



March 31, 2019

## Summer Communities of Service

### Youth and Young Adults!

The **United Church of Christ** is seeking 15 interns for Summer Communities of Service and 10 interns for the year-long Young Adult Service Communities. Please spread the word about these opportunities at the intersection of faith and social justice, living and working in intentional Christian community.

**Summer Communities of Service** support local programs across the United States that include disaster recovery in Houston/ Beaumont, Texas, and Volusia County, Fla. Other opportunities include food justice through community gardening, and economic equity through children's enrichment. 10 weeks. For young adults aged 19 and above.

**Placements for summer are happening now.**

**Young Adult Service Communities** participants join local communities acting for affordable housing, immigration reform, public health and racial justice. 11 months. For ages 21-35. **Placements for 2019-2020 are happening now.**

*For more info on these two opportunities go to: [ucc.org/volunteer](http://ucc.org/volunteer)*

**FEMA** is accepting applications for its Youth Preparedness Council. This program brings together teens (8th through 11th grade) from across the country who are interested and engaged in community preparedness. Use the following link to learn more: <https://www.ready.gov/youth-preparedness-council>



## PSEC Fall Meeting

### Sunday, November 17th

3:00—5:30 pm

Location TBD

## Keeping Our Churches Safe

How do we keep our church safe in a world that feels more dangerous than ever? It's a complicated question that takes on more urgency with every house of worship that is traumatized by gun violence.

Some churches have adopted a simple answer: arm ushers or other security persons with deadly force. While I understand and respect that decision, I would not prescribe it without considering seriously whether Jesus, who told Peter to put down his sword, would advise us to pick up a weapon — and the countless other concerns of responding to violence with violence.

There are actions steps to take right now to minimize the risks that come with living in world where evil does exist.

First, we speak the love of Christ to each other in our churches and we speak that to the world. There is no room anywhere for hate of any kind, directed at anyone for any reason. The shooting in Christ Church, New Zealand was unconscionable. Its perpetrator targeted brothers and sisters for their faith. My Muslim friends in the US and abroad have, by their faith, made me stronger in mine. The bells that toll this week for their deaths, toll for my own.

Second, congregations must be engaged in regular conversations about ALL manners of safety issues including but not limited to violent actors and active shooters, the protection of children and vulnerable adults, and natural and human caused disasters. If a congregation does not have plans and policies in place to address these and other safety issues, it is neglecting a fundamental responsibility of faithful stewardship. A good place to find help for that work is at our own UCC Insurance Board website ( <https://www.insuranceboard.org/safety-resources/>) The PSEC website also includes resources on Protecting Houses of Worship and Resources for Faith-Based Preparedness, found at <https://psec.org>.

Third, the simplest act to increase safety is to know the people around you — the people in your pews, in your church and your community. Deepen connections (or make them) with police, EMS and all local officials (many who will address safety issues/provide active shooter training for free) who need to know that your church is a resource when disaster strikes.

Finally, our Conference has just recently hosted two active shooter training events. We are in the process of evaluating that training and determining what will come next. If you are interested in being part of a future training event, please let us know by contacting Sue Creswell at [susan@psec.org](mailto:susan@psec.org).

We are called to live by faith and not by fear, as individuals and as church communities, and we can take steps to minimize the risks that come with living in a world where evil does exist. I encourage your congregation to do all it can to keep its members safe; to assess the dangers that are an inevitable part of living this life and do so in ways that reflect the words and teachings of Jesus.

With God's blessing, may it be so.

Bill Rev. William P. Worley, PSE Conference Minister