



Northeast Wisconsin Association
United Church of Christ

NEA REPORTER

5765 W. Grande Market Dr.
Suite B
Appleton, WI 54913-8471

February, 2007
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Dear Friends,

As a pastor who has officiated at hundreds of weddings in my ministry, one of the most powerful parts of the wedding liturgy in the UCC Book of worship comes after the bride and groom have made their vows. One of the options available to the pastor is the following announcement of the marriage:

_____ and _____ you are married with the blessing of Christ's Church. Be merciful in all your ways, kind in heart and humble in mind. Accept life, and be most patient and tolerant with one another. Forgive as freely as God has forgiven you. And above everything else, be truly loving. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, remembering that as members of one body you are called to live in harmony, and never forget to be thankful for what God has done for you.

In this month when we celebrate Valentine's Day, we acknowledge the power of love in our lives. Of course Valentines Day emphasizes romantic love, but during the end of the month we begin the liturgical season of Lent – a season of introspection and an acknowledgment of God's great love for humanity through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

The Christian marriage ceremony acknowledges the romantic attraction, the mutual honor and respect of one individual for another, and the Spiritual Source of love itself that models a free and gracious commitment forever. I am repeatedly moved by the injunction: *Forgive as freely as God has forgiven you.* Without God's gracious forgiveness that we receive and then offer to one another, relationships wouldn't work at all. There is no way that human beings are able to proceed in relationships without eventually coming to disappoint, offend or upset one another. It is the gracious forgiveness modeled in the Scriptures in a variety of settings that gives us hope for continually beginning again in our relationships.

Some have been burned in relationships and are afraid to risk loving again. Others have not had the opportunity of being in a relationship that is mutually beneficial, but rather strongly one-sided. It is a challenge finding another with whom one can offer the best of love through *patience, tolerance, forgiveness and harmony.*

May we do our best to grow into the likeness of Christ who was and continues to be the model of God's love for the world and to offer this love to one another. Just because the world is often cruel and harsh doesn't mean that we have to follow. Empowered by the scriptures' injunction to "love one another as God has loved us," we can make life more uplifting for ourselves and for those around us.

Praise be to God for God's greatest gift of love.

Shalom,

Art

Coming Events in the Northeast Association

FEBRUARY

2nd	10 AM	Nominating Committee@ NEA Office
2nd	1 PM	Annual Meeting planning Committee @ NEA Office
8th	8 AM—2 PM	Clergy Day, St. John's UCC, Appleton
20th	1 PM	Placement & Transition @ Pilgrim UCC, Fond du Lac
25th	3 PM	Installation of Rev. Edit Boda-Mercer as Associate Pastor @ Salem UCC, Plymouth
27th	1 PM	Division of Church & Ministry, Chairs @ NEA Office

MARCH

8th	9-10:30 AM	Division of Local Church Ministries @ NEA Office
	9-11 AM	Clergy Cluster II
11th		Stewardship Event @ Lakeland College
14th	9:30—11:30 AM	Clergy Cluster I
15th	9-11:30 AM	Executive Committee Meeting @ NEA Office
18th	4 PM	Installation of Greg Smith as Pastor @ St. Paul's UCC, Oshkosh

Contact The Association

NEA Office	Phone 920-731-4781	Fax 920-731-4255
Association Minister	Arthur Wille	art@neaucc.org
Association Secretary	Mary Martin	mary@neaucc.org
Ministries Coordinator	Position vacant	
Websites:	Association	www.neaucc.org
	Conference	www.wcucc.org
	National	www.ucc.org

NORTHEAST ASSOCIATION HOURS

Arthur H. Wille, Association Minister	M-TH	9:30 AM - 4:00 PM
Mary Martin, Association Secretary	M-TH	8:30 AM - 1:30 PM

FEBRUARY ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES

Jan Davis	17 Years	February 4
Julia Hollister	17 Years	February 25
Kay Krejci	16 Years	February 3
David Mercer	6 Years	February 3
Moira Finley	5 Years	February 24
Lorri Steward	4 Years	February 23

CHURCH ANNIVERSARIES IN 2007

20 YEARS

Our Shepherd UCC, Howards Grove

105 Years

First Congregational UCC, Redgranite

Peace UCC, Shawano

St. John UCC, Sheboygan

115 Years

Peace UCC, Marinette

120 Years

Immanuel UCC, Kaukauna

130 Years

St. John's UCC, Cecil

150 Years

First Congregational UCC, New London

160 Years

Immanuel UCC, Plymouth

A Blessing

May God bless you with discomfort at easy answers, half-truths and superficial relationships,
so that you will live deep in your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, exploitation of people and the earth,
so that you will work for justice, equity and peace.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer,
so you will reach out your hand to comfort them and change their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with foolishness to think that you can make a difference in the world,
so you will do the things which others say cannot be done.

-Author unknown

CHURCHES IN TRANSITION

First Congregational UCC, Appleton, seeking Pastor,
Rev. Jake Close, Interim

Zion UCC, Dale, in transition, Rev. Greg Watling, Interim

Church of Peace UCC & Bethel UCC, Fond du Lac, in transition,
Rev. Virginia Pych, Interim and Rev. Sharon Stier, Interim Associate

First Congregational UCC, New London, in transition,
Rev. Robin Reed, Interim

St. Paul's UCC, Sheboygan, seeking Pastor,
Rev. Earl Kruse, Interim

Immanuel UCC, Plymouth, seeking Pastor, Rev. Linda Kuhn, Interim

Union-Congregational UCC, Waupun, in transition,
Kathleen Rinear & Rev. John Jewell, Interim Team

Congratulations!

Covenant of Marriage

One of our Northeast Association pastors was married in October. The Reverend Michael Safford-Kennedy, pastor of Community UCC, Elkhart Lake and Reverend Susan L. Safford-Gaul were married at her church – Faith United Methodist Church in Brillion - during morning worship on Sunday, October 15th. The Reverend Cathey Rennick from Peace UCC in Brillion officiated. The combined choirs of Faith UMC and Community UCC graced the couple with wonderful music. Best wishes and congratulations to Mike and Sue!

Graduations

Mary Polchert, the spouse of Rev. Bill Rishel, pastor of First Congregational UCC, Plymouth, graduated with a PhD. in nursing from the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee in December. Mary is an assistant professor of nursing at Marian College in Fond du Lac.

Jill Puhlmann-Becker, the spouse of Jeff Puhlmann-Becker, managing director at Pilgrim Center, graduated with a Master of Science in Education degree in Reading Education from the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh in December. Jill is a 5th grade teacher at Murray Park Elementary School in Ripon.

Installations

Sunday, February 25, 2007, Rev. Edit Boda-Mercer will be installed as Associate Pastor at Salem UCC, Plymouth

Sunday, March 18th, 2007, Rev. Gregory Smith will be installed as Pastor at St. Paul's UCC, Oshkosh

PEACE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, Shawano, Pastor: Marty Black. HYMN CONTEST. Did you ever attempt to write a hymn? If your answer is "Yes", then now is the time. For our N.E. Association Annual Meeting on April 21st, the Planning Committee is sponsoring a hymn contest. The prize will be having the chance to share your poetic style with others and sing your hymn with the rest of the congregation at the annual meeting. You may set your hymn to a familiar hymn tune...or you may write both words and music. Hymns should be submitted by March 1st. (From MESSENGER)

COMMUNITY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, Elkhart Lake, Pastor: Michael Safford-Kennedy. HEAT A HOME, WARM A HEART. The Missions Committee has created a new ministry using title above. We will use some of our gifts to help people or families in our community pay their heating bills during the coldest months of winter. You will find a large calendar in the narthex. Alongside the calendar is a cloth bag. If you would like to help families in the Elkhart Lake area just place a donation in the bag. Then place an X on a day of the month on the calendar. Your gift of \$5.00 will buy a day of heat. After we have collected a month's worth of donations we will select a person or family in the area and pay \$150 or \$155 toward their heating bill for that month. (From COMMUNITY'S VIEWS)

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, Sheboygan, Pastors: James and Julia Hollister. CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS. Our church is again hosting a five day Vacation Bible School during Spring Break, March 26-30. The theme is: "Take a Plunge: Make a Splash with Jesus." During the week, the children will learn the stories of Jesus and take the plunge of obedience, worship, courage, faith and service. Each morning the program will run from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. and is open to children age 2 through 5th grade. We hope to have Middle and High School helpers. We look forward to another great VBS---with your help and support. (From THE PILGRIM VOICE)

BRIEF SELECTIONS FROM OTHER NEWSLETTERS

Rev. Vance Toivonen, Pastor of Hope UCC, Sturgeon Bay, is committed to seeking out everyone on the membership rolls and desires to touch base with them face to face. He looks forward to meeting them in their homes, at a local restaurant, or in his office, "whichever you prefer."

Grades 1-5 of *First Congregational UCC of Plymouth* recently held a successful lock-in. About 180 children were served and approximately \$2000 was earned for the camp scholarship fund.

An Arts and Aesthetics Task Force, a sub-committee of the Memorial and Special Gifts Committee, has the responsibility of generating art and design ideas to enhance the *First Congregational UCC of Appleton*. Some tangible results are the remodeled office and library, the new family bathroom, and an Art Scholarship program.

Before the demolition of the old *Bethlehem UCC church, Kiel*, some windows and sinks were donated to Habitat Restore of Plymouth. Restore not only helps to reduce landfill waste, but supplies an inventory for remodeling and repair at a reduced cost.

LAKELAND COLLEGE
FOUNDERS' DAY
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 06, 2007
BRADLEY FINE ARTS BUILDING

The Rev. Dr. Mark Allan Powell, Professor of New Testament at Trinity Lutheran Seminary will present "The Timeless Tale of a Prodigal Son: What It Means Both Near and Far".

Dr. Powell, an ordained minister of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, is also an author of 21 books on the Bible and the Christian faith, and the editor of the *Harper-Collins Bible Dictionary*, the world's best-selling dictionary of the Bible.

Registration for Founders' Day begins at 10 AM in the Bradley Fine Arts Building. The lecture, which is free and open to the public, begins at 11:00 AM. Following the lecture, a lunch with Dr. Powell and Lakeland's faculty will be held in the Laun Center, Second Floor, David and Valerie Black Room. Luncheon cost is \$10.00. Please confirm your reservation before February 1, by contacting the Mission House Center at 920.565.1538.

Please register for:

Preaching for Transformation

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Keith Russell, President, American Baptist Seminary of the West.
January 31, February 1, February 2, 2007 9 am - 3:15 pm

This workshop will focus on how preaching is a vital part of any strategy for transformation in both the church and society. We will explore the difference between transformational preaching and transactional preaching within the context of the current crises of the 21st Century. We will also consider the types of contemporary preaching which encourage liberation rather than oppression. Several Biblical texts will be used to illustrate the process.

Locations:

January 31st at First Baptist Church (ABC), 231 Wisconsin Avenue, Waukesha

February 1st at First Congregational United Church of Christ, 137 Algoma Blvd., Oshkosh

February 2nd at Cargill United Methodist Church, 2000 Wesley Ave., Janesville, WI

Sponsored by the Wisconsin Council of Churches.

Please register on-line at www.wichurches.org, or phone 608-837-3108.

Register by Jan. 24th for discount!

Rev. Ken Pennings
Coordinator for Ecumenical Formation
Wisconsin Council of Churches
750 Windsor St., Suite 301
Sun Prairie, WI 53590
(608) 837-3108
Fax: (608) 837-3038
kpennings@wichurches.org

Northeast Association Nominating Committee Seeks Your Help

The Nominating Committee has begun its work to prepare a slate of candidates to serve in various positions within the Association, Conference and wider church. These names will be presented to the annual meeting of the Association on Saturday April 21st, 2007 at Our Saviour's UCC in Ripon.

We have several vacancies and are looking for names of people, both clergy and laity, who would be willing to serve the Association. Below you will find a list of these vacancies and brief descriptions of each position. If you know someone who might be interested in serving, please fill out the form at the end of the list so that the Nominating Committee can contact them. The Nominating Committee seeks to have the Association committees and divisions represent the diversity of the Association itself by balancing lay/clergy, gender, age, rural/suburban/urban, geographic and other characteristics. Please know that not everyone suggested will necessarily be able to serve this year. The Nominating Committee will keep names on file for future use as other vacancies arise.

Please take some time and consider those you know who would serve the Association well.

Please return the form to the Association office by Thursday February 1st, 2007!

Conference Board of Directors (1 position, 2 year term)

Association representatives are a communication link between the Conference Board of Directors and the Northeast Association Executive Committee. Representatives attend all meetings of both groups (fewer than 12 meetings a year) and guide the work of the Conference. Representatives are encouraged to take back to local churches the work of the Association and Conference. This is an excellent opportunity for people who are looking for ways to get involved with and explore the different aspects of the wider church.

Division on Church and Ministry Committee on Pastor and Church Ethics (1 position, 3 year term)

This committee is responsible with matters related to professional and congregational ethics. It is responsible for disciplinary review of clergy and congregations within the Association and conducts necessary investigations relating to any ethical charges brought to its attention, making recommendations to the full Church and Ministry Division.

Division on Church & Ministry Committee On Periodic Support & Consultation (1 position, 3 year term)

This committee is responsible for making regular contact with the clergy of the Association. This includes clergy who are currently serving churches and specialized ministries as well as interim pastors and retired clergy. The committee is also responsible for the Association Clergy Day and Retired Clergy Day. Representatives to the committee will also, in pairs, meet with individual clergy as they conclude their first and fifth years in their current position and then in five year intervals to provide them with an opportunity to reflect on their personal, profession and spiritual lives. Representatives to this committee would also attend meetings, usually held at the Association office, approximately six to eight times a year.

Continued on next page

Division on Church and Ministry Committee on Placement and Transition (1 position, 3 year term)

This committee is responsible for licensure, commissioning, specialized ministries and the transfer of pastors in our Association. We place "In Care" persons from our Association who are seeking ordination into the ministry of the U.C.C. and conduct Ecclesiastical Councils, Ordinations and Installations. Much of our responsibility is with ministerial candidates who are "In Care" of our Association. We meet regularly with our "In Care" students to discuss their journey, share with them the ordination requirements of our Association, and offer guidance and support. Each student is assigned an In Care advisor. We have discussed the General Synod Proposal on Differing Pathways to Ordination in relationship to our Association, the Lakeland College program for Master in Theological Studies with Lakeland personnel, Commissioned ministry, the local church's commitment to their "Student In Care" and placed mentors for one-year with all pastors new to our Association. We meet usually every other month. In August, we meet with all our "In Care" students.

Division on Local Church Ministry (2 positions, 3 year term)

This division is responsible for being a resource to the Association in the areas of worship, Christian education, leadership development, youth ministry, stewardship, scholarships and nurture of volunteers. Representatives to this Division would attend meetings, usually held at the Association offices, and help direct the work of the Division as it supports the life and ministry of the churches within the Association.

Nominating Committee (3 positions, 3 year term)

The Nominating Committee seeks to prepare a slate of nominees to fill the various positions within the Association. The Committee seeks to have the Association committees and divisions represent the diversity of the Association itself by balancing lay/clergy, gender, age, rural/urban/suburban, geographic and other characteristics. ***These positions are nominated from the floor at the Annual Meeting, but we ask that you think about people who would be able to serve in this capacity.***

Nominating Committee Recommendation Form – Please Return by February 1, 2007

Your Name: _____
 Name of Nominee: _____ (you may nominate yourself)

Nominee's Phone Number: _____

Position you are recommending them for:

- ____ Conference Board of Directors
 ____ Division on Church and Ministry Committee on Pastor and Church Ethics
 ____ Division on Church and Ministry Committee on Periodic Support and Consultation
 ____ Division on Church and Ministry Committee on Placement and Transition
 ____ Division on Local Church Ministry

I believe that this person would be a good representative of the Association because...(please include any information you have about their involvement in the local & wider church and community)

Please return this form to: Northeast Wisconsin Association UCC
 5765 W. Grande Market Drive Suite B
 Appleton, WI 54913

You may also e-mail your recommendations to:
 Northeast Association Office at mary@neaucc.org or Rev. Moira Finley at pastormoira@tds.net

Friday, March 2, 2007

9:30 A.M. – 3:30 P.M.

**LIVING LENT THIS YEAR:
A CALL TO ACTION AND HOPE
(A Lenten Day of Retreat for Men and Women)**

Sometimes we are overwhelmed by all that we take in each day: the ache of poverty and violence, the threat of terrorism, the still unhealed devastation of the Gulf Coast, the war in Iraq. We yearn to know how we can contribute as an antidote to despair. In this day of retreat, we will wrestle with the questions: What do we give up and what or whom do we give to? What can we release in order to replenish and restore? – Come discover God's invitation as we reflect in hope together.

Our leader for this day: Known as one of the most prophetic young voices in Milwaukee, the Rev. Joseph H. Jackson, Jr. is the pastor of Evergreen Missionary Baptist Church. He is also the past president of MICAHA: Milwaukee Inner City Congregations Allied for Hope. A former staff chaplain at Aurora-Sinai Medical Center, Joe is presently a 2007 Oblate Candidate at Holy Wisdom Monastery in Madison.

Kettlewood Retreats invites you to this March event at Cedar Valley. Come join us in the countryside of the Kettle Moraine on 100 spectacular acres (an outdoor labyrinth too!) near West Bend. The noon meal is included.

To register for this retreat, please write a check for \$50.00 to Rev. Holly Whitcomb and send it to: 2095 Elm Tree Ct., Elm Grove, WI 53122. Include your name, address, and phone number (s). Retreats can fill quickly. Please register as soon as you can. Upon receipt of your registration, you will receive a map. For more information, call (262) 784-5593.

Looking ahead....

There are three events in March that will offer practical resources for clergy and laity in the Northeast Association. Please mark the dates now and look in the mail for fliers that will describe the events and include costs and registration forms in the near future. Please consider attending these events:

CANCELLED

A workshop on Spirituality on Saturday morning, March 3rd at 1st UCC, Green Bay sponsored by the Division on Wider Church Ministries and the Division of Local Church Ministries

A seminar on Stewardship on Sunday afternoon and early evening, March 11th at Lakeland College, Sheboygan County sponsored by the Division on Church and Ministry

An event on Evangelism on Friday evening and Saturday, March 23rd and 24th at the new Holiday Inn, Stevens Point sponsored by the Wisconsin Conference.

More information on page 11 of this newsletter

Fair Trade Coffee

An Opportunity to Support Third World Farmers

Several UCC churches in the Northeast Association have been involved in selling Fair Trade organic, gourmet coffee, tea, sugar and cocoa produced by democratically run farmer co-ops in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

Equal Exchange was founded in 1986. It is the oldest and largest for-profit Fair Trade Company in the US. Their mission is to build long-term trade partnerships that are economically just and environmentally sound, to foster mutually beneficial relationships between farmers and consumers and to demonstrate, through their success, the contribution of worker cooperatives and Fair Trade to a more equitable, democratic and sustainable world.

Equal Exchange is a thriving model of Fair Trade that has exceeded its founder's original vision. They offer their products from over 30 farmer coops in 18 countries. They have nearly 80 worker owners, with a broader network that includes 400 loyal investors, more than 300 food cooperatives, hundreds of cafes and other stores and more than a million consumers.

Over the next few decades, Equal Exchange needs to engage and collaborate with like-minded partners and stakeholders through the Fair Trade system if they are to continue to transform how business is done. Their vision includes breaking new ground by bringing Fair trade home- by fostering direct relationships with family farmers here in the United States. The collective achievements of the past 20 years proves that they can create change beyond their wildest dream

You are invited to share in their vision of a better world – a vision that connects more closely the food we eat and to the farmers who grow it. If you are interested in more information regarding Fair Trade items, click on www.equalexchange.com or contact members of First Congregational Church, Oshkosh or Union Congregational Church, Green Bay, which are two of the churches who support this effort by selling Fair Trade products.

Twenty choir robes available

First Congregational Church, Oshkosh, will have twenty used adult choir robes available in February. Those who would be interested in receiving twenty light blue choir robes with white stoles at no cost may contact the church office at First Congregational Church: e-mail office@fccoshkosh.org or telephone 920-231-7520. Joanne Peterson is the choir director/organist.

Positions Open

Immanuel United Church of Christ in Kaukauna, Wisconsin has an immediate opening (s) for the position (s) of Organist and Choir Director. Applicants are asked to respond with a cover letter and current résumé, including salary requirements, by February 2, 2007 to:

Imm4christ@newbc.rr.com

Or

IUCC

510 Sullivan Avenue
Kaukauna, WI 54130

Auditions will be required for organists

NEA REPORTER

**Northeast Wisconsin Association United Church of Christ
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Wisconsin Conference United Church of Christ 2007 Evangelism Event

**“How-To” Skills To Help Your Church Grow
March 23 - March 24, 2007**

Holiday Inn Convention Center , Stevens Point, Wisconsin

Church Growth Skills Training

Are you looking for practical ideas to help your church grow? At this event you'll:

- Learn from local church workshop leaders about ideas that work!
- Hear about good things happening at UCC congregations around Wisconsin!
- Have your spirit lifted by keynote speaker, Professor Deb Krause!

You will have the opportunity to attend four different workshops on “road-tested” evangelism skills, all led by experienced local church leaders. You'll learn a lot about what's going on in other congregations around the state, and go home filled with fresh ideas for your own church to try. And you'll enjoy the unique fellowship of Wisconsin UCC-ers while being inspired by Prof. Deb Krause of Eden Seminary.

The event begins with registration at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, March 23 and ends at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 24.

Workshop leaders will also be available to come to your congregation! What if your ushers, Council, worship planning committee, or Evangelism Committee could hear first-hand about what has worked somewhere else? More information on how to arrange a back-home workshop will be available at the event.

For more information go to:
www.wcucc.org