A black text on a white background

Description automatically generated

CONTACT: Maic D’Agostino, UCC Editorial Communications & News Strategist, Cleveland, 216-736-2113, newsteam@ucc.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JUNE 30, 2023

**United Church of Christ to Hold Prayer Vigil, Community Worship This Weekend in Downtown Indianapolis**

*Public Witness on Saturday Will Oppose Harmful Laws; United Church of Canada Leader Preaching Sunday*

During its [General Synod](https://generalsynod.org/) this weekend in Indianapolis, the United Church of Christ is inviting wider community participation at two events involving faith in action and extravagant welcome.

**Prayer Walk**

UCC members will be [taking to the streets of Indianapolis in prayer](https://www.ucc.org/prayer-walk-at-general-synod-to-show-support-for-trans-people-oppose-harmful-legislation/) **Saturday, July 1 from 2-4 p.m.** Organizers of the Prayer Walk will call attention to laws that [cause harm to trans citizens](https://translegislation.com/) and [curtail reproductive rights](https://www.guttmacher.org/state-legislation-tracker).

Participants will be meeting at [Hudnut Commons](https://downtownindy.org/go/hudnut-commons) across from the Indiana Convention Center. They’ll be joined by other denominational and faith leaders, as well as two Indiana state legislators who belong to the UCC — [Sen. Shelli Yoder](https://indianasenatedemocrats.org/senators/s40/) and [Rep. Kyle Miller](https://indianahousedemocrats.org/members/kyle-miller/full).

“Wherever the United Church of Christ gathers as the General Synod, we desire to leave an imprint of faithful witness as testimony to our collective understanding of a just world, in accordance with scripture and our Synod resolutions,” said Associate General Minister the Rev. Traci Blackmon, who is helping organize the prayer walk. “In our current socio-political climate, the Church desires to continue to be a reconciling force for good, calling our nation to come its higher self with love.”

Advocates representing the wider church, led by UCC leaders — including Blackmon and the Rev. Chad Abbott, Conference Minister of the [Indiana-Kentucky Conference](https://ikcucc.org/) of the UCC — will walk to the Indiana Statehouse. They’ll carry signs and rainbow flags and, on the south lawn of the Capitol grounds, they’ll offer a series of prayers, showing love and solidarity for those marginalized by bills passed and proposed.

“Praying just steps from the very halls where legislators have caused deep harm is a reminder that such a narrative of pain is not the only story,” Abbott said. “We will not waver in the face of such harm and instead name and acknowledge the dignity of all persons through the lifting of our prayers and lament. The world needs to know that there is another story, a story of a love so grand as to promise that no matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome as one of God’s beloved.”

**Community Worship**

[The Rev. Carmen Lansdowne](https://generalcouncil44.ca/news/get-know-moderator-nominee-rev-dr-carmen-lansdowne), Moderator of The [United Church of Canada](https://united-church.ca/), will be [the featured preacher during the General Synod Community Worship service](https://www.ucc.org/united-church-of-canada-leader-to-preach-at-general-synod-in-indianapolis/) **Sunday, July 2 from 2-4 p.m.**

Lansdowne is the first Indigenous woman to lead a religious denomination in Canada, and only the second Indigenous person involved in United Church leadership, the first being the Very Rev. [Stan McKay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stan_McKay), elected Moderator in 1992.

“Rev. Lansdowne is a minister and theologian who will bring a global perspective to the preached moment,” said the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, UCC Associate General Minister and General Synod administrator. “Her voice as an Indigenous woman will be reflected in her sermon. As we in the UCC continue to name Indigenous rights as a priority, having Rev. Lansdowne as a preacher and present with us in other ways is a gift as we explore ‘Making All Things New.’”

“Making All Things New” is the theme for the 2023 edition of the UCC’s biennial gathering.

“It’s a beautiful time to be changing the world,” Lansdowne said. “… In my traditional language, Haíɫzaqvḷa, we use the word *haíɫcístut*¸ which means ‘to turn around and make things right again.’  We are in a *haíɫcístut* time.”

Lansdowne, a member of the Heiltsuk First Nation, is a lifelong United Church member.

The Community Worship is open to all. An offering during worship will be collected for the UCC’s [Annual Fund](https://support.ucc.org/giving/annual-fund). A livestream of the service can be viewed at [ucc.org/gs-livestream](https://www.ucc.org/gs-livestream).

For press registration for General Synod events, please visit [ucc.org/press-registration](https://www.ucc.org/press-registration/).

*#     #     #*

*The*[*United Church of Christ*](https://www.ucc.org/)*, a mainline Protestant denomination, has more than 770,000 members and over 4,700 congregations nationwide. Headquartered in Cleveland, it is a church of many firsts: the first mainline denomination to ordain a woman, the first to ordain an openly gay man and the first predominantly white denomination to ordain an African American.*