



Living the Life at the United Church of Christ National Youth Event!

By Rev. Judy Waible

With gratitude to their local churches and the Vermont Conference for tremendous support, two teens from Hardwick, Carrie Harvey and Emily Messier, and one from Barton, Kerissa Moore, and one pastor, Rev. Judy Waible, departed the Burlington airport on July 24th heading for Nashville, TN to meet 23 others from Rhode Island. The 27 of us rode by bus to Knoxville, alternately dozing and meeting new people, preparing ourselves for no dozing and meeting lots of people from around the United States and further.

I think it would be fair to say that we were all WOWED by looking around at the first plenary to see more than 2,800 attendees. Throughout the four days, we had the opportunity to hear, see, and interact with prophets and preachers, dancers and drummers, storytellers and workshop teachers and some of these were we! We were all profoundly touched by a young woman's testimony and motivated to dialogue about our faith when we strongly disagreed with a speaker's presentation which just goes to show that there is value even in the things you don't like or even disapprove of.

The mood of the event became more somber after the shooting that took place about a mile away in the Unitarian Universalist church. Young and old alike experienced a sense of connection with that faith community and knew in a very concrete way that when one suffers we all suffer.

With plenty of opportunities to pray and worship, play and work, encounter difference and similarity, we returned home changed, somehow wonderfully different, having encountered Christ's church in new, exciting, and profound ways. We are already looking forward to the Regional Youth Event (as yet unplanned we think) in 2010. Join us next time!

P.S. Remember to go to www.ucc.org/youth/nye to see the videos of each days recap. You don't want to miss those drummers!



Kerissa Moore from Barton, VT shows her artistic side!



Emily Messier and Rev. Judy Waible enjoy themselves.



The Rhode Island and Vermont contingent pose for a group photo.



You can't see our vivid green shirts in the front of the second tier, but we were a colorful group!

Emily Messier and Carrie Harvey parade the Vermont Conference banner. They appear behind the Rhode Island group.

Annual Meeting Follow-up

At our 2008 Annual Meeting, we were joined by Rev. Martha Grace Reese, who enthralled us with her research on evangelism in mainline Protestant churches as we studied her book "Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism." Many delegates had read the book prior to the meeting, and several of our churches are continuing to study it this Fall.

"Unbinding the Gospel" is only the first book in a series of three that local congregations may find useful and inspiring. The other two books in the series are: "Unbinding Your Heart: 40 Days of Prayer and Faith Sharing" and "Unbinding Your Church."

Both are highly recommended and are available from the Conference Resource Center. Call Christine at 728-4999 or email: resource.center@vtucc.org.

Our group at the end of another inspiring day. We stayed in South Corrick.



This rock expresses the feelings of the UCC Community after the shooting at a local Unitarian Church.



From Your Conference Minister...

By Rev. Dr. Lynn Bujnak

Unexpected Insights



Rev. Dr. Lynn Bujnak
Conference Minister

As I have begun my ministry with you, I have been touched and humbled by the many ways in which I see faithful ministry happening in the Vermont Conference. The stories I have heard are appropriate for the “ordinary time” of the church year when we continue in the long season following Pentecost and anticipate the still distant Advent days. These are stories of ordinary people and congregations doing extraordinary ministry, often quietly and without fanfare. I want to share with you just a few stories.

Two of our smaller congregations, both served by part-time licensed pastors have been having serious discussions about the impact of the costs of fuel on persons in their communities. What I find fascinating is that these two churches are not focused on their own costs, but rather on the needs of others outside their doors. One of the churches will worship in their small fellowship hall and make the money they save available to those in need of fuel in the surrounding neighborhood. The other church has recently renovated their fellowship hall and plan to purchase cots and bedding to make the space available to those who would otherwise not have a warm, safe place to sleep this winter.

One UCC church in Vermont chose to use the time of their pastor’s sabbatical in a unique way. Taking seriously the recent conference resolution on becoming more multicultural, multiracial, this church engaged pastors of color not merely for pulpit supply but for one or two-week long residencies. In this way the life of the congregation was enriched and horizons expanded.

We live in a time of uncertainty when we are tempted to pull in and not reach out, to look to survival instead of to the abundant life God desires for us. How wonderful to see the witness of congregations daring to do the exact opposite. In these early days of transition, I feel deeply encouraged and enormously grateful for those signs of faithfulness where Vermont UCC’ers are taking seriously Jesus’ invitation to “come and follow” wherever that may lead.

Lynn

Rev. Dr. Lynn Bujnak
Vermont Conference Minister

Vermont News

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Vermont News is published six times a year through your support of Our Church’s Wider Mission. We welcome articles and pictures from local churches and associations.

Send them to: information@vtucc.org.
Deadline for the next issue: October 24.

West Newbury Congregational UCC Celebrates its 175th Anniversary in Style!

On Sunday, August 3rd, seventy-nine people attended a very informative and moving service at the West Newbury Congregational UCC’s 175th anniversary.

In 1833, four denominations came together to build and share the Union Meeting House in West Newbury, VT. Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists sold pews in the Meeting House and the number of pews sold determined the portion of time each denomination used the building. After some years, the other denominations left the union and the building became the West Newbury Congregational Church.

It seemed only appropriate that each denomination participate in this special historical anniversary on August 3. The Rev. Cheryl Heater spoke for the United Methodist Church. She said West Newbury was a hot bed of Methodism in the early 1800’s. Because of the Methodist Seminary in Newbury, VT many seminarians would

ride the circuit preaching to the folks gathered in homes and even in barns. Other speakers at Sunday’s service included The Rev. Dr. Louis George who spoke as the representative of the New Hampshire and Vermont American Baptist Church. The Rev. Carole Carlson spoke for the Vermont Conference, United Church of Christ, and Lois Peeler represented the Presbyterians. Also speaking was Steven Semerino, former interim pastor for 2 years and 2 months, at the West Newbury Church.



The Rev. Cynthia Batten, current pastor, spoke of the powerful ministry of Rev. John and Rev. Dorothy Marsh when they pastored in West Newbury after years as missionaries in Southern Rhodesia, now called Zimbabwe. The congregation now continues to be in partnership with Chikore Mission in Zimbabwe. The Rev. Dr. Donald Saliers, visiting music director and organist for the past 40+ years wrote the text for an anthem, “In Every Generation Alleluia.”

UCC Musicians National Network Event

By: Rick and Linda Presson

We spent “vacation” this summer in Akron, Ohio at the bi-annual UCC Musicians National Network event. We did learn lots; however, the best part of the conference was the people we met! We did a lot of networking! What a gifted, dedicated, fun and nice group of people we have working in UCC churches all over the USA! The title of the event, *Sing! Prayer and Praise* lived up to its name indeed. We sang most of the time: sight-reading new choir music, concerts, workshops, and the 100-voice Sunday worship choir. This was exciting, for many of us who sing in small church choirs. The Sunday worship was a highlight for the service was an eclectic blend of music and prayer.

We’ve led Praise & Worship Sunday (the second Sunday of the month) at Malletts Bay Congo UCC, Colchester, VT for about four years, so our main purpose in attending the conference was to meet the Praise Song Advisory Team (PSAT) and glimpse the new songbook to be premiered at General Synod in 09. We’re excited about this new resource and are grateful for the hard work PSAT is investing in this endeavor.

We loved meeting Pepper Choplin (we do a lot of his music at our church). He shared tips for arranging and composing. Dr James Abington gave us lots to think about and sing as well! We hope to arrange some of Christopher Grundy’s music for the praise band soon.

We have two regrets: We missed Gregory Chestnut’s workshop *Growing Up — Musically — In The Church* and we were so exhausted from the jam-packed 5 days that we slept through dinner/evening both nights in Toronto (our stopover on the trip home.) We look forward to staying in touch through email with our new friends in Christ.

2009 Compensation Guidelines Available On-Line

The 2009 Guidelines, approved by delegates at our 2008 Annual Meeting, are available for download from the Conference website. Visit: http://www.vtcucc.org/Ministerial_Compensation.html to download. If you would rather, please call Lynn Thomas in the Conference Office and she will mail you a copy.

Atkinson Retreat Center Ends Almost Seven Decades of Ministry

By Rev. Pamela Lucas, Associate Conference Minister



Rev. Pamela Lucas,
Associate
Conference Minister

On Sunday afternoon, August 31st, over fifty people gathered in the Chapel at the Atkinson Retreat Center in Newbury, Vermont to celebrate 68 years of hospitality and ministry. They had come to say good bye in a Service of Remembrance and Release.

Kum ba yah, my Lord, Kum bay yah!

The Catherine M.B. Atkinson Vacation Home for Ministers and Christian Workers (named for her mother and commonly known as the Atkinson Retreat Center) was bequeathed

to the Vermont Conference by Martha Atkinson upon her death on April 10, 1940. In her will Martha envisioned a vacation home "for Christian ministers and missionaries and their wives, and for Christian and social workers...and such kindred purposes as the Trustees may believe to be in harmony with the spirit of this trust."

Someone's crying, Lord...

Under the leadership of the original hosts, Rev. and Mrs. George Scrambler, who first opened the home for guests in June of 1941, through Eleanor Longfellow who ably served the Retreat for over fifteen years, those who have served on the Board of Directors of the Retreat Center particularly over the last eight years were also recognized. For their dedication and love for the Retreat they were thanked for the many hours devoted to the maintenance and upkeep of the building and its ministry against tremendous financial odds.

Someone's singing, Lord...

Those gathered remembered the retreats, the sabbaticals, the meetings, the day long, overnight and weekend events – the fellowship, the friendship, the faith formative experiences. People shared their memories of hospitality offered, tears shed, laughter shared, bread broken, wine poured, for lives touched and renewed in this place which provided sacred space to retreatants for 78 years.

Someone's praying, Lord...

Civilizations, institutions, buildings – and even ministries – rise and fall. Along with Martha's vision of a Retreat Center, she also envisioned the time when that ministry might cease. Her will authorized the building's sale when the Conference felt it was appropriate to do so. The proceeds from the sale will be added to the existing Atkinson investment fund and the income from the combined fund will support the work of the Vermont Conference, and the United Church of Christ's Local Church Ministries and Wider Church Ministries.

Someone's waiting, Lord...

People came to express their gratitude for the hospitality and welcome the Retreat Center has offered to so many, and to express trust that God will open new ways for souls to be nourished and hearts fed and community built in the future. Martha's Bible, the four guest books that chronicle the history, the sign that welcomed guests, all return to the Vermont Conference office to remind and bind us always to what has been good and beautiful in these 78 years of ministry.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Rejoice, give thanks and sing!

And all who gathered joined in prayer: Living God, receive our thanksgiving for this place of ministry once set aside as holy space and now released for a new future. We release roof and frame, window and timber, head and foot, gate and door, both coming and going. May your peace remain within its walls and travel with us as we go forth to new ministries and sacred spaces. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen

May our memories of this space live on even as we remember that God's presence is not tied to any place or building.



UPCOMING EVENT!

MIDDLE EAST PEACEMAKING
A Conference featuring Dr. Nuha Khoury,
A Peacemaker from Bethlehem, Palestine
November 1, 2008
Centre Congregational Church, Brattleboro

Dr. Khoury's peacemaking work is supported by the UCC Wider Church Ministries as part of Common Global Ministries. She is a Christian Palestinian who serves as Dean of Dar al-Kalima College, the first Christian college in the Middle East to offer advanced education in arts, multimedia, and communication.

The program, sponsored by the Vermont Conference Department of Mission, will also include workshops and presentations on a variety of peacemaking efforts.

Mark your calendar and Watch E KIT for registration information. Questions: contact Peace and Justice Advocate Theresa Lever (thelevers@comcast.net or 802-229-0415)

NO MATTER WHO
YOU ARE OR
WHERE YOU ARE
ON LIFE'S JOURNEY,
YOU'RE WELCOME
HERE.

Fran Patton from the Shrewsbury Community Church embroidered this UCC welcoming statement and Donna Smith framed it. The welcome now hangs on the front door of the church. 0(Gary O'Gorman is the pastor.)

Vermont Conference Pastoral Transitions Since August 1

Installations

Norman MacFarlane was installed as the Pastor of the Westmore Community Church on August 24th.

New Calls

Howard Gunter was called to the Pittsfield Federated Church effective Sept 15. He previously served as an Associate Pastor at Arlington Assembly of God, Jacksonville FL.

Debbie Cipolletti was called to the First Congregational Church of Brattleboro, effective Aug 4th. She was recently ordained in Middleboro Massachusetts.

Resignations

Deborah Roy, Shoreham Congregational Church, effective July 31, has accepted a call to North Branford Congregational Church in Connecticut.

Chris Petrak, First Congregational Church of Newfane, announced his retirement effective Dec 31st.

Ruth Anne Hill, Pittsford Congregational Church UCC, announced her resignation effective Oct 12. She will be moving to Washington State to be nearer family.

Susan Cooke Kittredge, The Old Meeting House, East Montpelier, announced her resignation effective Dec 31. She will be doing Chaplaincy work in Burlington.

Interim Pastor New Positions

Sandra Daly, Centre Congregational Church, Brattleboro, effective Sept 1st.

Jennifer Geary, First Congregational Church Lyndonville, and East Burke Congregational Church, effective Sept 1.

19th Annual Mountain Day: Hike to the Top of Vermont

By Rev. David P. Ransom, Resident Chaplain, The Mountain Chaplain

It was a phenomenal sight. If I had been Abraham journeying from Haran, I might have said that God was showing me the two pillars of the earth as strong lightning bolts. Between them was a revolving wheel of lightning bolts that lit the Western sky of black clouds. The wheel appeared as a mixture of symbols of Buddhism, Taoism, Native American, Judaism, and the Four-Footed Cross. Trailing from each "foot" was an extended lightning bolt that was also an integral

part of the wheel or "revolving foot." We were driving westward from Smugglers' Notch, after an amazing day on the Mountain.

After hearing from several people who had to cancel their plans to join us, Louise and I felt that we might be the only ones to celebrate the *19th Annual Mountain Day: Hike To The Top of Vermont*. We were surprised by two couples, one married in 1969, the other married in 1960. One woman had had both hips replaced, and led us to the top

at a deliberate, steady pace up The Long Trail from Route 108. We enjoyed lunch at Taft Lodge and memories of our neighbor, Nelson, who had died from a brain tumor, and whom we were especially remembering on this hike. We went to "The Chin" via Profanity Trail, which, though rugged, allows for less stretching. Richard led the way and lent a hand to those who followed. It might be said that this group of Jewish and Christian religious folk preferred "Profanity"

and it led us to where we needed to go.

We met a future hiker and three Long trail north-borders, offering hospitality and resources. We finally met Kim, Mountain Steward, who has since returned to Ohio where she teaches Middle School Social Studies. Kim was aware of Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, and plans to integrate Howard's work into her curriculum.

At the Chapel, on the way down, we collapsed, prayed, reflected, and

discussed G.K. Chesterton's *Saint Francis of Assisi* from "Le Jongleur de Dieu" (pps. 76-79) and the mystical transition Francis experienced in his discovery of God. Richard was ready for more on San Juan, which mountains were their "friends" at one point in time. We hustled down to find food, whereupon the lights went out and the gracious waitress was kind enough to find some chowder and bread to serve us.

Then the rains came. Then the lightning.

Angel Sunday and Family Bible Study Observed in Belvidere

By Rev. John Nutting, Minister Emeritus, Vermont Conference

The third annual Angel Sunday was celebrated at the Belvidere Community United Church of Christ in Belvidere on August 24th with a nearly full church of worshippers.

Those attending were greeted by a life-sized "floating angel" swinging on the church lawn complete with bright blond hair, fluttering wings, and silver halo. For the second year this angel was created by Thad Tallman and family.

In the entrance to the church Cathy Adams had constructed a foot high angel presiding over an open bible. Inside the church some twenty-five angels had been brought to enhance morning worship. Some

were tiny and delicate, others were larger made of china and wood. Still others were handcrafted by a Hungarian craftswoman from Florida. They were displayed across the front of the church, in the windows, with one gracing a furnace duct just behind the American flag.

Front and center below the pulpit stood a large pure white angel from Mildred Wescom's garden.

Angel hymns were sung including "Hark the Herald Angels Sing." Rev. John Nutting cited several passages of scripture including the dream of Jacob which involved a host of angels ascending and descending on steps to heaven.

For the first time a number of people brought family Bibles and told about their place in family history. Each one had special memories tucked into its pages. One was from the 19th century while another had been presented at the time of baptism.

Jim Abbott summarized some lessons contained in the book "All I Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten" and treated the congregation to his homemade blueberry pie.

A colorful bouquet of flowers was presented to Cathy Adams for her generous contribution of piano playing this summer. It was a fine day, full of worship and praise and fellowship.

Did You Know About the Money You Saved?

If your congregation participates in the UCC Health Plan, you probably already know that due to favorable claims experience, they were able to extend the first ever one month "premium holiday" for participants in the UCC Health Plan this past quarter. This means that one full month's premium has been refunded! The total was \$4.4 million, and reflects the benefit of being part of a self insured plan, working together to control and reduce costs. Michael Downs, President of the Pension Boards said, "Thank you for your support of the Plan and our many initiatives to improve service."

It begs the question; when was the last time you heard of an insurance provider extending a "premium holiday" to program participants? And a second questions as well: If your church does not participate in the pension, health, dental, and disability insurance programs offered by the Pension Boards, Why Not?

For more information, visit: www.pbucc.org, or email Jim Thomas in the Conference Office at thomasj@vtucc.org.

Is Your Church 5 for 5?

Yes, it is...if you receive each of the 4 UCC special offerings and give to OCWM Basic Support...

One Great Hour of Sharing

4th Sunday of Lent

Strengthen the Church

Pentecost Sunday

Neighbors in Need

1st Sunday in October

The Christmas Fund

The Sunday before Christmas

Our Church's Wider Mission — Basic Support

Every Sunday!

More information is available at:
<http://www.ucc.org/stewardship>

Our Church's Wider Mission
It's who we are.

Thanks For Your Support!

This insert to the United Church News is made possible by the generous donations of our local churches to Basic Support for Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM). Want to know more about OCWM or how to enhance your local Stewardship Campaigns? Contact Jim Thomas in the Conference Office at 728-4999 or thomasj@vtucc.org.