

The Campus Ministry Committee of Salem Presbytery invites and encourages congregations within our Presbytery to participate in the first annual UKirk Sunday Special Offering on August 8<sup>th</sup>. In these increasingly lean times, your financial support is vital to the health, success, and growth of campus ministry in our Presbytery and beyond.

UKirk national director, Gini Morris-Lane says, “Each UKIRK network ministry is charged with “reaching, loving and teaching college students so they may be lifelong followers of Jesus Christ. That every person, without qualification, should have the opportunity for God’s amazing love to be made known to them” through our 200+ ministries. Yet, when I share what I do in ministry, a common refrain I hear is that 18-22-year-old college students do not really want or need spiritual formation in college, because this is a time for them to focus on their studies and “have fun” before adulthood. The assumption is they will return to the church when they get married or have children. The church just needs to wait for them to return. I often respond that we know this is not the case. Young adults often go off to college, face disequilibrium in some way and don’t return to the Presbyterian Church, either because they no longer consider themselves Christians or because they join a church of another denomination.”

Within Salem Presbytery, there are 20 public and private colleges and universities in addition to community colleges and trade schools, which are supported by nine campus ministries. Since the Covid 19 pandemic began, Salem Presbytery campus ministers have stretched the bounds of their ministry programming to include students and congregations across the United States through virtual worship, Bible Study, and Fellowship opportunities.

As the world begins to open, many higher education students will return to University life like we’ve never seen it before. Many students will be starting from scratch, trying to build community at a school where they’ve never attended in person classes, or preparing to graduate and enter a work force, which has reinvented itself over the last 18 months. Over 90% of college students have experienced negative mental health symptoms due to the pandemic, according to a new BestColleges.com survey. Nearly half of students struggle with anxiety, isolation, and a lack of focus. Our students need the connection, support, encouragement, rest, and joy that a community of faith brings now more than ever.

The Book of Order reminds us that in our tradition, the congregation as a whole, on behalf of the Church universal, assumes responsibility for nurturing the baptized person in the Christian life, this special offering gives every individual and congregation in our Presbytery the opportunity to support these vital ministries.

The campus ministers of Salem Presbytery are eager to support your congregation in your planning for UKirk Sunday. We have compiled resources for worship planning, connecting your graduating high school students to campus ministry-including a QR code link where individuals, parents, and youth leaders can add graduating seniors’ information so our Presbytery campus ministers can get them connected to their new campus ministry home, and created a bulletin insert for you to use! If you’ve already made plans for August 8<sup>th</sup>, we’d be glad to help you find another Sunday that fits your schedule! We’d also love to talk with you about other ways to connect with and support college and university students and campus ministries in our area. Follow this link to get started! [bit.ly/salemCM](https://bit.ly/salemCM)

Thank you for your continued prayers, love, and support as we work together to build up the body of Christ.