



CONTACT

an edition of United Church News

VOL XXIV, No. 6 • CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE EDITION • DEC/JAN. 2009 • TWO SECTIONS • SECTION A • 600008

BY REV. ERIC S. ANDERSON

Over 450 United Church of Christ clergy, educators, commissioned ministers, delegates, and visitors spent two days at Central High School in Bridgeport considering the role of generosity in the life of the Church at the Fall Session of the 141st Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference. Keynote presenter the Rev. Stephen Gray, Conference Minister of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference, brought the assembly a wealth of stories that dispelled the illusion of scarcity and revealed the promise of generosity for giving new life to the stewardship of God's world.

The October 17-18 meeting is the primary business assembly of the Connecticut Conference. Voting membership includes authorized ministers, local church delegates, and other conference leaders.

In his lively and engaging keynote address, Gray emphasized the theological and practical truths of real abundance, which he set against the illusion and the fear of scarcity. "How do we nurture generosity," he asked, "in a culture that is fearful of scarcity?"

He spoke to an audience acutely aware of the disarray of the American financial system, and Gray referred frequently to the anxiety that had arisen in the previous three weeks. Throughout, he focused on the vital importance of the church's ministry. He encouraged the delegates to remember that giving to the church enables a pastor to visit with the sick and lonely, allows a musician to fill the air with joyful sounds in praise of God, and extends a helping hand to neighbors and strangers in need.

"From time to time when I am teaching or consulting," Gray said, "I will have someone say to me, 'All the church ever does is ask for money!' Have you ever heard that? My response is to say back to the person, 'You are 100% correct! And let me tell you why! Until the day comes that there are no children being abused in this community — until the day that there are no families in turmoil — until the day that no elders are being taken advantage of — there is work for the church to do. And the fuel for that work is money.



FALL ANNUAL MEETING

Delegates Explore Generosity

'And, by the way, I have a pledge card and do I have a great opportunity for you!'"

"The most important thing about giving is not what it does for your church," Gray emphasized, "but what it does for your givers." Asked once by a couple how much they should give to their church, Gray gave them the example of the choices his family had made. Then he encouraged them to go home, discuss it, and then look in the mirror. "If you aren't both grinning like Cheshire cats, then you probably haven't made the right decision."

When the couple returned the next day, they had increased their giving by a factor of eleven: and they were, indeed, wearing grins from ear to ear.

The delegates took the message to heart in considering the 2009 budget, which had been prepared before the banking crisis. The delegates adopted a 2009 Our Church's Wider Mission Basic Support goal of \$2,201,680, a 1% increase over 2008. They also voted a \$1.00 increase in the per capita request to the churches, to \$6.00 per member, and a total Conference budget of just over \$4.2 million.

In making the case for the budget, Budget Committee Chair Bob Giles noted that for the last three years, the Conference's local churches have maintained their basic support giving after several years of decline. He also contrasted Connecticut's \$6.00 per member request with Massachusetts (\$16.00) and Rhode Island (\$17.00).

51% of funds received by the Conference go to mission. The greater part is passed on to the national and international work of the United Church of Christ, and some through projects in the state. 36% of monies received fund the Conference's direct ministry, including Regional ministry, education and resources, communication, clergy concerns, the Conference Minister's office, and Silver Lake Conference Center. The Conference's administrative functions, including budgeting, accounting, endowment management, property management, and capital expenditures, account for the remaining expenses.

Giles noted some urgent needs in the Conference that have yet to find sufficient funding:

Continued on page 6

Journeys



Each year the Advent and Christmas stories seem filled with new and deeper meaning. I remember as a young pastor approaching my sixth or seventh Christmas Eve, I

wondered what I could possibly come up with that would be a different word for that night. And yet, all these years later, I continue to find depths and breadths of meaning that seem new to me.

This year, for instance, I find myself taken with all the journeys of the stories: The journey of the Jewish people toward the Messiah, Mary's pregnant waiting, her visit to Elizabeth, the plodding trek of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, the

stately approach of the Magi, the fearful flight to Egypt... each so different and yet each with elements of suspense and anticipation, uncertainty and fear, praise and blessing.

Naturally, my perceptions are colored by my own journey these four months. I've had to learn to live deeply with each of those elements myself. And in them I have found God and grace.

And that is the beauty of this amazing faith we share: no matter where we are on life's journey, the scriptures are full of the Word that speaks to our condition and God is remarkably available to us. For me, that is the meaning of "incarnation," that in the concrete lived reality, God is made real moment by moment. Our Christian God is not an ethereal, windblown, eerie spirit, but One who is embodied in the midst of this world in the concrete presence of Jesus Christ, One who shares our common lot, One who names the Church as the Body of Christ set in the midst of the world to serve and to transform.

You have incarnated the love of God for me in these months. Your faithful prayers for my wellbeing, your companionship on my journey, your gifts of courage and healing, of time and space for my recovery, have been embodiments

Your faithful prayers for my wellbeing, your companionship on my journey... have been embodiments of God and grace.

of God and grace. This is, after all, where it gets really real, when we are faced with mortality and suffering. Those journeys of the first century are iconic in our lives at these moments, and such a gift of depth and meaning they take my breath away.

So as we enter Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, I invite you to read the familiar stories again and let them speak to your condition and your need. Allow yourself the joy of Christmas in wonder and awe. Be a child in your heart and receive the astounding grace of Jesus. Go on *your* journey and do not be afraid, because you are accompanied by our most amazing God! As are we all.



Circles



A couple of anniversaries rolled through this October: the twentieth anniversary of my ordination, and the tenth anniversary of my joining the Connecticut

Conference staff. I've had several titles in those ten years, but oddly enough I've recovered the first of them again: Editor of *ConnTact*.

In those days, I was *very* part-time (twelve hours a month, I believe), and really just filling in before a new editor arrived three issues later. Since then the web site and other electronic communications have been my "beat," until a reconfiguration of staff responsibilities this summer brought my first task back to me.

I don't think anyone misses my predecessor, Jim Morgan, more than I do, but I hope to make a virtue of necessity (and pray that it is not merely a fruitless effort to make a silk purse from a sow's ear). The Conference's different media now have unified editorial oversight, including this bi-monthly newspaper, *ConnTact*, our periodic bulletin insert publication *Conference Call*, www.ctucc.org, FIDO*, occasional video productions, Facebook presence, staff blogs, and broadcast email. Content in one publication may now point to or comment on content in another. This issue, for example, includes a devotional essay from our weekly e-mail "The Spirit Calendar," available to subscribe to from our web site. You can also anticipate longer, more detailed versions of some *ConnTact* stories to appear on ctucc.org.

This issue introduces three recurring series to *ConnTact*: In addition to a "Spirit Calendar highlight, we begin to

shine the "Spotlight on Ministry," about vital and intriguing ministries in our churches; and to consider "Reflections on Faith," about living the life of the Spirit in the world. I anticipate that six annual issues of the newspaper will not suffice to share these stories and

It seems like I've been here before; I can't remember when...

reflections, and so there are sections of the website dedicated to finding them. This issue's "Reflections," in fact, is already the *second* in the series.

To direct your spotlight, share your reflections, tell your story, or offer your suggestions, please call me at 860.761.7102 or write me at webmaster@ctucc.org. I'm always working on the fresh edition.

All my life's a circle, but I can't tell you why; season's spinning round again; the years keep rolling by.

Rev. Eric S. Anderson is Minister of Communications and Technology for the Connecticut Conference, United Church of Christ, and still misses Harry Chapin.

UNITED CHURCH NEWS

(USPS 0764-070) is published bi-monthly by the Proclamation, Identity and Communication Ministry, Office of General Ministries, United Church of Christ, for members of the United Church of Christ. United Church News is a member of Associated Church Press and the Religion Communicators Council. United Church News encourages the reprint of any non-copyrighted articles. Please credit United Church News and send the editor a copy. Periodicals postage rates paid at Cleveland, OH and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER Send address changes to United Church News, P.O. Box 226625, Dallas, TX 75222-6625.

EDITORIAL offices are located at 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115-1100. Telephone 1-866-822-8224 ext. 2177; fax 216/736-2223; e-mail <guessb@ucc.org>; web: <ucc.org/ucnews>. Editorial opinions are not necessarily those of the official bodies of the United Church of Christ.

SUBSCRIPTIONS are FREE for members, but contributions are encouraged to support this communication ministry. Send checks to United Church News, P.O. Box 226625, Dallas, TX 75222-6625. All issues mailed directly to subscribers' homes. For subscription questions or to add/remove names from the mailing list, phone 1-888-READ-UCN (1-888-732-3826); fax 214-631-6610; email ucn@umr.org; or write to United Church News, P.O. Box 226625, Dallas, TX 75222-6625. Bulk orders available: 1-20 copies, \$1 each; 21-50 copies, \$.75 each; more than 50 copies, \$.50 each; phone 800/537-3394 ext. 2179.

ADVERTISING Connie Larkman at <larkmanc@ucc.org> or 866/822-8224 ext. 2196 for display and Marketplace (classified) ads, four-page inserts and web advertising.

CONNTECT EDITION

Connecticut Conference
United Church of Christ
125 Sherman Street, Hartford, CT
06105-2281
Phone: 860/233-5564
Fax: 860/231-8111, www.ctucc.org

Eric S. Anderson: Editor,
webmaster@ctucc.org
Cecile Gilson: Editorial Assistant,
cecileg@ctucc.org
James Baker: Designer

Send classified ads to
classifieds@ctucc.org
Send events listings to
events@ctucc.org

National Edition

The Rev. J. Bennett Guess: Editor
The Rev. W. Evan Golder:
Editor Emeritus
Randy Varcho: Design Editor
Connie Larkman:
Advertising Manager
Lee Foley: Business Manager
Dan Hazard: Web Design Editor



Biblical Stories Become Video Games in Innovative Education Program

BY REV. DAVID F. JARVIS

Something new is coming to Christian Education: A computer programming language called *SCRATCH*.

Developed at MIT, the graphically-based Scratch allows children to easily animate characters and scenery. "The thought we had," said the Rev. David F. Jarvis, interim pastor of the First Congregational Church of Bristol, UCC, "was that our young children could embrace the Bible while using new technologies. We recognized that there was an opportunity to bring computers into the Christian Education classroom. We also learned from educators in town that using Scratch for storytelling was and is the wave of the future." To that end Jarvis enlisted the help of Cameron L. Fadjo, a graduate student at Teachers College,

Columbia University, to help provide instruction on using the program.

"One of the most important parts of creating a game, next to the program itself, is the storyboard," said Fadjo. "I know a book with tons of stories," replied Jarvis as they were discussing Fadjo's current research project. Together they created a curriculum that they hope will generate renewed interest in Sunday school.

Although Fadjo is conducting his research on using Scratch to teach video game programming with third graders in New York City, he is using the technology with the 7th and 8th grade Sunday School class. "This program is used with kindergartners and in graduate classes, so it can be taught to students of almost any age," he said.

Class members have used the software to animate such Bible stories as the Last Supper, the raising of Lazarus, and the Garden of Eden. The graphic interface makes it easy to move characters about the virtual "stage," and the students have brought their own sense of fun to their projects. At an early stage of the editing, Lazarus' figure was that of a young woman wearing headphones, and his return home elicited a shocked "Are you all right?" from his astonished sisters.

Much to the delight of all involved, some of the students have begun to express interest in bringing their project home so that they can work on it between class sessions.

One of the first hurdles was finding the computers. In most churches computers



Cameron Fadjo (center) helps Bristol students tell their stories in SCRATCH.

are found in offices, not in Sunday School rooms. The Imagine Nation Children's Museum, a family-oriented museum in Bristol designed for young people to explore creativity in the arts and science, had the perfect computer room given to them by ESPN, the national sports cable network also based in Bristol.

"Director Doreen Stickney was more than willing to help us out," continued Jarvis, "Our young people leave church at the appointed time and go to the center, which is a mile away." The program's eight sessions each last an hour.

Jarvis believes the church must learn to challenge young people using current technology. "It is not that the teacher/learner models of Christian Education are outmoded, as much as we are hoping

to inspire our young people to learn and be creative while using the tools with which they are familiar. I want our young people to enjoy their projects enough to want to work on them at home... now there's a thought, Christian education at home!"

For more information on Scratch (which can be freely downloaded for Windows or Mac OS X) visit scratch.mit.edu or the 1st Congregational Church of Bristol at www.firstchurchbristolct.org.

Rev. David F. Jarvis is an intentional interim minister, now completing his service to the First Congregational Church of Bristol.

See other ministries in the Spotlight at www.ctucc.org/spotlight/

Conference Calls on Karen Ziel as Minister of Christian Education

The Connecticut Conference has called Karen E. Ziel, a Commissioned Minister in the United Church of Christ since 1996 and a Christian Educator for over 20 years, to serve as the new Minister of Christian Education. A former Director of the Conference's Ruth Dudley Resource Center, she is currently Minister of Discipleship Education for with the Congregational Church of South Glastonbury, UCC. She began her new ministry on November 3rd.

As Minister of Christian Education, Karen works with local churches and their educators to enhance their effectiveness and creativity. She will also coordinate the work of the Ruth Dudley Resource Center, which provides a panoply of resources for all ages in the work of Christian education for Connecticut's churches.

Karen's prior ministries also include the United Church of Chester, Center Congregational Church in Manchester, and Colchester Federated Church. She has deaned Silver Lake summer conferences, served as a Partner in Education, and worked with the Connecticut Association of United Church Educators. "Out of that rich experience," said Conference Minister Davida Foy Crabtree, "she brings a wealth of skill and giftedness, a loving and Christ-centered spirit, and a pastoral heart."

Karen will work in collaboration with Da Vita "Day" McCallister, Associate Conference Minister for Youth and Young Adult Ministries, and with the whole staff team.

"Karen has the energy, vision, commitment and humor to energize our work in Christian Education across the conference," McCallister commented. "I'm thrilled to work with her in developing programs, resources and support for our Christian Education, Youth Ministers/Directors and young adult ministries."

from the SPIRIT calendar



BY REV. SUSAN PAGE TOWNSLEY

Scripture: Luke 17:11-19

When I was a child, I was taught manners. What that meant, among other things, was sitting down after every birthday and Christmas with a seemingly endless supply of blank paper. While I was learning how to behave properly, it was a chore. The writing of the letters never connected my young heart with a genuine feeling of gratitude.

So, you can see, I have been one of the "other nine" of this scripture.

Still, every now and again, something happens in my life that springs forth a

well of gratitude. For example, sitting in a room full of widows when I was working with the organization Widowed Persons Service, I was achingly mindful of my husband's love, which is steady and sure. Or this summer, looking down from Inspiration Point in the Grand Tetons National Park to where my children were romping on a rock outcrop, I was overwhelmed with gratitude that God had created a beautiful world for us to move about in, and that God had invited me to participate in creating and shepherding two such unique children.

So, you can see, I have been "the one" in this scripture as well.

When I am one of the other nine, I am forgiven and beloved.

But when I am the one — returning to Jesus in gratitude — I am not only forgiven and beloved, I am also whole.

The Rev. Susan Page Townsley is Fairfield County Regional Minister.

The Spirit Calendar arrives via e-mail each Monday. Sign up at www.ctucc.org/fido/, or read them online at www.ctucc.org/fido/spiritcalendar/

reflections on FAITH

There Is a Season

BY REV. KAREN JODICE

This week I was reminded yet again that God places me where I need to be. What others may name coincidence I name the presence of God. A nudge and a stir, and I find myself in a place that nourishes me, that puts me in contact with someone or something that fills my soul.

It happened again this week. As so often is the case with me I returned to a place that has fed my soul. A place so close and yet one I seldom frequent. I returned to the campus of Yale Divinity

School for worship and while there I found my way to a book: *There is a Season*, by Joan Chittister with art by John August Swanson.

The book is beautiful in word and picture. The art inspired the words. Swanson's artistic depiction of the reading from Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 created within Chittister prose for each of the seasons or times: a time to laugh, a time to mourn, a time to live, a time to die...

In recent days I have found myself reflecting on grief and loss.

For some time now my emotions have ebbed and flowed with my father's health. Profound sadness followed by a joyful reunion. An awareness of the inevitable, yet appreciation of the moments of time still experienced. As I think about loss I am aware of the stages it is taking in my life. My father is deeply the same man he has always been. What remains is his optimistic face to the world, joy in simplicity and a deep connection to his God that flows

through his day. Yet he is profoundly different; no longer a source of life wisdom or practical knowledge; no longer a wise teacher across the miles or across the kitchen table. Yet the wisdom now resides within me, infusing my life and others' lives.

I experience a series of losses as time brings me closer to the end of his life. Added to this is now a loss of the mother I have known — temporarily, I pray. The mother, who always was one step ahead of everything, now needs me and others to hold her up. I am experiencing a love that now asks of it new things. A love that shows itself in tangible ways of caring. Simple tasks, yet rich with meaning. A foot rub becomes a release of pain and a new thread in the fabric of mother-daughter love.

So it is with interest that I read Chittister's reflection on a time to weep. A life infused with tears connects us to one another. A life that

experiences pain is full of compassion for another's pain. A life that experiences sadness also experiences great joy. "For," Chittister writes, "our tears are shed for the times and experiences of great joy in our life." As I journey in this time of loss I know that the loss is great because the love is great.

I share with you some of the particulars of my life with the hope and prayer that they resonate with the particulars of your life. As you weep and experience loss in your life may you also feel the great joy from which it flows. May you feel the presence of God in all your days. May you know that there is a time to weep and a time to laugh. As people of faith in the Resurrection may we all know the hope found in Jesus Christ.

Rev. Karen Jodice is pastor of the Broadview Community Church UCC in Hartford.

Find more Reflections on Faith at www.ctucc.org/reflections/

This is the second in our series considering the insidious, pervasive effects of racism on our society, arising from the Sacred Conversation on Race launched in our churches in May.

On Race and the Death Penalty

BY BOB NAVE

In 1972, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down all death penalty statutes in the nation, declaring capital punishment to be cruel and unusual, and therefore unconstitutional, on the basis of its arbitrary imposition. At the time, the Court was concerned that the death penalty was being applied inconsistently and was too severe for some crimes for which it was being imposed.

But arbitrary sentencing is anything but arbitrary. Prosecutors, judges, and juries make decisions consciously or unconsciously, and race is often a factor.

In his opinion in *Furman v. Georgia*, Justice William O. Douglas referred to the death penalty statutes as "pregnant with discrimination." Though the Supreme Court would later deem a new set of laws dealing with the death penalty constitutional in 1976, history has shown that no law can control the minds of juries and judges when it comes to racial discrimination.

A 2000 study released by the U.S. Department of Justice revealed that from 1995 to 2000, 80% of all federal death-penalty cases submitted to the Attorney General involved defendants from minority populations.

Dozens of studies of smaller jurisdictions reveal similar disparities. Connecticut mirrors the national statistics: minorities account for 61.5% of death sentences in the state since 1976, though the same groups make up less than 25% of the population.

A 2007 study of death sentences in Connecticut conducted by Yale Law

School revealed that black defendants are sentenced to death at three times the rate of white defendants in cases where the victims are white. In addition, killers of white victims are considerably more likely to face capital charges than those who kill minorities.

The majority of those making decisions about capital sentencing are white. A 1998 study found that nearly 98% of chief prosecuting officials in the U.S. are white, and only 1% are black. Furthermore, though courts have outlawed overt racial consideration in jury selection, it has been shown that through using coded factors, all-white or nearly all-white juries are still a common occurrence. Again, Connecticut mirrors the national picture: the overwhelming majority of decision-makers on capital cases in this state are white.

No matter how one looks at the issue, these three variables — race of the defendant, race of the victim, and race of those involved in the capital

sentencing process — show that race is a factor in death penalty sentencing.

Though the statistics are alarming, it is nearly impossible to prove racial discrimination in sentencing. Even when confronted with overwhelming evidence of racial considerations in capital sentencing, the Supreme Court has said that demonstrating the heightened risk of conviction or presenting evidence of a statistical trend was insufficient evidence to overturn a death sentence that may have been influenced by race.

Racial bias in capital sentencing is an inexcusable reality. It sends an ugly message about whose lives we cherish the most and whose deaths we are willing to overlook. As a state and as a nation we must work to end such discrimination.

Bob Nave is Director of the Connecticut Network to Abolish the Death Penalty. Visit www.cnadp.org for more information on how you can participate.

Delegates Call for Urgent Action on Climate Change: Practical Suggestions in Becoming a Green Congregation

BY KARIM AHMED AND
TRACY GIONFRIDDO

At the Fall Session of its Annual Meeting on October 18, the Connecticut Conference adopted a landmark resolution calling for urgent action on climate change. Passed by a large majority of delegates attending the meeting, the resolution, developed by the Conference's Environmental Ministry Team, urges member churches "to increase their level of 'green' activity

and practice within the next two to five years, with the aim of moving toward a carbon-neutral footprint over the next five to seven years." Citing recent scientific studies showing evidence of greatly accelerated melting of the Arctic ice cap and mountain glaciers around the globe, the resolution calls for the UCC at all levels to advocate passage of meaningful climate change legislation currently before Congress and state legislatures.

The Environmental Ministry Team has developed a comprehensive three-step program of action for clergy and lay members of individual churches to consider in becoming a Green Congregation (Green Globe status 1 to 3). In this program, each step consists of a number of suggested practical activities for being designated a Green Congregation.

Under Green Globe status 1, suggestions include:

- formation of a church 'green team,'
- preaching environmental sermons,
- inviting speakers,
- organizing educational seminars,
- conducting energy audits, and
- recycling paper, cans and bottles.

Under Green Globe status 2, practical suggestions include:

- installing energy efficient lighting,
 - insulating pipes and walls,
 - shifting to organic landscaping, and
 - purchasing renewable sources of electricity.
- Continued on next page*

General Association Expanding Creativity in Pulpit and Worship

Over eighty local church pastors, Christian Educators, musicians, and other authorized ministers of the Connecticut Conference gathered for two days in September at Silver Lake Conference Center for presentations by leaders in preaching and worship, learning ways to make their sermons and liturgies more engaging and more true to the Gospel. Opening with a chorus of drumming, the music of flute, guitar, piano, saxophone and voice surrounded the lectures and addresses. Attendees also explored the conference center, worshiped in its beauty, and some made new ventures on the high ropes challenge course.

Thomas H. Troeger, J. Edward and Ruth Cox Lantz Professor of Christian



Communication at Yale Divinity School, led the group through a number of exercises on imagination and creativity in worship and preaching. Human beings, Troeger said, are “wind/breath mud creatures” who are made in the image of God. Understanding ourselves as very much material beings punctures our pomposity and keeps us rooted in reality. Realizing that we are recapitulations of the great “I AM” gives us courage to follow where creativity leads.

“A boring sermon is not Godly,” said Troeger to appreciative laughter, because it fails to take part of the creativity of God.

Troeger’s tools for engaging that creativity included:

Looking at Scripture through four modes:

- What am I feeling through this text?
- What am I thinking about this text?
- What am I imagining in this text? and
- What do I feel like doing after reading this text?

And Employing the theory of multiple intelligences in preparing the sermon, so that people who learn differently may engage through:

Words,
Logics,
Music,
Awareness of body,
Awareness of space,
Awareness of words,
Awareness of self, and
Awareness of nature.

Troeger encouraged preachers to keep their sermons, as much as possible, at a concrete operational level. Rather than offering analysis, he said, offer a descriptive, engaging story, and allow the hearers to build upon that foundation with their more abstract thinking.

Three members of Old South Church UCC in Boston’s leadership team — Senior Minister the Rev. Dr. Nancy S. Taylor, Minister of Music Harry Lyn Huff, and Jazz Saxophonist Willie



Left: Thomas H. Troeger, J. Edward and Ruth Cox Lantz Professor of Christian Communication at Yale Divinity School

Above: A group discussion about the financial crisis.

Right: Saxophonist Willie Sordillo and pianist Harry Lyn Huff.



Sordillo— described their approach to worship, which emphasizes excellence in everything from music and preaching to the act of reading Scripture. Huff and Sordillo led a meditation in the jazz style from a composition by Duke Ellington, demonstrating that the setting of worship introduces new meaning to music that comes from secular sources.

Responding to questions, Taylor said that the team approach to worship used at Old South, which is able to bring talented musicians and worship leaders to its staff, can also be employed in smaller churches by encouraging the involvement of lay members. Sordillo, in fact, is a member of a smaller church. Where Old South holds jazz service weekly on Thursday evenings, his own congregation worships with jazz once a year.

The 2009 General Association of the Authorized Ministers, Christian Educators, and Musicians of the Connecticut Conference will be held September 20-22; the speaker will be the Rev. John Thomas, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ.

Among the steps under Green Globe status 3 are:

- replacing old furnaces and air conditioners,
- changing windows and doors,
- installing solar water heaters, and
- reviewing church investments for environmental impact.

For more information on the resolution or becoming a Green Congregation, contact George Stone at george@stone-ct.com or Katherine Freygang at kfreygang@aol.com.

Karim Ahmed is a member of Immanuel Congregational Church UCC, and Tracy Gionfriddo is a member of Asylum Hill Congregational Church UCC, both in Hartford.

Environmental Resources at CTUCC.org

Resources from the Environmental Ministry Team, including the complete Action Steps chart, are available on the Connecticut Conference web site at www.ctucc.org/greenchurch/ You can also join the conversation in the Environmental Ministry FIDO* forum. Sign up at www.ctucc.org/fido/

You’re welcome to become part of the Environmental Ministry Team; write the co-chairs for more information.

Delegates Explore Generosity

Continued from page 1

- Program dollars for Youth and Young Adult Ministries,
- Additional program resources for Generosity Ministries,
- Further advancement in technology and education,
- The addition of a support staff position, and
- Continuing education for staff.

The assembly endorsed the proposed resolution “On the Urgency for Action on Climate Change” after a brief debate (*See story on page A4*). The resolution will be submitted to the 2009 UCC General Synod.

Worship over the two days flowed from different styles and to different places in the spirit. The Rev. Judith Cooke and the Rev. Jennifer Gingras created beautiful and evocative stage settings with draperies, plants, and candles. The music included the Monroe Congregational Church’s bell and sanctuary choirs and its Church Band; the rich soprano voice of Cynthia Robinson, liturgical dance by Kelsey Maiolo, folk guitars, a dramatic Scripture reading from the Rev. Da Vita McCallister, and the stirring sermon “Thirst Quenchers” from Conference Preacher the Rev. Peter Allen. Rev. McCallister was also installed as the Conference’s Associate Conference Minister for Youth and Young Adult Ministries.

The Spring Session of the 2009 Annual Meeting will be held on May 9 at the Asylum Hill Congregational Church UCC in Hartford.

Joy in the Desert

Conference Minister the Rev. Dr. Davida Foy Crabtree reflected on the fears and stresses of living in the wilderness in her annual address. Crabtree drew upon the classic Biblical wilderness — one that is “harsh, barren, dry, unforgiving” — to reflect upon both her treatment for cancer and the American finance crisis. She spoke of new life still to come, by the grace of God, knowing that “God will not allow us to wander alone and untended.”

“One thing about life transplanted to the desert — it cannot go on the way it used to,” she said. “Life here is fundamentally altered, and the sooner we adapt, the better off we will be.”

She urged the assembly to assess their own physical, emotional, and spiritual health, and to focus their attention on others’ needs rather than their own. “It is absolutely essential,” she declared, “that we keep our churches strong and vital through this time, for it is our ministries that will make a difference in people’s lives.”

The wilderness is a place where people have frequently met God in the Scriptures: Moses, Miriam, Elijah, Jesus. “In the midst of privation, there is joy,” Crabtree said. “It is the joy of people rediscovering God... It is the joy that, stripped down, unencumbered, set free, in God’s great generosity, we will find grace anew and gratitude will suffice our lives.”

Some of the Future is Now: the Capital Campaign Raises its First New Structure at Silver Lake

BY STEPHANIE PITMAN

As the Capital Campaign, *Now For The Future*, winds its way through the hearts of churches and individuals of the Connecticut Conference, the first new building of the campaign is under way at Silver Lake! From beneath

the piles of oak and maple leaves a beautiful new Commons building is rising for the Hillside cabin village. This gathering place for summer conferees stands just downhill of the Social Hall where some of “Cabin Row” used to be.

On Sunday, October 12th, a group of parishioners and builders from the Wallingford Congregational Church gathered at the site and celebrated the long awaited groundbreaking with worship and communion. In record time, the building group from the church

cleared land, set concrete piers in place, finished the decking and raised the main side walls of what will be the first new program building of the campaign. The new Commons building will house one or two deans and provide program and gathering space for the entire village.

The Wallingford Church is raising the building in memory of Herbie Knight, a young man who loved Silver Lake.

Stephanie Pitman is Business Manager of Silver Lake Conference Center.

Have a Sacred Conversation with Youth

BY CHRIS DAVIES

Upon starting my job as youth director of a UCC church in Suffield a few months ago, I learned of a horrendous situation that had occurred with the youth of our church, at their high school. One of the children in our community of faith had retreated into himself at the start of high school. His mother explained that he lost interest in that which had made him happy, and his grades started falling drastically. Instead of going out with friends, he stayed home with the computer.

In mid-January, he came home with a swollen lip “from gym class.” The next day, when the school called to find out where he was, his mother learned that another student in his high school had been beating him up before gym class in the locker room every single morning.

This young man had been adopted from South Korea.

He was called “Toymaker” in reference to the toys being made in China with lead paint. For three months, he was daily abused by students in his own high school, while the other students *stood by and watched*. They *watched*. Not until these fights escalated to a facial injury did school officials notice his pain, and his rapid, painful, descent was finally explained to his concerned parents.

Elie Wiesel said, “There may be times when we are powerless to prevent injustice, but there must never be a time when we fail to

protest.” As Christians, how are we teaching this simple statement to our youth? Our Sacred Conversation on Race is most needed where the progress from the Civil Rights Movement is not remembered. By sins of omission, we are forgetting the youth of the church.

Because there is a stigma placed upon ignorance, these conversations are avoided altogether in the places where they should be had the most. Youth hesitate to express themselves for fear that they will be ridiculed for their “obvious” gap in knowledge. Even in communities with little racial and cultural diversity, talking about how something as simple as skin tone can influence the way in which we are treated may open the eyes of those who simply do not know.

It is tempting during the course of these conversations to concentrate on all of the good things that the younger generation has achieved; all that we have lived up to. It’s tempting to point to the world that we know as one with more freedom from racism. After all, in days past, racism was much more blatant! But progress does not mean that racism has been eradicated.

But on MTV, music videos put forth an image of black culture that is in no way representative of people as a whole. And I have learned that my generation has been brought up in a time where an Asian high school student can be daily accosted by people he trusted, while his classmates watched.

Sacred conversations on race at church are necessary. Years ago, Martin Luther King Jr. called

Sunday morning the most segregated hour in America’s week, and I think the truth of this can still clearly be seen today. Conversations within our communities of worship are essential to move forward in creating God’s vision of a just and compassionate society.

This is a call to action. If his classmates were familiar with racial discourse, would they have kept silent? I implore you, *talk* with the youth of your church about the issues that are pertinent today within our communities, and within our communities of faith.

The other day, in a seventh grade Sunday school classroom, I told the youth that statistically, if more than 13% of a community consists of people of color, white people move away. This group of white youth were shocked. “I’d stay!” one said. “How can they do that?” asked another.

Why is it that issues like this seem so crystal clear to our youth? While they can bring hope and inspiration to this world, I urge you also to not forget about us throughout your sacred conversations. We have had a different experience of race and racism, and we still need the care of a Christian community to discuss why this issue will continually be one of importance. If someone trusted by the youth in your church can converse with them about what all this means, they can begin to identify the issues that will define our generation.

Let us help to create God’s community of love and compassion within the youth of the Church.

E V E N T S

For fuller descriptions of these and other events, including registration forms and directions, please visit www.ctucc.org/events.php

Christmas at Silver Lake • Dec. 5 - 7 • Silver Lake Conference Center, Sharon • Join your friends and make new ones, as we anticipate Christ's birth at Silver Lake, with or without snow! And let's celebrate Christmas, Silver Lake-style! • Cost: \$90.00 for the weekend. • Contact: Silver Lake Conference Center, 223 Low Rd., Sharon, CT 06069. 860.364.5526.

Christmas Fair • Dec. 6, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm • First Congl. Church, 1009 Main Street, Branford • Homemade gifts and Ornaments, Breakfast and Lunch • Cost: Free Admission. • Contact: First Congregational Church of Branford, 1009 Main Street, Branford, CT 06405. 203.488.7201.

Christmas Dinner at Silver Lake • Dec. 7, 1:00 - 5:00 pm • Silver Lake Conference Center, 223 Low Rd., Sharon • Relax and enjoy the surroundings and feast on our traditional Christmas Dinner with your family and friends, sharing in the joy of this Christmas season. • Cost: Adults \$16.00, 10 and younger \$10.00. • Contact: SLCC Registrar, 223 Low Rd., Sharon, CT 06069. 860.364.5526.

Concert: Psallite! Sing Joyfully! • Dec. 7, 3:00 pm • First Congl. Church, 993 Main St., South Windsor • Sing joyfully for a season of promise and light that radiates throughout the world! Carols from different cultures, including Eastern and Western Europe, Celtic lands and America bring a

message of wonder and joy to this Christmas program. • Cost: Free. • Contact: CitySingers of Hartford, 591 Park Road, West Hartford, CT 06107. 860.528.7992.

Holiday Concert: the Silk City Chorus • Dec. 7, 3:00 pm • First Church of Christ, 689 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury • This a cappella mens group is a chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society -- an international organization dedicated to preserving the particular barbershop style of singing in four-part a capella harmony. • Cost: Adults \$10.00, students \$5.00, 12 and under free. • Contact: Mark Mercier, First Church of Christ, 689 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury, CT 06070. 860.651.3593 x21.

Concert: Psallite! Sing Joyfully! • Dec. 14, 7:00 pm • First Church of Christ, 12 South Main St., West Hartford • Sing joyfully for a season of promise and light that radiates throughout the world! Carols from different cultures, including Eastern and Western Europe, Celtic lands and America bring a message of wonder and joy to this Christmas program. • Cost: Voluntary offering (suggested donation \$10.00). • Contact: CitySingers of Hartford, 591 Park Road, West Hartford, CT 06107. 860.233.9605.

A Candlelight Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols • Dec. 21, 4:00 pm • South Congl./First Baptist Church, 90 Main St., New Britain • The picturesque South Church sanctuary is the ideal setting for the Christmas story's progression from the fall of humanity through the promise of the Messiah, leading to the birth of the

Savior. Nine scripture readings are interspersed with singing of Christmas anthems and carols. A reception follows. • Cost: Free will offering. • Contact: Christine Laird, The Music Series at South Church, 90 Main St., New Britain, CT 06051-2287. 860.223.7555.

Joel Martin and Friends in Concert • Dec. 31, 6:00 & 7:30 pm • Center Church, Main and Gold St., Hartford • Jazz and classical pianist Joel Martin and his band return to Center Church for two concerts that will be part of First Night Hartford 2009. • Cost: TBA. • Contact: Jason Charneski, Center Church, 60 Gold St., Hartford, CT 06103. 860.249.5631 x19.

Confirmation Retreat • Jan. 9 - 11 • Silver Lake Conference Center, 223 Low Rd., Sharon • The theme of this retreat for confirmation class members and advisers is "Unity in the Body of Christ." The purpose of these retreats is not to teach confirmation all in one weekend, but to help build community and to ask the questions that are key to a Confirmation process. • Cost: \$100.00 per person. • Contact: Sue Wilber, 125 Sherman St., Hartford, CT 06105. Toll free: 866.367.2822, or 860.233.5564 locally.

Odetta in Concert • Jan. 11, 3:00 pm • First Church of Christ, 689 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury • On January 11 at 3:00 p.m. legendary folk music icon Odetta will make her only Connecticut concert stop on her 2008-09 tour when she appears at the First Church of Christ in Simsbury as part of its annual concert series. • Cost: Adults

\$20.00, seniors and students \$15.00, 12 and under free. • Contact: Mark Mercier, First Church of Christ, 689 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury, CT 06070. 860.651.3593 x21.

Confirmation Retreat • Jan. 30 - Feb. 1 • Silver Lake Conference Center, 223 Low Rd., Sharon • The theme of this retreat for confirmation class members and advisers is "Unity in the Body of Christ." • Cost: \$100.00 per person. • Contact: Sue Wilber, 125 Sherman St., Hartford, CT 06105. Toll free: 866.367.2822, or 860.233.5564 locally.

Concert: Happy 200th Birthday, Felix Mendelssohn! • Feb. 8, 4:00 pm • South Congl./First Baptist Church, 90 Main St., New Britain • The year 2009 marks composer Felix Mendelssohn's 200th birthday, and the 35th birthday of CONCORA (Connecticut Choral Artists), who gave their first performance for the Music Series in 1974. A beautiful program of Mendelssohn's sacred choral works, both a cappella and with organ. • Cost: Premium \$30.00; General \$20.00; Senior/student \$10.00. • Contact: Christine Laird, The Music Series at South Church, 90 Main St., New Britain, CT 06051-2287. 860.223.7555.

Confirmation Retreat • Feb. 27 - Mar. 1 • Silver Lake Conference Center, 223 Low Rd., Sharon • The theme of this retreat for confirmation class members and advisers is "Unity in the Body of Christ." • Cost: \$100.00 per person. • Contact: Sue Wilber, 125 Sherman St., Hartford, CT 06105. Toll free: 866.367.2822, or 860.233.5564 locally.

Recent and Upcoming Pastoral Transitions

NEW CALLS

Arens, M. John to Pastor, New Preston Congregational Church, September 21, 2008

Faber, Kathy from Pastor Second Congregational Church, Manchester to Pastor, Enfield Congregational Church, November 30, 2008

Hambrick-Stowe, Charles from Lombard, IL to Senior Pastor, First Congregational Church, Ridgefield November 16, 2008

Kleiman, Kristen from Associate Pastor, Wapping Community Church South Windsor to Pastor, First Congregational Church, Bristol, January, 2009

Olson, James from Boston to Pastor, Center Congregational Church of Meriden, September 10, 2008

Marshall, Mary Beth from Associate Pastor, Peace Dale, RI to Pastor, South Congregational Church, Middletown, January 15, 2009

Salomons, Sara from Christian Education Director, The United Church of Chester to Associate Pastor, Asylum Hill Congregational Church, September 1, 2008

Ward, Fredd Associate Pastor, Congregational Church of Naugatuck, December 1, 2008

RESIGNATIONS

Coffman, Anne from Pastor, Olivet Congregational Church, Bridgeport, November 16, 2008

Fung, Jim from Pastor, Center Congregational Church, Torrington, November 23, 2008

Szysko, Dolores from Pastor, Church of the Good Shepherd, Woodstock, November 24, 2008

RETIREMENTS

Howe, Hannah from Associate Pastor, United Congregational Church of Tolland, October 20, 2008

Taber, Richard from Pastor, Congregational Church of Salisbury, January 15, 2009

UCC New England Women's Celebration VIII

Together Building Bridges
March 12-14, 2010
www.uccwomenscelebration.org

Connecticut UCC Woman Working for Peace in Israel

A young woman raised in Hamden is serving as a United Church of Christ Global Ministries volunteer in Jerusalem, working with two peace advocacy organizations in that troubled region. A member of the Ansonia Congregational Church UCC, 24-year-old Lydia is the daughter of missionaries and has spent much of her life overseas.

Find stories of her work and experiences at www.ctucc.org/news/lydia/

Positions

CHESHIRE: First Church is looking for a director of youth ministries to work with our growing, vital youth groups and our committed, creative resource adults. We are looking for someone who enjoys middle and high school young people, and who is excited to walk with them on their faith journeys. Our youth groups meet almost every week during the school year, and everyone looks forward to Youth Sunday and the annual mission trip. Along with gifts for working with young people and planning and leading programs, we are also looking for someone with gifts for administration and for stretching a shoe-string budget. This is currently a twenty-hour per week position. Please visit our website

(www.cheshirecongregation.org) for a job description and search for our recruitment video on YouTube. Send resumes and letters of interest to cheshiredymapply@gmail.com.

MANCHESTER - Center Congregational Church seeks a Discipleship and Christian Education Coordinator for one year, with the option of applying for the permanent position at the end of the school year. This is a part-time (20hr/wk) position with flexible times. (Sunday 9-noon is a must.) Involves oversight and direction of the CE program, including church school, Safe Church policy, adult education, and middle school youth group. Works directly with CE Board to build an educational ministry for pre-school - 8th grade.

Involves curriculum planning, publicity coordination with church office, and program implementation; assists in the recruitment and training of Sunday School teachers. Experience with Workshop Rotation Model a plus. Contact: Center Congregational Church, attn: Moderator, 11 Center Street, Manchester, CT 06040; 860-647-9941.

MILFORD – Woodmont United Church of Christ seeks a part-time (14 hrs. per week, including Sundays/44 weeks per year) Christian Education Director who will work with the leaders and staff of the church to coordinate and administer programs in the areas of Christian Education (CE), Youth, Spirituality and Mission. The CE

Director will have a commitment to the Christian faith and be enthusiastic about educational ministry; be able to work with people of all ages and be concerned for their nurturing as disciples of Jesus Christ. Strong organizational and communication skills and ability to initiate, develop, and execute plans are required. Must have experience in churches as well as experience in group leadership, administration, and supervision. CE Training preferred. Salary: \$13 per hour. It may be possible to negotiate an expansion of this position to include summer hours if it is acceptable to both the CE Director and the Church. Contact: Rev. Paige Besse-Rankin at 203-878-3885; 1000 New Haven Avenue, Milford, CT 06460



Members of the Marlborough Congregational Church Junior High Youth group prepare for the Rock-a-Thon. Sitting, left to right, are Kendra Walz, Kayla McCaffrey and Kali Lower. Standing are, left to right, Alicia Sedgewick, Conner McCaffrey and Mike Slusarczyk.

Marlborough Junior High Youth Rock to Help a Friend

Story and Photo by Fred M. Dole

The Junior High youth group in many churches is looked upon as a stepping-stone, often built around more fun activities intended to get younger boys and girls coming to meetings instead of the more serious programs they'll be involved with in a senior high group. To a large degree, such was the case at the Marlborough Congregational Church (UCC), whose very active senior high program regularly prepares meals at a Middletown food kitchen and which journeys for mission trips every two years.

When the church hired Christine Walz to be the Junior High Youth Group Director, one of the goals she and Pastor the Rev. Bob Faulhaber, Jr., set was to move the group toward more activity. Then tragedy, in the form of a near fatal accident, changed the entire Junior High program. On a cold February day, 10-year-old Jordan Hyde came home from school and went outside to help his dad split wood. As they tried to light a fire in an old oil tank, the gas can exploded and most of the gasoline sprayed onto Jordan. He suffered burns to 45% of his body and was rushed by helicopter to a New York hospital's burn unit. His father suffered less serious burns than Jordan but was also hospitalized.

Although the Hyde family did not participate in the Marlborough Congregational Church, many of the Junior High youth knew Jordan from school. The outpouring of sympathy and financial help from the Marlborough community was immediate and generous.

"When I heard the horrible news about Jordan," said Walz, "I knew many of our group members would know him or the family and would be hurt and upset. Finding something to do that would help him would give them a chance to do something because most people feel helpless when they hear that sort of news. Although I planned to eventually have our kids do outreach projects, I realized the time was now."

On a Friday night in April, twenty-five young people, complete with rocking chairs, blankets, pillows, snacks and lots of enthusiasm, showed up at the church hall. Jordan Hyde's sister, Whitney, and his grandfather, Dennis Quigley, came to wish the group well and to thank them for their help.

Initial reaction from the group members to a "Rock-a-Thon" was mixed.

Kendra Walz said, "At first I thought it might be boring, but then I thought about how Jordan feels." Corey Mosdale added, "It sounded like a good idea. We all knew Jordan needed help and his family was struggling." Andrew Ketchum was enthusiastic. "Fantastic," he said, "I was excited to help."

And rock the kids did! With breaks every hour and lots of fun besides, it wasn't until the wee hours of the morning that eyelids began to close and rocking chairs turned into sleeping chairs. A hearty few stayed awake for the entire 12 hours and at 7:00 AM everyone shared in muffins and fruit breakfast before going home.

"The results," said Walz, "went beyond my wildest dreams. We raised more than the \$5000 we had hoped for and, with the results of the silent auction baskets, the total was over \$6000! I am extremely proud of the boys and girls and I know they were very happy with the job they did."

The group followed up their successful fund-raiser with a more personal gift. When news came that Jordan was going to be coming home for a week from the Shriners' Hospital in Boston, one of the young people suggested they go over to his house and sing a song for him. As the church's bright purple bus ("Prayer Force One") pulled into the driveway, there was Jordan waiting for them. It was his first outside appearance since the accident and it was a moving moment for adults and youth alike.

Christine Walz says, "We proved that Junior High kids can really produce when they want to. Now that they know what to expect, they will tell their friends. The next time we do it, they will work even harder and more will join us. There isn't any need to wait for the Senior High Group to do exciting and meaningful things at the Marlborough Congregational Church.

Jordan Hyde continues to make progress in his recovery. He is still a patient at Boston Shriners' Hospital where he continues to undergo skin grafts and other surgeries. He is able come home to Marlborough for visits of several days at a time. The family's financial needs continue, so the Junior High Youth Group is planning another Rock-a-Thon to raise additional funds.

The Rev. Fred M. Dole is a Pastoral Associate at the Marlborough Congregational Church.