

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST BOARD
REPORT ON GENERAL SYNOD NOMINATING COMMITTEE NOMINEES
CLASS OF 2034**

The United Church of Christ Board nominates the following individuals for election by the General Synod to the General Synod Nominating Committee Class of 2034:

Brian Murray

Vote: UCCB-25-03-04

Bio:

The Rev. Dr. Brian Edward Murray, Senior Pastor of New Covenant Community United Church of Christ, is a native of Queens, New York. He is a graduate of Stuyvesant H.S., a science and mathematics magnet in New York City, Morgan State University with a bachelor's degree in biology, holds a master's degree in theology from St. Mary's Seminary and University, and a doctorate from Wesley Theological Seminary as a Howard Thurman Scholar. Most of his 30 years of clergy experience has focused on social justice, community organizing, and Christian education. Dr. Murray also served as an adjunct professor at the United Baptist College and Seminary, focusing on New Testament Studies and Urban Ministry.

Dr. Murray's journey is a testament to his dedication and commitment to community leadership. His transition from the pharmaceutical industry to the United Church of Christ and the founding of the New Covenant Community United Church of Christ in 2012, the first African American-led UCC church launched in the Baltimore area since the 1960s, are milestones that inspire others to follow in his footsteps. This journey is not just about personal growth but also about inspiring others to take up the mantle of community leadership.

Dr. Murray has previously served on the Board of Directors of the Baltimore Child Abuse Center, the Professional Advisory Board for Spiritual Care and Chaplaincy at Johns Hopkins Hospital, and the Steering Committee of the Family Informed Trauma Treatment Center, sponsored by the University of Maryland's School of Social Work and Kennedy Krieger Family Center. He also served as guest faculty for the Breakthrough Series Collaborative, a University of Maryland project that trained nonprofit and private agencies about the trauma of institutional racism. Dr. Murray is the former Co-Chair of BRIDGE Maryland, a statewide network of churches focused on congregation-based community organizing in the service of social justice. He now serves on the Advisory Board of the Religious Leaders Caucus for BRIDGE. In his current role as a Baltimore City Health Department Commissioner, Dr. Murray is focusing on health care and health education for aging, a testament to his ongoing commitment to community service.

Dr. Murray graduated from the 2013 class of Leadership Baltimore County and the 2018 class of the Greater Baltimore Committee Leadership Program. He has led the Gamma Omicron Omega Alumni Chapter of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Incorporated, a Divine Nine African American fraternity, and currently serves as Iota's National Chaplain, a role that allows him to influence and guide the fraternity's spiritual direction on a national level. Still residing in Baltimore, Dr. Murray and his wife, Janese, have two adult daughters and two grandchildren.

Member of Central Atlantic Conference and is an Authorized Minister or Ordained Ministerial Partner

Church Membership Information: New Covenant Community United Church of Christ

Demographics: Man, 60+, Black/African American

Christopher Ponnuraj

Vote: UCCB-25-03-05

Bio:

Rev. Dr. Christopher K. Ponnuraj has been a dedicated member of the United Church of Christ (UCC) family for over 29 years. As of April 2021, he serves as the Minister at West Center Congregational Church UCC in Bronxville, New York. Additionally, he is a Board-Certified Chaplain with the Association of Professional Chaplains and has been serving as a Chaplain at Calvary Hospital in the Bronx, New York, since 2008.

Rev. Chris distinguished career in ministry spans decades, marked by significant contributions to various congregations: From 1994 to 1996 he served as Associate Pastor of Christhava Tamil Koil UCC, New York. Subsequently, he took on the role of a Pastor at Bethel Tamil Church UCC in Baltimore, Maryland where he developed a new Asian Indian-Tamil Congregation.

For a quarter-century, Rev. Chris ministered to the historical Landmark church located in Bronx NY - Bedford Park Congregational Church, UCC. This church has been a cornerstone of the community since 1889. During his tenure at the Bedford Park Congregational Church, he guided the church in its process of gaining NYC Landmark status; took up a project to renovate the church to its original exterior luster along with a new roof; and installed a new electronic organ.

Rev. Chris is an active member of Pacific Islander and Asian American Ministries in UCC (PAAM) and served as Secretary (2006 to 2010), Vice Moderator (2010 to 2012) and Moderator (2012 to 2014). Rev. Chris served as a Board member of Office of General Ministries and Co-Moderator of Council for Racial and Ethnic Minorities - UCC (2010 – 2012). He was one of the leaders who extended his guidance and hard work to host the National PAAM Convocation in New York in 2018.

Rev. Chris also spends time providing spiritual guidance, operational support and mentorship to several young leaders and ministers. Prior to his ministry in the United States, Rev. Chris has his foundation in the church ministry as a Sunday school teacher and as a youth leader from Kolar Gold Fields, Bangalore ordained by Church of South India, Karnataka Central Diocese in 1991.

In addition to guidance and mentorship, Rev. Chris has served two terms in the Committee on Ministry (2017 -2023) and served as a member of the Nomination Committee, General Synod (unexpired term 2025). Currently he serves as a member of the Spiritual and Professional Development Committee and Nomination Committee of the Metropolitan Association, NY Conference. Chris represents the NY Conference as a Synod Delegate (2023 and 2025).

In his free time, Rev. Chris plays violin and enjoys rooting for the NY sports teams (Knicks and Yankees). Rev. Chris is married to Mrs. Vatsala C. Ponnuraj for 46 years and is blessed with one son Mr. Youngren Ponnuraj.

Member of New York Conference and is an Authorized Minister or Ordained Ministerial Partner

Church Membership Information: West Center Congregational Church

Demographics: Man, 60+, Asian/American

HUGS Membership: Pacific Islanders and Asian American Industries

Barbara Kershner Daniel

Vote: UCCB-25-03-06

Bio:

The Rev. Dr. Barbara Kershner Daniel, ordained in 1983, is Senior Pastor Emerita of Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ, Frederick, Maryland. She retired in June of 2023, after 40 years of parish ministry. She served as Senior Pastor of ERUCC from 2006-2023. From 1993-2006, she served as Senior Pastor of St. Paul's United Church of Christ in Fleetwood, Pennsylvania after serving as its Associate Pastor from 1989-1993. From 1983 through 1989, she served as Pastor of St. Luke's United Church of Christ, Kenhorst, Reading.

Rev. Dr. Kershner Daniel is a graduate of Catawba College and has MDiv and DMIn degrees from Lancaster Theological Seminary.

Currently, Rev. Dr. Kershner Daniel serves as a trustee for the YMCA in Frederick, MD and as Chaplain for the Junior Fire Company, in Frederick. She is active in the Rotary Club of Carroll as well as the Frederick Chamber of Commerce as a graduate of Leadership Frederick.

She was recently appointed to serve as the Disaster Response Coordinator for the Central Atlantic Conference. In October of 2024, she was elected to serve as secretary for the CANAAC (Caribbean and North American Council) Steering Committee, a regional expression for the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

The Rev. Dr. Kershner Daniel served as a trustee of the Pension Boards (2012 – 2020) and chaired the Corporate Social Responsibility Committee (2004-2018). She represented the Pension Boards on the Wider Church Ministries Board where she chaired the National Disaster Response Committee.

She served as a trustee of UCC-related Catawba College, Salisbury, NC. (2011-2019), chairing its Governance Committee (2018-2019).

She coordinated the Youth@Synod programs for the UCC in 2017 and 2019.

She has chaired several Boards, including the Lancaster Theological Seminary Board of Trustees, the Board of Directors for Wider Church Ministries, United Church Board for World

Ministries, Common Global Ministries Board, the UCC Historical Council and served as Vice-Chair of the UCC Executive Council.

Member of Central Atlantic Conference and is an Authorized Minister or Ordained Ministerial Partner

Church Membership Information: Evangelical Reformed UCC, Frederick, MD

Demographics: Woman, age 60+, White/European American

Marcelino Rivera

Vote: UCCB-25-03-07

Bio:

Rev. Marcelino Rivera is an ordained Minister with the Florida Conference of the United Church of Christ. Marcelino is currently serving as the Assistant Minister for Hispanic Outreach and Witness at the Windermere Union Church UCC.

Member of Florida Conference and is an Authorized Minister or Ordained Ministerial Partner

Church Membership Information: Windermere Union Church UCC

Demographics: Gender non-conforming, age 60+, Member of LGBTQAI+ Community, Hispanic/Latino/Latinx, disability

HUGS Membership: Colectivo de UCC-Latinx Ministries-UCC Disabilities Ministries

Gina Harvey

Vote: UCCB-25-03-08

Bio:

Rev. Gina L. Harvey grew up in rural Nebraska as the oldest daughter of three children in a middle-class white family whose culture blended the conservative political values of America's "heartland" with progressive views on labor unions and work. Gina grew up Lutheran but, after coming out as queer in her late twenties, found a spiritual home in the United Church of Christ denomination. Her first career was in music as a voice teacher and performer on the operatic and musical theater stage. As a professor of music in a small college near Atlanta, Georgia, Gina came face to face with her privilege as a white, straight-passing, cisgender woman. She learned from her students- many of whom were queer persons of color- the dangers and damages of oppression and hate for those on "the margins" of straight, white, Christian society. This awakening led her to follow her call to ministry and become certified as a Board-Certified Chaplain (BCC APC) and ACPE educator.

Gina and her wife Sharon live in Fargo, North Dakota, where Gina serves as the Director of Spiritual Care Services and Clinical Pastoral Education for Sanford Fargo. In this role, she provides spiritual guidance and support to patients and their families and oversees the training and development of seminary students and chaplains. Gina is the mother of two adult children,

Jimi and Jonah, who live in Longmont, Colorado and Syracuse, New York respectively. She is in a four-way covenant with Sanford Health and her local UCC church, First United Church of Christ, Fargo, and is the Chair of the Northern Plains Conference's Committee on Ministry. Gina is an active volunteer at First Fargo UCC, at Fargo's Downtown Engagement Center, and other social justice programs in the Fargo area.

Member of Northern Plains Conference and is an Authorized Minister or Ordained Ministerial Partner

Church Membership Information: First United Church of Christ, Fargo

Demographics: Woman, age 50-59, Member of LGBTQAI+ Community, White/European American