

# CONTACT: an edition of United Church News

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## “*I’m Seriously* **Done** *with Buses!*”

BY CADY GINGRAS



Chilling cold temperatures. Driving for hours. That’s what it was like for me and many others of the Trumbull High School Golden Eagle Marching Band when we went to perform at the 2009 Inaugural Parade for President Barack Obama. Many people in my family and church were thrilled that we were selected, and the community really supported us. But the blessing and honor at first wasn’t as exciting as you might think. We had to drive for hours to get to different places around Washington, D.C., and Delaware. I felt like we spent more time on the bus than doing anything else on the trip. However, after all the hours of driving, I finally realized how important and what an honor it was to play for our new president.

This was one of the greatest honors I have ever been given. For us, a high school marching band in Trumbull, Connecticut, to be chosen as one of 14 bands from around the U.S. to play for the first African-American president? I would have never dreamt it happening. And many others won’t forget this either. Courtney Kertesz, a member of my senior Pilgrim Fellowship, had this to say about her feelings of being a part of history, and of our new president:

“While being at the Inaugural [Parade], I felt many things happening at once. I realized that this was a part of history, and I was a part of it. I knew that it would be a tremendous deal because Barack Obama is our first African American president. As for the country in the future of [President] Obama’s election, this country may be in a better place. It will be in a better place because [President] Obama [has] wonderful ideas to take our country out of the economic crisis, as well as [plans] that will affect everybody in my generation. He is coming up with new jobs to help many families from going into a depression. During band practices for the [parade], I was told that we would need perfection with our music because we were playing for the most important person in our country.”

In total, four kids from our band belong to churches of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ.\* That really meant something to me as a confirmation student, because I knew the Obamas belonged to a UCC church in Chicago. That means we’re connected in the faith. Even though we had to go through hours of standing in freezing temperatures, I valued this trip and the work involved preparing and playing our music for President Obama. When I rounded the corner of the parade route and realized that our new president was saluting us, and his wife, Michelle, was jumping up and down with glee, I knew in that moment that the hope of a new day had dawned. This is a story I will pass on for generations. I will never forget this moment of my life.

\* Cady Gingras (percussion) and Courtney Kertesz (mellophone) belong to the Monroe Congregational Church UCC and Rosanna Clark (saxophone) and Katherine Warner (flute) belong to the Trumbull Congregational Church UCC

Cady Gingras of the Monroe Congregational Church recently received the great honor of playing with the Trumbull High School marching band before President Barack Obama at the Presidential Inauguration in January. The experience gave Cady a powerful feeling of pride in her fellow musicians and hope for the future of our country, as she shares in her own words here.



# Bridges, Bodies and Souls



He was the president of the Student Council at the high school and a devout Roman Catholic. I was the minister of the local church. A

terrible auto accident killed a gifted girl from our church and I challenged the rest of the kids to join me in putting an end to all these funerals. He came to the parsonage within hours with a desire to make a difference. We started the youth service bureau together. Whenever he was home from college, he'd stop by, but as we moved on, we lost touch. Then he heard of my cancer and wrote to tell me that he was praying for me, that I had had a profound impact on his life and the choices he had made. The letter (handwritten!) went on for four pages.

And there have been others I've heard from over these months who have moved me deeply by their words of affirmation and comfort. I discovered more love and support than I ever knew was there. I've been buoyed by prayers from around the world, received little gifts, reconnected with long lost friends, and deepened my relationship with God. I made my journey

public simply because by personality I could, and because at the beginning I thought a few people might benefit by knowing about [www.caringbridge.org](http://www.caringbridge.org). I didn't have a clue that my blog there would ultimately have 17,000 hits and be copied into tons of emails to others. It has been an important ministry to me and for me and I am grateful for the response.

I've learned so much and am thankful for this experience in ways that I cannot articulate. I believe that our churches can strengthen their ministries with those undergoing difficult health crises. Let me tell you a few ways I discovered:

I missed Sunday worship desperately; I needed to be there, but could not. What might we do to make church safe for those with compromised immune systems?

I wanted to be prayed over, so I gathered a tiny group of faithful people who met with me each morning of a chemo treatment and we prayed.

I needed little odds and ends of equipment that seemed silly to buy – turbans for my shaved head, a baby monitor, etc. – but there was no place I could find to borrow them. (Thanks to Yolanda Montano of our staff for the baby monitor!)

For those with serious illness, just keeping track of all the claims and tending to the financial accounting involved is daunting. Couldn't our churches offer help?

Now I know how little I knew as a pastor about what members went through. How might we all (parish caring ministries, pastors) learn more about specific diseases and the toll they take?

The prayer shawls and knitted chemo caps I received were wonderful gifts. Each was a blessing and their practical use for warmth was great. Does your church have such a ministry? Are there other such outreach ministries you might offer?

The bills for my treatment through the end of January came to \$104,000. If I hadn't had insurance, what would I have done? Waited until it was too late? Put it all on credit cards? Faced bankruptcy and lost our home? Together we can advocate for universal health coverage, as our Conference delegates did in 2007.

So I invite you to our Spring Meeting on May 9th where we will together explore "Body and Soul: The Church and Health Care." These ministries and many more will be our subject in workshops, keynotes and forums. Come yourself, invite others, send delegates! Let's strengthen our churches' ministries and our own understanding. Let's share our wisdom and deepen our faith so we are prepared for our own challenging times. (And we may even have a second surprise keynoter, so stay tuned to [ctucc.org](http://ctucc.org) for the latest news!)

## Resurrection

BY ERIC S. ANDERSON



As *ConnTact* arrives in your mailbox, I expect that the annual drama of Holy Week will be nearing its familiar conclusion. The contrasts of Holy Week are at hand: the solemn meal and shadows

of Maundy Thursday, the depths of pain and loss of Good Friday, the steadily more hopeful vigil of Holy Saturday, the slowly increasing light of Easter dawn, and the festal joy of Easter Day. For four days, the Christian Church explores the depths and heights of life and of faith. For four days, the Church acknowledges both the tragedy and the triumph of grace.

Would that the economic troubles that

beset us would last just four days! But the crisis' first days are long past, and the tremulous light of economic dawn is still below the horizon. I wonder what the best Biblical image is for us in this day. I hope we're not the terrified disciples who ran. Are we the faithful women who return to the tomb to do what we can? Could we even share, perhaps, in the work of the crucified Jesus, making a proclamation to those somehow imprisoned (1 Peter 3:19)?

Or perhaps our story might be the ark of Noah. As the world endured a crisis, Noah gathered and preserved what was precious. He got his instructions (complete with building plans and parts list) and his priority list (animals yes, compass no) from God, "and Noah did all that the Lord had commanded him." (Genesis 7:5) He made his voyage; he and those with him came at last to rest on solid ground.

What we lack that Noah had is the building plan, the parts list, and the priority list. We can see the flood, and we know that some things will be lost. What will we preserve? What boat might we

build to keep these priceless things, even lives themselves, from being swept away? Will it be meals offered to the hungry souls at the kitchen door; programs to ease the hopelessness as well as the hunger? Will it



be healing therapies for the sick and the poor? Will it be new industries to employ

the jobless? Might we proclaim God's resurrection with more passion and conviction? Can we find new ways of showing God's love in recognizable form?

Ark or tomb; boat or grave: by God's grace, our destination is the firm ground beyond, the blossoming light of Easter, the Day of Resurrection.

*Rev. Eric S. Anderson is the Minister of Communications and Technology for the Connecticut Conference. He lives just above the spring flood of the Connecticut River — he thinks.*

## UNITED CHURCH NEWS

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*Photography in this issue by Kathy Patrick and Eric S. Anderson.*



## “We Came to Help, and We Were Healed”

BY REV. LEE IRELAND

“We came to help heal, and we were healed.” These words appear as graffiti on a wall in Biloxi, Mississippi, amidst the chaos and destruction that has followed the raging storms that assaulted the Gulf Coast states three years ago. The words summarize the experiences of twenty-three members of the Orange Congregational Church UCC who traveled south last September to offer their help with the rebuilding of homes

and communities that were devastated by hurricanes.

Sue Cambria, who first traveled south to Back Bay Mission in 2007, organized the trip. The team of workers offered a variety of skills, some with training and others as complete novices. Depending on their talents or interests, they were sent in different directions to help with such jobs as painting, dry walling, working at soup kitchens, or performing electrical work. Elaine Sonderegger and fellow volunteer John Caldwell found that their modest electrician skills were valuable in the rebuilding effort. Caldwell explained that after a manager “saw our skills, he assigned us to certain jobs and saved work for us to do for future trips.”

Sue Yamaguchi, on her second trip, went to help at a soup kitchen. There she learned that they needed blankets for the homeless. She went to a fabric store, bought piles of fleece at 50% off, and made 175 blankets for children, teenagers and adults.

Bob Terni shared some of the frustration of the group. “Why can we transport

military personnel anywhere but we can’t clean up after a hurricane?” he asked. “People were living in trailers and it looked like a war zone!” Carol Treat observed, “There are 150 trailers in parking lots and it’s a horrible way to live. Despite the fact that they lost everything, the spirit of the people is still upbeat and friendly and positive. But someone told me that even 3 years later, the nightmares are still occurring. On the surface, the people appear OK, but underneath, there’s still a lot of suffering.”

On her second trip, Sandy Kline was thankful to see how things had improved, but she noticed that individuals’ depression didn’t heal quite as quickly. “You can rebuild a house, but not the mind or soul so easily,” she said. Yet, Susan Hutchinson witnessed the beauty of her efforts. She, her husband, Don, and her daughter, Kate, had the joy of working together to build a porch. “With the rising of the visible house, [the homeowner] stood taller,” Susan reported “and she could see the light at the end of the tunnel.”

Those who have sojourned from the comfort of their homes to the place of devastation were amazed again and again by the gratitude of those living in Biloxi. The survivors didn’t hesitate to tell their stories of being “in the water” and surviving to start rebuilding their lives. Each worker realized they would not think twice of giving their time, talents and treasures to help those whose lives are still being remade. As John Caldwell shared, “an unrealized secret of life is that people do not understand how much you get out of giving!”

For further information about how your church members can organize a trip to Biloxi or other disaster areas, call or write to the Orange Congregational Church at 203.795.9749 ([www.orangecongregationalchurch.org](http://www.orangecongregationalchurch.org)) or to the Disaster Response Team leader, Rev. Ted Mosebach.

*Rev. Lee Ireland is Associate Pastor of the Orange Congregational Church.*

*Find additional stories featuring local church ministries at [www.ctucc.org/spotlight/](http://www.ctucc.org/spotlight/)*

## Back Bay Today

SUE CAMBRIA AND DREW PAGE

Some people say that those who lost housing to Hurricane Katrina area should be able to help themselves by now. The long-term struggle is not apparent.

Property owners who lost their homes to Katrina still have mortgages. Often, they are paying for structures that no

longer exist, unable to rebuild and with little chance of selling the land. Complications with insurance coverage stall rebuilding efforts. Maria Watson, Director of Development for the UCC’s Back Bay Mission (BBM), explains that homeowner policies often contain vaguely worded exclusions. Insurers may deny claims based on the type of property damage. Flood damage may be covered, but storm surge, which is caused by high wind, may be excluded.

Many claims go to court, where they are decided case-by-case.

Billions of federal dollars have been allocated to the region, but the process is slow and the money pays for infrastructure and is not available to residents. With nowhere to go, some homeowners have paid out-of-pocket to contractors in an effort to rebuild quickly. Despite BBM warnings to check contractors carefully, some residents have fallen victim to fraud. They are left with no home or with unfinished repairs.

Those whose can rebuild face huge increases in insurance rates. Some insurers have withdrawn from the area, leaving less competition to help lower rates. For many Gulf Coast residents, the situation, now almost 4 years old, is still quite grim.

Rebuilding is happening. Efforts produce results. Back Bay Mission and similar organizations are helping it happen.



## Dr. Jeri Hepworth, Pioneer in Family Therapy, to Receive Living Waters Award

BY ERIC ANDERSON

The Connecticut Conference will present its Living Waters Award to Jeri Hepworth, Ph.D., one of the originators of Medical Family Therapy. The award recognizes the accomplishments of laypersons living out their faith in the world. Dr. Hepworth serves as Professor and Associate Residency Director of the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Connecticut’s School of Medicine, and works with patients and other family medicine faculty at the Asylum Hill Family Practice Center in Hartford. She and her husband Robert Ryder are members of the Storrs Congregational Church, UCC.

Dr. Hepworth’s interest in family medicine dates from her doctoral research into the effects of parental loss on the formation of intimate relations.

Her mission has been to assist medical practitioners understand the effects of the wider context of their patients’ lives on their health. “Illness, and certainly chronic or end-stage illness, is an existential crisis,” she said in an interview for the *UConn Health Center Magazine*. “Part of a physician’s strategy should be to determine who would be helpful to talk with patients and families. This can include traditional mental health clinicians or spiritual leaders. We can all encourage these conversations with patients, as well as facilitate ways for families to communicate with all of the clinicians involved with their care.”

Hepworth has written extensively, including the books *Medical Family Therapy: The Shared Experience of Illness*, and *Family Oriented Primary Care*. She is committed to universal health care which promotes access to a broad range of treatment options. “More and more,” said Hepworth, “research shows improved health outcomes when mental health services are provided at the same location as primary and specialty health care.”

Dr. Hepworth has taken several leadership roles in her congregation in Storrs, serving as chair of the Church Council during a particularly important stage of the church’s life. Her family and fellow members particularly value her acts of kindness and caring, and her thoughtful and prayerful approach to her faith and responsibilities.

The Living Waters Award reflects the understanding that all Christians are called to ministry by virtue of their baptism into Christ, and honors lay persons who clearly make the connection between their faith and daily life. Some of these individuals have been well-known members of their communities. Others have worked diligently and faithfully out of the public eye. “The people we wish to honor,” says the Conference’s invitation for nominations, “are often known to only a few.”



## A Night in the Cold: Homeless Awareness Sleepout

BY KATHY PATRICK

The plight of the homeless was very much on the minds of a brave group of teens from Prospect, Connecticut on Saturday night, February 21<sup>st</sup>. Ten members of the Prospect Congregational Church Senior High

Youth Group spent 24 hours in makeshift shelters right in the center of town. For the past eight winters the group has gathered to raise awareness for the homeless. Every year the money and food collected is donated to the Greater Waterbury Interfaith Ministries and every year the experience helps the youth understand the realities of the homeless.

The youth spend the daylight hours “panhandling” on the street corners and the nighttime hours trying to stay warm by the fire in an old drum. Their shelters are built from old wooden skids covered in cardboard and signs are spray painted to spread their message: “Help the Homeless” “Feed the Hungry” “Help us Help Others” are posted along the roadway to entice people to stop and drop money into their jars. And thankfully, even in this tough economy, the community responded. The group collected \$2,600 and enough canned goods to restock the shelves at the food pantry.

The PCC youth would like to encourage all youth ministries to get involved in service projects in their hometowns. 24 hours in the cold is nothing compared to what the homeless face everyday. Young people can make a difference! The Prospect Congregational Church Senior High Youth Group certainly knows how to make their world a better place!

*Kathy Patrick is Youth Adviser at the Prospect Congregational Church.*

## Body and Soul: The Church and Health Care

Spring Annual Meeting:  
May 9, Asylum Hill Congregational Church, Hartford

What has the Church to do with health care?

A man troubled by an unclean spirit. A woman stricken with a fever. A man afflicted with leprosy. A paralyzed man, carried by his friends.

These are just those *named* in the first two chapters of Mark’s gospel as people who sought and received healing from Jesus’ hands. Many more “people came to him from every quarter,” says Mark 1:45, even when he stayed in the country lest he be unable to move through a town.

The Church of Jesus Christ rests on a foundation made, in part, of care for the health of human beings.

The May 9 Spring Session of the 2009 Annual Meeting aims to take a broad look at issues of health, healing, treatment, advocacy, wellness, and wholeness. As announced in the February issue of *ConnTact*, one of the keynote speakers will be Juan A. Figueroa, President of the Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut, a passionate advocate for extending affordable health care to all citizens. The Conference hopes to announce a second keynote speaker closer to the event, to bring a different perspective on issues of health and wellness, possibly from the experience of illness and recovery; possibly from the perspective of a health care provider.

The workshop offerings were still in



development at press time, but concepts included parish nursing, long-term care planning, ministries with the disabled, non-traditional therapies, Safe Church, AIDS, social services, and more. There will be two workshop opportunities during the day.

The Spring Session of the 2009 Annual Meeting will be held at the Asylum Hill Congregational Church UCC in Hartford. Voting business at the meeting will be limited to election of officers. The Living Waters Award will be celebrated (see story page 3), but recipient Dr. Jeri Hepworth will be unable to attend that day, and the Conference plans to present the award to her in the fall. Attendees will also receive updates on the progress of the *Now for the Future* Campaign for Silver Lake as well as other important news that may be of interest at the time of the meeting.

## Women Look Forward to Eighth Celebration in 2010

BY SUSAN WALDRON

Celebration VIII, TOGETHER BUILDING BRIDGES “...a time to breakdown and a time to build up...” (Ecclesiastes 3:3) will bring together not only women from all of the New England Conferences of the United Church of Christ, but women from several of our ecumenical partners from our region. We have invited over two dozen groups of women from other branches of Christianity to keep their sisters in faith informed as we plan, so they will be able to be with us in Burlington, Vermont to participate in this exciting event.

Our planning also includes several meals, approximately 30 workshops, six renowned speakers, exciting music, dozens of displays, and plenty of time for

fellowship.

For many years when the Women Leaders of New England met, talk always drifted to questions of how we could bridge the growing divides between generations in our churches. Back in 2007, when planning for Celebration VIII began, we were determined to have a theme that would speak to all generations and all walks of life. Most importantly, though, we wanted a theme that could honor the women in the church who have been the “work horses” for many years, while still celebrating those females coming along behind us!

To that end, or should I say, beginning, we are planning an “Intergenerational Happening” that will take place during our Workshop time at Celebration VIII.

## Patricia Bjorling is Associate Conference Minister for Generosity Ministries



The Connecticut Conference has called Patricia R. Bjorling of Virginia and Hawaii as its first Associate Conference Minister for Generosity Ministries; she began her service on April 1. In her new role, Ms. Bjorling will work to help local churches and the entire Conference discover and implement new ways to enlist financial support for their ministries that better suit the present day.

Ms. Bjorling, who goes by the nickname of Patsy, has 30 years of experience in the field of nonprofit development and is a 2004 M.Div. graduate of Dubuque Theological Seminary.

“Patsy comes to us with exactly the experience and perspective we were seeking. She combines the best practices

of nonprofit fundraising with years of experience in working with local churches in their pledge drives and capital campaigns,” said Conference Minister the Rev. Dr. Davida Foy Crabtree. “We were impressed with the comments of her references, who consistently highlighted her teaching and coaching with churches, her creativity, and her conviction that it is in generosity that the Christian fully lives the Christ-like life.”

Ms. Bjorling most recently served as Director of Stewardship and Development for the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia and is In Care of the Oahu Association of the Hawai'i Conference of the United Church of Christ. From 1995 to 2000, she served as Development and Planned Giving Consultant for that Conference. In prior positions with schools, universities and a museum, she led development efforts and, in the case of the Durham Western Heritage Museum in Omaha, served as the campaign manager for a \$60 million capital campaign. Her background also includes academic work in English and in archives management.

The Generosity Ministries position was created to enable the Conference to work with local churches in adapting their giving programs to current best practices. Conceived last spring, the position is strategically crucial for the churches at this moment in time, given the economy. “That is the reason we went ahead and filled the position even though there are signs of decline in Our Churches' Wider Mission, the giving program that supports such work,” commented Dr. Crabtree.

Ms. Bjorling will also work with the *Now for the Future* Campaign and encourage churches and individuals in their giving to the wider Church.

## Church Stewardship in a Time of Economic Uncertainty

BY PATRICIA BJORLING

It would be an understatement to say we are living in unsettling times. As Christians, our response must focus both on the spiritual and the practical. A spiritual response is needed because, as the rector of St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Ellicott City, MD recently observed, “The current crisis is a spiritual crisis of amnesia, of forgetting who we are and whose we are.” Giving and stewardship are faith responses, and giving and stewardship suffer when our trust in God wavers.

To improve stewardship results, we must move stewardship to the center of our lives together as Christians, we must make constantly educate our congregations about stewardship, and we must apply best practices in the ‘mechanics’ of annual stewardship efforts.

Here are ten ‘tips’ for approaching stewardship during a time such as this.

- 1) Pray intentionally for generous hearts. Nothing is impossible with God's help.
- 2) Teach abundance. A time of economic crisis is an excellent time to study anew the providential nature of God.
- 3) Be an example to your parishioners. If the church's first response to cut the budget, then the individual's first impulse may be to reduce a pledge.
- 4) Emphasize the act of pledging and proportional giving as the goal, not specific dollar amounts. Pledging is a tangible demonstration of our personal commitment to being workers in God's field.
- 5) Understand the causes of change.

Be aware that drops in pledge amounts or no pledges at all may be a sign that individuals are experiencing great stress in their lives.

6) Provide a graceful way for people to make changes in pledge amounts during the year if necessary. Consider creating a ‘pledge change form’ that is readily available, and allows ‘face-saving’ for someone who may be feeling badly about having to lower a pledge.

7) Make it easier for your church members to give out of their abundance—‘off the top’ instead of from what is leftover. We can encourage first fruits giving by implementing Electronic Funds Transfer as a method of giving in our congregations.

8) Make changes in how you approach stewardship in your congregation. Relying on how things have always been done when it comes to teaching stewardship and asking for pledges is not a recipe for improving results.

9) Give thanks! Just as stewardship campaigns should begin with and be supported by prayer, stewardship milestones during the year should be commemorated with thanksgiving and praise.

10) Ask for help! The Connecticut Conference can help your congregation rethink its stewardship efforts and create exciting new plans for stewardship education and your annual campaign.

To ask for stewardship assistance, call or write Patricia Bjorling, Associate Conference Minister for Generosity Ministries, at PatsyB@ctucc.org or 860.761.7123.

*Patricia Bjorling is Associate Conference Minister for the Connecticut Conference. The full version of this essay is available at [www.ctucc.org](http://www.ctucc.org).*



New England Women's

• CELEBRATION • VIII •

“...a time to break down and a time to build up...”

—Ecclesiastes 3:3—

Our hope is to “build bridges” across the generations with interest centers to create music, dance, and art that reflect our faith experiences and celebrate our sisterhood. The end product of this intergenerational time will be our entertainment for Saturday evening. As a Steering Committee, it is our hope that our attendees, 900-1000 expected, will be able to bring back many fresh ideas for

building bridges in their churches as well as their daily lives.

The New England Regional Women's Celebration held its first gathering in 1982 and has met every four years since then. Two years before the first Celebration, the presidents of the New England Women's Fellowships of the United Church of Christ gathered to

learn from each other, to share their faith, and as it turned out, to form a committee to investigate the concept of a regional gathering for “the women in the pews.” The aim was to involve those women who rarely had the opportunity to participate in learning and sharing outside of their home church or conference. In two years they planned and brought the dream of Celebrations to fruition with 1096 women gathering to participate in CELEBRATION I. This success spurred the Founding Mothers to plan the next event, and the next, and the rest is history.

Much has changed since the first Celebration in 1982. Women have returned to the work force, while maintaining their homes and families. Women have taken on different roles in their churches as well. Our planning has also taken a new direction, designing programs for these busy women to meet their changing needs. We study previous evaluations to discover what women desire to compliment their busy lifestyles

and to help them grow spiritually while supporting them in their daily lives. We fashion the programs we offer to meet them where they are. Our theme and planning reflect these changing realities and a new focus for our efforts.

Plan to be with us March 12- 14, 2010 as we build all kinds of bridges! Connecticut Women will be sponsoring buses to travel to Vermont. Look for more news coming to a church Bulletin Board near you or in the *Communicator*, the newsletter of CT Women. More information can be found on the website [www.uccwomenscelebration.org](http://www.uccwomenscelebration.org) or by contacting Susan Waldron, Coordinator 860.923.2887 [swaldron01@snet.net](mailto:swaldron01@snet.net)

*Susan Waldron is Connecticut Coordinator for Celebration VIII, and a member of the Westfield Congregational Church in Danielson.*

*This is the fourth in our series considering the insidious, pervasive effects of racism on our society, arising from the Sacred Conversation on Race launched in our churches in May.*

## The Seamlessness of Justice

BY REV. DR. LOIS HAPPE

One of the more interesting concepts I learned in Econ 101 was the notion of “externalities.” I’ve long forgotten the formal definition, but the idea has lodged in my head so some days I see externalities everywhere.

Here’s what I remember – businesses need to track their costs, so accounting systems are designed to present an accurate picture of their financial status. The costs that are included are those that have a price tag attached – inventory, labor, utilities, etc. Anything without a price tag is not included. For decades, even centuries, companies have not tracked the full price of doing business. “Externalities” were ignored because whatever costs were associated with them did not appear in the books.

So, what are externalities? In the manufacturing process, effluents are externalities. Dumping waste into the environment does not figure into a company’s accounting system; it did not cost the company anything (until recently and even then not always). Yet externalities are not without cost. Somebody, or some thing, bears the consequences. Somebody, or some thing, pays.

So who pays?

First of all, the immediate neighbors bear the brunt of externalities. When a mountaintop is strip-mined, the small towns nearby have to replace their once clean water supply. When a hog factory is opened, the neighbors suffer the stifling odor and environmental degradation.

The next victim is our environment. Aquifers are pumped dry, toxins leach from landfills, gases and particulate matter sully the air, and prescription drugs pollute our water supply when improperly disposed.

As the environment absorbs these assaults, it affects the health of the entire population. Then, the final bill for increased health care costs and the cost of clean-up is delivered to all of us who pay taxes. Ultimately, we all pay for externalities. The current economic

crisis is the most recent example of the disparity between who got to decide and who will pay the bill.

In the context of this series, you may ask, “What does this have to do with racism?”

While it is true that all of us bear the cost of environmental externalities, not all pay equally. That was a lesson the UCC learned and published more than 20 years ago with its ground-breaking report *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States*, which revealed how communities of color were bearing a disproportionate burden with regard to toxic waste.

While we can take pride in this achievement, the effects of environmental racism continue to plague our nation, our state, and our communities. The most obvious examples, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency, are:

- 1) Higher concentrations of lead paint problems among low-income and culturally diverse populations,
- 2) Landfills, incinerators and hazardous waste treatment facilities located more frequently near low-income or culturally diverse populations,
- 3) 65 percent of African Americans and 80 percent of Hispanic Americans live in communities with substandard air quality, and
- 4) 90 percent of farm workers, routinely exposed to health risks associated with pesticides, are people of color.

We have learned several lessons through the environmental movement. The first is “everything is connected.” The second is “Nothing is insignificant.” There are no externalities. What is decided anywhere has consequences everywhere.

Sallie McFague, in her most recent book, *A New Climate for Change*, sums up our imperative:

*We have seen that human dignity and the integrity of creation rest on a sensibility that respects the other, whether that other is a human being or a nonhuman aspect of creation. The most basic stance that we must take in order to live differently in the world is an appreciation for something other than ourselves and our interests. Like God, we need to be able to look at the world and say, “It is good.” Period.*

*Rev. Dr. Lois Happe is Eastern Regional Minister and specialist in Justice Ministries for the Connecticut Conference. She provides staff support to the Environmental Ministry Team.*

## Clergy Learn About Marriage for All

BY ERIC ANDERSON



Over forty United Church of Christ pastors, chaplains, and clergy in other settings spent an afternoon gathering information about marriage in Connecticut for same-gender couples. Love Makes a Family religious organizer Obadiah Ballinger led the workshop on Thursday, January 22nd at United Church Center in Hartford, where he described the impact and limits of the law, spoke of helpful approaches to conversations in local churches, and offered resources for further study.

The attendees reported a wide range of opinions about marriage for same-gender couples among their parishes and settings. Some serve in congregations that have proclaimed themselves Open and Affirming (ONA), the phrase identifying UCC churches committed to full participation of gay and lesbian members, while others serve in places that have not undertaken that process. Some congregations have gladly opened their doors to same-gender weddings already, while others look toward lengthy discussion of the issue.

Ballinger, who is working toward ordination in the UCC in the Minnesota Conference, noted that while Connecticut’s marriage law makes no distinction in rights or responsibilities between couples, other states’ laws and federal law definitely do. Married Connecticut residents may file joint income tax returns, for example, but same-gender couples must file separate returns with the federal Internal Revenue Service. At the moment, this actually requires these couples to file a second state return, reflecting their federal status.

This situation is the tip of the iceberg: over 1,000 federal guarantees offered to married couples are not available to those of the same gender legally married in Connecticut.

Ballinger offered clergy three cautions that should be presented to same-gender couples seeking marriage:

- People planning to move to a state that will not recognize their marriage should know that, in the event they need to divorce, they will need to return to Connecticut to do so.
- Couples planning to adopt may want to adopt first and marry later, as agencies are frequently

reluctant to place children with same-sex couples.

- Members of the military are subject to dismissal from the service and even prosecution, with loss of pension and military benefits.

Many of the ministers had questions about discussing the same-gender marriage issue in their churches. “Openness and transparency of communication,” said Ballinger, “need to be part of the process.” He recommended that lay people lead the conversation, to avoid the perception that it is the pastor’s issue. “An ONA process should never be started by the pastor,” he said. “It will give the process more authenticity... Otherwise ONA can leave with the pastor.”

Important as well is to ground the conversation in broader discussions of human nature and sexuality. These are the groundwork for ONA.

Some wedding service models are available on the Connecticut Conference’s web site, which had been written prior to the availability of legal marriage.

Other issues raised included:

- Will the church be available to non-members seeking same-gender marriages? If not, what is the difference between making the church available to non-member couples of opposite genders?
- What about couples whose churches will not allow them to be married there, but whose pastors are willing? What accommodation can be made for them?
- What are the roles of clergy in marriage? Counselor, bearer of blessing, agent of the state: how to reconcile these?

Ballinger encouraged clergy, churches, and church leaders to continue to work for full equality. He asked that churches and couples let Love Makes a Family know about weddings so they can share the word. He asked pastors to share their views in local newspapers. Ballinger also suggested organizing book groups and film screenings. Marriage equality, he said, is a blessing to the community, to be extended lovingly and generously.

**Major Gatherings**

UCC Office Support Staff Network Annual Meeting: "Moving Forward in Faith" • Apr. 16 - 19 • Best Western on the Park, Madison, Wisconsin • UCC support staffs from all settings, come to share worship, participate in workshops, and join in peer group discussion. • Cost: Registration \$100.00 includes meals. Accommodations additional. • Contact: Carol Martell, Wisconsin Conference UCC. 608.846.7880.

Staying Centered in Troubled Times: CT Women of the UCC Annual Meeting • Apr. 25, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm • First Congl. Church, 23 S Main St., Wallingford • The Rev. Lee Ireland is guest speaker; other highlights of the day include the Recognized Women Award, Honored Laywomen to General Synod XXIV, the Huguenot Cross Award, workshops, displays, and lunch. • Cost: \$16.00 before Apr. 15; \$20.00 after. • Contact: Pam Didio, 125 Sherman St., Hartford, CT 06105. Toll free: 866.367.2822 x101, or 860.761.7101 locally.

Flying Forward, Reaching Back: NEAUCE Annual Conference on Christian Education • May 5 - 7 • Craigville Conference Center, Craigville, MA • The theme is inspired by a philosophical principle of the Akan people of West Africa called "Sankofa," which holds that in order to move into the future, one must go back and learn from the past. • Cost: AUCE Members \$235.00 includes meals and lodging. Non-members \$260.00. Other plans available. • Contact: Ruth Ann White, NEAUCE Registrar, 13 Jacklyn Dr., Lunenburg, MA 01462.

Connecticut Conference Annual Meeting, Spring Session • May 9 • Asylum Hill Congl. Church, 814 Asylum Ave., Hartford • Join us for the Spring Session of the Connecticut Conference's 142nd Annual Meeting: "The Church and Health Care." Juan Figueroa, President of the Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut, will be one of two keynote speakers. • Cost: TBA. • Contact: Cecile Gilson, 125 Sherman St., Hartford, CT 06105. Toll free: 866.367.2822, or 860.233.5564 locally.

Growing Bold: UCC Coalition National Gathering • June 22 - 25 • Crowne Plaza Hotel, Grand Rapids, MI • This is a celebration of Open and Affirming, an exploration of what ONA can be in its fullest expression, worship, fellowship, celebration and engagement. • Cost: \$99.00 per person before Apr. 30. Meals and lodging additional. • Contact: UCC Coalition,

UCC General Synod 27 • June 26 - 30 • DeVos Convention Center, 303 Monroe Ave NW, Grand Rapids, MI • "Immerse Yourself" is an apt theme for Grand Rapids as we gather along the Grand River and immerse ourselves in exploring what it means to live out the call of Jesus Christ

as a particular expression of the church. • Cost: Varies; Visitor-Full Event \$175.00. • Contact: United Church of Christ, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH, 44115. 216.736.2192. www.ucc.org/synod

**Retreats, Educational Opportunities, and Workshops**

An Introduction to Chakras • Apr. 4, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm • Spiritual Life Center, 120 Mountain Ave., Bloomfield • Cost: \$20.00. • Contact: Sarah Annis, Spiritual Life Center, 120 Mountain Ave., Bloomfield, CT 06002. 860.243.2374.

Profile Writing and Interviewing Workshop • Apr. 14 - May 5 • United Church Center, 125 Sherman St., Hartford • A workshop designed to assist clergy to develop their effective profile writing and interviewing skills. The complete program consists of four three-hour sessions held on Tuesdays from 1:00 - 4:00 pm. • Cost: \$50.00. • Contact: Ron Brown, 125 Sherman St., Hartford, CT 06105. Toll free: 866.367.2822, or 860.233.5564 locally.

Present Moment Living • Apr. 25, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm • Spiritual Life Center, 120 Mountain Ave., Bloomfield • Cost: \$50.00 suggested donation includes lunch. • Contact: Sarah Annis, Spiritual Life Center, 120 Mountain Ave., Bloomfield, CT 06002. 860.243.2374.

Making Friends of Church Numbers • Apr. 25, 9:00 am - 2:00 pm • First Church of Christ, 12 South Main St., West Hartford • A one-day seminar for pastors, lay leaders and church members who want to better understand and manage church finances. • Cost: Free. Lunch is included; please call 860.761.7114 to register. • Contact: Sue Wilber, 125 Sherman St., Hartford, CT 06105. Toll free: 866.367.2822, or 860.761.7114 locally.

Centering Prayer • May 1-2 • Trinity Episcopal Church, 300 Main St., Wethersfield • Cost: \$35.00 suggested donation. • Contact: Sarah Annis, Spiritual Life Center, 120 Mountain Ave., Bloomfield, CT 06002. 860.243.2374.

Adult and Child Yoga • May 2, 10:00 - 11:30 am • Spiritual Life Center, 120 Mountain Ave., Bloomfield • Contact: Sarah Annis, Spiritual Life Center, 120 Mountain Ave., Bloomfield, CT 06002. 860.243.2374.

Spiritual Discernment: Discovering God's Path for You in the Midst of Chaos • June 13, 9:30 am - 3:30 pm • Spiritual Life Center, 120 Mountain Ave., Bloomfield • Cost: Suggested Donation: \$50.00 includes lunch. • Contact: Sarah Annis, Spiritual Life Center, 120 Mountain Ave., Bloomfield, CT 06002. 860.243.2374.

**Silver Lake Events**

Women's Yoga and Music Retreat • Apr. 17 - 19 • Silver Lake Conference Center,

Sharon • Join us for a wonderful weekend of yoga, meditation, breath work, pulse dancing, chakra tonging, chanting and more! • Cost: \$165.00. Additional fee for massages. • Contact: Silver Lake Registrar, 223 Low Rd., Sharon, CT 06069. 860.364.5526.

Spring Action Weekend • Apr. 24 - 26 • Silver Lake Conference Center, Sharon • Action Weekends are your chance to give something back to Silver Lake. Through raking the grounds, opening up cabins, filling wood bins, and a number of other outdoor work projects you are sure to have a great time. • Cost: \$35.00 for high school students. Donations welcome but not required from alums. • Contact: Stephanie Pitman, 223 Low Rd., Sharon, CT 06069. 860.364.5526.

Third Annual Silver Lake Golf Tournament • June 9, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm • Lyman Orchards, Middlefield • Cost: \$150.00 per person includes breakfast, greens fees, cart, driving range and luncheon. \$30.00 lunch only. • Contact: Silver Lake Conference Center, 223 Low Rd., Sharon, CT 06069. 860.364.5526.

**Special Events**

Living Spirits Award Dinner and Silent Auction • Apr. 20, 5:30 pm • Pond House Cafe, 1555 Asylum Ave., West Hartford • Cost: \$50.00. • Contact: Sarah Annis, Spiritual Life Center, 120 Mountain Ave., Bloomfield, CT 06002. 860.243.2374.

Quilt Show • June 27-28 • First Congl. Church, 199 Valley St., Willimantic • Contact for entry forms: Linda Gardner, 860.429.7995.

**Concerts and Performances**

Five Friday Lenten Concert Series • Apr. 3 and 10, 12:15 pm • First Congl. Church, 26 Meetinghouse La., Madison • Cost: Free. • Contact: Nathan Bayreuther, First Congregational Church of Madison, 26 Meetinghouse Lane, Madison, CT 06443. 203.245.2739, ext. 12.

Organ Dedication Concert: Ron Ebrecht • Apr. 19, 3:00 pm • Congl. Church of Brookfield, 160 Whisconier Rd., Brookfield • Cost: Free. • Contact: Toni Sullivan, Congregational Church of Brookfield, 160 Whisconier Rd., Brookfield, CT 06804. 203.775.1259 x310.

Organ Dedication Concert: Mark Steinbach • Apr. 29, 3:00 pm • Second Congl. Church, 45 Broad St., New London • Cost: \$12.00. • Contact: Kristin Lambert, 10 Cove Hill Rd., Niantic, CT 06357. 860.739.6665.

A Mendelssohn Marathon: Part 2, "Music for Choir and Soloists" • May 13, 7:30 pm • Center Church, Main and Gold St., Hartford • Cost: \$10.00. • Contact: Jason Charneski, Center Church, 60 Gold St., Hartford, CT 06103. 860.249.5631 x19.

The Little Theatre of the Deaf: "Tree Wise" • May 17, 4:00 pm • South Congl./First Baptist Church, 90 Main St., New Britain • Contact: Christine Laird, The Music Series at South Church, 90 Main St., New Britain, CT 06051-2287. 860.223.7555.

Concert: Jazz in June with the Taylor Eigsti/Julian Lage Duo • June 7, 4:00 pm • South Congl./First Baptist Church, 90 Main St., New Britain • Cost: Premium \$25.00, General \$15.00, Students/seniors \$10.00. • Contact: Christine Laird, The Music Series at South Church, 90 Main St., New Britain, CT 06051-2287. 860.223.7555.



**Anne Sofie von Otter: Music of Theresienstadt**

*Immanuel Congregational Church, Hartford  
Sunday, April 26, 7:30 pm*

Mezzo-soprano Anne Sophie von Otter, one of the finest singers of her generation, will perform works written by Jewish composers while they were imprisoned at Theresienstadt, the notorious Nazi "model" concentration camp in Czechoslovakia. This poignant emergence of creation amidst cruelty and misery demonstrates the heights and depths of humanity and the triumph of the human spirit.

For tickets or more information, visit [www.woodlandconcertseries.org](http://www.woodlandconcertseries.org), or call 860.527.8121.

**Positions**

First Congregational Church of Watertown, CT seeks a part-time Director of Music Ministries to continue our strong musical tradition. Responsibilities include directing the adult and youth vocal choirs, providing music in worship and participating in special services during the year. Email resume along with a brief note on philosophy of church music ministry. Salary: up to \$26,000 depending on experience. Contact: Sam Dexter, revdexter@hotmail.com.

Part-time Music Director: The Congregational Church of Union seeks a music director to play three Sundays a month, with senior and children's choir rehearsals on Sunday mornings. Contact: Bob LaRochelle, rpbksl@cox.net.

United Church of Chester seeks a permanent part-time (20hr/wk, 44wk/yr) Director of Christian Education. Prior religious and/or youth education is preferred, but not required. Applicants should have a commitment to the Christian faith, enthusiasm for education, organizational and communication skills, and strong self-initiative to develop and execute educational and youth ministry programs. Submit resumes or inquiries to the Church Secretary at United Church of Chester, 29 West Main Street, Chester, CT 06412. 860.526.2697.

First Church of Christ, Simsbury has an opening for a Church Administrator. This is a part time (20-25 hours) position that requires office management experience, including personnel management, facilities maintenance. Must have strong communications, computer and leadership skills. The complete job description is available on the church's web site. Contact: Tommy Michaels, 54 Drumlin Rd., West Simsbury, CT 06092. 860.651.8410, 1stchurchjob@comcast.net.

First Congregational Church of Andover is seeking an Acting Church School coordinator, 8-10 hours per week, who will focus on nurturing the spiritual growth of our children primarily by providing leadership for our Church School program. The Acting Church School Coordinator will be eligible to apply for a settled position. Send a letter of interest and resume to First Congregational Church of Andover, PO Box 55, Andover, CT 06232.

**Available**

Free Women's Health Screenings: If you are a woman between the age of 40 and 64, and have little or no health insurance, you may be eligible for a FREE Pap test, mammogram, and heart disease screenings through the CT Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program provided by Eastern Connecticut Health Network. For more information call Debra at 860.872.5368.

The North Haven Congregational Church, 28 Church St on the Green, will hold its annual Springbook Used Book Sale on Friday, April 24 from 10:00 am until 8:00 pm and Saturday, April 25 from 9:00 am until 1:00 pm. Thousands of books will be for sale, all sorted by author and category; selection includes fiction, non-fiction, hardcover, softcover, children's and teens books, and special and unique books, all reasonably priced. Contact: North Haven Congregational Church, 28 Church St., North Haven, CT. 203.239.5691.

*from the*  
**SPiRiT**  
calendar



BY REV. DR. RON BROWN

*Transfiguration—change.*

That's what the word means, you know—transfiguration means change. And we've heard a lot about change lately. Politicians, economists, preachers, bankers, even presidents—everyone seems to be talking about change.

Jesus understood what it takes to change, I think. That's why he took Peter, James and John high on a mountain by themselves, so they could get a glimpse of change. The interesting thing is that the change is shrouded in mystery. When Peter tries to pin it down by trying to build shrines to mark the change, it gets more mysterious. A cloud descends and a voice within it tells them they should listen to Jesus. But Jesus didn't explain the change that took place. He just told them, as he always had, not to tell anyone about it just yet.

Perhaps that is still true today as the world seems so on the precipice of change. Our economic future, our political future, even the future of our beloved church seems shrouded in mystery. How can we live in midst of such change?

Dora Stoutenberg was a faithful member of South Church in New Britain until her death 5 years ago. For the last 6 years of her life I was privileged to be her pastor. She left extensive notes about her funeral in a bright orange file folder. On the very last paper in that bright orange folder I found these words, typed and corrected to make them just right. In a handwritten note in the margin Dora made their purpose clear: "not a quote—just my prayer."

*These have I gloried in:  
Ocean waves and winds,  
mountain tops and woodland trails,  
the love of a good man,  
children and grandchildren.  
Parents and Grandparents who gave  
me all that contributed to my growth.  
Friends everywhere always.  
An endlessly happy life for which I  
thank my God.*

And that, I believe, is the mystery of Transfiguration in a nutshell. We live our lives in the midst of change, not on the mountaintop, but here, in the world, shrouded in a cloud of mystery. And sometimes the only way to make sense of the change all around us is to live our lives in gratitude for the gifts of today.

It is a mystery... a change that cannot be explained... only lived.

*Rev. Dr. Ron Brown is Associate Conference Minister for Clergy Concerns for the Connecticut Conference. Subscribe to the Spirit Calendar, the Connecticut Conference's weekly spiritual reflection, at [www.ctucc.org/fido/](http://www.ctucc.org/fido/)*

reflections on  
**FAITH**

**An Extravagant Welcome**

BY REV. ELLEN PETERSON

December 21 was cold, snowy, rainy and sleety. My parishioners had already told me that they would not be venturing out to church, so we did not have a worship service on that day. My heart and soul yearn for a weekly worship service, so my partner Marilyn and I decided to go to a church in Stratford.

I want to share with you an experience of extravagant welcome.

I called First Congregational Church and was pleased that I did not hear an answering machine, but a real live person. The Associate Pastor, Rev. Joshua Sander, said that if people felt safe venturing out, they would be welcomed. As we walked through the powerful wind and pelting rain, we looked longingly at the entrance to

the church. We could not get there fast enough.

We climbed the steps and entered the church, relieved to be out of the elements. An usher greeted us, wearing a great big smile on his face, as if he knew us and was happy to see us again. He guided us to yet another smiling usher, who welcomed us as he handed us a bulletin. Then yet another smiling usher greeted us and walked us to a pew.

Now, I know how people are about their pews; there is almost an "ownership" rite. We wanted to be respectful and not sit in anyone's pew. I shared that with the usher. She lovingly shrugged off that notion and sat us where we desired. How refreshing!

Everyone around us greeted us and made us feel welcome. During the service, Rev. Ed Rawls stood up with flowers. It is their church's custom to welcome guests with a flower. I could not help but tell him that I was a UCC pastor.

As the service continued, Rev. Rawls stood up to read the New Testament Scripture. He pondered for a few

**Recent and Upcoming Pastoral Transitions**

**NEW CALLS**

Besse-Rankin, Paige, from Pastor, Woodmont United Church of Christ, to Pastor, Church of Christ Congregational in Goshen, March 30, 2009

Bryant-Smith, Paul, from Pastor, First Congregational Church of River Edge, NJ, to Pastor, First Congregational Church of Norwalk, Apr. 1, 2009

Goodstal-Spinks, Care, from Thomasville, NC, to Associate Pastor, North Haven Congregational Church, Mar. 19, 2009

Ireland, Lee, from Interim Ministry to Associate Pastor, Orange Congregational Church, Feb. 9, 2009

**RESIGNATIONS**

Lee, Jonathan, from Pastor, Rocky Hill Congregational Church, to Chief Development Officer, Hartford Seminary, Mar. 20, 2009

seconds, and then said, "This scripture would be better read by a woman. It just so happens that we have a visiting UCC pastor here this morning." After recovering from sliding down into "our" pew, I walked up to the pulpit. The reading was Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55). As soon as I began to read, the Holy Spirit became so alive within me. I felt one with all of God's children. The UCC motto "That they may all be one" came alive in that moment.

Marilyn and I experienced such an extravagant welcome: from Rev. Joshua answering the phone, to three smiling ushers, to all the people who greeted us so warmly, to Rev. Ed inviting me to take part in the service, to people at coffee hour coming up to us.

I wish all churches were this welcoming.

*Rev. Ellen Petersen is pastor of Evangelical and Reformed United Church of Christ in Wallingford*

*Read more Reflections on Faith online at [www.ctucc.org/reflections/](http://www.ctucc.org/reflections/)*