

## **Associate Conference Minister Annual Report 2018**

It has been quite a year for Search & Call and Committees on Ministry in the UCC. There have been many revised documents, new ways of doing search and a new Manual on Ministry. To say the least, all these changes have kept me “on my toes.” Even with all these changes and revisions, I love this position and continue to be blessed by meeting so many amazing people in our churches who are doing the work of Jesus Christ.

I want to thank the Committees on Ministry (COM) of the 5 Associations in PSEC. These are the best COMs in the UCC!!!! And I mean that! We have awesome chairs and co-chairs and amazing members on our committees who are giving of their time and talent in and on behalf of the UCC. THANK YOU! Because of the hard work of these COMs, PSEC continues to work toward creating an atmosphere of excellence in ministry.

Our Pastoral Excellence Programs continues to grow in PSEC! I am thrilled to say that we now have 10 Communities of Practice—groups of 4-6 clergy who work together to support and share best practices in ministry. There are approximately 40-60 clergy in these groups. We have also started our first “virtual” group of MIDs who are not always able to meet face-to-face so they meet every month on Zoom. YEAH!!!! THANK YOU to all the facilitators who lead these groups and to the members who are willing to support one another and hold one another accountable in their ministry.

2017-2018 also saw the beginning of a “Church Closure” Team. This team held its first workshop on Saturday, April 21. There were 27 people at that first workshop representing 5 congregations. Although this may be a “downer” for some folk, I find it an honor and a holy time as we walk with churches discerning if the time for ending their ministry is near. One of the things that is most concerning to me is that we need to make every effort to connect members from closing congregations to other UCC congregations. We are a denomination with a covenantal polity and we cannot afford to lose our biggest asset, UCC members! We also have a fund for closing congregations to contribute in order to create something new in the future. I would challenge churches considering where their funds are to be distributed to think about the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Although there are many deserving charities in our communities, how many work to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That is the work of the church. To continue our mission of creating disciples, I hope you will think about contributing to this fund so that we can continue the work of the church.

Finally, there are many churches in search of a pastor. Unfortunately, there are more part-time churches than I have part-time pastors. It is becoming evident that I cannot provide pastors for these churches. I pray that we might begin to seriously explore other ways of being church. What about shared ministry, what about sharing pastors? I would be happy to speak with any churches that are interested in these or other options.

Thank you for the opportunity to be your Association Conference Minister and know that I enjoy what I do. This is an exciting day in the life of the church in PSEC. It is an opportunity to begin to think about ministry. It is a time to think of new ways of being “church.” I believe that God is doing a new thing, all we have to do is be willing to step forth in faith knowing that God will provide.

I look forward to working with you and together may we trust God in the process and look forward to an amazing future as we proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

Blessings,  
Rev. Sharon S. Morris