



The Seneca Valley Voice

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

At last week's adult study of Marcus Borg's *The Heart of Christianity*, two members arrived in...unusual attire. Unusual, at least, for an evening's simple supper and discussion. Rather than the typical work clothes or blue jeans sported by the rest of the class, these members were wearing the clothes they wore on their wedding day. As it happened, our class met on their ninth anniversary. Their joy, their ability to play, connected instantly with each of us. But the celebration with us of their anniversary moved to another level altogether as we gathered for the class itself.

Our session began around the chapter titled "Born Again: A New Heart" which speaks to the myriad images of rebirth that are the DNA of our faith. Dressed in their wedding finery, this anniversary couple captured the *image* of our spiritual movement featured so prominently in the wedding story in the second chapter of the gospel according to John. From birth, through those rough places we often call 'the wilderness' where our true self becomes lost, hidden, distorted, or exiled, to recovering the self God creates us to be, our spiritual journey is one of beginning to live from the inside out rather than the outside in. Spiritual rebirth is that process of letting go of (or in traditional terms, dying to) that which is false within ourselves and being born into the truer self in which our identity is centered in God.

Borg describes four of these experiences of rebirth:

- A sudden and dramatic moment such as the conversion of Saul, better known as Paul.
- A gradual process over a lifetime, in which one experiences a deepening trust in God.

- The shorter rhythms of life, which may take place several times during periods of major change.
- The smaller rhythms of daily life, in which we forget God, becoming burdened, then remember God, and are reborn.

Our anniversary couple was a joyful reminder that the born-again experience happens in many ways.

Other joyful reminders come from places we often least expect. As I write this column, breaking news tells us of the release of the three surviving captives from the Christian Peacemaker Team in Iraq. Their joy in their release—truly a rebirth from a wilderness experience!—is tempered by their grief that the fourth member of their team, Tom Fox, was killed just two short weeks before. Yet even in their grief, these CPT members affirm Fox's presence with them in their joy.

As we move through these closing days of Lent, may we know within our own spiritual journey the experience of rebirth.

Blessings,

Carolyn



Moderator's Report

Last Sunday a visitor to our church said to me, "There's a great energy in this church. I can feel it." His comment surprised me, but you know what? He was right. There is an energy and that is exciting. That energy is composed of many, many things, from the welcome at the door, to the way the grounds look, to our worship services, our coffee hour, the conversations taking place throughout the church on Sundays, committee meetings, Christian Education, our music ministry, etc. Can you feel it?

I hope you can. All of us are part of that energy and that energy needs all of us.

Now, please consider how you can be part of that energy. One of the ways is to participate in the life of the church by serving on a board or committee. There are many places you can help:

- Christian Education-responsible for children, youth, and adult education
- Social Concerns-oversees the mission programs, helps connect us to the larger community
- Deacons-oversees the spiritual life of the church and its members and visitors
- Stewardship-responsible for the financial resources-our treasures and talents
- Fellowship-provides opportunities for us to know one another better
- Property Operations-oversees the care of the building and grounds
- Human Resources Committee-responsible for staff policies and procedures
- Hope Task Force-helps to provide a warm welcome to visitors
- Pastoral Relations Committee-serves as an advisory group to the pastor and supports her leadership
- Worship Committee-provides input into the planning of the services

During the next month or so, the nominating committee will be finding people to serve on these boards and committees, so please consider how you may want to be of service. **Believe it or not, the nominating committee cannot read your mind, so if you want to help on of the above**

committees, please do not wait to be asked. At this point, Jen Fuss has agreed to be on the nominating committee and she will be joined by a few others.

Please let Jen, any of the current board chairs (see list in this newsletter) or me know if you have questions or want to be on a board. All are welcome.

On **May 7** we will hold our **annual congregational meeting** about the work of the church. At that time the list of committee members and church leaders is voted on. Please mark your calendars for our annual meeting, Sunday, May 7, at 12:15. There will be a potluck lunch starting at about 12:15 as part of this annual meeting and an extended coffee hour after the first service. Please join together in food and fellowship to review our work from the past year and begin our new year. Agendas and annual reports will be available several weeks before the meeting. There will be a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board for the potluck.

If you would like to share your time and talents with any of our boards, please contact the appropriate chair listed below:

Social Concerns

Loan Refund News

The UCCSV Church Council voted unanimously to do the following with the refunds in the amount of \$4,903.32 from various church loans:

- \$1,000 is being applied to UCCSV's 2006 budget to bring it into full balance. \$560 is being applied to Our Church's Wider Mission contribution which represents a 4% increase over what was budgeted. The remainder was given to the Social Concerns Board to decide on distribution, with an emphasis on giving support to help with victims of Katrina.
- Social Concerns met and decided to give \$2,500 to the Central Congregational UCC in New Orleans. (See the article in the most recent issue of *NewSpirit*, or within this issue of the *Voice*, "Conference Seeks Support for Central Congregational UCC.") The money will be channeled through our own Central Atlantic Conference. A final vote on the remaining

distribution will be made at our next board meeting after some further research.

Chair, Social Concerns Board

Emergency Assistance: March Report

As of March 22 we have fielded almost 20 calls for assistance, resulting in the total expenditure of \$615.00. Many of the calls were for assistance with utility bills. Some were for assistance with rent to avoid eviction. One call was from a homeless individual living in a car. We were able to help with food and direct that individual to agencies more equipped to handle the needs.

As always we thank you for your continued support of this important ministry to our greater community.

Upcounty Interfaith Clothing Center

It's that time again for Spring Cleaning! As you change seasons and clean out closets, basements, and garages, donations not appropriate for Tina's can be given to the **Upcounty Interfaith Clothing Center** in Gaithersburg. All donations given to Interfaith Clothing are available at no charge to those who are in need. Donations accepted are: clothing (all ages), household items, toys, small appliances, and school supplies.

The **Upcounty Interfaith Clothing Center** is a program of Community Ministry of Montgomery County. It is located at 620 East Diamond Ave., Suite M, Gaithersburg, MD; telephone: 301-977-1267; fax: 301-977-0687. Call first for their donation days and hours.

Tina's Consignment: Save your gently used spring and summer clothes and household items for Tina's. We will collect items on April 2. If you have any questions please check with the Social Concerns Board.

Conference Seeks Support for Central Congregational UCC

The Central Atlantic Conference is working to help support Central Congregational UCC in New Orleans as it tries to resurrect itself from the devastation associated with Hurricane Katrina. Central is one of the historic African-American congregations in the UCC. Rev. A. Kinghton (Tony) Stanley of People's Congregational UCC in Washington was ordained

there and former UN Ambassador Rev. Andrew Young grew up in the church. The conference goal is to raise enough to provide \$5,000 worth of support each month so that the church's minister, Rev. Wilmer Brown, can remain in New Orleans and help minister to UCC congregants as they determine their plans for the future. Conference Minister Rev. John Deckenback and Associate Conference Minister Kwame Osei Reed recently returned from visiting the area affected by Katrina and would welcome the opportunity to address church groups, large and small, about what they witnessed. In addition, work groups interested in going to New Orleans are being coordinated by Rev. Andy Coe at revacoe@yahoo.net. Contributions should be sent to the CAC office for forwarding to the South Central Conference, which is providing bookkeeping support to the church. More information on UCC recovery efforts is available at www.ucc.org.

Fellowship

The Youth Group and Sue did an amazing job with the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper. We thank them and everyone who came to enjoy both the food and festive decorations.

Jasna and Arthur were gracious hosts at their home for our Tapas Night. We appreciate their willingness to share their home to encourage the fellowship of this congregation. We were all treated to delightful appetizers and desserts. Many thanks to all our great cooks.

Fellowship will again partner with the Deacons to coordinate the Maundy Thursday Service on April 13. This is a meaningful low key service which consists of a simple supper, communion, and optional foot washing.

The coffee we are now enjoying each Sunday is the gift of Susan purchased from Equal Exchange.

Stewardship - Update on Fall '05 Stewardship Campaign

As Chair of the Stewardship Board, I would like to thank everyone for their support of last fall's Stewardship Campaign. Many thanks to Andy for his dedicated work as Chair of the Stewardship Campaign, and thanks as well to Heidi and Paul for their assistance.

As for the campaign itself, we received 52 pledges in the amount of \$181,500...a great number to be sure, but short of our goal and the amount pledged in the prior year's campaign. So, we have some challenges in front of us and some work to do in meeting those challenges. We will be sure to consider the feedback we've received on the campaign to try to improve the process for next fall's campaign....for example, we will plan to provide more information about stewardship to the congregation throughout the year.

We are truly grateful for the pledges of financial support we have received, and just as grateful for the continuing pledges of people's time and talents to UCCSV. Your support of the Stewardship Campaign and UCCSV through your time, talent and treasure make it possible for UCCSV to live out its mission with each other and our larger community. Again, thank you!

Faithfully,
Stewardship Chair

Update from the Treasurer

As of 3/21/06 UCCSV has had expenses of \$57,072.49 and collections and gifts of \$65,972.56. If you want more information, please feel free to contact Al Speich.

Mission Trip to South Africa

This summer I have the opportunity to go to Durban, South Africa, and work with children affected by HIV/AIDS. In South Africa I will be working with the Rev. Adora Lee, a UCC missionary who was ordained at Peoples Congregational UCC in the District and is a member of the Potomac Association. She was appointed to that mission on behalf of the UCC HIV/AIDS Ministry.

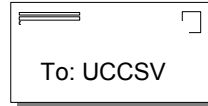
One of my primary goals in going to South Africa is to bring support to that ministry, as well as to strengthen the ties between the UCC in the United States and our partners in South Africa

I will be traveling by myself as a volunteer missionary for Global Ministries of the UCC and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). I will leave for South Africa on May 28 and return on August 1. Because I am a volunteer missionary, I must raise the funds to pay for travel, food and other expenses. These are estimated to be \$3,500-\$4,000.

If you wish to contribute toward my trip and this mission, please send a check made out to UCC of Seneca Valley, with A. Deckenback-SA in the memo

line. These may be mailed to the church at 13421 Clopper Road, Germantown MD 20874. Thank you so much for your consideration and your support.

Aaron



A Note from Jesse and Debbie

Dear Carolyn,

We hope that this letter finds you and our entire family at UCCSV well. We are starting to jump in here at FCCGE. We are both on the God is Still Speaking Committee; Jesse is joining the education committee and is a backup on PADS (Homeless shelter that rotates among local churches). The church here is working to adopt many of the things implemented at UCCSV to make guests feel more welcome, and Deb is playing a big part in that effort. UCCSV should give itself a pat on the back; it's quite good at guest welcoming.

Blessings, Jesse and Debbie

Looking into 'Open and Affirming'

A group is currently forming at Seneca Valley to explore the possibility of "officially" becoming an Open and Affirming church. As a denomination, the United Church of Christ began recognizing congregations as "Open and Affirming," often called ONA for short, in 1985. At that time the Fifteenth General Synod, the national delegate body of the UCC, adopted a resolution which "encourages 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."

Although over 500 UCC congregations have adopted an ONA policy, there is no formal process for doing so, or for the exploration itself. However, most churches engage in a time of study, prayer, and conversation before making a decision about adopting an ONA statement. The statement is crafted at the end of the period of exploration. The average period on discernment is about two years.

Over the next few months, the ONA planning group will be meeting with members of other near-by churches that have become ONA and evaluating other resources to develop an approach appropriate for our congregation. The plan will then be presented to the church council for their consideration. After that, the entire congregation will be invited to participate in what will likely be a wide variety of discussions, seminars and other events over the next year or two as we explore what being an ONA church might mean to us here in Seneca Valley.

An abundance of information about ONA may also be found at the United Church of Christ Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns website,
www.ucccoalition.org/programs/ONA/ONAdocs.html

Foster Care Parents

The Family Services Agency, Inc. is currently looking for treatment foster parents (TFP) for its new Therapeutic Foster Parent Program (TFPP). The TFPP seeks to provide a safe and caring place to live for children with severe behavioral or emotional problems.

The Montgomery County Child Welfare Services and the Family Services Agency will provide prospective TFP with extensive training to help them develop the knowledge and skills needed to meet the treatment goals of the foster child.

For anyone interested in becoming a therapeutic foster parent, there will be an informational meeting held at 6:00 pm on April 4 at the Family Services Agency. Please contact the Program Coordinator at 301-370-2223 or visit our website www.familyservicesagency.org for more details.

Contact: Meg Duskin, Director of Marketing
301-840-3208
duskinm@familyservicesagency.org

Lectionary Readings – April

Sunday, April 2 – Fifth Sunday in Lent

Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalm 51:1-12 or Psalm 119:9-16
Hebrew 5:5-10
John 12:20-33



APRIL 2 - Daylight Saving Time Begins

Sunday, April 9 – Palm Sunday

Isaiah 50:4-9a
Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29
Philippians 2:5-11
Mark 11:1-11
Mark 14:1-15.47

Holy Week Services

**Maundy Thursday Meal: April 13,
6:30pm**

Easter Sunday, April 16

Sunrise
Acts 10:34-43
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
John 20:1-18

**Good Friday Tenebrae: Friday, April 14,
7:30pm**

9:30 and 11:00 Worship

Isaiah 25:6-9
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
1 Corinthians 15:1-11
Acts 10:34-43
Mark 16:1-8



Easter Sunday:

Second Sunday of Easter – April 23

Acts 4:32-35
Psalm 133
1 John 1:1-2:2
John 20:19-31

Sunrise worship – 6:15am

**First regularly scheduled worship –
9:30am**

Third Sunday of Easter – April 30

Acts 3:12-19
Psalm 4
1 John 3:1-7
Luke 24:36b-48

**Second regularly scheduled worship –
11:00am**



HAPPY EASTER!



APRIL 2006

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 2:00-4:00pm Inquirer Class 5:00-7:00pm Youth Group	3 7:00pm - Deacons	4 9:00am - Staff	5 6:15pm Souper 7:00pm – Heart of Christianity	6 7:30pm - Choir	7	8
9 Palm Sunday 2:00-4:00pm – Inquirer Class 4:00-7:00pm - Confirmation	10 7:30pm Social Concerns	11 9:00am - Staff	12	13 6:30pm - Maundy Thursday	14 Good Friday 7:30pm - Worship	15
16 EASTER	17 Church Office Closed	18 9:00am - Staff 7:30pm - Council	19 6:15pm Souper 7:00pm– Heart of Christianity	20 7:30pm - Choir	21	22
23 New Members received 4:00-7:00pm - Confirmation	24	25 9am - Staff	26 6:15pm Souper 7:00pm – Heart of Christianity	27 7:30pm - Choir	28 6:00pm – Boeshore Rehsarsal	29 Boeshore Wedding
30 5:00-7:00pm – Youth Group						

Outside groups meeting regularly at UCCSV:

Sunday & Tuesday Nights - 8:30pm - AA

Thursday Nights - 7:30pm - Boy Scouts

Friday Nights - 6:30pm - Salem Church

Saturdays - 8:30am-1:00pm & 4:30-8:30pm - 7th Day Adventists