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FROM YOUR ASSOCIATION MINISTER

When you read this I will be in Germany celebrating the 400th Anniversary of the Moers Church District. Part of the celebration will have the partners from Egypt, Rwanda, Indonesia and us to provide some entertainment that reflects our culture. As of today, I am at a loss, having limited entertainment skills. They also asked us to do a Bible Study on Mark 10:46-52. This is a portion of what I'll be offering with thanks to Ched Myer and the Executive Committee and the Division on Church & Ministry and others. We did a Bible Study together on the Mark 10:46-52 text.

In this remarkable healing story, mark draws a devastating contrast between the beggar Bartimaeus' initiative and the aspirations of the disciples. Upon their approach, Jesus had asked James and John, "What do you want me to do for you?" (10:36). To the beggar's petition, Jesus responds with exactly the same words. But how different the requests! The disciples wished for status and privilege; the beggar simply for his "vision." The one Jesus cannot grant, the other he can. It is Bartimaeus who is told to "take courage," as the disciples were told earlier, during the dangerous crossing of the sea (6:50) And it is the beggar who follows. The scripture of Hope is now clear in this last healing episode. Only if the disciples struggle against the internal demons that render us deaf and mute, only if we renounce our thirst for power, in a word only recognize our blindness and seek true vision, then can we carry on the discipleship adventure.

"What do you want me to do for you?" again underlines the importance of getting our deepest desires straight, and it is clear that "to see again" is the principle need of the community. Yet, early in this text, it is that self same community that hinders the seeker, that quiets the request, that attempts to silence the one crying out to see. Here Jesus instructs the crowd, instructs the Church, the community that calls for silences, that calls the needy one to be quiet, they sternly ordered him. Jesus instructs the crowd, instead of calling him to silence, "call him here." And strangely the crowd, the church, the community change their tune saying, "Take heart, get up, he is calling you." That is another sign of healing and

discipleship, they say the community says to the blind beggar, "Take Heart, get up" and not shut up and sit down. There is a bit of sight here for the community. For the community, for us to change our tune, that is as much of a miracle as the sight returned to the beggar.

Yet one must again see the courageous action of the beggar, Bartimaeus. In throwing off his cloak, he is giving up all that he depended on. His cloak that he had for the purpose of catching the coins that flipped to him. He gave up what he had counted on for survival. For him to get his vision, for the community, for the disciples to get their vision from Jesus, they and we will need to give up the cloak and depend on the word that comes to us. "What do you want me to do for you?"

With Great Hope,

Bob Mutton

BARABOO TO HOST ASSOCIATION FALL MEETING ON 10/12/08

There will be a change this fall. The Fall Meeting of the Association, which is normally held on the 4th Sunday of September, will be held on October 12 in Baraboo beginning at 1:30 p.m. The reason for the change has to do with our UEK (German Partnership). It is their 400th Anniversary and we have been invited to participate in the week-long festivities. Dr. Mutton (usually called Bob) will be attending the UEK events which conflict with our regularly scheduled meeting.

The theme for our meeting will be "Living My Faith in Public Life." Speakers will be: **Alan Green** is a retired UCC minister currently living in Spring Green and a member of Plymouth UCC in Dodgeville. He is a writer and a gardener. Alan's most recent book is a fictional biography of the young Jesus, "The Silent Years," soon to be published by Copestone Fiction Press. **Kerri Parker** is a M. Div student at Chicago Theological Seminary and Executive Director of the YWCA in Rock County. Her faith-based justice commitments have

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led her to write opinion-editorial pieces for the newspaper, as well as preach on social justice topics. **Linda Ketcham** holds both a Bachelor and a Masters Degree in Criminal Justice Sciences from Illinois State University and has been involved in human services and social justice work since 1979. She currently co-chairs the Wisconsin Women's Network Task Force on Women in Criminal Justice. She has been with Madison-Area Urban Ministry since March, 2006. **Phil Haslanger** is the Associate Pastor at Memorial UCC in Fitchburg. Prior to ministry, he was a journalist for 35 years, working primarily at The Capital Times in Madison. He still writes a column for the Cap Times called "Faith & Values." **Paul Higgenbotham** is the presiding judge of the District IV Court of Appeals, which reviews decisions from lower courts throughout southwest and central Wisconsin.

More information will be coming your way with registration forms and a schedule. We'll have a number of speakers on the topic and a bit of dialogue we hope. It ought to be interesting with November 4th just over the hill. The agenda follows:

- 1:30 p.m. Registration
- 2:00 p.m. Welcome, roll call, hymn sing
- 2:30 p.m. Alan Green, Kerri Parker, Linda Ketcham
- 3:45 p.m. Break
- 4:00 p.m. Phil Haslanger/Paul Higgenbotham
- 5 :00 p.m. Dinner
- 6:00 p.m. Business Meeting
- 6:30 p.m. Prayers

Come and listen to 5 examples from UCC folk on how UCC people's faith impact their public life and reflect on your own.

WHITTEN CALLED TO EDGERTON

Lora Whitten of Eden Seminary was called to be Pastor and Teacher of the Edgerton Congregational UCC on Sept. 14th. She enjoys hiking in the woods with her partner and meditation outdoors. She enjoys sports and sees her flower garden as therapy. She is In-Care of the St. Louis Association of the Missouri Mid-South Conference and will be ordained on November 2nd. Lora will begin at Edgerton on October 5. Please welcome her to the Association.

DISTRICT MEETINGS TO BEGIN IN OCTOBER

Due to the scheduling conflict of Mutton going to Germany, the District Clergy gatherings will begin in October instead of September. We will be sending you a portion of the paper Dr. Moyer presented to the Northeast Association at their Spring 08 meeting entitled "The Church in 50 Years."

We'll meet:

District I Dodgeville October 15 8a.m.

District III Portage October 15 12 p.m.

District IV Evansville October 21
9 a.m.

District II Madison October 22 8 a.m.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING

The Healing Power of Forgiveness: Body, Mind, and Spirit

A Conference for Spiritual Caregivers
St. Mary's Hospital – Wed., October 8, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. (\$50)

For more info call St. Mary's 608 258-6769 (Brochure at SWWA Office)

How to Get More Members – with Jim Griffith

A Workshop for Church Leadership Teams – Sat., October 11, 2008

9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Pilgrim UCC, Grafton (Brochure at SWWA Office)

(\$75 for a team of three. Includes lunch & materials)

For more info, contact Carol Martell at cmartell@wcucc.org

"How-To" Skills to Help Your Church Grow – Bring "Em In"

Wisconsin Conference Evangelism Event – November 14-15, 2008

Holiday Inn Convention Center, Stevens Point, WI (Brochure at SWWA)

Contact the Conference Office for more info: 608 846-7880.

Spirituality Within the Teaching Ministry

GLAUCE (Great Lakes Association of United Church Educators) Fall Event

October 14-16, 2008 – Techny Towers Conference & Retreat Center

(Waukegan Road north of Chicago.

Contact Gail O'Neal at WI Conference Office 608 846-7880 or

goneal@wcucc.org

YOKE APPROVED

On September 14, both the Mineral Point and Dodgeville congregations voted to

approve a proposal for yoking presented by a joint committee of the two congregations. Rev. Todd Smith Lippert will become the pastor of both congregations. He began his dual charge on September 15th. Please keep this new venture in your prayers.

UNITED REFORMED CHURCH GUESTS IN SWWA

Rev. Robert and Gwen Jennings of Torquay, Devon, England will be guests of the Wisconsin Conference for the month of October. This exchange which has been going on for more than 20 years sends a URC Pastor here in the fall for a month (they spend approx. a week in each Association) and in the spring we send a pastor to the Southwest provinces of the URC. Robert and Gwen will be with us in the Southwest Association from October 20-30. Rev. Mark and Cheryl Yurs will represent us in the Southwest Province in the Spring.

CONGREGATIONS SEEKING PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

Madison Orchard Ridge – seeking ½ time Associate

CONGREGATIONS TO BE SEEKING

New Glarus – John Jewell & Petra Streiff, Interims

Whitewater – Craig Jan-McMahon, Interim

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8 a.m.

District III Portage October 15
12 Noon

District IV Evansville October 21
9 a.m.

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8 a.m.

MINISTERIAL DEVELOPMENT GROUPS BEGAN IN SEPT

As is our tradition in the Southwest Association, the Clergy Support Groups called Ministerial Development Groups (MDG) began with the new programming year. There are 3 gatherings: Evansville (2nd and 4th Thursdays), Verona (1st and 3rd Thursdays), and Madison Lake Edge (1st and 3rd Fridays). They all meet from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. In each gathering clergy come together to discuss practical theological issues and provide counsel and advice. These groups have been a benefit to those just beginning in ministry as well as those of us who have been around for a while. You are invited to participate in any of the groups listed. Take advantage of this fine opportunity.

BVO TO RETIRE

Rev. Bonnie Van Overbeke has announced that she will retire January 1, 2009, from the position of Pastor and Teacher at Memorial UCC in Fitchburg. Bonnie was ordained by the southwest Wisconsin Association at First Congregational UCC in Madison in September of 1991. She served as interim minister at both Dane Immanuel and Washington Reformation, Monticello. Before that she was Director of Education at Madison First Congregational. Bonnie served as Associate Conference Minister for Christian Nurture and Congregational Life for the Wisconsin Conference from 1991 to 1997 where she was the initiator of the now popular Lay Academy. In 1997 she was called as Pastor and Teacher at Memorial and has served there for the past 11 years. She is a past Moderator of the Southwest Association, helped initiate the Authorized Lay Pastor Program and serving on that committee. She initiated the Association's Partnership with the Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Palestine, was a General Synod Delegate and has been a faithful member of the Lake Edge Development Group and numerous study groups. Indeed she has been an integral part of the life of the Association and the Conference and will be deeply missed. The scripture chosen at her ordination was Micah 6:8 "And what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God." This has characterized the ministry of our beloved Sister in Christ.

STACK TO GO NORTH

Rev. Christine Stack has resigned her position as Pastor and Teacher of the

Congregational UCC in Whitewater where she has served since July 2001.

Christine was involved in numerous activities of the Association and the Conference. She served on the Periodic Support Consultation Committee and was part of the group that helped establish the procedure. In addition, she chaired the Evangelism Committee. She was an active member of the Evansville District Meetings, participated in the Development Groups and in book study groups. She will be moving North (near Stevens Point) where she and her husband, Bob, live. Godspeed dear Sister in Christ.

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

For Lora Whitten and the congregation at Edgerton

Todd Smith Lippert and the congregations at Mineral Point and Dodgeville in their Yoke

The family of Vivian Meier in the loss of her mother

John Klindt, as he recovers from by-pass surgery

Rev. Robert and Gwen Jennings in their exchange to Wisconsin from the URC

OUR CONGREGATIONS AT:

Browntown, Ray Sowersby, Pastor

Columbus, Lee Zortman, Pastor

Dane, Denise Cole, Pastor

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.

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/communications.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.