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| CONTACT: Maic D’Agostino UCC Editorial Communications & News Strategist  Cleveland, 216-736-2113, [newsteam@ucc.org](mailto:dagostinom@ucc.org)  FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 20 2023 |

A new United Church of Christ national leader has been called.

The [UCC Board](https://www.ucc.org/department/board/) voted in a special meeting Monday, Sept. 18 to appoint the Rev. Shari Prestemon as Acting Associate General Minister for [Wider Church Ministries](https://www.ucc.org/wider-church-ministries/) and Co-Executive for [Global Ministries](https://www.globalministries.org/). The Board’s executive committee received the recommendation to nominate Prestemon from General Minister and President the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, per the UCC Bylaws, and approved that nomination Sept. 11 for the full Board to vote on.

“I am thrilled that Rev. Shari Prestemon is joining our denominational leadership as the Acting AGM for Wider Church Ministries and Acting Co-Executive for Global Ministries,” said Board Chair Julia Gaughan. “She brings a breadth of experience and knowledge alongside spirit-filled leadership and passion for this work. We look forward to what this next chapter of ministry will mean for both the UCC and the world."

Prestemon has been Conference Minister of the [Minnesota Conference](https://www.uccmn.org/) for the last decade and is the current chair of the Council of Conference Ministers. Prior to joining the Conference, Prestemon spent 13 years as the executive director of [Back Bay Mission](https://thebackbaymission.org/) in Mississippi, leading that organization through its post-Hurricane Katrina recovery.

From 2012-18, she served on the Common Global Ministries Board. She also has experience with direct international partnerships, including time as short-term mission personnel in the Philippines and a variety of other visits with global partners, such as in Palestine and Israel.

“Shari Prestemon comes to the role of Associate General Minister with extensive experience in all areas related to the work,” said Thompson. “She is very knowledgeable of the scope of Global Ministries, which is an integral part of Wider Church Ministries. Global mission and partner relations are priorities which invite the participation of the church in all settings and involve a strong ecumenical witness.”

Her appointment comes after Thompson, the previous AGM for Wider Church Ministries, took office as [the newly elected General Minister and President of the denomination](https://www.ucc.org/karen-georgia-thompson-becomes-first-woman-to-lead-ucc-in-historic-vote/), beginning Aug. 1. At the same time, Peter Makari — global relations minister for the Middle East and Europe — [stepped in to serve as WCM’s transitional executive](https://www.ucc.org/makari-named-as-transitional-executive-for-wider-church-ministries-until-october/) until a successor to Thompson could be appointed.

As detailed in the [Bylaws](https://www.ucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/7.3.2023_UCC_Bylaws_FINAL.pdf), the UCC Board, in consultation with the GMP, may appoint an Acting AGM to fill such a vacancy, who then serves until a successor is elected by General Synod.

Prestemon will assume her new duties Jan. 16, 2024, and will be based in Cleveland, where the UCC is headquartered. In addition to Thompson, Prestemon joins the Rev. Traci Blackmon, Associate General Minister for [Justice and Local Church Ministries](https://www.ucc.org/what-we-do/justice-local-church-ministries/), as one of the three [Officers of the Church](https://www.ucc.org/department/elected-officers/). This will be the first time in its history that all the UCC’s Officers will be women.

“I’ve been blessed to witness and personally experience the amazing impact of the UCC’s mission in action in countless ways over the years, in the United States and across the globe,” Prestemon said. “I know what a difference it makes when we accompany those who are in crisis and pain, when we show up to make our love concrete. It will be an honor and joy to step into this role and lead such profound ministries in our life together.”

Read the full release [here](https://ucc.org/shari-prestemon-named-acting-associate-general-minister-for-wider-church-ministries/).

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*The United Church of Christ, 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.*