



CONTACT

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"MANY HANDS, MANY HEARTS"

Celebrating Our Gulf Coast Response!

BY JIM MORGAN

It has been nearly three years since the devastating hurricanes Katrina and Rita struck along the Gulf Coast in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. During that time, local churches and individual church members in the Connecticut Conference have offered an overwhelming response in prayer, donations and hands-on work.

It's time to celebrate those efforts! If you or your church have participated in the relief, recovery and rebuilding efforts – with our partners at Back Bay Mission, in New Orleans, the Florida Conference, or anywhere else along the Gulf – please join us from 5 to 7 pm Saturday, September 27th at the Rocky Hill Congregational Church for a celebration worship service at 5 pm and social gathering to follow. The Dixieland Jazz Ensemble will entertain us with sounds of the south. Beverages will be provided; please bring an appetizer or dessert to share.

Show your group's fun and spirit by sending a few photos via e-mail (ManyHandsManyHearts@cox.net) that we can include in a video we'll show that evening.

It's important that you **RSVP by September 18** to Jo-Ann Hornyak at 860-394-9780 or to the e-mail address above.

Much remains to be done along the Gulf, and we know that the faithful of Connecticut will continue to offer their hands and hearts to those in need. Please join us as we come together to recognize what we have accomplished, and upon which we will continue to build.

Rocky Hill Congregational Church is located at 805 Main Street in Rocky Hill, CT. The church office can be reached at 860-529-4167.



SPRING ANNUAL MEETING

Celebrating the Creative Spirit



Counterclockwise, from top left: Conference Minister Rev. Dr. Davida Foy Crabtree celebrates communion; Living Waters Award recipient, Dr. John Ramos, Sr., Bridgeport Superintendent of Education; Val Tutson and Rev. Cliff Aerie lead the Imaginarium; members of Silver Lake's "Sing Praise!" 2007 summer conference in a New Wineskins Festival "playshop;" Arianna Aerie, singing with the Oikos Jazz Ensemble; sharing the artisans' gifts of inspiration and creation; interpretive dance during the Imaginarium.

BY REV. ERIC ANDERSON

About 500 pastors, church leaders, delegates, young people, and creative souls gathered on Saturday, May 10, at South Congregational Church UCC for the Spring Session of the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference. Those present explored their place as co-creators with God in a celebration

of music, dance, drama, and visual arts, led by keynoter the Rev. Cliff Aerie, Minister for Special Events, Creativity and the Arts of the United Church of Christ.

In addition to a passion for artistic expression, Aerie brought with him members of the jazz ensemble Oikos, and called upon the talents of many members of the Connecticut Conference for his morning presentation and for the Imaginarium that closed the day.

In his morning presentation, Aerie told the story of the construction of St. Paul's Cathedral following the Great London Fire, designed by Sir Christopher Wren. On its completion, King James II was reported to have said that the new church was "awful, artificial, and amusing."

Wren was delighted, for the king had actually meant that the cathedral inspired awe, that it celebrated the work

Continued on page 6

The Reconciled Community

-- our institutions, government, towns and cities, corporations and even our dreams -- the odes of the day are to the rights and privileges of individuals. Never mind that nothing could be more



I wrote the following reflection on an airplane this spring as I was thinking about the United Church of Christ's unique voice and unique gift to our nation. I thought I'd share it as a

late summer reflection, as we prepare for the fall and welcoming new members, developing program to teach the basics of our covenantal polity, and celebrating life in community.

We live in an era that celebrates the individual. Across our societal constructs

unChristian and unBiblical. Never mind that those who celebrate the most are precisely those who claim our nation to be Judeo-Christian (indeed, too many say only Christian!) Yet the hope of this nation, this experiment in democracy, has always been in devotion to community, to the common good, to putting others before ourselves.

There are few places left where a deep and true democracy is still practiced. Very few places where we learn to live in community, placing the good of the whole before the good of the one, no matter how powerful that one. I believe that our teaching the members of our churches how to dwell in diversity, how to live together, to make decisions in careful and caring processes, to honor covenant as the guiding principle of our polity is to offer a gift to the nation.

Only in churches like ours, with no hierarchy and no commander or boss,

There are few places left where a deep and true democracy is still practiced. Very few places where we learn to live in community, placing the good of the whole before the good of the one, no matter how powerful that one.

is this discipline of living in reconciled community still practiced. In the United Church of Christ, we choose to live in covenant, under shared allegiance to Jesus Christ. Because of him, our differences do in fact make us stronger and unite us.

This is perhaps the most important gift we give to our members, our communities and our nation. Yet, it is also the most challenging, counter-cultural teaching we have before us.

In most of our churches, the majority of members have come from outside our tradition, often from more authoritarian backgrounds, sometimes from other mainstream denominations

that are governed differently. They have found a Church to love. We owe it to them, and to our ideal of democracy, to teach them our ways, Christ's way. A way that honors each individual for their presence and their gifts, yet calls each one into the Christian community that always places the good of the many above the preference of the one.

Our teaching must be continuous and it must help our members live our principles in their neighborhoods, workplaces, towns, cities and nation. We can be the leaven in the loaf. Having been taught, we teach. Having been saved from narrow, self-aggrandizing individualism, we can set our nation free from the same.

Interpreting Our Global Mission

BY JIM MORGAN

Do you have a passion for mission? Are you interested in energizing your congregation through global mission involvement? Have you had or would you like to have an experience serving overseas?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, the Wider Church Ministry Team has a program that will be of interest to you. In recent months, the team has completed two, day-long sessions of Ministries and Mission Interpreters training (MMI), sponsored by the Wider Church Ministries office of the United Church of Christ.

This training has equipped nearly two dozen clergy and lay volunteers to visit with local congregations and other interested groups to help interpret the wide range of global mission activities conducted jointly by the UCC and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) through our common organization, Global Ministries.

Global Ministries operates around the world in five principal regions, which are identified as Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and Europe, Africa, Southern Asia, and East Asia and the Pacific. The sessions addressed a wide range of topics, including A Theological Basis for Mission, How to Be a Global Mission Church, and Telling the Stories of Mission.

If you are a member of your congregation's mission and outreach committee looking for new ideas, an MMI visit might be just the thing for you. MMI volunteers are prepared to work with DVDs, PowerPoint programs, handout materials and regularly updated, first-hand accounts from missionaries in these fields.

This variety of tools and information can help them interpret our critical presence in response to the deepest needs – physical, emotional, financial and spiritual – of the communities we serve and touch through Global Ministries. It conveys a powerful sense of the faith-affirming and life-changing global mission work made possible by support of Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM), the voluntary giving from local congregations to their UCC Conference, which in turn shares those funds with the national setting of the Church.

If you are interested in learning more about Wider Church Ministries or in arranging for a presentation by an MMI, please contact the co-chairs of the Conference's Wider Church Ministry Team, Elizabeth McCosh-Lillie (emccosh@snet.net) or Jill Shaw (gmshaw@juno.com).

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The Amistad Completes an Epic Voyage

BY JIM MORGAN

The year-long, 14,000 mile international "Atlantic Freedom Tour" of the Freedom Schooner Amistad ended as she docked safely at New Haven's Long Wharf on Saturday morning, June 21, successfully completing her journey's challenging final legs, first from the Cape Verde Islands to Charleston, South Carolina and then up the eastern seaboard to Connecticut.

To the spirited call-and-response cries of "Amistad!" "Freedom!" from hundreds gathered to welcome her home, the 99-ton, 127-foot long schooner sailed in exactly one year to the day from departure on her first trans-Atlantic crossing, resoundingly greeted by church choirs, drumming groups and numerous dignitaries.

The Amistad embarked on its historic voyage as Connecticut's flagship and international ambassador of freedom and goodwill, first visiting England to help celebrate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the British Empire. From there she made her way down the west coast of Africa, arriving at Freetown, Sierra Leone, the homeland from which the Mendi captives were taken

in 1839, sailing across the infamous Middle Passage and intended for the slave auctions in the Caribbean and United States.

The story of their ship-board rebellion and subsequent trial and acquittal before the U.S. Supreme Court continues to inspire those who seek freedom to this very day. Several Congregational churches in Connecticut, forebears of the United Church of Christ, as well as prominent individuals, played a crucial role in supporting the captives and their pursuit of justice. Indeed, today the Connecticut Conference is one of the major sponsors of the Amistad.

The significance of this story was recounted by several of the morning's speakers, who included U.S. Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, state Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, state Senator Toni Harp and New Haven Mayor John DeStefano, who cited the ship's history as "a wonderful message to the world of human character and resiliency."

Noting the Amistad's powerful symbolism as a testament to justice, tolerance and equality around the globe, Rep. DeLauro said it is "living its values, carrying its message. This ship is part of who we are."

Attorney General Blumenthal summarized the feelings of many in the crowd, seeing in the Amistad "the power of freedom... It is that ideal that can move the world and move America. Welcome home, we're proud of you. Job well done."

Urban Outreach Mission Trip

Giving and Receiving

BY JULIE MENARD

Recently, a small but mighty high school youth group from the First Church of Christ UCC in Mansfield – whose motto is "Where Faith Takes Action," - chose to offer up their school vacation, and instead traveled to Boston for a week of mission work.

We were offered hospitality from the First Church in Charlestown. Upon arrival, the group met with Carl McDonald from Boston Urban Outreach, a division of the Boston Mission Society. We began the week with an orientation that focused the group on our purpose and goals. We quickly realized that we were being asked to step out of our comfort zones.

Throughout the week, we encountered a side of Boston that none of us had experienced on our family trips to the city. Our work brought us together with people in a variety of settings who were homeless, as well as with the elderly, children and the prison population. At each site, we encountered a strong sense of hospitality and community. It was humbling to receive hospitality from those who had no home. Our week of work took us to places and sacred spaces where these folks gather, eat, create, worship and commune. The experience opened the group's eyes to the social stratification and inequity in the world.

The week ended with a shared meal, when Carl again met with our group to reflect on our week of mission work. The entire experience was a powerful and educational one for all involved. We found meaning and purpose in all that we did, as we served side by side with those whom we encountered throughout the week – offering work as well as the ministry of presence. We fed and were fed, taught and were taught – a true blessing.

Julie Menard is a high school student and member of First Church of Christ UCC in Mansfield Center, Connecticut.

Sam Fogal

A Personal Reflection

BY AMY BEVERIDGE

The Rev. Dr. Samuel W. Fogal died on Saturday, July 5, 2008. Sam served churches in Baltimore, Maryland and Darien, Connecticut before joining the Connecticut Conference staff in January 1984. He was the Minister of the Department of Church Life and Leadership for the twelve and a half years he was on the staff, and he also served for a number of years as an Area Minister, providing Conference connection to the churches of the Southwest area of the state.

I was primarily Sam's support person during those years. In that time I came to know Sam as a person of deep biblical faith and commitments. He often quoted the texts that guided his ministry. Primary among them was this passage from Luke "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4: 18-19).

Working for social justice, calling institutions—including the Church—to serve the poor and needy, and preaching the good news of liberation through Jesus Christ were hallmarks of Sam's ministry as I observed it. Accordingly, he took deep pride in his wife Laurie Etter's prison ministry and in the many honors she has received for her work.

At the same time, Sam had the heart of a pastor. I was aware of the huge number of hours he devoted to pastoral care for the pastors in his area, for the members of our Department, for other staff members, for national staff with whom he also worked, as well as for his many friends. His letters were filled with concern and warmth for each person (I know, for in those days I typed many of them!), and he was generous with expressions of appreciation and thanks for each one.

Sam valued other people's gifts and believed his own ministry was enhanced when the people around him were empowered to use those gifts. It was a natural step for him to give me opportunities to serve partly as program staff, and so I was able to work with laity who served on Nominating Committees and as members of caring ministries. "Empowerment" became one of the key words we used to define and describe the ministries of our Department.

When our paths took different directions in 1996, Sam and I continued to see one another occasionally. He was always concerned about how I was doing and how my family was. When my husband Tom and I visited him two days before he died, he was still inquiring about our welfare, still expressing gratitude for the years of ministry we had shared.

Another passage that Sam often quoted was Philippians 3:12. Paul has spoken of his desire to "know Christ and the power of his resurrection..." "Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own." Once it was clear there was no hope of his getting well again, Sam chose home hospice care and was fully aware and accepting of his coming death. He "pressed on." In so doing, he continued to witness to us. How just like him!

Amy Beveridge retired from the Connecticut Conference on July 1st. She served most recently as Director of the Ruth Dudley Resource Center and Christian Education facilitator for the Conference.

Sacred Dialogue Expands

BY REV. LOIS HAPPE

Through distressing events this spring, the American public, and members of the United Church of Christ in particular, were reminded how painful the issue of race continues to be in this country. Following the publicity generated by remarks made by the Rev. Jeremiah Wright, Rev. John Thomas, on behalf of the Collegium, issued an invitation to the churches of the UCC to inaugurate Sacred Conversations concerning race on May 18. Many pastors accepted the invitation, preaching on the issue then or a Sunday soon after.

This was a good first step in renewing a dialogue that has languished in recent years. Our awareness of the depth and extent of racism has been rekindled; we have been reminded of the divides that continue to plague our society. We

should build on this opportunity to continue our efforts to address racism and its effects. At a Justice and Witness gathering this summer, a specific project was proposed that would expand this re-invigorated dialogue.

Through the coming year, a series of articles will appear in ConnTact, reflections prepared by several of conference ministry teams that will discuss the ways racism affects, intensifies and/or intersects with the particular issue in which the team has been active. In this edition, the first in the series shows how race is related to significant inequalities in healthcare in Connecticut. We are invited, in this article and those to follow, to consider in light of our conviction that all humanity is created in the image of God, how we can allow the disparities to continue.

We are not always comfortable talking about racism. Those of us in the majority population resist the implicit charge of responsibility; those in

communities of color are rightfully angry about the depth and extent of the effects of racism they must cope with daily. Guilt and anger get in the way of dialogue. Denial and despair stymie genuine conversation. In order to enter into the heart of the matter, we will need to work hard at suspending some of our initial emotional impulses. This series has as its premise that these uncomfortable discussions will be made less difficult by addressing the effects of racism rather than by assigning blame. The series is also predicated on the assumption that individuals of the majority population are more likely to be uninformed about those effects than people of color and therefore are learners in any conversation about racism and its consequences.

The manifestations of racism are not hidden, although many of us may not be in the habit of seeing them. It is incumbent on us not to turn away, not to hide our eyes, not to deny the truth of the matter – racism continues to

stunt the lives and spirits of significant numbers of our brothers and sisters. While we may not, as individuals, be responsible for creating the circumstances that allowed some of us to prosper and others to struggle without relief, nevertheless, we are responsible for our choice to permit the disparities to go unremarked, unaddressed and unresolved.

The Justice and Witness group is planning a conference-wide forum in February to consider the effects of racism that will be discussed in these pages. It will be an additional opportunity to continue Sacred Conversations and to sustain our efforts to reduce and remove the burden disproportionately carried by some.

Please see the first article in this series, "Health Care and Racial Disparity" on page 5.

Connecticut Conference Youth Revive International Mission Program

BY REV. PETE ALLEN

In the 1980's and 90's, Bryan Nurnberger grew up in the Naugatuck Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, absorbing a message of compassion from his parents, pastors, teachers, and youth leaders. These spiritual mentors sowed seeds that are now blossoming and bearing fruit in Connecticut and Mexico.

This April, Mr. Nurnberger played guide and host for a Silver Lake mission team as they lived in Oaxaca, Mexico with needy children and constructed a home for a family living at the local dump. Eight teenagers and three adults from Connecticut Conference churches worked hard, laughed often, cemented friendships, deepened faith, and opened their hearts as they revived Silver Lake's international mission program.

During the course of the trip, special bonds formed between mission team members and the kids of Casa Hogar Benito Juarez, the children's home that was their base for the week. About one third of Casa Hogar's children live with disabilities, while others have been orphaned or abandoned.

In reflecting on the trip, Lauren Joy, a sophomore from Winchester Center Congregational Church, said, "We received so much more than we gave. I

grew in confidence. I realize now that I can make a difference in someone's life."

The Silver Lake team spent weekdays working at Oaxaca's city dump, where 33 families live and try to sustain themselves with whatever the dump can provide. These families' "houses" were small shacks made of discarded pieces of cardboard, plywood, and plastic. With help from local masons, the mission team constructed a home made of concrete block and painted three other homes. These simple structures are weatherproof and provide a safe, dry, quiet space for children to do homework.

The eight teens who made the trip were asked to share their experiences. All of them reported to their home congregations and the group made a joint presentation at the Conference Annual Meeting in May. This summer, several of them will visit Silver Lake to inspire conferees with tales of their week in Mexico.

Emma Lane, a sophomore from the First Church of Christ in Mansfield Center, wrote, "There are so many stories to tell. Hopefully I will get people pumped up about doing mission work. This trip was one of the most incredibly powerful things that I have ever experienced. I can't wait to go again next year!!"

Simply Smiles, Inc.

Bryan Nurnberger is the founder and president of Simply Smiles, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of impoverished children. Over the past several years, Simply Smiles has renovated the Casa Hogar Benito Juarez children's home

in Oaxaca, Mexico. More than a dozen mission teams from Connecticut UCC churches (and a few other locations) did the work and provided the children and staff with companionship, hugs and smiles.

Financial help from many sources – primarily individuals and congregations from the Connecticut Conference – provides adequate clothing (including school uniforms), improved nutrition, health care, and computers for the residents of Casa Hogar. Donations are laying the foundation for a new college scholarship program.

As of mid-summer, 2008, Simply Smiles mission teams have constructed seventeen houses at the Oaxaca dump. Thirteen more are planned. The City of

Oaxaca has recently recognized this new cluster of homes as a true neighborhood and has promised to provide electricity!

For more information, please visit www.simplysmiles.org

Next Year

If you know of a high-school age young person who is interested in attending next April's Silver Lake mission trip to Oaxaca, information will be posted on silverlake.ctucc.org by October '08. You may also contact the Rev. DaVita McCallister at the Conference office or the Rev. Peter Allen at the Monroe Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, in Monroe, CT.



Members of the Silver Lake 2008 International Mission Team, pictured left to right: Josh Dufresne, Jillian Dufresne, Rev. Pete Allen, Daniel Otte, Lauren Joy, Sara Cipot, Jeff Wright, Emma Lane, Steve Lombardi, Ryan Budde, Grace Krusell.

Health Care and Racial Disparity

BY REV. LOIS HAPPE

A year ago, the delegates to the annual meeting voted in favor of a resolution that called for quality, affordable healthcare for all. There was no debate on the floor and the vote was nearly unanimous. Most of us, it seems, understand that the present system of delivering healthcare is not working well and that change is imperative.

Our discussion coincided with the publication of an important document, "A Report on Health Disparities in Connecticut," by the Connecticut chapter of the NAACP. In convincing detail, the report shows how 21% of Connecticut's population¹ does not receive its share of the state's medical resources. Based on an extensive review of public records, the report reached this conclusion: "(This report) reveals that compared with Whites, African Americans and Hispanics were more likely to be in fair or poor health. African Americans in Connecticut continue to lead the state in the prevalence of most chronic health illnesses reported. It clarifies that health disparities in Connecticut do exist and are indeed very prominent in the lives of its African American citizens." (For the complete text, see www.naacpc.org.)

This spring, we have been invited to again consider how racism continues to affect our lives. Since we have endorsed, in our resolution, the assertion that "providing quality, effective, and affordable healthcare, available to all people, is our Christian moral obligation," we

therefore need to do our homework to understand why healthcare is not equitably distributed and, more important, what we have within our power to do to redress the disparities that are glaringly obvious.

Among the findings of the report, of particular concern is the extent to which chronic conditions – diabetes, asthma and hypertension – show up in disturbing proportions among communities of color. The average age for hospital admission for these diseases for African Americans is 51, for Hispanics, 59 and for whites, 65. African Americans are nearly four times more likely to be hospitalized for diabetes than whites; Hispanics 2.5 times more likely.

According to James Rawlings, MPH, chair of the NAACP Health Committee, the scarcity of primary health care services is a primary reason for the higher incidence of these treatable conditions in communities of color. Where the indicators of chronic illness are high, the communities are underserved. He points out how costly this neglect is to households – these disabilities are associated with unemployment, dependency on other family members, and increased risk for impaired mental health. One person struggling with a chronic health issue affects the entire family system; that family system draws down resources from the whole community as a consequence. The cost for emergency services to treat these conditions has steadily increased from \$611 million in 2000 to an estimated \$1.1 billion in 2008.

The report acknowledges the complicated relationships among race, ethnicity and socio-economic status that are responsible for the

current problem. It goes on to suggest that poverty is the root cause, requiring significant economic resources to remedy.

Circumstances have converged to offer some possibilities to address the disparities that institutional racism has created. A community in our midst has been woefully underserved and will continue to be underserved unless we make common cause with our allies to see that we do better. The coming legislative year promises to include efforts to make changes. We should actively support a plan that will provide quality healthcare for all.

To understand better what is at stake, consider using the new healthcare curriculum written by Amy Beveridge. It is available online through the conference website—check it out and plan to use it as an adult education offering this fall. Then vow to pay attention. When good bills are introduced, express your concern to your state representatives and senators. If you haven't spoken up before and you need support, take a friend with you. Write a letter! Make a call! Just do it!

Kim Harrison, our public policy advocate, will keep us up to date with developments at the capitol. Ken Esposito is working as an educator for the UCC congregations on this issue. Contact him at the Christian Activities Council at 860-527-9860 to schedule a community forum or a congregational discussion.

¹Connecticut's population includes 9.1% African Americans, 9.4% Hispanics, and 2.4% Asian Americans. (Figures from a presentation by James Rawlings on February 27, 2008.)

The Rev. Lois Happe is Eastern Regional Minister for the Connecticut Conference, UCC.

Conference Creates New ACM Position

The Connecticut Conference has announced the creation of a new Associate Conference Minister position, that of Generosity Ministries, which will function at the Conference's senior staff level.

A letter sent in June to the Pastors of the Churches of the Conference by Conference Minister, the Rev. Dr. Davida Foy Crabtree, explained that we are in a very different era around fund-raising and financial development in our churches and in our common life. She said the new ACM will work with our churches, members and the Conference itself to help us adapt to this new era and to improve our capacity for inviting people into deeper generosity in their whole lives.

More specifically, the Generosity Ministries position will help develop and implement a comprehensive strategy of financial development, including individual donors, local churches and organizations, as well as new initiatives to create giving opportunities for members and churches of the United Church of Christ in Connecticut.

Rev. Crabtree's letter noted that this new era of financial development is fueled not only by the present downturn in the economy, but also by new generations who give very differently than their predecessors.

Giving for general purposes is down in almost every nonprofit organization. The Generosity Minister will strive to develop opportunities that respond to people's increasingly evident desire to give strategically and in new forms to specific needs that move and inspire their generosity, including *Now For the Future: The Campaign for Silver Lake*.

In order to make this an essentially neutral financial move, the senior staff level position of ACM for Wider Church Ministries has been eliminated, effective August 1. Communications functions that are part of that position will be integrated with the Conference's technology ministries. Rev. Eric Anderson will serve in this expanded role of Minister for Communications and Technology. He will edit ConnTact and other publications and continue to lead our technology initiatives, along with a part-time assistant.

A full job description of the Generosity Ministries position can be viewed at <http://www.ctucc.org/generosity>.



New Orleans Trip

BY JO-ANN HORNYAK

In April, a small but mighty band of Nutmeggers (Maryland Grier and Suzanne Robinson of Faith Congregational Church in Hartford, and Anne Kirkpatrick and I from Somers Congregational Church) traveled to New Orleans with our limited construction skills and big hearts. We came back with the ability to tile and grout a floor, but also with saddened hearts that so much more still needs to be done.

We stayed at Little Farms Church and could not have been more welcomed than by this congregation. Every week the parishioners put on a potluck supper of delicious southern cooking. We not only enjoyed some great food, but got to meet some wonderfully

caring people, and learned first hand of their experiences during the Hurricane Katrina, nearly three years ago now.

If you think you have nothing to offer in the way of skills and couldn't possibly be of help... you are wrong. The recovery of New Orleans will be with us for quite a while, and there is surely something you can do, or learn to do. Please, make the decision to help. Plan a mission trip for your church or join another group. It is easy to find some open spots. Rev. Alan Coe, Minister for Disaster Recovery, and Sarah McAllister, Volunteer Coordinator are there to help plan your trip. Call them at 504-258-7306 or email at ucchurricanerecovery@yahoo.com

Pictured, left to right, are Maryland Grier, Anne Kirkpatrick, Jo-Ann Hornyak and Suzanne Robinson.

Celebrating the Creative Spirit

Continued from page 1

of artisans, and that it reflected the inspiration of the Muses. Aerie stressed the importance for the entire church to nurture the creative spirits within it, embrace their gifts, and let those gifts lead them to awe, to appreciation of art, and to the guidance of their own muses.

Aerie supported his presentation with songs rendered by his daughter, vocalist Arianna Aerie, and Oikos pianist Chris Bakriges. Quoting Frederick Buechner, he said, "the place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." "Where can you bring your deep gladness," Aerie asked, "to make a difference?"

The Conference presented the Living Waters Award, which recognizes significant ministry by a lay member of a UCC church in the state, to Dr. John Ramos, Sr., Superintendent of Education in Bridgeport and a member of First Congregational Church UCC of Norwalk and associate member of First Congregational Church UCC of Watertown. Ramos was praised for his leadership skills, for his efforts to transform the educational system, working with local faith communities, city government, the city's Board of Education and through the legislative process.

In his acceptance, Ramos asked the assembly to pray for schools and children every morning, and to encourage the state General Assembly to fully fund all-day kindergarten programs.

"I know Congregationalists," Ramos said, "and I know that you pray, and I also know that you act, and if I can get you to feel this, I know that you'll act on it."

Attendees had the first viewing of a new video produced by the Conference on Our Church's Wider Mission Giving. The eight-minute piece describes some of the ministries supported by local church contributions to the wider church through OCWM. It may be viewed online, and additional copies are available from the Conference office in Hartford.

Church Creativity Displayed

The Conference explored some of the possibilities offered to ministry by the imagination and creative arts through workshops and special presentations of the "New Wineskins Festival" that occupied the middle of the day. "New Wineskins" presented artists and performing groups from around the Conference who showcased their work and the ways in which it informs their faith, or helps proclaim their faith. Meeting delegates and visitors delegates chose from twenty different workshop offerings, including puppetry, dance, visual artistry, creative writing, emerging technologies, and music. Drums boomed, puppets danced, young people sang, and people learned about financial affairs, health care and youth ministry.

The day concluded with a Worshipful Imaginarium, a seventy-five minute journey through the Pentecost story and artistic expression hosted by Aerie and noted storyteller Valerie Tutson. Three actors playing the apostle Peter, a man, and a woman described the events of the first Pentecost, accompanied by dance, music, and surrounded by a painter, a potter, a spinner, and a digital artist working at their arts. Specially written for the occasion by Aerie, the Imaginarium also included original work by South Church Music Director Neely Bruce.

As Peter said at the close: "Each of us can be a new wineskin... a vessel for the holy... a source of refreshment and renewal... a blessing."

Oikos returned to South Congregational Church that evening to present a Global Village Jazz Concert. Cliff and Arianna Aerie told stories of their travels around the world as background for the different rhythms and voices of the compositions, many composed by Cliff Aerie and Chris Bakriges. In addition to Aerie on saxophone and Bakriges on piano, Oikos consists of Arianna Aerie, vocals; Jay Hoggard, vibraphone; Belden Bullock, bass; and Bill Arnold, drums.

A Visit to the Church House

BY REV. STAN YOUNGBERG

While on vacation a couple of years ago, my wife Pat and I scheduled a summer day's visit to the Church House, the UCC's headquarters at 700 Prospect Avenue in Cleveland, Ohio. I highly recommend this occasion as many of you are already planning ahead to travel to the 27th General Synod in Grand Rapids, Michigan next June.

We began our tour as part of a small group led by Hans Holznagel, Assistant to the Collegium for Community Life. Hans led us from floor to floor, introducing us to many friendly employees who then told of their ministry and work.

We visited the offices of Justice and Witness Ministries, Local Church Ministries, Wider Church Ministries, General Minister and President and the Associate General Minister offices. The Rev. John Thomas and Mrs. Edith Guffey were both in that day to our great satisfaction and both spent considerable time welcoming us and chatting informally about who we were and their given ministries and enthusiasm for their work as leaders among us.

We then were brought to a very special place of worship, The Amistad Chapel. Our tour of the chapel began around the font where we recalled biblical water stories - Noah's Ark, the Baptism of Jesus, and the turning of water into wine. Then Hans recounted the familiar UCC water story - the Amistad event.

In 1839, 53 captives from Sierra Leone revolted during transport toward slavery on the ship, *La Amistad* (friendship). As they tried to sail back to Africa they were intercepted and brought to the United States, where they were put on trial. Congregationalist abolitionists raised funds, hired lawyers, and befriended them. The case was tried and appealed, reaching the Supreme Court, where it was argued and won in 1841 by former President John Quincy Adams. The freed captives finally returned

home, thanks to intensive fund-raising by their Congregational abolitionist friends. Five years later, some of those funds supported the social justice work of the American Missionary Association (AMA), formed in 1846.

Once our tour group heard the *Amistad* story, we identified its elements in the Amistad Chapel: Native Sierra Leone Ikoro Wood Cross and communion table, nautical themes in the boat shaped chapel, rudder and compass images, star-like ceiling lights, and small replicas of the Amistad murals (residing at the UCC's historically black Talladega College). We all were given several minutes to reflect and meditate upon the moment of our being there and some meaning of gratitude for those who courageously said "no" to injustices of their time, and "yes" to interceding in order to bring about justice.

Eventually our tour moved on to other places in the Church House. We found ourselves on the 9th floor where the social justice legacy continues in the AMA's successor body - the Justice and Witness Ministries - to this day. Gifts from local UCC congregations to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) sustain this and other ministries of the national setting of the United Church of Christ today.

I urge you to plan ahead if your destination is General Synod 27 and discover the inspiring good work happening all the time inside the UCC Church House via an extraordinary, dedicated, and faithful staff. Numerous surprises await you no matter what your particular area of interest and ministry within the wide array of attractions found in the United Church of Christ. Inspiring energy will be found around every corner. Your experience will give memories to savor and take home as one of several experiences you'll enjoy by attending General Synod 27.

The Rev. Stan Youngberg serves as Interim Pastor at North Church in New Hartford, CT.

E V E N T S

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

Ye Olde Country Fair and Auction

• **August 16, 10am - 4pm** • North Guilford Congl. Church, 159 Ledge Hill Rd., North Guilford • An old fashioned country fair, complete with auction under the tent, hand crafted items, linens and things, jewelry, silent auction, antiques, white elephant bargains, books, produce and plants, tools, toys, food and peach shortcake and a magnificent quilt show. For the children we have farm animals, children's games, and rides on the Little Toot Railroad. • Cost: Free admission • Contact: Michele Van Epps at 203-457-0581; michele.vanepps@gmail.com

Film: "Hidden Secrets"

• **September 5, 7 pm** • South Church, 277 Main St., Hartford • South Church offers the Christian film "Hidden Secrets," a family-oriented film of love, laughter and spirituality. • Cost: Free • Contact: Carol Bradford at South Church, 277 Main St., Hartford, CT 06106; 860-249-8627; cbradford@southchurchhartford.org

The Thriving Church: An Event for Clergy and Lay Leaders

• **September 5-6** • Wilton Congl. Church, 77 Ridgefield Rd., Wilton • Is the 20/80 percent rule inevitable? How does a thriving church activate its membership and turbo-charge its staff and volunteers? Church consultant Tom Bandy is the principal speaker for this two-day event. Bandy is President of Easum, Bandy and Associates. He consults with congregations and judicatories across the theological spectrum using a systems approach to leverage change. Workshop leader Anne Wright Coffman is an associate with Easum, Bandy, and Associates, and pastor of the Olivet Congregational Church UCC in Bridgeport. • Cost: Clergy attending 2 days: \$60; clergy/lay attending Sat. only: \$45 • Contact: Wilton Congregational Church 77 Ridgefield Rd., Wilton, CT 06897; 203-762-5591; office@wiltoncongregational.org

Farewell Reception for Jim Morgan

• **Wednesday, September 10, 4:30 - 6 pm** • United Church Center, 125 Sherman St., Hartford • Please join us to say thank you and farewell to Jim Morgan, the Associate Conference Minister for Wider Church Ministries, as he leaves the staff. Gifts in his honor may be sent to the Conference, attn: Cecile Gilson, at the address below, payable to the Missionary Society of Connecticut and noted for the "Jim Morgan recognition." • Contact: Cecile Gilson, 125 Sherman St., Hartford, CT 06105; 860-233-5564 or Toll-free: 866-367-2822; cecileg@ctucc.org

"Many Hands, Many Hearts"

• **Saturday, September 27, 5 - 7 pm** • Rocky Hill Congregational Church, 805 Main St., Rocky Hill, CT • Please join us for worship and social gathering in celebration of our local church and individual response to the needs of the Gulf Coast following the hurricanes of 2005. (See story on page one.) • Bring an appetizer or dessert to share; drinks and music will be provided. • Contact: **RSVP by September 18** to Jo-Ann Hornyak at 860-394-9780; or manyhandsmanyhearts@cox.net

Mission Works! • October 2-5

Hilton Garden Inn, 1100 Carnegie Ave., Cleveland, OH • All friends and members of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) are invited to experience the fourth biennial Missionworks! event, blending global culture, learning and fun for growing mission awareness. Be inspired by multi-media presentations, lively discussions, project strategies, models for giving, connecting to global mission, mission activities for your congregation, including hosting a missionary in your church. Hear from international partners, Global Ministries staff, past and present, One Great Hour of Sharing and Week of Compassion, missionaries from the Middle East, Asia and Africa, and more! • Cost: \$100 - \$295 (price varies with accommodations) • Contact: Marcy Dory at 866-822-8224, x3209; dorym@ucc.org

Tony Robinson: Ministry in the Interim Between Worlds • October 7, 9 am - 3 pm

• Wapping Community Church, 1790 Ellington Rd., South Windsor • Join author, teacher and pastor, Tony Robinson, as he helps us explore the new paradigm for being and doing church: from the world of civic faith and the civic faith church to congregations that are formational communities of Christian discipleship. This event is open to all clergy. Particular attention will be paid to the role of intentional interims in helping congregations find language and resources for these times. Tony is the author of the best-selling "Transforming Congregational Culture" and a recent collection of essays, "Common Grace: How to Be a Person and Other Spiritual Matters." His book, "Changing the Conversation: Third Way Congregations" will be published this summer. **Registration deadline: Sept. 30.** • Cost: \$50, includes lunch • Contact: Sue Furness, 125 Sherman St., Hartford, CT 06105. 860-233-5564 or Toll-free: 866-367-2822; susanf@ctucc.org

Small Church Convocation:

Building Strength in Small Churches • October 10, 9 am - 4 pm • Pilgrim Way Baptist Church, 19 Columbia Rd., Windsor • Well-known Alban Institute author and speaker, Alice Mann, is the keynoter for this gathering of leaders from small churches. Topics will include: the distinctive role of the smaller church, learning to build on strengths, dealing with small church challenges, options for the small church, and making wise and faithful choices. Lunch will be provided in the Cajun and African-American traditions; mild or vegetarian options will be available. Sponsored by the American Baptist Church of Connecticut, the Connecticut and Massachusetts Conferences of the United Church of Christ, and the Episcopal Dioceses of Connecticut and Western Massachusetts. • Cost: \$25 per person, up to 4 people; groups of 5 or more: \$20 per person. • Contact: Connecticut Conference, 125 Sherman

St., Hartford, CT 06105; 860-233-5564 or Toll-free: 866-367-2822.

Connecticut Conference 141st Annual Meeting Part II - "Nurturing Generosity" • Friday and Saturday, October 17-18

• Central High School, Bridgeport, CT • Keynote speaker will be the Rev. Stephen Gray, Conference Minister of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference, UCC. • Contact: Watch www.ctucc.org for updated information about workshops and other programming for the Meeting.

CT Women of the UCC Fall Gathering and Luncheon

• **November 1, 9:30 am - 2 pm** • First Church of Christ Congl., 2183 Main St., Glastonbury • The guest speaker for the fall gathering of the Connecticut Women of the United Church of Christ will be Dr. Jane Smith, Professor of Islamic Studies at Hartford Seminary and Co-director of the Duncan Black MacDonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations. • Cost: \$12 • Contact: Pam Didio, 125 Sherman St., Hartford, CT 06105; 860-233-5564 or Toll-free: 866-367-2822; pamd@ctucc.org

Dr. Tony Campolo; What Does It Mean to Be Evangelical? • Sunday, November 16

• First Congregational Church of Branford, 1009 Main Street, Branford, CT • Dr. Campolo, preacher, teacher, author and founder of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education, will preach at the 10 am worship service, and address a luncheon at 11:45 on the meaning and hospitality of contemporary Evangelical Christianity. The public is invited. From 7 - 8:30 pm there will be a presentation and Q&A with local pastors and pastors from the CT Conference of the UCC. His pre-Advent topic will be "How Do We Prepare the Way?" The evening program is by reservation only. • Contact: Rev. Vance Taylor, 203-488-7201; info@firstcongregationalbranford.org. For interviews with Dr. Campolo, contact Christine Fenton, 610-341-5962; cfenton@eastern.edu

Recent and Upcoming Pastoral Transitions

NEW CALLS

Diters, Mark from Associate Pastor, South Congregational Church of Granby to Pastor, Flagg Road UCC, West Hartford, August 25, 2008

Enfield, Melanie Associate Pastor, Church of Christ, Congregational, Newington, June 1, 2008

Forer, Kate from In-Care to Associate Pastor, First Congregational Church of Greenwich, August 1, 2008

McCusker, Jean Part-Time Pastor, Central Village Congregational Church, September 1, 2008

Montgomery, Mark Associate Pastor, First Congregational Church of Greenwich, August 1, 2008

Nye, Ruth from Associate Pastor, First Congregational Church of Haddam to Part-time Pastor, First Congregational Church, Andover, August 1, 2008

Sypher, Eileen from In-Care to Associate Pastor, First Congregational Church of Old Lyme, June 1, 2008

Wall, Shannon Rye from In-Care to Associate Pastor, First Congregational Church of Darien, May 22, 2008

R E S I G N A T I O N S

LeBar, Ruth from Union Congregational Church of Oakville, August 1, 2008

Smith, Larry from First Congregational Church of Canton Center to Hollis, MA, September 14, 2008

R E T I R E M E N T S

Latimer, Arthur from Associate Pastor Shalom UCC, New Haven, May 31, 2008

Positions

CT CONFERENCE – The position of Minister of Christian Education for the CT Conference, UCC, is open as of July 1, 2008. This person will coordinate CE activity across the life of the Conference through direct consultation and services to local churches, collaboration with the CT Asso. of United Church Educators, and as the staff person for the CT Partners in Education who provide consultation and workshops in Conference churches. In addition, the Minister of CE coordinates the Ruth Dudley Resource Center and Staff Library. Basic qualifications include: a background in Christian Education, working knowledge of computers, effective interpersonal skills, strong written and oral communication skills, and some library experience. The position will provide 25 hour of service (on average) per week, with some degree of flexibility. Interested persons should contact The Rev. Dr. Davida Foy Crabtree, Conference Minister, at 860-233-5564, or toll-free 866-367-2822.

AVON - Congregational Church, UCC seeks an Organist/Director of Music, half-time position, approx. 20 hrs./wk. Opportunity to direct additional choirs (children, youth, handbell). Service is Sunday at 10:30, plus weeknight rehearsal(s), and other occasional and seasonal services. Austin Organ, 1964: 6 ranks, 2 manuals, unit organ. Other instruments include pianos, handbells, handchimes, clavino, Orff, and percussion instruments. Salary: Up to \$35K/yr. Position available as of August 1, 2008. Applications received until position is filled. Send resume and reference names to Denise Beene, Secretary, Avon Congregational Church, 6 West Main St., Avon, CT 06001; secretary@avon-church.org

CHESHIRE: First Church is looking for a director of youth ministries to work with our growing, vital youth groups and our committed, creative resource adults. We are looking for someone who enjoys middle and high school young people, and who

is excited to walk with them on their faith journeys. Our youth groups meet almost every week during the school year, and everyone looks forward to Youth Sunday and the annual mission trip. Along with gifts for working with young people and planning and leading programs, we are also looking for someone with gifts for administration and for stretching a shoe-string budget. This is currently a twenty-hour per week position. Please visit our website (www.cheshirecongregation.org) for a job description and search for our recruitment video on YouTube. Send resumes and letters of interest to cheshiredymapply@gmail.com.

ESSEX: First Congregational Church UCC is looking for a part-time (20-25 hrs. per week) Administrator/Secretary for this lively, intergenerational church. Applicants should have Computer and Web knowledge, strong communication, organizational and interpersonal skills and be an independent worker. Competitive salary and liberal vacation/personal time are offered. Submit resume to office@essexucc.org

GUILFORD – First Congregational Church (UCC), an 1,100 member, open and affirming congregation, seeks an Acting Director/ Minister of Christian Education for a thriving CE program. This ministry serves a church school of 250 children (nursery to eighth grade), confirmation program, and weekly middle school youth group during the school year. Candidate will work as integral member of exceptional church staff, attending weekly staff meetings; monthly Christian Education, Adult Education, and church school meetings; and developing teachers and volunteers to support the CE program. Acting Director may apply for full time position when posted. Send resume/profile and cover letter to ce_search@firstchurchguilford.org, or 122 Broad Street, Guilford, CT 06437. For more information, please call 203- 453-5249.

HEBRON - The Gilead Congregational Church (UCC), a growing and active congregation in an expanded building, seeks an Organist/Choir Director. Two

Sunday morning worship services, Mid-September until Memorial Day; one service in summer. Austin pipe organ; piano, organ and choral experience preferred. Salary commensurate with experience. Benefits include SS and four weeks paid vacation. Weddings and funerals paid separately. Contact: the church office, attn: Ken Cook, 672 Gilead Street, Hebron, CT 06248; church office at 860-228-3077; or gileadchurchucc@earthlink.net. Reply by July 15th.

MANCHESTER - Center Congregational Church seeks a Discipleship and Christian Education Coordinator for one year beginning July 1, 2008, with the option of applying for the permanent position at the end of the school year. This is a part-time (20hr/wk) position with flexible times. (Sunday 9-noon is a must.) Involves oversight and direction of the CE program, including church school, Safe Church policy, adult education, and middle school youth group. Works directly with CE Board to build an educational ministry for pre-school - 8th grade. Involves curriculum planning, publicity coordination with church office, and program implementation; assists in the recruitment and training of Sunday School teachers. Experience with Workshop Rotation Model a plus. Contact: Center Congregational Church, attn: Moderator, 11 Center Street, Manchester, CT 06040; 860-647-9941.

MILFORD – Woodmont United Church of Christ seeks a part-time (14 hrs. per week, including Sundays/44 weeks per year) Christian Education Director who will work with the leaders and staff of the church to coordinate and administer programs in the areas of Christian Education (CE), Youth, Spirituality and Mission. The CE Director will have a commitment to the Christian faith and be enthusiastic about educational ministry; be able to work with people of all ages and be concerned for their nurturing as disciples of Jesus Christ. Strong organizational and communication skills and ability to initiate, develop,

and execute plans are required. Must have experience in churches as well as experience in group leadership, administration, and supervision. CE Training preferred. Salary: \$13 per hour. It may be possible to negotiate an expansion of this position to include summer hours if it is acceptable to both the CE Director and the Church. Contact: Rev. Paige Besse-Rankin at 203-878-3885; 1000 New Haven Avenue, Milford, CT 06460

NORTH HAVEN – The Congregational Church seeks an ordained or soon-to-be ordained Associate Minister, 26 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.

WEST SPRINGFIELD, MA – Mittineague Congregational Church, UCC seeks a Director of Christian Education who can work collaboratively and be responsible for the Church School of our congregation. The position averages 12 hrs per week, compensation is dependent upon experience and skill level and includes four weeks paid vacation. For more information or to send a resume please contact: Rob Gormbley, at the church office, 413-734-1290; 1840 Westfield Street, West Springfield, MA 01089; mittpastor@comcast.net

For Sale or to Give

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



141ST ANNUAL MEETING PART II • Connecticut Conference • United Church of Christ

October 17 & 18, 2008 • Central High School, Bridgeport • 1 Lincoln Boulevard • Bridgeport, CT 06606

Nurturing Generosity

Keynote:
Rev. Stephen C. Gray
Indiana-Kentucky
Conference Minister

- Worship
- Workshops
- Plenary Sessions
- Conference Minister's Annual Address

- Authorized Minister's Lunch
- Community and Fellowship