



The Seneca Valley Voice

The United Church of Christ of Seneca Valley
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Carolyn's Column

This September column may better be named "Pastor's Potpourri" this time around. I guess that's appropriate; there are several activities and issues that either are about to resume, or are on the horizon.

Second Service

The first is that there has been a good deal of discussion concerning the second service, which is especially appropriate, given our priority of focusing on the worship outcome for this year. [The 11:00 service was discontinued over the summer, partly so that the band could enjoy the same break as the choir.] **The second service will resume on September 9.** Once again, there will be a coffee 'half hour' in between the two services to allow worshipers to visit with one another and to enjoy the always-delicious goodies provided or coordinated by the Fellowship Board.

It is a bit of an understatement to say that there are strong feelings about the second service, feelings which reflect a variety of perspectives. It may be helpful to remember that the service is intended to provide an alternative to the first service for those who are drawn to a progressive Christian community, but wish to be involved in a more energized, informal style of worship. The board of Deacons initially supported the idea of an alternative service precisely because of that desire to reach out to a broader community, and that concern continues to be a high priority. It should also be noted that, because of the highly participatory nature of the second service, a blended single service is unlikely to be satisfactory to either worshipping community.

The band committed to providing music leadership in the second service, and is equally open to occasional participation at 9:30.

Confirmation

Although confirmation can be traced to the gift of the Spirit as people responded to the gospel, in Protestant circles it is more commonly associated with a sense of completing the sacrament of baptism and joining the church. In fact, the order for confirmation in the United Church of Christ's *Book of Worship* is titled "Affirmation of Baptism." Furthermore, at least with infant baptism, the parents pledge to raise the child in a way that leads him/her to profess Jesus as Lord and Savior. Confirmation provides the means for the individual to make that choice. After a period of preparation, the individual decides whether or not to affirm those baptismal vows and publicly commit to Christian discipleship.

The Confirmation class for UCCSV is held every two years, and will begin on Sunday, September 9, from 4-7 pm. It meets twice a month during the school year, and is geared for ninth and tenth graders, but older students are welcome to participate as well.

Open and Affirming

Thirty people gathered in mid-August to discuss the questions and concerns that have been generated by UCCSV's consideration of becoming an Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation. Discussion also focused on a draft ONA statement that task force chair, Colby Harmon, circulated prior to and at the meeting.

There is strong support for bringing the ONA process to a decision in the near future. Therefore the proposed date for this decision is now 21 October. Two significant educational opportunities are scheduled between now and then. The first is a showing of the excellent documentary, *Call Me Malcolm*, which addresses many of the issues of the transgendered community by following the story of Malcolm.

The film will be shown on Sunday morning, September 9. Details are provided in the ONA article in this newsletter.

The second is a panel discussion with members of the LGBT community who belong to ONA churches. (LGBT is the acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered individuals.) That discussion is scheduled for 30 September, beginning with a light supper at 6 pm.

It strikes me that both young people and adults are considering seriously what it means to be a disciple, whether the process is that of confirmation, or it is applied to the ways in which we practice the hospitality and affirmation that is so central to our witness.

Blessings,

Carolyn

Christian Education



Sunday School Resumes!!

On Sunday, September 9, all children grades K-5 will be resuming church school. The Christian Education Board has been hard at work developing plans for this age group. Our focus will center around scriptures and stories from the Bible that are also used in the adult worship service(s). It is our hope that will spur home discussions between parents and their children about the scripture and/or the story related on any given Sunday.

Our Sunday School teachers for Sept/Oct/Nov will be Anne Kimmell and Stephanie Brant - both are new faces serving on the Christian Education Board. It is hoped that all parents will make an extra special effort to have their children present on September 9, as we are using this first Sunday school session as an opportunity to take pictures of each child for display on our CE bulletin board. Be sure to take a look at our "Transformer" bulletin board to find out more about our kids at UCCSV!

Mind, Body, Spirit

Mind, Body, Spirit will meet September 11 from 7:30 to 9:00 pm. This group affords the opportunity to learn meditation as a means of improving health through relaxation and provides a path for drawing closer to God. All are welcome. Please call the church office at 301-540-3449 if you plan to attend).

One Anothering

A lectionary-based support/growth small group aimed at knowing God and one another through the sharing of a Bible text in the context of issues that emerge in our lives.

The 'lectio divina' is the organizing principle of the group. It involves reading a selected Bible text three times during the course of the evening. After each reading, the group is invited to respond to the text at deeper and deeper levels. In the process, God and the neighbor are known and savored in all their grandeur and mystery. Leadership is shared by the group.

The group meets weekly on Wednesdays at 7:30 pm .Please call the church office at 301-540-3449 if you would like to attend..

Saving Jesus

"Ever feel Jesus has been kidnapped by the Christian Right?" That provocative question frames a 12-session small group series that Carolyn Roberts will facilitate Wednesday evenings, 7:30-9:00 pm at the church.

The series utilizes a DVD with John Shelby Spong, Amy-Jill Levine, James Forbes, Tex Sample, John Dominic Crossan, and a host of others.

\$10 will be charged to defray the cost of materials.

The sessions begin September 5.

Social Concerns

Congregational Forum Held to Discuss Open and Affirming Hopes and Concerns

On August 19, a forum was held after worship to discuss the congregation's responses to the recent Open and Affirming (ONA) questionnaire and the recently distributed draft ONA statement. Some "sound bites" from the meeting include the following:

- The proposed ONA statement addresses both the "head and heart."
- Many other UCC congregations between the beltway and Frederick are already ONA.
- For the most part UCCSV is already identified with the UCC's denominational stance on ONA and some local pastors have already chosen not to participate in ecumenical efforts with us because of this.
- Losing people or gaining people? Some anticipate that we are likely to attract more friends/family of LGBT people as well as LGBT people themselves.
- "Why is it taking so long?" Some expressed frustration about how drawn out the process has been, considering the majority of supportive voices in the surveys and at the forums.
- The pros and cons of holding a vote on ONA versus using a consensus-based process were discussed. Some felt that using consensus as a tool could be useful, but most expressed that a secret ballot vote of yes or no would yield the same result and anyone holding the minority opinion would at least know they had an opportunity to weigh in and be counted.

The ONA committee had originally planned on having a consensus-based decision on ONA being carried out in November. After the forum, the committee has decided to ask the Church Council if an ONA yes or no vote can be held on October 21.

Upcoming ONA Events

Viewing of the film "Call me Malcolm"

September 9 at 11:00 am

Come join us for this heart-warming film.

Child care and snacks will be provided.

As this film begins, so does Malcolm's final year of seminary, a course of study that he enrolled in as Miriam. Malcolm started his transgender transition

during seminary, with the support of his local UCC church. Before the school term begins, he steps away from his safe environment and sets out on a road trip across the country, visiting many people along the way, each of whom has a different perspective on the issues of gender-identity, faith, and love.

Outside of Denver, Malcolm reconnects with a former high school teacher whom he has not seen since he transitioned. In Cortez, he meets Pauline Mitchell, whose Nadleeh, or two-spirit, Navajo son was murdered while still in high school. In Los Angeles, Malcolm talks religion with Calpernia Addams, the subject of the Showtime film *Soldier's Girl*. Malcolm then travels to San Francisco to meet a police sergeant who gained international attention when he transitioned while serving on the force.

Panel Discussion with Members of Nearby ONA Churches, September 30 at 6:00 pm

Help us welcome members of nearby ONA churches for soup, salad and a frank discussion about what ONA means to them and their congregations. A light meal will be served at 6:00 pm; the discussion will start between 6:45 and 7:00 pm.

What is "Open and Affirming?"

In 1985 the national delegate body of the United Church of Christ (UCC), the General Synod, adopted a resolution that encouraged "the congregations of the United Church of Christ to adopt a non-discrimination policy and a Covenant of Openness and Affirmation of persons of lesbian, gay and bisexual orientation within the community of faith." There is a long tradition of honoring the self-determination of individual churches within the UCC denomination. The decision to become an Open and Affirming (ONA) church is left up to each congregation.

Our congregation held its first meeting to discuss the merits of becoming an ONA church in November of 2006. During that meeting Rev. Bruce Swanson shared some of his congregation's experiences as they considered becoming ONA. Subsequent forums here have discussed what the Bible does and doesn't say about homosexuality and the congregation's comments and concerns about our church becoming ONA were recently solicited with a questionnaire. Many of the issues raised from the survey were discussed at a congregational forum on August 19.

***ONA Vote Tentatively Scheduled
for October 21, 2007
at a Special Congregational Meeting***



Community Based Shelter

Do you love Me? Feed My Sheep. According to the Gospel of John this is one of the last directives that Jesus gave to his disciples. It is now the 21st Century and we good people of UCCSV are now counted among Jesus' disciples.

In September (Sunday, September 23 dinner through Wednesday, September 26 breakfast and lunch) we get a chance to do some "feeding for Jesus." This is the time we will be providing beds for a group of homeless women in a Rockville shelter.

This program, called the Community Based Shelter (CBS), provides a temporary home for women while they get training to prepare themselves to be self-sufficient. Various churches, synagogues, etc., provide meals for the women.

In the coming weeks sign-up sheets will be displayed listing the needs UCCSV will have during the days we will be feeding the women. Look for the sheets, find something you can do and please sign up. Here is something to remember – helping someone in need makes a person feel really good. Try it; you'll see!

Floyd Price, Social Concerns Board

Emergency Assistance Fund (EAF)

Members of the congregation continue to be very generous to the EAF that supports families in need in the Germantown-Gaithersburg area. Sometimes, however, there are members of our own congregation who are also in need. Because of this fact, when you make a contribution to the EAF you may designate that you would like the money to be used within our congregation if needed. Carolyn Roberts is authorized to use up to \$500 per year of the emergency assistance funds for families within our congregation. The Social Concerns Committee wants to thank everyone who has contributed to this very important outreach program of UCCSV .

Although it is only August, Emergency Assistance has provided funding for about as many requests as were funded in the entire last year, giving a total amount of \$9025 so far this year. UCCSV has cooperated with several agencies and groups to help avoid or reverse discontinuation of electricity service for 20 families, gas service for 4 families, and water service for 10 families. UCCSV has contributed to help 15 families avoid becoming homeless and has provided medical-related help in 9 instances. We have purchased \$10 Giant cards to give to families who get food from our food cupboard so that they also can purchase milk and bread, as well as funding a few other services (e.g. paying a lawyer for advice for a family.) The news of the generosity of UCCSV continues to spread so we get many calls for help, some on recommendation of friends and some sent to us by the local aid agencies. One down side of the large number of people who contact us with their needs is that the overall amount of our available funds is declining. If this would be a good time for you to make a contribution to the Emergency Assistance ministry, it would help the program continue to share in funding all of the documented requests that we receive. Many thanks for all you do to help so many people.

Anti-Racism Training

When:

Friday, Sept. 28, 6 pm and
Saturday, Sept. 29, 8:30 am – 2:30 pm

Where:

Bethesda United Church of Christ,
10010 Fernwood Rd.,
Phone: 301-365-3387

Sponsored by:

The Potomac Association Board and Social Action
& Mission Committee

For:

Members and friends of the churches in the Potomac Association and especially those who hunger to sit at the "Welcome Table" and who yearn to live out our motto, "that they may all be one."

Anti-Racism Training Goals:

- 1) to help people come to a common understanding of the continuing challenges of racism
- 2) to analyze and understand racism in historical and current contexts: institutional, cultural and individual; to enhance the ability of individuals and churches
- 3) to engage strategically in dismantling of racism and building a multicultural/multiracial church and world.

Cost:

\$25.00 to cover the costs of resource materials and meals for Fri. supper, Sat. breakfast & lunch. Scholarship help is available.

Register:

call 301-365-3387.

For further information and/or expression of interest: call Jim Russ at 301-208-0373.

**Thanks Are In Order**

Recently the church received \$574 as a result of two Pampered Chef parties held by members.. Many thanks to all of you who purchased items, and a big thank you to the Pampered Chef Consultant, Linda. Linda contributed a percent of the sales as did the company. She was a delight to work with, so if you want to host a party or purchase something, please think of Linda at www.pamperedchef.biz/lindaQ. Also rumor has it that another member is also planning a party in November as a fundraiser and there may be others in case you missed the fun.

**Board of Property Operations****Nextel Update**

Nextel and General Dynamics have advised me that the Montgomery County Permitting Department has approved Nextel's Wireless Communication Support Facility Construction Permit. When Nextel delivers our "approved" copy of the Wireless Communication Support Facility construction drawings to the Montgomery County Permitting Department everything will be in order with the county.

General Dynamics has not yet revealed when construction of Nextel's Wireless Communication Support Facility will, in fact, begin at our church. I'm confident Montgomery County has a deadline for the construction to begin, and I'd think General Dynamics would want their carpenters to be in our attic before the colder weather arrives. My guess is that they'll begin within the next 30 days.

Also, the Board of Trustees recently approved an amendment to the Nextel lease which will allow us to deal with Nextel's electric bill more judiciously. There are no other "open" issues with Nextel which could delay the construction. So, all the paperwork's been completed - the ball's in General Dynamics's court to schedule the start of Nextel's Wireless Communication Support Facility.

Chair, Board of Property Operations





A Grand Celebration!

Sunday, July 15, marked a very exciting celebration here at the United Church of Christ of Seneca Valley. In worship and at a reception following, we celebrated the 100th birthday of member Kaye.

We were pleased to have Trevor, our former music director and current member of the Washington National Opera, here to offer his voice in singing *The Lord's Prayer* and direct the sanctuary choir in Mozart's *Allelulia*. A special coffee hour followed worship, complete with cake and a special balloon to share "Happy Birthday" wishes with Kaye. Kaye was also given a decorative jar holding congratulations from individuals in the congregation.

Kaye is an inspiration for us all. She continues to study and learn, using her computer skills to email and to do research, along with participating in yoga classes and being a fervent opera fan. Kaye is remarkable with her positive outlook on life.

Happy Birthday, Kaye! May God bless you with more happy celebrations!

Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation

Please join us and please pass the word. Shalem Institute will host their Fall Open House September 30, 2007, from 1:30 - 5:00 p.m. The afternoon will offer an opportunity to get acquainted with Shalem staff and friends, experience an introduction to Shalem's programs, and sample contemplative prayer. The open house is free of charge

The Shalem Institute provides in-depth support for contemplative living and leadership—a way of being in the world that is prayerfully attentive and responsive to God's presence and guidance. For over 30 years, we have offered a wide variety of programs and resources for spiritual directors, clergy, lay leaders and individuals who want to open themselves more fully to God in their daily lives and work. Complimentary refreshments will be provided.

For more information, visit:

http://www.shalem.org/short_programs/introductory_events/open_house.html.

Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation:

On the grounds of the Renewable Natural Resources Center
5430 Grosvenor Lane, Site 140
Bethesda, MD 20814
Phone: 301-897-7334
Fax: 301-897-3719
<http://www.shalem.org>



Choir Robe Cleaning

The Choir looks so spiffy thanks to Diamond Cleaners, 13220 Wisteria Drive, at the intersection of Father Hurley Blvd. The folks there established an account for us and were very kind and eager to give the church service at a discount. Quoting the owner, "We love to do this for churches because we are Christians, too."



September Scripture Readings



Church Officers

Sunday, September 2

Sermon Title: *Do you look like the church?*

Jeremiah 2:4-13

Psalms 81:1, 10-16 or Sirach 10:12-18

Psalms 112

Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

Luke 14:1, 7-14

The September Calendar of Events is on page 9.

Sunday, September 9

Sermon Title: *Freed to Serve*

Jeremiah 18:1-11

Psalms 139:1-6 or Deut 30:15-20

Psalms 1

Philemon 1-21

Luke 14:25-33



Sunday, September 16

Sermon Title: *Casting God Images*

Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28

Psalms 14 or Exodus 32:7-14

Psalms 51:1-10

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Luke 16:1-13

Sunday, September 23

Sermon Title: *In Jesus' Name*

Jeremiah 8:18-9:1

Psalms 79:1-9 or Amos 8:4-7

Psalms 113

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Luke 16:1-13

Sunday, September 30

Sermon Title: *Generous Spirit*

Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15, 14-16 or

Amos 6:1a, 4-7

Psalms 146

1 Timothy 6:6-19

Luke 16:19-31

People for Peace



Dear Carolyn L,

At the General Synod in June, the Collegium issued a pastoral letter calling on the church to join protest to prayer in opposition to the war in Iraq. Since then, the United Church of Christ has launched a new anti-war campaign website, **100,000 People for Peace**, with the goal of gathering 100,000 petition signatures supporting the pastoral letter. I plan to take these 100,000 names with me to Washington, D.C. in October, following World Communion Sunday, and present them – in person – as our unified call for peace to leaders of Congress and members of the Administration.

This is an ambitious goal, and we need your help. On Sunday, September 16, in commemoration of the International Day of Peace, **please read the pastoral letter at your church and circulate the petition, available for download on the 100,000 People for Peace site.**

If our efforts are successful, this will be the largest online advocacy campaign ever attempted by the UCC, representing a total participation equal to nearly one-tenth of our denominational membership. But we cannot do it without you. **Please download the pastoral letter bulletin for distribution on September 16, and make your voice heard.**

Sincerely,

The Rev. John H. Thomas
General Minister and President
United Church of Christ

P.S. Have you and your church members signed the petition yet? **Please sign today...**and organize your congregation's petition-signing opportunities. Download and circulate a petition to **collect hand-written signatures.**





SEPTEMBER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 8:30a – 8p - 7 th Day
2 9:30a Worship 8:30p AA	3 Labor Day Office Closed	4 10:00a – Staff Mtg 8:30p - AA	5 7:30p – <i>Saving Jesus</i> 7:30p – <i>One Anothering</i>	6 7:30p – Choir 7:30p – Boy Scouts	7	8 8:30a – 8p - 7 th Day
9 9:30a Worship 11:00a - Worship 4:00-7:00p – Confirmation 8:30p - AA	10 7:00p – Property Ops 7:30p – Social Concerns 7:30p – Christian Education	11 10:00a - Staff 7:30-9p – Mind, Body, Spirit 8:30p - AA	12 7:30p – <i>Saving Jesus</i> 7:30p – <i>One Anothering</i>	13 7:30p – Choir 7:30p – Boy Scouts	14	15 8:30a – 8p - 7 th Day
16 9:30a – Worship 11:00a – Worship 8:30p - AA	17 4:00p –Human Resources 7:30p - Council	18 10:00a - Staff 8:30p - AA	19 7:30p – <i>Saving Jesus</i> 7:30p – <i>One Anothering</i>	20 7:30p - Choir 7:30p – Boy Scouts	21	22 8:30a – 8p - 7 th Day
23 9:30a – Worship 11:00a – Worship 4:00-7:00p - Confirmation 8:30p - AA	24	25 10:00a - Staff 8:30p - AA	26 7:30p – <i>Saving Jesus</i> 7:30p – <i>One Anothering</i>	27 7:30p - Choir 7:30p – Boy Scouts	28	29 8:30a – 8p - 7 th Day
30 9:30a – Worship 11:00a – Worship 8:30p - AA						

Please watch the bulletin boards and Sunday bulletins for September calendar updates.

Groups who meet regularly at UCCSV;

Sunday/Tuesday nights: 8:30p – AA

Thursday nights: 7:30p – Boy Scouts

Saturdays: 8:30a-1:00p and 4:00-8:00p – 7th Day Adventists