

Hello, and welcome to United Church of Christ Outdoor Ministries!

The Outdoor Ministries Association of the United Church of Christ (OMA-UCC) is the association of camps, retreat centers, and conference centers affiliated with the United Church of Christ. The services and resources of OMA-UCC are available to all our member organizations.

OMA-UCC is all about outdoor ministry leaders helping and supporting each other so that outdoor ministry will continue to be strong and vibrant everywhere throughout the United Church of Christ. So, make sure you let me know at any time that we can help you get connected with resources and/or people that will be helpful to you.

Part of this welcome to you into OMA-UCC is to provide some resources that will be helpful as you transition into your new role. Feel free to reach out to me or the OMA-UCC staff, or OMA-UCC Board Members!

OMA-UCC is divided into three territories in the US: Eastern, Central, and Mountain/Pacific. These territories each have members on the OMA-UCC Board of Directors. You can easily connect to the websites of each of our camps here: <https://www.omaucc.org>. I encourage you to reach out to your colleagues, both near and far!

On the OMA-UCC website you will find:

- General information about OMA-UCC
- Information about the process of applying for Deering Grants
- Information on contacting the OMA-UCC staff
 - Bill Bourdon, Executive Director
 - Kaila Russell, Communication Chair
 - Ryan Gackenheimer, Chaplain
- Facebook group you may find helpful:
 - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/outdoorministryassociationoftheunitedchurchofchrist>
- The OMA-UCC Newsletter. This is a treasure trove of the latest news and information that you will find to be informative and interesting. To get signed up to receive the newsletter and occasional email blasts with more time-sensitive information, go to the <https://www.omaucc.org> site and go to contacts and send Kaila a note.
- And much more!

Things that might be good to know:

OMA-UCC is one of the founding members of the Outdoor Ministry Connection Council (**OMC**). We, along with five other mainline denominations (ELCA Lutheran, United Methodist, Episcopal, Presbyterian, and United Church of Canada), came together for mutual collaboration. In November of 2025 we will have our second combined gathering, and we are working towards regional gatherings (2026) as well as other specialized trainings.

More things you might like to know:

You can join affinity groups in the fall and zoom with others in similar positions across the country. You will find a link under resources on the OMA-UCC web page.

OMA-UCC will help you travel to events and trainings – just e-mail Bill Bourdon and request travel support for an event. Currently we are offering twenty \$250.00 grants.

OMA-UCC fosters a summer staff employment program through a partnership with National UCC. Look for information about the program in September and October newsletters.

OMA-UCC works with our OMC partner associations to conduct a continuing educational program called Compass Points: www.compasspoints.org. These three-day workshops are offered in rotation over the course of two years.

OMA-UCC collaborates with partner Outdoor Ministry Associations to produce the summer camp curriculum, *Inside Out*. You can find information on the OMA-UCC web page under “Resources”.

The Presbyterian Outdoor Ministry Association has been moving toward welcoming individuals and camps from beyond the Presbyterian Church. They have invited our members to participate in their annual November gathering as well as inviting our membership to join the Campfire Collective. Membership in the Campfire Collective will enable your camps to have special purchasing discounts, access to their library, and discounts on their American Camping Association dues. You can find information on the November gathering at www.campfire-collective.org

OMA-UCC dues provide about one-third of the annual budget to support the work of OMA-UCC. It is our hope that all of the 34 UCC outdoor ministry camps will participate in supporting the work of OMA. In January of each year members are sent an invoice and our hope is that you will send in your dues by the end of March.

The American Camp Association has a New Directors Training Program which can be done online and in person. I encourage you to consider taking the certification course. If your camp is not accredited with ACA but would like to be we have several members in OMA-UCC who can help with the process of accreditation.

Zoom meetings of UCC camp directors are offered the last Thursday of the month September-May. Look for the link in the monthly newsletter.

Please know that your Outdoor Ministry Family is out there, and Blessings as you begin a new journey.

Bill Bourdon
OMA-UCC Executive Director

