



# let it shine

## Called As Partners in Christ's Service

### The Conferences of the UCC

*Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him. (Matthew 10:1-4)*

Today, the disciples of Jesus are known by these names—Jeremy and Jennifer, Emily and Eduardo, Oscar and Olivia. Disciples of Jesus have answered the call in local congregations called Trinity United Church of Christ, First Christian Church, South Congregational, and Saint John's United Church of Christ. Disciples called by Jesus to ministries of grace and service are also found in conferences such as the South Central Conference, the Hawaii Conference, the Central Pacific Conference, and the Connecticut Conference.

The 39 Conferences of the United Church of Christ are another setting in which the children of God are responding to the summons to discipleship and service. In the words of Article VIII, Section 46 of the Constitution of the United Church of Christ, "A Conference is that body of the United Church of Christ which is composed of all Local Churches in a geographical area..." Conferences are typically made up of one or more associations of congregations, and with these associations, the Conferences of the UCC provide the primary support for the search-and-call process by which churches select ordained leadership. While the care and order of the denomination is an essential purpose for our Conferences, answering Jesus' call to discipleship is clearly another.

Conferences respond to Jesus' call and enrich the life of the local church in a variety of ways, including: offering outdoor camp experiences for all ages; holding leadership training events for laypersons; encouraging congregational understanding of the Wider Church and participation in global ministries; serving as a communications link between congregations; organizing justice and peace

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*Our UCC Polity—How Our Church Works*

policy advocacy ministries; aiding churches in their stewardship campaigns; resourcing congregations with Christian Education materials; assisting in the continuing education of ordained clergy, commissioned ministers, and Christian educators; consulting with congregations in times of transition, crisis, and opportunity; and calling forth its members for Conference-wide celebrations.

In other words, the Conference is yet another place where Christians can respond to Jesus' call to be disciples in "ministries of grace", to use Jane Huber Parker's words. Conferences are called, with individual members and local congregations, to be "equal partners in our caring, to fulfill God's chosen end." And Conferences are called, just like those first disciples, to be "messengers of faith, thus giving hope and confidence and peace."

#### Reflection:

- How does your Conference further the mission of the church of Jesus Christ "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.?"
- How can your gifts for ministry be offered to your Conference to further Christ's ministry of love in the world?
- In what ways has the faithful ministry of your Conference touched and shaped your life and the life of your congregation?

#### Resources:

- Called as Partners in Christ's Service, text: © 1981 Jane Parker Huber from *A Singing Faith*, Westminster John Knox Press.
- *The Holy Bible*, New Revised Standard Version, 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches.
- The Constitution and By-Laws, United Church of Christ: [www.ucc.org/aboutus/constitution](http://www.ucc.org/aboutus/constitution).

*"Called As Partners in Christ's Service: The Conferences of the UCC" was written by David Taylor, one of the pastors of First Church of Christ, Congregational, United Church of Christ, Glastonbury, Connecticut. Rev. Taylor has served the United Church of Christ in the local, conference and national settings of the church.*

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