

S

H

A

L

O

M

FROM YOUR ASSOCIATION MINISTER

I recently had a conversation with a lay member of one of our congregations, asking me what it was about the United Church of Christ that I most appreciated. I told her it was a big theological tent. I suggested that if you have Luther, Calvin and Zwingli together as part of your tradition, each holding a different understanding of the Eucharist, yet all a vital part of who we are as a denomination, you have a great opportunity to be both engaged by a different theological position and nurtured by history. It's a great tent to be under, but it requires some patience and some ability to live with ambiguity. Our life together does fashion our theological ideas – they don't just come well-formed into our heads.

Hear this about theologian, Jurgen Moltmann – about how his understanding of the Eucharist was shaped by two distinct experiences in 1968. On one occasion he and a motley crew protesting the Vietnam War sat on the floor of the London offices of the Catholic publisher, Sheed & Ward, passing the bread and cup from one person to the next. In this small circle they felt the bodily presence of Jesus. The other occasion was at St. Giles Church (John Knox's church) in Scotland where the elements were passed out on silver trays by servers wearing black, with participants separated from each other. He left the church depressed. Later he concluded that the Lord's Supper "is not a church meal for people who belong to one's own denomination. It is the feast of the crucified Christ whose hands are stretched out to everyone."

When we're in a big theological tent, our life together forms us.

Blessings in Advent,

Bob Mutton

CLERGY AND FAMILIES EPIPHANY PARTY

The Clergy and Family Epiphany party will actually happen on Epiphany! You are invited to the Mutton/Ames home on January 6, 2008, for Chowder and Chili and other things – beginning at 5 p.m. until 8 or so. All we need to know is the number coming. Contact the Association Office with your RSVP.

WE WILL DO OUR OWN FESTIVAL OF HOMILETICS

The Southeast/Southwest Associations Clergy Retreat will happen at Pilgrim Center on February 10-12, 2008, beginning at 6 p.m. on the 10th and concluding at Noon on the 12th. We will do a number of things related to Preaching. Dr. Dow Edgerton, Professor at Chicago Theological Seminary, will lead two sessions. Mark Yurs of Verona Salem UCC will present at paper on preaching the resurrection, Eric Kirkegaard of Kewaskum and Bob Ullman of Sussex will lead a discussion on Context in Preaching and we'll hear sermons from Tisha Brown of Madison Community of Hope, Wanda Washington of Milwaukee Grace, Tom Payden of South Milwaukee and Todd Smith-Lippert of Dodgeville. The cost is \$100.00. Scholarships are available upon request. Please register with your Association Office.

TRIP TO GERMANY AND RUSSIA

Plans are forming for the Partnership trip to the Moers Church District in Germany and then a joint trip to Russia. The first week we'll be staying with host families and take short trips in the Moers area. The second week will be a trip to Pskov, near St. Petersburg. The cost for the trip to Pskov, including air flight to and from St. Petersburg, Hotel Riga in Pskov with half-board, bus transfers in Russia, visits, guides, entrances and visas will be exactly 900 euro. The cost for the flight to Dusseldorf from Chicago will be \$1,499 with taxes and fuel tax. A meeting for people who have interest will happen on Dec. 9th at the Mutton/Ames home at 6 p.m. for dinner and discussion. We'll send you directions when you let us know of your attendance.

SOUTHWEST WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

**VOLUME XXVI, ISSUE 14,
NOVEMBER 2007**

NO DISTRICT MEETINGS IN DECEMBER

We will begin again in January. We'll send out the theological papers in early January.

TUCKER TO BE EXAMINED

Gayle Tucker, a recent graduate of United Theological Seminary of the Twin cities and a member of First Congregational UCC in Janesville, will be examined at an Ecclesiastical Council on December 8, 10 a.m., at the church in Janesville. The Council has been called to respond to the recommendation of the Division on Church and Ministry that Gayle be ordained upon reception of a call. Her Ordination paper is available upon request to the Association Office. It is the responsibility of the congregations in the Association to send delegates to this Council.

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/ecomunications.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.

IN OUR PRAYERS

- Kris Avise-Rouse and family as he begins his new call in Columbia, IL
- Gayle Tucker at the Ecclesiastical Council in Janesville
- Jacki Mitchell in the midst of cancer treatment
- The family and friends of Rev. Robert Klepper on his death
- OUR CONGREGATIONS AT:
 - Monroe, Mike Heath & Gretchen Sylvester, Pastors
- Monticello Washington Reformation, Mary Gafner, Pastor
- Monticello Zwingli, Larry Balleine, Pastor

HERITAGE AND CALL: CELEBRATING THE UCC @ 50

Living the Call: Prisoners and Society
Thursday, January 17, 2008, 7 p.m. at First Congregational UCC in Madison
UCC Congregations in our area have put a particular focus of late on what is happening to prisoners in our state. What role can churches play in the reconciliation of offenders and local communities?

Living the Call: Immigration and Hospitality

Thursday, February 28, 2008, 7 p.m. at Orchard Ridge UCC in Madison
Like so many places in the nation, Wisconsin is experiencing a growth in the number of immigrants from other lands, especially from Mexico. What can we as Christians do to walk with newcomers on their journey into a strange land?

CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS: REGISTER NOW FOR THE 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 & 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 Christian Education Division

FEMINIST STUDY GROUP TO BEGIN NEW BOOK

In January the Feminist Study Group will begin the book, "Take This Bread" by Sara Miles. The book was reviewed by Rev. Phil Haslanger for "The Progressive" and also reviewed favorably in the Christian Century. Miles, who had no interest in joining a church, happened to visit a congregation in the Bay area that was having communion and the moment transformed her. Let us know if you'd like to participate. We have a few extra books.

CONGREGATIONS SEEKING:

Darlington Immanuel – Sue Strickler, Interim

NATIONAL YOUTH EVENT

Lisa Hart, Coordinator of Youth Ministry for the Conference (lhart@wcucc.org) shared the following information: The NYE will be held at the University of TN in Knoxville, TN. The dates are July 23-28 for the Wisconsin gathering. The actual event will start with dinner on the 24th. Registration costs will be \$345.00 The cost of the bus is yet to be determined, but looks like \$125-\$150 per person. NYE is open to youth ages 13-18. More info is available on the UCC website at www.ucc.org/youth.

JESUS CORE 2008 – "Love from the Center of Who You are: Don't Fake It"

Jesus Core is a retreat for High School Students at Pilgrim Center – January 4-6, 2008. It is presented by the Conference Youth Ministry Team. Cost is \$130. It begins at 7 p.m. on Friday and ends at 11:30 a.m. on Sunday. Check the Conference Website (www.ucci.org). Call Lisa Hart at the Conference Office or lhart@wcucc.org.

COOKIES AND CRAFTS AT MEMORIAL UCC

Memorial UCC in Fitchburg will hold a cookie and craft fair with jewelry and other hand-crafted items on **Sat., December 15, 8:30 a.m. to 12 Noon.** (5705 Lacy Road, Fitchburg) The proceeds will go to benefit the Bethlehem Partnership.

REV. ROBERT KLEPPER JOINS THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

Rev. Robert Klepper died Thurs., November 8, in Bella Vista, Arkansas, where he had lived since his retirement in 1981. Bob is best known to many Wisconsin pastors and retirees because from 1975 to 1981 he served the First Congregational UCC in Plymouth, WI. He served as Interim at several of the churches in the Southwest Association.

Born October 1, 1917 in Frankfort, IL, he attended Elmhurst College, Union Theological Seminary (M.Div.) and Princeton Theological Seminary (STM). He was married to Judy

Klepper who served as Christian Education Director at Monticello Zwingli UCC.

Bob was an artist and enjoyed working with glass. He had a lifelong interest in hymnody and wrote concordances of the Hymnal of the United Church of Christ (1985) as well as the Methodist Hymnal (1987), The Hymnal of the Episcopal Church and the Pilgrim Hymnal (1989). Many of us have used these resources.

Bob retired in 1981 and moved to Arkansas in 1983. He volunteered at the Bella Vista Library and served as a volunteer pastoral assistant for the Bella Vista Community Church and the Bella Vista First United Methodist Church. Survivors include his wife, Dorothy, a son, Dr. Tim Klepper and daughter, Ceinwin King-Smith, a stepson and stepdaughter, a brother Clarence and two grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Olga Klepper, as well as his second wife, Judith Klepper.

A MOBILE MEDICAL CLINIC FOR IRAQI CITIZENS

This project initiated by the Social Concerns Committee of our Association, raises many questions about contemporary Christian response to human suffering. According to our latest report nearly half of our congregations have participated and we have succeeded in raising over \$33,000 toward our goal of \$43,750.00.

That is an amazing response in two respects. First is the high level of generosity that it represents – over a thousand dollars per responding congregation on average! But second, it is amazing that there were even that many churches (and some individuals) who have responded. Our committee has been advised that there yet may be more dollars coming, so we have agreed to (1) forward the monies in hand and (2) to keep the drive open as long as we are still short of our goal.

In early October, the Rev. Bob Edgar, currently the President and CEO of Common Cause, and former General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, preached at Riverside Church in New York City. He told how “Christians” down by the riverside” would rescue babies from the waters. But at some point it becomes imperative to go upstream and confront the people who are

throwing the babies in the river in the first place.

As I think about our mobile medical clinic, perhaps we are like those pulling the babies out of the water. But I also think that our efforts are directed at the cause of the problem. At the root of much of the suffering in Iraq is what we so far have been sending to those people. We have sent to them an invading army; we have sent to them inadequate resources and no plans to stabilize their country and reestablish civil order. We have imposed upon them an occupational military rule that has little understanding of their culture, customs, religion, language, or history. We have sent to them Abu Grebe prison management as our example of humanitarian conduct. We have sent to them Black Water (exempt from accountability) as our example of security management. We have sent to them Halliburton as our example western style corporate free enterprise.

Perhaps this one tiny gift can be a symbol that Christian Americans have something better to offer. We offer this gift because we care. We offer this gift without strings attached. We offer this gift, because “upstream” we know there are better possibilities that throwing a nation’s hopes and dreams into the water.