



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UCF Congratulates Karen Georgia Thompson as First Woman to Lead UCC and Welcomes New UCF Board Members

New York, July 5, 2023 – United Church Funds (UCF), a financial ministry of the United Church of Christ (UCC), congratulates the Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson as the new General Minister and President (GMP) of the UCC, following an overwhelmingly affirmative vote at General Synod 34, meeting in Indianapolis. Thompson, a Jamaican immigrant, will become the first woman – and the first Black woman – to lead the denomination.

“We cannot think of a better individual to lead the church at this critical moment, both in terms of Rev. Thompson’s particular talents, passion and energy, and the communities she represents,” said the Rev. Dr. Charles Buck, UCF President & CEO.

Buck pointed to Thompson’s stated commitment to “decolonizing the church on all levels,” as she phrased it in an address to the UCC’s Board prior to her nomination, as essential to the church’s mission and future. “It also dovetails with UCF’s work, which includes leveraging our position as a major shareholder to pressure the companies in which we invest to commit to social, economic and environmental justice,” added Buck.

As the new GMP, Thompson also becomes an ex-officio member of UCF’s Board of Directors, where she will help guide the financial ministry in carrying out its mission.

Julia Gaughan, the new Chair of the UCC Board, will also join UCF’s Board as ex-officio member. When the UCF Board meets this October, Gaughan and Thompson will join three other newly elected Board members:

Yvette Wynn – Wynn, who previously served as a UCF Board member from 2019 to 2021, is a Certified Financial Planner (CFP) and currently serves as Regional Sales Director/Business Development Manager at Morgan Stanley. She holds dual master’s degrees in Finance and Economics from New York University and Fordham University, respectively, as well as a bachelor’s degree in Finance from Pace University.

Rev. Shari Prestemon – Prestemon has 30 years of leadership experience in faith-based organizations and is currently the Conference Minister of the UCC’s Minnesota Conference. Prior to that, she served as Executive Director of Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi for more than a decade. She holds a Master of Divinity from Chicago Theological Seminary and a bachelor’s degree from Luther College.

David Misemer – Among his numerous positions on non-profit boards, Misemer currently serves as President of the Board of Directors for the Interfaith Action Foundation, a Minnesota-based organization that engages congregations and people of faith in providing shelter for families experiencing homelessness. For over 25 years, Misemer led research and development and IT for 3M Company. He holds a Ph.D. in Applied Physics from Stanford University and a bachelor’s degree in Math and Physics from Cornell University.

Also joining UCF’s Investment Committee will be:

Bill Lee – Lee is a Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) and has been a top-ranked chief investment officer for large not-for-profit foundations and pension plans over the last 20 years, including serving on the Board of the Rockefeller Bros. Fund. Lee worked as Chief Investment Officer & Senior Vice President for New York-Presbyterian Hospital and previously served as a member of the Investor Advisory Committee of the Securities & Exchange Commission (SEC). He holds a Master’s degree in Business Administration and Finance and a bachelor’s degree in Finance, both from California State University, Hayward, as well as a Certificate in Executive Leadership from Harvard Business School.

“We are incredibly privileged to be welcoming new Board and Investment Committee members with such a depth and breadth of experience,” said Buck. “We are also so grateful to our departing members, who have served UCF for years with the utmost dedication and professionalism.”

Departing UCF Board members include the UCC’s outgoing GMP, John C. Dorhauer and outgoing UCC Board Chair, Cameron Barr, as well as Brian Holeman, Wade Zick and outgoing Board Chair, Edith Guffey, who has served in that role since 2019. Moving in to the position of Board Chair will be the Rev. Penny Lowes, who has served on UCF’s Board since 2011.

“We cannot possibly express adequate gratitude to Edith for what she had brought to UCF – and what she continues to bring to the wider church and the world at large,” said Buck. “Fortunately, Penny has agreed to step into Edith’s giant shoes, and we know she will ably guide us as we enter this next chapter in UCF’s growth and mission.”

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About United Church Funds

United Church Funds (UCF) is the leading provider of socially responsible, values-aligned investment management services to United Church of Christ churches and ministries, as well as all faith-based organizations. We offer customized investment portfolios and prudent investment strategies that provide competitive returns while also reflecting our clients' values in seeking to achieve a just world. UCF also offers endowment governance consulting, planned giving programs and superior, personalized service from our dedicated Client Services team. To learn more about how UCF can help your church or faith-based organization further its mission while achieving its long-term financial goals, please visit www.ucfunds.org, email us at info@ucfunds.org or call us toll-free at 877-806-4989.

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