

Mission Bite: from across the Minnesota Conference

from Rev. Elena Larssen, Associate Conference Minister

Vitality Initiative: Next Level

It has been great for us to have [our coach] come and look at the congregation with new eyes. We are trying some new things in the coming months such as bringing the choir to our 8:30 service in hopes to re-direct some of the members to that worship experience and really emphasizing Lent this year through a covenant keepers commitment that will emphasize prayer, service, worship and giving throughout those 40 days of spiritual reflection.

- Kathy Nelson, Senior Pastor of Peace UCC, Duluth



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What does it take to [turn a cruise ship around](#)? The answer is, as is so often the answer, "It depends." It depends on the size of the ship, and it depends on if the ship is equipped with special machinery called 'bow thrusters,' which are devices on the bow of the ship that allow it to turn while standing still. Otherwise, the only way to turn a ship - especially a large one - is to turn it while it is moving.

I love the image of turning a cruise ship when I think about how churches deal with change. We all know that change is inevitable, and all communities of ministry and mission have to interact with changes, both internal and external. The cruise ship that is moving along, cutting through the waves, is a lot like a vibrant church. Because it's already moving, it can adapt its course and make adjustments using the forward motion it already possesses. And a church that is waning in its strength is like that docked cruise ship: it's very hard to turn when standing still but is possible with special effort.

We love connecting with the other churches involved and enjoy having an opportunity to gather and discuss what Mike [Piazza] has said in the public events.

- James Pennington, Pastor of Spirit of the Lakes/Minnehaha UCC

But whether a congregation is vibrant or more settled, change is hard for everyone. Even a cruise ship sailing at full speed on open waters has to change courses carefully, with one eye to the safety of all on board and the other on the weather. Under this rationale, the second phase of the Vitality Initiative included a "Next Level" program for churches that needed support to deal with unmanageable growth and overwhelming change. Under the coaching guidance of Mike Piazza of the Center for Progressive Renewal, five congregations have received visits and coaching since last March: Peace UCC, Rochester; Peace UCC, Duluth; Spirit of the Lakes/Minnehaha UCC, Minneapolis; Mayflower UCC, Minneapolis; and Wayzata Community. Rev. Piazza has also opened his coaching workshops to the whole conference with the result that 100 folks attending "Reformation of Worship" and "Money Talks," representing congregations all around the state.

The best part of having a coach is that Mike pushes us to new understandings of how we can be a church, and new ways to be.

- Paul Bauch, Senior Pastor of Peace UCC, Rochester

In these rapidly changing times, all churches and pastors can benefit from support; Rick Wagner and I spend much of our time with churches in pastoral transition, so we appreciate that the Vitality Initiative puts us more broadly in touch with churches of the Conference. In closing, we remember that this and the other parts of the Vitality Initiative (New Church Development, clergy groups) are possible from the generous legacy bequests of the Grenada and Madison congregations. We remember their faithfulness and gifts of hope with sincere gratitude.

Blessings,
The Rev. Elena Larssen

Joys and Concerns

1. Grace Anderson will be ordained into ministry on Sunday, November 13 at 2:00pm at Macalester-Plymouth United Church (1658 Lincoln Ave., St. Paul). A reception will follow the service of ordination. Clergy are invited to robe and wear red stoles.
2. An Ecclesiastical Council will be conducted for Shai Wise on Wednesday, November 16 at 10:30am at Plymouth Congregational Church (1900 Nicollet Ave., Minneapolis). A light lunch will be served following the Ecclesiastical Council. To ensure a quorum, please contact the church - Patwin at 612-871-7400 or patwin@plymouth.org (email preferred). Anyone who wishes to have lunch following the Ecclesiastical Council is requested to so indicate with the RSVP.
3. Congratulations to [Joint Religious Legislative Coalition \(JRLC\)](#) and Alison Killeen, JRLC Statewide Organizer. They received a \$1000 grant from your very own United Church of Christ [Neighbors in Need](#) offering and that money will go toward some of the busing costs for the March 2012 [Day on the Hill](#). Never been to a Day on the Hill? This is your year! From JRLC, "Every year JRLC hosts our Day on the Hill lobby day at the State Capitol. Participants are briefed about justice policy issues at the St. Paul RiverCentre in downtown St Paul, MN, and then are bused to the capitol to rally in the capitol rotunda, lobby members of the state legislature, and communicate with the Governor and other leadership. Debriefing and evaluation forms show that this event results in hundreds of in-depth conversations with legislators. These conversations produce valuable information about legislative support and objections, and other significant political intelligence. JRLC's Day on the Hill literally fills the Capitol building and impresses upon lawmakers that the social justice agenda must be considered."
4. An Ecclesiastical Council for Michael MacMillan will be conducted Monday, November 21 at 2:00pm at Edina Morningside UCC (4201 Morningside Road in Edina). Refreshments will be served following the vote. To ensure a quorum, anyone who plans to attend should contact the church at emcucc@emcucc.org or 952-926-6555.
5. We offer thanksgiving for the life of the Rev. John L. Davis, a United Methodist minister, who served for close to two decades as the Executive Director of the North Central Ministry Development Center (then called the North Central Career Development Center). John was a counselor and mentor to many United Theological Seminary students, candidates for authorized ministry, and active pastors. A memorial service will take place on Saturday, November 19 at 11:30 am at Brooklyn United Methodist Church, 7200 Brooklyn Blvd., Brooklyn Center. Notes of condolence may be sent to Ginger Davis as 5919 Centerville Rd. #2025, North Oaks, MN 55127.
6. Congratulations to Rev. Dr. Eleazar Fernandez (Mayflower United Church of Christ and United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities) whose book [Burning Center, Porous Borders: The Church in a Globalized World](#) was published in October 2011. The book is available for purchase through the internet and at the Cokesbury

[United Church News](#)

Headlines from across the United Church of Christ

Right now: Don't forget to add your Mission:1 totals to the tote board! www.ucc.org

[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: Prayer focus on South Africa this week

[Association of United Church Educators](#)

Right now: Regional educator events announced

[Congregational Vitality](#)

Right now: Mission:1 - have you reported your totals yet?

[Justice & Witness Ministries](#)

Right now: Are you participating in Community Supported Agriculture?

[Council for Health and Human Services Ministries](#)

Right now: Pilgrim Place leads resident-centered care

Bookstore at United Seminary. Eleazar welcomes the opportunity to speak about and teach on themes from his book in local churches of the Minnesota Conference. He can be reached at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities.

A Sabbatical Note from Wade Zick

Greetings friends and colleagues in ministry!

I am growing in excitement and increasing thanks for the opportunity to be on sabbatical leave from November 15 through February 15. I certainly hope that the details for the time away have been covered. If there are questions or concerns, please contact Zac Norenberg, zacn@uccmn.org, who will direct your question to the right person.

My sabbatical plans and proposal have revolved around taking this period of Sabbath and focusing on personal renewal and spiritual growth. I will spend time in prayer/meditation, reflection, playing, volunteering, and spending time with family and friends. More specifically, the three months of Sabbath include two 10-day silent meditation retreats, volunteer work at an orphanage in Zimbabwe with our UCC partner missionaries Don and Maryjane Westra, periods for reading centered around the topic of health and wellness, downtime for rest and extra time at the gym, hanging out with friends and family in California and Michigan, and most importantly spending some quality time with my spouse, including travel abroad to Dubai, Sri Lanka and India.

Many thanks to the Board of Directors for this opportunity, Karen Smith Sellers for helping to make this time away possible, David Becker for helping to pick up some program pieces in my absence, and Rick Wagner and Elena Larssen for handling some extra tasks around ministry grants. Huge thanks to Zac Norenberg, my assistant, for his stepping up during this period making sure the work and communication continues.

Thank you for your thoughts, prayers and good wishes for this time - they are greatly appreciated!

In much thankfulness and excitement,

Wade Zick

Associate Conference Minister of Faith Formation for Children & Youth

You are invited!



All authorized ministers, lay members, seminarians and seminary faculty/staff and friends of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ are invited to lunch and a open conversation with Rev. Geoffrey Black, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities on Friday, November 18, beginning at 12 noon and ending by 3 pm. A reception with light refreshments provided by United Theological Seminary will follow.

Lunch is optional and will be by reservation only. The cost is \$5.00, and your RSVP should be made to Alison Bents (Alisonb@uccmn.org) by Monday, November 14. Money will be collected at the lunch.

Rev. Black will speak briefly and then welcome questions and concerns.

Mission:1 Let's go for the collective 'win!'

We're in the final stretch for Mission: 1!

As you can see from the tote board at ucc.org, we're close to meeting our big goals, but **we have a long way to go in a very short time**. There is confidence that, when all is said and done, we will make it over the finish line and exceed our benchmarks in every category. But, in order to achieve that, we're going to need a herculean effort from each of us!

There are three important requests that will ensure our collective 'win' for Mission: 1.

1. Even if your church has completed its scheduled food drive, **take the onus to do just a little more individually**. We still need at least 200,000 additional donated food items by this Friday, and that's going to require some extra effort. So, please pick up a few items today at the store to donate, and then [report your extra effort as an individual](#).

2. **We need a groundswell of online donations in the next 48 hours**. If 1,111 people would step up today with \$11 or \$111 gifts - or even a nice number in between - we could enjoy watching our financial goals realized by sundown! [We need your online gift to Mission: 1](#).

3. **Double check to make sure your church has reported - or will report** - the number of food items and letters your congregation has received. We're only counting what's being reported, so we need your tally no later than Friday afternoon.

What an exciting, inspiring movement this has become! Thanks to all of you for the creative, committed ministry you are offering in Jesus' name. **May we all be 1!**

Intergenerational Church Workshops Available!

Robin and Eric Nelson, who were Program Directors of Pilgrim Point Camp this past summer, will be offering intergenerational workshops in the coming year for Minnesota Conference congregations and their communities. The workshops will explore creative ways of worshipping together and building community through play. Offerings include puppetry, mask-making, creative presentation of biblical stories, singing and game playing, and family folk dance. Ashley Funds may be available to help meet your congregation's costs. Congregations interested in exploring setting up this kind of program, please contact Robin or Eric at mcgnelson@aol.com or 612 378 7578.



Transgender Remembrance Day

Transgender Remembrance Day is Sunday, Nov. 20

Transgender Day of Remembrance is an opportunity for congregations to show support for the transgender community - which still faces hurdles in the struggle for equality and basic civil rights. Since 1999, this date has been set aside to remember transgender people who have been killed because of their gender identity or expression. The majority of these crimes have never been solved.



Many of the victories we've celebrated in the past year still do not protect the transgender community. The repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" does *not* secure the right of transgender citizens to serve openly in the armed forces. Many civil-rights ordinances protect lesbian and gay citizens from discrimination but not our transgender neighbors. And the rate of suicide attempted suicide in the transgender community is the highest for any group in the country: a staggering 41%.

Since 2009, the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns has required wording in new Open and Affirming covenants that cover the transgender community. New Open and Affirming churches typically include the phrase "gender identity and expression" along with "sexual orientation" in their covenants, or equivalent language. For older Open and Affirming congregations, now is the time to update your covenants to include a clear welcome to the transgender community. This is an opportunity to learn more about the transgender experience and to open dialogue with transgender neighbors in your community. The Coalition is ready to help with resources, including the groundbreaking documentary, "Call Me Malcolm."

The Coalition will be honoring our transgender family on Nov. 20. We hope your congregation will join us.

[Learn more about Transgender Day of Remembrance](#)
[transACTION: a free study resource for congregations](#)
[Gender Identity and Our Faith Communities](#)

[Order "Call Me Malcolm" video](#)

Children & Youth Ministry Luncheon



Children & Youth Ministry Luncheon
Thursday, November 17, 11:30-1:30
Union Congregational UCC, St. Louis Park
Simple Spiritual Practices

Featuring Marilyn Sharpe, a parent educator, church professional and lifelong faith former.

[Click here to register now!](#)

Clergy Clusters in the coming week

Northeast Cluster: Tuesday, November 15, 12:00pm
Pilgrim Congregational UCC, Duluth

Great Small Church Webinar - Sign Up Now!

**8 Ways Small Churches are Changing the World
(and How Yours Can, Too!)**

WEBINAR: Rev. Elizabeth Dilley, Pastor, First Congregational United Church of Christ, Red Oak, IA is a leading voice in promoting the effective, healthy and world changing power of small churches.

Join us as she presents 8 ways your church can make a difference in lives of your congregation, community and the world.

When: November 15, 2011 - 8:00 - 9:00 PM EST
Cost: \$14.99 What a bargain!

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Circle of Names



Circles of Names Campaign

1,000 Names, \$100,000 Pledged

On November 17, 4-6 p.m. in the Hennepin Avenue Methodist Church parsonage, seven women of faith will be among the honorees at the Twin Cities Area Circles of Names gathering sponsored by the National Council of Churches. The Circles of Names is an NCC project to raise money for women's

ministries by inviting contributions of \$100 or more to honor women who have been special mentors of faith and exemplars of justice. Our own **Rev. Sarah Campbell** (pastor, Mayflower UCC, Mpls.) will be honored at the gathering, along with Dorothea Burns, Rabbi Amy Eilberg, the Rev. Alike Galloway, Dr. Josie Robinson Johnson, Dr. Fatma Reda, and Elona Street-Stewart. For more information or to RSVP to this event, please contact Alison Killeen ajkilleen@gmail.com. To contribute in the name of a mentor, see www.circlesofnames.org.

Upcoming Webinars!

The Insurance Board is holding these upcoming webinars you do not want to miss!

Church Tenants: Sharing Your Church & Managing Risk

November 16, 10:00am & 2:00pm

Sharing your space and developing sources of income requires understanding methods of risk transfer. The session will review how to lend and lease your property while minimizing risk to your church. Here's how to manage common tenants: daycare, Weight Watchers, non-profits, wedding parties.

Social Media - Plan, Prepare, Protect

November 30, 10:00am & 2:00pm

Social media is "child's play" for children, but not for churches. A review of the many considerations around church use of social media, including management controls and oversight, copyright, libel, privacy and security.

You can register for any of our webinars [by clicking here](#).

Make sure you visit our website often for a list of upcoming webinars. You can also access our website for other valuable information!

Local Church Events

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

- **Saturday, November 12:** [Summit Ave. Artisan Festival, St. Paul's UCC, St. Paul](#)
- **Thursday, November 17:** [Children of Genocide: The Holocaust, Cambodia and Rwanda, Edina Morningside UCC, Edina](#)
- **Saturday, November 19:** [3rd Annual Trash or Treasure, Linden Hills UCC, Minneapolis](#)
- **Sunday, November 20:** [The Wisest of Investments: Early Education, Linden Hills UCC, Minneapolis](#)

Would you like your events to appear on this calendar? Just email Alison Bents at alisonb@uccmn.org. Simple as that!

Employment Opportunities

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

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