



Welcome to the [2023 Ministers Institute](#) of the Disciples of Christ Upper Midwest Region!

This document provides details for all the workshops. Click [here](#) to register.

Keynote Speaker



Ramona Wink is a licensed mental health counselor and motivational public speaker with 515 Therapy (www.515therapy.com) and Consulting in West Des Moines. She graduated with her Masters in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Drake University and with her BA, majoring in Mass Communications, from the University of Iowa

In her role as a therapist, Ramona sees both individuals and couples. She combines her innate ability to connect with people in an authentic manner with her educational training and her own life experience to support her clients as they navigate mental health issues.

Ramona is passionate about her motivational public speaking role because it allows her to make a positive impact on even more people. Mental health impacts everyone and yet in Iowa, we are facing a mental health crisis due to the shortage of mental health professionals. From the stage, Ramona's superpower is to share the stories that she hears in her therapist's chair, with details changed to protect her clients' confidentiality, normalizing the fact that mental health issues are real! She is quick to connect with audiences of any size and her warm and engaging personality makes people feel right at home. Her messages are also packed with tools and techniques that audience members can learn and demonstrate in their lives to achieve and maintain mental wellness. <https://www.515therapy.com/speaking>

Ramona was recently appointed by Governor Kim Reynolds to serve on the Iowa Board of Behavioral Sciences. You can read more about Ramona at <https://www.515therapy.com/ramonawink>

Guest Preacher



Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund has long known she wanted to dedicate her life to serving God and helping others. She majored in religious studies at Trinity University, graduated with a Master of Divinity degree at Princeton Theological Seminary, and received a Master of Social Work degree at Rutgers University. Ministry and Social Work blend together her two passions of loving God and loving my neighbors. Sarah was ordained into Christian ministry by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in 2002.

Sarah has served in multiple roles some of which are the Minister for Disabilities and Mental Health Justice on the National Staff of The United Church of Christ, locally on the board of the Faith and Action Project at Christian Theological Seminary to end poverty, as Director of Bethany Fellows, Mental Health America, and as Executive Committee for Pathways to Promise. Sarah is the Open and Affirming LGBTQ Consultant and a member of the Mental Health Ministry Team for the Indiana-Kentucky Conference UCC.

Sarah received the Princeton Engle Preaching Prize for excellence in preaching and the Bob and Joyce Dell Award for Mental Health Education from the United Church of Christ Mental Health Network for my “outstanding authorship and leadership in breaking the silence about mental illness in family and in church and offering healing and hope.” She is a widely published author in journals, magazines, and books. Sarah says she is excited about sharing part of the story about my family, faith, and mental illness with the world in her first book, [*Blessed are the Crazy: Breaking the Silence About Mental Illness, Family, and Church.* \(Chalice Press, 2014\)](#). The stories continue in her third book, *Blessed Youth: Breaking the Silence About Mental Illness, Children, and Teens* (Chalice Press, 2022). Sarah states she continues to be amazed at the resilience and strength of family bonds, as she gives thanks for her own family every day.

Monday, January 30 Workshops 5:15-6:15 p.m.



Grace Mapping

Grace Mapping is a spiritual activity that invites everyone to look at their lives and to see where they have experienced joys, sorrows, good and bad times not only in life but also with God. This is a tool that anyone can do in a variety of ministerial settings. Each person will get to start their own grace map to take home with them. Rev. West is an ordained DOC minister, currently serving two UCC Congregations in rural Nebraska. A former hospital chaplain and pastor in Iowa, Kate shares this ministry tool to engage people in sharing their own stories of faith through word and art that anyone can do.

Kate West



Yoga

Jason Thrasher

This session includes an overview of what yoga is, what it is not, and its benefits for body, mind, and spirit. Following the presentation, the group will be led in ~30 minutes of chair yoga. A second opportunity for practice is available on only Tuesday morning. Jason Thrasher is a lifetime yoga practitioner, who practices daily. Jason has completed a 200-hour certification course. Jason served as the Christian education Director at First Church United for many years before the Covid pandemic. He is currently enrolled in the Commissioned Ministry program through the Disciples church. Jason lives in West Liberty Iowa and is happily married to his wife Katie. They are blessed to have three wonderful children, Chance, Charlie, and Alice.



Guided Meditation

Margaret Hutchens

Using the image of encountering Jesus at the well, this meditation will provide a safe space to fully drink from the Living Water. It is intended to be a resource that the participant can draw upon any time in any space.

Tuesday, January 31 Workshops 9:30-10:30 a.m.



Minister and Church Burnout

Craig Robertson

Burnout of ministers and churches can be like a slow leak on a car tire. Two things we can do to help stop the slow leak of burnout in the minister and church: 1. Be aware of your and church’s attitude. 2. Hold listening meetings where revealing questions help us to understand how to stop the leak of burnout by both minister and church. Rev. Robertson is currently the minister at Capitol Hill Christian Church in Des Moines Iowa. He has been in the ministry for over 34 years. He worked with the Transformation Task Force for the Upper Midwest Region for three years where he helped develop a program to help churches transform into what God wanted them to do in their communities.



Addressing Chaplain Burnout

Eric Johnson

Eric is a professional chaplain in the healthcare setting with an impassioned dedication to quality spiritual and emotional care for patients, families, and staff. He endeavors to be the best provider he can be and to assist other in achieving that same objective. Current areas of particular interest for Eric include leadership, professional standards, bereavement care, ethics, and care during existential crisis.



Spiritual Direction

Chris Waddell, MDiv

What is it? How can it be helpful to people? How is it different from pastoral care or counseling? Why might it be worth my time and attention? How do I find a trained spiritual director that is a good “fit” for me? How might I become a spiritual director? These are the questions we will explore in this one-hour presentation by Chris Waddell, Director of Leadership and Spiritual Life at the Des Moines Pastoral Counseling Center. Chris believes nurturing relationships involves faith, vulnerability,

wonder, and playfulness. His religious perspective and practice were formed in the United Methodist Church, where he served as minister for 19 years. Chris’ MDiv is from Duke University. He has training in the healing circle process through the Center for Restorative Justice Practices in Des Moines, IA.

Tuesday, January 31 Workshops 10:45-11:45 a.m.



NBA presentation

Joselyn Spence

Joselyn serves as the Director of the NBA’s Mental Health and Wellness Initiative where she works to implement programs that promote holistic wellness through the creation of learning resources for clergy and community leaders, addressing the needs of pastors in a variety of ministry settings, sharing the stories that help to eliminate stigmas related to mental health and wellness. She is passionate about mental health care,

holistic wellness, communal care ethics, and spirituality. As a holistic wellness specialist, Joselyn works to develop research and provide empathic care to all she is called to serve.



Book Study – “Blessed Youth” by Sarah Lund

Sarah Lund

Blessed Youth provides a deep dive and frank discussion about the growing mental health challenges our youth face. Sarah addresses what really needs to be considered an emergency — the first wave of a mental illness tsunami sparked by the pandemic, massive cultural change and unrest, and unprecedented social media engagement. Sadly, the Blessed Youth books were born of the pandemic’s effects on Sarah’s niece: Sydney was 16 when

she died by suicide in November 2020. Blessed Youth emerged in the weeks after Sydney’s death. Blessed Youth Survival Guide is a pocket-sized book for teens to have in an emergency. It includes mental health basics, emergency contacts, and tools to equip a teen to respond in a crisis until professional help arrives.



Book Study

Loren Strait

“A Path to Belonging: Overcoming Clergy Loneliness”

Loneliness, or the feeling of being cut off from others, is an epidemic among people in America. While some may think that clergy have a strong built-in community, this is not often the case. According to authors Mary Kay DuChene and Mark Sundby, clergy are as lonely as the general population. Rev. Loren Strait, pastor at Covenant Christian Church in Urbandale, IA will

lead a discussion of the book.

Tuesday, January 31 Workshops 1:30-2:30 p.m.



Veterans Mental Health

Sarah Klein

This presentation is an overview of the Whole Health System of Care at the Iowa City VA HCS. This is an approach to health care that empowers and equips both Veterans and Staff to take charge of their health and well-being and live their life to the fullest. You will learn more about this practical framework and the importance of cultivating a culture of self-care. One of the components included in self-care is spirituality and how it helps us live a life of grace, hope, and serenity in, through, and with God. Sarah is the Whole Health System Manager and Employee Whole Health Lead for the Iowa City VAHCS. Sarah graduated from the University of Iowa with a degree in Health and Human Physiology with an emphasis in Health Promotion, has a Master's in Health and Wellness Management and is a Nationally board-certified Health and Wellness Coach.

Sabbatical Planning

Panel members **Owen Cayton, Andrea Brownlee, Laurie Feille, and Doug Pfeiffer** will discuss the difficulties of planning your sabbatical. Each panel member has recently taken a sabbatical. Each has a unique story to share about the planning, taking, and returning from sabbatical.



NBA presentation

Joselyn Spence

Joselyn serves as the Director of the NBA's Mental Health and Wellness Initiative. In this role, Joselyn works to design and implement programs that promote holistic wellness across all NBA programs. This work is done through the creation of learning resources for clergy and community leaders, addressing the needs of pastors in a variety of ministry settings, sharing the stories that help to eliminate stigmas related to mental health and wellness. She is passionate about mental health care, holistic wellness, communal care ethics, and spirituality. As a holistic wellness specialist, she has worked at the intersection of these passions to develop research and provide empathic care to all she is called to serve.

Wednesday, February 1 Workshop 9:00-11:30 a.m.

ARPR Action Team: Workshop/Educational Experience

Systemic White Supremacy:

What is it, Why it matters, and How it effects the Church universal

Rev. Dr. Laurie Pound-Feille, Rev. Gary Sneller, and Rev. Kate West



Join members of the Action Team and the region's Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation team, as we discuss Systemic White Supremacy and how to faithfully and respectfully call out Systemic White Supremacy in ourselves, others, and the various parts of the Church with whom we interact. We ask that all come

with a spirit of willingness to hear hard things and to expand our hearts and minds.

Part 1 – How we have AR/PR Conversations

- We all want to believe that we are not racist, but we all have cultural biases – we don't realize that the things we say, and our actions can be racist. It's often hard for us to unlearn these things.
- How do we respond with grace when we hear/see racism/racist things? How do we respond when we are told that we are perpetuating racism, even when we don't think we are being racist?

Break from 10:15-10:25

Part 2 – Terms for which we need to come to an agreement

- Racism
- Microaggressions
- Systemic white supremacy

The starting point is a definition page by Rev. April G. Johnson, DOC Minister of Reconciliation. The ARPR Team received these definitions at the 2021 ARPR retreat as a handout for all participants.

Resource List:

- [White Too Long--the Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity](#) by Robert P. Jones, CEO of Public Religion Research Institute (Simon and Schuster, 2021).
- Recommended listening to Fresh Air interview with Robert Jones: "American Christianity Must Reckon with Legacy of White Supremacy, Author Says." Found at NPR: <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/896712611>
- A Catholic point of view is the book, [The Sin of White Supremacy--Christianity, Racism, and Religious Diversity in America](#) by Jeannine Hill Fletcher (Orbis, 2017)
- Recommended listening to interview with Jeannine Hill Fletcher, professor at Fordham University, a theologian found at [Episode 9. Jeannine Hill Fletcher, The Sin of White Supremacy \(maryknollsociety.org\)](#)