



The Pension Boards
United Church of Christ, Inc.

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Dear Church Family in the Southern California Nevada Conference—

Greetings from your partners in ministry at the Pension Boards!

As you prepare to come together for your Annual Gathering, I write to express our solidarity and best wishes for a productive and celebratory time together. We're among the sponsors of your meeting because we know how essential these events are to the vitality and health of conferences and their congregations.

By way of introduction, the Pension Boards is one of the five Financial Ministries of the United Church of Christ, providing retirement plans, health insurance, and resources for overall wellness to all who serve the UCC, both authorized ministers and lay employees. Years ago, we created the **UCC Annuity Plan** knowing that ministry thrives when personal finances aren't a distraction, and so the Plan was designed to provide lifetime income, funded through both employer and employee contributions. We are blessed to have a first-rate investment team to manage those assets, and we do so with a clear commitment to **socially responsible investing** that reflects the values of diversity, equity and inclusion that are central to our faith, and which are mindful of environmental and social responsibilities.

We also offer best in class **health insurance** coverage, both a non-Medicare plan through Blue Cross/Blue Shield and a Medicare option through Humana. Both these plans offer significant preventative care programs knowing that wellness is not just about responding to illness but encouraging and enabling healthy lifestyles throughout one's life.

Inspired by a General Synod resolution on economic justice that identified credit unions as a significant contributor to that effort, the Pension Boards has been working over the past few years to create a credit union not only for UCC employees, but all members of UCC congregations across the country. In April, we received a charter for the **Generations United Federal Credit Union**, and over the next months you will hear much more about how the credit will provide a wide range of banking services, programs designed for the particular personal needs of church employees and business needs of church employers and which will build up the economic vitality of local communities.

Knowing that the needs of lay employees and ministers for financial and professional security often go beyond what our core business programs can provide, the Pension Boards has a philanthropic arm, the **United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance (UCBMA)**. UCBMA

has a two-part mission: to provide direct financial assistance to those serving the church in circumstances requiring help, and to offer programs that sustain pastors through each phase of their pastoral career. Last year, UCBMA distributed \$2.4 million to supplement small pensions, help retirees pay health insurance premiums, and meet emergency needs faced by active and retired lay church workers and authorized ministers. That financial support is made available in part through gifts to the **Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross**, one of the four Special Mission Offerings of the United Church of Christ. If your congregation already receives that offering each year, thank you! If it doesn't, please learn more—we're happy to explain the program and provide resources for getting the word out.

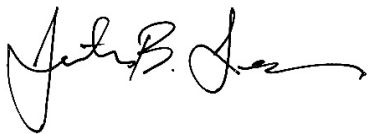
UCBMA also provides three programs that help meet the needs of pastors in their ministry. The **Ministers Financial Vitality Initiative** (MFVI) is a program of cohort-based learning, personal financial management mentoring, and grants to address outstanding debt. Originally created through grants from the Lilly Endowment, MFVI affirms that skills to manage one's personal finances is an essential foundation for focused ministry, and over 200 young (and not so young) pastors have participated to date.

More than a decade ago, the **Next Generation Leadership Initiative** (NGLI) was created in recognition that the dramatic and often challenging changes in local church life call for new skills and perspectives in pastoral leadership. Designed for pastors under the age of 35 who are committed to congregational leadership, NGLI provides a wide range of skill-building experiences over a 6-year period. NGLI pastors—including a number in SCNC—are high energy, creative, hopeful and imaginative, and are excellent conversation partners for local churches facing changes.

The third leadership initiative of UCBMA is the **Annuitant Visitor Program**, which for 40 years has maintained connection with retired pastors across the denomination, affirming their faithful ministry, helping them to optimize their benefits, and connecting them when needed with the grant programs of UCBMA. More than 150 retired pastors are trained to call on more than 6,000 pastors each year, making a real difference in the lives of those who have served so faithfully.

As you gather at Chapman University, my Pension Boards colleague, **the Rev. Krista Betz**, Director of Leadership Initiatives, will be with you to lead a workshop on General Synod, and to be present in the exhibit area to talk about any and all topics Pension Boards and United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance. I know she we will offer a warm welcome and helpful information to all.

Blessings as you come together!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan B. Lee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Rev. Dr. Jonathan B. Lee
Director, Church Relations and Operations