



CONTACT

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Summer at Silver Lake

BY ANNE AND TIM HUGHES

Silver Lake summer sign-ups are in full gear now. There are still plenty of spaces left in many conferences for youth entering 4th through 12th grades. You can register online at <http://silverlake.ctucc.org>, and see all the conference descriptions for your age group! This year we are offering a \$25 discount when you sign up for a second summer conference. Bring a friend and get a free Silver Lake t-shirt, too.

Also, check out the Silver Lake video on our website, or ask your church to show it for interested parents and youth ages 8 to 18. You'll find the link for the video on the front page, right underneath the link for registration.

In March, we gathered 2008's dynamic community of deans - most returning for another season, with some emerging, new leadership - for our Dean's Retreat. We shared stories, strategies, new games, ideas, ways to recruit and train great counselors, scheduled our weeks' waterfront, high ropes, campfires and worship, and reconnected with the Outdoors and one another in this adventure we call Outdoor Ministry at Silver Lake. The weekend culminated with our Dean's Appreciation Dinner with special appetizers courtesy of Chef Bob.

We are now interviewing and hiring what looks to be a fabulous Camp Family team and summer staff team of young servant leaders. We are also excited to welcome Youth and Young Adult Minister, Rev. Da Vita McAllister, to the mix this summer! Don't miss out on what so many look forward to all year: a week of community with friends, fun and faith-building to sustain you through the sped-up whirlwind of your life. See you at the Lake this summer!



“Fields of Flags” Completes Two Years of Travel

BY JO-ANN HORNYAK
AND ANNE KIRKPATRICK

The “Field of Flags” was dedicated on Sunday, October 23, 2005 at the Somers Congregational Church in Somers, Connecticut. Members of the Memorial Garden Committee placed 2,231 American flags - one for each American casualty in Iraq and Afghanistan - on the west lawn of our church. The list of casualties was displayed on a board showing the name and rank of each American killed.

The “Field of Flags” has become a ministry that has brought comfort to

many families as it has traveled to five other states. The touring schedule is set as congregations contact the church office in Somers (860-763-4021) and request that the flags come to their church. In addition to Connecticut, this traveling memorial has been displayed in Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Delaware and most recently, Florida. The flags have waved at 14 different locations, including Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and United Church of Christ churches, as well as a Catholic Seminary and a Harvest Assembly of God. Each church has given a donation that has enabled Somers to purchase additional flags.

After spending January at the First United Church UCC in Tampa, Florida, more than 4,452 flags went to the Clearview United Methodist Church in St. Petersburg, Florida. As we write this in March, the Field of Flags is currently at the Christ Congregational Church in Miami, Florida. The flags are scheduled to return to Connecticut in May and will be at the First Congregational Church in Ridgefield at the end of June.

Please continue to pray for the safety of all of our troops and for the families of the fallen heroes.

Nourished by the Imagination



Imagination may be one of God's greatest gifts to human beings. I know that in my life, my ability to imagine a different world, a renewed church, a splendid garden or a

new understanding of a given scripture text all nourish me spiritually. Indeed, imagination is often a source of hope and healing for all of us.

Throughout the centuries, the Church has befriended artists and musicians; indeed sometimes we have been their only source of support. The Church's

readiness to receive the gifts of imagination, creativity and the arts has varied over time, and this is one moment in history in which our full use of our creativity will stand us well. We are in an era

when the new generations seem drawn to both the simple and dynamic, so the melding of our simple spirituality with creative expression of the arts throughout the church's life will have great appeal.

As I travel our Conference, I am struck by the creativity I encounter in some places. At South Church in Middletown, from Easter to Pentecost, the interior of the sanctuary is draped with a diaphanous fabric tenting over the pews. It has quite an effect of softening and making the stone building more intimate – and you can experience it on May 10 when we gather for our Spring Meeting! At First Congregational Church of Southington, the praise band "Branches" offers richly meaningful and lively music at two of their four services every Sunday. At the Congregational Church of Union, their small choir

expands their reach by singing from the aisles. At Portland, the church offers a chocolate festival in the midst of the February doldrums. At First Church in New London, their tiny membership serves 75 people a hot breakfast every day with an outreach program of great creativity.

pushing boulders up mountains...not a healthy condition for anyone!

So I want to urge every church to send a good contingent of people to the Spring Meeting on May 10. Let's imagine together some new ways of being church, of offering worship to God's glory, of evangelizing our

"I want to urge every church to send a good contingent of people to the Spring Meeting on May 10. Let's imagine together some new ways of being church, of offering worship to God's glory, of evangelizing our communities and reaching out in social mission."

Honestly, I am also struck as I travel by the sameness of so many worship services and programs. I know I'm treading on thin ice here, but I'm going to say it anyway: sometimes I think I'm in a time warp and I've landed in 1959 or 1975. Our churches can get very stuck in ruts. Pastors try to introduce new ideas but they feel like they are

communities and reaching out in social mission. It's going to be an amazing day – from opening worship with the Oikos Ensemble, through workshops and playshops, to a Pentecost-inspired "Imaginarium," when we return to the sanctuary in the afternoon. And, to top it off, a great – free - Global Village Jazz concert that night! Don't miss this – it's all about the future!!!

Strengthen the Church

Growing the Church's Future

Strengthen the Church, one of four special mission offerings within the United Church of Christ, grows the UCC's future by:

- Funding **new church starts** and **invigorating existing congregations**
- Nurturing **lay and pastoral leadership**
- Building **youth and young adult** ministries
- Supporting the **God is Stillspeaking Ministry** and its extravagant welcome for all within the United Church of Christ.
- All gifts are directed to activities and programs of **your church's local conference** as well as the **UCC's national ministries**.

SPREAD THE LOVE

The offering is typically received on Pentecost - the day we celebrate the founding of the Christian church - but churches may choose to receive the offering on any Sunday; some choose their local church's anniversary or Thanksgiving Sunday. In 2008, **Pentecost is May 11**, which also happens to be **Mother's Day!**

Explore the resources found at www.ucc.org/stc as you prepare to receive the Strengthen the Church offering in 2008. For more information, please contact Rev. Doris Powell, Minister for Pastors and Congregational Stewardship, at powelld@ucc.org, or 216-736-3853.

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Regional Minister Reflection

Look What God is Doing! Here! Now!

BY REV. MIKE PENN-STRAH

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever.I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you." John 14:15-16, 18.

"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" Isaiah 43:19a

"What am I doing here?," I often ask myself! During the 36 years I spent in parish ministry, serving congregations ranging from 120 to 1,200 members, including three interim ministries and four years co-pastoring a new church start with my wife, I never imagined myself in conference ministry. In fact, I recently described myself in a Lenten reflection as a local church pastor masquerading as a regional minister.

Nevertheless, in every setting in which I have served, a consistent theme of my ministry has been to share the promises of Isaiah and Jesus and help congregations discover the new thing God is doing in their midst. That new thing is often difficult to perceive, isn't it? As we face various challenges and crises in our congregations - a beloved pastor's leaving, shrinking budgets, declining memberships, changing neighborhoods, misconduct, conflict among members or with the pastoral leadership, and so on - it is so easy to get caught up in and weighed down by feelings of loss, despair and anxiety. We forget Jesus' promise to send us an Advocate, God's Holy Spirit, to lead us through that crisis into new ministries. We forget to look for the new thing God is doing in what we see as an overwhelming challenge or crisis.

Several years ago there was an independent film set, in part, on an Indian reservation, where there was a woman who drove an old Buick. The car's transmission was almost shot. In fact, the only gear that still worked was reverse. So she had to drive backwards, looking in the rear view mirror!

As difficult and preposterous as that sounds, it offers an apt analogy for the way we sometimes attempt to "drive" our churches, spending a lot of time and energy nostalgically recalling where we've been and what we used to look like.

As comfortable and understandable as that is, Isaiah reminds us that that is not where we will see God. God, says Isaiah, is always moving out ahead of us, calling us to hurry along and catch up and stay with God as God moves into a new place, where God needs us to be God's people in a new way. I believe the most important questions the leaders and members of a congregation can ask themselves are: "What is God doing in our congregation now? Where is God leading us? What is the new future God is opening to us?"

That's what I understand myself to be doing here, in conference ministry—helping congregations discover the exciting and fulfilling future God is opening to them. That's why I love this ministry. That is also why I am so excited to be in ministry with you, because I am discovering that this is a conference filled with committed and gifted folk who believe that God is leading us into a future filled with promise. Thank you for inviting me to journey into that future with you.

Rev. Mike Penn-Strah is the South Central Regional Minister of the Connecticut Conference.

Church Campaigns Hit Stride

As we move into spring, many local churches are beginning to focus on their own campaigns and ways to best show their support and commitment to the Campaign for Silver Lake. They recognize that Silver Lake is a place of year-round ministry, offering Christian community and the grace of God's creation as it serves the youth and adults of the Conference's nearly 250 United Church of Christ churches in the state.

Already, 50 churches have welcomed a *Now for the Future* campaign presentation for the congregation or a selected group of church leaders. And there are now 82 churches that have

**NOW
FOR
THE
FUTURE**
THE CAMPAIGN FOR
SILVER LAKE



established a campaign presence by either appointing a church rep or committing to the campaign even before naming a representative.

Now for the Future is indebted to all the church reps who have carried their energy, enthusiasm and personal commitment to Silver Lake back to their churches.

To learn more about *Now For the Future: The Campaign for Silver Lake*, or to inquire about a presentation for your congregation, please contact Bev Hughes, Campaign Coordinator, at bev@ctucc.org, 860-233-5564 or toll-free at 866-367-2822.

Save the Dates!

Shari Prestemon, Visiting on Behalf of *Now For the Future: The Campaign for Silver Lake*. See dates and locations this page (right).

Val Tutson – Celebrating Silver Lake! **April 10** at Monroe Congregational Church; **April 11** at First Church in Windsor. Performances are at 7 pm.

New Orleans Mission Trip – April 27 to May 3. See story page 4.

CT Conference Spring Annual Meeting – "New Wineskins for a New Day." Saturday, May 10, South Church in Middletown. All are invited! See ad and story on back page.

Silver Lake Golf Tournament – Tuesday, June 10, 9 am. Lyman Orchards Golf Club, Middlefield, CT

National Youth Event – "Living the Life" July 24-28, University of Tennessee.

Val Tutson Celebrating Silver Lake

Enjoy an evening of performance with renowned storyteller Valerie Tutson in celebration of Silver Lake Conference Center, its past and its future. Val will bring her unique inspired and inspiring blend of storytelling and audience participation to several churches around the Conference, including Roxbury Congregational Church on Thursday, April 3rd, Monroe Congregational Church on Thursday, April 10th and First Church in Windsor on Friday, April 11th.

Internationally acclaimed, Val grew up in the First Congregational Church, UCC of New Milford and at Silver Lake. She has keynoted Conferences, resourced public schools, and last June served as Co-host of Synod in the City at General Synod 26 in Hartford. Val also serves as Honorary Co-Chair of *Now For the Future: The Campaign for Silver Lake* with retired SLCC Director Alden Tyrol.

All performances begin at 7 pm, with a \$5 admission charge per person or family. For more information, please contact Sue Wilber at suew@ctucc.org, 860-233-5564 or toll-free, 866-367-2822.

Back Bay Mission Director to Visit in the Conference

The Rev. Shari Prestemon, Executive Director of Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi, will speak about *Now For the Future: The Campaign for Silver Lake* at a number of appearances around the Conference. She also will reflect on her work and the ministry of Back Bay Mission, a tithing recipient of the capital campaign. As ConnTact goes to press, Shari's schedule is:

Thursday, April 10 – 6:30 pm, at First Congregational Church of East Hartford; 860-528-3133

Friday, April 11 – 7 pm, at Middlebury Congregational Church; 203-758-2671

Saturday, April 12 - 11 am – Noon, at the First Church in Farmington, with the Connecticut Conference Historians Workshop; 860-677-2601

April 12, at 12:15 – Lunch conversation, following the "Charity, Advocacy and Vocation" workshop. Registration for the workshop and/or lunch is \$10; please call 860-651-3593.

April 12, from 6 – 8 pm, at First Church Congregational in Fairfield. A conversation and shrimp boil hosted by Rev. David Spollett; please call 203-259-8396

Sunday, April 13 – 9 and 10:45 am. Preaching at the worship services at First Church of Christ, Simsbury

April 13, at 6 pm. Conversation and Pot Luck at First Church of Christ, Congregational in New Britain; 860-229-3709

Please bring the following items based on your last name: A-H main entree; I-P salad; R-Z dessert.

Monday, April 14 – 7 pm at the United Congregational Church of Tolland. Conversation, coffee and dessert. Please call 860-875-4160 if you are planning to attend.

Tuesday, April 15 – 10:30 am, with the New London Association Clergy at the First Congregational Church of Ledyard UCC.

April 15, at 6 pm – Conversation and Pot Luck supper at the Somers Congregational Church; 860-763-4021. Please call ahead.



Silver Lake Hires New Site Manager

Silver Lake Conference Center is thrilled to announce the call of Dave Kobersmith as our new, year-round Site Manager. He will begin work on April 1. Dave comes to us with 15 years experience at Camp Birchwood in Alaska, a ministry of hospitality and Christian faith formation within the Alaska Missionary Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Dave and his wife, Kim, both missionaries, bring their two children, Sayer and Cavin, to Silver Lake's year-round ministry of serving retreat groups as well as our busy summer church camp conference program. He developed an enthusiasm and wealth of experience as Manager-Director of Camp Birchwood, where he worked closely on strategic planning with Kaleidoscope, Inc., which is also Silver Lake's development consultant.

Dave has a broad background in site maintenance, forestry, and organizing volunteer work groups. His passion for Outdoor Ministry, sustainability, and love of camp, will enhance the work of caring for Silver Lake's 65 acres, multiple year-round and summer buildings, and the hospitality of this sacred place.

As Site Manager, Dave's responsibilities include ongoing facility maintenance and grounds-keeping with an eye towards repair, reuse and recycling, reducing environmental impact and increasing sustainability of the facilities and resources used at Silver Lake; recruiting and nurturing the wider volunteer community to engage proudly in the upkeep of Silver Lake Conference Center; and training and supervising the Ecological Task Force, our summer maintenance crew, as a dynamic, integral part of an outstanding summer staff team of Silver Lake's Outdoor Ministry summer program.

He looks forward to meeting many Silver Lake alums and young people at Spring Action Work Weekend, April 25-27th. Please join us in welcoming Dave, Kim and their boys, to their new home at Silver Lake!

Disaster Response

On the Ground in the Florida Conference

BY JO-ANN HORNYAK AND ANNE KIRKPATRICK

Jeanne, Ivan, Frances, Charley, Katrina, Rita and Wilma. Familiar names? Perhaps not all of them. But they are very well known to the thousands of Florida residents whose homes are still in need of repair after the devastating storms of 2004 and 2005. Today, Florida's long-term recovery efforts also include a focus on the aftermath of deadly tornados that swept across the state in 2006 and 2007.

In January, we had the opportunity as Disaster Response Coordinators for the Connecticut Conference to see first hand some of the damage and the work yet to be finished, or in some cases even begun. We traveled through Florida with Karen Thompson, Disaster Response Minister for Florida, and Stephanie Cohan, Volunteer Coordinator, visiting Collier, Polk, and Lake counties.

We were amazed at how much still needs to be done. Though some residents have been able to evacuate their homes on a temporary but long-term basis, the majority of residents unfortunately have no other choice but to remain in their leaky, mold-infested homes.

The rebuilding efforts in the Florida Conference are organized differently from those in other affected areas that we have seen along the Gulf Coast. Volunteer crews work through participation with the local long-term county recovery agencies in Florida, rather than directly with the UCC Disaster Recovery. Each county has its own housing arrangements for volunteers. There is a three to five-year recovery time, which leaves Florida with many residents still needing help rebuilding their lives and homes. Presently, 12 counties need volunteers, with about 900 cases still open. Won't you help?

Jo-Ann Hornyak and Anne Kirkpatrick are Co- Coordinators of the Conference's Disaster Response Ministry Team. April 27 to May 3 they will lead a work trip to New Orleans, with volunteers drawn from churches around the Conference. If you are interested in taking part in that trip, which coincides with week 2 of New Orleans' famed Jazz Fest, contact them at johornyak@cox.net or abkasac@aol.com. (Please see story on this page.)

To learn more about volunteer opportunities in Florida, please contact Stephanie Cohan at recovery@uccfla.org or 305-758-4845 or 800-416-1147.

Recent and Upcoming Pastoral Transitions

NEW CALLS

Crosby, Rebecca called from In-Care to Associate Pastor, First Congregational Church of Lyme, January 6, 2008

Dexter, Sam called to Pastor, First Congregational Church, Watertown, January 27, 2008

RESIGNATIONS

Bridle, Pam from Pastor, First Church of Bethlehem, UCC, February 11, 2008

Magyar, Linda from Associate Pastor, East Granby Congregational Church, April 27, 2008

Karjian, Nayiri from Pastor, Congregational Church of Easton, Inc., to Texas, January 31, 2008

Thompson, Kathleen from Associate Pastor, North Madison Congregational Church, May 4, 2008

RETIREMENTS

Cartwright, Kimball from Pastor, First Congregational Church of West Haven, March 30, 2008

Dakers, Peter from Pastor, Winchester Center Congregational Church, April 1, 2008

Join a Mission Trip to New Orleans!

All Churches Are Welcome

Churches of the Connecticut Conference continue to express their commitment and support to the congregations and communities of the Gulf Coast devastated by hurricanes in 2004 and 2005, through prayer, fundraising such as the recent "Fat Sunday" special offerings that were requested, and organizing work trips.

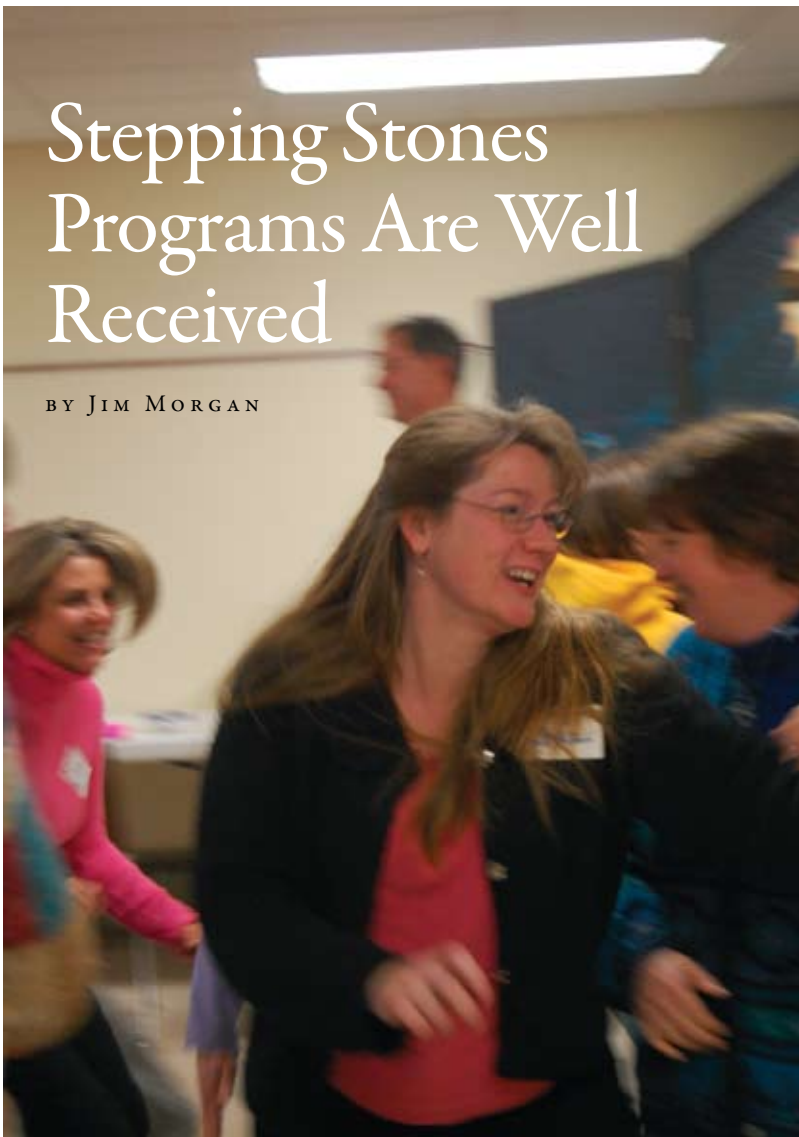
This spring, members of United Church of Christ churches from around the Conference have a very special opportunity to participate in that effort by joining a mission trip to New Orleans from Sunday, April 27 to Saturday, May 3. The trip will be led by Jo-Ann Hornyak and Anne Kirkpatrick, Co- Coordinators of the Conference's Disaster Response Ministry Team. Since 2005, they have made numerous visits to various locations along the Gulf Coast, including Back Bay Mission in Biloxi, Mississippi, and most recently to our partners in the Florida Conference.

This trip is being developed in conjunction with Rev. Alan Coe, Disaster Response Coordinator for the UCC's South Central Conference, who is based in New Orleans. Participants will have the chance to visit with our partners in relief and recovery from Central Congregational Church, who are now worshipping with the congregation at St. Matthew's Church in New Orleans. They also may be involved in the ongoing work at the church's parsonage or the Hume Child Development Center, a day care that is a ministry of the church. And serendipitously, the week also coincides with the closing days of the city's famous Jazz and Heritage Festival, offering a unique opportunity to experience some of the "melting pot" culture, food and music for which New Orleans is world famous.

If you are interested in being part of this exciting and much-needed effort, it's not too late to sign on. Please contact Jo-Ann or Anne at johornyak@cox.net or abkasac@aol.com. Et la bas!

Stepping Stones Programs Are Well Received

BY JIM MORGAN



Stepping Stones for Youth Ministry

The Stepping Stones program offered three short-term courses for youth group advisors, pastors or church educators who want to energize and refresh their ministry. The gatherings provided an opportunity to network with others involved with youth in their churches. The second year of the series was attended by more than 30 people at each of the January and February events, representing a total of nearly 30 churches of the Conference.

Over the course of three evenings at First Congregational Church in Southington, the program explored aspects of effective youth ministry, contemporary issues, and leadership development. The presenters were all Certified Christian Educators, Directors of Youth Ministry or Ministers of Discipleship Education.

"Mission Trips: A Centerpiece for Youth Ministry" was presented by Bill Vibert of the West Avon Congregational Church and Karen Ziel from the Congregational Church in South Glastonbury. They covered the essentials of planning a mission trip, including where, when and for how long to go, fundraising, what to pack (and not pack!), parental support and how to include the faith community.

In "Media and Music," Marji Hughes of the Congregational Church of Naugatuck introduced people to the music many of our youth are listening to, and the internet sites where they spend much of their free time. She discussed how we might utilize these interests in developing our youth programs.

The final session, "Games and Community Building," was led by Debby Kirk, who serves both the First Congregational Church of Woodstock and the East Woodstock Congregational Church. She discussed skills to help link games and other group activities to faith lessons, and shared ideas for creating Christian community that is welcoming to youth.

The Stepping Stones programs were organized by the Connecticut UCC Partners in Education (PIE), a ministry of the Connecticut Conference. Amy Beveridge, Christian Education Coordinator for the Conference, says "The Partners sensed the need for Youth Ministry Stepping Stones offerings. They dreamed up this, which has been very successful. I'm very pleased."

Through Stepping Stones, and bolstered with the recent addition to the Conference staff of Rev. Da Vita McCallister as full-time Associate Conference Minister for Youth and Young Adult Ministry, the Conference continues to expand and enhance its ability to help equip local churches for vibrant, vital and engaging ministry with the youth of their congregation.

Stepping Stones for Christian Education in April

The third year of Stepping Stones programs for Christian Educators and those interested in CE programming at their church continues this spring with two offerings. The first, *Faith Formation – Serving It Family Style*, will be held Thursday, April 10 at First Congregational Church, 359 Route 6, in Andover. Family is widely considered to be the most significant influence in the faith formation of children and youth. Workshop leaders Gloria Bent and Charlotte LaVoie, both Certified Christian Educators, will help consider the ways a congregation's CE ministry can support adults in their roles as the primary Christian educators for their children.

The second program, *Spiritual Disciplines*, will meet Thursday, April 24 at Wapping Community Church, 1790 Ellington Rd. in South Windsor. Much is written about the ways in which ancient and modern spiritual practices (disciplines) ground and nurture our relationship with God. Heather Eaton and Karen Ziel will lead an exploration of spiritual disciplines for all ages in a hands-on way. Both programs begin with a light supper at 6, followed by presentation and dialogue from 6:45 to 9. The cost is \$12.

To learn more about the Stepping Stones programs, please contact Amy Beveridge at amyb@ctucc.org, 860-233-5564, or toll-free at 866-367-2822.



Positions

BRIDGEPORT – Olivet Congregational Church seeks a Church Administrator familiar with MS Office and website maintenance. Four hours per day (primarily AM), five days a week.
• Contact: Rev. Dr. Anne Coffman, Olivet Congregational Church, 2102 Main Street, Bridgeport, CT 06606; awcoff@sbcglobal.net

CANTON – The First Congregational Church seeks a part-time Senior Youth Leader to coordinate and implement all senior high school youth group activities, including fellowship, worship, and missions/service. Approximately eight hours per week, September to May, and a summer mission project. Immediate start is available. Contact the church office at 860-693-4581.

HARTFORD – Asylum Hill Congregational Church (www.ahcc.org), a faith community of more than 2,000 members, seeks a creative, full-time Director of Children and Family Ministries to work with over 200 children, birth through 6th grade, from the church and the surrounding community. The ideal candidate will have a calling to serve the entire family, at least three years of educational and administrative experience, knowledge of curriculum development and CE tools, and experience training leaders and volunteers. Full benefits, with salary based on experience. Contact: e-mail cover letter, resume and references to cannon@ahcc.org, attn: David Carter, Search Committee Chair; or mail to Children's Ministry Search Committee, AHCC, 814 Asylum Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105.

MONROE – The Congregational Church seeks a creative, outgoing professional with strong organizational skills, who enjoys working as part of a team. Responsibilities include providing administrative support to two pastors, maintaining church records and database, support for office operations, scheduling church events, and interacting with the public. Must be proficient in Microsoft applications; knowledge of Church Windows software a plus. The position is full-time and is available immediately. Please submit resume and salary requirements to: mccresume@sbcglobal.net. No calls please.

NORTH HAVEN – The Congregational Church seeks an ordained or soon-to-be ordained Associate Minister, 32-36 hours per week. This person will complement the work of the senior pastor and the laity in all facets of ministry, including our established ministry with children and

youth, an adult education program, and adult volunteers in support of these ministries. Competitive compensation, including health benefits, is offered.

• Contact: Associate Minister Search Committee, North Haven Congregational Church, 28 Church Street, North Haven, CT 06473; 203-239-5691; or northhavenucc@snet.net.

SOUTHBURY – United Church of Christ seeks a temporary, part-time (10 hours per week) Christian Education Administrator. Involves curriculum planning and program implementation for pre-school through 7th grade; assists in the recruitment and training of Sunday School teachers. Experience with Workshop Rotation Model a plus. Flexible times; Sunday 9–11 am a must. Biblical knowledge required. Send resume and references to United Church of Christ, 283 Main St. North, Southbury, CT 06488; or united.ch.christ@sbcglobal.net

SUFFIELD – First Church of Christ seeks a Director of Youth Ministry, 15-20 hours per week. An energetic, outgoing leader will engage youth grades 6-12 in faith-building activities and mission experiences. The director will plan and direct regular youth meetings and activities, two weekend retreats and one, week-long mission trip per year. Prior Youth Ministry experience and ACE credentials are preferred. Salary range is \$15,000-18,000. • Contact: First Church of Christ, attn: Bobbie Rodgers, 81 High Street, Suffield, CT 06078; the church office at 860-668-7223; or rogersbobbie@cox.net

WOODBURY – The First Congregational Church (UCC) seeks an Organist/Choir Director. Sunday worship is at 10, with rehearsals following the service. The church has a Hook and Hastings organ, with 21 ranks of pipes and chimes. Piano, organ and/or choral experience required. Salary is between \$10,000 and 14,000 per year (negotiable). Benefits include SS and two weeks paid vacation, plus one floating Sunday. Weddings and funerals are paid separately. • Contact: the Church office at 203-263-2846; or Peter McIvor, First Congregational Church of Woodbury, UCC, 214 Main Street South, Woodbury, CT 06798.

For Sale or to Give

BRIDGEPORT – Olivet Congregational Church has a Schulmerich Carillon Bell System, Americana 180 series, circa 1904. "We can't get it to work, but you might need it for parts or for fun!" • Contact:

Rev. Dr. Anne Coffman, Olivet Congregational Church, 2102 Main Street, Bridgeport, CT 06606; awcoff@sbcglobal.net

are willing to give. Inquiries can be made to the Music Committee at Rocky Hill Congregational Church, 805 Old Main Street, Rocky Hill, CT 06067.

ROCKY HILL – Congregational Church has 12 dark blue polyester choir robes in reasonably good condition they

Homeless for a Night

BY REV. LAURA WESTBY

Rev. Laura Westby serves as Pastor of the First Congregational Church in Danbury, CT. This article first appeared as a reflection in their local church newsletter.

I spent last night in a homeless shelter. No, I didn't suddenly lose my home; I merely left it for a night to volunteer at our overflow shelter. I'd been meaning to do this for some time, but never quite "got around to it" (in other words- hadn't exerted enough effort to make it happen). I had plenty of reasons for delaying, but when the announcement seeking help appeared in the Sunday bulletin, I knew I'd been offered the push I needed. So, anxieties in check and sleeping bag under my arm, I joined Annie for a night.

The shelter guests began arriving around 9 pm. The first stop for all those wishing to use a shelter bed is the City Shelter on New Street. In order to stay at the City Shelter the guest must have some form of ID that shows that they are city residents. Those who cannot do so go to Dorothy Day, along with those for whom there is no room at New Street. Once the Dorothy Day beds are filled, the guests come to the Overflow Shelter here at First Church. They arrive cold and tired. Some go right to sleep after claiming their cot and bedding. Others warm up with some cocoa and snacks, preferring to chat with the volunteers and one another for awhile. By 10 o'clock the lights go out and people settle in.

I am a very light sleeper, so I didn't expect to get much sleep. And I didn't. Put 18 people together in a room, and there is bound to be someone snoring or getting up to use the bathroom. One poor soul coughed most of the night. But I did manage to get about five hours of sleep, more than I expected.

The lack of sleep was difficult, and some nights there are challenges, but the hardest part of serving at the shelter is realizing that the person to whom you're giving cocoa could be your brother or your neighbor. Some of those who come have a mental illness, some are so used to having to fight to stay alive that they can be inconsiderate of others. But each one of the guests thanked us for the small kindnesses we could offer- a razor or a toothbrush, a pair of socks or a warm coat. To a person, they were respectful toward us, and usually tolerant toward one another.

Before I arrived last night, I asked God to help me see Jesus in the guests. I should be careful what I pray for. I can't say I was able to do this with every person, but with many I could. I saw who they might have been before they became homeless and I saw a glimpse of who they are now- brothers and sisters who are broken but still beloved by God. It was both reassuring and devastating. It was also a privilege.

These are the ones the bible calls "the least," the ones with whom God unabashedly takes side. Julie and Angel and Mountain Man and all the rest are among God's favorites, the ones Jesus came to serve and save. They are the ones we are supposed to feed, shelter, visit and care for as if they were Jesus himself.

It's not easy. Your heart *will* be broken and you will not rest as easily afterwards as you did before- and you shouldn't, not as long as people have nowhere else to sleep but the street. But it's not as hard as you think either. I have feeling I'll be going back-maybe you can join me next time.

In the name of the One who has no home but our hearts,
Pastor Laura

For fuller descriptions of these and other events, including registration forms and directions, please visit www.ctucc.org/events.php

Stepping Stones: Faith Formation – Serving It Family Style • Thursday, April 10, 6-9 pm • First Congregational Church, 359 Route 6, Andover, CT 06232 • **Stepping Stones: Spiritual Disciplines • Thursday, April 24, 6-9 pm** • Wapping Community Church, 1790 Ellington Rd., South Windsor, CT 06074 • Please see full descriptions in story on page 5. The programs begin with a light supper at 6, followed by presentation and dialogue from 6:45 to 9. • Cost: \$12 • **Contact:** Amy Beveridge, 125 Sherman St., Hartford, CT 06105; 860-233-5564, or toll-free, 866-367-2822; amyb@ctucc.org

Moving Between the Pew and the Street: Charity, Advocacy, and Vocation • Saturday, April 12, 8:45 – Noon • First Church of Christ UCC, Simsbury • Has your congregation debated whether it's more important to be involved in charity or advocacy work? This workshop explores the ways we live out the call to "do justice." It offers tools for developing priorities -- using faith practices, relationship building and respect for vocation. Workshop leader is the Rev. Michael Denton, Conference Minister of the Pacific Northwest Conference. • Cost: \$10 per person, includes lunch; \$25 for a church team of up to 3 people. • **Contact:** First Church of Christ UCC, 689 Hopmeadow Rd., Simsbury, CT 06070; 860-651-3593

Church Historians' Workshop • Saturday, April 12, 9 am - 2 pm • First Church of Christ, Congregational, 75 Main St., Farmington, CT 06032 • **Contact:** Rev. Evans Sealand, 125 Sherman St., Hartford, CT 06105; 860-233-5564, or toll-free: 866-367-2822; evanss@ctucc.org

Safe Church Policies and Practices Workshop • Saturday, April 12, 9:30 am - 12:30 pm • Church of Christ Congregational, 12 Village Green (Rtes. 44 and 272), Norfolk, CT 06058 • Rev. Kathy Peters will review basic practices and discuss "next steps" after basic policies have been implemented with members of CE boards, Church School teachers, youth leaders, child care workers, pastors, and those responsible for oversight of safe church policies. All UCC churches are welcome. • Cost: Free • **Contact:** Rev. Michael Ciba, Valley Northwest Regional Minister, at michaelc@ctucc.org. Please reply with your church's name; number of participants; a contact person's name, phone number and e-mail address; if

your church already has a "Safe Church" policy; and any specific topics you would like addressed.

Spring Action Weekend • 7 pm, Friday, April 25 – 2 pm, Sunday, April 27 • Silver Lake Conference Center, 223 Low Rd., Sharon, CT 06069 • High School students and all Silver Lake alums are invited to attend! Action Weekends are your chance to give something back to Silver Lake as we prepare for the summer ahead. Bring work boots and gloves, sleeping bag and pillow, toiletries, warm clothes (extra is always good), and your health form from the summer. • Cost: \$35 for high school students; Donations from alums are welcome, too! • **Contact:** Stephanie Pitman at 860-364-5526; slcc_registrar@ctucc.org

CT Women of the UCC Annual Meeting: 80th Anniversary Celebration • Saturday, April 26, 9 am - 3 pm • United Congregational Church of Christ, 877 Park Ave., Bridgeport, CT 06604 • Celebrate the 80th Anniversary of Connecticut Women of the United Church of Christ. Guest speaker the Rev. Da Vita McCallister, Associate Conference Minister for Youth and Young Adult Ministry, will speak on the theme "Giving Hope to Children at Home and Abroad." • Cost: \$16, includes lunch. • **Contact:** Pam Didio 125 Sherman St., Hartford, CT 06105; 860-233-5564, or toll-free: 866-367-2822; pamd@ctucc.org

Mission Trip to New Orleans! • Sunday, April 27 to Saturday, May 3 • Be part of a Conference-wide work trip to our partners in the South Central Conference. (*Please see story on page 4.*)

"Walks Against Hunger" • The Connecticut Food Bank, Sunday, April 27 at Library Park, Waterbury and **Sunday, May 4** at East Rock Park, New Haven. **Foodshare, Sunday, May 4** at The Hartford Insurance Company, 690 Asylum Ave., Hartford. • Each year, Foodshare, the Connecticut Food Bank and their partner agencies provide food for tens of thousands of needy children, adults, working poor families and the elderly in our state. Help make this year's events the biggest and best ever. Registrations are at 1 pm, with the walks beginning at 2 pm. • **Contacts:** Foodshare, 450 Woodland Ave., Bloomfield, CT 06002; 860-286-9999; Connecticut Food Bank, 203-469-5000.

CAUCE Reads Discussion Groups • Tuesday, April 29, 7 pm • The Connecticut Association of United Church Educators (CAUCE) Reads program will discuss "The Phoenix Affirmations: A New Vision for the Future of Christianity," by Rev. Eric Elnes. Join discussion groups hosted by CAUCE Coordinating Committee members to share your insights and hear what others have learned. Directions and the registration form to reserve your place are at www.ctucc.org/events.php. A discussion group with fewer than 5 participants will be cancelled. Locations: **Mansfield Center**, First Church of Christ, 549 Storrs Rd., hosted by Charlotte Lavoie; **Simsbury**, First Church of Christ, 689 Hopmeadow St., hosted by Cindy Cole; **Watertown**, First Congregational Church, 40 DeForest St., hosted by Diane Ciba; and **West Haven**, First Congregational Church, 1 Church St., hosted by Jim Hazlett. • Cost: Free. • **Contact:** Gloria Bent, PO Box 486, Mansfield Center, CT 06250-0486.

A Serenade to Music • Saturday, May 3, 5:00 pm • Wapping Community Church, 1790 Ellington Rd., South Windsor • "Soft stillness and the night become the touches of sweet harmony. Such harmony is in immortal souls." Vaughan Williams' setting of Shakespeare's poem is featured on the 50th anniversary of the composer's death. The program also includes selections from Monteverdi, Beethoven, Brahms and Barber. Come hear CitySingers of Hartford in this eclectic and inspiring choral program. Dinner is at 5:00 pm, followed by the concert at 7:30 pm. • Cost: \$15; \$10 for seniors and students, which includes dinner. • **Additional performances are Sunday, May 4 at 4 pm** at East Granby Congregational Church; cost is \$10, \$5 for seniors and students; **and Sunday, May 18 at 4 pm** at Trinity Episcopal Church, 120 Sigourney St., Hartford; a free will offering is suggested. • **Contact:** CitySingers of Hartford 591 Park Rd., West Hartford, CT 06107; 860-559-5135.

Silver Lake Open House • Saturday, May 4, 2 - 4 pm • Silver Lake Conference Center, 223 Low Rd, Sharon CT 06069 • This is a great time to meet summer staff, take a tour, and get comfortable with where first-time conferees will be living in Christian community for a week of great experiences: making friends, having fun, and growing in the Spirit! • Cost: Free, but registration is required. • **Contact:** Lesley Munshower, 860-364-5526; lesley@ctucc.org

NEAUCE Conference: "Renewal, Rejuvenation and Resources for the Emergent Church" • Tuesday-Thursday, May 6-8 • Craigville Conference Center, Craigville, MA • Keynote speaker is noted author the Rev. Dr. Ivy J. Beckwith, Minister to Children and Families at the Congregational Church of New Canaan. The Conference also features workshops on a wide variety of topics. • **Cost:** Full event is \$250, which includes room and board. Discounts for AUCE members. • **Contact:** Ruth Ann White, NEAUCE Registrar, 13 Jacklyn Dr., Lunenburg, MA 01462.

Connecticut Conference Annual Meeting, Spring Session • Saturday, May 10, 9am - 4:45 pm • South Congregational Church, 9 Pleasant St., Middletown, CT 06457 • The Rev. Cliff Aerie, the UCC's Minister for Creativity and the Arts, will be the keynote presenter for our day of imagining the future Church. (*Please see ad and story on back page.*) • **Contact:** Cecile Gilson, 125 Sherman St., Hartford, CT 06105; 860-233-5564, or toll-free: 866-367-2822; cecileg@ctucc.org

Silver Lake Golf Tournament • Tuesday, June 10, 9 am • Lyman Orchards Golf Club, Middlefield, CT • Join us for the 2nd Annual Silver Lake Golf Tournament. The day begins with a 9 am shotgun start and includes a continental breakfast and luncheon buffet. Last fall, the tournament helped raise more than \$6,000 for the benefit of programs at Silver Lake. • Cost: \$150 per player • **Contact:** Silver Lake Conference Center, 223 Low Rd., Sharon, CT 06069; 860-364-5526; slcc_registrar@ctucc.org

UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns National Gathering • "One Tribe, One Table" • June 26-29, Dallas, TX (Please note new location.) • More information is available at ucccoalition.org/programs/gathering.

2008 National Youth Event • "Living the Life" • July 24-28, at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee • Every four years, NYE hosts about 3,000 youth ages 13-18, their advisors and chaperones for four days of workshops, recreation, great music, worship, faith and community. Registration is now open. • Cost: \$345 per person, which includes accommodations and meals from Thursday night through Sunday night • **Contact:** Rev. Day McCallister at DaVitam@ctucc.org, 860-233-5564; or Rev. Kelly Burd, burdk@ucc.org, 216-736-3860, or toll-free: 866-822-8224, ext. 3871. Please visit www.ucc.org/youth for NYE news and updates!



New Wineskins for a New Day

A Day of Imagination & Creativity for the Church

ALL ARE INVITED!

141st Annual Meeting, Part I Connecticut Conference, UCC

with Rev. Cliff Aerie, UCC Minister for Special Events, Creativity and the Arts
Saturday, May 10, 9 am to 4:45 pm • South Church Congregational, Middletown

Worship Celebration, with the Oikos Jazz Ensemble

Playshops and Imaginarium

Arts of Faith "Festival of Sharing" Performances

Free Registration for Youth 18 and Younger

REGISTRATION IS NOW AVAILABLE ON THE WEB SITE AT WWW.CTUCC.ORG/NEWS/ANLMTG08

Join us at 7 for an inter-generational performance of Global Village Jazz with the Oikos Jazz Ensemble
• Free-will offering is suggested.

For more information, contact Sue Wilber at the Conference office:
suew@ctucc.org; 860-233-5564 or toll-free, 866-367-2822.

NEW WINESKINS FOR A NEW DAY will be a day of Imagination and Creativity for the Church. We'll explore ways in which the life of the church can be infused with creativity and imagination, opening the doors and windows so the Spirit can work in and among us, culminating in the afternoon's *Imaginarium* performance, a not-to-be-missed multi-media experience.

"New Wineskins" will feature a jazz worship celebration, playshops and performances as part of an arts-of-faith "Festival of Sharing," an opportunity to experience how some churches are expressing their faith and fellowship

creatively. Youth 18 and under register for free. Lunch fees will still apply.

KEYNOTER

We are privileged to have as our keynoter the Rev. Cliff Aerie, Minister for Special Events, Creativity and the Arts for the United Church of Christ. A jazz saxophonist, composer and all-round eclectic artist, Cliff has spent a lifetime exploring the adventurous terrain of creativity.

EVENING PERFORMANCE

A part of Cliff's Ministry of Imagination, Creativity and the Arts (MICA) has been the creation of

the Oikos Jazz Ensemble, a world music jazz group that performs at many UCC events and leads jazz vesper services around the country in collaboration with Global Ministries. They were main stage headliners at General Synod 26 in Hartford.

Oikos will perform that evening at 7 p.m. at South Congregational Church. Enjoy an early dinner at one of the Middletown's many fine restaurants and return to the church for inspired and inspiring music. A free-will donation will be received for admission. Don't miss this very special evening!

STEEPLEJACKING: How the Christian Right is Hijacking Mainstream Religion
BY SHELDON CULVER AND JOHN DORHAUER

REVIEWED BY ESTHER SHOUP

Is your church's endowment safe? Who is on your governing boards and how did each one get there? Is your church in denial about a takeover?

Mainline churches are under attack by the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD). Masquerading as a religious group, in reality it is dedicated to a political agenda. The IRD's fundamental purpose is to divide denominations and separate and remove congregations from their denomination for political and social reasons. Denominations such as the Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, and United Church of Christ (UCC) are now experiencing the undermining efforts of the well-heeled IRD.

In the first three chapters of their book, Culver and Dorhauer describe the techniques used, the specific types of people involved, churches targeted, and the splinter groups within denominations that are assisting this effort. The IRD's favored strategy is to create schism that will give them control of the property, finances, and membership of the church. It wants a denomination that pursues a strict, narrow theological base. These background chapters help the reader understand what is behind the steeplejacking that is occurring in America.

The following chapters give examples of how a church is "steeplejacked." The "IRD plants", usually selected local leaders/members and very new members, use disruptive un-Christian, behavior to achieve their goals. When possible, they focus on hot button issues, such as sexual orientation and stem cell research.

The authors outline the warning signs or conditions of steeplejacking. Pastoral leadership in transition, internal conflict, secret meetings, church leadership who profess a fundamentalist theology, and unawareness in the congregation of what is going on - all fit as parts of the strategy. The interim pastor or pastor's role may be that of aggressor, pacifier and/or protector. Specific actions are suggested.

In the final chapter and conclusion, the authors describe how each of us can be attuned to what is going on in the church - learn the signs of attacks. Laity can confront the "new leadership" and fight back against the hijacking.

Each denomination and church has a unique, rich heritage of belief, ministry and worshiping God. If you want to hold on to your "valuable church" this book is a **MUST** read. Steeplejacking has happened, and is happening in Connecticut.

Esther W. Shoup is a member of the Ellington Congregational Church.