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FROM YOUR ASSOCIATION MINISTER

Grace is at the core of the Gospel and at the center of Our Reformed Faith; and yet it is little understood and often seen as unfair (you didn't work for it, therefore you don't deserve it) and unjust (for grace falls like gentle rain on the both the just and the unjust).

As the New Year begins, listen to this interesting take on Grace from Ed Beers in a portion of a sermon he preached on Luke 21:5-19, quoting a bit from Flannery O'Connor.

"In a comment on her writing, the late Flannery O'Connor observed "Our age doesn't have a sharp eye for intrusions of grace. It no longer has much feeling for the violence, which surrounds them. Yet, she adds, "...violence is strangely capable of **returning my characters to reality** and preparing them to accept their moment of grace... **the idea that reality is something to which we need to be returned at considerable cost, is seldom understood, yet it is implicit in the Christian view of the world**"

Luke's readers observed a world steeped in violence. The immediate context: Roman occupation forces destroyed the Jerusalem temple. The central magnet of Jewish life was dissolved. As in any crisis a bevy of self-assured messiahs emerged.

"Don't be taken in," says Jesus. "Many will claim my name, but don't be taken in." When violence erupts, don't be terrified. Flannery O'Connor reminded us, this is **precisely the time for the unanticipated eruption of grace.** Because in Luke's narrative, grace erupts through a particular historic event, it can suggest meanings for difficult events in our own setting.

When such moments occur, Jesus' admonition, "Do not be terrified" is necessarily linked to fidelity to his Name. The phrase, "because of my Name," appearing in all three readings, is a synonym for standing up for justice, compassion and truth. It also means, the suffering you don't deserve, ironically, becomes a way of witness.

"Grace, through courage and by fidelity of others to the Name of Jesus, erupts in

unanticipated and mysterious ways. And if Flannery O'Connor is right, it happens even in the most violent and turbulent moments we can ever imagine."

With Great Hope...and frightening Grace,

Bob

DISTRICT MEETINGS RETURN
Clergy gather monthly for Bible Study (lectionary Gospel lesson for upcoming week), Theological conversation and Prayer. In January, we'll be discussing the paper, "The Cross and the Lynching Tree" by James Cone. We meet in these geographical groupings:

District IV –	Evansville	
	January 15	9 a.m.
District I –	Dodgeville	
	January 16	8 a.m.
District II –	Madison Plymouth	
	January 23	8 a.m.
District III	Portage	
	January 30	12 Noon

IN OUR PRAYERS

Leslie Schenk, as she is ordained and begins at Ladysmith
Lois Rosko, as she is ordained and installed at Reeseville
Petra Strieff, as she is Authorized as a Lay Pastor
Phil Haslanger, as he is installed at Fitchburg
Jacki Mitchell, as she recovers from Cancer Treatment

Our Congregations at:

Mt. Vernon – Brad Brookins, Pastor
New Glarus – Tom Neilsen, Pastor
Paoli – Sara Thiessen, Pastor

**REMINDER:
SPRING
ASSOCIATION
MEETING – APRIL
26 AT
MONTICELLO
ZWINGLI**

SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN
ASSOCIATION

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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TIP FOR NEW CLERGY

Chautauqua is taking new clergy conference applications for the Summer of 2008. Touted as a wonderful place for education and family. They pay for everything except travel. Application is at <http://religion.ciweb.org/>

GERMAN YOUTH TRIP TO GERMANY

Again, we remind you of a wonderful opportunity for youth 16-24 to Germany, June 28-July 19. Youth will do a work project in an area of Germany where they experienced serve flooding. In addition, they will spend some time in Berlin. The cost will be mostly the flight from Chicago to Dusseldorf. If you have interest, contact Rev. Bill Kapp at Bill_Kapp@ucc-saukcity.org or Laura Stalder at lstalder@wisc.edu

CHECK OUT THE ASSOCIATION WEB SITE

The Division on Lay Life and Leadership has taken the Association website as their project and have done a great job. We now have a new page where people can sign up to receive Nancy's Association E-News. You can go to the home page and follow the link or just click on this one, <http://www.swwisconsinucc.org/ecommu nications.htm>

If you wish to receive the Association Newsletter, Shalom, by e-mail or would like to start on or improve your church's website, check this link so they can let us know of your interest. Contact Nancy Potter for suggestions and critique.

WE GOT CALLS AND WE'RE ORDAINING!

Yes, two of our "In-Care" folks have received calls and will be ordained soon. **Lois Rosko** has been called to be the Pastor and Teacher at First United Church of Christ in Reeseville. Lois is a graduate of Chicago Theological Seminary and is well known to many in the Association, as she served at Madison lake Edge and Fitchburg in the ministry of Christian Education and served as Pastor at Fort Atkinson Friedens. She will be Ordained and Installed at Reeseville on February 17, 2 p.m. You are invited to send delegates to participate in the promises

made between Pastor, Congregation and the Association.

Leslie Schenk, a member at Madison Plymouth and a recent graduate of Eden Seminary, has been called by two congregations in the Northwest Association at Ladysmith and Conrath. She will be ordained at Madison Plymouth on January 20, 7:00 p.m. This will be the first Ordination at Plymouth in recent memory.

STREIFF TO BE AUTHORIZED

Petra Streiff, who has been a parish nurse at our congregations at Madison Plymouth and Fitchburg will become an authorized Lay Pastor at a serve on January 20 at 3 p.m. at Madison Community of Hope. Petra was recommended by the Authorized Lay Pastor Committee and approved by the Division on Church and Ministry. She went through about a 2 year training period which included an internship at First UCC in Belleville with Rev. Heide Hackman being her supervisor.

CONGREGATIONS SEEKING

Darlington Immanuel - Sue Strickler, Interim

HASLANGER TO BE INSTALLED

Phil Haslanger will be installed as Pastor and Teacher at Memorial UCC in Fitchburg on February 3 at a 10 a.m. service. You are invited to send delegates to this service to participate in the promises between Pastor, the Congregation and the Association.

READING GROUP TO BEGIN NEW BOOK

The Contemporary Theology Reading Group will soon complete "Undergoing God" by James Alison and in February will begin "The Beginning of All This...Science and Religion" by Hans Kung. From the cover, "Kung seeks to reconcile theology with the latest scientific insights, holding that a confrontational model for the relationship between science and theology is out of date." If you have interest, let us know and we'll order you a book

CHRISTIAN EDUCATIONS – REGISTER NOW

FOR REJOICE & RECHARGE RETREAT!

Beat the winter doldrums with a special day designed to recharge! Join us on Saturday, January 26 at Verona Salem UCC. This year there will be 10 workshops to choose from and the R 7 R Spa and book Store will be back again by popular demand! To address the feedback we had from last year attendees, we have added workshops that cover teaching for all ages. See brochure in this Shalom or on the Association Website for more information. Hope to see you there! The C.E. Division

ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS FOR 2007-08 ASSOCIATION DIRECTORY

Mutton home email – should be muttonames@verizon.net

Director of Moon Beach Camp – should be Glenn Svetnicka

Mark Yurs email – should be mark@salemucc-verona.org

Twink Jan-McMahon email – should be tjmc@tds.net

Petra Streiff new Phone # - 608 – 527-4155

Our schedule for the Clergy Retreat:

Sunday

6:00 p.m. Dinner
7:00 p.m. Introduction to the
Program
7:15 p.m. Dow Edgerton and
“Bag O’Homiletics”
8:30 p.m. Evening Prayers
8:45 p.m. Refreshments

Monday

8:00 a.m. Breakfast
9:00 a.m. Morning
Prayers and Sermon #1 (Tisha Brown)
9:45 a.m. Break
10:00 a.m. Preaching the
Resurrection by Mark Yurs
11:00 a.m. Break
12:00 p.m. Lunch
1:00 p.m. Sermon #2 with liturgy
and hymn (Tom Payton)
2:00 p.m. Free Time
6:00 p.m. Dinner
7:00 p.m. Panel discussion (topic
to be decided with Kirkegaard Ullman
And others

convened by Edgerton

8:00 p.m. Break
8:15 p.m. Evening Prayers
w/Sermon #3 (Todd Smith-Lippert)
9:00 p.m. Refreshments

Tuesday

8:00 a.m. Breakfast
9:00 a.m. Presentation by Dow
Edgerton
10:00 a.m. Break
10:30 a.m. Final Service
(Communion) w/ Sermon #4 (Wanda
Washington)
11:30 a.m. Evaluation and Lunch