

Dear Members of the Northern Association,

Grace and peace to you in the name of the One who knits us together in covenant and connection. We invite you to join us for the **Spring Northern Association Meeting on Saturday, May 3, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.** at **First Congregational Church of Santa Barbara**, with lunch to follow. Because the meeting will focus on a process of discernment, we strongly encourage in-person participation. We will make a **Zoom option** available for accessibility.

Please register online by Monday, April 28 at www.scncucc.org/northern.

At this meeting, the Northern Association will be asked to consider participating in the **Unified Conference-Association Model**, a provisional structure designed to support ministry by creating regional gatherings for learning and fellowship and 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 shift is not to lose what is precious, but to create space for what matters most: deepening relationships, strengthening collaboration, and offering meaningful support to clergy and congregations.

As the Northern Association Executive Committee and Conference leaders have been in discernment and have worked to develop a proposal for the Association's review, we return often to the wisdom of *Ecclesiastes 4*, and the teacher's reminder: *Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil... A threefold cord is not easily broken*. This image has called us to remember that strength, resilience, and faithfulness grow when we are bound together—not only in spirit, but also in the ways we structure our shared life.

At our Spring Meeting, we will seek one another's wisdom and engage in discernment. If we feel ready, we will vote on participating in this model. If we are not yet ready, we will set another date for the Association to meet and proceed accordingly. We desire being open to the Spirit's leading.

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 a video for use with your congregation are also online: www.scncucc.org/northern.

We know that change is not easy, especially when it touches something as cherished as the Northern Association. And yet, we trust that the Spirit is still moving among us, inviting us into forms of faithfulness that meet the needs of today and open possibilities for tomorrow.

We are deeply grateful for the many years of shared ministry in this Association—for the worship we've led together, the clergy we've supported, and the congregations we've nurtured. Whatever path forward we choose, our covenant in the United Church of Christ endures. Like the threefold cord, we are strongest when woven together in trust, hope, and shared purpose.

With gratitude and prayers for the road ahead,

The Executive Committee of the Northern Association

Southern California Nevada Conference, United Church of Christ