

SHALOM

SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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FROM YOUR ASSOCIATION MINISTER

This month I'm giving over my column to Dr. Mark Yurs of Verona Salem, as he reflects on his trip to the United Reformed Church of Great Britain. The Wisconsin Conference has an exchange program with the URC. Each year they send a Pastor here and we send a Pastor there. Associations take turns and this year Mark represented us...listen to his reflections

"We saw some wonderful sights while we were in England. We saw sheep on the hillside, hedges along the roadside, and the beauty of the seaside. We saw cathedrals with vaulted ceilings, houses with thatched roofs, villages with cobbled streets, and cemeteries with monuments eroded by time. We saw the queen's palace, a rich man's estate, and a homeless man's tattered clothes. We saw the place from which Cabot sailed, the place where William of Orange landed, a place where Cromwell stood, and a place where Wesley slept.

We saw some wonderful sights in England, but the most magnificent of them all was the church of Jesus Christ. I do not mean the buildings. I mean the people. The most magnificent sight we saw was the living, breathing church of Jesus Christ gathered for worship, fellowship, and mission. I have loved the church since I was a boy, but, I tell you, I fell in love with it all over again. What we saw of the church – and it was a sight to behold – has given me fresh vision and renewed spirit.

The Breadth of the Church

We saw the breadth of the church. We joked with our hosts, and they with us, about the language differences between us. They call fries chips, chips crisps, cookies biscuits, sidewalks pavements, carts trolleys, trucks lorries, sweaters jumpers, and lines queues. Our countries are, as someone said, two nations divided by a common language. But the church is one. As soon as we walked into the first church building – Furrough Cross United Reformed Church in Babbacombe – as soon as we walked into the first church building and started to meet its people, we felt immediately at home. Whatever else the church is, it is international and the bonds of fellowship reach across every national border and boundary.

The fellowship that is the church is ecumenical as well as international. We were hosted by the United Reformed Church, but I participated in the installation of a new Anglican priest, met with Methodist district superintendents, preached in a Methodist Chapel – founded by John Wesley in 1775 – and we took part in a Lenten study group that met in the home of Anglicans, was led by a URC minister, and which took in some Roman Catholics and Pentecostals as well. Denominations, however important they are, do not limit the church. The family of Christ is interdenominational as well as international.”

We saw the breadth of the church and know now as never before,
In Christ there is no East or West,
In him no South or North;
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth. (John Oxenham)

There is more, if you have interest, contact Carol at the Association Office & she will send it on.

With Hope,

Bob

DISTRICT MEETINGS

We begin again in May with Bible Study, Prayers and a theological paper. This month we'll read "Shaping Communities: Pastoral Leadership and Congregational Formation" by Peter W. Marty. You'll be receiving a copy by e mail or you can contact the Association Office for a hard copy. We meet:

District I	Dodgeville	May 20	8 a.m.
District II	Madison	May 28	8 a.m.
District III	Portage	May 20	12:15 p.m.
District IV	Evansville	May 19	9 a.m.

JULIA WEAVER TO BE EXAMINED AT AN ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCIL IN MAY

On May 31 at 3 p.m. the Association will gather as an Ecclesiastical Council for the purpose of examining Julia Weaver to discern her fitness for Ordained Ministry at Community of Hope UCC in Madison where she is a member. We will send her Ordination paper to all clergy in District II who are expected to attend. If you would like a paper, contact the Association Office.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WISCONSIN CONFERENCE – JUNE 12-14 GREEN LAKE CONFERENCE CENTER

The theme is "Creation and the Environment" with the title of "Living Gratefully." The meeting will begin with registration at 9 a.m. on Friday, June 12 conclude with Worship at 11 a.m. on Sunday, June 13. For more information, check the Wisconsin Conference Webpage.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING AND TRANSFORMATION – CHIAPAS, MEXICO

The Wisconsin Conference is offering Lay/Clergy Schools in Chiapas, Mexico July 6-18, 2009. We have brochures available or check out the Wisconsin Conference Webpage.

YOUNG AMBASSADORS EXCHANGE GROUP NEEDS YOUR HELP

This summer the Wisconsin youth and young adults who traveled to Germany last year will host 15 folk in return. We'll be working at Back Bay Mission in Biloxi for one of our three weeks together. As trip costs have increased, we are finding it hard to meet the anticipated expenses of this exchange. We're continuing with fundraising efforts, but would also like to appeal to individuals and churches in the Association who might be able to contribute to our cause. Perhaps there is a congregation that does not have a youth group of their own, but would like to support the mission work of the young. Well, that sounds like us! Any contribution would be appreciated and may be sent to the Association Office to the attention of Sally Iverson.

BECOME A STORYTELLER THIS SUMMER!

Midge Miles is conducting a workshop/retreat, **Ministry in Story**, July 30 – August 2nd. It will provide teaching on the role of storytelling in the Judeo-Christian tradition; skills on how select, learn and tell sacred stories; processes for incorporating stories and storytelling into various ministry settings; ways to design worship and celebration through story and symbol; and retreat sessions that explore our own personal sacred stories. The program is held at Shalom House in West Bend beginning with dinner and opening session on Thursday and sessions on Friday & Saturday, 9:30 a.m. – 6 p.m. through Sunday 9:30 – 12:30 p.m. This is a great summer opportunity to immerse yourself in the world of sacred storytelling, animate your life and ministry and have fun! To receive a PDF version of a flyer, contact Midge at midge.miles@att.net or call (262) 306-7988.

WILCOX TO BE ORDAINED

Sara Wilcox will be Ordained on June 21 at First Congregational UCC in Madison. Sara is a graduate of Chicago Theological Seminary and is a member of First Congregational UCC in Madison. She currently resides in Asheville, North Carolina where she will be one of the pastors in a new church start.

THEOLOGICAL STUDY GROUP TO BEGIN NEW BOOK

In May, the Contemporary Theology Study Group will begin reading Elizabeth Johnson's "Quest for the Living God: Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God." Johnson is Professor of Theology at Fordham. The date in May is yet to be decided. If you have interest, let us know and we'll update you.

CONGREGATIONS TO BE SEEKING

Madison Orchard Ridge – seeking ½ time Associate

Fitchburg Memorial – ½ time Associate

New Glarus Swiss – Interims, John Jewell & Petra Streiff

Whitewater Congregational – Interim, Craig Jan-McMahon

Kristin Gorton, whose home church is McFarland UCC, is a pastoral intern at Memorial UCC in Fitchburg.

CARROLL OLM TO BE INDUCTED INTO ASSOCIATION HALL OF FAME

The Wisconsin Association of Homes and Services for Aging will induct ten Association leadership pioneers into the Association Hall of Fame on May 7, at the Ramada Inn, Stevens Point. Before retirement, The Rev., Dr. Carroll Olm was Executive Director of Fairhaven Corporation in Whitewater. The Awards Committee Chair, Mary Ann Drescher, Attic Angel Association, Madison, said, "The Association would not be here today if it were not for the ideas, perseverance, dedication and effort of these individuals who conceptualized the idea for this Association and brilliantly paved the way for WAHSA to weather the storms of the past 50 years, leaving for us a legacy of strength, leadership, and mission which we still uphold today."

GENERAL WHAT? It's coming up soon!

WHAT: General Synod 27

WHEN: June 26-30, 2009

WHERE: Grand Rapids, Michigan

OK, so you find yourself asking again...General What??? General Synod 27!

Every two years, the governing body of the UCC meets to celebrate the life of the denomination through worship, workshops, and dialogues focusing on topics important in the life of the church. Each of the 38 UCC Conferences sends delegates to General Synod. I will be one of the delegates representing the Wisconsin Conference UCC in Grand Rapids. This year's theme is "Immerse Yourself!"

I am beginning to make plans for my trip to General Synod in June, and wanted to share my experience with you along the way. At the end of April, I participated in an orientation session with the delegates from the Southwest Association. The meeting helped prepare us for plenary sessions, including discussions on resolutions, election of national officers, and the proposed budget for the UCC.

A few of the things that I am looking forward to at General Synod include:

River City Saturday – Wow! The possibilities are endless! River City Saturday will be a day of worship, workshops, music, and inspirational speakers (Eugene Robinson from the Washington Post, Ray Suarez from PBS, The News Hour with Jim Lehrer, Barbara Brown Taylor, author of "Leaving Church: A Memoir of Faith," and many more. I am excited!

Resolutions – I am quite curious to hear the debates. The resolutions that have been submitted for General Synod 27 include topics such as global food concerns, the prevention of HIV, climate change, and physician assisted dying. As a delegate, I will not know which resolution I

will be assigned until I reach Grand Rapids. I will read through each of the proposed resolutions before my trip in anticipation of the discussions.

Want to learn more about General Synod? Check out the UCC's website at <http://www.ucc.org/synod/>. Immerse yourself! Peace!

A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR SERVICE AND FUN

High School Youth and Graduating Seniors: A trip to Back Bay Mission – Biloxi, Mississippi with Youth from the Association and youth from our German Partners. July 11-19. Transportation (BUS) FOOD, LODGING, ALONG WITH SIDE TRIPS TO THE St. Louis Arch, Graceland and Cape Girardeau, MO. Total Cost \$400. Contact the Association Office ((608) 244-3350 or Rev. Bill Kapp at (608) 643-8387 or Bill_Kapp@saukcity.org

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

(We have brochures & additional info at the SWWA Office)

THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO GLOBALIZATION

A 2009 Theological Colloquy at Lakeland College June 9-11. The event will include participants from the Evangelical Church of Westphalia, Germany and the Evangelical & Reformed Synod of Honduras.

2009 WASHINGTON ISLAND FORUM – June 22-29 – “Encountering Jesus”

with the Rev. John Bell from the Iona Community and Dr. Marlene Kropf, of the Mennonite Biblical Seminary.

EMBRACING AGING IN THE CHURCH – May 29-30 – with Dr. Susan McFadden of UW Oshkosh and Rev. John McFadden, former Senior Pastor of First Congregational UCC in Appleton, WI.

GERMAN GUESTS TO BE IN SWWA

We have lots of lead-time – our ecumenical partners from the Moers Church District in Germany will be with us October 10-20. October 14 and 15 we will be together at Pilgrim Center to do a study on the Book of Acts. There will be 13 folk from Germany with us. If you have interest in hosting or being part of the retreat, contact the Association Office.

LAY ACADEMY YOUTH MINISTRY LEADERSHIP

A wonderful team has crafted yet another year of Lay Academy to focus on Youth Ministry Skills. Dates and topics are:

- * Faith Foundations – September 25-26, 2009
- * Theory of Youth Ministry – November 13-14, 2009
- * Leadership Development – January 29-30, 2010
- * Management Matters – March 5-6, 2010
- * How to Program for Success – April 23-24, 2010

Excellent instructors in the field will teach each weekend (Friday 7-10, Saturday 9-3) at the Conference Center in DeForest. For registration information, visit our website at www.wcucc.org

MAY 2009 CALENDAR

- 1 Ministerial Development Group (MDG) Lake Edge, Madison, 9:30 a.m.**
- 2 SPRING MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION, MONROE, 9 A.M.**
- 4 Wisconsin Board of Directors, DeForest, 10 a.m.**
- 6 Periodic Support Consultations, Association Office, 12 Noon**
- 7 MDG, Verona, 9:30 a.m.**
- 7 Social Concerns Committee, Association Office, 12 Noon**
- 7 Executive Committee of the Association, 5 p.m.**
- 11 Wisconsin Conference Staff Meeting, DeForest, 9 a.m.**
- 14 MDG, Evansville, 9:30 a.m.**
- 14 Division on Church & Ministry, Assoc. Office, 5 p.m.**
- 15 MDG, Madison Lake Edge, 9:30 a.m.**
- 19 District IV, Evansville, 9 a.m.**
- 19 Division on Lay Life & Leadership, Assoc. Office, 5:30 p.m.**
- 20 District I, Dodgeville, 8 a.m.**
- 20 District III, Portage, 12:15 p.m.**
- 20 Division on Christian Education, Assoc. Office, 5:30 p.m.**
- 21 MDG, Verona, 9:30 a.m.**
- 28 Evansville, MDG, 9:30 a.m.**
- 28 UEK Working Group, Mutton/Ames Home, 12:15 p.m.**
- 29 Council on Higher Education, DeForest, 12 Noon**
- 31 Ecclesiastical Council for Julia Weaver, Community of Hope, 3 p.m.**