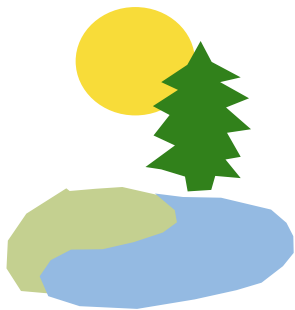




ConnTact

**United
Church
News**

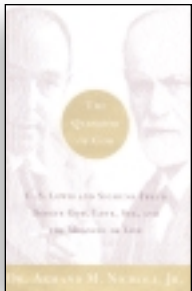
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Summer at
Silver Lake

*From the
director*

A
3



God, Love,
Sex, Etc.

Book Review

A
3

Poem &
Song

A
7



Colombia Journey

*Messages of
Hope and Peace*

Editor's Note: From June 26 to July 8, a delegation of 35 men and women journeyed to Colombia, South America, on a mission of peace, education and Christian witness. After a two-day orientation and sermon in Miami, the group flew to Bogota, where it soon divided into two groups so as to cover more territory. Half went to Sincelejo, a town close to the Caribbean coast near the border of Panama, and the other half, to Choco, which is closer to the Pacific coast.

The delegation traveled under the aegis of "Witness for Peace," a U.S. organization which has been sending peace delegations to Latin American countries for 20 years, and "Justapaz," a non-profit group working for justice and peace in troubled lands.

The delegation was made up of members of six denominations: UCC, Disciples of Christ, Mennonite, Quaker, Presbyterian and Methodist. The UCC delegates came from the Connecticut, Massachusetts and Central

Atlantic conferences. Many in the group of 35 were professors, lay leaders or pastors.

The Connecticut delegates were: the Rev. Davida Foy Crabtree, the Rev. Frederick Streets, Lynn Shaw, Hugh and Kate McLean, Sarah Dowling, and the Rev. Kent Siladi, who is on sabbatical. The following passages are gleaned from their reflections upon returning home.

Continued on page A4

The Two Sides of Justice

A
6

Lives on the Line



The Rev. Dr. Davida Foy Crabtree, Conference Minister

Times of tragedy are the times when we seek our spiritual center. Unfortunately it is the case that for most people, their search under those conditions will disappoint them. Our spirituality must be nurtured and deepened over many years if it will meet our need when we are hurting or afraid.

This has been apparent here in the northeastern United States in this past twelve months as people have sought to deal with their sorrow, anger and fear since the tragic and horrific events of last September 11. At first there was a surge of interest in faith and spirituality, noted especially in church attendance. Very quickly it slacked off. Pundits blame the church, and

Yet a deep and sustained spiritual center can transform individuals, communities and nations. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Colombia right now.

surely there is some measure of truth to their commentary. Yet I think the truth is that ours has become a nation devoted to instant gratification, and if a solution doesn't make us feel instantly better, we reject it. The hard work of developing a mature faith remains a discipline that eludes the great majority, who settle either for feel-good spirituality or for authoritarian fundamentalism.

Yet a deep and sustained spiritual center can transform individuals, communities and nations. Nowhere is this more apparent than in Colombia right now. The challenges Christians face there are

monumental. Churches are being shut down by both the guerrillas of the left and the paramilitaries of the right. Pastors and religious workers are being assassinated even as they lead worship. Much of the nation is devoted to violence as a way of life, and faces a developing potential for dictatorship. People are desperate for peace but those who work for peace

and justice are a threat to established ways. Their lives are in danger.

In this context, the witness of the Iglesia Menonita de Colombia stands as a testimony to the importance of a long-term development of a tough and deep spirituality. The Mennonites of Colombia have nurtured a community of 1,000 members spread over 17 churches. Through Justapaz and the leadership of Ricardo Esquivia, their pastors and people are refusing to cooperate with any of the armed factions, and courageously working for an effective peace process. Some of them serve as negotiators when there is a threat of another massacre or when someone has been kidnapped. Daily they put their lives on the line in the name of Jesus. Scared? Of course they are. Yet through their work, many other pastors of other denominations have been brought together to reflect on the call of the gospel for their work in Colombia right now. And through them, important work with the dispossessed and the displaced is taking place. Most importantly, they have the courage to live the faith in all its implications, to make personal sacrifices we cannot begin to imagine.

Recently I wrote to Justapaz and want to share some of my message with you:

"Your practice of the faith is one that reaches out with encompassing arms to extend God's love and Christ's peace to all people. The genuineness of your faith continues to touch me deeply. I yearn for such depth and gospel trust for Christians in the United States.

It is hard for you to know this as fully as we do here, but your Christian witness in the midst of Colombia is so very important to the vitality of the faith and the survival of the wholeness of the gospel! In every generation, God raises up somewhere in the world a Christian community whose witness and ministry transforms the worldwide Church's understanding of the faith. I believe that Justapaz and Iglesia Menonita de Colombia are such a community for our world at this time.

Those are difficult words for me to write, living the privileged life that I do. And difficult knowing that you are the ones living the sacrifice for peace and reconciliation, for justice and hope. Yet I think it is important that you know the simple power you have in the name of Jesus Christ. It is the power of transformation through your faithfulness. I don't mean that you alone will bring the peace for which we all hope, nor that the power of your presence will even necessarily ultimately succeed by the standards of the world. Yet I do mean that the peace that comes of Christ is transmitted in this world largely by his Body, the Church, and his Ministers, all who are Christian. For the peace

we seek is so much more than that the world ever recognizes!

These are the days, in Colombia especially but throughout the world as well, when we learn that the only peace that is rich and deep is the peace of Christ. For in his peace, we are all one. Peace is a gift Christ gives; it is the foundation of life. We humans create the conflicts and the wars that mask that peace. Yet the peace remains the foun-

Those are difficult words for me to write, living the privileged life that I do. And difficult knowing that you are the ones living the sacrifice for peace and reconciliation, for justice and hope.

datation, the beginning and the end, of all life.

We are so blessed to know you! For through your ministry we are able to touch the depths of Christ's peace. We may have only a glimmer of it because of our privilege, and because of the facade of peace in which we live our daily lives, yet through you we see Christ alive. Through you we gain a vision of the ministry and witness to which we are called here in the United States. We pray that we may claim that vision and that it may shape our mission in profound ways.

May it be so among us!

• United Church News •

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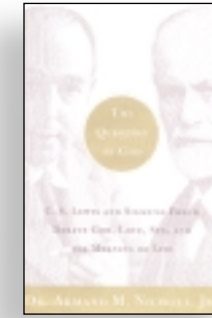
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Can We Talk?

THE QUESTION OF GOD
C.S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud Debate God, Love, Sex and the Meaning of Life
by Dr. Armand M. Nicholi, Jr.
The Free Press, 2002



Imagine if you will (in your best Rod Serling voice) that Sigmund Freud and C.S. Lewis are having tea and discussing the meaning of life. These two brilliant men who came from very similar experiences as children eventually took two very different roads. Dr. Armand Nicholi, Jr. has captured some of that imagined conversation in his book, *The Question of God* (The Free Press, 2002).

For more than 25 years Dr. Nicholi has studied the philosophical writings of both men, and has taught a course at Harvard that compares the two worldviews.

Dr. Nicholi begins the book by explaining both men's early lives, the difficult and negative relationships they had with their respective fathers and the role religion played in their lives. Both men ultimately were non-believers or Atheists in

their young adult years but C.S. Lewis experienced a conversion and became an outspoken proponent of Christianity. Using the extensive writings and correspondence of both men, Dr. Nicholi states their beliefs and arguments for and against the existence of God and how that affects people at the deepest levels.

One example is seen in their views on moral truth. Freud held that moral law comes from society's need to cohabit and that laws change with time and culture. Lewis determined that moral law comes from a higher being, that the similarities in moral laws from culture to culture point to a universal moral code that is written upon people's hearts. Some differences and changes occur over time and culture, but the basic moral laws stay the same.

The conversations continue through happiness, love, sex, pain and death. Dr. Nicholi presents both sides in a somewhat conversational tone that does not hold up one argument over the other. The continued impact of the writings of these two great minds could in part be due to the continued tension in each of us between Freud's materialist worldview and the spiritual worldview held by Lewis. The examination of both arguments helps us articulate our own beliefs.

Cecile Gilson is Administrative Assistant for the Connecticut Conference and a frequent contributor to ConnTact.

Silver Lake's Busy Summer

Summer is traditionally a slow time in Connecticut, but here at Silver Lake, we are hopping as wildly as the bass. More than 1,200 young people are involved in our ministry this summer. We are especially excited to have hosted a group of 29 youth and their counselors from two Elon Home campuses in North Carolina. The Elon Homes are privately

run facilities dedicated to providing a safe, supportive and educational environment for children who have been abandoned, abused or neglected. Many have bounced from foster home to foster home. In order to qualify for our program, these young people have earned the right by adhering to many strict behavioral standards, and have performed community volunteer service back home.

They are participating in the "Sing to the Lord" conference, and during a recent Friday night worship, performed several musical numbers for a delighted crowd of their peers. We remain grateful to the 17 Connecticut churches (and a few in Rhode Island and Massachusetts) which helped make this program possible. And a special thanks to the Rev. Dr. Jean Simpson, who enlisted the support of many of those churches.

In other Silver Lake news, construction continues apace at our eight new cabins. Crews have continued to come up on weekends to work on the eight cabins that were started during the year since last September. Two are just being framed out, but the other six are rapidly nearing completion.

Construction continues apace at our eight new cabins.

Programmatically, the Challenge Course continues to be a wonderful opportunity for kids to stretch themselves in a safe, yet thrilling, way. Through this ministry, all participants are given the opportunity to improve their self-esteem and their relationships with others. The "low" elements, or those obstacles that are lower to the ground and less physically challenging, give kids the chance to develop teamwork and cooperate while encouraging emergent leadership. The "high" elements, including the Catwalk (a log stretched between two trees) and the Burma Bridge (a cable with guide wires) help participants face their fears while gaining self-confidence. All activities are, of course, closely supervised by facilitators trained by the engineers who created them.

Finally, a word about this summer's volunteers. We have had a wonderful and talented group of volunteers – about 30 per week – who willingly gave their time to lead our youth through Conferences on a variety of topics. Those who serve as "deans" of the volunteers usually consist of pastors and Christian Education directors. "Counselors" are usually adults and young people (over age 16) who've come to us as conferees in the past. The volunteers for our "Sing Praise" Conference, led by Valerie Tutson and Danielle Grise, wrote a wonderful song based on the summer theme, "God's Neighborhood: That They May All Be One." The song is an upbeat number calling all nations and all people to praise God. We have continued to teach it to each group. (Lyrics appear on page A7.)

Dana M. Fisher is the director of the Silver Lake Conference Center.

Colombia Journey Continued from page A1

From Lynn Shaw
Member, First Church of Christ in Middletown; Member of the Admissions Department, Wesleyan University

For me, there were three main purposes for the trip: to listen and learn; to be in solidarity with our brothers and sisters; and to improve our standing so that when we returned, we might have some influence on our country's foreign policy.

I wish that all our representatives and senators could go down and see for themselves that the huge decisions they're making are having dire consequences. Lacking the perspective we now have, they're sending lots of foreign aid dollars there — about \$98 million initially, which is going into the wrong hands. There is so much corruption, and the U.S.-ordered fumigation of farms in order to get rid of coca plants, seems to be making its way into military hands and is, instead, fueling the war.

"They are so brave, and are continuing to reach out — it's really the Gospel alive."

We heard testimony from union leaders, economists, pastors and individuals — including a woman who left the guerrillas and now helps other escape their grasp — that people are being displaced from their communities with only the clothes on their backs. These are country people with huge families, given the lack of birth control, and these people, often women with several children, little education and no resources, arrive in cities with no idea of where to go.

They seem far away from us, but in fact are not: we visited the only school in Colombia exclusively for displaced children — about 550 kids in all — which the Connecticut Conference paid for through Justapaz. And my church — First Church of Christ, UCC, in Middletown, established a partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the town of Ibague. These connections are vital.

What struck me most was that despite their losses, the living have, remarkably, retained their sense of hope, even though they have water only two hours a day and very little electricity. There are no phones, except in some stores. What a strange feeling to be on a bus and hear, echoing off a mountain, a shop owner cry, "Henry! You have a phone call!"

Everywhere we went, the message was: the American government's aid program, "Plan Colombia," is not working. The people have been waiting and waiting and they are discouraged and frustrated. Still, I was so inspired to meet so many people who were still

helping each other. We met a woman who is a member of very small Mennonite church in Sincelejo who hosted us. She gave us dinner, and held a very moving communion on the roof of the school there. She played her guitar for us, and sang, through her sadness: "if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you can move mountains." Every night, after hearing terrible news, she and her husband will sing together because they don't want to lose their sense of compassion and their hope.

It's very dangerous for pastors to organize and be politically active; they have to be very careful about what they preach, because they don't know whether their organization has been infiltrated by guerillas. But they are so brave, and are continuing to reach out — it's really the Gospel alive.

From the Rev. Dr. Frederick J. Streets
Chaplain, Yale University; Senior Pastor, The Church of Christ in Yale

It matters to the people of Colombia who are living in an environment dominated by poverty and extreme acts of violence to know that people are interested enough to learn about the conditions under which they live and are willing to help them deal with their situation. This is what we were told by the people there many times during our recent visit.

Throughout the country, there are at least two million people — women, children, men and the elderly — who have been separated from their families and displaced from land and homes they own by various heavily armed, organized, violent actors. They live in government shelters, refugee camps, on urban streets and in city dump grounds surrounded by high rise garbage piles. There were 20 people in one man's family. He is the only one who has survived the deaths of all of his family members and is now living as a 'displaced person.' His is not an uncommon story in Colombia. But it is not Colombia's only story.

It is a land of beauty with a rich history and an abundance of natural resources — control over which is a dimension of the long civil war there. The decency, beauty and extraordinary gifts of the Colombian people are overshadowed by the struggle for who will have control over Colombia's resources and negotiate its geo-political relationship with the United States and other foreign governments whose agendas are not in the best interests of Colombia. We were told, for example, many times and by different people throughout the country, that "Plan Colombia" is only flooding the country with more weapons. We were told

that the fumigation of farm lands and forests is destroying Colombia's natural resources, making people ill and causing various kinds of defects and illnesses in newborn babies.

Half of our delegation visited the Choco region of Colombia, which is north of Bogota near the Panamanian border. The majority of the people there are Afro-Colombians, many of whom are farmers who have been displaced from their mineral and oil rich land. In addition to this struggle, they have been fighting the effects of racism and sexism in Colombia since gaining independence from the domination of Spain in 1849.

However we understand Colombia's history and current problems, it is clear that unemployment (half of Colombia's population of 40 million people are unemployed), poverty and the current power struggle combine to create a formidable culture of violence that affects everyone. In this context, the Mennonite Church of Colombia, the United Church of Christ, and the evangelical Protestant and Catholic churches of Colombia, along with other organizations like Justapaz and Witness for Peace, face violence and the threat of death every day in their call for peace, in meeting the concrete needs of people and in committing acts of non-violent civil disobedience.

No trust, no justice; no justice, no peace. What an opportunity we have as people of God to be ambassadors for contributing to the building of cultures of trust, justice and peace.

Through our partnership, we encourage each other to resist the seductiveness of power and the temptation of evil which makes injustice appear so normal that the will to be unjust is preferred over justice. This makes an industry out of violence. Creating cultures of peace and justice is one of the major challenges facing religious people around the world. In a conversation with Ricardo Esquivia of Justapaz in Colombia, I was reminded of something very important: social justice and peace-making are bridges. Through them, we can have basic trust in one another — even in our enemies. Ricardo has often risked his life by talking with various armed actors. Of this he said: "I will talk with the devil if doing so has the potential of saving a life."

No trust, no justice; no justice, no peace. What an opportunity we have as people of God to be ambassadors for contributing to the building of cultures of trust, justice and peace.

From Sarah Dowling

Member, First Congregational Church in Cheshire; Currently studying social work at Marist College, Poughkeepsie, NY

On this trip to Colombia I learned a

lot more than I thought I ever could in two weeks. It became very evident that even a single person can make a difference, whether with a phone call to a representative, or a letter to an editor. I know that I can educate others about Colombia.

The church in Colombia is also making a major impact on the country. They have a wonderful connection with the people around them. They also have many connections with churches in the United States. These connections have formed a network of solidarity that is key to the peace movement in Colombia. The U.S. churches provide much needed support to the Colombian churches on an emotional level. The Colombian churches know that they have people constantly praying for them and working on the cause on the U.S. side of the conflict.

Our trip was a symbol of hope and peace.

As far as the government goes, my eyes were definitely opened. After talking to U.S. representatives and speaking to members of refugee (displaced) villages I was made aware of the fact that there are two different stories. There is the one that we as U.S. citizens hear that glorifies the actions of the U.S. government, and the second story is that which we don't know. This story is that of the actual conditions of the people living in Colombia, the results of our actions and the piece-by-piece destruction of a most beautiful country. The governments of the U.S. and Colombia often have different goals than that of the Colombian people.

The trip was important to those of us who went, but it was even more important to those whom we met. For them, it was a way to share their stories that don't get seen on the U.S. media. Our trip was a symbol of hope and peace. In us, they saw hope that we would return to the U.S. and work on influencing change from our end. The people we met also became like beacons of hope for us. They had so much going against them, yet they continued to work for peace, and find hope in everyday simplicities. It was important for our group to speak with as many people as we could and foster permanent relationships with them. In this we would be gaining first-hand knowledge of the conflict in Colombia, and be able to offer more effective forms of support.

It has become difficult to read reports from the country without taking it with a grain of salt because in my mind I carry images of thousands of displaced people living around the cities. But besides the images of suffering, I also saw a new side of the country. I learned that not all of Colombia is war. There are people there that are

Continued on page A5



going on with their lives, farming, making art and music to be the best of their abilities. I brought home a sense of hope.

The people of Colombia have an intense amount of faith that is contagious. My faith was definitely made stronger by what I saw and felt while in Colombia. Our hosts were so kind to us and gave so freely to us. It was these random acts of kindness that struck a chord with me. We were kept safe during our whole trip while there was a lot of violence surrounding us. Our faith made us strong on our trip and it will continue to keep us strong as we work for peace in Colombia.

The trip has made me more aware of the consequences of my own actions and the actions of my government. As a person who is aware of the issues in Colombia, it is my job to make others aware and to do my best to change the policies and practices of our government.

From Hugh and Kate McLean

Co-Chairs, Connecticut Conference Capital Campaign

The task facing the Colombian people is to overcome their legacy of violence and rebuild civil society on relationships of trust rather than coercion. We are heartened by our visit to discover that there is a growing consensus that not only is this needed, but that it might be possible to achieve in a non-violent way.

Negotiations for a lasting peace in Colombia require a minimal level of trust to be successful. This is done in small ways, always looking for common ground on which to build trust. In the words of Ricardo Esquivia, the founding director of Justapaz, "Peace work is the work of the Church. We dream of a better life based on the Gospels, on God's own words. There is no force on earth that can make that dream die." Following that dream takes courage and solidarity: "Courage is not being overcome by fear. We need to see little pieces of hope in every action. As we work to strengthen the body of Christ in Colombia, so we also will strengthen the body of Christ in the United States. Ultimately we will end up working for the same issues in both countries."

The task facing the Colombian people is to overcome their legacy of violence and rebuild civil society on relationships of trust

rather than coercion. We are heartened by our visit to discover that there is a growing consensus that not only is this needed, but that it might be possible to achieve in a non-violent way. And we are impressed by the quality of the leadership of this growing movement. How can we, in North America, participate in this exciting task of building a lasting peace in Colombia? Here is what the director of the Red Cross in Quibdó told us: "What we ask of the United States and the international community is to accompany civil society in helping the Colombian government remove the plugs from its ears and the blinders from its eyes so they will take on responsibility to protect civil society."

In response to what we heard from our dialogue partners in Colombia here is a list of specific commitments we have undertaken:

- 1. Strengthen the partnership between Justapaz and the United Church of Christ in Connecticut,** support Justapaz's Ministry of Accompaniment, and explore with other members of the First Church in Windsor what it would mean to participate in Justapaz's Sister Church Program.
- 2. Work to restrict and eventually eliminate U.S. military aid.** Instead the Colombian government needs to be encouraged to adequately support the victims of violence and provide public services in rural areas that will help small farmers to stay on their land.
- 3. Work to end aerial fumigations of coca leaf.** Evidence is that fumigation forces small farmers off the land because it destroys food crops in gardens as well as the coca. Colombians do want assistance in getting alternative crops to market, but they feel that destroying the livelihood and possibly the health of peasant farmers in Colombia cannot solve the United States' drug problem.
- 4. Work to channel humanitarian aid through non-governmental organizations** with a commitment to assisting displaced people and other victims of human rights abuses in ways that strengthen community organizations.

PILGRIMS & PARISHES

EDITED BY JEAN HAMILTON

Kensington

Congregational Church invited volunteer firefighters and their families to join their annual "Sundae Sunday" following a time of remembrance during the worship service.

Brookfield

The Congregational Church held weekly Summer Campfires/Vespers during July and August. Following a meal, participants stayed for campfire, worship, songs, stories and S'mores.

New Britain

South Church has a faith-based support group for foster and adoptive parents to help them deal with their unique and exciting challenges. They recently held a prayer and blessing of their pruner shawl ministry. They rededicated their needles, blessed new shawls and shared stories of ministry and faith.

Washington

First Congregational Church had a Hymn Festival Service that included a selection of congregational hymns that set forth the life of Jesus. The service included a time for commentary on the poetry of the hymns.

Glastonbury

First Church of Christ offers a calming quiet break in the week with a Service of Meditation that includes soothing music, a candlelit sanctuary, readings for reflection and contemplation, a Scripture reading and a time of prayer.

Chester

The United Church extended an invitation to members of the congregation to lead services or give sermons during the summer months. The Church Council and Deaconate coordinated the participation.

Suffield

The First Church of Christ conducted a tour and demonstration of their pipe organ that included both the mechanical and tonal aspects of the Gress-Miles organ.

Rocky Hill

Congregational Church proudly recognized the great-grandfathers of the church during worship. Each great-grandfather was given a loaf of homemade bread as well.

Fairfield

The children and youth of First Church, Congregational, filled an Ark for Heifer Project as their mission outreach project for Lent. An impressive \$5,000 was raised from contributions from the children and youth, special contributions from members, and a matching contribution from the thrift shop. The money will be used to help 30 families.

Bethlehem

Two members of First Church helped stock the Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen this summer by offering their rototilling services in exchange for a bag of produce or food for the Food Pantry and Soup Kitchen. They even offered to deliver the food themselves.

Farmington

During a recent wedding rehearsal, lightning from a tremendous storm hit First Church's steeple and set off bells that sounded nothing like wedding bells! Thanks to the Farmington Fire Department, the historic meetinghouse was not damaged.

Andover

First Church holds a monthly "open mic" for musicians and poets to perform and everyone else to enjoy. Refreshments and raffles round out the evening.

The Two Sides of Justice

Justice Witness Ministries Help Thaw "God's Frozen People"

By the Rev. Gordon Bates

Not too long ago, I talked with a pastor about the role of "justice" in the life of the parish she served. Among other comments, she said, in a confessional way, "I'm afraid that we spend more time talking about justice than actually doing it." She and her parish are not alone. Many of "God's Frozen People" seem endlessly engaged in wordsmithing about injustices rather than working to rectify them.

On the other hand, another pastor commented in answer to the same question, "We do an awful lot of mission activity on all levels of our church, but we don't always do a very good job of interpreting the justice context for what we are doing in Christ's name." A lot of company can gather around that flag, as well.

What both pastors said, in one way or another, is that both justice action and a justice context for action are needed if the church is to be both faithful and intentional in its discipleship. Long live their tribe.

The struggle in our churches to provide both the context and the opportunities for justice action is endless, interminable, aching frustrating to both pastors and laity. It is especially challenging for those of us who are passionate members of the United Church of Christ, whose identity and purpose is tied so closely to the notion (however difficult to define at times) of justice. We proclaim that we are a "Just Peace" Church. We like to see ourselves as a pilgrim people intent on "making justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream." (Amos 5:24)

The two facets of the Church cannot be separated. To neglect either is to limit or hinder the mission of any church: the point is to connect the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the pain and needs of the world on all levels of life.

We are called as Christians to lead and be led into mission-oriented justice action. Our goal must not be simply improved housing, or civil rights, or more adequate welfare funding, or a cessation of violence in various lands and localities, laudable as those goals are. It is to incarnate, as best we can, as often as we can, the eternal Love of God revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Working quietly for social reforms is often

appropriate and sometimes sufficient, but what an impact it makes when churches carry their banners in Gay Pride parades, or when laity and clergy testify, out of their faith, at the state legislature, or gather in public demonstrations on behalf of peacemaking and against an easy reliance on war-making. Most of us — most of the time — are far more comfortable with anonymous mission than with publicly identifying ourselves as Christians motivated by God's love for all people. We might better heed St. Francis: "preach the Gospel always, and when necessary, use words."

At the same time, we are also called to lead and be led into justice-oriented mission. From this angle, our goal is not simply to barrage those who will listen with all the code words of the Faith, nor to be content with Band-Aid reactions to individuals in miserable situations. What is desperately needed and usually ignored is systemic reform. It does not do the Gospel proud to send mothers in Africa cans of powdered milk and copies of the Gospels, while ignoring the governmentally generated pollution of the rivers and streams from which they must draw the water to mix with it. Neither does it move the Gospel forward in America when Christians are content to help stock food pantries for low income families while ignoring the fact that welfare reforms since 1996 have pushed thousands into jobs that are below minimum wage, are incapable of supporting families, and do not provide health insurance. These reforms force people to choose between better housing and food on the table; and between parenting and working (because there is no child care available for them).

Within the UCC, we can and must do a better job from both angles of our call. Mission that is offered as charitable giving of money or self, without prophetic advocacy against the injustices that created the need, is not "doing justice" in Micah's sense, however sincere, or large, the gift may be. Likewise, justice action that is undertaken without witnessing in some way to the amazing love of God that constrains us is not the mission for which Jesus lived and died and to which we are called.

Maybe that's why we call it "Justice Witness Ministries." What a concept!

Editor's Note: The Rev. Gordon Bates is Associate Conference Minister, Justice Witness Ministries and a frequent contributor to ConnTact.

Colchester Federated Church..... 300th
First Church (Baptist & Congregational), Winsted 225th
North Congregational Church, New Hartford.....175th
First Congregational Church of Willimantic..... 175th

Connecticut Conference United Church
of Christ Churches Celebrating 25-Year
Anniversaries in 2003:

CLASSIFIEDS

Positions

BLOOMFIELD — The First Congregational Church is seeking a Youth Music Director who will meet with youth on Sunday Mornings. The Cherub Choir rehearses at 9 a.m. and the Junior Choir rehearses at 9:30 a.m. The choirs sing during the 10 a.m. worship once or twice a month. Candidate must provide music for rehearsals, but piano accompanist is available for worship services. Salary is negotiable. Contact: Church office at 860/242-0776. [11/02]

BRIDGEWATER — Congregational Church is seeking an organist/choir director. There is a 2-manual, 7 rank Austin organ and brand new Estonia grand sanctuary piano. Sunday 10 a.m. service with special services, adult choir; handbell directing a plus. Monthly staff meetings, and music committee meetings. Salary about \$11,000, based on qualifications, 4 weeks paid vacation. Contact: Stuart Rapp, P.O. Box 7, Bridgewater, CT 06752 or serap@netzero.net. [11/02]

COLCHESTER — Colchester Federated Church is seeking a Director of Music Ministries. This is a vibrant community of 500+ members with many talented musicians. This person should be someone who can work with many others to bring together a balanced, varied, and sacred program to support worship and congregational singing. Contact: Colchester Federated Church, 60 Main St. Colchester, CT 06415; or call 860/537-5189; colchesefederated@juno.com. [9/02]

COLUMBIA — Columbia Congregational Church is seeking an Organist/Choir Director to enhance their worship. Responsibilities would include providing music for Sunday Service and special holidays, directing Sanctuary and children's choirs, coordinating with bell/chime choir director, and attending staff and Music Committee meetings. Average worship attendance is 150-175. Position is ticketed for 15 hrs. a week with a salary of \$11,000 to \$13,256, commensurate with

experience. Contact: David Pearce, Columbia Congregational Church c/o Search Committee, 325 Route 87 Columbia, CT 06237. Or call 860/228-4669; husky58@yahoo.com. [9/02]

GLASTONBURY — Vibrant Glastonbury UCC congregation seeks committed, creative Director of Christian Education. Responsibilities include coordinating Church School and special seasonal programs, selecting and training Church School teachers, developing adult education opportunities and managing the Church library, all with the assistance of the Board of Christian Education. Part-time (20 hours per week/10 months). Commitment and enthusiasm more important than formal certification. Contact: Sarah Moriarty, Personnel Committee: First Church of Christ Congregational, 2183 Main Street, Glastonbury, CT 06033. Or call 860/633-4641; firstchurch@glastonburyfirst.org. [9/02]

GRANBY — Wanted: Choir Director/Director of Music. First Congregational Church of Granby is an historical church in a growing town, known for its excellence in music with a knowledgeable choir. Many of the 32+ volunteer choir members sing in other groups, including the Hartford Chorale and the Farmington Valley Chorale. Our pipe organ was recently enhanced. We are seeking a team player who will work with our organist and pastors to provide a harmonious worship experience. Resumes may be sent to Nancy Rodney, First Congregational Church of Granby, 219 N. Granby Road, Granby, CT 06035; or e-mailed to sprichard@fccgranby.org. [9/02]

MIDDLE HADDAM — The Second Congregational Church of Middle Haddam is seeking an Organist/Music Director to play historic 1827 Thomas Appleton Organ, the oldest restored organ of nine in existence. Pay negotiable. Responsible for Sunday service, work with Music Committee, develop choir. Send resume to: Second

Congregational of Middle Haddam, P.O. Box 206, Middle Haddam, CT 06456 or call Eleanor Hallberg at 860/267-4578; ehallberg@juno.com.

MILFORD — Full time Minister of Christian Education position available July 1st at the First United Church of Christ, Congregational, Milford, CT. Membership is 800+ with active family and children's ministries. Job responsibilities include but are not limited to: supervision of church school (enrollment 175+) and church school staff, weekly children's sermons, elementary and middle school youth groups, and intergenerational programming/coordination. Full job description is available upon request. Please send inquiries to Christian Education/Search Committee, 1st United Church of Christ, 34 W. Main St., Milford, CT 06460. [9/02]

SUFFIELD — The First Church of Christ, Congregational, seeks a part-time Director of Youth Ministry, approximately 15 hrs./week. They are looking for an enthusiastic person with vision, energy and faith to lead a vital ministry with middle school and high school youth. Strong staff and lay support. Contact: Youth Ministry Search Committee, 81 High Street, Suffield, CT 06078. [11/02]

THOMASTON — First Congregational Church is seeking a part time Youth Director for newly developing youth ministry program. Approximately 10-15 hrs./week. Must have some youth ministry experience. Please send resume and brief statement of belief. Contact: First Congregational Church, 135 Main Street, Thomaston, CT 06787; c/o Youth Director Search Committee, first.congregational@snet.net or Carol Pytel, 860/283-4937. [10/02]

TRUMBULL — Trumbull Congregational Church seeks an Organist/Choir director for its friendly, loyal adult and children's choirs. Major responsibilities within a 15-hour week include Sunday rehearsals before and after 10 a.m. service. Applicant should be familiar with traditional and contemporary music. The

church has a well-maintained 1899 Flegemaker tracker organ listed with the Organ Historical Society. Salary \$13 - \$15K commensurate with experience. Contact: Organist Search Committee, Trumbull Congregational Church, 3115 Reservoir Ave., Trumbull, CT 06611; 203/268-2433; trumbullcong@hotmail.com. [9/02]

WEST HARTFORD — The Flagg Road UCC is looking for a Youth Fellowship Advisor. This supportive, engaged small church seeks candidates for part-time youth group leadership. Middle and high school groups which meet at least once a month are looking for mission, fellowship and worship guidance. Assisted by strong lay volunteers. Experience desired. Contact: Flagg Road UCC at 860/523-0121 or Vicki Aldrich at 232-2217. [11/02]

WOODBURY — Organist/Choir Director needed for First Congregational Church of Woodbury (200+ membership). One Sunday service 10:30 a.m. Adult Choir (10). Rehearsal: Thursday and one hour before Sunday service. Occasional Youth Choir. Piano, organ and/or choral experience. Hook & Hastings organ (21 ranks of pipes and chimes). \$8-11,000/year (negotiable). Benefits include SS and two weeks paid vacation plus one floating Sunday. Contact church office at 203/263-2846. [9/02]

Sell or Give

BROOKFIELD — Congregational Church has youth choir robes for any church that has need of them. They are light blue and red. Contact: 203/775-1259. [11/02]

NEW BRITAIN — The Stanley Memorial Church has a Lester Upright Piano for sale. Contact Pastor David Stickney at 860/229-8971, Mon.-Thurs. a.m. for details.

A Poem for Sept. 11 and a Song for Community

Poem written for a prayer service held on September 11, 2001 by Brittney Bauer, a member of Second Congregational Church, Manchester, who at the time was a 12-year-old student at Illing Jr. High, Manchester.

As sorrow floods our hearts,
anger burns away too,
For loved ones are lost,
and worlds crashed down.
Many tears are shed,
from my heart to yours.
But as we walk
this path of darkness,
a light is at the end.
Every time we reach for it,
it slips away as more tears are shed.
But with each survival of hope
renewed,

we are closer to that light.
No words can describe the tragedy
we've felt today, though
we all might try.
Many things have fallen today,
to create a river of sorrow and fear,
not to soon be forgotten.

*Dedicated to all the innocent
people who lost their lives due to
terrorism.*

Song written by Sing Praise 2002, Silver Lake Conference Center

All God's Neighborhood

Chorus
Praise God all you nations
Praise God all you people
Praise God all creation
All God's Neighborhood

We're all a part of God's
neighborhood.
This earth we share is our home.
Join hearts and hands we can connect.
That we may all be one.

Families build neighborhoods
Neighbors create the world
We're gathered in community
That we may all be one.

We need to make the connection,
Reach out and take a hand
Nation to nation and land to land.
No matter the difference
or walls that divide us
We've got the spirit of God
to guide us!

EVENTS

Friday, September 6 9:30-12 or 1:30 to 4 The Rev. John Thomas, General Minister and President, United Church of Christ, invites clergy and laity to remember and worship together – See page 3 for details.

Sunday, September 15; 12:15–5 p.m. • First Church of Christ Hartford • “Youth Ministry, Why and How” • Youth Ministry Training day with keynote speaker the Rev. Harold Masback. Registration and details available from Sarah Annis at saraha@ctucc.org. Contact: 866/367-2822; or toll-free at 860/233-5564 ext. 117.

Sunday, September 15; 4 p.m. • Second Congregational Church of Middle Haddam • The 1827 Thomas Appleton Pipe Organ Recital Series • Richard Donohue, organist, pianist, concert and opera tenor, will perform. • Free

Sunday, September 22; 4 p.m. • First Congregational Church of Stamford • Dr. Susan K. Smith • Spiritual Renewal Message • The dynamic preacher from The Advent United Church of Christ in Columbus, Ohio, will deliver a Spiritual Renewal Message. Contact: Revnor@aol.com or 203/323-0200.

Tuesdays, September 24–November 12; 5-6 p.m. • Andover Newton Theological School • Sacred

Space/Sacred Pace • An Eight-Week Class in Walking the Labyrinth for Spiritual Growth, Guidance and Renewal • Part of the Labyrinth Minister Training. • Cost: \$75 Contact: Patti Keeler at 508/432-6614 or sacredspace@attbi.com.

Saturday, September 28; 9-12 p.m. • First Church of Christ Congregational Glastonbury • Teacher Training • Sunday School Teachers, C.E. Directors, Pastors and Mission Committees should hold this date • The Partners in Education consultants sponsor this event • Contact Sarah Annis at saraha@ctucc.org. Or call 860/233-4464, ext. 117; or toll-free at 866/367-2822.

Monday, September 30, October 21, and November 18; 9 a.m.- 3 p.m. • Andover Newton Theological School • “Leading from Within,” a three-part workshop on Spirituality and Leadership for Clergy, Dr. Margaret Benefiel, a Quaker Minister, will be the leader • Cost: \$100 • Contact: 617/964-1100, ext. 315.

Sunday, October 15; 4 p.m. • Second Congregational Church of Middle Haddam • The 1827 Thomas Appleton Pipe Organ Recital Series • Lois Regestein, organist for the First Congregational Church of Winchester, Massachusetts, will perform. • Free

Saturday, October 26; 9:30 a.m.-4 p.m. • Andover Newton Theological School • “Mugshots & Mirrors: Reflections of the Face of God” • A youth event for confirmation classes. Through worship and the arts explore how we, as people of faith, reflect the face of God. • Leaders include Val Tutson, Burns Stanfield, Megan Weymouth, Danielle Grise, Joe Mayher and Carl McDonald. • Cost: \$15 per person • Contact: Chris Braudway-Bauman at 617/964-1100, ext. 280; or cbbau-man@ants.edu.

Sunday, November 24; 4 p.m. • Second Congregational Church of Middle Haddam • The 1827 Thomas Appleton Pipe Organ Recital Series • Larry Allen, Director of Music and Organist at Immanuel Congregational Church of Hartford, will perform. • Free

November, 2002 through March, 2003 • Silver Lake Conference Center/Incarnation Center • Connecticut Conference Confirmation Retreats are scheduled for Nov. 15-17, 2002, January 24-26, 2003, February 21-23, 2003, and March 7-9, 2003 at Silver Lake; and February 7-9, 2003 at Incarnation Center • Cost: \$80 per person • Contact: Sarah Annis at saraha@ctucc.org or call 866/367-2822 or 860/233-5564, ext. 117.

Renowned Storyteller at CT Women UCC Luncheon



Valerie Tutson, renowned Bible Storyteller, is the speaker for the Connecticut Women of the United Church of Christ luncheon during the CT Conference Annual Meeting on October 19. Tutson grew up in the First Congregational Church in New Milford. She has worked at Silver Lake and has shared her story for National UCC Women's Conferences, New England Women's Celebrations and General Synod. She has been called upon to share her gifts at conferences, retreats and worship services across the United States and around the world.

Tutson has an enthralling style for retelling the old Bible stories in a fresh new way. The luncheon will take place at the First Church of Christ in New Haven, Parish House, at 311 Temple Street at 12 noon. Delegates to the Conference Annual Meeting will be bused to the site. Registration is a must!! Register either on the Conference Annual Meeting form (if you are a delegate) or call the Conference Center, Connecticut Women's secretary at 1-866-367-2822, ext 101. Cost is a real bargain at \$10.00. Reserve your space now for a special luncheon with a delightful dose of a legend, Val Tutson!

The Rev. Arthur Higgins Receives Award from Bates

The Rev. Arthur Higgins, former Associate Conference Minister, was presented the prestigious Benjamin Elijah Mays Award from Bates College at the college's June 8 reunion ceremonies.

Higgins, a 1943 alumnus of Bates, was given that institution's highest honor for his lifelong ministry.

“Arthur Higgins has been a pioneer in establishing two new kinds of ministry and church work, both of which have been broadly emulated in other churches throughout America,” said outgoing Bates President Donald W. Harward in giving the award. “Higgins was the founder and president of the New Samaritan Corporation, a wing of the Congregational Church that oversees the building of suitable and affordable housing for elderly and low-

income people in Connecticut. It is a national model for the involvement of the church in low-income and elderly housing. Higgins was also the first Connecticut Conference Minister of the Department of Church and Society, an innovative example of church organizations at the state and national level becoming involved in broad issues of social justice and fairness.”

The Benjamin Elijah Mays Award is given only when Bates wishes to honor an alumnus or alumna who has made extraordinary contributions to America and to society worldwide. A civil rights leader, mentor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and former president of Morehouse College, Mays himself was the inaugural recipient of the award, in 1982. Other recipients have included Edmund Muskie, Bates class of 1936.

- **Getting Prayer from Our Hearts to Our Mouths**
 - **Creating a Pastoral Prayer that has Heart**
 - **Prayer & Justice**
- September 29 & 30**

As part of Second Congregational (Greenwich) Church's 300th anniversary kick-off and installation activities, the nationally known clergy/writer, the Rev. Dr. Ted Loder, will lead two events on September 29 and 30. The first is open to clergy and laity. On the 29th from 6:00 - 7:30 p.m., Dr. Loder will speak on “Getting Prayer from Our Hearts to Our Mouths.” On Monday the 30th, Dr. Loder will speak on two topics: “Creating a Pastoral Prayer that has

Heart” and “Prayer and Justice.” This event is open to all clergy. Both of these events are free, however, a reservation is requested. Call 203/869-9311 or e-mailing 2cc.org. Dr. Loder has written many books on prayer (*Guerrillas of Grace*, *Putting My Heart in My Mouth*) and his sermons are also published in numerous other books and articles. The Second Congregational Church is located at 139 East Putnam Ave. (Rte. 1) in the center of Greenwich.