“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Hebrews 13.8)
“I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43.19)
“Write the vision; make it plain.” (Habakkuk 2:2)

At its best, every institution (including the church) is both backward and forward-looking. It looks to the past—its history and heritage, its values and traditions—as the foundation for its work, but it also looks to the future to see what new challenges (and opportunities) are on the horizon and how it needs to change to be ready to address them.

The theme song for the backward-looking churches might be “How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent Word.” The theme song for the forward-looking might be “New occasions teach new duties; Time makes ancient good uncouth; they must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth.”

I had a seminary professor who disliked the conservative/liberal dichotomy that was so prevalent at the time (with all its negative, divisive connotations) and preferred the labels “conserving” and “liberating.” In the first place, we seek to preserve the best of the past, that which is foundational, tried-and-true. In the second place, we seek to liberate ourselves from forms and habits which are no longer life-giving and find new ways to express the faith in a new day.

It is never really a choice. Institutions—the church included—must sometimes discard ways of being and doing that are no longer helpful. We must sometimes find new ways to express the faith, all the while hanging onto the things that are essential, even if those essentials are wrapped in new clothes.

Middleton Community UCC is at a crossroads of sorts. There have been a number of developments and changes in recent months:

- Madison has grown out to the edges of our church property, making what was once a rural island into a suburban community with many more people living close to our church building.
- We are in the process of selling eight acres of our property for development. The proceeds of the sale will allow us to pay off a large portion of our remaining mortgage balance.
- One of our core ministries, The Road Home shelter program, is ending, leaving a big volunteer gap in our ministry.

Annual Meeting
Sunday, January 21, after worship
when we receive reports, vote on the 2018 budget, and celebrate the ministry of MCC
(Potluck to follow)
Worship in January

January 7, 2018
Epiphany (observed)
Ephesians 2:11-22
“Brought Near”
What is our vision for ministry? What do we believe God is calling us to be and do? On this first Sunday of a worship series, entitled “Imagine the Possibilities,” we will begin a time of visioning and dreaming by focusing first on hospitality. What does it mean to be hospitable? How can our ministry of hospitality expand so that all might feel welcomed and at home? Holy Communion will be celebrated this day.

January 14, 2018
Second Sunday after Epiphany
Matthew 25:31-40
“Doing the Faith”
On this final hosting Sunday for The Road Home, we will reflect upon “risk-taking mission and service.” How is service in the name of Jesus Christ risky? What new risks are we being called to face? Today’s worship service will include a service of remembrance and thanksgiving for our ministry with The Road Home.

January 21, 2018
Third Sunday after Epiphany
Psalm 98
“Make a Joyful Noise”
The adjective connected with worship in the book “Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations” is “passionate.” In what sense is our worship passionate? How can our worship reflect our passion and commitment to Jesus Christ?

January 28, 2018
Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-16
On this Sunday, while Pastor Jim is away, Rev. Dave Werner will be leading us in a time of reflection on faith development. How do we grow in faith, even as adults? How can we break out of the assumption that Christian education is for children?
Recycle the Warmth

January is a good month to think about keeping our neighbors in need warm! Help “recycle the warmth” by donating new or good-quality recycled bedding to St. Vincent de Paul. A large box, ready to be filled with warmth, will appear in Fellowship Hall in late January. Bring your new or clean and gently used blankets and bedding and place them in the box on Sunday, January 28. St. Vincent’s will pick them up the next day for distribution to needy people in Madison and surrounding communities.

Money donations can also help to warm the chill – make your check out to Middleton Community Church with “Recycle the Warmth” in the memo line and drop it in the offering plate. Thank you!

A Day to Breathe:
The Power of Positivity

For our winter “Day to Breathe” on Saturday, January 20, Jane Mirshak will lead a class called “The Power of Positivity.” Transform your life and learn to be more positive through breath, ancient wisdom, laughter, nutrition, movement and love. The session will start at 9am and end at 2pm and will be held at the church. A light lunch will be provided.

Please register and pay in advance with Jane at ohmissjane@msn.com or 917-670-6794. The fee is $50 per person.

More information about the class is available on MCC’s website: www.middletonucc.org/a-day-to-breathe

MOANA Sing-Along—January 28 at 2pm

It’s time again for our annual movie sing along! This year we’ll sing along to Disney’s Moana! We will gather on Sunday, January 29, 2016 at 2 p.m. in the Sanctuary in Middleton Community Church. There will be a costume contest, prizes, activity bags, and delicious treats! Join us for an afternoon of fun songs and a great movie on our big screens! Invite your friends and neighbors! Everyone is welcome!

DON’T FORGET FOOD SUNDAY!

On the first Sunday of every month, please bring non-perishable food and personal care items to help stock the shelves of Middleton Outreach Ministry’s Food Pantry.

MCC Staff
Contact Information

Please use the following information to correspond with church staff.

Office:
mccucc
@middletonucc.org
(608)831-4694
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Jim Iliff:
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Katie Iliff:
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Mindy Bergman:
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Janet Coughlin:
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Barbara Brown:
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Jason Tank:
mccbuildingmanager
@middletonucc.org
(608)831-4694

Website:
www.middletonucc.org
Daily Bible Reading Guide
For January

1/1 Ephesians 1:1-23
1/2 Ephesians 2:1-22
1/3 Ephesians 3:1-21
1/4 Ephesians 4:1-16
1/5 Ephesians 4:17-32
1/6 Psalm 72
1/7 Ephesians 5:1-20
1/8 Ephesians 6:10-24
1/9 Mark 1:21-45
1/10 Mark 2:1-17
1/11 Mark 3:1-19
1/12 Mark 3:20-35
1/13 Mark 4:35-5:20
1/14 Mark 5:21-43
1/15 Mark 6:1-29
1/16 Mark 6:30-56
1/17 Mark 7:24-37
1/18 Mark 8:27-9:1
1/19 Mark 9:2-29
1/20 Mark 9:30-50
1/21 Mark 10:13-31
1/22 Mark 10:32-52
1/23 John 12:20-36a
1/24 John 12:36b-50
1/26 Acts 9:26-43
1/27 Acts 12:1-25
1/28 Acts 13:1-12
1/30 Acts 13:26-41
1/31 Acts 13:42-52

To have these daily readings sent right to your email box, go to www.americanbible.org, click on “Bible Resources,” then “Daily Bible Reading.” Daily devotionals are also available at www.ucc.org.

Tuesday Night Fellowship

On Tuesday, January 7, Tuesday Night Fellowship will begin a video study entitled “Embracing a Life of Meaning: Kathleen Norris on Discovering What Matters.” Best-selling author Kathleen Norris provides a unique viewpoint of “what matters most,” including:

- **Belief Matters:** Why does belief matter? To what do we give our hearts? What is the core message of what we believe—creeds or commitment? To what extent is to believe also “to belove”?
- **The Bible Matters:** The Bible is our collective story. How is that story reflected in our daily lives? What is it about the Bible that always seems to address our present moment?
- **Community Matters:** In community, individualism and imperfection meet grace and acceptance. What is our part in the Body of Christ?
- **Place Matters:** In what ways is faith set within the physical space of home, church, land and people?
- **We Matter:** What it means to remain in God’s image and to counter our selfishness by embracing the world and its needs?

Copies of the study guide are available in Fellowship Hall. The cost is $7.

Tuesday Night Fellowship begins at 6:00 pm with a soup supper, followed by study at 6:30. The evening concludes by 8. Childcare is provided if requested.

Tuesday Lunch Bunch

Come and enjoy lunch with the Tuesday Lunch Bunch. The first lunch in the new year will be on Tuesday, January 9, at 11:30 am at Benvenuto’s Italian Grill, 1109 Fourier Dr. in the Holiday Inn West.

The group meets the second Tuesday of the month at various local restaurants.

Come and get acquainted with the group and enjoy good fellowship and food. Everyone is welcome.

For the January lunch, call Rose Ann Sprang at 831-6486 for your reservation. Hope to see you on January 9!

Backyard Mosaic Women’s Project

On Wednesday, January 10, 2018, at 10:30 am, Julia Weaver will speak about the “Backyard Mosaic Women's Project for Women Inmates” in the Community Room at Attic Angel Place, 8301 Old Sauk Road.

Growing out of Weaver’s ministry at the Dane County Jail, the Backyard Mosaic project offers an safe space for women to come together to explore their spirituality and creativity in an atmosphere of sobriety.

All are welcome!
2018 Mutton Lectures: “Dear White Christians”

Dr. Jennifer Harvey, author of Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation, will be in Wisconsin to speak on the subject of the church and racial justice. The lecture will be offered in two locations:

- Friday, February 9, 2018, 7 pm to 9 pm, Fountain of Life Covenant Church, 633 Badger Road, Madison, WI.
- Saturday, February 10, 2018, 10 am to 12:00 pm, Calvary Memorial United Church of Christ, 4515 Mayfair Road, Wauwatosa, WI.

Advanced registrations are welcome through the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ at wcucc.org. Persons are also welcome to register at the door. The cost is $10.

Jennifer Harvey’s appearance in Wisconsin is sponsored by the Mutton Lectureship group of the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ in cooperation with the Mission Team of the Southeast Wisconsin Association of the UCC.

The Robert Douglas Mutton Lectureship in Theology and the Practice of Ministry is sponsored by the Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ through generous gifts in honor of Bob Mutton and to continue his commitment to theological study as an essential part of the faithful practice of ministry for both clergy and laity.

Family Small Group

Our Family Small Group will be meeting January 8th at 6:00PM to discuss the final section (chapters 5&7) of Making a Home for Faith: Nurturing the Spiritual Life of your Children.

If you are interested in joining us, please contact Lara Romine, LaraRomine@gmail.com for more details. We will then take a short break and resume again during Lent, stay tuned to find out what we will be doing then!

Mind/Body/Spirit

Would you like to take some time for yourself in the new year? Practicing mindfulness is one of the single most powerful things you can do for your wellbeing.

Brian Koenig will continue to lead mindfulness meditation class in January. Join us on Thursday, January 4 and Thursday, January 25, from 6:30-7:30pm. New participants are welcome anytime.

Each class begins with a check-in, a brief TED Talk or speaker, and a practice meditation. Everyone is welcome.
There is always room for you on the Sanctuary Arts & Decorating Committee. These folks are responsible for the beautiful and striking decorations in our sanctuary. If you would like to add your talents to this group, please contact Jacci See at seej@firstweber.com.

Happy Anniversary!

Mary Dennis-Classen & Irvin Dennis
Andrew & Carol Phelps
Scott & Darcy Sage
Michele & Kevin Statz
Mark & Karil Walther
John Zumbrunnen & Amy Gangl

Did we miss yours? Contact the church office and let us know.

Correction: The Dec. anniversary list should have listed
David & Mary Ann Drapcho

Coffee & Conversation to Start
Brené Brown Book January 17

Coffee and Conversation will begin reading and discussing Braving the Wilderness: The quest for true belonging and the courage to stand alone.

“True belonging doesn’t require us to change who we are. It requires us to be who we are.” Social scientist Brené Brown, PhD, LMSW, has sparked a global conversation about the experiences that bring meaning to our lives—experiences of courage, vulnerability, love, belonging, shame, and empathy. In Braving the Wilderness, Brown redefines what it means to truly belong in an age of increased polarization. With her trademark mix of research, storytelling, and honesty, Brown will again change the cultural conversation while mapping a clear path to true belonging.

I hope you will join us on January 17th as we begin to discuss this book. Books are available for purchase in the fellowship hall for $9 and you may send a check or pay in cash at the church office. C & C meets the first and third Wednesdays of each month at 8 a.m. at TnT coffee shop, located in the mall at the intersection of North High Point Rd. and Old Sauk Road. Call or email Jim Neu- man with questions at jdneu- man@tds.net or 829-0698.

MCC Knitting Group

Do you knit or crochet? Whether you are a beginner or an expert, you are invited to join us for fellowship while working on your latest project. We will be meeting Monday evening, January 29, from 6:30-8:00, at MCC.

If you are interested or have any questions, please contact Beth Michaels at 843-9649 or bethmichaels57@gmail.com.

Confirmation

Confirmation class will resume on Sunday, January 7, with reports of the meetings with their mentors and a look ahead to Martin Luther King Day. Later in the month, they will be discussing radical hospitality and intention faith formation.

Be sure to keep our confirmands and the Confirmation program in your prayers: Jasper Metzloff, Nick Paulsen, Kevin Walther and Tyler Wilson.

Confirmation is a two-year program that honors the individual faith journeys of our teens and prepares them to continue that journey into adulthood.

Questions about Confirmation? Please contact Randall Crow at crows@chorus.net, or 608-616-2324.
Very COOL Sunday School

Very Cool Sunday School resumes on January 14th. We will be learning about the Fruits of the Spirit and what real Love is...

Very Cool Sunday School is a VERY cool faith formation program for children.

Each week the kids will start the morning by gathering in a large group for fellowship and fun, then they will have a VERY COOL Bible lesson that can include crafts, games and scavenger hunts! The children will also deepen their understanding of God, themselves and others through music during music time. There will be songs, instruments, puppets, games and many more ways to pray and praise God through music.

Our schedule for VCSS this year will start at 9:45 — after the Time for Children during worship — and end at 10:45. Visitors are welcome to participate!

Please join us for another fun and spirit-filled year! Register your children at the Christian Education table.

You can be a part of this wonderful ministry by signing up to help as a Teacher Assistant. And by donating snacks for Sunday School. Please find the sign up forms on the Christian Education table in the fellowship hall.

Please contact Patrick Tenny at mccfaithformation.org if you can help.

Sunday School Teacher and Shepherd Meeting

SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, January 6, from 12:00-2:00

Join us on January 6th from 12:00-2:00. Lunch will be provided. After lunch, we will talk about the curriculum for the remainder of the year.

You will have the chance to give feedback on last semester’s Sunday School and schedule dates for teaching and shepherding in the new year.

Your presence is important to me, so that we can make our Sunday School program more enjoyable for you, the teachers, and the students.

Thank so much for the time and talent you have given to the Sunday School program. You have been a blessing to the church and an example of service to others!

We have a lot to accomplish and discuss so come hungry and ready to have fun!

Just Bakery

Just Bakery will return to MCC on Jan 14 with a selection of baked goods to sample and purchase. MCC invites this wonderful ministry to provide baked goods during Coffee Hour nine times a year.

To learn more about Just Bakery, pick up a brochure from the Mission & Stewardship table in Fellowship Hall or visit www.emum.org/justbakery.html.

Middleton Outreach Ministry’s Food Pantry Top 10 List

- Low Sugar Cereal
- Fresh, Dried, and Canned Fruit
- Soup
- 100% Juice; Herbal Tea Bags
- Holiday Baking Supplies, (other than flour)
- Sugar & Honey
- Prepared Boxed/Canned Meals
- Shelf Stable Meat, Canned or Pouches
- Laundry Detergent
- Toothbrush, Toothpaste, & Floss

Coffee & Cookies Hosts!

Volunteer for this 9:30am fellowship ministry! Check the sign-up sheet on the coffee hour table for available dates.
Happy Birthday!

Carla Babiarz
Chelsea Bergman
Mindy Bergman
Nick Breitbach
Barbara Brown
Lynn Burke
Randall Crow
Geri Cupery
Jerry Edgar
Maxwell Elmer
Dorsey Falk
Mike Falk
Morgan Falk
Kristin Friel
Sherrill Giessler
Haywood Gilliam
Lawrence Landgraf
Fred Lauper
Brent Lockwood
Chris Long
Craig Lorfeld
June Meier
Jamie Menz
Marianne Nover
Beckett Paulsen
Benjamin Percy
John Rahman
Judy Rahman
Daniel Roach
Anji Robertson
Floyd Robertson
Grace Romine
Dan Uminski
Jorji Wakeland
Gillian Wiens
John Zumbrunnen

Did we miss yours?
Contact the church office and let us know.

Surprising Gifts

We are delighted to announce the five recipients of a “Surprising Gift” of $200 from our church in 2017!

1. Friends of the State Street Family, which ministers to Madison’s homeless, by providing meals, sleeping bags and blankets, warm clothes, etc. They also help people with housing, sobriety support, and medical and mental health care.

2. End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, which supports victims of domestic abuse and their children, and works to end abuse with laws, legal services, advocacy, and safety education.

3. Equal Justice Initiative, which challenges racial injustice in the legal system, and works on issues such as mass incarceration and harsh sentencing of children.

4. Mobility Worldwide, which builds simple wooden three-wheeled “mobility scooters” (usually operated by a hand-crank), so people who can’t walk can get around in impoverished parts of the world.

5. Remembering Jesse Parker Inc. Jesse was a Wisconsin high school senior who tragically died in a car accident. His dream was to go to Africa to drill wells for people who don’t have clean water, so his family formed this charity to support local causes and carry out their son’s dream.

Thanks to everyone for all your wonderful suggestions of worthwhile charities! It was hard to select just a few. The charities which weren’t picked this year will be considered again later this year.

Board of Mission and Stewardship

Sunday Faith Formation

Join us following worship on Sunday, January 21, after worship for a video and discussion on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose birthday is February 4. Bonhoeffer was a German pastor and theologian who resisted the Nazi government in Germany, with its atheism, aggression, and cruelty.

Following the seven-minute video, there will be a discussion of some of the points the video raised:

- How is our religious faith connected to our secular world?
- As persons of faith, how are we called to be active and engaged in the issues of our time?
- What would we be willing to sacrifice for the sake of what is right?

If you would like to watch it ahead of time, you can find the video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WrNTVrtXPAY

There will be handouts on the adult faith formation table (closest to the piano in Fellowship Hall) with Bonhoeffer quotes and additional resources.

Hope to see you there!
Saturday Fellowship Meets January 13

Saturday Fellowship, a monthly gathering of MCC members and friends, will be meeting on Saturday, January 13, beginning at 8 am.

Over the years, SF has addressed a variety of topics, from politics to the environment to what your favorite movie says about you.

Beginning in January, the group will have a “current events” focus. What are the issues or events that concern or interest you? Does our Christian faith offer a different perspective into those events?

Each person attending is asked to bring some item in the news that interests or concerns them for discussion and reflection from a Christian perspective.

Saturday Fellowship meets at 8 am. Light refreshments are served. All are welcome. See you then!

The Road Home - Big Changes in 2018
Jan. 7-14 Host Week

The Road Home is changing, and our role in supporting homeless families will be changing, too!

The Road Home Board of Directors recently voted unanimously to end its shelter program hosted by the congregations. The shelter program will end on or before March 31, 2018. Our MCC Road Home Team is saddened by the end of the IHN shelter ministry because it has been such a rewarding experience for us and for our volunteers. But the reasons for ending the program are good news; and we as a congregation and as individuals will have new opportunities to serve families through The Road Home. For more information please see a larger article in the December newsletter, our e-newsletter, and on our web site.

Our final Road Home host week at Middleton Community Church begins January 7, 2018. Our sign-up board is in Fellowship Hall. Please consider volunteering to serve homeless families with children in . Please contact Ross Michaels, rbm@chorus.net or June Meier, jmeier2525@gmail.com with questions.

Blessings and thank you.
The MCC Road Home Team: June Meier, Ross Michaels, Marci Paulsen, and June Glasel

Centering Prayer Meditation Classes

Be still and know that I am God. - Psalm 46:10

Centering Prayer meditation is a method of receptive, silent prayer that prepares us to open to the gift of contemplative prayer...a movement beyond conversation with Christ to communion with Christ. Learn more about this form of Christian meditation with a series of six Thursday evening classes, beginning January 18, here at Middleton Community Church. [Taught by Benedictine Oblate Beth O’Brien.] For more information on this class, other contemplative events, and Wisdom School retreats, visit Beth’s website: www.ContemplativePresence.org

Faith in Action

Injustices anywhere—in our city, state, country, and world—call us to take faithful action. Our Faith in Action Team seeks to answer that call, following Jesus’ teachings of **love, justice, and compassion**, and is directed toward **nonpartisan action in support of our shared biblical values**.

If you would like to have your name added to this group’s mailing list, or if you want to get involved, check the “Faith in Action” box on the Pink Sheet.

Sunday Morning Greeters

Can you come to church at 9:00 am, say “Good Morning,” and welcome our members and guests? Then join our Greeters Team! Individuals, couples, and families are welcome. Check the box on the Pink Sheet in the Sunday bulletin to sign up. Contact Joan Richner (831-6710 or bjrichner@gmail.com) with questions.
“Journey to Generosity” Stewardship Campaign

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21)

The theme of our stewardship campaign is “The Way of Jesus: Journey to Generosity.” In the above verse, Jesus reminds us that our hearts follow our treasure. As followers of Jesus who value the church and its work of sharing the love of God with the world, we are called to support that work with our time, our talent, and our treasure.

Again this year, we are asking you to make two separate pledges—one for our operating budget and another toward “Through by ’22,” our campaign to pay off our church mortgage. In both cases, you will be making a one-year commitment.

Since we mailed out the materials in October, pledges have been coming in at a good rate. In fact, we have very nearly reached our goal! But we’re not there yet! We need everyone’s response to help us “cross the finish line.” Pledge packets are available on the Mission and Stewardship table in Fellowship Hall. We can mail one to you if you wish. Just contact the church office (831-4694 or mccucc@middletonucc.org) and we’ll send one out.

Please be generous in your support for the ministry and mission of Middleton Community UCC!

Winter Retreats at Camp Balsams

Camp Balsams near Eagle River is a great base camp for your trip to the north woods this winter. Cross country skiing, snowshoeing and ice fishing are available nearby, and Charlie’s Cabin is open year-round and is a warm and inviting place for relaxing, reading and sharing good fellowship. On the two levels, there are five bedrooms, three bathrooms.

Church members may enjoy a personal retreat at Charlie’s Cabin for $100 a night. Check with the church office for available dates.

Land Sale Update

On October 22, the congregation voted to approve the execution of a purchase agreement to sell a portion of the church land consistent with terms outlined at the meeting. We are happy to report that the purchase agreement has been approved by the Council and signed by both parties. The buyer also has deposited earnest money in accordance with the agreement. The buyer is now working with the City of Madison and Town of Middleton to get the necessary approvals for the development.

A closing date has not yet been set.
I could name others, but you get the idea. While these changes may create excitement or anxiety in you, they more importantly provide an opportunity to reflect upon our ministry and mission and to “see visions and dream dreams” of a new future.

During worship in January and February, and in other settings of the church, we will spend time thinking about our ministry and imagining a new future. What might worship look like in the present day? What about Christian education (and not just for children)? What sorts of ministries and missions are needed to address the needs and challenges of the present day? How can we strengthen our ministry of hospitality in order to welcome all people into our community of faith?

The theologian Phyllis Tickle says that the global church has had a big garage sale every 500 years. Today, roughly 2,000 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, are at just such a moment. “We must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of Truth.”

I hope you will join with me and other members to reimagine MCC’s future and “write the vision; make it plain.”

See you in church!

Thanks to everyone who gave me gifts, sent me cards, and offered thanks and good wishes during the Advent and Christmas seasons. I am privileged to serve as your pastor and am humbled by your gratitude and support. God bless you all!

2019 General Synod in Milwaukee

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Wisconsin Conference,

Grace and Peace to you. The 32nd General Synod of the United Church of Christ will be hosted by our Conference in Milwaukee June 21-25, 2019! This is the first time the General Synod will be held in our Conference.

We are honored to serve as the Coordinators of the Local Arrangements Committee. It is our task to provide local assistance to the National organizing team in their planning. We spent time at the General Synod in Baltimore shadowing their Local Arrangements Committee, asking questions and taking copious notes. We are still in the process of discovering and defining our responsibilities.

In the months and year ahead we will be keeping you posted. It is too early for us to do much specific planning and requesting of volunteers. We will invite your participation as we move closer to the time of the General Synod. We want volunteers from all around the Conference, representing our urban and rural faith communities.

We look forward to serving the Conference and the national church for the 2019 General Synod!

Your 2019 Local Arrangements Committee Coordinators: Revs. Deborah and Tom Payden; Bonnie Andrews, Rev. Tim Perkins.
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