



Northeast Wisconsin Association United Church of Christ

NEA Reporter

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	Conference	www.wcucc.org
	National	www.ucc.org

Coming Events in the Northeast Association

JANUARY

1 st	Happy New Year	NEA Office Closed
8 th	10 AM – Noon	Placement & Transition @ NEA Office
10 th	9:30 – 11:30 AM	Clergy Cluster I, St John's UCC, Black Creek
11 th	9 – 11 AM	Clergy Cluster II, Our Saviour's UCC, Ripon
16 th	9:30 – 11:30 AM	Clergy Cluster III, Community UCC, Elkhart Lake
18 th	9 – 11:30 AM	Executive Committee meeting @ NEA Office
22 nd	9-11 AM	Division on Wider Church Ministries
23 rd		C-TEN @ First Congregational, Oshkosh
25 th	9-11 AM	Division of Local Church Ministries
29 th	10 – Noon	Periodic Support & Consultation

FEBRUARY

2 nd	10 – 11:30 AM	Nominating Committee @ NEA Office
8 th	8 AM – 2 PM	Clergy Day, St. John's UCC, Appleton

Dear Friends,

“The story is told of Pablo Picasso who, during the roaring twenties in Paris, was asked to paint the portrait of a young poet, Gertrude Stein. After months of work, Picasso unveiled the painting. People were shocked. The image resembled Miss Stein, but showed her as old, wise, strong; not the young, uncertain woman that his fellow artists knew. When they said ‘But that doesn’t look like her’, Picasso responded, ‘It will one day.’ And, in truth, it happened. The artist had a vision of what she would look like and be one day and framed the vision in his own famous portrait.” This quote from an article by Joan Delaplane in *The Living Pulpit*, Jan-Mar 1992, reflects how the gift of vision can be powerful in guiding thinking and acting into a hope-filled future.

What stories do we live by? If we live exclusively by the reports on the evening news and the realities of our personal and family lives, we may be overwhelmed and live a frightening and depressed existence. God understands the reality of our lives and comes to us to “share our common lot.” God breaks through the structures and routines of our lives to offer a vision of God’s realm.

Knowing the stories of faith as presented in the scriptures may give us hope. Jesus’ parables, for example, reveal God’s intentions for us. Jesus’ parables surprise us and give us a glimpse of the justice and peace that God intends for us. In a world where bad harvests and either famine or flooding are a reality, Jesus points toward the Kingdom of God where only one fourth of the seed produces a yield of one hundred fold (Mark 4:1) God is like the woman who when she finds a lost coin throws a party for her neighbors that probably costs more than the coin she found (Luke 15:8-10). A widow asserts her needs in public before a corrupt judge for her rights (Luke 18:1-8) In the parable we call “the prodigal son” the father (the God figure) breaks social conventions to nurture freedom in his children. He isn’t worried about his dignity as he lavishes his resources of love and care on both sons.

At the beginning of this new year, let’s repent (turn). Let’s turn away from the negative stories of our world and of our lives that are so demeaning and often lead to death. Instead, let us live by the counter cultural and counter intuitive parables of Jesus that set us free to have great hope about God’s world and God’s future.

In closing, I would like to quote again from the article by Joan Delaplane: “Jurgen Moltmann tells a story from the Talmud of a rabbi who was considering what questions a Jew would probably have to answer at the Last Judgment. What would the universal Judge ask? First the rabbi thought of the obvious things: Were you honest in business? Did you seek wisdom? Did you keep the commandments? and so on. Finally a question came into his mind, which surprised the rabbi himself. It was the question about the Messiah. The universal Judge will ask, ‘Did you hope for my Messiah?’ Is that not the question Christians will be asked? Says Moltmann: ‘Did you hope for me? Did you keep hoping even when you nearly gave up? Did you endure to the end?’”

I believe that in our time, a primary mission of the church is to be a hopeful people and to model that hopefulness with our words and actions. What do you think?

Shalom,

Art

JANUARY ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES

Jennifer Dawson	28 Years	January 6
Jacob Preuss	19 Years	January 31
Laura Hawkins	6 Years	January 14

CHURCH ANNIVERSARIES IN 2007

20 YEARS

HOWARDS GROVE
Our Shepherd UCC

105 YEARS

REDGRANITE
First Congregational UCC

115 YEARS

MARINETTE
Peace UCC

120 YEARS

KAUKAUNA
Immanuel UCC

SHAWANO
Peace UCC

130 YEARS

CECIL
St. John's UCC

150 YEARS

NEW LONDON
First Congregational UCC

160 YEARS

PLYMOUTH
Immanuel UCC

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

St. Peter's UCC, Kiel, candidate sermon scheduled

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

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

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

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

CLERGY UPDATES

Rev. Greg Smith has been called as Pastor at St. Paul's UCC, Oshkosh as of November 27, 2006. Greg's former ministry was in the Iowa Conference. Welcome to the NEA, Greg.

The Rev. Virgie Davis has resigned as Ministries Coordinator effective December 31st in order to move to Texas where she will begin a new position in the secular world beginning in January. Virgie has been an active member of the Northeast Association since 1998 and has been our Ministries Coordinator for the past several years. We wish her well as she begins a new chapter in her life.

The Rev. Chris Schwab has transferred his ministerial standing from the Northeast Association to the Hawaii Conference where he will be installed as the Kahu (Pastor) of Kapa'a First Hawaiian Church, Kapa'a, Kauai, Hawaii on Sunday, January 14th. You may send greetings to Chris and his wife Rachel at: Kapaa First Hawaiian Church, 4-1325 Kuhio Hwy., Kapaa, Kauai, Hawaii 96746, or e-mail Noah_and-3_cats@hotmail.com

HAPPENINGS

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.

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!

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:

- * 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.

Clergy Social Evening January 19th

Northeast Association Clergy and spouses/friends are invited to attend an Epiphany party on the evening of Friday, January 19th. The event will take place at First Congregational Church, 137 Algoma Boulevard, Oshkosh, beginning at 6:00 p.m. The main course of hearty soups and homemade bread with a green salad will be provided. Pastors are invited to bring either an hors d'oeuvre or a dessert to share. Please RSVP to the Association Office (mary@neaucc.org or 920-731-4781) by Monday, January 15th.

Prayers

We lift up our prayers for Darlene Fritz (and her husband Rev. Tom Fritz, pastor of St. John's UCC, Appleton), for retired Lakeland College professor Dr. Reinhard Ulrich (and his wife Margaret Johnston of Plymouth) as they face the challenges of cancer, and for Bobbie Morkin, spouse of Rev. Chuck Morkin, as she recovers from major surgery.

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.

**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

Saron UCC (located in beautiful but sometimes-sultry suburban Johnsonville) is interested in receiving information from our churches in the association and conference that have air conditioned their sanctuaries. They are looking for comparative data showing summer church attendance one or two years before AC was installed as well as one or two years after it was installed. In addition, if you have any impressions based on experience regarding the cost vs. benefits of installing AC, please feel free to share them. Responses may be sent to:

jamesfdmartin@excel.net, or call

Jim Martin at (920) 467-6202.

Back Bay Mission Trip

October 21-28, 2006

“Got it?” “Got it!” This was the phrase frequently heard as 7 women passed along in relay style flat bed loads of sub-flooring, plywood flooring, and sheet rock. These supplies were hauled into homes still devastated by Hurricane Katrina over a year after the storm. Our job was to have the houses ready for a 2-week blitz “rebuild” scheduled for early November. Imagine 7 women simultaneously nailing down plywood flooring in one house! Meanwhile the 4 men were skillfully working in homes that were farther along in the reconstruction process. Among other things, they rebuilt walls, hung bi-fold closet doors, installed a tub surround, countertops, baseboards and other finishing touches to several homes.

We were grateful to be able to work in these homes, but the more profound joy came as we met several of the homeowners, heard their stories, and felt that we had made a special connection with them. We were welcomed into the Back Bay community more warmly than we had ever anticipated both in the neighborhoods and at the predominately black mission church we were invited to attend one evening. There we experienced a service quite different from what we are accustomed to at First Congo. At one point in the service, the whole congregation walked around, greeting each other with handshakes and many hugs.

Each of us on the trip has memories that remain most poignant to us. I think about the elderly black woman we met as she was taking a walk down the street by the house we were working on that last day in Biloxi. She had been living with her sister in Mobile, but her sister had died, and besides, she was so homesick. She was now back in her neighborhood, living with her daughter in a FEMA trailer not far from her house. When I asked her if her home was being repaired she replied, “Oh, a man comes around every now and then.”

Wanda Beemer, another member on the team, served in the important role as organizer of the food for lunch and the maker of the best white chili. She was also instrumental in the most surprising thing that happened to us. We had gone to a restaurant for dinner. As the rest of us were rearranging tables and chairs so all 12 of us could sit together, Wanda chatted with the couple sitting nearby, no doubt wondering about this group causing all the commotion. Wanda told them where we were from and why we were in Biloxi. Awhile later, as the couple was leaving, they placed a napkin on our table with this message written on it. “Thank you for your work in Biloxi. Enjoy dinner! Andrea and Jay.” Inside the napkin they had placed 2 one hundred dollar bills.

Please pray for the continuing work of Back Bay Mission and financially support the spirit led service this mission provides for people in need.

(Written by Ellie Olson)

Mission Team Members

Deb Burich

Maynard and Wanda Beemer

Al and Pam Benzschawel

Marcia Krater

Jeannie Sommers

Jim Brygger

Mary Haller

Len and Joyce Hanstedt

Ellie Olson

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, Oshkosh, Pastor: Greg Smith. **THE MISSION COMMITTEE** has started a new project. Along with the Prayer Shawls, we are now knitting and/or crocheting winter scarves. The Mission Committee also serves the evening meal at the Salvation Army on the first Thursday of the month. If you have been there to help in the kitchen or serve the meal, you know that most of the people who come in for a meal don't have much. By December 2007 we want to have enough scarves to give to each person who comes for the meal, as a gift from our church. We are asking for people who knit or crochet, if you would be willing to help us out. (from St. Paul's Newsletter)

PILGRIM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, Fond du Lac, Pastor: Ted Drewsen. **THINKING OUT LOUD...**In early November Pilgrim Church welcomed Mr. Paul Thompson as the director of the Pilgrim Choir (formerly the Senior Choir). Paul is a graduate of Marian College with music major in voice performance and a minor in philosophy. He has been the Director of Vocal Music and Jazz Studies at St. Mary's Springs High School since 2004. Paul brings youth and vitality along with his significant gifts in music. It is with great joy that we welcome Mr. Paul Thompson to the staff of Pilgrim Church. (from THE PILGRIM QUILL)

HOPE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, Fremont, Pastor: Alex Tychkin. **AUDIO AND VIDEO TECHNICIANS...**In the past months, after meetings with the Council, getting bids for various video recorders for the sanctuary, and countless hours of dreaming and planning, things have finally come to fruition with the purchase of the permanently mounted video camera, VHS recorder, and DVD recorder...We are still in the trial and error phase of its operation. After we become totally comfortable with the operation, we will work with the Council regarding its uses and possibilities. (from WHISPERS)

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, New London, Interim Pastor: Robin Reed. **MILWAUKEE PUBLIC TV TO FEATURE UCC HAND BELL CHOIR.** Imagine the feeling of relief and accomplishment if as a member of a choir you had practiced and rehearsed most of your Christmas music by mid-October. Now add to those feelings the excitement of learning that your choir was chosen by Milwaukee Public Television, to be featured on a highly regarded and well-viewed program on Christmas Eve. The New London Youth Hand Bell Ensemble of the First Congregational UCC,s performance was videotaped on a beautiful Sunday afternoon in October. (from GOOD NEWS newsletter)

FIRST REFORMED UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, Manitowoc, Pastor: Richard Runge. **PASTORAL PONDERING...**"Peace! There seems to be so little peace and so much conflict in our world. One need only think about Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Israel, Gaza---yes, even Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Often, we view peace as the cessation of absence of hostilities, and that is certainly something all of us would hope for. But, the biblical understanding of peace is broader than this. When the biblical writers speak of peace, they're talking about harmony, wholeness, and health."

POSITIONS AVAILABLE

First Congregational Church, UCC, Appleton, is seeking an inspirational, dynamic, and energetic Director of Music Ministries. This unique congregation, which includes many accomplished musicians, has an historical connection to a conservatory of music, a commitment to combined orchestral and choral works, and a long tradition of excellence in music worship. We are seeking candidates who have a respect for traditional music, as well as the vision to raise the profile of the church throughout the community and develop a comprehensive, multi-generational program of worship through music. The individual must demonstrate excellent musicianship, interpersonal skills, effective rehearsal and conducting techniques, and knowledge of the repertoire. The Director of Music Ministries will organize and supervise a new half-time music position, as well as oversee a 50-voice Sanctuary choir with 10 paid section leaders. Organ skills desired but not required. A Bachelor of Music degree and proven successful leadership with two years working in the field of choral or sacred music required. Position is available August 1, 2007. For a full job description and more information on the church and surrounding community, visit our website at www.firstcongoappleton.org/musicsearch/

Send questions or resume to:

Attn: Paul Eggen
First Congregational Church, UCC
724 E. South River Street
Appleton, WI 54915

Immanuel United Church of Christ, Kaukauna is seeking to hire a Nursery Supervisor. The Nursery Supervisor will cover the church nursery from 8:30-10:30 a.m. every Sunday Jan-May and Sept-Dec. The pay is \$30/Sunday. For a detailed job description, please contact the church office at imm4christ@newbc.rr.com or call at 920-766-2137. Please send resumes to Immanuel UCC, ATTN: Rev. Feller, 510 Sullivan Avenue, Kaukauna WI 54130. Deadline is January 21, 2007.

The Wisconsin Council of Churches proudly sponsors the workshop:

Preaching for Transformation

January 31, February 1, February 2, 2007

Presenter: Rev. Dr. Keith Russell, President, American Baptist Seminary of the West.

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.

Locations:

January 31st at First Baptist Church, 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

Please register on-line at:

www.wichurches.org, or phone 608-837-3108

The NEA is in transition with our website. We hope to have our new design completed within the next few weeks. Once completed, the NEA Reporter will be posted on our website for your viewing.

As stated in the December newsletter, we will no longer be sending paper copies each month.

This month we are e-mailing a copy to the local churches. Thank you in advance for your patience and understanding during this time of transition.

The NEA Staff

