

Conntact

United Church News

Vol XVIII, No. 5 • Connecticut Conference Edition • June 2002 • Two Sections • Section A • 6000008



A Long, Strange Trip
Editorial

A
2



An Innovation of Ill Consequence
Book Review

A
4

The Prophet Motive
Article

A
6

Pilgrimage to the Gulf Coast

BY MERRILYN GARCIA

On April 12, 2002, 88 high school students, along with 16 adults, from the First Congregational Church of Guilford's Pilgrim Fellowship group, traveled to the Back Bay Mission in Biloxi Mississippi.

Our Pilgrim Fellowship is committed to God's work by doing local mission throughout the year, and then picking a site for a larger mission project in the spring. This was the largest group that Back Bay Mission has ever hosted at one time and because of the size of the group, we were housed across the bay at Camp Wilkes, a Boy Scout Camp. *Continued on page A5*



Back Bay Mission is the only UCC presence in Mississippi, and provides a wide range of social services for people of the Gulf Coast.



Working the Frontier: The Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference

A
6

Working the Frontier



The Rev. Dr. Davida Foy Crabtree, Conference Minister

Recently an article appeared in our local paper about a radio station affiliated with the far right. The date line was Kalispell, Montana. Immediately I thought of our new UCC church in Kalispell, started five years ago by the Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference. I remember being inspired by the vision of this new church as a true alternative faith community for those in

militia country who would stand against the politics of hate.

So I called Rev. John Schaeffer, my Conference Minister colleague there, to learn what has happened since I last heard the story of the founding of the church. He told me they had grown to 60 members and were about to call their new pastor. I heard excitement in John's voice as he talked about this vibrant and faithful UCC church with their many opportunities for mission and witness and their concomitant challenges. They decided on day one to be an Open and Affirming church and to extend what President John Thomas calls an extravagant wel-

come to all kinds of people. That in itself is living water in an environment where fundamentalism tends to stoke the fires of hate.

So many of our churches in the west live in isolation from other UCC churches because of the great distances. If I remember correctly, it is over ten hours from Kalispell to the Conference office, and one passes only a few other churches of our kind of faith on that route. Yet in

another way, the church in Kalispell is more supported by the prayer and encouragement of the rest of the churches of the Conference than is any of ours here in Connecticut. What is that old saw? Absence makes the heart grow fonder! Where we take so much for granted here – a church in most every town, plenty of people to join us on any given Sunday, at most a two hour drive to a Conference event – the people of the Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference take nothing for granted except the unity they experience with one another and the grace of God that attends their lives.

After I concluded that call to John, I gave thanks to God for his faithful witness and leadership. He has been working that frontier for well over a decade now, most of that time all by himself. Thirty-eight churches spread over that huge region, nurtured and supported by this man and the Conference Board and its committees. There must be extended times of profound loneliness. I know there are, because he and I have talked about it. He faces many of the same stresses I do as a Conference Minister, but he does so without the collegial support of a wonderful, creative and faithful staff such as we have in this Conference.

The opportunities for mission in the MNW Conference are legion, the needs of the churches substantial, the isolation of the clergy breathtaking.

Yet there they are, and I give thanks for them, and for the thousands of others who minister on one frontier or another across this country.

John mentioned to me on our call that there are historic connections between New England and Montana, that the great majority of their churches

The opportunities for mission in the Montana-Northern Wyoming Conference are legion, the needs of the churches substantial, the isolation of the clergy breathtaking.

are of our heritage, with direct ties to Connecticut and Massachusetts. That is true for so many of those now ministering on the frontiers of our country. Let us not forget our brothers and sisters who labor in other vineyards to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who have never heard it, or who have only heard it in part. And may God's richest blessing be upon them all.

• United Church News •

United Church News (USPS 0764-070) is published monthly except bi-monthly January-February and July-August by the Proclamation, Identity and Communication Ministry Team, Office of General Ministries, United Church of Christ, for members of the United Church of Christ. Address: 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115-1100, telephone: 216/736-2177; fax: 216/736-2223; e-mail: <sgoldere@ucc.org>. UCC on the web: <ucc.org>; United Church News on the web: <ucc.org/ucnews/>. Editorial opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the official bodies of the United Church of Christ.

Periodicals postage rates paid at Cleveland, OH and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to United Church News, P.O. Box 247, Bellmawr, NJ 08099-0247. For subscription questions, phone toll free: 800/363-0575.

Contact Edition

Connecticut Conference
United Church of Christ
125 Sherman Street
Hartford, CT 06105-2281
Phone: 860/233-5564
Fax: 860/231-8111
www.ctucc.org

Editor:
The Rev. Hal Chorpenning
e-mail: halc@ctucc.org

Editorial Assistant:
Ms. Cecile Gilson
e-mail: cecileg@ctucc.org

Designer:
James Baker

Send classified ads to
classifieds@ctucc.org
Send events listings to
events@ctucc.org

National Edition

The Rev. Robert Chase
Publisher
The Rev. W. Evan Golder
Editor

Barbara A. Powell
Associate for Production
Randy Varcho
Graphic Designer/Writer
Jimi Izael
Writer

Gayle Starling-Melvin
Editorial Assistant/Writer
Ron Buford
Advertising Manager
Lee Foley
Business Manager

ORIGINAL SPIN • THE REV. HAL CHORPENNING

A Long, Strange Trip

As the Grateful Dead once sang, "What a long, strange trip it's been." Well, perhaps not so long. After three years with the Connecticut Conference, I have accepted

a call as senior minister of Plymouth Congregational UCC in Ft. Collins, Colorado, where I will begin serving in July. It is an exciting opportunity to serve a dynamic congregation. I have learned much in my ministry with the Connecticut Conference, and I am grateful to all those people whom I count as teachers: the laity of our 257 churches, our clergy, the national staff of the UCC, and my colleagues on the staff of the Connecticut Conference. I continue to feel a sense of God's call to parish ministry, a call that I feel compelled to answer.

I've had some time to reflect on my time in Connecticut. I am struck by how extraordinarily blessed this conference is, for several reasons.

And I'm also wondering whether those beatitudes can sometimes be counted as curses.

Blessing I: Connecticut has the highest concentration of UCC congregations in the nation. If you drive through Connecticut, you'll see at least one UCC church in virtually every city and town. Sometimes it's wonderful to say the words "Congregational" or "UCC" and have non-members know just what you're talking about. That doesn't happen much in other parts of the country. We are a force to be reckoned with in Connecticut, in terms of sheer numbers (more than 100,000) and in terms of influence. Think of it this way: one in fourteen UCC members live in Connecticut.

The curse is that there are so many of us that we take each other – and our denomination – for granted. Sometimes we see other UCC congregations as the competition, rather than as our colleagues, whom we nurture, encourage, and collaborate with.

Blessing II: We have a rich history. We have nearly 400 years of Congregational history in Connecticut...not all of it pretty (ever heard about the Mystic Massacre in 1637?) We stand on

Continued on page 3

A Call for Deliberate Christian Response to Religious Pluralism

by LINDA CARLETON

When I was growing up in northern Virginia, my family didn't go to church. This periodically presented some problems. I remember that my second-grade teacher didn't believe me when I said, "I don't know any" in response to the request that we sing our favorite hymn. It was a time when we still said the Lord's Prayer and sang "Jesus Loves Me" in the public schools, and she looked aghast when one day I asked, "Who is Jesus?" (A book of children's Bible stories appeared in our home sometime after that and for a few months, my mother dropped me off at a Unitarian Sunday school for some religious education.)

In the 1950s, I felt like an anomaly; today, my parents' rejection of the church is the norm for many in our secular society. In his most recent book, *Why Faith Matters*, Huston Smith examines the ways in which the modern world has undermined religion. Scientism, academia, the media and the law have created a dark tunnel in which the light of God is barely visible. Our culture's materialist worldview has led to a technological revolution and a global community. However, its attendant neglect of values and ultimate questions has also produced a dehumanizing society that has engendered a

fundamentalist reaction around the globe. In the past year, we have become painfully aware of how profoundly we are all affected by these changes. The major challenge to post-modern society (and, indeed, to the human race) is whether we can reclaim a faith-based worldview with the power to unite rather than divide the world's people.

Any effort to affirm such a faith-based worldview today must take into account the reality of religious pluralism. The members of our congregations all have neighbors, co-workers, classmates, and friends who embrace other religions. Both world events and the people next door are leading us to ask difficult questions that have often been ignored by the local church: What do other religions believe? How can I affirm the Christian gospel amid so many competing truth claims? Must I believe that Christ is the only truth? Or the only way to salvation? Perhaps the most pressing theological question of our age is how we as Christians can respond to the religious pluralism of the world we live in.

The tragic reality is that the answer to this question that most frequently reaches the public ear is the exclusivist response of fundamentalist Christianity, "Jesus loves you, but you're going to hell unless you are (our kind of)

Christian." I know from my own experience that this response is a toxic one. For the first fifteen years of my adult life, I filled the spiritual void in my heart by teaching high school comparative religions. I was profoundly moved by the sacred experiences and spiritual truths to be found in all the world's enduring religions – all, that is, except Christianity. My understanding of the gospel came primarily through the secular media, and as much as I longed for a personal relationship with the divine, I could not entertain a God who seemed to me like an angry and arbitrary parent or a church that condemned to hell those who know the God of love by other name. I had no idea there was another face to Christianity until I invited Rusty Hicks to speak to my class. Rusty was then the abbot of the New Haven Zen Center, but I discovered that he was also an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ – and that he saw no contradiction in these roles. Rusty's inclusive faith allowed me to open the doors of a Congregational Church, and God has done the rest. Now I, too, am ordained in the UCC, called to a ministry of refugee resettlement and teaching comparative religions within the church.

I am convinced that today all of our churches are called to broaden their understanding of the world's religions and to wrestle with the theological questions surrounding religious pluralism. This is especially true for our youth. Even those young people who have grown up within the UCC are well aware of outside messages. They learn the history and basic premises of the world religions in their high school world civilizations classes. They are infected by the anti-religious bias of our media and are angered that many Christians condemn the faiths of their non-Christian friends. They are already asking the difficult questions. In order for our faith in the love of God in Christ to make any sense to the reality of our youth, it is imperative that we let them

know that there are theological and biblically sound alternatives to an exclusivist response to the world religions.

I have heard it argued that the job of the church is not to "do comparative religions" but to encourage Christian identity formation. However, we all know that Christian identity cannot be formed in a vacuum; it must take place in meaningful dialog with whatever world we live in. Today's world gives us no alternative but to form our identities within the context of religious pluralism and the messages of our secular culture. And to do this effectively, our churches must deliberately address these realities themselves. If we fail to do so, we leave this crucial part of faith development to our secular culture and the exclusivist Christian messages portrayed by the media. Given the enormity of today's needs for interfaith understanding, this is simply no longer a viable alternative.

Linda Carleton graduated from Yale Divinity School in 2001 after teaching history and comparative religions at Guilford High School for over twenty years. As founder of Melita Welcome House, she currently serves as assistant minister for refugee programs at the First Congregational Church in Guilford and also works as sponsorship developer for Interfaith Refugee Ministry. Linda has taught comparative religions for adult education programs, interfaith groups, confirmation classes and an Elderhostel program sponsored by Bangor Seminary. She is available to preach on issues relating to religious pluralism (during the academic year) and to offer programs on comparative religions or on the Christian response to religious pluralism for adults or high school confirmation classes or youth groups. You can contact Linda by e-mail at lindacarleton@prodigy.net or by calling 203.453-0254.

ORIGINAL SPIN • continued

the shoulders of giants: the founding of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1810, the first missions to India (1812) and Hawaii (1819), and the Amistad Incident (1839). The Missionary Society of Connecticut started 400 churches in 40 years, beginning in 1798.

The curse is that we sometimes rest on our 19th-century laurels and fail to realize our full potential. We need to rekindle our missionary zeal and our sense of the Social Gospel. We need to come together as a whole to be the church and not remain insular. Together, our Connecticut churches have combined budgets in excess of \$600 million each year, and yet we often remain focused inward as local congregations, rather than looking outward at what we are called to do as good stewards with our abundance.

Blessing III: We have excellent staff resources. I am moving to a conference with three fulltime staff members, who cover 90 churches spread across three

very large states (53 times the geographic size of Connecticut!).

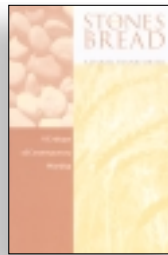
The staff of the Connecticut Conference is an incredible resource for those who tap into the source. We have expertise in clergy search-and-call, organizational and leadership development, stewardship, outdoor ministry, Christian education, planned giving, justice, legislative advocacy, mission, media relations, and a host of other areas. And on a given Sunday it is typical for at least five of us to be preaching in pulpits around the state.

The curse can be that not everybody knows what we have available, and others take it for granted. Here is an idea: go to www.ctucc.org and see where your congregation's needs and the conference's resources intersect. Join a FIDO* online discussion and connect with other UCC members or get updates on such issues as stewardship.

(to be continued in the July-August issue of Contact)

“An Innovation of Ill Consequence”

Stones for Bread: A Critique of Contemporary Worship
by A. Daniel Frankforter
Westminster John Know Press, 2001
195 pp.



I have to begin this review with a confession. (It's not just good liturgical style, it's a matter of honesty.) I really enjoy traditional music in worship. A Bach cantata works for me.

Mozart's Requiem is about as good as it gets. But that is my perspective as an individual. As a minister, I try not to do simply what nourishes my soul in worship, but to build access points for the sacred for others... and occasionally to invite in those who might otherwise be left out in the cold.

In his book, *Stones for Bread*, Daniel Frankforter looks at different elements of worship and focuses squarely on music as the aspect of worship that is most controversial. Fair enough. Music can be controversial in almost any congregation, whether it concerns selecting a hymnal or deciding whether non-classical forms of music can be employed in the act of worship.

We in the Congregational strand of the UCC have some powerful history when it comes to music, as well. "Music in Congregational worship was originally unaccompanied vocal music," writes John von Rohr

in *The Shaping of American Congregationalism*, "but gradually musical instruments were introduced... it was long felt that their use in worship was biblically prohibited. ... The first known record of an organ in a New England Congregational church appears in Ezra Stiles's diary of 1770 where he noted that a 200-pipe instrument had recently been set up in the church at Providence. However, he designated it 'an innovation of ill consequence.'"

With drums, electric guitars, and synthesizers appearing in our sanctuaries (to the utter revulsion of some), it appears that the writer of Ecclesiastes was right: there is nothing new under the sun.

Frankforter maintains a rigid distinction between secular and sacred musical forms and style. The epitome of the sacred for Frankforter seems to be the first generations of Reformation hymnody. The sentimental late 19th century hymnody that dwells on the personal-only dimension of faith (extensive use of "I, me, my" rather than "we, us, our") also comes under fire.

He makes several valid and important points in his critique: "Music that does not reflect a sense of the awesome mystery of God may produce a joyful noise," he writes, "but it is not sacred in any sense that the

psalmist and Amos would have understood." This is largely true, and it reflects Frankforter's very transcendent view of the sacred: that God is wholly other and to be approached with fear.

Worship, according to Frankforter, "produces a sense of energizing peace that no secular entertainment replicates." I hope that this is true. The author sets entertainment and worship over and against one another (probably much as our Congregational forbears did), concluding that worship ought not emulate the cheap thrills of MTV. He goes further, however, essentially equating rock and roll with sexuality. "The most obvious point of conflict between Christianity and the rock/pop arts is the latter's sexuality," he states. "Rock lyrics treat various subjects, but rock music is fundamentally a sexual anthem....The more they suggest bodily movements, the less compatible it has been with the sacred." This attitude seems very culture-bound: has Frankforter never experienced worship in an African-American congregation where movement goes hand-in-hand with song?

He seems to suggest a further rigid dichotomy: between body and spirit. "When sex is brought into the sanctuary, it tempts worshipers to exalt the powers of nature instead of God," Frankforter concludes. (One wonders what he makes of the Song of Solomon!)

The liturgical arts are changing. We have organs, pianos, and a host of other instruments. Some of us use liturgical dance as a means of expressing faith and conveying sacred experience through our embodiment. As a minister, I search for music that helps provide affective access to the sacred, which is especially important in our sometimes intellect-focused UCC.

His critique of "vapid praise choruses" in favor of theologically solid hymnody is valid. Here is a praise chorus called, "Jump" by Stephanie Jackson: "Jump for joy, sing to the Lord (repeat) Lift your voice, make some noise, jump for joy (verse) There's no reason to hide what we're feelin' inside. We've been given freedom in this life. Why should we stand still? We know God is real. We have got to show Him how we feel. Jump for joy (8 times)"

It lacks the profundity and theological sophistication of "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" and "Christ the Lord is Risen Today," certainly. But good hymnody didn't cease with Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley. If you sing M.T. Winter's "O for a World," Brian Wren's "Bring Many Names" or Tom Troeger's "Praise the Source of Faith and Learning," you will experience the dynamism and depth of some current hymnody.

Frankforter also misses the point that many young people are looking for contemplative experience, and that many mainline churches don't offer opportunities for what Emerson called "first-hand religion." Taizé chants may not explicate theological themes, but they often rely on the liturgical tradition of the church for their subject, and for some they offer an access point to the holy.

As was true for our Congregational forbears who took the leap toward the organ, we stand at a crossroads. Many of us aren't choosing between the Flentrop tracker organ and the Korg synthesizer: we're at a point of both/and and at a juncture where additional instruments - acoustic or digital - and musical styles deserve our consideration. We may decide to leave our worship as it is, but we ought to be intentional about our choices.

Pilgrimage to the Gulf Coast *continued from page 1*



Don Morgan, Back Bay's minister of mission, and I had spent a lot of time determining what the projects would be, making sure we had enough projects for all of the PFers. The six projects spread all 104 of us across the city. The project that got some of the most attention was the building - from the slab up - of a house to replace the one that had been condemned by the city and was demolished. Within 5 1/2 days with three teams working on the house, we were able



to frame it, side it, roof it, install the windows and doors, leaving with the inside walls framed and ready to be sheet rocked!! Some people would think that just that project was a monumental achievement, but there was more.

Two other teams went to the city's Boys Club Girls Club off Crawford Street. This project became a total transformation of the club. We knocked out cinder block walls, tore out a battered boys bathroom that was in a storage closet, chipped each individual tile off the walls surrounding the gym. Then we began to put it back together, we framed new spaces and made a music and study room out of one area. We made a new boys bathroom and locker room. We made

new wood walls for the gym. We painted murals with the children from the center. We repainted almost the whole club, including an art space, and teen space. We carpeted 5 rooms and made cubbies from scratch for the little ones to put their belongings.

Several other teams were put on sites that had been condemned by the city. As the projects began, we talked about God sending these PFers not just to tear down sheds and clean up debris but to soften these peoples hearts so they could experience God's love. It worked wonders. At one site a man had been a plumber a long time ago. He had buried over the course of forty years all sorts of wire, copper, and other metals. Each was bundled neatly and then buried.

On our hands and knees we helped him recover his buried treasure to be sold. We dug with the old man by our side telling what type of wire or what type of metal we had discovered. Unearthing his buried treasure was like uncovering gold for him. He told these young people, "that he would never forget their help, and they were truly a gift from God to a somewhat crazy old man."

The final project we worked on was for a Headstart Program, the Moore Community House. We scraped, repaired, and painted a house that was going to be office space and a place to house VISTA volunteers.

Those were the work projects that had spread us across Biloxi in service for the United Church of Christ's Back Bay Mission. Yet more importantly than all the work we accomplished was the spiritual journey for each young person and adult. We worshipped at seven local churches, where we were embraced with love and warmth. We became part of their sermons and received appreciation from their congregations for the work we were going to do and the money we had raised for the materials. We attended a revival one night and were lifted up in words of praise as they spoke about fighting giants like David & Goliath, "weren't these young people helping others to face their personal Goliaths." They even took up a collection for us and donated \$150 to the projects. And lastly, but most importantly it was how each of us learned the face of Jesus with the people we were helping.

On Friday night, we still had a half-day of work on Saturday; the Back Bay Mission hosted a "shrimp boil" for us. Many guests attended that dinner including the Back Bay staff, board members and people from the city. One compliment that stuck in my mind was made by the Director

Efforts by young people

make a difference in the lives of the people they serve, and often in their own lives. Many opportunities for mission and service are available through the United Church of Christ, as close by as the Amistad replica in New Haven and as far away as Indonesia.

If you are traveling on business or on a vacation to another part of the nation or the world, drop by a UCC congregation or mission and see how your giving to Our Church's Wider Mission is at work. You can find a directory of congregations and a listing of our international missions at www.ucc.org

If a group from your church wants to organize an international mission trip, the UCC and our partners in the Disciples of Christ have a wonderful People-to-People Pilgrimage program. And if you're looking for an opportunity to volunteer in the U.S. our Volunteer Ministries program can help connect you. Just call or email one of the staff persons below. -ed.

International trips:
Ms. Isabel Gonzales
317.713.2579
igonzale@dom.disciples.org

U.S. trips:
the Rev. K.C. Ackley
216.736.3214
ackleyk@ucc.org

of Planning and Development for Biloxi, who told these young people, whom he had seen at the various sites throughout the week, that he in all his years in his position in Biloxi and elsewhere, that, "he had never seen a volunteer effort on this scale work so hard together and accomplish so much." He also spoke about their deep desire to accomplish the tasks before them and the respect that they showed not just for each other or the people we were helping but the respect and caring we showed to the whole community.

Spreading God's love through service truly is transforming to everyone. With God's blessing we can and did make a difference

Merrilyn Garcia is director of youth ministries at the First Congregational Church of Guilford.

Mark Your Calendar Now!
October 18-20, 2002

135th Annual Meeting
of The Connecticut Conference United Church of Christ

Hill Career Regional High School, New Haven, CT
Sunday afternoon worship United Church
on the Green in New Haven
Hosted by the New Haven Association

All are welcome to attend!

Danielson
Westfield Congregational Church Youth held a birthday party for everyone. They were each asked to bring a grab bag gift under \$5 value and celebrated everyone's birthdays.

Wilimanticon
First Congregational Church had a special musical service. The entire church service was musical with performances by the Bell Choir, Senior Choir, Children's Choir, Soloists and Instrumentalists.

Branford
First Congregational Church offered Continuing Christian Education based on the principles of the twelve-step program. They examined some of the common problems of living to see how the twelve-step program might apply to the resolution of the problems.

North Branford
Congregational Church sponsored an essay contest in conjunction with their 275th Anniversary Celebration. The questions for consideration were "What North Branford Congregational Church means to me?" or "Growing up in NBCC". Everyone from young to old was encouraged to participate.

Rockville
Union Congregational Church school students celebrated Easter by learning about the "The Good Shepherd" with live baby lambs and real shepherds paying them a visit.

Storrs
Congregational Church has a designated spot for people to leave notes for the Properties committee

that might include suggestions for repairs, problems that might exist with the facilities, ideas for improvements, information about contractors that might be used and volunteering to undertake tasks that exist.

East Haven
The First Congregational Church has invited families and groups to "sponsor" their monthly newsletter. Sponsorship means a donation to cover the cost of mailing for one month and could be done in someone's memory or as a gift.

Somers
Congregational Church holds an "Ultimate Auction" every year. As part of that auction they sell "Heavenly Parking Spaces".

Naugatuck
Congregational Church held LaRomana/Bell Sunday. Members were encouraged to bring small, handheld bells with them to worship. During the worship service, each time the word "alleluia" was said or sung the congregation rang their bells.

Suffield
First Church of Christ held their Third Annual Quiet Day. Many people from old to young baked, brought food, welcomed and directed persons, lead meditations, and planned and created meditation areas.

South Windsor
Wapping Community Church is selling engraved bricks for the proposed new entrance to the building. For \$50 members can dedicate and honor someone and beautify the entrance to the church.

Enfield
Congregational Church celebrates Palm Sunday by having all the children parade to the meditation garden with Palms and musical instruments. In the garden they hold a prayer service to dedicate the prayers the children have written during Lent. The prayers are burned during the prayer service and the smoke serves as a visual symbol of the prayers going up to God.

Middletown
South Church held a letter-writing lunch sponsored by the Board of Outreach and the Social Action Committee. Time was set aside to write letters to local, state and federal officials about issues that concerned the members. Addresses and basic information was provided along with the intentionality of investing the time to write the letters.

Roxbury
Congregational Church hosted their sisters and brothers from Christ Episcopal Church at their worship service for United Worship. They were invited to worship and celebrate the Lord's Supper as part of an ongoing relationship between the two churches. In December Congregational Church was invited to worship at Christ Episcopal Church.

Southington
First Congregational Church has a Church Family Yellow Pages. Members are able to advertise their business/specialty to the congregation. It allows the congregation to know what services might be available within their church community.

Living from the Prophet Motive:

Doing Justice... Seeking Peace... Building

BY GORDON BATES

TANF stands for "Temporary Assistance to Needy Families." It may not be a familiar acronym, but to millions on welfare it symbolizes a congressional struggle between those who see the purpose of welfare reform as primarily getting people off welfare and those who see its goal as the reduction of poverty.

TANF is a program created in 1996 as an effort of the Clinton Administration to co-opt the issue of welfare reform by providing funding to the states to meet a criticism of welfare in the previous decades, namely, that it simply made people dependent on the government and perpetuated itself generation after generation. It was a criticism with some validity, and the response in the form of TANF and other legislation has been implemented with some success over the past six years. TANF is up for reauthorization this year and the new administration has put forth proposals that make the program even more rigid in its desire to strengthen families and continue to reduce welfare caseloads.

Ironically, TANF has been successful: it has reduced caseloads across the country, including Connecticut. Connecticut receives \$267 million annually, which is used in a variety of state agencies, usually to lower the amount of state funds needed. More people are indeed off welfare, and into jobs. Isn't that a success?

It would be, perhaps, if that

were all that was needed. Unfortunately, no. Disastrously, the program has pushed people into low-paying jobs that cannot support individuals, let alone families.

The poverty level, nationally, is pegged at an annual income of \$15,020, usually for a family of three. That figure does not begin to take into consideration the high housing costs of many low-income families. It also fails to consider the lack of employment benefits in most cases, the costs of going to work and the need for child-care. TANF also does not provide much for education or training, or give much time for such improvements to take place before the time limit is reached for receiving welfare. In Connecticut the limit is 21 months, under two years.

The average TANF family or individual leaving welfare is usually forced to take a minimum wage job, with no benefits. Minimum wage, earned full time for a full year, yields an annual income of \$10,300 (\$5.15 per hour times 40 hours over 50 weeks). Get the picture? The choice is often between working and parenting, between shelter and food, between medical care and housing. Moving off welfare can easily mean being part of the "working poor," actually losing ground rather than improving one's situation.

TANF, as presently constituted, is not an adequate strategy for lifting families or individuals out of poverty. Neither the Republican nor the Democratic forms of this bill rectify its deficiencies. Passage of either alternative means six more years of being locked into low-paying jobs for millions of people and continued poverty for millions of children.

A few weeks ago, at the beginning of March, your Justice Witness Ministry Team sent two representatives to Washington, D. C., to join in a

Continued on next page

CLASSIFIEDS

Positions

ANSONIA — The First Congregational Church, UCC is seeking an Organist/Choir Director. Position to begin July 2002. 3 manual draw knob pipe organ, 36 ranks, 33 stops. Chickering baby grand piano in sanctuary. 9-10 member Chancel Choir. One 10 AM Sunday Service. Contact: Mrs. Clifford Hoyle, 7 Elizabeth St. Ansonia, CT 06401 203-735-6284 [8/02]

AVON — Avon Congregational Church seeks choir director. One Sunday service. Responsibilities include, periodic meetings of music committee and music staff. Collaborating with organist, youth choir director, youth bell director and volunteer music administrator. 12-15 hours/week. Position available September 2002. Year runs through third week in June. \$10k/year. Contact: Organist, Sue Smith 860-297-0035 days, 860-673-2104 evenings. Suesmith@avon-church.org [6/02]

BRIDGEPORT — Business Manager The United Congregational Church of Bridgeport (UCC) has a full time opening for a Business Manager. The duties and responsibilities are varied and include: Office Management, Facilities Administration, Budgeting, Financial Administration, Operations, Fund Raising, and Public Relations. The candidate selected will be the one who best demonstrates the experience and skills necessary to be successful in this position. No particular religious affiliation is required. The position will report to the Senior Minister and support the Board of Trustees. While the hours are Monday through Friday, occasional night, Sunday or weekend work with compensatory time off will be required. They offer competitive salary and benefit plans. An equal opportunity employer. Send your resume to: Business Manager Search The United Congregational Church 877 Park Avenue Bridgeport, CT 06604-4694 [7/02]

EAST GRANBY — East Granby Congregational Church is seeking an organized, self-directed individual to provide management and administration of the church office. Responsibilities include reception, clerical tasks, publication and report writing. Knowledge of general office equipment, Word, Excel, Access and Publisher is required. Applications in person will not be accepted, no phone calls please. Contact: Resumes are to be sent with cover letter addressed to Janice Gibson, PO Box 390 East Granby, CT 06026 [8/02]

GREENWICH — Director of Ministries for Children and Young Families Looking for a person who feels a deep calling to minister to and with children and their families. While it would be preferable for the person to have a degree in an education related field and have experience in ministry in a church setting, Second Church is seeking a person who has a deep love for children and desires a creative place in which to minister. Contact: Mail resume to Rev. Robert H. Naylor, Second Congregational Church, 139 E. Putnam Avenue, Greenwich, CT 06830 or email - info@2cc.org [7/02]

HARTFORD — Warburton Urban Residency is a nine-month, full-time ministry in urban human services and congregational life for third-year, graduating seminarians or recent graduates. A collaborative program of the Trustees of the Warburton Chapel, Center City Churches and First Church of Christ in Hartford (Center Church), it presents the opportunity to practice ministry in both public and congregational settings and to strengthen a seminarian's gifts. September 2002 through May 2003. Salary: \$2,650 per month, plus employee benefits and relocation assistance. Contact: For information, contact Ron Krom, Center City Churches, 1 Buckingham Street, Hartford, CT 06106, (860) 249-7543, e-mail rkrom@ccchartford.org. [6/02]

NAUGATUCK — The Congregational Church is seeking a full time Organist/Director of Music Ministry (part time considered) for 400+ membership. 1971 three manual 42-rank Austin. Adult and Children's choir Chancel, Alleluia, Handbell and Djembe Drum choirs. Two Sunday and Special Services Professional Training with Sacred Music Emphasis. Contact: Music Search Committee One Division Street Naugatuck, CT 06770 [6/02]

NORTH GUILFORD — The Congregational Church is seeking a half time (approx. 20 hrs/wk) Director of Christian Education. Dynamic individual will direct growth and development of Christian Education program. Responsibilities include church school and involvement in youth and family ministry. ACE certification or equivalent preferred. \$13,000-\$15,000/ year Contact: Annis Homer c/o North Guilford Congregational Church 159 Edge Rd. North Guilford, CT 06437 Fax 203-457-0657 [6/02]

PUTNAM — Congregational Church of Putnam is seeking a Christian Education Director to coordinate and supervise church school and youth programs. Candidate may also participate in program development for overall educational needs of the church. Candidate should have excellent organizational, interpersonal and communication skills. Preference given to candidates with previous experience, educational training, or willingness to complete UCC ACE program. Contact: Please send summary of qualifications to: Congregational Church of Putnam, PO Box 463, Putnam, CT 06260. [8/02]

ROWAYTON — The United Church of Rowayton is seeking a full-time Director of Christian Education to run their growing church school program and lead the adult education program. They seek someone with a passion for Christian Education that would enjoy nurturing the spiritual growth of an active congre-

gation. This position offers plenty of room for creativity and is in a low-pressure environment. They will provide a competitive salary and benefits package in a flexible and pleasant working environment. Contact: Debbie Beaudry, United Church of Rowayton, 210 Rowayton Avenue, Rowayton, CT 06853, ucr210debbie@aol.com. [8/02]

SOUTH WINDSOR — Organist/Choir Director is needed for First Congregational Church of South Windsor. Adult Choir, Thursday rehearsal, occasional youth choir. 1 Sunday service 10 am. Hook & Hastings tracker organ. Contact: Beverly Nielsen, 860-298-8606 [6/02]

THOMASTON — First Congregational Church is seeking a part time Youth Director for newly developing youth ministry program. Approximately ten-fifteen hours per week. Must have some youth ministry experience. Please send resume and brief statement of belief. Contact: First Congregational Church, 135 Main Street, Thomaston, CT 06787 c/o Youth Director Search Committee first.congregational@snet.net or Carol Pytel, 860-283-4937 [7/02]

Sell or Give
BEACON FALLS — United Church of Beacon Falls has 73 Pilgrim Hymnals in good condition to give away. Contact: Jim Van Pelt 203-729-9232 [8/02]

BLOOMFIELD — For Sale a Moller, 3-rack unit organ built in 1966, Opus #10321. Pipe chamber 8 feet high x 8 feet wide x 3 1/2 feet deep. 2 Manual and pedal (full). Currently in use. Buyer will remove. \$6000. Contact: First Congregational Church in Bloomfield 860-242-0776 [8/02]

HARTFORD — Central Baptist Church in Hartford has about 500 Pilgrim Hymnals free for the taking. Call Dick Matteson to arrange pick-up. Contact: 860-522-9275 [8/02]

Prophet Motive *Continued*

national protest to improve TANF by correcting its present defects before we end up with even more families worse off than they were before. They were the Rev. Selena Blackwell (Imani UCC) and the Rev. John Selders (Amistad UCC). They were joined by the Rev. Don Steinle, of the Christian Activities Council and me.

Although the struggle is an uphill one in the House of Representative, and there is more hope for a receptive hearing in the Senate, Congress must not be allowed to stifle com-

passion for the least among us in order to justify increased expenditures on an undeclared war on terrorism.

All who are concerned are urged to contact both your Congressional Representative and your Senators to urge:

- That TANF be reauthorized.
- That TANF funds contain more support for education and training;
- That TANF funds consider the des-

perate need for child care options;

- That TANF funds be used to support all types of families; and
- That TANF have as its primary goal the reduction of poverty, not simply lower caseloads.

Our General Synod and Connecticut Conference have long fought for a more just economy. In 1999, the 17th G.S. Statement of Christian Conviction contained these words: "A just economy gives all persons access to the basic material necessi-

ties of life... (It) is inclusive, involving all able people in responsible, participatory, and economically rewarding activity... Economic resources should be so distributed that all individuals are empowered to participate fully in the economic system... so that the poor and weak can take control of their lives and shape their own future."

For up-to-date information, call the Rev. Gordon Bates, Associate Conference Minister for Justice and Witness, at the Conference Office number: 860/233-5564 ext 115.

EVENTS

Thursday, June 13, 2002 •
South Church New Britain •
New Vintage Big Band •
Closing the season as always
with a “lighter” Strawberry
Festival concert featuring The
New Vintage Big Band. The
golden sounds of this swinging
big band will bring a season of
“bests” to a grand finale.

Contact: 860-223-7555
November 7-9, 2002 • St.
Louis, Missouri • Children and
the Church VI • Multicultural
dimensions of safety, health,
peace, advocacy, and spiritual
nurture. Key Leaders Dr.
Barbara Myers, Rev. Dr.
William Myers and Rev. Dr.
Yolanda Yvette Smith.

Sponsored by Eden
Theological Seminary and the
Local Church Ministries, a
Covenanted Ministry of the
United Church of Christ. Cost:
\$150 before 10/7/02, \$200
after Contact: Carolyn Landers
Pettigrew 216-736-3863 petti-
grc@ucc.org

God's Neighborhood:

*Finding Our Common Ground
That They All May Be One*

General Association • Sept. 23-24, 2002

Silver Lake Conference Center

KEYNOTERS:

Dr. Benjamin Griffin, President of Andover Newton

Dr. Heidi Hadsell, President of Hartford Seminary

Dr. William Imes, President of Bangor Seminary

Clergy and Christian
Educators are encouraged
to save these dates.
Watch for registration
forms in June.

Contact Sue Furness at 866-FOR-CUCC
or susanf@ctucc.org

Save the Date

July 20-23, 2002

**New England Conference
on Mission**

**Geneva Point Center,
Lake Winnepesaukee**

**Building Bridges—
Connecting and Equipping God's People
for Missions and Ministry**

For a brochure, contact Cecile Gilson at 866-376-2822
or 860/233-5564 ext. 120