

## EVENTS

**Clergy Tax Seminar • February 3, 9:30-12:30** • First Church of Christ Congregational, West Hartford • Glen Berwick, CPA and member of First Church in Glastonbury has agreed to offer clergy (and seminarians) of the CT Conference a workshop on Income Tax Preparation. • Cost: \$10 • Contact: Sue Furness 860-233-5564, ext. 112; Toll-Free (Outside of Hartford): 866-367-2822

**A Celebration of Barbershop • February 5, 7:30 PM** • Immanuel Congregational Church, Hartford • This concert will feature Riptide, the 2004 International Bronze Medalists. Riptide is one of the most high-voltage and entertaining quartets that barbershop has to offer. • Cost: \$15 General Admission, \$12 seniors and students • Contact: 860-527-8121 or www.woodland-concertseries.org

**Reception Celebrating the Ministry of Rev. Gordon Bates • Sunday, February 6, 3 - 5 PM** • First Church of Christ Congregational, Glastonbury • Plan to bring lay members of your congregation who have worked with Gordon during his many years of faithful social justice ministry. • Contact: Barbara Mansfield 860-233-5564; or barbaram@ctucc.org

**Old Testament Scholar Dr. Phyllis Tribble, Guest Preacher • Sunday, February 13, 10 AM** • First Congregational Church, Guilford • Well-known biblical scholar, Dr. Phyllis Tribble, will preach a sermon entitled "Reclaiming the Bible." Dr. Tribble, author of "Texts of Terror" and "God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality" also will lead a sermon talk-back at 11:15 and a public lecture at 4 PM. • Contact: 203-453-5249.

**Pastor's Study Conference • February 28 - March 1** • Old First Church, Springfield, MA • A program celebrating the 70th anniversary of this New England event. "Ecumenism: What's Really Going On," featuring three outstanding ecumenists: Michael Kinnamon, Elizabeth Nordbeck and Thomas Dipko. A brochure is available through the Conference Office • Contact: Sue Furness, 860-233-5564, ext 112; susanf@ctucc.org

**Clergy/Church Staff Gathering with Rev. Dr. Jeremiah Wright • March 29, 9 to noon** • Asylum Hill Congregational Church, Hartford • The Asylum Hill congregation invites pastors, CE and youth staff to spend the morning with Jeremiah Wright, Senior Pastor of Trinity Church in Chicago, and explore the theme "Moving into Ministry." There will also be a major worship experience that evening when Dr. Wright will preach. • Cost: Registration information will be included in the next conference mailing. • Contact: the AHCC office at 860-525-5696

**Seminary Support Program with Rev. Dr. Susan E. Davies • Thursday, April 7, 9 to 1** • Wapping Community Church, South Windsor • Rev. Dr. Davies is the Jonathan Fisher Professor of Christian Education, Bangor Theological Seminary. Although she teaches a wide variety of seminary courses, Dr. Davies's particular interest focuses on the role education plays in fostering new and more liberating forms of human community. • Cost: \$15 • Contact: Sue Furness, 860-233-5564, ext. 112; susanf@ctucc.org

**NEAUC 2005 Mountains and Valleys Journeying Through the Psalms • May 10-12** • Craigville

Conference Center, Cape Cod, MA • Mark your calendar for the 34th Annual Conference on Christian Education for Pastors, Christian Educators, Youth Leaders and Sunday School Teachers. The Keynote Speaker will be noted author, the Rev. Donna Schaper. The special worship and workshop leader will be Ron Buford, coordinator of the UCC's Stillspeaking Initiative. • Cost: \$210, AUCE members, \$200, commuters \$110 • Contact: Rev. Ruth Martz, 860-523-4995.

**Hartford Seminary Tour to Turkey • May 19 - June 1** • Join Dr. Ibrahim Abu-Rabi and Dr. Heidi Hadsell on this unique opportunity to gain a better understanding of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in a country rich in faith, history and beauty. Also offered as a course for graduate-level credit at Hartford Seminary. Register by March 1. Limit of 40 persons. • Cost: \$2,600, includes round-trip airfare from NYC to Turkey, accommodations, lectures, tours, most meals. • Contacts: Valerie Vick at 860-509-9519 or vvick@hartsem.edu; for academic credit information, Karen Rollins at 860-509-9511 or krolins@hartsem.edu

**Drivers Wanted** • Drivers/support staff are needed for some sections of the Bike Across America trip, sponsored by the Connecticut Conference, UCC. Duties include driving the truck with 21-foot trailer, and providing support for the cyclists. Sections still needing support are: Seattle to Spokane, WA: June 23-July 1; Winona, MN to Niagara Falls, ONT: Aug. 4-17; and Niagara Falls to Sharon, VT: Aug. 18-27. If you are interested, please contact Nancy and Ken Wright for details at 802-763-8937

## Recent Pastoral Transitions

## New Calls

**Blood, Deborah** from In-Care to Pastor, First Congregational Church in Bloomfield, January 15

**Degree, Peter** from In-Care to Pastor, Northford Congregational Church, January 16

**Parsons, Shepard** from Interim Work to Pastor, Congregational Church of Shelton, December 6, 2004

**Peters, Kathy** from CT Conference Associate Conference Minister to Pastor, The United Church of Chester, January 3

**Vetter, Todd** from In-care to Associate Pastor, Orange Congregational Church, January 4  
**Young, David** from Pastor, Battle Creek, Michigan to Senior Pastor, First Congregational Church of Greenwich, March 1

## Resignations

**Cook, Stanley** Pastor, Hadlyme Congregational Church, January 16

**Kissa, Wendy Sue** from Associate Pastor, East Granby Congregational Church to Motherhood, January 7

**Martz, Ruth** from Associate Pastor, Immanuel Congregational Church, January 9

**Wiley, Peter** from Pastor, Congregational Church of Brookfield to Pastor, Hudson, Ohio, February 1

## Retirements

**DiQuattro, James** from Church of Christ, Winsted, December 31, 2004

## Need Computer or Internet Help?

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at the Connecticut Conference: 860/233-5564 x102  
www.ctucc.org/shepherd/  
shepherd@ctucc.org



# ConnTact

United Church News  
God Is Still Speaking,

Vol XXI, No. 1 • Connecticut Conference Edition • January/February 2005 • Two Sections • Section A • 600008

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2005  
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by Jim Morgan

The Connecticut Conference has announced that it will undertake a three-pronged strategy to fulfill the goals of *Now For The Future*, the proposed capital campaign of the churches of the Conference.

Listening sessions conducted with 31 churches last March through June identified the Silver Lake Conference Center, Youth Ministry and Seminary Scholarships as the areas of greatest need and opportunity. The sessions were spread throughout the Conference and represented each of the 15 Associations, with large, small, urban and rural churches invited to participate.

Groups from each of those churches were asked to review the original proposal and prioritize the components. That process and their comments made clear that *Now For The Future* will be best served by three distinct development and funding approaches, each with its own timeline. "People came away with a better understanding of the Conference and appreciated the Conference coming to them to ask for their input," said *Now For The Future* planning committee co-chair, Kate McLean. *Continued on page 4*

**Tsunami Relief Fund • See Page A5**

FROM THE CONFERENCE MINISTER, REV. DAVIDA FOY CRABTREE

# Inspired Generosity



*"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself..." [Philippians 2:5-6]*

Christ is the ultimate Giver, the epitome of generosity. He gave up all that he could have had, gathered a motley crew of disciples about him and gave and gave and gave. He poured out his life for the world and its future, inspiring us through hundreds of generations to live our lives differently than we would have without him.

If, as I believe with every fiber of my being, we are the Body of Christ today, then we are called to be

his kind of giver as well, signs of God's amazing generosity in the midst of a broken world. It is God's expectation that we will also pour ourselves out, live generously and risk giving to the point at which we discover true joy, indeed transformation.

Thousands and thousands of dollars from our members have gone to work through the United Church of Christ and Church World Service in disaster relief in southern Asia in these weeks. A sign of God's unconditional love.

Over a hundred people and churches have contributed to the new Health and Welcome Center at Silver Lake. A sign of the outpouring of the Body of Christ.

At the end of the year, we received word of another sign of inspired generosity. **Mr. Harry Baldwin**, a member at **United Congregational** in Bridgeport, created a Charitable Remainder Unitrust through the UCC to benefit the Missionary Society of Connecticut. His gift of \$337,589.87 worth of stock is now invested through the United Church Foundation. It will pay him an income throughout the rest of his life and when he dies, the income will strengthen our ability to address inter-religious understanding and relationship-building. **Rev. Len Clough**, who founded the UCC Planned Giving program nationally and lives here in Connecticut

now, worked with Harry throughout his consideration of alternatives for his gift.

Harry is a remarkable man, filled with a Spirit-inspired vision of the way we could make a difference in Connecticut with just some assistance from him. He is also a person who needed the income to sustain himself through the years ahead. So the perfect solution was a planned gift. He receives income at a higher rate than most other secure investments and gets a tax deduction in the year of the gift. He also has the wonderful assurance that his assets will continue to give and to make a difference long into the future.

What a gift Harry gave! What a gift he is! And what a gift the UCC Planned Giving program is to someone like Harry - a person with a vision and a commitment, yet also a need.

We celebrate Harry Baldwin, and all who are givers in the name of Jesus Christ. Each of you deserves the appellation "Christian" when you give generously, for you become a sign of Christ's ministry and God's love in the midst of the world. May your tribe increase!

*If you or your church would like to learn more about the UCC Planned Giving Program, call Jim Morgan at 860-233-5564, X 123, or email him at jim@ctucc.org.*

# Reflections on Seven Years' Work

by Rev. Gordon Bates

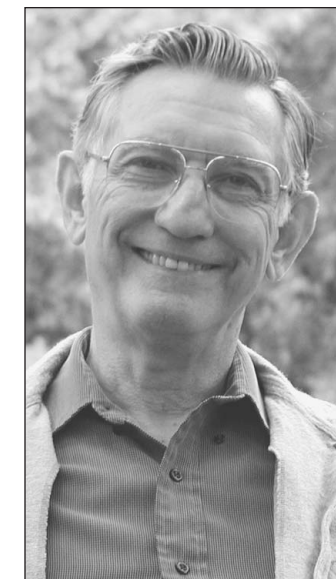
*My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going, I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have*

*that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always though I seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.*

- Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*

Writing one's "reflections" depends on several crucial components being in place and functioning. One is memory, another is discrimination, and a third is honesty. In my case the first is shaky, the second has always been faulty and the third is submerged under a desire to look good. Ask my patient wife, Wanda, without whom I would be lost. The reader is forewarned.

My service with the Connecticut Conference officially began on September 8, 1997. I actually started coming to the office on July 1, the day after retiring from the Connecticut Prison Association, but the



summer was a get-acquainted time. In any case, after 12 years as the CPA Director of Volunteer Programs and then as Executive Director for 17 years, this was a major change. I was more than ready to be part of a small staff rather than overseeing 140 employees, and grateful to be responsible for just a portion of the work rather than the "whole enchilada," as my Hispanic colleagues used to say to describe the CPA's 18 programs in almost as many sites. I early discovered that not everyone thought I was joking when I said that the only difference I could detect between the correctional context and the Conference was that in my new job the offenders didn't wear any special clothing.

My time at the Conference Office has been one of the best periods in my life. I have been privileged to work with one of the most competent and dedicated Conference Ministers in the United Church of Christ, Rev. Davida Foy Crabtree, during one of the most challenging times in the relatively brief life of our denomination. That privilege extends to my compatriots on the staff and in our churches, all of whom have affected my life and thinking deeply. I've been nurtured over these past seven years by hun-

dreds of friends, not only in Connecticut but in Cleveland and Washington, D.C., friends whose talents and love I will treasure as long as my memory holds, which of course is no guarantee.

My life can be best described as one of "guided drift." I picked up that phrase from theology professor Bill Orr of the Western Theological Seminary faculty over 47 years ago and it has certainly held true for me. Thankfully, I've never had to apply for any of the jobs I've held. I drifted into all of them, which probably says something about my ability to set goals for myself. So, when Davida invited me to become an Associate Conference Minister, telling me that she had gained the idea through a dream, I couldn't resist. How biblical can you get?

In 1974, I left the Presbyterian Church to become part of the UCC and I've never regretted the change. The last seven years have reinforced my conviction that our denomination, whatever its future may be, is one of God's unique experiments in living out alternatives to a world based on self-centered competition, exclusiveness, greed, hate and violence. As an unabashed advocate of the Social Gospel, the commitment of the UCC to engage the justice issues of our time remains the foundation of my idea of the purpose of the Church. In addition, the melding of four very different traditions in the UCC has become for me, over these past seven years, a testimony to the mutual need of every tradition to learn from, and insofar as is possible, to be in covenant with others. The UCC's embrace of radical inclusiveness, progressive revelation and servant-leadership is, in my opinion, unsurpassed.

*Continued on page 4*

## CLASSIFIEDS

### Positions

**BETHLEHEM** — The First Church of Bethlehem seeks a part-time Music Director/Organist. • Contact: Please e-mail your resume to fcb282000@yahoo.com or send to P.O. Box 28, Bethlehem, CT 06751, Attention: Tom Nelson.

**CHESTER** — United Church of Chester seeks a new Director of Christian Education, a part-time position approximately 10-15 hours per week. If you are enthusiastic, creative, organized and a great motivator, then this cozy church full of country charm would love to speak with you. The weekly curriculum is SEASONS OF THE SPIRIT, taught by a dedicated group of volunteers. • Contact: Please contact Kara Manierre, United Church of Chester, PO Box 393, Chester, CT 06412; 860-526-2697; or karay4@comcast.net

**MANCHESTER** — Center Congregational Church seeks a part-time Christian Education Coordinator or Director to strengthen a committed CE Committee and teachers. A warm, open and positive person who loves working with others and has good organizational skills is ideal. The position would include preparation for children's Sunday activities and special events, as well as coordination with the CE Committee, ministers, teachers and parents. Depending on the applicant's background, skills and interests, the position can be shaped to include CE program development in a wide range of ways. The position can be structured for anywhere between 8 and 18 hrs/wk. • Contact: Rev. Susan Murtha-Smith, Center Congregational Church, 11 Center Street, Manchester, CT 06040; SusanJdArc@aol.com.

**MARLBOROUGH** — A growing and vibrant Marlborough Congregational Church seeks a part-time (15-20 hours) Director of Christian Education. The position is perfect for someone with enthusiasm, energy, strong communication/people skills, a playful attitude, collaborative spirit and a creative streak a mile long. Strong lay support is in place for a worship-based Sunday School program model that often colors outside of the lines with glad permission. There is also an increasing appetite for the challenging Adult Education recipes you might want to cook up. • Contact: Rev. Bob Faulhaber or the church office at (860) 295-0432; or e-mail to bobfaulhaber@msn.com.

**NEW CANAAN** — The Congregational Church of New Canaan seeks an energetic and passionate Christian to serve as full-time Director of Youth Ministries for the high school and middle school youth in their church and community. This growing, 1600-member U.C.C. church is passionately committed to serving youth. If you have a heart for youth ministry, they want to meet you! The dynamic high school youth group ("YG") has over 150 active members, our middle school youth group ("MSYG") of 7th and 8th graders has more than 80 active members, and the junior youth group ("JYG") of 5th and 6th graders has 50 active members. Directors of Youth Ministries are responsible for the spiritual nurture and guidance of youth and develop programs for all three groups, manage a youth ministries budget in excess of \$300,000, recruit and supervise a staff of 7 part-time team advisors, plan and lead four annual mission trips, and serve as community liaisons. New Canaan is a beautiful New England town located one hour from New York City and 50 minutes from New Haven. The position is full-time and offers a compensation package exceeding \$50,000. • Contact: Send your resume to: The Congregational Church of New Canaan, 23 Park Street, New Canaan, CT 06840, Attn: Kelly Morrissey; or email kelly@godsacre.org

**SHARON** — The Ministry of Food - Do you or someone you know feel called to feed God's people? The young people who come to Silver Lake each summer have wonderful Christian camp experiences, and food plays a vital part. If you like to work with young people and are interested in helping Bob, the Chef extraordinaire, coordinate the kitchen staff this summer, please contact the Silver Lake Conference Center at (860) 364-5526, or by e-mail at timh@ctucc.org. This is a unique opportunity for someone interested in food services to learn from the best, in a beautiful setting (the foothills of the Berkshires) as part of a Christian community.

**For Sale**  
**SOMERS** — Choir Robes (25) - Maroon (with white accent) In very good condition, cleaned and ready to use. Will sell in two lots (12-13 robes). \$30 per robe. • Contact: Chuck Hersey (860) 763-1238; or e-mail at chhersey@cox.net

## PILGRIMS AND PARISHES

EDITED BY JEAN HAMILTON

**Ridgefield**  
First Congregational Church sponsors a Wednesday "Back to Church Night." Activities for children start in the afternoon, dinner is served and a worship service and multiple activities end the evening. Opportunities are provided for all ages and interests.

**Somers**  
Congregational Church offered a series of discussions about "What's the Difference" between the United Church of Christ and other denominations. The discussions focused on how the beliefs and practices of the UCC came to be and ways in which they are similar or different from other denominations. The Church collected items to be sent by hawking to the people on the Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota. New toys, clothing and baby items were collected for Christmas gifts.

**Southington**  
First Congregational Church and the Greater Southington Jewish Congregation presented an inter-faith production of "Children of Eden." This uplifting musical tells the story of Genesis - with interactions between God, Adam & Eve and their children - and of their challenges and their legacies.

**Tolland**  
United Congregational Church incorporated areas of rescue assistance in their new addition. These areas are specially designed and fire-coded to offer protection for anyone there until emergency personnel arrive.

**Enfield**  
The Christian Outreach committee of the Congregational Church sponsored a food drive

for the local food pantry. Brown grocery bags were distributed with a list of suggested foods. The bags were filled and returned on a designated Sunday and a "Blessing of the Bags" service was held.

**Guilford**  
First Congregational Church held an adult education series on creation stories present in every culture and religion. Questions such as "What do they say about who we are?" were discussed in conjunction with the two creation stories presented in Genesis. There is also a Mustard Seed Group, an interfaith discussion group for mothers of children with special needs, that meets monthly to share information, network with other moms, and provide and receive comfort and inspiration.

**Northford**  
Congregational Church held a musical worship/workshop of hymns of the east. This event featured exploration and discussion on hymn planning, education, function and hymn arrangements for choirs.

**East Hartford**  
First Congregational Church held a New Year's Eve Game Night. Everyone was encouraged to bring games and desserts for all to play together, sleeping bags for children to nap before midnight and movies. At midnight, there was a gathering for prayers and a chance to ring the church bell.

**Hamden**  
Dunbar United Church of Christ held a Heritage Day. Everyone was invited to share their culture or another culture they wished to explore. Tables were set up to create their own little United Nations.

# Rev. John Thomas Visits the "Quiet Corner"

by Debbie Pallato-Fontaine

*"This treasure we possess in earthen vessels to make it clear that its surpassing power comes from God and not from us..." (2 Cor. 4: 7)*

On October 27, a night that offered not only a total lunar eclipse, but also the Boston Red Sox's first World Series triumph in 86 years, the Rev. John Thomas, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, visited the First Congregational Church of Woodstock, tucked in the hills and dales of Connecticut's "Quiet Corner." He was the concluding speaker in our series "Journeys Toward God," where each presenter shared how the UCC had shaped their faith and spiritual journey. And now we were to hear from the General Minister of the UCC himself. It was, indeed, a night for those of faith and spirit.

John's central theme was one of *relationship*, encompassing the sense of belonging – belonging to God, to one another as we gather around the Lord's Table – and our relationship to the global community, particularly to the most vulnerable and needy. He believes the United Church of Christ is a faith defined by relationship: to God, to one another, to all of creation. This relationship allows us to "walk together" across time and space. Emphasizing that point, he said he often enjoys walking through church cemeteries as he visits churches across the nation. This is where he is reminded that there was something before his relationship with God, and there will be a relationship after, that faith as relationship is not bound by time, geography, confession, or tradition.

John described this special and unique relationship as inextricably linked to God's justice. He said faith in relationship to Jesus Christ means that we are called to live out our lives in the messy, ambiguous activities of the day. He cautioned that this relationship must not be private, but rather a part of our daily lives.

Our walking together in all of God's ways includes justice and social action; the mission of the church, John affirmed,

includes the love of God and neighbor. He described demands of justice by using examples of the Amistad story and civil rights, the full baptismal rights of gays and lesbians, and the vital role of women in ministry. So, again, we heard of a relationship that is linked to the demands of justice – both in our past and in the present.

He described the importance of the relationship of the "gathered community" that comes alive in worship, education, and mission. The priesthood of believers, a central tenet in UCC polity and theology, calls us to minister to others and to nurture each other's faith in community. John said that our faith is more than the intimate relationship to the living Christ and to that presence. It also embraces how we relate to the poor, the vulnerable, and the needy in the world, citing our outreach in Colombia and China as examples of places where the cross is ever present.

When asked what might be a challenge for our church today, John said that we must be willing to relinquish the pleasure of being in the midst of respectability and all that it means, using the Amistad story and Open and Affirming commitments as examples of uniquely Christian truth-telling. In the knowledge that ours is a companion God who walks with us when we are vulnerable, he said we are called to demonstrate courage, and to walk in the places of vulnerability – to wherever we engage the power of the cross. He cautioned against "grim fidelity," and, citing a favorite psalm, noted that "God's joy is our strength," reminding us that the cross and that joy are inseparable – palpable and omnipresent.

Many people in the audience were curious about the UCC's "God is Still Speaking," identity campaign. He said that this quotation forces us to look beyond the comma, to know that God has more in store for us, and reminded us of the words of the Puritan pastor, John Robinson, "God hath yet more light and truth to break forth from God's Holy Word!"

After our closing prayer, people lingered over coffee and dessert in the Great Room, savoring time spent with John. His presence and words of wisdom touched our hearts and deepened our spirits, here in the "Quiet Corner."

*Debbie Pallato-Fontaine is the Commissioned Minister of Spiritual Formation for First Congregational Church of Woodstock.*

## State Assembly Begins 2005 Session

by Kim Harrison



The 2005 Connecticut General Assembly opens with a new Governor, Speaker of House, President Pro Tempore, and several new legislators, marking a real change for the first time in 10 years. And unlike recent years, the state is running a budget surplus. However, there are predictions of a budget shortfall for the 2006 fiscal year. The exact amount changes, depending on who does the calculations. The governor's office predicts over \$1 billion, while the non-partisan Office of Fiscal Analysis estimates it will be closer to \$600 million. Nonetheless, it's still a shortfall, and that means either reductions in spending or an increase in taxes.

The Governor's office has already spoken of budget cuts. This is not welcome news, as state spending in social service areas that help the poorest people already has been seriously reduced in recent years, leaving these recipients and not-for-profit providers to make do with much less.

One such program, State Administered General Assistance (SAGA), has been whittled away year-by-year. About 40 percent of SAGA recipients are women, and almost all are single. Their income is limited to \$477 a month, or \$5,724 a year, and their assets cannot exceed \$1000. Their sole access to health care is through the SAGA program. Many are awaiting Social Security Disability determination, a process that can take up to two years. SAGA Medical coverage no longer provides transportation and for many of these men and women, who often have complex medical needs, having to travel even a few miles can prevent them from seeking care. Other changes to SAGA include elimination of vision care, podiatry, physical therapy and occupational therapy as covered expenses.

These changes in basic care pale in comparison, however, to the way in which the program costs are now capped. SAGA used to be an entitlement, that is, everyone who was eligible got medical services. It is still intended to work that way, but in reality once the funds are used up – whether that occurs at the end, or more likely halfway through the fiscal year – there's no more funding for hospital and community health centers to provide the care, putting these providers at great financial risk.

Connecticut hospitals stand to lose \$22 million under the new SAGA restrictions; Health Centers will lose between \$2 million and \$5 million a year. These losses threaten the ongoing financial viability of these essential non-profit health care providers, which endangers the health care for all Connecticut residents. The Conference will work in coalition with other advocacy groups to restore benefits to SAGA recipients and ensure appropriate funding for the program.

Other important issues such as education funding, property tax relief, income tax changes, corporate tax expenditures and the death penalty will also be a part of the 2005 legislative session. To follow what's happening, please refer to the Justice and Witness Ministries section of the Conference website at [www.ctucc.org](http://www.ctucc.org).

*Kim Harrison is the Public Policy Advocate for the Connecticut Conference. This position is funded entirely by the Frank Baker Trust, which was left to the Missionary Society of Connecticut in the 1980s.*

## NEW REGIONAL MINISTERS NAMED

by Rev. Davida Foy Crabtree

We are pleased to announce the calling of our three new Regional Ministers, who will join Revs. Kent Siladi (South Central Region) and Susan Townsley (Southwest Region) on April 1, 2005. These additions to our staff brings to fruition our move to five regions, enabling us to more fully assist the churches of the Conference. (Two staff positions were eliminated to make this new structure possible.)

**Rev. Michael Ciba**, who has most recently been pastoring Mill Plain Union Church in Waterbury will serve the new **Valley-Northwest Region** (Naugatuck Valley and the Litchfield Associations) of the Conference.

After a career in business, Michael has served for 14 years in parish ministry, and in a variety of leadership positions in the Ohio and

Connecticut Conferences, most recently chairing the Committee on Ministry of the Naugatuck Valley Association. One of his references said, "Mike has a keen and thoughtful mind. He is a patient listener with an uncanny intuitive ability to correctly read difficult situations quickly and respond accurately. (He) understands

process and uses it effectively. At the same time, he maintains a gentle aura of caring concern for pastors, students, and laity."

Michael is known for his careful attention to detail, his focus on spiritual nurture for pastors (having studied at the Shalem Institute), and his love of the United Church of Christ. His special area of responsibility will be United Church of Christ Identity and Evangelism.



Rev. Dr. Lois Happe

**Rev. Dr. Lois Happe** returns to Connecticut to serve the new **Eastern Region** (Tolland, Windham and New London Associations).

For the past seven years, she has been the pastor of the Westhampton Congregational Church, United Church of Christ in Massachusetts. While there she chaired the Church and Ministry Committee of her association, led the Hampshire Interfaith Council, and served as a Stewardship Associate and Environmental task team member of the Massachusetts Conference.

A lay reference for Lois comments, "Lois is that rare leader who possesses excellent 'people skills' along with the administrative and organizational strengths to get tasks accomplished... She is a talented communicator, articulate and able to think on her feet, comfortable at constructive conflict resolution and able to help those with different views or values feel that they have been listened to and been treated in a fair, respectful manner."

Lois previously served as a campus minister, a chaplain, a pastoral care supervisor and an associate pastor in two churches. Her area of specialty will be Urban and Justice Ministries.

**Rev. Dr. Raymond Hargrove** will serve the new **North Central Region** (Farmington Valley, Hartford and Hartford East Associations). His area of specialty will be Church Development and Multi-racial Multicultural Concerns.

Ray is well known and esteemed throughout the United Church of Christ, having served in a variety of capacities, including Associate Conference Minister in the Southern Conference for 11 years and a similar role in the Florida Conference since 2001. He chaired the Education Task Force for FaithWorks in 1994, and has served in a variety of national leadership positions within the United Church of Christ.

Prior to his service in the Conference setting, he served as pastor in four local churches.

One of his references writes, "Raymond is the complete package. Everything flows from his devout and committed faith. His honesty and integrity are impeccable. He is compassionate, fabulous with people, articulate and possesses a wonderful sense of humor."

The special areas of responsibility of each Regional Minister mean that person will lead the rest of the team in building their own skills and knowledge in that field.



Rev. Dr. Raymond Hargrove

He or she will pay particular attention to training and resourcing opportunities, encouraging the whole staff team to confer and learn together. Conference-wide ministry teams that grow up among us in that particular field will interact particularly with the Regional Minister with that portfolio. In addition to the above, the

Rev. Susan Townsley will take responsibility for Transformational Leadership. Rev. Kent Siladi will serve as Coordinator of the Regional Ministers. The Search Committee for the Regional Ministers was designed to include representatives from each of the nine Associations affected by this new regional structure. Those members were Rev. Efrain Agosto (Hartford East), Rev. Cheryl Anderson (Litchfield South), Marge Anderson (Litchfield North), Rev. Paulette Harwood (Windham), Rev. Bridget Hughes (Farmington Valley), Jeff Lukens (Naugatuck Valley), Rev. John Selders (Hartford), Julie Stone (New London), and Rev. Robert Wright (Tolland). Alan Kendrix, a member at Church of the Redeemer in New Haven, was the Committee chair. Revs. Davida Foy Crabtree and Kent Siladi served as Conference staff to the Committee.

### • United Church News •

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### ConnTact Edition

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**Now for the Future** *continued from page 1*

"We had some very energized conversations about the future of the church," said Hugh McLean, co-chair of the planning committee. "Now For The Future captures people's concerns. There is a strong feeling that what we've been doing isn't good enough for the future. Things have changed, and people are looking for ways to make a difference. Many churches want to do better."

A Silver Lake Conference Center (SLCC) component will be pursued through means of a traditional capital campaign, as originally proposed. The Missionary Society of Connecticut has contracted with Kaleidoscope, Inc. consultants to develop a strategic plan for the Silver Lake facility that includes a business plan, providing a total perspective on what we can and must accomplish.

"We know that there is a very significant need for accessible, adult-friendly and semi-private retreat facilities, as well as additional dining space," said Rev. Davida Foy Crabtree, Conference Minister. "Whether these can best be achieved by a reworking of what's there, additions, or a separate structure is what's on the table."

Plans call for three retreats this winter and early spring with the consultants and the SLCC Board of Directors, key SLCC staff, members of the Conference staff and selected guests, including youth representatives. The goal is to present preliminary results to the one-day Annual Meeting in Wallingford on May 14. Feasibility work will take place over the summer and early fall, with the intention of bringing a specific funding proposal and officially launching the Silver Lake campaign with a vote at the fall Annual Meeting in October. A one-year pledge drive is anticipated, with fulfillment of the gifts over a three to five-year period.

The Youth Ministry component of *Now For The Future* reflects a yearning for safe, spiritually-centered places and a deep desire for "transformative experiences" heard in the listening sessions. "We need to find ways to open doors to those experiences for all the young people of Connecticut, not just in our churches," said Rev. Crabtree.

The Youth Ministry initiative will focus not only on traditional youth ministries, but on new and innovative ways to change the culture in Connecticut by creating a healthy, positive environment for children and youth to live in a spiritually deep and enriched context. Funding will be sought from key leadership churches willing to make a commitment of special gifts over and above their OCWM contributions for a significant period of time.

The third component, Seminary Scholarships, will be funded by a combination of Planned Giving designations, bequests and memorial gifts. Scholarships will be awarded to applicants who demonstrate the highest potential and strongest passion for ministry.

"We want to use the scholarships strategically as way to encourage and enable career choices, so that once again the best and the brightest will be able to hear and honor the call to ordained ministry," said Rev. Crabtree.

The reconfigured proposal continues to reflect the Conference's mission of building relationships and helping connect the local churches in ways that make our common witness more powerful. And *Now For The Future* remains the best description of each proposed element, with a focus on identifying, nurturing and developing the future leadership of our churches and communities.

**Reflections** *continued from page 2*

I leave the Connecticut Conference with gratitude for the opportunity offered to me and for the acceptance and support I have received. I ask forgiveness for any ways in which I have fallen short of the service I might have or should have rendered. May God's grace continue to pull us all toward the new creation we are intended to become.

*Rev. Gordon Bates officially retired from the position of Associate Conference Minister for Justice & Witness Ministries on December 31. Gordon will be much missed by his Conference colleagues and many friends in the local churches of the Connecticut Conference. We are deeply grateful for his faithful service and generous friendship! Thank you, Gordon! A celebration of his life's ministry will take place Sunday afternoon, February 6 from 3 to 5 at First Church of Christ, Congregational in Glastonbury.*



Stillspeaking banners greet visitors to Immanuel Congregational Church in Hartford. Such banners now identify many proud United Church of Christ congregations across the state, who declare "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here." Visit [www.ctucc.org](http://www.ctucc.org) to see and learn more.

**Annual Meeting**  
*Part 1 - Mission Matters*  
Saturday, May 14, 2005, 9 AM – 4 PM  
First Congregational Church of Wallingford  
23 South Main Street  
Keynote Speaker Rev. John Thomas, President & General Minister, United Church of Christ  
Watch for Informational Mailings  
Annual Meeting Part II  
October 21 & 22, 2005  
Location to be determined

# "Inner Ring" Urban Churches in Transition

by Rev. Gordon Bates

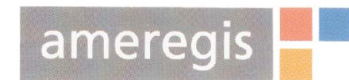
For at least a decade, perhaps longer, a growing number of UCC churches in towns contiguous with urban centers in Connecticut have been sensing major transitions taking place. Called "first ring" congregations, they have been observing changes that are difficult to label and even harder to comprehend, affecting not only churches but the entire community. For churches in particular, however, these transitions raise questions about their future as well as their immediate situation.

On October 19, 2004, approximately 44 pastors and laity from a number of such churches around the Conference met at the First Church of Christ in West Hartford for a morning seminar in which they could listen to an expert presentation and engage in discussion with one another about the transitions and changes that they are facing. The seminar was arranged by a committee composed of pastors serving in the Inner Ring suburbs of Hartford, Waterbury, Bridgeport and New Haven. Rev. Rick Huleatt from First Church in Windsor chaired the committee; Rev. Carole Carlson, Associate Conference Minister for Clergy Concerns, served as the staff facilitator. The event was funded by a grant from the Brown Endowment. The presenting question for the day was "What is the future of Old First Churches of Connecticut Suburbs?"

The speaker for the day was one of the most experienced and knowledgeable in the country. Myron Orfield, a former state senator in Minnesota and an adjunct professor of law at the University of Minnesota Law School, is founder and President of Ameregis, a research and geographic information system firm based in Minneapolis. Ameregis documents evolving development patterns in U.S. Metropolitan regions, and the growing social and economic disparities within them. He also serves as the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Area Research Corporation (MERC), a research and advocacy organization he started. Together, Ameregis and MERC assist individuals and groups in fashioning local remedies that address these concerns. Drawing on his experience in analyzing a number of urban centers in the U.S., he has authored *Metropolitica*, a study of the often troubled relationship now existing between central cities and their surrounding circles of suburbs. (Please see a related story in the July/August 2003 edition of *ConnTact*, available online at [www.ctucc.org](http://www.ctucc.org).)

Orfield led the group first through a power-point set of slides combining demographic research of Connecticut and state-of-the-art mapping of social trends affecting every town in Connecticut. His presentation named the very transitions observed partially and fragmentally by everyone present and demonstrated that no region, city or town in the state is immune from the pervasive problems of urban sprawl, crime, tax inequities, racism, overload in the public schools and polarization of the various classes of people inhabiting both city and suburbs.

The ensuing discussion was facilitated by a panel of responders which included Rev. Alvan Johnson, pastor of the Bethel AME Church in Bloomfield; Rev. Leigh McCaffery, pastor of the First Congregational Church of Waterbury, and the Rev. Stuart Pinette, pastor of the Roman Catholic St. Mary Magdelene parish of Oakville, CT. Their confirmation of the evidence compiled by Orfield's analysis and the comments of those gathered made for a stimulating and, oddly, hopeful morning of commiserating and projecting of steps that each congregation must take if they are to thrive as well as survive in their present settings.



Topping the list of what can be done is the support that each church can give to the trend toward regional solutions of the social problems plaguing every community in the state. One of the major blocks to regional problem solving is "Home Rule," the historic assumption of independence and autonomy by each Connecticut town. The fact that Home Rule finds its roots in colonial congregational polity was lifted up by the discussion as one of the unintended consequences of our heritage, one which we might be motivated to correct in favor of towns and cities covenanting together to further mutual prosperity and progress. Orfield's work across the nation reveals that groups formerly divided by class and race and religion can act in concert to stabilize their communities, reduce taxation inequity, protect the environment, reduce crime, improve transportation and work toward smart growth through a regional agenda.

The group departed at noon, convinced that the challenges facing inner-ring churches are real and profound, and that the resources are available to help meet those challenges. More important, they left with the assurance that the Gospel we share provides us with the motivation and the faith to trust that God is at work in every aspect of the situations facing us, requiring us not to be successful but to be faithful in the use of our knowledge and energy.

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**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**Tsunami Relief Fund**  
The UCC has a goal of raising \$800,000 for relief and rehabilitation efforts organized by Church World Service and other UCC partners in response to the tsunami that struck 12 Southeast Asian and African countries. Immediate support of \$93,000 came from your One Great Hour of Sharing offerings. Your dollar donations are critically important because they are easily transmitted; they can be applied by those in the region to address the most urgent needs; and the money revitalizes local economies when support is most desperately needed.  
The devastation caused by the tsunami has in many ways exacerbated longstanding economic and social challenges in the region. It is another sobering reminder of the importance of our ongoing advocacy for fair and just U.S. policy throughout the world, particularly as it affects those on the margins of the global economy.  
For those wondering how to help, please consider the following:  
1. Pray for the millions of people affected by this tragedy.  
2. Make a gift payable to your UCC congregation, marked for "Tsunami Relief" in the memo portion, to be sent to the Connecticut Conference Office for recording and forwarding on to Wider Church Ministries.  
3. Make a secure on-line donation now by visiting: <http://www.ucctakeaction.org/ctt.asp?u=286&l=74227>  
Thank you for your help!