

# Pastor John Linwood Kennedy

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Pastor, Bethlehem UCC Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan



# Education

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- Austin Texas Community College -- Criminal Justice
- Elmhurst College (Elmhurst IL) -- B.A. "Magna Cum Laude" Double Major Theology & Philosophy
- Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary -- M. Div. "Outstanding Preacher Award"

# Pastoral Career

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- Peace memorial Village Retirement community (UCC), Palos Park IL -- Director of Resident Services & Care (1 year)
- Fourth Avenue United Methodist Church (Louisville KY) -- Associate Minister of Outreach/Witness (1 year)
- Mt. Tabor United Methodist Church, Crestwood KY (Louisville metro) – Pastor (6 years)
- Preston Highway UMC, Louisville KY -- Pulpit Supply/pastoral care (1 year)
- First Congregational UCC, Watertown WI -- Sr. Pastor (5 years)



# Quotes from Pastoral Profile

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- God used all of my life, to minister to and with others to share the love and hope of Jesus. Christ. God had rescued me through his love and I wanted to share that same hope.
- I am passionate about pastoral care, counseling, and visitation.
- Even as a child, justice meant everything to me and I would intercede in cases of bullying or exclusion.
- The church was always like a part of my extended family that nurtured me and also tested me.

# Quotes, continued

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- I loved being a police officer and I was good at what I did. I felt like I made a difference each day in neighborhoods that were plagued with crime and suffering. I received “Police Officer of the Year Awards” 4 times. My point is that when I received my call to Ordained Ministry, I did not leave something I disliked, but left something that I loved and that was part of my identity.
- I felt limited by the badge and the gun.





# Continuing Education

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- CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION CPE CISM Critical Incident Stress Management Response Team, Training via Christ Hospital
- CISM TRAINING, Wisconsin Law Enforcement
- Austin Police Dept. Fire Chaplain Training
- Wisconsin Fire Chief Assoc. Cultural Awareness & Diversity Training
- Stephen Leader Training
- Hospice Training
- UCC Training on Disabilities and Mental Disabilities



# Awards, Honors, and Publications

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- "Outstanding Male Preacher Award, Class of 2004 Louisville Theological Seminary
- *Magana Cum Laude* Elmhurst
- College International Theology Honor Society
- International Philosophy Honor Society
- Phi Kappa Phi (highest ranking international academic honor society)
- 4-Star Pastor's Award Kentucky Conference
- Louisville District UMC "Police Officer of the Year Award" 4-times (Austin TX Police Dept.) 41 Commendations Certificate of Merit Community Service Awards 5



# The Kennedy Family (11/11/14)

John & Karen  
Mitch Port age 19  
Sarah Kennedy age 15  
Julia Kennedy age 14  
John-Matthew age 8

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## My sense of being called by God and the church to authorized ministry

- I was raised the son of a United Church of Christ pastor. Growing up as a pastor's son I always knew what it was like to be within the shadow of the church's steeple. For my family our lives were spent living in a parsonage next door to the church. The church and its surrounding grounds were an extension of my home. They were the worst of times and the best of times. I experienced the pain that occurs to a pastor's family when conflicts arose in our faith community, and I experienced some of the greatest acts of love, grace, and kindness from our faith communities. I have no memory of God not being a part of my life. The church was always like a part of my extended family that nurtured me and also tested me. Even though I was always active in the church, I never entertained the idea of being a pastor even though people would often ask me that question.
- Instead I became an Austin Texas Police Officer. I served 12-years, working in the toughest of neighborhoods, and, worked in the Organized Crime Unit-Major Violator's Section. I saw the worst of the worse. I lost 3 friends who were killed in-line-of-duty, and had police friends who committed suicide. On a personal level I was injured on duty and suffered a painful divorce. I loved being a police officer and I was good at what I did. I felt like I made a difference each day in neighborhoods that were plagued with crime and suffering. I received "Police Officer of the Year Awards" 4 times.
- My point is that when I received my call to Ordained Ministry, I did not leave something I disliked, but left something that I loved and that was part of my identity. I felt limited by the badge and the gun. I felt God calling me to reach out to others who struggled and needed to experience Christ's love. God used all of my life, to minister to and with others to share the love and hope of Jesus Christ. God had rescued me through his love and I wanted to share that same hope.



# Ministry Essays

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- The following slides are Rev Kennedy's responses to the section of the Pastoral Profile in which candidates are asked to write about various Pastoral attributes, from *THE MARKS OF FAITHFUL AND EFFECTIVE AUTHORIZED MINISTERS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST*, a resource document provided by the UCC to Pastors and Congregations during the search process.
- While Rev Kennedy wrote the words, he did \*not\* apply the formatting, particularly the tiny text used to “make it fit on one page!”



## My concept of covenant and how it informs the nature, purpose, and polity of the United Church of Christ

- Even though I was raised and trained in the UCC for most of my life and ministry, I also had ministry experiences in other denominations. I experienced the diversity of what “Covenant and Connection” meant in those traditions. In the UMC, I served as an associate pastor for outreach and witness in an urban church in downtown Louisville with great diversity, and then as a solo pastor for 6-years in a rural/suburban congregation. During my time in seminary I did 2- years of Field Education. I served a Methodist Church because I wanted to experience serving in an urban setting since I had been a “ghetto-cop” and felt the pain and need in the city.
- I was then offered my own church and parsonage by the KY Conference of The Methodist Church while still in seminary. I had a wonderful experience with wonderful people at Mt. Tabor UMC and the church grew dramatically, but I knew I needed to return to the UCC because of my commitment to a Congregational Polity. In the United Methodist Church (UMC), their sense of connection in ministry is in their Episcopal Polity. The Bishop is in charge and appoints the pastors to the churches. What is decided at the National level is mandatory for the Conferences, districts, and each individual congregation. It is a top down hierarchy. The pastor is not a member of the church but belongs to the Conference. In the UCC, of my raising, each church is fully autonomous in its decisions. Local churches in the UCC: develop their own constitution, bylaws; call their own pastors; and make their own decisions. The power is vested in the congregation. In the UCC we trust that God’s voice of clarity will be heard by listening to the many voices in the pews. Authority rises from the many, from the members themselves of which the pastor is one. Our covenant and connection with the wider church is voluntary and is guided by unity in mission and ministry, not in a hierarchy. Covenant unlike a contract is joyful response

# I am passionate about

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- (Definition) Passionate: showing or caused by strong feelings or a strong belief; intense; strong spirit. I am passionate about beautiful, creative, and Christ-Centered worship. I am passionate about pastoral care, counseling, and visitation. Our Congregation started a Stephen Ministry Program in 2011 and we have 5 trained Leaders and 18 trained ministers. I visit every ever shut-in at least once a month (there are exceptions) for communion visits and more for those who are struggling. I am amazed and passionate about God's goodness and love for his/her creation.
  - I believe God still performs miracles and that God uses people to accomplish those miracles, and to transform, and create new beginnings out of dead-ends. I am passionate about creating safe places and spaces for people to be who they really are on their faith journeys. So I am passionate about creating and nurturing an environment where it is not only ok to seek, explore, and question, but where it is actually encouraged and can be fun. I am passionate about encouraging and helping congregations to be lay-driven churches of the 21st century and discover the joy of authentic and covenantal community with healthy family systems. I have had a life-long passion for social-justice and believe mission should address immediate needs as wells as address the systemic causes of those needs. I am steeped in the teachings of Gandhi and have studied the works of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for 34-years. I work passionately to foster a church with extravagant welcome for all God's people. Our Congregation just became officially Open & Affirming on July 14, 2014. I work hard working with the Deacons to bring members into the church. I do so in a way that listens and appreciates their story but also I share the rich story of who we are as the UCC to help searchers make a informed decision that helps them find the church home that feels like coming "home".



Mark 14. of *The Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers at the United Church*: to accept and promote diversity, to inspire others to do so, and to minister in a multicultural and multiracial, open and affirming, just peace, accessible to all, united and uniting church.

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- From my earliest memory, I was that taught me that all people are created equal. As a 6-year-old-boy, I remember my mom explaining when Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated, that he was a modern day prophet. I was the son of a UCC pastor who worked in the Civil Rights Movement. Even as a child, justice meant everything to me and I would intercede in cases of bullying or exclusion. I thought I was immune from prejudice. But at age 24, I discovered that I had prejudice and racism in me that I did not even know existed. As a police officer in Austin, Texas, working in the toughest of neighborhoods, I realized that even with progressive parents and all my progressive ideals, that just being raised white in the South had left latent racism in me. An epiphany occurred when a good friend of mine asked me if I would mind if my baby-sister married a black man. I was ashamed. It put a mirror in front of my face and didn't like what I saw. From that moment my heart changed. I saw color with my eyes but not with my heart. It was so freeing. I had the same experience with homosexuality. I was raised not to be unkind, but that it was wrong. That changed, as I learned of beloved family members and other close police friends, who lived closeted lives. I realized that stereo-types meant nothing. In addition, I got to know the people in the neighborhoods and on the streets including transvestites. I developed relationships and learned much. I was the only white officer invited to be a part of the Cultural Awareness and Diversity Training Team. After leaving the police department, I attended seminary where I sought out a church to serve that was an inner city, multi-racial, multi-cultural, and welcoming congregation. Being on staff there helped to further develop my sense of acceptance for all. As of recently, my current UCC congregation went from one that was divided to O & A in 5 years with a 90% majority! Minority members added to our roles in last 2 years.