

Communications

As Communications Director, I serve all of the ministries of the National Office, leadership teams, and other ministries. It's a centralized role, so everyone is free to take advantage of whatever expertise they imagine that I have.

I typically begin my National Conference report by reviewing my basic areas of responsibility. There used to be five areas, but one of them—computer technical support—has been transferred (thank goodness!) into the very capable hands of David Kline, associate director of UB Global. I'll summarize the remaining four areas, and then drill down into some specific aspects of them.

1. Print Publications

Most print publications come through my office one way or another. My role might involve the whole project—writing, editing, and design. Or, if designed by a third party, I might merely do some final proofing and touch-up and then get it printed. In particular, I work on a number of print projects for Global Ministries—*Worldview* newsletter, prayer cards, Thank Offering and Easter Offering bulletin inserts, Miriam Prabhakar's newsletter, and other things.

Official Documents. I also update the Discipline and Pastoral Ministry Handbook. The new Discipline, with changes made in 2017, will be available as a PDF download on the UB.org website by the end of July. The Pastoral Ministry Handbook is updated periodically by the Pastoral Ministry Leadership Team; they don't need to wait for National Conference to approve changes. A "revised" date is included on the cover of the handbook.

UB Booklet. The UB Booklet was totally redesigned and released at the 2011 US National Conference. It was an immediate hit. We've been out of copies for a while now, so it's time to reprint the booklet. I'll do that after National Conference. It will incorporate changes made at the 2013, 2015, and 2017 national conferences, as well as at the General Conference meetings of 2013 and 2017.

UB Year in Review. In January 2012, we published the first "UB Year in Review," which looked back over 2011. We have since published a "UB Year in Review" each year. We always mail it around the end of January. It remains a popular piece.

2. Internet Strategy

I oversee most of what the national office does on the internet—websites, email, UB app, Facebook, online forms, MailChimp, online church directory, domain names, etc. We have a significant internet footprint, and I'm pleased with the overall quality.

UB.org

UB.org is our flagship site, the official website of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, USA. In December 2016, a whole new design went live. It updated the existing design, which dated back to 2011. The site had gone through four or five total redesigns prior to that, dating back to the original launch of UB.org in 1997.

The heavy lifting for the 2016 redesign was done by Clear Elevation, the design firm which is a partnership with Huntington University. I wanted to give them a try, so that I would know whether or not to recommend them to United Brethren churches. It was a very positive experience. Their expertise with Wordpress (our web platform) is very high, and all of my dealings were very professional. I would (and will) use them again.

While we're talking about Clear Elevation: I also asked them to finalize the logo for the 2017 US National Conference. I had done the basic design, but developing a good logo in multiple formats requires additional expertise. Carson Sprunger, at Clear Elevation, provided that.



Steve Dennie
Director of
Communications

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UBCentral.org

This is where we post news about what's happening in the United Brethren church—news about local churches, ministers, denominational events, missions, staff openings, obituaries, and whatever else comes along. UBCentral is also a record of history, especially in regard to ordinations, pastoral assignments, and deaths of ministers and missionaries.

I've been receiving much less news from local churches. But, since I've been preoccupied with the history book, I've not been working to solicit news. I hope to give more attention to this during the next two years.

At the beginning of 2017, as part of our 250th anniversary recognition, I started posting "On This Day in UB History" items. By the end of June, there will have been a total of 115 posts. This resulted from a brain-storm I had last summer, and I've been kicking myself because of all the extra work it entails. But I've received a lot of very positive comments about these posts, and it certainly adds to this special year. The posts will continue through the end of 2017. They get posted on both UBCentral and Facebook.

About 380 people now subscribe to the UB Daily News, up 40 from 2015. They receive an email each day, around 11:15 a.m., containing all news posted to UBCentral during the previous 24 hours (including the "On This Day" posts). This is by far the best way to keep informed about what's happening in the United Brethren church. You don't need to go anywhere—the news comes to you. Subscribe at ubnews.org.

Facebook

Our official denominational Facebook page is located at [Facebook.com/unitedbrethren](https://www.facebook.com/unitedbrethren). As of June 24, 2017, it had 1633 "likes" (compared to 1230 in 2015 and 758 in 2013). That surpasses the Connect email list, which reaches just under 1000 people. Facebook is also a great repository for photos; you'll find many photo albums from UB events there.

All news gets posted on UBCentral. I'm more selective on the Facebook page, lest I annoy people by flooding their news feed. Anything urgent goes here, like prayer requests, deaths among ministers or missionaries, disasters, and the like. Nearly all of the "On This Day" items have been posted to our Facebook page.

UB Global has their own Facebook page at [facebook.com/ubglobalministries](https://www.facebook.com/ubglobalministries). I don't do anything with this page, beyond steal news items for UBCentral. They are up to about 615 "likes," compared to 120 in 2015.

There is also a Facebook group for UB ministers—a closed group, which means it's not accessible to everyone. There are 135 members, compared to 120 two years ago. This is not an official group; I didn't create it and don't administer it in any way. There is occasional interaction, and sometimes a post will provoke a lot of discussion. But for the most part, it's fairly quiet.

Connect

Connect is our official denominational e-letter. I consider it the UB news vehicle with the biggest punch. It reaches somebody in nearly every church in the US. Most information sent via Connect has already been posted on UBCentral, or shortly will be posted there. An issue typically has 1-3 items. Connect is sent on an as-needed basis, rather than according to a set schedule. It currently goes to 930 subscribers.

UBGlobal.org

This is the official website for UB Global (the new name of Global Ministries). I oversaw implementing a new design in the spring of 2016, but David Kline has managed the site since then (with frequent visits to my office). He also added connections to an online giving function.

The addition of David Kline in UB Global provides another person with significant expertise (or at least aptitude) in this area. I'm delighted every time he encroaches on my turf and lightens my load. Territorialism is for the birds. David manages UB Global's Facebook page and maintains the UBGlobal.org website.

Email

UB Global produces and sends out a couple e-letters using the UB Mailchimp account (for which they must develop their own subscriber lists). As of June 24, the Missions Prayer Guide had 295 subscribers, and Mission Link had 250 subscribers. I'm not involved with those newsletters.

Community Church Builder

The Bishop's Office uses Community Church Builder to communicate directly with ministers, and to enable leadership groups to interact. The Women's Ministry Team uses it extensively. Administrative Assistant Cathy Reich administers CCB. I provide some graphics, but that's about all I do with CCB.

Domain Names

We own a lot of different domain names. I view this as relatively cheap but valuable internet real estate. We have domains for our major sites (ub.org, ubglobal.org, ubcentral.org, ubchurches.org). In addition, other domains are useful in publicity to point to specific subdirectories on websites (ubteens.org, ubwomen.org, ub2017.org, ubstaff.org, ubpastors.org, ubnews.org, and others). In some cases, they are just domains that I don't want anybody else to have, like the major versions of unitedbrethren (.com, org, .us).

We also keep in our denominational account the domain registrations for about eight UB churches. I take care of renewing their registrations, and point the domain to the appropriate place. Every year, it seems, one or two churches lose their domain because they let their registration lapse, or because it was in the private account of somebody who no longer attends the church. That won't happen under my umbrella.

Since we got into the game early, in 1997, we were able to secure a two-letter domain name, ub.org. I regularly receive requests to buy the domain. I'm curious about how much we could get for it, but I never pursue the offers. We have far too much wrapped up in the ub.org domain.

3. Filemaker Database

The Filemaker database is a very important internal tool. We use it to keep extensive information on our ministers (education, service record, ministerial licensing, etc.) and churches (addresses, service times, contact persons, directions, etc.). In addition to ministers, we keep contact records for a lot of other people— whoever we need to be in contact with.

The database also includes church statistics going back to the early 1990s. When church reports arrive in January and February of each year, that's where the information goes. A lot of it, anyway.

We use the database for a variety of mail-merge mailings to both ministers and churches. A mobile app puts this information on mobile devices for office personnel who travel a lot.

The database is hosted on Pointinspace.com, which also enables us to use database information in a searchable directory (ubchurches.org).

I designed the database (long ago; it was Bishop Ray Seilhamer's idea), maintain and expand it, and handle the web and mobile interface. It's kind of due for an overhaul.

4. UB Conferences

Every year I'm working on either the US National Conference or the Women's Conference. Both are on a two-year cycle, but on alternating years.

When it's a National Conference year, the first six months are pretty well shot. On the promotion side, I develop a logo and web pages (starting in the fall), maybe a poster (not this year), regular news updates, and whatever else is needed. I edit and layout all reports, and get them posted on the website as PDFs and viewable pages. I design all of the signage. This year, because of the 250th anniversary, has involved a lot of extra things which I hope contribute toward making the conference special. I get dragged (sometimes kicking, but never screaming) into all kinds of arrangements and needs related to the conference.

The women's conference is less demanding. I design a logo and other publicity (maybe a brochure, poster, "Save the Date" card, or whatever else they'd like). I produce other materials, as requested by the Women's Ministry Team, for the actual conference (like signage). The WMT is easy to work with, and they graciously keep me in their loops.

Also, we sponsor pastor summits on the off-year (same year as women's conferences). I develop whatever I'm asked to develop for the Pastor & Spouse, youth, associate staff, and other summits. (The Youth Workers Summit is actually held every year.)

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UB History

Over 30 years have passed since *Trials and Triumphs*, the UB history book, was published. In 2010, the Pastoral Ministry Leadership Team asked me to update the history, and I enthusiastically embraced the project. Big writing projects like this energize me.

It turned into a two-volume work, which I titled, *All for Christ*, using the tagline for the US National Conference adopted in 2013. Although I've been working on the book for six years, it's been practically all-consuming since the 2015 US National Conference. Lots of other things have gotten pushed to the back-burner (for those of you affected by that—I apologize).

Copies of the finished books arrived at the National Office at the end of June. *All for Christ* will be officially released during the 2017 US National Conference. I know this won't have a huge audience. But our history needs to be captured and recorded, so that's what I did. I trust that *All for Christ* will be a useful resource for the United Brethren church far into the future.

You can order copies on Amazon for \$14.95. It'll be a lot cheaper at this National Conference. I will design a version for mobile devices (like Kindle), perhaps by the end of 2017.

These are my seventh and eighth published books. Of the eight, five were done for the United Brethren church. The other three were fluff humor books for InterVarsity Press. I save my best for my church. *All for Christ* is my *magnum opus*.

On the Personal Side

Pam and I were part of the core group that started Anchor Community Church (Fort Wayne, Ind.) back in 1998. Anchor continues to be our church home. I'm on the leadership team and play keyboard on the worship team; Pam works with finances. After 18 years with founding pastor Tim Hallman, he took a position with the Fort Wayne YMCA. The pastoral transition in mid-2016 went very smoothly. We're excited to have Kevin and Christia Whitacre leading Anchor.

In February 2017 we got a scare when my dad, Don Dennie, had a stroke. He has come back from it as well as could be expected. I consider it an extraordinary blessing that, despite his physical limitations, he is, mentally, as sharp and witty as ever.

Pam and I celebrate our 28th anniversary on July 22, 2017. She is a partner in the Christen-Souers accounting firm in Fort Wayne, Ind. Our lives revolve foremost around our work, plus church and extended family. Our own household includes three cats (or, more likely, their household includes two humans). Murphy and Reacher are three years old, and Molly is 19. She sleeps nearly all the time and gets whatever she wants.

The *All for Christ* books have dominated my life for several years now, but especially during the past two years. I even took 18 months off from the worship team just to gain another evening to work on the books. Now that it's done, and as soon as National Conference is over, I can do something about all those weeds in the back yard. Until now, I've only had time to watch them grow, not to do anything about them.

And Finally....

It's been a pleasure serving alongside Bishop Todd Fetters. He's fun to be around, and has great instincts for the role of bishop (a direct result, I'm sure, of growing up around Paul, Barbara, Brooks, and Luke). Cathy Reich, who works right outside my office, is an indispensable part of the National Office team and is Grand Central Station when it comes to the National Conference. Please thank her for everything she does.

The rest of my colleagues at the National Office are pretty great, too. It's a superb team.

I appreciate the many opportunities the United Brethren Church continues to give me.