

COMMAntary: an e-newsletter of the Minnesota Conference - United Church of Christ

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God is still speaking,

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Volume 6, Number 25

23 June 2010

News of the Conference

Mission Bite

*from the 2030 Clergy contingent of the Minnesota
Conference United Church of Christ*

Shepherding the Shepherd

Nine members from the Minnesota Conference attended a June 1-3 gathering of the 2030 Clergy Network in Chicago. The conference, "Shepherding the Shepherd," brought together clergy in their twenties and thirties from around the nation for worship, fellowship, conversation, networking, and continuing education sessions. Speakers included the Reverend Lillian Daniel, co-author of "This Odd and Wondrous Calling," the Reverend Otis Moss, III, senior pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ, the Reverend Dr. Alice Hunt, President of Chicago Theological Seminary, and the Reverend John Thomas, immediate past General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ and current Senior Adviser to the President and Visiting Professor of Ministry Studies of Chicago Theological Seminary.

Plenary sessions focused on effectively incorporating personal stories in preaching, strategies for leading and pastoring, and visioning for congregations and the denomination. Workshops addressed such topics as financial leadership, church risk management, soliciting feedback and planting new churches. Another primary focus of the conference was networking among clergy from within the same age demographic, and sharing success stories to encourage one another in individual ministry settings.

The Minnesota delegation was led by the Reverend Elena Larssen, Associate Conference Minister of the Minnesota Conference UCC and included seven authorized ministers from the Minnesota Conference. Their attendance was made possible by the Mett fund for clergy continuing education in the Minnesota Conference.

News from the Wider Church

[United Church News](#)

Headlines from across the United Church of Christ

Right now: Celebrating 20 years in Cleveland!

[UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns](#)

Right now: Celebrate 25 years of Open and Affirming

[Global Ministries](#) of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ

Right now: Check out the [video of the week!](#)

[Association of United Church Educators](#)

Right now: Regional educator events announced

[Congregational Vitality](#)

Right now: Great examples of churches on Facebook

[Justice & Witness Ministries](#)

Right now: Are you participating in Community Supported Agriculture?



Pictured L to R: Rev. Kayla Bonewell (Peace UCC, Rochester), Rev. Hilary Martin Himan (Wayzata Community Church, First UCC of MN, Minneapolis), Rev. Jennie Ott (First UCC of MN, Minneapolis), Rev. Désirée Gold (Cottage Grove UCC), Rev. Oby Ballinger (Community UCC, St. Paul Park), Rev. Elena Larssen (Associate Conference Minister), Rev. Mark Pettis (First UCC, Moorhead), Rev. Jane McBride (First UCC of MN, Minneapolis)

Congratulations to Rev. Jennie Ott recently called to serve Lake Oswego UCC in Lake Oswego, OR.

Past Mission Bites can be found at www.uccmn.org

Wadena Tornado

We at First Congregational UCC in Wadena want to thank all those churches and individuals who have reached out us since our community was devastated by a tornado last Thursday. We feel supported by your concern and your prayers. We know we're not trying to cope with all this alone.

268 buildings in Wadena were impacted by the tornado with 26 destroyed. Our church was a block east of the tornado path and is undamaged. Four of our members' homes were severely damaged or destroyed, and many more members had some degree of damage to their homes and property. Our community center no longer exists, our high school may well be a total loss, and our community college is badly damaged.

If you would like to come and help, please call 1-800-543-7709. The community is fast reaching the point where only volunteers with particular skills are needed. Monetary gifts can be mailed to City of Wadena Emergency Disaster Fund, P.O. Box 152, Wadena, MN 56482. Make checks to Emergency Disaster Fund. To donate online go to www.givemn.org. Under Donate and Find a Non-Profit,

type: "Wadena Tornado." Monetary gifts can be focused on needs as they arise and, when possible, be spent in the community to help local businesses survive.

It is an honor to serve in a community where so many have reached out to help neighbors or simply anyone who needs help. And all is not grim. A group of us clergy met today with a Lutheran pastor whose church was badly damaged. He saw the silver lining, "Now we can offer open air worship with pew seating."

Rev. Bob Griggs, interim pastor of First UCC in Wadena and Faith UCC in Bertha

Joys & Concerns

1. Catherine Duncan will be ordained Friday, June 25 at 5:00pm at Plymouth Congregational Church, Minneapolis. Light refreshments will be served after the service. The church is located at 1900 Nicollet Ave. S. in Minneapolis.

2. First United Church of Christ in Northfield will recognize the retirement of Rev. Sandy Johnson in a service of Closure and Farewell on Sunday June 27 at 10:00am. A gala reception will be held 2-4pm in the Church Assembly Room, with a program at 2:30. Please RSVP to the church at 507-645-7532 or church@firstucc.org if you plan to attend. The church is at 300 Union St, Northfield.

3. It's a girl! Rev. Brigit, Joe, and big brother Timber welcomed Terra Faith Stevens to the family on 6/22. She weighed in at 7 pounds 6 ounces and is 18 inches long. Mom and baby are doing great. Rev. Stevens is the pastor of St. Paul's UCC in Plato. Congratulations and many blessings to the Stevens family!



4. The Central Cluster holds its annual pulpit exchange this Sunday, June 27. The following persons will be in the assigned pulpits:

Rev. Bill Baldwin: Chaska - Zoar UCC

Rev. Kathy Gibson Christenson: Gencoe - First Cong'l UCC

Rev. Richard Mark: Glencoe - Peace UCC

Rev. Barb Jackman: Henderson - St. Paul's UCC
Rev. Joe Clay: Hutchinson - First Congregational UCC
Rev. Keith Weber: Lester Prairie - Prairie Community Church
Rev. Brian Brosz: Norwood Young America - Friedens UCC
Rev. Penny Entringer: Norwood Young America - St. John's UCC
Rev. Philip Ramstad: Plato - St. Paul's UCC

Please hold these congregations and pastors in your prayers this Sunday and rejoice with them in this annual celebration of the covenants we share with one another.

5. Rev. Oby Ballinger, pastor of Community UCC, St. Paul Park, will travel to the New England Regional Youth Event this weekend. He will be a worship and workshop leader during the event. Congratulations, Oby!

We Need Your Feedback

If you attended any part of this year's Minnesota ONA Gathering: "Witnesses... to God's Love for All," we need to hear from you. Part of the success of any event is proper evaluation and we have tried to make this as easy as possible. There is a short electronic survey available by [clicking here](#). Thank you for your feedback and continued support of this ministry of "extravagant welcome."

Update on CUE Giving

We received last week the latest financial report from CUE (Chicago-United-Eden), which reveals that Minnesota Conference giving to CUE year-to-date is about \$3000 behind where it was at the same time last year (\$10,508 compared to \$13,655). Overall giving to CUE by the sixteen participating conferences of the mid-America region of the UCC is down nearly \$11,000. Our United Church of Christ seminaries in mid-America depend on us for financial support. And as CUE Development Associate, Kiely Todd Roska, helpfully reported at our 48th Annual Meeting, the local churches of the Minnesota Conference and the Conference as a whole are the beneficiaries of the good ministry of the seminaries. Many, if not most, of our local churches are served by authorized ministers who have been educated at a CUE seminary. Graduates serve in leadership roles throughout the church. Please consider including CUE in your congregation's budget or as a special mission offering. Your questions can be addressed to Kiely Todd Roska at cueseminaries@yahoo.com. Thank you!

There are things you can do!

It is easy to feel helpless and hopeless as horrific reports and images from the Gulf oil spill continue to arrive. You may not have special wild life training or education in toxic waste clean up but the Earthwise community would like to remind you that there are things YOU can do.

- Write or call your Senators and request strong clean renewable energy legislation.
- When possible bike, walk, carpool, or take the bus.- If you do drive, determine your weekly mileage and try to cut it by 5%, or more!
- Eat locally as much as possible, decreasing the gas required to transport food to your table.
- Pray for all the creatures who call the ocean and seashore home.
- Pray for the plants and vegetation of the fragile Gulf shore ecosystems.
- Pray for the water, remembering it once traveled down the Minnehaha, the Minnesota, the St. Croix, and the Mississippi on its way to the sea.
- Pray for the residents of Gulf shore cities and towns. They have suffered previous hardship and now face economic ruin.
- Pray our political leaders, our scientists, and our environmentalists will have creative insights for resolution and recovery.

United Church News Digest

You can print on 8 1/2 x 11 sheets of paper copies of the June 2010 issue of the United Church News Digest (five pages back to back) with the latest UCC news. You can distribute those hard copies of the United Church News to church leaders and interested members in your church. To see the latest issue of the United Church News Digest go to: www.ucc.org/news/print/digest click on the June 2010 issue

Conference Directory

Alison Bents will begin work on the new 2010-11 Conference Directory (to be published in September). Please check your individual listings and church listings and report any needed changes to the Conference office at alisonb@uccmn.org.

For the past two years, the directory has been emailed to all clergy, churches and lay leaders on the Board, Committees, Teams and Task Forces.

Upcoming Events

Come March with Us!

Come March with Us: Twin Cities Pride Parade

Sunday, June 27, the Parade steps off at 11:00am, in downtown Minneapolis (parade route is along Hennepin Ave to Loring Park, line-up/staging area on 3rd St).

All members and friends of the MN Conference UCC are invited to be a part of our marching contingent. "Open and Affirming" congregations are welcome to bring their

banner. As in previous years, the Minnesota Chapter of the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns has paid for a marching contingent. We are registered as "MN Chapter United Church of Christ Coalition for LGBT Concerns."

Questions and details can be answered by visiting the parade section at www.tcpride.org. Steve Strickler will serve as the coordinator of our contingent. He can be reached at Strickler.Stephen@mayo.edu.

Join the Isaiah 58 Solidarity Vigil

Join the Isaiah 58 solidarity vigil: changetakesfaith.org

Minnesota's Vigil Week - July 11 - 17 (the week includes Wisconsin, North and South Dakota, Illinois, Michigan)

This is an act of solidarity with the immigrant and other communities of Arizona during their summer long vigil at their capitol. We are also declaring our own opposition to similar legislation in Minnesota.

You are invited to go to the web site and sign on - this is the core statement at the website (changetakesfaith.org) and click on Minnesota on the map. There is a sign-on form and a statement.

You can participate...

1. As an individual: commit to on one of more times taking a moment to offer a prayer or a moment of personal reflection during which you join your mind and heart with the Arizonians who are acting to stop this heinous legislation from becoming law;
2. Pick a day or a night and hold a vigil in your congregation, faith community, meeting, mosque, synagogue, etc.
3. On the day your community gathers to worship, offer a prayer or a statement or a brief reflection etc, during that time.

Doing a vigil action? We need to know. Help us gauge participation - let me know what you are doing, when, etc (send info to Rev. John Guttermann at intpasj@me.com).

Choices Make Change: July Family Camp

Choices Make Change July Family Camp @ Pilgrim Point Camp July 18 -23, 2010

Special guest Brian Rusche from the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition will lead Bible study, reflection and action sessions about how we make and live out our choices.

For more information about the program and general flow

of the week at camp contact Family Camp Coordinators
Brenda Clarno 952.929.8566 or Jo Clare Hartsig
952.476.4782
Registration materials: 320.763.6549,
www.pilgrimpoint.org A promotional flyer [is available here](#).

Faith Stories: 2010 Women's Retreat

Faith Stories
2010 Minnesota Conference UCC
Women's Retreat
September 17-19, 2010
Pilgrim Point Camp, Alexandria, MN

We are diverse in our origins and our daily lives. Let's get together, share about ourselves, learn about others, and renew our energy for living our lives!

Our Speaker: Our keynote speaker and worship leader will be Rev. Vicki Wunsch, an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. Vicki's experience has included facilitating a wide variety of workshops and trainings for churches.

Workshops include:
Karma and Reincarnation
The Transgender Journey
Discerning Your Personal Myth
Reflecting with Nature
The Turkish Scarf Project
Finding Yourself with Art
Surviving Cancer and Homicide

Registration deadline: Sept. 3, 2010
Brochures available: www.mizpahucc.org or 952-935-5509

Youth Leader Retreat & Training

Ecologies of Call:
Youth Leader Retreat and Training

Come... Refresh... Learn...

The weekend retreat and training includes: Time for your own spiritual well-being, keynote speaker is author and coach Dr. David Anderson of Vibrant Faith Ministries, worship leader is Bryan Sirchio, networking, resource sharing, practical workshops and more...

August 27-29, 2010
Cost: \$75 (additional team members, \$50)
[Click here for registration and information](#)

Questions? Call Leah Springer or Wade Zick at 612-871-0359 or email: leahs@uccmn.org or wadez@uccmn.org

Register by July 31

Widening the Welcome



Developing the life of congregations to include persons with disabilities and persons with mental illnesses/brain disorders and their families.

Sept. 23-25, 2010, St. Louis, MO, Drury Plaza Hotel
www.wideningthewelcome.com

A National Gathering sponsored by UCC Mental Illness Network and UCC Disabilities Ministries

Local Church Events

Upcoming Local Church Events

Check out all the events happening at our local churches across Minnesota on our new [Local Church Events Calendar!](#) You can surf around the calendar to see what's coming up this week and farther out. **Just click on the title of the event in the calendar to get more details.**

This week, don't miss...

- Thursday

Do you want your events to be on this calendar? Send an email with the details to Alison Bents at alisonb@uccmn.org.

Classifieds

Job Opportunities

Check out the Employment Opportunities portion of the Minnesota Conference Website. [Click here to see listings.](#)

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