



**Northeast Wisconsin Association
United Church of Christ**

NEA REPORTER

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

March, 2007
Volume 42, Issue 3
Published monthly
except July

Dear Friends,

During the liturgical season of Lent followers of Jesus pay special attention to the inner journey. In the winter days of early March with snow covering the ground and shorter days still prominent, the earth doesn't boast many signs of life. But we know from the past that by the time Lent ends, there will be more light, the ice will be thawing on the lakes, the song birds will have returned, and the crocus will be blooming. In a similar way, our spiritual lives may have grown as a result of the thoughtful reflection and nurturing we are doing right now.

Culture is in tremendous change. Just as Ford, GM and Chrysler are taking stock of their product lines to meet the transportation needs of the new generation, churches are experiencing a similar transformation. Most of our congregations were begun as neighborhood churches where the majority of worshippers would walk or take a horse and wagon. Times have changed and people are willing to drive miles to church just as they are to work. People will look for a faith fellowship that meets their spiritual needs and they are no longer "brand" sensitive, whether it's driving a Buick because their parents and grandparents did or attending a UCC, Presbyterian or Lutheran congregation because that's been part of their family heritage.

As I travel around our Association I am aware of the struggle that our local churches are experiencing as a result of the change in culture and economics. All of us are aware that things are much different now than they were just a generation ago. For example, in the past we assimilated new members into the church by asking them to serve as ushers, teach church school, join the choir, and serve on governing boards. These days new members would rather join our churches to nurture their faith life or be involved in doing something for someone else often beyond the walls of the church.

I have great hope for the church of the future. God is doing a new thing in our midst as the church is being transformed. I see vitality in congregations that pay attention to the inner spiritual life and balance that with external service as an expression of faith. The inner life is fed by worship that lifts the spirit through music and prayer, through scripture and proclamation, through silence and sacrament. Small study groups, faith sharing groups, book discussion groups – all are foundational in planting the seeds of faith and nurturing them. Vital congregations extend hospitality and are inclusive. They are heavily invested in outreach. In our Association I see lively congregations sponsoring "hands-on" mission trips to hurricane ravaged Florida and the Gulf Coast, Appalachia, Indian reservations on the Plains, and inner city neighborhoods. Churches get away from worrying about themselves and their own survival when they look beyond themselves, sometimes partnering with another church in their own city and at other times covenanting with a church in different part of the state or the world. The Lay Academy of the Wisconsin Conference gives local church members the opportunity to learn and renew their faith and bond with others from different churches who share a common faith pilgrimage.

My prayers are with you this Lent. Do not fear. God will use the present ferment in church and society to yield the next step on the way to fulfilling the vision of the Reign of God. May we grow as individuals and congregations as God brings newness to our lives.

Shalom

Art

Coming Events in the Northeast Association

FEBRUARY

27th 10 AM Division of Church & Ministry, Chairs @ NEA Office
 1 PM Pastoral Relations Committee

MARCH

4th 3 PM Installation of Edit Boda-Mercer as Associate Pastor @
 Salem UCC, Plymouth
 8th 9-10:30 AM Division of Local Church Ministries @ NEA Office
 9-11 AM Clergy Cluster II, St. Paul's UCC, Oshkosh
 11th Stewardship Event @ Lakeland College
 14th 9:30—11:30 AM Clergy Cluster I, First Congregational, New London
 15th 9-11:30 AM Executive Committee Meeting @ NEA Office
 1 PM Annual Meeting Planning Committee @ Our Saviour's UCC, Ripon
 18th 4 PM Installation of Greg Smith as Pastor @ St. Paul's UCC, Oshkosh
 19th 9-11 AM Division on Wider Church Ministries @ NEA Office
 20th 9-11 AM Clergy Cluster III, St. John UCC, Manitowoc
 23-24 Wisconsin Conference Evangelism Event in Stevens Point
 26th 10-12 AM Committee on Periodic Support & Consultation @ NEA Office

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

Are you interested in submitting an article to the NEA Reporter?
 All submissions need to be sent to the NEA office via e-mail no later than the 23rd of the month.
 All articles and requests are subject to approval of the Association Minister.

MARCH ORDINATION ANNIVERSARIES

Vernon Jaberg	60 Years	March 16
Sharon Stier	23 Years	March 18

CHURCH ANNIVERSARIES IN 2007

20 YEARS

Our Shepherd UCC, Howards Grove

120 Years

Immanuel UCC, Kaukauna

105 Years

First Congregational UCC, Redgranite

130 Years

St. John's UCC, Cecil

Peace UCC, Shawano

150 Years

First Congregational UCC, New London

St. John UCC, Sheboygan

160 Years

Immanuel UCC, Plymouth

115 Years

Peace UCC, Marinette

ECSW - Resource Center

Mission Statement

The East Central Synod of Wisconsin Resource Center will provide resources and guidance to assist congregations in their ministry. The center will be a catalyst for mission by encouraging congregations to share ideas, leadership, media and materials. Through making connections for ministry, providing 'hands-on' services to parishes, and multiplying available resources, the center will equip and build up the body of Christ."

As a member of the Northeast WI Association, you have the opportunity to utilize the ECSW Resource Center. Visit their website at: www.ecsw.org.

Phone: 920-734-3797



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Annual Timber Rattler Outing
Is scheduled for Saturday, August 11, 2007.
More information be will be
Available soon.

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. Sharon Stier, Interim Associate

Immanuel UCC, Neenah, in transition,
Rev. Milton Staskal, interim

First Congregational UCC, New London, seeking Pastor,
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

Installations

Sunday, March 4th, 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

April 15, 2007 Ordination and Installation of Joan Shiels as Associate Pastor at
Hope UCC, Sturgeon Bay.

WANTED: SENIOR CHOIR DIRECTOR

Weekly rehearsal and sing two Sundays per month. Potential candidate should have previous conducting experience in sacred music. If interested, please contact Our Saviour's United Church of Christ in Ripon, WI at (920)748-2544 or send resume and cover letter to 343 Scott St., Ripon, WI 54971.

FIRST REFORMED UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, Manitowoc, Pastor: Richard Runge. CH __ CH. QUESTION: WHAT'S MISSING FROM CH __ CH? U R. This is the theme for our all-church visitation. You are (UR) important to our church and we would very much like to know what is important to you in the life of the church. Fifteen to twenty-minute "UR home visits" will be made to each family in order to gather information. A discussion sheet and a time and talent sheet will be mailed out to each family prior to our visit. We plan to make our "UR home visits" during the month of March. Volunteer visitors from the congregation will work in pairs to make these visits. (From the Newsletter of First Reformed UCC)

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, Malone, Pastor: Keith Weiland. LENTEN THEME WILL BE THE VALLEYS OF LENT. The Valleys are biblical sites from which we may learn lessons for this sacred season. Rev. Weiland and Rev. Greg Whelton of St. John's UCC, Sheboygan will each speak on alternate Wednesday evenings. Ash Wednesday's theme is "the Valley of Dry Bones" and Good Friday's theme is "The Valley of the Shadow of Death". Wednesday evenings will begin with a soup meal at 7:00 and Bible study at 7:30. (From the Friendly Visitor)

SARON UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, Sheboygan Falls, Co-Pastors: Jim Martin and Jenny Dawson. HEARTS FOR LOVED ONES. During the month of February a large banner reading "EXPRESS YOUR LOVE--SHARE CHRIST'S LOVE" will appear on the wall of the narthex of Saron Church. For the first three Sundays of February a heart may be purchased to put on the banner in honor of or in memory of a loved one. Red hearts read: "This heart is in loving honor of (fill in name) from (fill in name). White hearts read: "This heart is in loving memory of (fill in name) from (fill in name). Each heart costs twenty dollars with all proceeds going toward FORWARD IN FAITH campaign. (From The Tidings)

BRIEF SELECTIONS FROM OTHER NEWSLETTERS

St. John's UCC of Black Creek will take part in a special Fox Valley celebration of the 50th birthday of the UCC. First, participating churches plan to purchase an Ark full of two of every animal offered through the Heifer Project. Second, a celebration of worship, music, and ice cream social will mark the 50 year anniversary at St. Lawrence University on June 17. Don Baumann, pastor, is involved in planning the event.

The Tri-Jo Parish of Cecil participates in the ANY SOLDIER PROGRAM. Cards with personal notes to "Dear Soldier" insures that our service people in Iraq and Afghanistan know we are thinking of them. Moira Finley is pastor and teacher.

The Women's Guild of **St. Paul's UCC, Sheboygan** will host three Midweek Breakfasts during the Lenten season, each featuring a guest speaker. Earl Kruse is the interim pastor.

Pastor Kathleen Gloff of **Ebenezer UCC, Chilton**, reminds us that our denomination has a special web site (www.askthequestion.org) for people who wonder if ordained ministry is for them. One can be helped to explore their spiritual journey, or just satisfy their curiosity.

Hands of Christ Deaf Ministry

Hands of Christ Deaf Ministry continues to reach out to the Deaf Community in East Central Wisconsin with the Good News of Jesus Christ's love for all. The office for the ministry is at All Saints Episcopal Church on College Ave in Appleton. We worship in the Chapel of First United Methodist Church. This year we have added another worship/learning time to our schedule of events. We will be going on our second Mission Trip to do hurricane clean-up in the Gulf Coast area.

Currently we have a full Administrative Board comprised of two representatives from each of the supporting five denominations. The UCC representatives are: Vicki Mielke, who serves as our treasurer and has been a very active, willing and enthusiastic member of the board for a number of years. Laurie Kleist has recently agreed to serve on our board and we look forward to the ways God will use her gifts in this ministry and we pray her life will also be enriched as we work together. Vicki and Laurie are members of Congregational UCC in Neenah. We are thankful for these servants who give support, wisdom and encouragement to our ministry and the joy of working ecumenically and learning from each other; God has truly blessed us.

Our future plans include Vacation Bible School this summer. Our Spiritual Board has now expanded to include a worship committee and this group is focusing on ways to enhance our Deaf worship and make it more visual, an important aspect of Deaf culture. We are in need of a laptop in order to project images (First United Methodist owns LCD equipment and is willing to share their resources with us). Our choir is also in need of a black light with a base for creating unique Sign Language songs.

Please keep in mind that our ministry travels to hearing congregations on the second Sunday of each month in order to lead Deaf worship and help hearing folks "see" the Gospel in a new way. Our Deaf choir SIGNS anthems and Pastor Gisele Berninghaus preaches in both sign language and voice, a new experience for many. This opportunity allows members within the Northeast Association to see how their weekly offerings are being used to reach out in special ways. Contact Pastor Gisele Berninghaus at 920-968-1196 or hocdeaf@tds.net to get more information or to schedule a time for Hands of Christ to come to your congregation. Thank you for your prayers, your financial support and your partnership in this ministry.

**The Annual Meeting of the NEA
Will be held on Saturday, April 21, 2007
At Our Saviour's UCC
In Ripon.**

**More information will be mailed in the next couple of weeks.
Mark your calendars and
plan to attend.**

NEA REPORTER

**Northeast Wisconsin Association United Church of Christ
5765 W. Grande Market Dr.
Suite B
Appleton WI 54913-8471**



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