

Dear Members of the Central Association,

Grace to you in this Holy Week, and peace in the spirit of resurrection hope. As we journey through Holy Week—a time of grief and courage, of endings and beginnings—we remember that we are a people united not by easy answers, but by a story. A story that reminds us the Spirit of new life often rises precisely where endings once seemed certain.

It is in that same spirit of hope and transformation that we write to invite you to the **Spring Central Association Meeting on Saturday, May 17, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.** We will meet via Zoom.

Please register your attendance by May 14, at www.scnuc.org/central.

As many members may note, the Central Association has not met since spring 2023, when the gathered body discerned it was time to ask the Conference Board of Directors to temporarily assume responsibility for the Central Association's remaining essential functions. What began as a short-term solution—allowing time for rest, reflection, or potential reorganization—has extended over a longer season and has brought us now to a decision point.

At the Spring Meeting, Central Association will be asked to vote to officially conclude its work as an Association (as required by California law) and to affirm the opportunity for clergy and churches to participate in the **Unified Conference-Association Model**. This Model is a provisional structure within SCNC designed to support ministry by creating regional gatherings for learning and fellowship after reassigning the Association's ecclesiastical and structural responsibilities (ex. Ecclesiastical Councils, processes by which churches enter or end relationship with the UCC, etc.) to ministry within the Conference setting. The goal of this model is to not lose what has been significant and to create space for what matters most: deepening relationships, strengthening collaboration, and offering meaningful support to clergy and congregations.

When we are together, we will hear more about this model, seek one another's wisdom, and engage in discernment. When we feel we have arrived at clarity, we will vote on the official matters. In preparation for time together, you'll find a brief FAQ, the formal proposal for the unified model, and a copy of the potential motion (containing polity and legal language) attached. These resources and are also online: www.scnuc.org/central.

Also, in preparation for the Spring Meeting, we will also host a **community conversation and learning session** on **Tuesday April 29 at 11 am via zoom** and another on **May 1 at 7 pm via zoom**. These are an opportunity to learn and ask questions. Register for either of these events at: www.scnuc.org/central.

We hope you will join us for these sacred moments of reflection, gratitude, and faithful transition. We believe this final meeting of the Association is not just an ending—it is also the beginning of something new. A release of one form of covenantal life, and the faithful shaping of another. Let us honor what has been, release what no longer serves, and bless what is yet to be.

With deep gratitude and hope for the journey ahead,
The Executive Committee of the Central Association (2023)

Frequently Asked Questions:

What's the short version of the proposed plan?

Central Association is considering participation in the Unified Conference-Association Model. This would transition essential Association responsibilities—such as ministerial oversight, support for churches, and event coordination—to settings of the Conference. AND, as the Association concludes its ministry, a new set of opportunities will begin. The Conference setting (reminder: the Conference is the collective of churches and members) will work with regional representatives to host regional gatherings that promote health, wellbeing, and vitality among clergy and churches.

Who plans the regional gatherings?

Each region—including Central—will have **event liaisons**-representatives from the region who are on the Conference Board and Covenanting Committee on Ministry-who help plan gatherings in partnership with Conference Staff, local leaders, and host churches. Others with interest can help in planning gatherings.

Is this a new thing?

No and Yes. Many Associations across the UCC—including our Central—have already transitioned to a model of the Conference-acting-as-an association. What is new for us is a plan for hosting regular regional gatherings. This provisional structure is designed to be adaptive and reviewed regularly to ensure it meets the needs of the Church today.

How is this better?

This model continues to reduce the burden on volunteers, frees up energy spent on institutional upkeep, and redirects it toward connection and ministry. By sharing responsibilities across the Conference, we gain support from staff and leadership while still gathering in our region for shared learning, worship, and fellowship.

Where will my Ministerial Standing be held?

Ministerial Standing would be held by the Southern California Nevada Conference.

Is there a polity term for this?

UCC polity (aka governance) has a provision that allows a Conference to be given the responsibilities of an Association. When this happens, the “Conference is acting as an Association.”

Where will remaining Association funds go?

Any remaining Association funds will be transferred to the Conference with a designated purpose: to continue supporting ministry in local churches. The funds would be used to initially support regional events and continue to provide cost-sharing for MID psychological assessments.

Do we -as folks from Central-still have a place?

Yes! This model is not a hierarchy, but a covenantal invitation. The Central region is a vital part of the wider Conference. Your churches, voices, and gifts matter. This model maintains your regional realities, while offering more sustainable ways to participate in shaping our collective shared life and ministry.

What happens if the Association votes “no”?

If the Central Association determines it wants to continue as an Association, then new Association leaders will need to be elected and begin to diligently to manage the affairs and responsibilities of maintaining a healthy Association. The Executive Committee would meet, volunteers would be recruited and vetted, and an additional Association meeting would need to be called to consider and approve nominations for the next Association leaders.