

December 2016



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.

We are entering our third year of online-only reporting of congregational and minister information, and reporting percentages have remained steady as a result. Hooray! Thank you for the work that you continue to do in your respective judicatories to maintain high percentages of church participation.

For this 2017 cycle, 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.

For local churches that will be accessing the Data Hub for reporting 2016 information, CARD has created several helpful **video tutorials and information sheets to guide churches** through the process. Some of these videos have been/will be updated from last year due to some minor upgrades and additions we've made to the reporting process this year. All training materials are available at the following link on the Yearbook and Directory webpage: www.ucc.org/research_yearbook. On this page, congregations can also find an updated Definitions Tip Sheet for reporting categories and a printable Data Hub Reporting Guide for churches. *Please share these resources with your congregations!*

On the topic of church reporting, **last year CARD piloted a new category called "Total Church Participants," coupled with a revamped "Community Engagement" category.** Most of the feedback we received on these new categories was positive, and many were grateful to think in new ways about congregational vitality and impact. While these categories continue to remain "fuzzy"—that is, not as exact as church membership or financial figures—we ask that you continue to encourage congregations to track and record these statistics with as much vigor as they record more traditional categories. What we measure matters! Please also continue to encourage their use of the "Guide to Yearbook Community Engagement and Total Church Participants Categories" found on the Yearbook and Directory webpage.

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 all 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. Per usual, however, these forms are meant to be a resource for your Conference and should not be sent to CARD directly.

Last year was the second year that we experimented with an **electronic process for Conferences to upload Basic Support and Special Support (including Special Offerings) totals for local churches.** *Because of the challenges we faced over these last two years in this process, we have decided to go back to having each Conference simply send us their Excel spreadsheets.* There continues to be much confusion regarding what is to be included and not included in these categories, particularly when it comes to Special Support; so it is best for Taylor Billings, CARD's Research Specialist, to manually review and edit each spreadsheet as it comes in and then request edits as necessary. Thanks so much for your patience as we collectively experimented with this process—for some, it worked well; for others, it didn't. Either way, we learned a lot! Expect to receive communications from Taylor in the coming weeks around these pieces.

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, we have created 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.

The Data Hub's **Necrology tab for deceased ministers** contains some improved changes for clearer communication and ease of completion. Please remember to fill out the deceased minister's record as completely and accurately as possible—it helps us so much! An updated Necrology Guide with proper abbreviations can be found on the Data Hub webpage: http://www.ucc.org/research_data-hub.

Last year, we also asked you to **update the Conference Information section of the Data Hub** since data is now pulled directly from that tab into the *Yearbook & Directory*. We will be following this process again, so please be sure to update all Conference and Association information, including staff changes that may have occurred in the past year.

Finally, thank you to all of the Conferences that reported financial and general statistical information for the first time last year! This initial reporting year was very successful, 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. A report with baseline statistics will be released soon, so keep an eye out for this!

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,

Rev. Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi
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 2017, CARD will once again be offering **incentives to Conferences that are able to increase their Yearbook reporting rates for local churches**. Here are the incentives for this reporting cycle:

1. Conferences that have a 10-14% increase in congregational reporting from the previous year:
 - \$300 UCC Resources Gift Certificate
2. Conferences that have a 15-19% increase in congregational reporting from the previous year:
 - \$400 UCC Resources Gift Certificate
3. Conferences that have a 20% or greater increase in congregational reporting from the previous year:
 - \$500 UCC Resources Gift Certificate
 - A personalized Conference Statistical Mini-Profile
4. **NEW!** Most Improved Award—for the Conference that demonstrates the greatest increase in reporting percentage from their previous three-year reporting average:
 - Pizza party at Conference Annual Meeting

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.