

Ecumenical Campus Ministry at Kansas State University

History: 1920 - 2021

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Presbyterian Campus Ministry in Manhattan, Kansas

Reverend William Upton Guerrant arrived in Manhattan in September 1920, as the first Presbyterian campus minister. The church was used for student meetings for the first ten years.

The old house where the Guerrant family lived at 315 N. 14th Street, across from City Park, was torn down and a brick Westminster Student Center where the Westminster Fellowship met was built in its place in 1931. The Westminster Student Center was funded by the United Presbyterian Church's Synod of Kansas through The Westminster Foundation.

Bill and Claire Guerrant with their four children (Bill, Gene, D.S, and Etienne) also lived in this center. Rev. Guerrant was known to his former students as "Wild Bill" because of his hot and heavy evangelistic style of preaching. He retired in 1951, after thirty-one years of student ministry.

By 1957, the Westminster Student Center was outgrowing the brick building on City Park West. A fundraiser was started to buy a building. Led by First Presbyterian Church, churches in the Synod helped with this effort. The Synod of Kansas held title to the property from the start.

A site for the new center was acquired in 1956 on north Denison. Starting in 1958, the house standing on the property was used as an administrative building for the campus program. The house was removed and made into a parking lot for 30 cars when the new center was constructed. In 1960/61, the building at 1021 Denison was built by The Westminster Foundation of the Presbyterian Synod for use by the Presbyterian Campus Ministry and was known as the Presbyterian Campus Center. The new building was dedicated on October 8, 1961. The house on City Park West was used to house the campus ministers and eventually sold in February 1971.

During the years the campus ministry was funded and run by the Presbyterian Church, the direction for programming came from the Department of Campus Christian Life, Central

Department of Church Relations, Board of Christian Education within the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Of course, there was also more direction provided to the Westminster Student Center by the local churches, Presbytery and Synod via The Westminster Foundation.

The Westminster Foundation

The Westminster Foundation of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. was created for the purpose of providing a campus ministry to witness to Christ in university and college communities.

The beginning of such a ministry was at the University of Michigan in 1887. A Presbyterian student program in Kansas at the University of Kansas was among the early ones, starting in 1905. By the 1950s, there were approximately 150 Presbyterian Student Centers in the U.S.

The responsible structure for the campus ministry in Manhattan, up to May 1963, was the Local Committee Westminster Foundation, a created entity of the Board of Trustees of The Westminster Foundation of the Presbyterian Synod of Kansas.

The Local Committee was made up of nine members divided into three classes and elected for three-year terms, plus the president of the student fellowship and one minister from each Presbyterian Church in Manhattan. The professional staff were ex-officio members. The committee was organized into five areas of responsibility: finance, program and philosophy, church relations, property care and policy, and public relations.

Moving beyond just a Presbyterian Campus Ministry focus:

The Presbyterian Campus Ministry changed names and was overseen by the Council of Ministry of the United Campus Christian Fellowship (UCCF) at Kansas State University in 1963. This was an idea originally proposed by the United Church of Christ in the 1940s. In the 1950s, discussion continued. By 1956, a plan for the United Campus Christian Fellowship was drawn up by the various student national executive committees. By the 1960s, churches were ready to participate in an ecumenical student movement. Members of the UCCF at Kansas State University were the United Presbyterian Church, United Church of Christ (Congregational and Evangelical & Reformed), the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Evangelical United Brethren (Later renamed the United Methodist Church after a merger).

The responsibility for this particular campus ministry thus passed into the hands of the Council of Ministry which was made up of two persons from each of the four participating denominations, two UCCF student representatives, one clergy-man from each of the local congregations of the participating denominations, and three members-at-large elected by the

above-named members. The professional campus ministry staff persons were ex-officio members but without vote.

The Westminster Foundation of the Synod of Kansas continued to provide a share of the funding until it was disbanded in 1968. After that, the majority of the funding plus ownership of the Denison and City Park West buildings continued through the Presbyterian Synod for many years. The remaining funding for the UCCF came from local churches, those denominations' regional/national organizations, student fees and sales, property rental, and even money from the ubiquitous Coke machines.

1963 Quote:

“The UCCF is a community of worship, of study and of common commitment and action. Through serious study, we seek a deeper understanding of the Christian faith and how this relates to all areas of academic study and all phases of life. We seek to put this into terms of commitment and action so that each student and faculty member will share in God’s purposes in whatever occupational role God may be able to use him/her.”

In 1970, United Campus Christian Fellowship was reorganized but still supported by the Presbyterian (FPC and Trinity), Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), United Church of Christ and United Methodist Church churches. Those four denominations and five local churches proposed to lead nearly 2000 UCCF preference students and faculty into significant adventures in being a Christian ministry within the university.

During the 70’s, the ministry became the United Campus Ministry (UCM). UCM was joined by the United Methodists and Quaker Society of Friends. Also, in 1970, the remaining local church’s campus ministers (Warren Rempel - United Methodist Wesley Foundation) and Bruce Woods – United Methodist) and staff all located to the campus student center on Denison Street, joining Rev. Hafsten and Rev. Lackey.

In 1988/89, the United Methodists pulled out of the UCM. The United Methodists wanted to create and support their own campus ministry.

(It may be more accurate to characterize the UM’s decision in terms of a move to tribalism, with an eye on organizational survival. There were and still are two wings of the UMC—one more traditional/conservative and one more ecumenical/liberal. It may be the bishops decided these ecumenically-oriented campus ministries weren’t forming “sufficiently Methodist” future clergy and laity, and moved to institute measures that produced more institutional control/influence over the spiritual and ecclesiastical formation of their college-going young adults.)

During the 60s/70s/80s, a local board was created to govern the ecumenical campus ministry. Made up of members from the local churches, some regional church organizations and campus faculty, the board governed and made funding decisions.

Wider Christian Efforts Locally and Beyond:

On the Kansas State University campus, in the State of Kansas, and nationally, there were efforts to have churches work together across each campus, on all the campuses in Kansas and on campuses nationwide through an organization called the United Ministries in Higher Education. The United Ministries in Higher Education branch at KSU was created in the early 1960s. In 1970, members were American Baptist, Church of the Brethren, Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ and United Methodists.

In July 1978, the state-level group overseeing all campus ministries (the Kansas Commission for United Ministries in Higher Education, Inc.) changed the United Campus Ministry at Kansas State University name to the Ecumenical Christian Ministries, Inc. at Kansas State University. The other campus ministries at all the other Kansas Regents universities were similarly renamed, i.e., Ecumenical Christian Ministry, Inc. at the University of Kansas, etc.

The Kansas Commission for United Ministries in Higher Education was an administrative and coordinating entity. Laura Varney, board member from Manhattan's First Presbyterian Church, served on the Board of the UMHE in Kansas at that time.

At the regional level, there was a United Ministries in Higher Education in KCMO with members: American Baptists, Christian Church (DOC), Church of the Brethren, The Episcopal Church, Moravian Church in America Northern Province, Presbyterian Church in the U.S., Reformed Church in America, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church and United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. At the national level, there was a United Ministries in Higher Education located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with the same members as at KCMO.

Today's ECM

The Ecumenical Campus Ministry (ECM), Inc. at Kansas State University was incorporated on March 21, 1991 by Presbyterians and United Church of Christ. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) did not return to the ecumenical partnership until somewhere around 1999, when Campus Pastor David Jones approached Paxton Jones, Regional Minister and President of the Christian Church in Kansas, about rejoining the campus ministry effort at K-State. Paxton Jones personally joined the ECM Board, helped with finding financial resources, and shepherded Disciple involvement in ECM on a statewide level.

Beginning in 1998, Rev. John Williams, Presbyterian Synod of Mid-America executive, indicated that the Synod's outsized support of the campus ministries at KU and K-State was coming under pressure, both from other campus ministries within the Synod who thought they deserved a larger piece of the pie and from demographics that indicated a denomination slowly decreasing in membership and financial capacity to support campus ministry.

At that time, campus ministry garnered nearly 25% of the Synod's budget, or approximately \$150,000/year, with nearly 50% of that total going to just two—KU and K-State—of the 15 or so campus ministries within the Synod's jurisdiction. This unequal distribution was for years

justified on the basis that the Synod owned campus ministry buildings only at KU and K-State, that these two universities had the largest number of students, and that the influence of graduates from these two schools reached much further into societal leadership than graduates from the remaining schools.

Thus began a slow divestment from campus ministry on the part of the Synod of Mid-America. Although funding levels remained relatively stable until 2010, the Synod sought relief from the costs of building maintenance as early as 1981. In 2006, the Regional Presbyterian Synod office deeded the building at 1021 Denison to the ECM Board of Directors.

In 2013, the ECM Building at 1021 Denison was sold to the KSU Foundation. A new ECM building was built at 904 Sunset Avenue and finished in March 2015.

Programming over the Years

From 1920 until the early 1960s, campus ministry was very focused. The aim was to make an authentic Christian witness in the total life of the university and its students, faculty, and all other members of its community. Students were encouraged to attend local Sunday School and church services every Sunday. The campus ministry provided classes in many aspects of Christianity for single and married students. Emphasis was on spiritual growth during the time spent at the university, so graduating students would be a positive asset to their future jobs and communities.

The late 60's and early 70's were times of protest and KSU had its share. The war in Vietnam and the civil rights movement brought out many mixed feelings and protests. The leaders at UCCF were involved in calming the waters, so to speak. UCCF Pastor Jim Lackey and First Christian Pastor Ben Duerfeldt spent much time with students discussing the war and civil rights. First Christian Church, Manhattan and/or the Christian Church in Kansas may have pulled out of the campus ministry in 1970 or 1971, in response to Lackey's/the ministry's anti-war stance.

On Dec 13, 1968, Nichols Gymnasium burned and this was believed to be part of the Vietnam War protest. No one was ever charged, but it was declared to be arson. The Black Panthers were active on and around campus. One of the UCCF students was 'turned' by a Panther recruiter at about the same time as the burning. One of the campus leaders spent the night of Dec 13, 1968, discussing the ministry, with this UCCF/Black Panther member and, therefore, the student was not a suspect. The student Frank Cleveland was known as "Klorox."

Frank Cleveland (aka Klorox) had been recruited to K-State and Manhattan from a New York City Association of Christian Fellowship. Jim Lackey was Pastor of UCCF and worked closely with Frank to get him away from the Black Panthers who had recruited Frank. Ben Duerfeldt was on the Board of UCCF at the time and very involved.

One of the signature programs of PCM/UCCF about that time was its participation in/sponsorship of a “model United Nations” program. This was an era of hope for “organic unity” among the various denominations.

By the early 1980s, if not sooner, those hopes had been dashed, as denominations (at various speeds) came to embrace new forms of tribalism.

During the 70’s, the ministry became the United Campus Ministry (UCM) and sponsored movies, dinners and other events which were designed to raise awareness of national and international events, such as apartheid in South Africa. The movie “Cry Freedom” was shown and discussed.

In the 80’s, ECM gave voice to the Aids crisis and later to LBGT (Lesbian/Bi/Gay/Transgender) issues. Over the years, the ministry has provided a safety valve and a place to come and discuss the difficult problems students and the community face, without judgement as to beliefs.

Many campus ministries across the country developed a close synergy with the social reform movements of the 1960s—women’s rights, civil rights, the anti-war movement, the environmental movement—and many campus ministers were spiritually formed by this synergy between their religious and social convictions. That synergy shaped campus ministry, including at K-State (though to a lesser extent here than other places, perhaps owing to K-State’s status as a land-grant university) for the next generation. But by the late-1980s, signs of a shift to religious tribalism were evident.

By the mid-1990s, campus ministries were searching for new organizing principles to reflect the changing realities in the larger culture and the churches, including declining financial support from the churches. The social-justice-oriented approach gradually gave way in the late-1990s to a hybrid approach that both maintained an appreciation for earlier social justice, ecumenical and international concerns and reconnected the campus ministry, at least at K-State, to the foundations of church life, from which campus ministry originally developed.

The four pillars of ECM in the late 1990s were Worship, Bible Study, Community Service and Fellowship. While successful in reconnecting ECM to the supporting churches and in developing three or four “generations” of effective small group ministry cohorts over the next dozen years, this model lacked sufficient engagement with the concerns of wider cohorts of students within the university.

A shift to a more “student leader centered” model of campus ministry focused on student passions and concerns energized ECM by 2010.

Examples of the New Ministry:

Real Food Lunch started: January 20, 2010 - present

Mission trips:

- Engineers without borders/ECM, to Ecuador repair water lines in mountain village of Yakanyay, Ecuador, January, 2012.
- ECM Service-Learning Trips to Puerto Morro in January, 2013 and Engabo, Ecuador, Winter 2014
- Spring Break Mission Trips began in 2003 (Ciudad Victoria, Mexico, followed by Chicago, Nashville, a number of hurricane recovery trips to Port Arthur, TX, New Orleans, LA, Beaumont, TX, Texas City, TX, then other trips to San Antonio, Matamoros, Mexico (also with EWB), Nashville, tornado recovery to Greensburg, KS, and a Poverty Immersion Experience in Louisville, KY. Once the January trips to Ecuador started, interest and energy for the Spring Break trips subsided.

Recent Changes in ECM Leadership and Organizational Oversight

Rev. Dr. David Jones (CC – DOC) retired in 2017 after 20 years as the campus pastor. Dr. Jones saw a lot of changes in his 20 years plus the construction of a new building for ECM. At some point, the United Ministries in Higher Education was closed down at all levels. The Presbyterian Synod of Mid-America stopped funding the ECMs at KSU and KU.

The charge of governing, funding and guiding ECM now fell totally on the local ECM Board of Directors. There was no longer church, university, state or national oversight.

Reverend Christian Watkins (CC – DOC) started as the newest ECM campus pastor in August of 2017. During her time, the campus relations have already changed. KSU decided to dissolve the committee of religious organizations working with faculty and staff on campus, stopped hosting the religious organizations' websites and no longer offered KSU email addresses.

ECM's campus Pastor, Christian Watkins, is a member of the KSU President's Committee on Religious, Spiritual and Nonreligious Diversity

Because of the Corona Virus Pandemic, starting in March 2020, ECM was forced to pivot to online Real Food Live and holding small group classes and Board of Directors meetings on Zoom.

By fall of 2021, due to some people being vaccinated, meetings were able to resume in person, which everyone realized was a huge plus. Human beings are meant to interact with one another in person. Otherwise, engagement with one another and organizations such as ECM is very difficult, if not nearly impossible.

As ECM celebrates its 101st Anniversary, the organization looks forward to another century of welcoming students to the KSU campus and guiding them to a full and wonderful adulthood.

Our Mission – 2017 to the present

Ecumenical Campus Ministry (ECM) at Kansas State University is committed to support safe and nurturing spaces for students at the university and in greater Manhattan who are eager to explore and affirm the complexities of diverse and thriving community. ECM embodies God's love by fostering community in the midst of multiple religious and non-religious identities, ethnicities, genders or sexual orientations, and native languages.

'Humans Welcome-No Strings Attached' is our directing phrase which inspires the ways we engage as community, whether through discussion, sustainable lifestyle choices, or by sharing our personal journeys.

ECM continues to imagine what the world might look like if we asked how to be faithful to the earth we walk, the food we eat, and the people we encounter.

List of Pastors

- Rev. William Upton Guerrant (Presbyterian)
1920 – 1951
- Rev. A. Myrvin DeLapp (Presbyterian)
1951 – 1954
- Dr. Rev. Emerson I. (Abbey) Abendroth (Presbyterian)
08/1954 – 1961
- Rev. David J. McGown (Co-Pastor) (Presbyterian)
1961 – 1967
- Rev. James Lackey (Co-Pastor) (CC – DOC)
1963 – 1978
- Dr. Joseph W. Hafsten (Co-Pastor) (Presbyterian)
1967 – 1970
- Dr. Rev. Warren Rempel (United Methodist Wesley Foundation)
1970 to 1979?
- Rev. Bruce Woods (Evangelical United Brethren/United Methodist)
1970 to 1979?
- Rev. Rodney Saunders (Presbyterian, Methodist or CC-DOC?)
February, 1979 – May 1987
- Rev. Al Zimmerman (Presbyterian)
July 1987 – December 1996
- Dr. Rev. David Jones (CC – DOC)
April 1997 – 2017
- Rev. Christian Watkins (CC – DOC)
2017 – present

Other campus ministries were housed at the ECM Building at 1021 Denison from time to time:

- Don Fallon, Lutheran Campus Ministry
- Craig Sommers (or Sommer), Lutheran or United Methodist Campus Ministry
early '80s