as she offers many stories of how to deal creating a new and innovative ministry. "A team of five to six people can do this."

## Agnus Day

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## St. Stephens UCC Merrill Invites UCC Friends for 2026 Mission Trip

St. Stephens UCC in Merrill is planning an all-church Mission Trip to Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi next year: June 14 to 20, 2026, with travel days stretching it to June 13-21. We invite members of other churches to join us to build up our team and increase our joy!

The cost will be about \$600 per person to include: the \$250 fee to Back Bay Mission, van rental and carpooling to Biloxi, overnight lodging while there (air-conditioned dormitory type arrangements), breakfast and dinner (lunches on your own), hotel stays one night going and one night on way back. St. Stephens is holding fundraisers to defray the costs for its members and we encourage other churches to sponsor their members as well.

Work may include: rehab of homes and building new homes with Habitat for those who can work on job sites. For non-construction work, Back Bay offers work in a homeless shelter, a soup kitchen and food pantry. We will also need someone

to make our breakfasts and dinners in the commercial kitchen provided in the Mission House.

For more information on Back Bay Mission, go to:

<https://thebackbaymission.org>. For more information on this opportunity, contact Rev. Mike Southcombe at [mike@ststephensucc.net](mailto:mike@ststephensucc.net) or call 715-536-7322.

Back Bay Mission is a few blocks from Biloxi Beach and about 25 minutes from New Orleans. Our work days end at 4:00 P.M. so there will be time for groups to explore the area in the evenings.

Church pastors or leaders can contact Rev. Southcombe for a leader's guide, more information on mission trips to Back Bay Mission or for more information on this particular trip. Participants must be at least 14 years old at time of the trip, everyone 16 years old and over will need to pass a background check. The church will have to maintain five youth to one adult ratio for all youth participants.

## Mehlberg Installed at First Congregational UCC May 18



The Reverend René Mehlberg was installed as Pastor of First Congregational United Church on Sunday, May 11, 2025. Rev. Michael Jones, Associate Conference Minister, preached for the occasion.

Pictured above from left are Rev. Jones, Rev. Tim Schroeder (ELCA), Rev. Mehlberg, Rev. Toby Ellision (ELCA), Rev. Grace Gravelle (ELCA), and Rev. William Clyma (UCC).

**Stewardship Quotes:** I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. C. S. Lewis

The person who waits to do a great deal of good at once will never do anything.

Samuel Johnson

**Stewardship Quotes:** The good deed you do today may be the only sermon some receive. Francis of Assisi

**Northern Region Pulpit Supply List July 2025**

Churches should be fair and forthright in agreeing upon honorarium and travel expenses for persons they invite to provide pulpit supply. The WI Conference Division of Church and Ministry suggests a minimum of \$150 plus mileage reimbursed at the IRS rate for **2025, 70 cents per mile**. *Note: 2025 minimum \$175.*

Where a church has two points and two services, consider an additional \$75 plus mileage.

Conference staff persons serve local congregations in a variety of ways. Honoraria are not accepted, and travel costs are covered by the Conference travel budget. Except in emergencies, Conference staff cannot provide pulpit supply; however, the staff welcomes opportunities to preach for special occasions or to meet with members of the congregation.

*Please note: Persons licensed to the Wisconsin Conference and ordained pastors are authorized to administer the Sacraments.*

**EAU CLAIRE TO TWIN CITIES AREA:**

**Pauline Bangle**, 1037 Olive Street, Chippewa Falls, WI 54729, 715 404 9181, [westernpb@yahoo.com](mailto:westernpb@yahoo.com)

**Jill Christopherson (licensed to the NW Association)** 2113 7th St, Eau Claire, WI 54703-2825  
715-514-7361 [christopherson.jill@gmail.com](mailto:christopherson.jill@gmail.com)

**Rev. Jim Clausen**, 1289 Lake View Ave., Winona, MN 55987  
320-267-3225, [james.clausen@ymail.com](mailto:james.clausen@ymail.com)

**Rev. Bill Clyma 1840 University Avenue West, Apt. 304, St. Paul, MN 55104**  
763-415-0779, [pastorbill111@outlook.com](mailto:pastorbill111@outlook.com), (will travel 100 mi.)

**Rev. Elizabeth Hazel**, 1060 Marian Lane, Park Falls, WI 54552 (will drive 3 hours)

**Rev. Carol J. Heckmann**, 1789 County Rd EE, White Bear Lake, MN 55110  
651-269-4950, [autumnsky1353@gmail.com](mailto:autumnsky1353@gmail.com). I am willing to travel 2 hours.

**Rev. Sandee Kosmo**, 3214 Chasewood Lane, Eau Claire, 54701  
715-834-2112 [skosmo14@msn.com](mailto:skosmo14@msn.com)

**Ann Larrabee** 817 Hamilton St. Wausau WI 54403  
715-216-6119 [bookworm1952@hotmail.com](mailto:bookworm1952@hotmail.com)

**Rev. Norm Luecke**, 301 Alvey St, Bruce, WI 54819  
925-639-1652, [normluecke@yahoo.com](mailto:normluecke@yahoo.com), (Available June-Sept: willing to travel 2 hours.)

**Rev. Kent Meyer**, 170 Emerson Ave. E # 106, West St. Paul, MN 55118  
507-458-0757, [revkmeyer@gmail.com](mailto:revkmeyer@gmail.com)

**Rev. Missy Miller**, 1431 Moon Beach Dr., St. Germain, WI 54558  
715-218-0100, [mmiller@ucci.org](mailto:mmiller@ucci.org)

**Stephen P. Ottman**, 733 First Street, Plum City 54761  
715-495-2017, [s.ottman53@gmail.com](mailto:s.ottman53@gmail.com)

**Rev. Mary Runyon**, 722 Powell Street, La Crosse WI 54603  
865-724-7702, [maryhaysrunyon@gmail.com](mailto:maryhaysrunyon@gmail.com) S of Eau Claire Will travel 90 miles from La Crosse

**Rev. Will Runyon**, 722 Powell Street, La Crosse WI 54603  
865-724-7702, [williamdavidrunyon@gmail.com](mailto:williamdavidrunyon@gmail.com) S of Eau Claire Will travel 90 miles from La Crosse

**Patti Steevens**, 1809 E. McMillan St, Marshfield, WI 54449  
715-650-1761, [patti-steevens@hotmail.com](mailto:patti-steevens@hotmail.com) Will travel the state, generally not available in Jan or Feb.

**Susan Vornholt**, 301 Oak Street, Neillsville, WI 54456  
715-797-4031 [svornholt@yahoo.com](mailto:svornholt@yahoo.com)

**Rev. Charles Wolfe**, 680 Walnut Street, Prescott, WI 54021  
715-262-2133, [chaswolfe411@gmail.com](mailto:chaswolfe411@gmail.com)

**Rev. Vicki Wunsch**, 618 Ross Ave., Wausau, WI 54403,  
612-616-0562, [rev.vicki42@gmail.com](mailto:rev.vicki42@gmail.com)

### **LA CROSSE AREA:**

**Jill Christopherson**, 2113 7th St, Eau Claire, WI 54703-2825 Licensed to the NWA  
715-514-7361, [christopherson.jill@gmail.com](mailto:christopherson.jill@gmail.com)

**Rev. Jim Clausen**, 1289 Lake View Ave., Winona, MN 55987  
320-267-3225, [james.clausen@ymail.com](mailto:james.clausen@ymail.com)

**Rev. Jean M. Feeney**, 726 E. Montgomery St. Apt 3, Sparta WI, 54656. [Jfeeney16@yahoo.com](mailto:Jfeeney16@yahoo.com)

**Ann Larrabee** 817 Hamilton St. Wausau WI 54403  
715-216-6119, [bookworm1952@hotmail.com](mailto:bookworm1952@hotmail.com)

**Robert Lynn**, N1963 Crestview Place, La Crosse WI 54601  
608-799-4421, [lynn.roberto@gmail.com](mailto:lynn.roberto@gmail.com) (willing to travel one hour from La Crosse)

**Rev. Missy Miller**, 1431 Moon Beach Dr., St. Germain, WI 54558  
715-218-0100, [mmiller@ucci.org](mailto:mmiller@ucci.org)

**Rev. Mary Runyon**, 722 Powell Street, La Crosse WI 54603  
865-724-7702, [maryhaysrunyon@gmail.com](mailto:maryhaysrunyon@gmail.com) Will travel 90 miles from La Crosse

**Rev. Will Runyon**, 722 Powell Street, La Crosse WI 54603  
865-724-7702, [williamdavidrunyon@gmail.com](mailto:williamdavidrunyon@gmail.com) Will travel 90 miles from La Crosse

**Patti Steevens**, 1809 E. McMillan St, Marshfield, WI 54449  
715-650-1761, [patti-steevens@hotmail.com](mailto:patti-steevens@hotmail.com) Will travel the state, generally not available in Jan or Feb.

**Rev. Tom Uphaus**, 2650 N Pine Creek Rd, La Crescent, MN 55947  
507-895-2152, [tuphaus@acegroup.cc](mailto:tuphaus@acegroup.cc)

**Susan Vornholt**, 301 Oak Street, Neillsville, WI 54456  
715-797-4031, [svornholt@yahoo.com](mailto:svornholt@yahoo.com)

**Rev. Vicki Wunsch**, 618 Ross Ave., Wausau, WI 54403,  
612-616-0562, [rev.vicki42@gmail.com](mailto:rev.vicki42@gmail.com)

**Pauline Bangle**, 1037 Olive Street, Chippewa Falls, WI 54729, 715 404 9181, [westernpb@yahoo.com](mailto:westernpb@yahoo.com)

**Jill Christopherson**, 2113 7th St, Eau Claire, WI 54703-2825, Licensed to the NWA  
715-514-7361, [christopherson.jill@gmail.com](mailto:christopherson.jill@gmail.com)

**Rev. Jim Clausen**, 1289 Lake View Ave., Winona, MN 55987  
320-267-3225, [james.clausen@ymail.com](mailto:james.clausen@ymail.com)

**SUPERIOR-ASHLAND AREA:**

**Rev. Bill Handy**, 715-682-0168 [williamhandy18@gmail.com](mailto:williamhandy18@gmail.com)

**Rev. Elizabeth Hazel**, 1060 Marian Lane, Park Falls, WI 54552 (will travel 3 hours)  
715-744-2373, [morrinhazel@pctcnet.net](mailto:morrinhazel@pctcnet.net)

**Rev. Norm Luecke**, 301 Alvey St, Bruce, WI 54819  
925-639-1652, [normluecke@yahoo.com](mailto:normluecke@yahoo.com) (Available June-Sept: willing to travel 2 hours)

**Rev. Missy Miller**, 1431 Moon Beach Dr., St. Germain, WI 54558  
715-218-0100, [mmiller@ucci.org](mailto:mmiller@ucci.org)

**Rev Robert Rice**, 5695 Hunter Cove, Conover, WI 54519  
405-642-6118, [robertsrice@msn.com](mailto:robertsrice@msn.com)

**Patti Steevens**, 1809 E. McMillan St, Marshfield, WI 54449  
715-650-1761, [patti-steevens@hotmail.com](mailto:patti-steevens@hotmail.com) Will travel throughout the state, generally not available in Jan or Feb.

**Susan Vornholt**, 301 Oak Street, Neillsville, WI 54456  
715-797-4031, [sjvornholt@yahoo.com](mailto:sjvornholt@yahoo.com)

**Rev. Vicki Wunsch**, 618 Ross Ave., Wausau, WI 54403,  
612-616-0562, [rev.vicki42@gmail.com](mailto:rev.vicki42@gmail.com)

**WAUSAU AREA:**

**Jill Christopherson** 2113 7th St, Eau Claire, WI 54703-2825, Licensed to the NWA|  
715-514-7361, [christopherson.jill@gmail.com](mailto:christopherson.jill@gmail.com)

**Rev. Jim Clausen**, 1289 Lake View Ave., Winona, MN 55987  
320-267-3225, [james.clausen@ymail.com](mailto:james.clausen@ymail.com)

**Christopher Ewan**, 114814 County Road A, Athens, WI 54411  
715-680-0083, [ewan1223@hotmail.com](mailto:ewan1223@hotmail.com)

**Rev. Elizabeth Hazel**, 1060 Marian Lane, Park Falls, WI 54552, (will travel 3 hours)  
715-744-2373, [morrinhazel@pctcnet.net](mailto:morrinhazel@pctcnet.net)

**Ann Larrabee** 817 Hamilton St. Wausau WI 54403  
715-216-6119, [bookworm1952@hotmail.com](mailto:bookworm1952@hotmail.com)

**Dr. Pamalyn Lee**, PO Box 1042, Land O Lakes, WI 54540-1042,  
715-891-5579, [pam.lee43@gmail.com](mailto:pam.lee43@gmail.com)

**Rev. Norm Luecke**, 301 Alvey St, Bruce, WI 54819  
925-639-1652, [normluecke@yahoo.com](mailto:normluecke@yahoo.com)

**Rev. Missy Miller**, 1431 Moon Beach Dr., St. Germain, WI 54558  
715-218-0100, [mmiller@ucci.org](mailto:mmiller@ucci.org)

**Rev. James Mohr**, 35 Hewett St., Neillsville WI 54456,  
715-743-7626, [jmohr13@outlook.com](mailto:jmohr13@outlook.com) \*Note: I would be available to drive to any place South of Wausau, East of La Crosse, and Southeast of Eau Claire.

**Rev. Robert Rice**, 5695 Hunter Cove, Conover, WI 54519  
405-642-6118, [robertsrice@msn.com](mailto:robertsrice@msn.com)

**Patti Steevens**, 1809 E. McMillan St, Marshfield, WI 54449  
715-650-1761, [patti-steevens@hotmail.com](mailto:patti-steevens@hotmail.com) Will travel the state, generally not available in Jan or Feb.

**Susan Vornholt**, 301 Oak Street, Neillsville, WI 54456  
715-797-4031, [sjvornholt@yahoo.com](mailto:sjvornholt@yahoo.com)

**Mary Wright**, 7010 Evergreen Avenue, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494  
715-325-3602, [bmw@tznet.com](mailto:bmw@tznet.com) or [22bowzer@gmail.com](mailto:22bowzer@gmail.com)

**Rev. Vicki Wunsch**, 618 Ross Ave., Wausau, WI 54403,  
612-616-0562, [rev.vicki42@gmail.com](mailto:rev.vicki42@gmail.com)