

## **ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER**

### **Annual Report 2020**

*Rev. Dr. Barbara Doerrer-Peacock*

Each day, I am grateful for this work I am privileged to do in and on behalf of the Southwest Conference! I am grateful for the blessing of working with so many caring, compassionate, committed and creative people – in the office, on committees and in our churches. Thank you!

*Spiritual leadership formation, authorization and transition* continues to be a helpful umbrella definition for the diverse tasks I do in this ACM position. I see my job as acting on the behalf of the Conference and the United Church of Christ to best enable the development of new and competent spiritual leaders and encourage strong and healthy frameworks for their ministries.

My work in formation is core to both foci of my ministry for the Southwest Conference: 1. Staffing the Committee on Church and Ministry-A with its oversight of all authorized ministers, and 2. Overseeing our Conference youth and camping ministries. Spiritual formation is about how we experience God's call, respond to it, and create and follow pathways to fulfill that call with competency, accountability and in covenant with the faith community.

- **FORMATION WITH YOUTH AND ADULTS WORKING WITH YOUTH:**

- ✓ This last year, again my primary focus is on creating transformational spiritual formation space through the week of camp. In an ongoing effort to make our church camp experience more sustainable, we successfully merged our program with the AZ Region of the Disciples of Christ. I am grateful for the partnership of the **Rev. Jay Deskins**, the AZ DoC Regional Children and Youth Minister whom we co-opt as a Camp Director and also offering assistance with other youth programming. Jay has been working to offer shared mid-year youth and children opportunities as well.

Transitional years are usually a mixture of both successes and chaos (both true for us at DUCC!). Our success was that both adults and youth stepped up to the challenges, stayed open and flexible, enjoyed the new “fuller” feeling of camp and built new relationships. With chaos comes the new learnings necessary for adaptive change. Our biggest challenges had to do with: 1. the daily schedule, 2. a needed mutual agreement on core values, policies and procedures at camp, 3. continuing clarity of the roles and responsibilities of youth leaders in camp, and 4. more complete and required pre-camp training and preparation for adult staff. All four points were worked on for DUCC (Disciples/UCC Church Camp) 2020!

AND THEN THE PANDEMIC STRUCK in March! Jay and I spent the next nail-biting two months trying to decide what we were going to do about DUCC 2020. We were able to cancel our week at Emmanuel Pines Camp in Prescott, and hold our reservation for 2021. But, each time we settled on one new idea, in a week the circumstances would all change. Finally we opted for a 4-week virtual DUCC@Home “camp” experience. Using a digital platform called the Camp Portal courtesy of the Presbyterian Church USA, Jay took the lead planning about 4-5

online events per week, ranging from small group Zooms, to interest groups, worship, whole-group “campfires” and talent shows. The June/July weeks started out with about 30 registrations, however by that time of the summer, many of the kids and families were feeling the Zoom-fatigue, and interest dwindled.

- ✓ While Jay was working on virtual DUCC@Home, as a staff we began asking more big-picture questions of whatever this “new normal” is, how is it going to shape faith formation in our churches long-term? I invited people from across our Conference who served their churches in faith formation to begin meeting via Zoom. We continue to meet twice a month, and are finding support, creativity and resource sharing, plus venturing into discussions on the big questions of how we will evolve in our faith formation as church communities.
- ✓ I also facilitated a gathering of Phoenix-area clergy and youth directors in 2019 to discuss sharing information, resources and events regarding their youth ministries with each other. The result was an acquaintance of the people gathered, and a shared Basecamp project where opportunities, questions, and information can be shared to build mutual events.
- **SPIRITUAL FORMATION, AUTHORIZATION AND TRANSITIONS FOR CLERGY:**  
COCAM-A oversees the discernment path toward ministry, and the authorization of ministers for the United Church of Christ and the Southwest Conference. As the staff person for COCAM-A, I do the following:
  - ✓ Keep the ministerial files, digital and hard copy, up-to-date
  - ✓ Work with ministers who are transferring in or out of the Conference
  - ✓ Oversee and work with those seeking or maintaining authorized standing of some sort in our Conference.
  - ✓ Working with Members in Discernment and those considering that status.
  - ✓ Working with Local Church Discernment Committees for training and coaching.
  - ✓ Working closely with the chair of COCAM-A to create agendas, keep track of committee actions, correspondence, setting up interviews,
  - ✓ Being the guide for COCAM-A through fitness review processes.
  - ✓ Consulting with the committee and conference minister to create and uphold policy positions,
  - ✓ Maintaining the national UCC Datahub record system for our conference clergy.
  - ✓ Working with retired clergy for support and decisions regarding their standing.

- **HEALTHY MINISTRY MODULES**

Excellent ministry must be sustained by healthy clergy and congregations. As part of maintaining healthy authorized ministry, clergy are required to keep up to date on training for awareness of ethical boundaries, bias and diversity.

In 2019, we continued with our four Healthy Ministry Modules for clergy that pertain to ethical boundary awareness. We held one block of all four modules on a Friday afternoon through Saturday afternoon schedule in September in Albuquerque, then two modules bookending the October clergy retreat in Tucson, and the other two modules on one day at the Conference Office in Phoenix in December.

We have added an Alternative Module One that can be taken by retired or soon-to-be retired clergy who want to remain with active ministerial standing but covers some of the unique ethical issues and challenges for those who are professionally retired. We held the new module this year in Phoenix.

We continue to offer Boundary Awareness training for Congregations, and I hope to be developing a similar program for church staff members.

With the renewed commitment and focus of our nation on racial issues and working for racial justice in the wake of the police killings of unarmed People of Color, I am taking advantage of the offerings in our Conference to heighten efforts of awareness and work toward racial justice. As many of our clergy leaders are taking part in the national UCC trainings for Sacred Conversations to End Racism, I am committed to using new resources and trainers for the development of two new Healthy Ministry Modules for our clergy's ongoing accountability: one focusing on anti-oppression and implicit bias as clergy leaders, and the second specifically on the manifestation and complicity of racism within churches that our clergy need to be sensitive to.

I am grateful to the trained leadership team we have in conducting our Healthy Ministry Modules on clergy boundary awareness and ethics: **Rev. Gail Joralemon, Rev. Sarah TevisTownes, Rev. Donna Cavedon, Rev. Len Silvester, and Rev. Dr. George Ault.**

On a personal note, in a year that has had a number of challenges in my personal life (death of my father, and continuing health concerns of my husband Rich), I haven't always felt like I was able to operate at full-capacity. I'm deeply grateful for the immense support and understanding I've felt from Conference friends and colleagues, plus the rock-solid foundation of being able to work in partnership and collaboration with the other Conference staff: Bill, Liana, Genevieve and Wende! They are the best! Thank you all!