

Executive Board Bios

Rev. Susan Valiquette, Executive Board Moderator

Raised, baptized and confirmed in the United Church of Christ, Reverend Susan Valiquette sensed a calling to ordained ministry when she was in grade 10. She responded to that calling and was ordained in 1995 at the age of 25 in Ohio. She has served the UCC since that time as both a local church pastor and as a global mission co-worker. She chaired the Church & Ministry committee of the Southwest Association, Michigan Conference. Susan was appointed through Global Ministries as the Chaplain of an all female secondary boarding school, Inanda Seminary, in the township of Inanda (Durban, South Africa) for 18 years. Last year, she served on the Southwest Conference Board as an at-large member. Her best skills are rooted in people, and she believes that it is through relationships and connections that we work most effectively and efficiently. She enjoys yoga, hiking, cooking, traveling, and spending time with her two children Micah (22) and Madeline (20) when they visit from university.

Hubert Hirwa, Executive Board Moderator-Elect

I am Hubert. I moved to Arizona to work in business development in 2016 and have loved it so far. As a person I truly believe that you have to leave the places you live better than before you got there, a belief that has gotten me a President's Volunteer Award from the Obama White House. Since arriving in Arizona I have volunteered with the homeless, been a camp counselor for the Southwestern Conference, and for the last two years I have had the honor of serving on the board of the Southwest Conference of the United Church as Secretary. I enjoy Russian literature, historical epics, dancing as well as a good brunch. I have been and am excited to serve on a board that is committed to racial justice work, something truly rare.

Scott Greenwood, Executive Board Treasurer

A constitutional rights attorney based in metro Phoenix, Scott Greenwood is nationally renowned for his passionate engagement in defending civil rights and civil liberties. His practice emphasizes enhanced accountability, transparency, and legitimacy in best-practices law enforcement. He also serves as general counsel emeritus to the American Civil Liberties Union after serving as general counsel and member of the ACLU's executive committee for over eleven years, and on its national board for over thirteen. He also served as general counsel to the ACLU of Ohio and on its executive committee and board for over two decades. Scott serves as treasurer to Arizona's

one-n-ten, providing services to LGBTQIA+ youth, and also to the Southwest Conference. He, his husband Adil, and their senior rescue pug Hank live in Scottsdale.

Rev. Deborah Worley, Executive Board Secretary

I was ordained as a Minister in the SWC of the UCC in 2000, but between then and now spent 15 years serving full-time in the “ministry of motherhood” (i.e., staying at home with my three kids, who are now 15, 18, and 20). Before that, I served as a youth pastor at The United Church of Los Alamos for several years, and more recently have been serving as the solo pastor of a small PC(USA) congregation. My affiliation with the SWC over these past 20+ years has been very meaningful to me, and I was honored to be invited to serve as Secretary of the Executive Board. I am very much looking forward to engaging more deeply with the Conference in this role.

Connor White, Executive Board At-Large

Connor White is a research scientist whose church leadership experience started in 2018 by serving on a committee updating his local church's Open and Affirming statement to better affirm transgender individuals in church life and activity. Since then he has served on his local church's Council of Stewards as Member-at-Large since 2020 and leads the church's COVID-19 Response Team, using his science background to form evidence-based responses to the pandemic and providing the congregation with weekly reports. Having grown up in his local church, Connor wants to give back to Scottsdale Congregational and the wider Southwest Conference, which is why he said yes to SWC leadership. He hopes his young-adult and research experience will provide a unique perspective to aid the Southwest Conference Executive Board.

Rev. Dr. George Ault, Executive Board At-Large

George Ault has been an active member of the Southwest Conference since 1985, when he came here to serve as the pastor of The Church of the Red Rocks in Sedona, AZ. He served as the pastor of that congregation for 30 years, and has served on a variety of SWC committees, including twice as the Moderator. He feels honored to be nominated to serve on the Executive Board, to which he brings his experience and enthusiasm

Rev. Rebecca Morgan, Executive Board At-Large

Currently I am serving my second round as interim minister at First Presbyterian Church in Farmington, NM, and am the former owner of Namaste House Assisted Living, also in Farmington. I returned to my hometown of Farmington in 2008 after serving as a hospital and hospice chaplain in the Denver area.

While living in Farmington sometimes feels like living on the edge of the world, no UCC churches to be found within 200 miles, I do enjoy being back in New Mexico and have found making connections with the UCC, even from a distance, to be so very important to me. Staying connected to my church keeps me grounded theologically and justice focused.

I am honored to be considered to sit on the conference board as it seems to be a way to give back to the church that has given me so much. Looking forward to what comes next as we walk together down this glorious, messy road.

Namaste and love,

Rev A.O. Ferguson, Executive Board At-Large

A O Ferguson resides in Albuquerque, NM and is a chaplain and faculty member for the University of New Mexico school of medicine. He has lived in NM for 6 years and considers the southwest home. The connection between the people and the land is life affirming. A O is originally from the foothills of North Carolina, so the high desert took some getting accustomed to. Chaplaincy is a second career as A O spent 20 years in laboratories as a physical scientist. His areas of study and work were organic chemistry and molecular biology. A O is ordained clergy in the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC). He attended Lancaster Theological Seminary in Lancaster, PA where he earned a MDiv. He attended Hood College in Frederick, MD earning an MA in Thanatology. A O then did a fellowship at University of Texas M D Anderson in Houston, Tx. He worked at Anderson for 5 years before moving to New Mexico. A O is a member of First Congregational UCC of Albuquerque. A O is an avid hot air balloon enthusiast, golfer and loves to travel.

Rev. Dr. Rebecca McElfresh, Executive Board At-Large

Following a career in education where she served as a public school classroom teacher, program director, school principal and human resources director, and then faculty of Ursuline College and The University of Akron, Rebecca entered the discernment process for ministry at The Good Shepherd United Church of Christ in Sahuarita, Arizona where she now serves as the Associate Minister of Pastoral Care and Spiritual Growth. Her doctoral work focused on the role of the arts in the spiritual transformation of individuals and groups. She is also one of three authors of the book titled, Embracing Our Final Days: A Journey of Care to the End, a memoir of the role of caretaking for those with Alzheimer's and other dementias.

Rebecca and her husband, Jim Armstrong, live in Indianapolis, Indiana during the summer months where some of their children and grandchildren live. Together, they have three children and five grandchildren. Rebecca is an avid lover and supporter of the arts. She enjoys silversmithing, working with clay and painting / mixed media. She is especially passionate about bringing the arts into our spiritual experiences, both individually and collectively in worship.

Rev. Sarah Tevis Towne, Ex-Officio

I'm the Pastor and Teacher at Church of the Good Shepherd, UCC in Albuquerque, NM and the former Moderator of the SW Conference. In addition to serving a local brick-and-mortar church, I host a TikTok ministry @disorganized.religion. Online ministry is also the topic of my current DMin inquiry. I'm a high-energy, neurospicy millennial who brings fun and creativity to meetings. Because of the way my brain processes the world, I strongly prefer online gatherings (hypersensitivity to sound, light, smell and emotion make in-person gatherings and airports, in particular, super stressful).

For fun, I enjoy sewing, adventuring outdoors, and spending time with my husband and two adult children. I'm also in the process of training a medical-alert service dog named Mango. If you want to get in touch, text message or phone call is the best way. Direct communication is also ideal--subtle hints and humor definitely go over my head sometimes. Haha. I'm happy to adjust my communication style to meet your needs too—I appreciate that we have different ways of being in the world!