

December 2018



Dear Conference Partners,

Advent Greetings! It's time once again for the UCC to begin preparing the *Yearbook & Directory* for the coming year. There are a number of important items to consider for this coming season. Please note that this letter is a little bit longer than in previous years, with general highlights found in the first section and specific Conference reporting highlights in the following section.

General highlights regarding the Yearbook process:

This year we are bringing back supplemental research questions. Many of you will remember that prior to 2011 we used printed forms for data collection and asked different research questions each year at the end of the form. When we launched the Data Hub in 2011 we lost the ability to gather this information. These questions have been a valuable research tool in the past, so we have decided to begin working to bring this back! This year we have created a brief supplemental survey for churches to complete. Churches will need to leave the Data Hub site to complete the survey. We will be working in future years to make this a more seamless process.

For the past several years we have offered incentives to conferences in an effort to increase our reporting rate and to show our appreciation to you for all the hard work you do to ensure your churches report. This year, we have decided to make some significant changes to our incentive structure. We will continue to offer incentives to conferences; however, these incentives will have a service orientation. In addition, we will use our financial resources to offer several incentives for churches as well! Churches that complete their annual report and answer the supplemental research questions will be entered in a drawing for one of several gifts (currently we have 32 prizes to offer).

Last year we made a substantive change in reporting OCWM giving. Due to the passing of the General Synod 31 Resolution on Proposing a New Framework for Covenantal Giving and Implementing Fundraising Best Practices, the OCWM category that we've known as Special Support—which sought to capture all UCC-related giving that was not Basic Support—was replaced with **a new category called Other UCC Giving**. *Other UCC Giving is defined as giving to any UCC-related entity that is not Basic Support or the four Special Mission Offerings*. This category will be *self-reported by churches*, not reported by Conferences (as Special Support was previously reported).

Conferences will continue to forward an Excel spreadsheet of their OCWM data to our office for upload. *Please remember, however, that we will only be asking you to report OCWM Basic Support (however that is defined for your Conference) and the four Special Offerings. OCWM Special Support is not to be reported*. Taylor Russell, CARD's Research Specialist, collects, reviews, and edits each Conference's spreadsheet as it comes in and requests changes as necessary. Expect to receive communications from Taylor in early February.

Now that the Manual on Ministry has been finalized, look for changes to be coming to the Data Hub next year to reflect all the updates. This update will not be rolled out until after the Yearbook is completed.

Now, here are the more specific highlights regarding your Conference's organization of the Yearbook data collection and reporting process:

Reporting should continue to be much easier for minister records since many of you have been making updates throughout the year. However, if you have not been doing this and would like to get a head start on updating minister records, the UCC Data Hub can be accessed at any time. As always, the **Data Hub resources webpage** offers training materials and tutorials to guide Conference and Association users through making changes in the system: www.ucc.org/research_data-hub. We expect new video tutorials to be posted by early January.

All instructional materials for local churches—including video tutorials and information sheets—will be available in January 2019 at the following link on the Yearbook and Directory webpage: www.ucc.org/research_yearbook. On this page, congregations can also find a Definitions Tip Sheet for reporting categories and a printable Data Hub Reporting Guide for churches. For the reporting category of Other UCC Giving, an additional information sheet will be provided to guide churches in their reporting for this field. *Please share these resources with your congregations!*

As in previous years, your Conference does not need to change the annual data collection process for Yearbook reporting if you don't want to do so. We know that each Conference has its own unique process for how information is collected from local churches and ministers for annual Yearbook reporting. We know that some churches may not have regular internet access, and others may not be comfortable inputting data electronically. For this reason, we have posted minister and church Yearbook forms on our secure website to be accessed at any time for your distribution and use: www.ucc.org/research_secure_forms. Please do not share this link with your churches. You may download the forms and share as you need. Per usual, however, these forms are meant to be a resource for your Conference and should not be sent to CARD directly.

Please be as diligent as possible in adding and updating information in people's records. As you update minister records, also remember that **Specialized Ministry and Member in Discernment tabs** should be updated. As an additional reminder, ministers have the option not to publish address, phone number, or email address in the *Yearbook & Directory* or Access UCC. To emphasize this, there is a special page on our website that lets ministers know that they can contact their Conference at any time to opt out. Please feel free to direct your ministers to this page as well when sending out information update requests—**Authorized Minister Opt Out** at http://www.ucc.org/opt_out.

Over the past several months the Ministerial Excellence, Support, and Authorization Ministry team has been working with you to provide updates on your ministers with Dual Standing or Privilege of Call to ensure their denomination of origin is accurate. These files are now being turned over to CARD. We will be updating these minister's records in the coming weeks to reflect the information you returned to MESA. We expect this to be completed in February 2019.

In the past couple years, we asked you to **update the Conference (and Association) records in the Data Hub** since data is now pulled directly from that tab into the *Yearbook & Directory*. We will continue to be following this process more stringently than in previous years, so please be sure to update all Conference and Association information, including staff changes that may have occurred in the past year. *As we did last year, we will not be sending this information back to Conferences for review prior to publication!*

Finally, thank you to all of the Conferences that reported financial and general statistical information in the Data Hub these last two years! This process has been very successful and has provided much helpful information to Conferences, and we ask that you (or the Conference financial staff person) work to complete this information once again this spring. Resources to assist with **completing the Conference Finances tab in the Conferences section of the Data Hub** can be found on the Yearbook and Directory webpage as well.

As always, any member of the CARD staff team is ready and willing to answer questions and assist you in the Yearbook reporting process. We are looking forward to another great reporting cycle—thank you for your continued partnership in this vital work on behalf of the United Church of Christ.

Sincerely,

Erica Dollhopf, Ph.D.
Director

Destiny Hisey
Associate Director and Yearbook Managing Editor

P.S. The Conference incentives awards continue to be a fun way to celebrate success! For 2019, CARD will once again be offering **incentives to Conferences that are able to reach an 80% Yearbook reporting rates for local churches and Conferences that have the largest increases in reporting rates for local churches.** Here are the incentives for this reporting cycle:

1. Conferences that have an 80% congregational reporting rate:
 - *Mini Statistical Profile customized to the conference*
2. The three conferences with the highest increases in their reporting rate:
 - *Mini Statistical Profile customized to the conference*

Conferences that have an 80% overall congregational reporting and the three conferences with the highest increased reporting rate will be entered in a drawing for the following prizes:

- *Design of a survey to be administered in 2019 and basic analysis of results.*
- *Webinar on a topic of the winner's choice presented by CARD staff.*
- *In-person training on topic of the winner's choice facilitated by CARD staff.*

This is CARD's small way of honoring all of the work that you—our Conference and Association partners—undertake with this annual process and throughout the entire year. I hope they assist in increasing local church reporting or prompt your Conference to send a few extra announcements to encourage data submission. So feel free to spread the word about these incentives! If you have other ideas for future incentives, please let us know.