

**First Report of the General Synod Nominating Committee  
Class of 2034 At Large Nominees to the United Church of Christ Board  
Thirty-Fifth General Synod**

The General Synod Nominating Committee is pleased to present the First Report of the Nominating Committee, the slate of nominees for election to the United Church of Christ Board, Class of 2034. You will also find the Second Report of the Nominating Committee presenting the nominees for Moderator and Assistant Moderator for the 36<sup>th</sup> General Synod.

The General Synod Nominating Committee presents this slate of nominees for the delegates' consideration. This is a non-compliant slate as we did not meet the criteria of 20% of members under the age of 30. We are at 8%. We did have more applications in this age demographic this cycle due in part to connecting with the regional youth events and with COREM constituency gatherings.

Another area of non-compliance is that we also exceeded the maximum number of three persons from any single conference in two instances. We also note that with the consolidation of conferences, this is a by-law requirement that needs to be reviewed. The Nominating Committee notes that if the resolution regarding the Keystone Conference is approved by the delegates, it will result in that new conference having 5 persons serving on the United Church of Christ Board. The slate meets the requirement for all other bylaw criteria related to the composition of the board. The Nominating Committee is pleased to endorse this slate of nominees, and we are proud of the process by which it was produced.

The General Synod Nominating Committee always works diligently to meet the criteria set forth in the UCC Bylaws. The pool of candidates applying for elected positions continues to decline with each biennium. The number of lay candidates continues to decline even as clergy candidates increase. And you will note the low numbers of persons from our Native American, Pacific Islander, Asian, and Latiné communities as we struggle to solicit applications from those constituencies.

The process regarding the selection for Moderator and Assistant Moderator of the Thirty-Sixth General Synod was a little more difficult as the bylaws require that one of these positions is held by an ordained clergy person and the other by a lay person. We have consistently noticed over the last several Synods only one or two persons applying for these positions which makes the authorized/lay condition often very difficult to meet with genuinely qualified candidates.

One other representational consideration is geographic diversity. Our six regions in the United Church of Christ need to be represented in these At-Large positions. Those numbers by region for the current board and current nominees are as follows:

Great Lakes 7, Mid Atlantic 11, New England 2, Southern 5, West Central 3, Western 8

As chair of the General Synod Nominating Committee, I would be happy to speak with anyone with questions, shared experience, or ideas about the nomination process.

Respectfully submitted,



June Boutwell, Chair  
General Synod Nominating Committee  
[revjuneb@gmail.com](mailto:revjuneb@gmail.com)

## Biographic Statistics

### United Church of Christ Board

	Count	Percentages
Gender non-conforming	2	5.6%
Woman, both transgender and cigendar	20	55.6%
Man, both transgender and cisgender	13	36.1%
Non-binary	1	2.8%
 <b>Authorized Minister or Ordained Ministerial Partner</b>		
Holds Ministerial Standing	12	33.3%
Lay Man, both transgender and cigendar	8	22.2%
Lay Woman, both transgender and cigendar	15	41.7%
Lay Non-binary	1	2.8%
African American	17	47.2%
Asian American	2	5.6%
Hispanic	3	8.3%
Native American	0	0.0%
Pacific Islander	2	5.6%
<b>Total People of Color</b>	24	66.7%
European American	12	33.3%
60+	16	44.4%
50-59	5	13.9%
40-49	10	27.8%
30-39	2	5.6%
19-29	3	8.3%
Youth	0	0.0%
Disablity	6	16.7%
LGBTQA+Community	15	41.7%

## **First Report of the General Synod Nominating Committee Class of 2034 At Large Nominees to the United Church of Christ Board**

**Bret Bicoy** is a member of Hope Church in Door County, Wisconsin. He was born in 'Aiea, Hawai'i and graduated from 'Iolani School, but yearned to see more of America. So, Bret set off on an adventure which began at Tufts University in New England and eventually took him to all 50 states in the union. Along the way he was blessed to meet his bright, lovely, and charming wife Cari who is a third-grade teacher at a Title I school in Green Bay. Professionally, Bret has served for two decades as President & CEO of the Door County Community Foundation and writes a regular column on community and philanthropy in the Peninsula Pulse newspaper. As a volunteer, he served three terms as Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ, is one of the founders of the United Church of Christ Foundation of Wisconsin and is a long-time Rotarian. Bret was also twice elected to the Green Bay City Council, the first person of color to ever sit on the Council and was named a Fellow of the Council on Foundations in Washington, D.C. for his work promoting philanthropy in diverse communities. He and his wife have six adult children, four of whom are (or soon will be) married, but none of whom have yet seen the wisdom of providing grandchildren for Bret and Cari to enjoy.

**Man, both Transgender and Cisgender, 50-59, Layperson (Not Ordained), Pacific Islander, Wisconsin Conference**

**Indigo Brown** is a dedicated member of Plymouth United Church of Christ in Seattle, Washington, where she actively contributes to the church's mission and community. She currently serves as the Moderator of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ, demonstrating her strong leadership and commitment to fostering collaboration and growth within the denomination. Additionally, Indigo is a board member of Plymouth Healing Communities, an organization that provides companionship, housing, and supportive circles for individuals living with mental illness and housing instability.

Professionally, Indigo works for Aging and Disability Services for the City of Seattle, where she advocates for equitable access to resources for vulnerable populations. Her career reflects her deep passion for serving underserved communities, a commitment that is also evident in her work as a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) facilitator. Through this role, she has empowered individuals and organizations to embrace inclusivity and justice.

Indigo holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Washington. Over the years, she has contributed to various ministries as a worship leader and technology coordinator, blending her technical expertise with her spiritual leadership to enhance worship experiences.

Outside of her professional and church commitments, Indigo enjoys expressing creativity through crocheting, cooking, and baking. Her lifelong dedication to the church and her community stems from her belief in creating inclusive spaces where all individuals feel valued and supported. Indigo's work exemplifies her passion for building stronger communities through faith, service, and advocacy.

**Women, both Transgender and Cisgender, 19-29, Layperson (Not Ordained), Black/African American, Pacific Northwest Conference**

**Cynthia Butts** brings experience as a music and church leader, and equity educator to her work with the United Church of Christ. Her education includes a degree in music and training in Taking Action for Racial Equity and Working Effectively Across Differences, a program with Capacity Building and Partnerships. Cynthia serves as Minister of Music at Ainsworth United Church of Christ for the last 12 years. She participates in the Reckoning with Racism cohort with The Common Table and is a member of the United Church of Christ Central Pacific Conference Board. In her personal life she loves singing, storytelling and meeting people from all walks of life. She shares her life in Portland, Oregon with her wife Ellen and their two cats, Sweetpea and Buster.

**Woman, both Transgender and Cisgender, 60+, Layperson (Not Ordained), Black/African American, Central Pacific Conference**

**Elizabeth Brunson** currently works as an Institutional Review Specialist with the US Department of Education. She has been a lifelong member of the United Church of Christ. She is the Co-Chair of the Zachariah Walker Racial Justice Initiative and the Consistory President of Reformed Church of the Ascension UCC. She attended United Lutheran Seminary from 2001-2006, earning a MDiv. Since that time, she served as worship leader supply for several colleagues, served as Director of Financial Aid at the Seminary from 2010-2015, and served on the Middle States Evaluation team. As part of POWER Interfaith, she worked with Jewish, Muslim, Ethical Humanist, and ecumenical Christian colleagues to build power together, to work towards economic, racial, and climate justice in the greater Philadelphia area and surrounding county communities. She was a founding Board member of Make Music Norristown. She loves singing, creating experiences for friends and families through trips and events, physical fitness, and raising her rescue dog Phoebe. Her adult son living with autism keeps her connected to the special needs community and he continues to be her joy and driving force.

**Woman, both Transgender and Cisgender, 60+, Layperson (Not Ordained), White/European American, Pennsylvania Southeast Conference**

**Equilla L. Curry** is a visionary minister and advocate for justice, inclusivity, and spiritual formation within the United Church of Christ.

A member of Faith UCC in York, PA, Equilla has served in various ministry and leadership capacities, bringing expertise in management, finance, policy writing, and church governance.

Equilla holds a Master of Divinity from Lancaster Theological Seminary and a bachelor's in business administration with a CPA track from Bucknell University. She is Design Thinking certified and holds a certification in Spiritual Direction, equipping her with innovative problem-solving skills and the ability to walk alongside others in their spiritual journeys.

With extensive experience in chaplaincy and spiritual direction, Equilla has provided pastoral care in hospital settings, non-profit organizations, corporate spaces, and congregational life. She has hosted a corporate prayer line for over seven years, fostering connections between individuals in the U.S. and Africa. Additionally, she has worked closely with clergy, seminarians, and church leaders to provide mentorship and support, ensuring their spiritual and professional development.

Equilla currently serves as Secretary for the York Association of the Penn Central Conference and is actively engaged in the UCC's search and call process. She has also served on committees navigating pastoral transitions and broader church leadership changes. Her passion for empowering church leaders extends to creating spaces for LGBTQ+ clergy, people of color, and members in discernment to receive spiritual guidance, liturgical support, and professional mentorship.

**Women, both Transgender and Cisgender, 40-49, Layperson (Not Ordained) Black/African American, Penn Central Conference**

**Josann Jenks** is a dedicated educator, cultural advocate, and nonprofit leader from Honolulu, Hawai'i. As a Special Education teacher with the Hawai'i Department of Education, she fosters inclusive, student-centered learning that integrates Hawaiian and Pacific Islander history, language, and culture. She holds a bachelor's degree in History and Ethnic Studies, with a minor in American Studies, from the University of Hawaii at Manoa

Josann is a baptized member of Kawaiaha'o Church, UCC, where she previously served as Council Secretary. She is a Youth Delegate of the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches (AHEC) and actively serves in Pacific Islander & Asian American Ministries (PAAM). Currently, she is a student in the Makuakāne Institute, preparing to become a Kahu Pono (Licensed Minister) in the Hawaii Conference of the UCC.

She has extensive experience in historic preservation, archives, heritage societies, and historic house museums. She has also worked in social services, specializing in domestic violence advocacy and combating child exploitation (CSEC) with a focus on trauma-informed and Culturally responsive care.

As an Indigenous Kanaka Maoli and Ma'ohi with ancestral ties to the sugar plantations in Hawai'i, she carries a diasporic identity of Puerto Rican, Filipino, Chinese, English, and German heritage. Passionate about justice-driven theological education, she advocates for culturally contextual worship that celebrates Indigenous peoples and honors their spiritual traditions within the Christian faith. Josann's work aligns with the UCC's mission of justice, inclusion, and service, ensuring that faith communities uplift and empower all people through worship, education, and advocacy.

**Woman, Both Transgender and Cisgender, 19-29, Layperson (Not Ordained), Pacific Islander, Hawaii Conference**

**Ali Lopez-Valcarcel** originally from Puerto Rico, a US Army Veteran, served as Chaplain Assistant in the US Army for 9 years. After completing military service, Pastor Ali relocated to the Rio Grande Valley, a place she has called home for over 15 years. There, she graduated from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Social Work, where she earned a Master of Social Work.

After graduation Pastor Ali served in various Social Work positions including an unaccompanied minor shelter for migrants and at a Veterans Affairs Health Care Center.

Rev. Ali is a graduate from Brite Divinity School and an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ. Rev. Lopez-Valcarcel currently leads The United Church of Christ Rio Grande Valley, an emerging congregation that seeks to do justice in the RGV for migrants, refugees, people in the margins and LGBTQ individuals in Brownsville, TX. Rev. Ali is also an adjunct professor of the school of Social Work at UTRGV where she teaches future Social Workers.

Ali's biggest passion is to share the expansive love and grace of God to all of God's creation by advocating for justice and equality for all of God's people.

**Gender Non-Conforming, 40-49, Holds Ministerial Standing, Hispanic/Latino/Latina, South Central Conference**

**Janese Murray** is a member of New Covenant Community United Church of Christ, where she is married to the Pastor, Reverend Brian Murray. She was on the Board of the Central Atlantic Conference from 2013 – 2021 and served as the board chair from 2019 – 2021. As the board chair, Janese led the effort to update the conference mission, vision, values, and bylaws. She was also chair of the Leadership and Governance committee.

Janese is the President and Founder of Inclusion Impact Consulting, a diversity, equity, and inclusion consulting firm. She consults with organizations who seek to increase the diversity of their workforce and create an inclusive and equitable environment. She also conducts interactive workshops and facilitates small group discussion.

Before starting her firm, Janese had over 20 years of corporate experience in leading and implementing diversity and inclusion strategies. She worked for the Exelon Corporation where she served as the Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion. In addition to her experience in diversity and inclusion, she held various roles in employee relations, talent management and training and development.

Janese is a graduate of Morgan State University and she and her husband Brian, have two daughters, Rachel and Alexis. Rachel and her husband, Nick, have blessed Janese with two grandchildren, Rosemary and Christopher.

**Women, both Transgender and Cisgender, 60+, Layperson (Not Ordained), Black/African American, Central Atlantic Conference**

**Sara Rabe** is the pastor of First Congregational UCC in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin and has been serving congregations for nearly 25 years.

Sara's education includes a BS in Religion from Lakeland University - Sheboygan, Wisconsin, as well as a Master of Divinity from Eden Theological Seminary - St. Louis, Missouri. She earned her Doctor of Ministry with an emphasis on Parish Revitalization from McCormick Seminary - Chicago, Illinois.

Currently a member of the Wisconsin Conference UCC Board of Directors, Sara was also a member of the Board of Education for the Stoughton Area School District in Stoughton, Wisconsin. With experience and training in organizational development, conflict resolution and mediation, Sara serves in a variety of ministerial capacities including a strategic planning consultant for churches within the Wisconsin Conference UCC.

Sara and her wife Amy enjoy time outdoors and traveling with their three young adult children.

**Woman, both Transgender and Cisgender, 40-49, Holds Ministerial Standing, White/European American, Wisconsin Conference**

**Jennifer Smith** is dedicated to community service, with a strong focus on economic opportunity. She has traveled globally to learn from diverse communities about resilience, leadership, and connection, integrating these insights into her professional, civic, and faith-based work. A member of Holladay United Church of Christ near Salt Lake City, Jennifer has served in various leadership roles, including moderator and on committees shaping the congregation's future vision, pastoral relations, and human resources. Her broader community engagement includes board leadership roles with local universities, the Women's Leadership Institute, the Children's Center of Utah, YWCA of Utah, United Way of Greater Salt Lake, People Helping People, and the Berkana Institute. Professionally, with a career in financial services, Jennifer is the Executive Vice President and Chief Technology and Operations Officer of Zions Bancorporation. She holds an honors B.A. and an M.S. in Economics from the University of Utah. Her contributions have been widely recognized. She has received the YWCA of Utah's Outstanding Leadership Award for Social Innovation, been named one of American Banker's Most Powerful Women in Banking for four years, and honored with the Women Tech Council's Technology Leadership and Decade of Impact Awards, as well as Utah Business's CxO of the Year.

**Women, both Transgender and Cisgender, 50-59, Layperson (Not Ordained), White/European American, Rocky Mountain Conference**

**ivy tillman** -ze/zir/zirs, formerly a Western Massachusetts resident, lives in Madison, AL. A retired IT professional, ivy now spends the majority of zir time in volunteering in zir local church and conference as a UCC ONA Coalition coach, a Racial Justice facilitator (recently certified to facilitate Sacred Conversations to End Racism), and a SECUCC delegate to General Synod, as well as a member of the Just Peace Players, a SNECUCC liturgical drama troupe. ze previously served on the General Synod Nominating Committee, class of 2015.

ivy additionally volunteers with United Women of Color (UWOC), and works on social justice issues with other local and state community partners, among them Moms Demand Action AL/Everytown for Gun Violence Prevention. ze hosts--and sometimes leads--virtual workshops with the Sojourner Truth School for Social Change Leaders. ze appreciates the thought, care and collaboration that goes into the work of each of these groups and is very happy that each gives zir a public platform to practice and model inclusiveness now that ze has retired. ze loves to play Scrabble: sadly, no one will play with zir...

**Non-Binary, 60+, Layperson (Not Ordained), Black/African American, Southeast Conference**

**William Thomas Young IV** is the 8th senior pastor of Covenant Baptist United Church of Christ in Washington D.C., serving them faithfully since April 2020. William received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the American Baptist College in Nashville, Tennessee in 2000 and the MDiv from Vanderbilt University Divinity School in 2003. Upon moving to the United Kingdom in 2004, he received the M.A. degree in Political Science and International Studies from The University of Birmingham, the M.Th from New College, Edinburgh University, and the M.Phil from Glasgow University.

From 2006-2007, he was an assistant minister at St. Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh, serving under the Chaplain to the Queen. William organized the first Martin Luther King Day service and the first jazz vespers service in the cathedral. In 2013, he was ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacraments in the United Reformed Church (URC). From 2013-2020 he served as senior Minister of 2 congregations: Morison Memorial URC in Clydebank, Scotland and Drumchapel Essenside URC in Glasgow.

Since returning to the USA, he has made public safety, DC statehood, and Solidarity with Palestine priorities of his prophetic ministry. He is a member of the Boards of Churches for Middle East Peace and Bright Stars of Bethlehem, the Western support body of Dar al Kalima University in Bethlehem  
**Man, both Transgender and Cisgender, 40-49, Holds Ministerial Standing, Black/African American, Central Atlantic Conference**