



Minnesota Conference Selects New Associate Conference Ministers

The Board of Directors voted unanimously on August 2, 2008, to approve the recommendation of the search committee and call Rev. Elena Larssen and Rev. Richard Wagner to be Associate Conference Ministers for the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ, effective October 6. This action is a vital step in the Conference commitment to become a transformational regional body:

- driven by mission rather than maintenance;
- committed to spiritually enlivened strategic initiatives rather than to survival;
- focused on Christian formation and discipleship of children, youth and adults;
- directed toward identifying and nurturing the gifts and leadership abilities of clergy and laity;
- devoted to strengthening, building, and inviting congregations; and
- dedicated to prophetic witness.

Elena Larssen comes to us from First Congregational Church (UCC) of LaGrange (IL) where she has been Acting Associate Minister. Prior to that, she was for four years a campus minister at Stanford University and, at the same time, Minister of

Outreach at First Congregational Church (UCC) of Palo Alto (CA). She also spent five years as a trainer in child-abuse prevention and healthy leadership practices with Kyros Ministry, San Mateo. Her ministerial profile reveals strengths in: lay leadership empowerment; ecumenical, interfaith and multi-cultural fluency; mission and justice-centered programming; and a capacity to increase financial support.

Elena is a 2002 graduate of the Pacific School of Religion, where she remains an adjunct instructor in campus ministry. In the Northern California Nevada Conference she was a member of the Committee on Ministry, a founding member of the Youth Leaders Network, and a member of the Annual Meeting Planning Team. She was also actively engaged in outdoor ministries. With the National United Church of Christ she has been a trainer for the God is Still Speaking campaign and was Co-



Rev. Elena Larssen and Rev. Rick Wagner begin in the office October 6th

Moderator of the National Planning Team of the 2030 Clergy Network, playing a pivotal role in the movement from conceptualization to implementation of a functioning entity with contacts in all conferences of the UCC.

Her references cite particular strengths in preaching/speaking, acceptance of people with divergent backgrounds, the capacity to develop a sense of fellowship among the people with whom she works, and helping people to understand and act upon issues of social justice. She is described as theologically articulate and grounded, an energetic, high-functioning, and transformative leader who builds relationships and works constructively with conflict.

Richard (Rick) Wagner has served in the Minnesota Conference since 1993 when he became pastor of Union Congregational UCC in St. Louis Park. He has been actively engaged on the Committee on Ministry, first in

the Eastern Association and more recently on the Conference, and on the Board of Directors. He has also led numerous workshops in churches and taught classes in both licensed ministry and seminary settings. He has supervised seven seminary interns and, during his most recent sabbatical, was pastor-in-residence at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities.

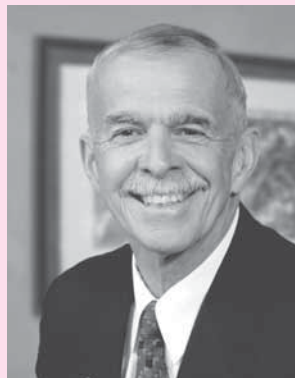
Prior to coming to Minnesota he served sequentially as settled pastor in two congregations in Kentucky and as interim minister to four local churches in Illinois. In these settings he moved congregations to greater health, developed new programming, and increased community outreach. Consistently, he increased giving to Our Church's Wider Mission. He has also been involved in several capital campaigns.

Rick is a 1982 graduate of Harvard Divinity School and has additional training in clinical pastoral education, interim ministry, healthy congregations, emotional intelligence, appreciative inquiry, and church growth. His profile calls particular attention to his effectiveness as a preacher/speaker with (continued on pg. 8)

Save the Date

Sunday, November 16, 2008
2:30-5:30 pm

Mayflower Community
Congregational Church UCC,
I-35W and Diamond Lake Road, Minneapolis
A reception and honoring of local church giving to our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) and An open conversation about the life and ministry of the national church with
The Rev. Stephen Sterner, Acting Executive Minister of Local Church Ministries of the United Church of Christ



An invitation with an RSVP request will be sent to each local church pastor for publication and posting

Dick Hamm leads retreat in Minnesota



Over sixty people from forty-four local churches were present September 14-15 in a workshop on Recreating the Church with Rev. Dick Hamm.

October Clergy Retreat

October 20-21, 2008

ARC Retreat Center, Stanchfield MN

Gather with other UCC clergy for 24 hours at the beautiful ARC Retreat Center www.arcretreat.org.

Cost: If you pay with a personal check the cost is: \$65 for overnight, 3 meals and program

Payment with a church check add \$20 to the costs above

The program is being developed, but there will be ample time for relaxing, walking the labyrinth, visiting chapel and exploring the library of spiritual books and journals.

The event is being planned by the Professional Development of Authorized Ministry Team. Questions, contact Rev. Rosemary Rocha, Edina Morningside Community Church, UCC, 952-926-6555, emcrosemary@emcucc.org

Friends of the Conference

Sets \$70,000 Goal for Fiscal 2009

Thanks to the generous support of nearly 220 donors, the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ realized its "Friends of the Conference" goal for the second consecutive year! The 2007 goal was \$50,000 and we achieved nearly \$60,000. The 2008 goal has been \$60,000 and, with one month remaining in the fiscal year, over \$63,000 has been received! THANK YOU!

In fiscal 2009 we hope to raise \$70,000 and increase our number of donors to 270. Watch for a letter this fall inviting you to become a "Friend of the Conference." When you receive it, consider not only the ways in which the Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ has been a blessing to you but also the ways in which it can be a blessing for others. Then give generously.

Children's Sabbath

October 17-19th, 2008 marks the seventeenth annual *National Observance of Children's Sabbath* sponsored by the Children's Defense Fund. Children's Sabbath is a time for congregations to celebrate and honor the work they do with children and to spark new ideas in how to serve families and children in your congregation and outside the church walls. Celebration of Children's Sabbath also provides an opportunity for everyone in a congregation to reflect on the Christian teachings on caring for the oppressed and vulnerable members of society.

This year's Children's Sabbath theme is "When will we hear Dr Martin Luther King, Jr's call to end poverty in America?" There are currently more than 152,000 children living in poverty in the state of Minnesota alone. Why not take this opportunity to lead your community in speaking out for those whose voices are harder to hear? The Interfaith Children's Advocacy Network (ICAN) is helping congregations plan Children's Sabbaths by distributing free copies of the Children's Defense Fund *Children's Sabbath Resource Manual* to individuals and congregations across Minnesota. ICAN can be reached at www.jrlc.org, by emailing info@icanmn.org or by calling 612-230-3234.

Moderator — Rev. Mark Kuether

I am now in my tenth year serving as Pastor and Teacher of our United Church of Christ congregation in Detroit Lakes. One of the many highlights of my time there is the gracious way the good and faithful people of the congregation sent me to the Holy Land as part of my sabbatical in 2006.

Prior to becoming our Conference Moderator in June, I served the Wider Church in a variety of ways, including the Executive Council of the United Church of Christ.

I particularly enjoy spending time with my wonderful family, which includes my wife Teresa of 23 years and our children Hannah (a senior at Hamline University in St. Paul), Mollie (a senior in high school) and Isaac (fifth grade). I also enjoy time I can spend

outside, reading, and playing racquetball a couple times a week.

I grew up in the United Church of Christ. My home church as a child was St. Paul's UCC in rural Minnesota Lake.

Among my hopes for the future of the Conference is a stronger connection among the churches who are the Conference. My hope is that we recognize we are the Conference, and as we work and play, worship and serve and pray together, we are able to more fully be who God intends for us to be.



Save the Dates! Take the Challenge!

2009 Minnesota Conference Annual Meeting
June 5-7, 2009

College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, MN

"Together, we will be renewed!"

(ROMANS 15:32, NIRV)

PREVIEW OF 2009 Meeting: "Annual Meeting Jeopardy"
(Category: Keynote Speakers)

Can you answer all four questions correctly?

1. Her UCC church in the "Buckeye State," where her ministry took membership from 5 to 300, lists its vision as: "To move people from being church members to being disciples."

Who is _____?

2. He openly declares, "God has called all leaders, lay and clergy, to lead healthy, growing spiritual movements. For this reason I refuse to lead a dying church."

Who is _____?

3. A former journalist, now a senior pastor who uses the arts in her ministry, she is also co-president of a "multi-racial, multi-ethnic social justice

organization comprised of over 50 different religious denominations," whose mission is, "People of faith building power to 'do justice.'"

Who is _____?

4. With a background in two major Christian traditions, he claims: "Christianity has classically been a movement that flowed from the epicenters of large population areas, embracing persons from all walks of life, especially those persons who are economically poor and socially marginalized."

Who is _____?

Answers will appear in the next edition of the Voyager

Vice-Moderator — Lisa Lindesmith

My name is Lisa Lindesmith. I am a veterinarian by trade, and own a small animal hospital in St. Louis Park called All Paws Animal Hospital. My partner, Toni, and I were married 10 years ago at Robbinsdale UCC, and I joined RUCC soon after that. What drew me to join was the realization that I could make a much bigger difference in the world through the local and wider church than I could possibly make on my own.

One of the things I enjoy about volunteering in the church is that it is so very different from what I do for a living. Outside work and church, I enjoy kayaking, travel, photography, reading, and hanging out with the world's greatest neighbors. Toni and I have been a family for 16 years, and we live in Golden

Valley with our Golden Retriever, Cedar.

I am honored to serve in the wider church setting and hope to help the Minnesota Conference be strong, thrive, and be responsive to the needs of the local churches. I believe that the best way to do this is to continue working to help local churches understand the purpose of the Conference. We, the UCC, are so much more than the sum of our parts, and I want to help our congregants understand and live that out on a daily basis.



What could I do for others, if I just had a little help?

Haven't we all asked that question of ourselves from time to time? In Mankato, Minnesota the First Congregational Church-United Church of Christ has responded with a resounding and sustainable answer. Members of the Mission Ministries Team have established a permanent endowment fund (See article on page XXXX) within their church for the sole purpose of supporting members in their service of others. Through annual grants they engage and encourage congregants to give of their time (and share their talents) to improve the lives of others—whether locally, nationally or internationally.

In Feb 2008 the first grant recipient, Char Lusher put into action the intent of the endowment. Recently retired and adjusting to a fixed budget, Char was unable to finance her project of knitting hats and mittens for the Santa Anonymous Program, a program that she had known for more than sixteen years. So, she decided to ask for help from her church.

She completed the 2-page application, which asked her to describe the project/activity, its goals, and its cost. Char requested funds for yarn and circular knitting looms with an open invitation to other members of First Church to join her. She would teach those wishing to learn how to knit and suggested using the Fellowship Hall to have knitting sessions one night a week. The Endowment Board asked her to con-



Knitting Group at First Congregational UCC, Mankato

sider yarn donated by members to offset costs and for \$500, her project was given the green light.

For the past eight months, Wednesday evenings at First Congregational are abuzz with “oohs and ahhs” of finished hats in all colors, patterns and sizes. Knitting sessions have become craft sessions with congregants bringing in other projects they're working on, finding it much more fun and inspirational when working alongside friends and family. Others have been moved to crochet scarves; still others, are using the traditional knit and purl method of knitting children's mittens.

With an initial goal of producing 300 hats and mittens by the first of December, Char's project is over the top! At last count, she has col-

lected 400 hats, scarves, and mittens handcrafted by more than a dozen volunteers (many shown in the lower left picture) ready not only for Santa Anonymous, a children's non-profit organization, but also to share with adults at the Salvation Army Community Center who find their heads also needing warmth this winter. And, the project isn't over. This fall, members will also start sewing mittens from donated polar fleece.

The finished handiwork will be displayed in the sanctuary in November with a special dedication service planned prior to their hand delivery to the local nonprofits.

When questioned if she were pleased with her project, Char replied, “I couldn't be happier. I like to start projects and then turn them

over to someone else. Sometimes, I'd disappear to see if my concept was working. And sure, enough, when someone hit a stumbling block, there was always another with the right skills in the group to mentor.”

When asked if there were any unexpected outcomes that she hadn't anticipated when she first requested funding, Char responded, “The unexpected results? This project has brought forward a group of people from the church that probably would not have interacted with one another. And the creativity! The difference and choices show—in patterns, yarn, and new techniques. No two hats are the same!”

— Linda Hachfeld, member of First Congregational Church and member of the Mission Endowment Board

St. Mark's UCC Welcomes German Visitors

St. Mark's United Church of Christ in Bloomington, MN welcomed 40 people from Germany to worship Sunday morning, June 15th. The majority of the members of the group were from the “Evangelische Kirche von Burgsteinfurt” congregation. This congregation belongs to the “Church of Westphalia,” which is one of the official partner churches of the UCC. Burgsteinfurt is located in the North-western part of Germany, close to the Dutch border.

The connection to St. Mark's was the former pastor Rev. Roy Eberbach. Wilfried and Roy were at Eden Seminary together doing doctoral work. Wilfried received a letter from

Roy many years ago and recalled that letter when he was planning a trip to this part of the world. He contacted St. Mark's and connected with the current pastor, Jennifer Jaimez.

The worship service was held in both German and English. Besides the friends and members of St. Mark's in attendance, there were several community members who attended because the service was publicized in the local paper. There were many wonderful moments during the service. The worship service was filled with a great deal of singing. Wilfried taught St. Mark's a well loved hymn in Germany that was

new to most. He then spoke about a tradition in Germany where the host always receives a flower from the visitor. In his sermon he created an imaginary bouquet of flowers from his garden that he would have brought to St. Mark's if he could have. Each flower represented a truth about the reality of humankind and/or the faithfulness of God. It was a creative and lovely sermon.

Another highlight was the Children's Time led by Jennifer and Wilfried. Wilfried taught the children the familiar song, “Praise Ye the Lord, Alleluia” in several different languages. It was noted that even though the “Praise Ye the Lord” sounded differ-

ent the refrain was always the same: “Alleluia”

The service concluded with the blessing song “God be with you, 'til we meet again”. It was followed by many delicious treats made by the members of St. Mark's. Several of our visitors were delighted by the Minnesota delicacy “rhubarb.” There were also hand-painted cookies made by our own Laura Vande Waa, 92 years young.

St. Mark's blessed them as they went on their way for the rest of their 14 day tour. Although there were some language barriers – we were united in the Spirit and the love of God.

Come Thirsty

Since July 3rd, twenty- and thirty-somethings from United Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ churches across the metro area have been gathering in fellowship every Thursday evening. Sometimes it's a smaller crowd of ten to fifteen and sometimes it exceeds thirty. "Come Thirsty" is the group motto. Derived from John 4:5-15, the saying suggests that those who come, come thirsty; a thirst that includes one's whole self.

Beginning last November, clergy and church leaders met to discuss how the church could address the spiritual needs of young adults. A decision was made that to best address the needs of young adults, a fellowship that combined the efforts and resources of many churches was needed.

The main purpose of each gathering is fellowship. During July, the group met in Bryant Square Park in South Minneapolis to play kickball. The evenings were filled with loud cheers, playful jeers, even some coaching for those who couldn't remember the rules from elementary gym class, but fellowship took priority over competition. Often players, enthralled in conversation, had to be reminded it was their turn to kick. The evenings began with prayer and the sharing of joys and concerns and ended with bowling and beverages at Bryant Lake Bowl.

Month by month the nature of the fellowship continues to emerge. In August, the group voted to continue with volleyball at Corcoran Park, followed by Nintendo and



David Becker winds up for a pitch

board games at the Chatterbox Pub. September began with a chili supper at the home of Erin Higgins.

Those who volunteered to be on the fellowship's Ministry Team met at Lyndale UCC on September 11th to further discern the future direction of the group.

On Thursday, September 18th, 7:00pm FAITH ON TAP *and in a Cup* began at the Common Roots Cafe. Designed to be more spiritual than intellectual, these gatherings focus on participants' faith questions. For 45 minutes the group contemplates, debates, and chats over coffee or a pint on topics of the spirit.

Thirst can mean a lot of things, but the hope is that through the course of an evening with the 20/30 somethings fellowship group, whatever people are looking for will in some small way be found and the thirst of the spirit quenched.

Please contact Amy Wick Moore at ajwick_2000@yahoo.com, or 651-645-3765, and check out www.comethirsty-mn.org to learn more about the gatherings...and come join us!

Welcome to Michele Borne!

August was a month of transition for the Conference Office. Our days have been brightened by our new Administrative Assistant for the Ashley Minister of Faith Formation for Children and Youth, Michele Borne. Michele is also the Christian Education Director at Excelsior Congregational Church in Excelsior, Minnesota. She has been in that position for the last two years and brings with her twenty plus years of ministry experience. She keeps busy with her 9th grade son Christian, 4th grade daughter Claire, and husband Peter. She enjoys family time on their boat, going camping and spending time outdoors. It's great to have her in the office! Welcome, Michele! You can reach her at micheleb@uccmn.org.



The UCC and Me

Saturday, August 23, St. John's and First Congregational UCC Churches hosted a county-wide UCC Vacation Bible School. There was singing and a few lessons too. Participants learned about the parts of the UCC symbol, the seasons of the church, and the sacraments. There were many activities during the day, including hula-hooping. (The youth were really good at this, but the leaders had a little problem with getting the body and the hoop working together!) All became part of the "royal family" once the crowns were made. Finally, we made graham cracker churches. Lunch was served by the First Congregational Church. Sunday's joint worship service included sharing what was learned.

— Richard Abel, St. John's, Fairmont

Leadership-21 at First UCC, Northfield

First United Church of Christ, Northfield, has been awarded a \$6800 grant from the Fund for Theological Education (FTE) for their **L-21 Program — Leadership for the Twenty-first Century Church**. The grant is part of FTE's "Cultures of Call" initiative that helps congregations nurture vocational discernment among young adults, particularly the call to ordained ministry.

Starting in September, a small group (6-7) of college students will gather weekly for a facilitated discussion, led by the minister and other members of the church and community. The sessions are designed to provide information, action, and reflection useful in the discernment process.

"The information aspect is pretty straightforward," said First UCC Minister Sandy Johnson, "we'll present facts about the varieties of ordained ministry and the process of preparation for ordination. It's the action and reflection aspects that we think are unique in our program."

The action portion invites these young adults to undertake and lead projects in the congregation. This is a way to "try on" the leadership role while learning more about how church worship, programs, and administration work. Each student will work with a staff member, church member, or committee to carry out

their project.

The reflection aspect of the program will use non-traditional conversation starters, many of them from the arts and popular culture. So, for example, a session might begin with a scene from the TV series "Joan of Arcadia" in which God is portrayed as a "Goth" teenager. In other sessions, the students will work with poetry, yoga, African drumming, or visual art as a way of asking deeper questions about their own vocations.

The other unique thing about this program is that the students will be paid (at the same rate as on-campus Work-Study jobs) for the 3-4 hours they participate each week. Students told program planners that they couldn't make a significant time commitment without cutting down on some other activity. Offering these small financial stipends reduces the hours they need to work on-campus during the year, and makes it possible for them to participate in L-21.

According to Johnson, the first year's group includes seven young women and men from Carleton and St. Olaf colleges; four are members of UCC congregations, the others are Presbyterian, Mennonite, and Evangelical Covenant. "We believe this is going to be a lively and exciting group," she said, "I can't wait to get started."

Reminder

Applications for St. Paul's Family Resources 2009 Heritage Grants are due October 31, 2008. Application forms and other information on the grants can be found on the Minnesota Conference UCC Website (www.uccmn.org). Click on St. Paul's Family Resources.

If you have further questions, please call Rebecca Galkiewicz at 651-490-0316 or Charlie Hentzen at 651-738-9260.

NYE 2008 Memories



The Minnesota Conference represents at NYE

Nearly 100 youth and adults traveled with the MN Conference from over 20 churches to take part in NYE this summer with 2800 UCC folks. Thanks to all the leaders who went, Lori Heutmaker for her hard work, and the Ashley funds—all which helped make the trip a great success!

Allison Dargan

I had a lot of awesome times at NYE. One of my favorites was the forum about the crisis in Sudan. I learned so much information that I had no idea was going on. I found the speaker's story incredibly touching and inspiring. Hearing it made me want to travel to a third world country and make a difference.

I also really enjoyed all of our speakers. They all had wonderful stories and made me question my own journey in life and what I can do to contribute more.

NYE was a blast! I learned so much about people from other places and about myself, and I would go again in a heartbeat! LIVING THE LIFE!

Mia Vaydich

Totally fantastic! Everything from the big cockroaches to the singing. My favorite memory is probably swimming. From some intense "volleyball" games, to trying the ana-ana slide in the pool. We met amazing people who just wanted to have a good time and get close to God.

Emily Punyko

NYE was fabulous. One particular thing I'll remember is Rev. John Thomas's sermon. It brought tears to my eyes because it was so moving. He told us about hope and where we can

place our hope. He mentioned war in Iraq and in the Middle East and told us how people live with horror. When we all prayed together for the victims of war and the family members of victims and for those in the shooting in Tennessee, there was such an overwhelming presence of God listening to our prayers.

Another favorite moment was when Valerie Tutson, another speaker, taught us a prayer: to pray to the south, the west, the north, the east, the earth, the heavens, and ourselves.

Phil Hubert

NYE was as awesome as I'd remembered it from four years ago. I felt a sense of déjà vu walking on the Knoxville campus with memories of good times past. There was the building we'd stayed in, there was the route we took to worship, singing Seven Nation Army as we went along. I thought to myself, "How can this time possibly compare?" And that's where I learned something. Even though nearly all of the people were new to NYE, our UCC identity was as strong as ever and I found myself having a wonderful time.

My favorite parts of NYE are hard to pin down on paper, but an obvious choice was the music, and there was definitely lots of it. Between the NYE house band, the youth choir, karaoke DJs all around campus, and Lost & Found there was music everywhere. It was impossible not to get caught up in it; we had no choice but to get on our feet, clap to the up-beat rhythms or to sway together to the calmer melodies. The common thread of wor-

ship wound through all 3000 of us and a collective energy filled the arena. Music is how I most often find myself best connected to God and sharing it with others only makes it stronger. It's experiences like these that I always look back to and hold onto forever.

Rachel Peterson

When I decided to attend NYE, I didn't really think about all that it would entail. It was an uncharacteristically impulsive decision. I just thought, "Oh, Tennessee...I've never been there." And the best thing that happened to me there was also extraordinarily random. On the bus ride to Knoxville, I had my own little two-seat section to myself until we picked up the rest of our group in Owatonna. I grudgingly gave up one of my seats to a girl who got on there. It turned out to be the luckiest seating arrangement in history. Despite the five-inch height difference and the natural blond vs. unnatural red-head factor, Ellen and I could easily be twins. We hit it off, discussing our mutual obsession with the Twilight series. We got along well, so we stuck together throughout the conference. We discovered we both got the same ACT score (34), we both want to major in English, and we both have some perfectionist tendencies. Maybe, with any luck, we'll end up at the same college and it'll be like a permanent version of NYE!!

Kate Thoennes

For one of my workshops I signed up for an off-campus service project. The ride in the van was a little awkward at first because none of us knew

each other. Then we all started talking, and in 15 minutes I felt like I knew everyone. The two people I remember the most are Tim and Deanna. When we got there we were all laughing and playing with the kids. I saw a little girl standing in the corner by herself, so I walked up and asked her name. She said "Kaylin" and I was surprised by her heavy southern accent. I told her my name and asked her if she wanted to go play with everyone else. She said "no," so I just kept talking to her, and I finally got her to come out of the corner. We played with blocks and built a fort and had a snack. I learned that she is 5 years old and going into kindergarten. Now I am thinking about the NYE theme "Living the Life." I think that younger kids do a very good job of living their lives, and being around them made me feel like I was living my life.

Keely Shrake

My favorite memory from the trip was the Butterfly lady that sat up in the tree. She was really cool, and her story was amazing. Listening to her made me want to get out and do something amazing, but I don't think I could sit in a tree for a couple of years.

Tony Androsky

My favorite part of NYE was making new friends and seeing all the different states come together for this conference. I loved the diving board and being able to swim every day. The speakers were amazing. I will miss all my friends that I met from different states and areas. I can't wait till the next one, only next time I will be chaperoning it.

Celebrate Higher Education Sunday and Show Support for CUE

Sunday, October 26th is Higher Education Sunday. What better way to celebrate than to show your support for CUE! CUE is the organization charged with encouraging and supporting theological education at the United Church of Christ's three Midwest Seminaries: Chicago, United and Eden.

Did You Know?

- Since the 1980s, the cost of higher education has risen steadily, at several times the Consumer Price Index (CPI).
 - Seminaries have to keep tuition lower than many graduate schools. Its alumni don't usually go on to earn high salaries.
 - Despite efforts to keep costs down, during the '07-08 school year at United Theological Seminary, tuition for one year was \$11,000.
 - In addition to tuition costs, students spend \$350 per semester on books and bear significant commuting expenses. Most students are unable to work full-time while attending seminary, so their earning capacity is significantly reduced.
- A 2005 study by Auburn Theological Seminary in New York shows that:
- The average student loan debt for new pastors more than doubled from \$11,043 in 1991 to \$25,018 in 2001.
 - By 2011 about 84 percent of seminary students will have to borrow to finance their education.
 - By 2011, the average seminary loan burden is expected to be more than \$54,000.

Scholarship Gifts Make a Difference!

Recent United Theological Seminary graduate Aaron Crowell echoed many students' experiences when he commented on the importance of scholarship assistance he received at United: "Without the scholar-

ships that United offered, I would not have been able to take part in this ecumenical community of study, conversation, and prayer...and an education that has given me so much insight into God's call for human stewardship. The support has been a blessing!"

During the 2007-08 school year, 84% of United students received some form of scholarship support. Some financial aid is need-based, some is merit-based, and other scholarships are denominationally specific. All of them make a significant difference for our students.

Church/Seminary Partnership

- Without the churches, some of our best future pastors would not be able to attend seminary.
- Without the churches, seminaries like United would not be able to educate the next generation of church leaders.
- Without the work of seminaries like United, the churches would lack strong and visionary leadership.
- We need each other. We are partners in ministry.

The Minnesota Conference has been supporting the CUE program for 40 years. The three seminaries have been educating students for over 150 years. It is through our support that their work continues today and for years to come.

One great way to encourage and educate your congregation about theological education in the UCC is by celebrating Higher Education Sunday October 26th. You can find more information and order materials at the CUE website: www.cueseminaries.org. Scholarship gifts may be made out to United Theological Seminary and sent care of Julie Brown, United Theological Seminary, 3000 5th St NW, New Brighton, MN, 55112. Or you may make a gift online at www.unitedseminary.edu.

Two Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ Churches Chosen!

At the end of August, five Twin Cities metro-area churches were selected to participate in a United Theological Seminary (UTS) project. "Creating Significant Worship in Times of Change and Challenge" is underwritten by a Worship Renewal Grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship with funds provided by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. Among those five churches were two of our own! Lyndale UCC and Parkway UCC both in Minneapolis were selected to participate in the project.

"Creating Significant Worship..." is an interactive worship-enriching program. Each participating congregation sends a worship planning team to form a cluster group with other selected congregations. The churches that applied for the project had to assemble a team of people who would be dedicated to the year-long project. Each cluster group meets with UTS faculty and resource persons to explore a variety of ways to give their church's worship new life through theological reflection, dialogue and an intentional engagement with the arts. UTS resource persons will also visit the churches to assess interests, strengths, resources and possibilities for the congregation.

Project director Cindi Beth Johnson says, "The goal is to find

churches eager to reflect on ways to make their worship relevant and meaningful, who sense they are on the cusp of congregational growth or change and can send a dedicated team that is willing to invest time and energy."

Lyndale and Parkway fit well into the criteria of the Worship Renewal project. Both congregations demonstrate an awareness of the need to embrace challenges and changes they face: changing demographics, languages, cultural diversity, finances, building needs and ecumenical and community relations. There is energy at these churches to examine their existing worship and to explore possibilities for change to meet current and future challenges. Both congregations demonstrate passion around the power of worship to be an important and transformative force for congregational nourishment. The final requirement for participation in the Worship Renewal project is that congregations must be open to intentional and broad integration of the arts in worship — everything from dance to poetry, visual art to new music, a wide use of literary and dramatic arts. We are eager to see what the congregations of Lyndale UCC and Parkway UCC will do with the new learning and guidance of the project.

New Green Union Building Opens at Fairgrounds

Representing the Workers Interfaith Network (WIN), Minnesota Conference pastor John Guttermann spoke to 200 union members and their families at the dedication of the new Minnesota AFL-CIO Labor Pavilion on the Minnesota State Fair Grounds. The new pavilion, the fairgrounds' first building designed to meet 'Green' Building Standards, was built with union labor. It was dedicated on the fair's opening day. In brief remarks concluding with a prayer of dedication, Guttermann spoke of his family's union legacy, saying, "We know the benefits of union membership." He also said, "I am here as a pastor and person of faith. My tradition teaches that the work of justice sitting at the heart of the union movement is sacred work." US Senator Amy Klobuchar was the keynote speaker and ribbon cutter.

WIN unites religious leaders, labor leaders, and workers demanding improved wages, benefits, and working conditions for all. Former Conference Moderator the Rev. Nancy Anderson serves on WIN's Board of Directors. For more information about WIN, speakers, or other assistance, check their website, workersinterfaith.org or call Matt Gladue, Executive Director, 612-332-2055.



Senator Amy Klobuchar cuts the ribbon to open the building

Academy for Vital Christianity

Looking for a way to enliven your ministry? The Academy for Vital Christianity offers a wide variety of classes designed for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of the Christian tradition. Instructors have been recruited from United Theological Seminary's regular, adjunct, and retired faculty. Well-known regional experts from outside the

seminary have also been pulled in to teach courses. Each class is \$225 and entrance is granted through an easy registration.

For a complete list of course offerings in Duluth, Rochester, and the Twin Cities, visit www.unitedseminary.edu. Fall registration ends October 25; Spring registration begins in January.

Victor Lewis, National Expert on Dismantling Racism, Appearing Across the State in November

"Healing the Heart of Justice: The Spirit of Diversity Leadership" is the theme of major antiracism/multicultural learning events being hosted by UCC churches in Rochester (November 7-9), Duluth (November 11) and Saint Paul (November 13-16). People in each of these regions of the State will have an opportunity to learn from Victor Lee Lewis, an internationally recognized leader in the field of anti-oppression diversity work and alliance building. As an educator, trainer and activist, Victor has conducted keynote speeches, seminars, and "train the trainer" programs throughout the United States and abroad. He has more than twenty years experience in the field. He is perhaps best known for his inspiring and catalytic leadership role in the award-winning race relations documentary, "The Color of Fear." Mr. Lewis is currently Director of the Center for Diversity Leadership in Oakland, California.

Peace UCC in Rochester, Peace UCC in Duluth and Cherokee Park United Church in Saint Paul are the host congregations who are collaborating with one another and local partners to sponsor these events. Funding is provided in part by the Emmaus Antiracism Team and the Justice & Witness Team of the Minnesota Conference. ASDIC (Antiracism Study Dialogue Circles) and its Facilitators-in-Training

Groups are also sponsoring and organizing Mr. Lewis' presentations. The three lead congregations all have participated in ASDIC and have active antiracism teams.

Peace Church Rochester, through its ASDIC Circle, took the initiative in bringing Mr. Lewis to Minnesota. Peace Rochester, along with First Congregational UCC Zumbrota and The Congregational Church of Rochester, have built an amazing coalition that is strengthening and greatly expanding the network of people committed to antiracism work in the Rochester area. Working in active partnership with the Rochester Public Schools, the local chapter of the NAACP, the County Human Rights Commission, the Diversity Council, the University of Minnesota Rochester, and dozens of other faith communities and organizations, they will host the following events:

- On Friday November 7 at 7:00 p.m. Mr. Lewis will present a lecture entitled "A Time for Transformation: From the Politics of Race to the Politics of Solidarity," exploring the thought patterns underlying the "racial paradigm." This will be followed by a reception for Mr. Lewis. Due to the phenomenal attendance expected at this event, it will be held at Willow Creek Middle School, 2425 11th Ave SE, Rochester 55904.
- On Saturday November 8 from

8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Mr. Lewis will lead and facilitate a workshop entitled "Healing the Heart of Justice: The Spirit of Diversity Leadership," exploring the integration of personal growth and development (inner leadership) with organizational development and transformation skills (outer leadership). This workshop will also be held at Willow Creek Middle School.

- On Sunday November 9, Mr. Lewis will preach at Peace Church Rochester at both the 8:30 and 11:00 a.m. services. The church is located at 1503 Second Avenue NE, Rochester 55906.

The events in Rochester are all free and open to the public. For more information about Victor Lewis events being offered in Rochester, contact Rev. Paul Bauch at 507-282-6117 or pastor@peacechurchucc.org. Registration is being handled by the Rochester Diversity Council at 507-282-9951, info@diversitycouncil.org.

In Duluth, PeaceChurch and 15 partnering organizations are hosting, throughout the community, showings of "The Color of Fear" with facilitated discussions in advance of Mr. Lewis' arrival. As in Rochester, this has become a major initiative for the School District. Organizing leadership and trained facilitation for these many efforts are being provided by members of PeaceChurch as well as other community persons who have participated in ASDIC Circles and Undoing Racism workshops. The YWCA is providing the funds for the Victor Lewis presentation. Mr. Lewis will present his lecture workshop "A Time for Transformation: From the Politics of Race to the Politics of Solidarity" on the evening of Tuesday November 11. This workshop is free and open to the public. It begins at 7:00 p.m. at Denfeld High School, 4405 W 4th St, Duluth 55807. Mr. Lewis will also speak the following evening at the University of Minnesota Duluth. For further information about the events in Duluth, contact Ellen O'Neil at 218-722-7425.

In the Twin Cities area, opportunities to hear Victor Lewis include:

- On Thursday November 13, Mr. Lewis will present the lecture workshop "A Time for Transformation: From the Politics of Race to the Politics of Solidarity" at 7:00 p.m. Because of extensive community involvement organized by the host



Victor Lee Lewis, nationally renowned anti-oppression, diversity leader

organizations and the large gathering that is expected, this event will be held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, 401 Concord Street, Saint Paul, MN 55107. The lecture is free and open to the public.

- Mr. Lewis will lead an intensive antiracism leadership workshop beginning on Friday evening, November 14 and continuing through the day on Saturday, November 15. This workshop is designed for people with prior antiracism training and will be held at Cherokee Park United Church, 371 West Baker Street, Saint Paul 55107. The cost of this deepening workshop is \$40 and requires registration; scholarships are readily available.

- Mr. Lewis will be preaching at Cherokee Park Church on Sunday, November 16 at 10:00 a.m.

For more information about Mr. Lewis' presentations in the Twin Cities area, contact Rev. Tim Johnson at 651-227-4275 or cpuc@usfamily.net.

These events present wonderful opportunities for people throughout the Minnesota Conference to learn from this astute and highly knowledgeable national expert as we live into our calling as a Conference of extravagant welcome and evangelical courage. Many thanks are due the three core churches, ASDIC and the Emmaus Team, who began an endeavor that has grown to amazing proportions in three different regions of our Conference, and to the Justice & Witness Team for additional financial support. Come join in the learning and the creation of the future we desire to share together!

by Rev. Tim Johnson and Margery Otto on behalf of the Emmaus Antiracism Team

Twins game fundraiser



Rev. Bryan Olson of Cottage Grove UCC presents Rev. Dr. Karen Smith Sellers with a check for \$435 to benefit OCWM. The money was raised through a Twins game fundraiser.

New Associate Conference Ministers

continued. . .

...a strong commitment and loyalty to the United Church of Christ. He is cited for helping people to work together to solve problems and for dealing effectively with conflict. He is described as an outstanding teacher and a good listener, who is approachable and articulate. Well-respected by his peers, he is characterized as collegial, dedicated, and detail oriented. He is also noted for his humor.

The search committee was comprised of Rev. Nancy Swanson, Chair (Cherokee Park United Church, St. Paul), Ms. Maureen Day, Secretary (Mayflower, Minneapolis) and Rev. Lindy Purdy, Chaplain (Wayzata Community Church). Other members were Dr. Richard Anderson (Granite Falls UCC), Rev. Howard Bell (New Brighton UCC), Mr. Scott Shaffer (First Congregational, Fairmont), Ms. Janet White (Grace Community UCC, St. Paul), and Conference Minister, Rev. Dr. Karen Smith Sellers, staff. They were charged by the Board to seek two superb candidates with broad and complementary strengths in order to create a strong and successful team.

The search committee vigorously solicited applicants through a variety of channels. Careful review was given to each candidate. Prior to being interviewed, the entire pool of finalists participated in assessment through the North Central Ministry Development Center.

The position description calls for these qualities: a person of deep and evident Christian faith, who shows self-awareness, integrity, and respect in relationships, exhibits the courage to face challenge and change, is approachable and accessible, and maintains appropriate personal and professional boundaries. The requisite qualifications for the position were stated as: an authorized UCC minister who is scripturally grounded and theologically articulate, passionate about the local church and demonstrates an understanding of its dynamics, knowledgeable about the diverse settings and operations of the UCC, able and willing to commit to functioning as a staff associate and team member, effective communicator, knowledgeable

about and skilled in the work of organizations, and technologically literate or willing to learn.

Recognizing that "the context in which we seek to be church is different from that in which most of us grew up" (Rev. Anthony Robinson, October 2007), the ministry of the Associate Conference Ministers will include attention to the following: *Strengthen, build, and invite congregations by*

- promoting congregational excellence and teaching best practices;
- directing energies toward congregational vitality and revitalization;
- empowering churches in transition;
- offering coaching and/or consultation for clergy and/or lay leaders and committees;
- referring and connecting authorized ministers and congregational leaders to appropriate services; and
- extending a ministry of presence in the local churches of the Conference.

Leadership development of clergy and laity by

- promoting pastoral excellence and teaching best practices;
- identifying and recruiting lay and clergy leadership;
- initiating and sustaining structures for the development of authorized ministers, including clergy communities of practice or covenant groups directed toward support, accountability, and growth; and
- identifying or creating opportunities for ongoing faith formation and leadership development of all members of the Minnesota Conference.

The Associate Conference Ministers will provide staff support for the Committee on Ministry and will resource Conference teams and task forces as assigned by the Conference Minister.

With the ministry of these associate conference ministers, the Minnesota Conference ends more than a-half-dozen years of interim ministers in these positions. Special thanks to Revs. Richard Scheerer, Mary Kay Sauter, Judith Youngman, and Howard (Howie) Tobak, who served the Minnesota Conference UCC faithfully and well during a long season of transition.

Conference says, "Thank you and Godspeed" to Rev. Howard (Howie) Tobak and Jonathan Morgan

This month we say, "Hello and welcome" to our new Associate Conference Ministers, Rev. Elena Larssen and Rev. Rick Wagner. We also sadly say farewell to the Rev. Howard (Howie) Tobak, who has served faithfully and well as Interim Associate Conference Minister since July 23, 2007 and to Jonathan Morgan, who has been our Financial Development Consultant since May 2006.

Howie came to us with a strong background in the skills called for in an interim associate conference minister. He received Basic Training in Interim Ministry in 1990 and for the next twenty years served as an intentional interim minister in six different conferences of the United Church of Christ and in sixteen different settings, including an ecumenical campus ministry, three senior pastorates, three multiple congregation pastorates, and nine sole pastorates.

Additionally, he chaired the division of Ministry of the Maine Conference ('93-'96) and was member and co-chair of the Church and Ministry Committee of the Southern Association of the Minnesota Conference ('96-'01). He provided supply coverage as Association Minister in the Southern Association during the two-month leave of absence by Rev. Joanne Stoughton.

As a Professional Transition Specialist, who is on the faculty of the Interim Ministry Network, he brought particular skills in church revitalization, conflict mediation, fiscal management, lay leadership empowerment, organizational restructuring, parish self-appraisal, stewardship development, and strategic planning.

Howie has worked with approximately seventy local churches of the Minnesota Conference. During the fourteen months he has been among us, he has logged approximately 23,000 miles, had 750 contacts with clergy and churches regarding transitions, 320 contacts with clergy regarding Search and Call, and 270 con-



Martha and Jonathan Morgan at a recent Friends of the Conference event

tacts with clergy and/or parishioners regarding pastoral matters.

Jonathan Morgan emerged from retirement as Vice President for Development and Stewardship at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities to become our first Financial Development Consultant. Early in his tenure he had opportunity to participate with Conference Minister, Rev. Karen Smith Sellers and Rev. Jeff Sartain (Plymouth Congregational, Minneapolis) in



Rev. Howie Tobak at 2008 Annual Meeting

financial development training provided to UCC national and conference leadership. In response, he prepared a report for the Board of Directors that set forth twenty recommendations for strengthening the financial resources of the Conference. Among these was the formation of a

Development Committee, for which he provided staff support. Jonathan also worked with the Planned Giving Committee, met occasionally with the Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) Team, and frequently with the Finance Committee.

Of particular note is the dramatic growth he fostered in the "Friends of the Conference" annual fund. In 2007 he challenged us to raise \$50,000 in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the United Church of Christ. Thanks to his persistence and leadership, that amount — nearly ten times what had previously been raised through a year-end appeal — was achieved and exceeded! The 2008 goal of \$60,000 has also been met, and almost two dozen donors have joined the leadership circle by contributing more than \$1000 each!



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