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United Church of Christ to address climate change, immigrant protection, poverty at General Synod

Author and speaker Matthew Desmond, preachers Traci Blackmon, Kaji Douša on schedule

MILWAUKEE (June 19, 2019) – Addressing eviction and poverty, protecting immigrant children and the environment, denouncing acts of hatred and violence in the name of white supremacy, and advocating for a just world for all people will be on the agenda of nearly 4,000 progressive Christians gathering in Milwaukee in this summer. The United Church of Christ, a mainline Protestant denomination of nearly 900,000 members, will hold its biennial governance meeting, General Synod 2019, June 21-25 at the Wisconsin Center.

Among the highlights of General Synod 2019:

Matthew Desmond is a New York Times bestselling author and Pulitzer Prize winner for his book, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*, which chronicles the lives of families in the poorest neighborhoods of Milwaukee. The book, based on years of embedded fieldwork and data, points to eviction as the root cause of poverty.

Desmond, a professor of sociology at Princeton University, received a 2018 Stowe Prize for Writing to Advance Social Justice, awarded by the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center to authors whose work shines a light on critical social justice issues.

Desmond will offer the keynote address to the General Synod on Saturday morning, June 22.

Evicted is also the subject of the UCC 2019 All Church Read.

Women, for the first time in UCC history, will fill all the roles of preachers, liturgists and worship writers at General Synod. Four dynamic ministers will speak, informed in part by the theme, “Shine,” based on Matthew 5:16. They are [the Rev. Kaji Spellman Douša](#), senior minister of the [Park Avenue Christian Church](#) in New York City; [the Rev. Traci Blackmon](#), UCC associate general minister of [Justice and Local Church Ministries](#); [the Rev. Sharon Lee MacArthur](#), acting pastor of the [Berkley \(Calif.\) Chinese Community UCC](#); and [the Rev. Amy Butler](#), senior pastor of [The Riverside Church in New York City](#). The worship schedule can be found on the [UCC General Synod website](#).

The acclaimed [Sanctuary Choir of Chicago’s Trinity United Church of Christ](#) will be featured at a [fundraising dinner and concert](#) Saturday evening, June 22. Through multiple exuberant musical

styles, its 45-member touring choir gives voice to the motto the congregation has lived out for nearly 50 years under its current pastor, the Rev. Otis Moss III, and his predecessors, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright Jr. and the Rev. Reuben Sheares II: “Unashamedly Black and Unapologetically Christian.”

During **Community Service Projects** guided by the UCC 3 Great Loves Initiative, <http://www.ucc.org/3greatloves> General Synod attendees will participate in activities that embody Love of Children, Love of Neighbor and Love of God’s Creation in several locations around downtown Milwaukee. The projects start at 2 p.m. Saturday, June 22:

- Love of Neighbor: A 3.5-mile Justice Walk around Milwaukee includes stops at several organizations that help men, women and families in crisis. From the Wisconsin Center to the County Courthouse and the County Jail; to St. Benedict de Moor, the site of the city’s largest community meal program; to the Guest House Shelter of Milwaukee, an innovative assistance organization for homeless men; to the Coggs building where the UCC-founded Friedens Community Ministries is housed.
- Love of Children: Pathfinders works to assist youth in crisis. Participants will serve this transformational organization that brings healing, hope and safety to young people 11-25 who have experienced homelessness, sexual abuse or other trauma by creating hygiene sacks for their street ministry.
- Love of Creation: Volunteers will visit the Urban Ecology Center, a creative organization committed to connecting people with nature and each other and participate in a clean-up project by Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful.

A Sunday **“Shine! Festival”** in Zeidler Union Square, organized by two local UCC pastors, will showcase Milwaukee’s street-fest culture. From 4:30 to 8:30 p.m., Synod delegates and visitors from around the world will enjoy food trucks, beverages, live music, a family game area and more.

General Synod resolutions to be considered:

- Two proposed resolutions, if passed, would address climate care by endorsing bills before Congress: the Green New Deal (H.R. 109 and S.R. 59) and the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act of 2019 (H.R. 763).
- Another calls for pharmaceutical companies to change their practices in light of the U.S. opioid addiction crisis.
- Topics of 20 other proposed resolutions range from the treatment of immigrant children and families, to problems with private prisons, to support for survivors of rape and sexual violence.

Media availability: News conferences, as warranted, will be held on Monday and Tuesday after business sessions. UCC executives and clergy will be available to speak to the media at that time. Press advisories will be issued.

To arrange an interview or media opportunity, contact Connie Larkman, larkmanc@ucc.org or 216-496-5540.

All press must preregister for General Synod access.

Visit https://www.ucc.org/synod_press_registration. Media members should please have press credentials with them at all times. There will be a designated access area in the Plenary Hall, and reporters are requested to attend news briefings for information/questions on high-profile issues.

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About the United Church of Christ The United Church of Christ is a mainline Protestant denomination comprised of nearly 900,000 members and 5,000 congregations nationwide. Headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio, the UCC is a church of many firsts, including the first mainline denomination to ordain a woman, the first to ordain an openly-gay man and the first predominantly white denomination to ordain an African American. The UCC and its members are tireless advocates for social issues such as immigration reform, racial equality, LGBT rights, marriage equality, environmental protection and economic justice.