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FROM YOUR ASSOCIATION MINISTER

Pentecost will come upon us soon, as everything else did this liturgical year! Often congregations choose that day for Confirmation. Following is a portion of a Confirmation Sermon – listen in as the Pastor offers gifts to the confirmands in the name of the congregation.

...we offer gifts, yes on this day, before you confirm your Baptismal Vows, we have some things to give you. It is in response to all that you have given us. Now it is not much in terms of this culture, but in reality, it is all that we have, gifts, what we hope for you, a few stories that offer hope, that suggest a way to live, stories that have a person or persons in them that you might remember when you need them, someone who in a difficult moment might come to your rescuer, someone you might think of when you find yourself without resource, when you find yourself not knowing what to do. Story one:

From Thorton Wilder – one of his three minute plays called “The Angel That Troubled the Waters.” The story tells of a man who stood all day by the pool of Bethesda, praying in fierce agony that God would touch his tortured soul into health. The Angel, coming whispered in his ear saying, “Stand back, healing is not for you. WITHOUT YOUR WOUND WHERE WOULD YOUR POWER BE, it is your very remorse that makes your low voice tremble into the hearts of the needy. Not the angels themselves in Heaven can persuade the wretched and blundering children of earth as can a human being broken on the wheel of living. In love’s service only the wounded soldiers can serve.” And in that moment the Angel stopped down into the waters and troubled them. As the lone sufferer drew back, a lame old neighbor, smiling his thanks made his painful way into the pool and was healed. Joyously, with a smile on his lips he approached the other, still standing there like a statue of grief, thinking of the things which might have been. “Perhaps,” he said, “it will be your turn next, but meanwhile come with me to my house. My son is lost in dark thoughts, I do not understand him. Only you have ever lifted his mood. And my daughter, since her child has died, sits in the shadows. She will not listen to us. Come with me an hour.” The play ends. I recommend to

you this man. WITHOUT YOUR WOUNDS WHERE WOULD YOUR POWER BE? Power strength, and compassion is no doubt born of suffering. The power of compassion comes from sincere empathy that we feel for those whose pain we know. How different our approach is to those whose pain we have tasted. They know our special power and they feel our special strength and they are open to our words and our caring as a brother or sister traveler who knows the bends in the road. We learn compassion, we learn how to act compassionately, we have the power because we know the agony, and that is what it means to be a Christian. For when you are agonizing over your own troubles and find no way out, maybe the man at the pool will come to you and say, “come with me but an hour,” and your will remember.

Now, if you were preaching this sermon, what would be your next story?

Great Hope to you as Pentecost nears,

Bob

FEMINIST STUDY TO BEGIN NEW BOOK

The Feminist Study Group will finish their current book by Sara Miles, “Take This Bread,” a fine work combining images of the Eucharist and feeding those in need. They will begin a new one called, “Here, If you Need Me,” by Kate Bragstrup. Contact the Association Office if you have interest in participating.

ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCILS SCHEDULED

If all goes well, the Division on Church and Ministry will recommend that the Association conduct two Ecclesiastical Councils for the purpose of examining Sara Wilcox of Madison First Congregation and Chicago Theological Seminary on May 18, 3 p.m., at First Congregational and Twink Jan-McMahon of Madison Lake Edge and Eden Seminary on June 1 at 2 p.m. at Lake Edge. Sara’s Ordination Paper has been sent out to all congregations in District II (Madison area) and Twink’s paper will be sent to the same district early in May. It is expected that

SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION

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congregations in District II will send delegates to these councils. If you are not in District II and wish to receive either paper, contact the Association Office.

DISTRICT MEETINGS IN MAY

Clergy will gather in districts to do Bible Study, pray and discuss a theological paper.

District I Dodgeville	May 21	8 a.m.
District II Madison	May 28	8 a.m.
District III Portage	May 21	12pm
District IV Evansville	May 20	9 a.m.

STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH OFFERING – MAY 11, 2008

Strengthen the Church Offerings are used to help new and renewing congregations in the United Church of Christ. In the Wisconsin Conference, Strengthen the Church funds support our mission priorities of new congregations:

Grace UCC, Milwaukee, Rev. Wanda J. Washington, pastor held its first service in April, 2006, our first new church start in 35 years!

El Vid del Señor, Rev. Mario Navarro, organizing pastor is our Latino New Church Initiative in the Waukesha area.

These funds also support congregational vitality through training, and resources for renewing churches through a variety of programs and events.

Half of all funds contributed stay in Wisconsin to strengthen the church through renewal and new church development, and half are used by the national UCC for growth and evangelism.

IN OUR PRAYERS (Please add these petitions to your daily prayers)

Bob Mirshak, recovering from a hospitalization

Jacki Mitchell, recovering from cancer treatments

Deb Krause-Dean at Eden Seminary, recovering from breast cancer Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Conference

Our Congregations at:

Whitewater, Christine Stack, Pastor

Windsor, David McDonald, Pastor

Woodman, Barbara Dunlop Wolfe, Pastor

BOUNDARY TRAINING OFFERED BY NORTHEAST ASSOCIATION

Northeast Association's Division on Church & Ministry has scheduled a Boundary Training event for pastors on May 8, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at First Congregational UCC, 724 E. South River St., Appleton, WI 54915. The registration fee is \$10.00 which covers lunch and supplies. The leaders will be Revs Becky Johnston and Jim Klein who will be using the video content from the Faith Trust Institute. Pastors from the Southwest Association are welcome to attend. Please send your check for \$10.00 made payable to the **Northeast Wisconsin Association**, to Scarlet Harvath, Northeast Wisconsin association, 5765 W. Grande Market Drive, Suite B, Appleton, WI 54913-8471 (Phone: 920-731-4781).

HERITAGE AND CALL DVD VIDEO

An excellent DVD video put together to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the UCC was available free of charge at the Spring Association Meeting in April. The video is an historical look at the 50 years of the Southwest Association, UCC. It is filled with images of ministry and congregations that date back to the mid 50's and move to the present. The technical work was done by Paul Hedges of Orchard Ridge UCC in cooperation with a number of clergy. Rev. Phil Haslanger of Fitchburg Memorial had a major hand in writing the script. The DVD was shown as part of the 50th Anniversary celebration on Oct. 14 at First Congregational UCC in Madison.

CHARLIE WORKMAN HABITAT HOUSE

Charlie workman is known throughout the Southwest Association from his years as pastor at Zwingli Church in Monticello and his times as serving as either an interim minister or providing pulpit supply. Within Green County this 91 year-old is known as the "Father of Green County Habitat for Humanity." He and his wife, Marilyn, are the primary benefactors for the affiliate. In honor of his years of service and their monetary contributions, GCHFH is naming a house in his honor. The Green County UCC churches are committed to this local mission project as a means of building community while providing a home for a needy family. The hope is to broaden the effort throughout the SWA.

Work on the Charlie Workman House in Browntown, WI will begin on Saturday, July 5th. Teams from the UCC churches and individuals are wanted to volunteer

from identified Saturdays from July until mid-October. Visit the website at www.greencountyhabitat.org or call Carol Holmes at 608-225-0341 for more information.

Monetary gifts in support of this house are also most welcome. Donations should be mailed to Green County Habitat for Humanity, P.O. Box 298, Monroe, WI 53566. Note that the donation is for the Charlie Workman House. Another way to show support is to send a team of bicyclists or come as single rider to the Bike 4 Habitat on Saturday, May 17th in Brodhead. Check the website for details.

CHURCHES SEEKING

Dane Immanuel, Interim to be decided
Darlington Immanuel, Sue Strickler, Interim
Mineral Point First, Beryl Melcher, Interim

ARCHBISHOP ELIAS CHACOUR TO SPEAK IN MADISON

Archbishop Chacour has worked for reconciliation and peace in the Middle East, especially building high-quality schools in the Galilean village of Ibillin, where the students and faculty include Christians, Muslims, Jews and Druze. More than 50% of the 3000 students are girls. He will speak on Wednesday, May 14, 7 p.m., at First United Methodist Church, 203 Wisconsin Ave.

BARTH GROUP ON TO NEXT VOLUME

The Barth Study Group has now completed 9 volumes (plus the fragment IV.2) of Church Dogmatics. They will begin the Doctrine of Creation, Volume III.2 in May. You are invited to participate.

Evangelism Event...Bring "Em In! "HOW-TO" skills to help your church grow. November 14-15, Holiday Inn Convention Center, Stevens Point, WI.

REV. WANDA WASHINGTON TO SPEAK

Rev. Wanda Washington, pastor of Grace UCC in Milwaukee, will speak here in Madison at the Mt. Zion Baptist Church, 2019 Fisher St., on June 3rd at 6:45 p.m. The topic will be "Race, Theology and Politics."

CRAIGVILLE THEOLOGICAL COLLOQUY

The theme of this year's Craigville Colloquy is "God's Shalom: Confronting the Many Faces of Violence." It will happen at the Craigville Conference Center on Cape Cod July 14-18. We have brochures.

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 copy this one, <http://www.swwisconsinucc.org/ecommunications.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.