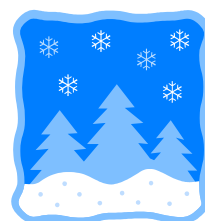


The Seneca Valley Voice

The United Church of Christ of Seneca Valley
13421 Clopper Road ♦ Germantown, Maryland 20874
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Carolyn's Column

**Our mission is to provide
a welcoming spiritual home
for those seeking God's presence,
preparing us to serve others
in Jesus' name.**



Hospitality was one of the primary necessities of biblical people and the cultures from which they came. Its practice, codified in Jewish law (Leviticus 19.33-34) speaks directly to respect for the stranger. Abraham entertains three guests by bowing down to greet them, offering water to wash their feet, shade in which to rest, and bread, curds, milk, and a calf to eat. Unaware that they are not earthly beings, Abraham extends the same generous hospitality to the three that he would show any visitor. (Genesis 18.1-15)

This practice of hospitality is at the core of one of our most beloved parables, the story of the good Samaritan. In it, Jesus makes it clear that hospitality is not limited to those from the same religious background, ethnic group, or some other category we might identify. The apostle Paul urges the early church to continue the practice of hospitality, enjoining believers to "Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers." (Romans 12.13)

Small wonder then, that the very first portion of UCCSV's own mission statement proclaims that we are called to provide a welcoming spiritual home. This call is reflected even in the church's architecture, with a narthex that immediately communicates "living room" to those who enter the doors of this church.

Individual members make hospitality a reality. Personal gestures of care, attention to guests beyond initial pleasantries, active listening, an open heart, a

graciousness that includes others – these are only a few marks of the personal practice of hospitality. In the culture of fear which is so pervasive in our time, hospitality is also an active witness to love.

This isn't to say that hospitality is always easy. Nor is it limited to personal practices. One of the breaking stories in this issue of the *Voice* is an article by the UCC's Director of Communications, commenting on CBS's decision to accept a Super Bowl ad from Focus on the Family concerning abortion. This is the same network that refused to air the UCC's 2004 ad conveying an all-inclusive welcome because that welcome includes gays and lesbians, as well as people of varying abilities and a full rainbow of colors.

Hospitality is more than an initial welcome, of course. But it begins there.

Thank you to each of you for the welcome you extend, and the hospitality you practice.

Blessings,

Carolyn

Carolyn

It's That Time of Year Again
The Super Bowl Party

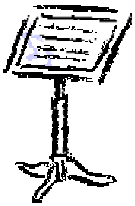
Yes, it's on!

The Annual Deckenback/Roberts Super Bowl Party and Open House is February 7th ... from game time (around 6:00 pm) until...

Bring a friend and something to share! (Watching the game is optional...)

No need to RSVP...

Join us!!!



Hello!

From our Director of Music Ministry

I look forward with great joy to joining you soon as Director of Music Ministry. As we begin our musical journey together, this may be the perfect time for you to add your voice to the adult choir. No experience is necessary; come to discover or to revisit the wonderful world of choral singing as we prepare the beautiful music of Easter. Our first rehearsal together will be Thursday, March 4, at 7:30pm.

Diane

Note From the Deacons

Mark Your Calendars

The New Year is upon us and we have much to ponder, blessings as well as challenges. With Lent merely a month away, the deacons would like to extend an early invitation to members and friends to join us for Lenten fellowship. The topic will be, **“Six Vital Themes of our Faith.”**

Deacons will host a series of 5 “Simple Suppers” followed by discussion and exploration as a way to examine and share our individual and collective faith together. Sidney Fowler’s book, *“What Matters to You? Matters to Us”* will be our guide.

Dinner will be served at 5:00pm followed by discussion until 7:00pm. Child care will be provided. *Friends with Wheels* will assist if you need a ride.

February 21 ***We belong to Christ***

February 28 ***We are a people of covenant / We are one at Baptism and the table***

March 7 ***We are people of God’s extravagant welcome / We thank God by working for a just and loving world***

March 14 ***We listen for the still-speaking God***

March 21 Final dinner together wrapping up our month’s discussion

Please join us for an evening of fellowship and ***“Ask the questions that are deep in your heart or dance in your head. Together, we’ll listen for God who still speaks today.”***

We look forward to your company; please mark your calendars and look for your personal invitation in the mail.



Emergency Assistance

The Emergency Assistance Program has completed another year in which it helped 146 families by giving a total of \$14,230. Fifty-four families were helped with housing (\$5437), 51 families were helped with their electricity bills, 20 were helped with their water bills, and the rest for things like medicine and doctor's bills or Giant coupons, which we sometimes give away in small amounts to those without food.

Although most of the people we deal with directly are very thankful on the phone, sometimes UCCSV received a thank you note for its generosity, which I think you all will appreciate reading.

"To My United Church of Christ FAMILY. You are always in the prayers that I pray each day. May God continue to watch over you as you enter a new year of love, kindness, joy and excellent health. May you prosper in ways that only our God and Savior can make possible. Your generosity shall always be remembered and greatly appreciated. Happy New Year."

In December we received \$4100, with the majority of this support coming from the Prince of Peace offering. However, an important part comes from your continuing support of the bake sales, equal exchange sales and other contributions. Thank you for your continued support of this program.

Christian Education

Whether you are a long-time church goer or are relatively new to the Christian faith, please join us for a study of Martin Copenhaver's book *To Begin at the Beginning: An Introduction to the Christian Faith*. (The book is available on-line at www.amazon.com).

We will be discussing the basic tenets of the Christian faith -- what we believe, why we believe, and what is required of us as people of faith. All are welcome!



Fox Chapel Elementary School Tutors

What a fantastic response from UCCSV folks for the ministry of tutoring at Fox Chapel. Kudos to Damian, Jean, David, Helen, Christie, Ann, Jasmine, Glen, Sandy, Carolyn and Ruthanne. They work with children who need additional help with reading or with math. Amy substitutes as needed.

Fellowship



Ladies' Brunch

Our last brunch was so much fun that we're doing it again with a twist. All the women of the church are invited to a brunch on Sunday, February 21, after church. There will also be Pampered Chef kitchenware available for ordering for those who need to stock up on some things. The proceeds from that sale will be donated to the church. More details later, but put it on your calendar and do plan to come. There will be no pressure to buy anything - just a relaxed time with us ladies - good food and good company!

A "Thank You" That Is Due!!!!

Not that a mother can't toot her own horn about her child but in this case the deacons want to make some noise. A big "**thank you**" should go out to Aaron. Aaron personally took on the job of installing sound-proofing tiles in Carolyn's office. It was recognized that for privacy consideration the sound proofing would offer an important feature that is essential for a minister and her congregation.

Carolyn's office looks great, and you can't hear a peep through the walls. Aaron, the congregation thanks you for your time and talents!

Thanks also go to John r and Wayne for promptly responding to the Deacons' request for a cabinet in one of the hallway bathrooms. The cabinet is installed in the middle bathroom and contains emergency supplies for those who have a personal care need.

Lent Begins

Join in a spiritual practice in which Christians around the world take part, one of the oldest of all Christian observations.

Begin your Lenten journey by joining with our friends from Trinity United Methodist and the Church of the Open Door at our traditional unity service on Ash Wednesday, 17 February, at 7:30pm.

Like all Christian holy days and holidays, the observation of Lent has changed over the years, but its purpose has always been the same: self-examination and penitence, demonstrated by self-denial, in preparation for Easter. Early church father Irenaus of Lyons (c.130-c.200) wrote of such a season in the earliest days of the church, but back then it lasted only two or three days, not the 40 observed today.

In 325, the Council of Nicea discussed a 40-day Lenten season of fasting, but it's unclear whether its original intent was just for new Christians preparing for Baptism, but it soon encompassed the whole Church.

How exactly the churches counted those 40 days varied depending on location. In the East, one only fasted on weekdays. The western church's Lent was one week shorter, but included Saturdays. But in both places, the observance was both strict and serious. Only one meal was taken a day, near the evening. There was to be no meat, fish or animal products eaten.

Until the 600s, Lent began on Quadragesima (Fortieth) Sunday, but Gregory the Great (c.540-604) moved it to a Wednesday, now called Ash Wednesday, to secure the exact number of 40 days in Lent—not counting Sundays, which were feast days. Gregory, who is regarded as the father of the medieval papacy, is also credited with the ceremony that gives the day its name. As Christians came to the church for forgiveness, Gregory marked their foreheads with ashes, reminding them of the biblical symbol of repentance (sackcloth and ashes) and mortality: "You are dust, and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:19)

By the 800s, some Lenten practices were already becoming more relaxed. First, Christians were allowed to eat after 3:00 pm. By the 1400s, it was noon. Eventually, various foods (like fish) were allowed, and in 1966 the Roman Catholic church only restricted fast

days to Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. It should be noted, however, that practices in Eastern Orthodox churches are still quite strict.

Lent is still devoutly observed in some mainline Protestant denominations, most notably for Anglicans and Episcopalians." ~ From Christian History, *Christianity Today.com*, Ted Olsen.

www.christianitytoday.com/global/printer.html?ch/news/2004/lent.html

Haiti Earthquake Update:

January 21, 2010, 9:59am

Felix Ortiz, GM Area Executive for Latin America and the Caribbean, went to Haiti Friday, January 22, with a group from the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). LWF headquarters are in Port-Au-Prince. He will visit Patrick Villier and the CONASPEH leadership. Thanks for your prayers.

The leaders of our two main UCC and Disciples partners in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Patrick and Francoise Viller and Polycarpe Joseph are safe, as well as our missionary family serving in Haiti, [Kim and Patrick Bentrott](#) along with their son Solomon. Please visit the Bentrott's blog for updated information: <http://www.kimandpatrick.blogspot.com/>

Patrick Villier is a member of the Common Global Ministries Board (CGMB) and the president of the [National Spiritual Council of Churches of Haiti](#) (CONASPEH), a grassroots movement of 6,000 plus congregations and our largest partner in Haiti for almost three decades. The six story CONASPEH headquarters building, which houses the school, seminary and nursing institute, has been flattened by the earthquake. Twenty or so of the nursing students were tragically trapped inside.

In an e-mail received on January 18, 2010 at 4:35pm, Patrick Villier says the following: "*As you know, Haiti and CONASPEH are in a bad situation as everything seems to be against it or the people, but you are always behind us. We are not afraid neither surprised of your love, concern, solidarity. As a matter of fact, that make us strong. we have churches of God around the world that are praying for us. Despite the problems, we know God is in control of our sadness. For this moment, we are looking to establish contacts with the leaders of churches, parents or the others who need emergency help. Our national committee's*

members are alive. Our second purpose is to rebuild CONASPEH CENTER, as hope for the Haitian churches, children, women and the country. Please keep your faith and courage because Haiti needs all of you more than ever."

Concerning CONASPEH, David Vargas, Co-Executive of Global Ministries said: *"CONASPEH is serving grassroots congregations among the poorest of the poor. Many of those congregations will be devastated. Haiti has been a top priority for Global Ministries in our Critical Presence emphasis. At this moment, it is very important that we as Disciples and UCC step up to meet God's people and creation at the point of deepest need. In all my years in Global Ministries, I can say that this situation is probably the "deepest need" we have experienced as we walk with our partners. Thank you for keeping CONASPEH and the people of Haiti in your prayers."*

CONESPEH is also home to 150 Global Ministries sponsored children. Linda Lawrence, program administrator of the [▶Child Sponsorship Program](#), said hundreds of the nearly 600 children at the center are still in need of sponsorship following hurricanes in 2008 and this latest disaster.

Polycarpe Joseph is the Director of the [▶House of Hope](#), a program that benefits children laboring as domestic servants. Polycarpe sent us this e-mail message on January 14 at 11:11am: *"For the moment it is impossible to assess the quantity of deaths but there must be between 100 and 250,000. At the moment, our collaborators are trying to find out the situation of each of our beneficiaries. The situation is critical. Our facilities have been damaged. People are scared, hungry and thirsty, people have no more homes and live in the streets. We need a lot of prayers and support."*

BEFORE You Collect Donated Goods . . .

- The most effective way for Americans to assist with relief efforts is to make a cash contribution to a humanitarian organization they trust.

Why Financial Contributions are Preferred:

- Experienced disaster relief agencies prefer the flexibility of cash donations because they avoid the labor and expense of sorting, packing, transporting and distributing donated items.

- Agencies use cash to meet disaster survivors' specific needs more quickly, and money spent in disaster-impacted areas helps local economies to recover more quickly.

Confirm the Need Before Collecting:

- Relief agencies prefer the versatility of cash donations; however, some agencies have the infrastructure in place to store, transport and distribute donated items such as food and clothing.
- To prevent waste, **get precise information and confirm the need** before collecting any donated goods. Items should be donated only to agencies that have requested them specifically.
- Be wary of anyone who claims "everything is needed." While every effort to help survivors is appreciated, disaster workers do not have the time, people power or money to dispose of unneeded donations.

Can I Volunteer in Foreign Disaster Areas?

- Volunteer opportunities in foreign disaster settings are extremely rare, and usually are limited to people with prior disaster experience and relevant technical skills (such as health or engineering).
- In a country struggling to respond to and recover from a disaster, an influx of unexpected or unneeded volunteers and donations can make response efforts even more difficult.
- Some questions potential volunteers should ask themselves before entering any disaster area, domestic or foreign, include:

- Am I affiliated with a disaster-relief agency that can provide me with a specific mission and resources to accomplish that mission?
- How will my own needs for food, water and shelter be met?
- If I am injured, will appropriate medical care be available?
- Will language be a barrier to my effectiveness, and will local authorities recognize I am there to help?
- Once I enter the disaster area, will I be able to leave?

So...In Addition to Sending Money, How Can I Help?

ASSEMBLE KITS - Hygiene and Baby Kits are urgently needed for survivors in Haiti. This is one very

concrete and "hands-on" thing that church groups can do. Church World Service has issued an urgent call for Gift of the Heart Kits:

<http://www.churchworldservice.org/site/PageServer?pagename=kits_main>.

Advocate:

The UCC's ecumenical partners are asking that we advocate to the US government for "temporary protected status" for undocumented Haitians now in the United States, since it would place severe burdens on them and the government of Haiti to send them back to Haiti.

<<https://secure2.convio.net/cws/site/Advocacy?pagename=homepage&page=SplashPage&id=233&JServSessionIdr004=o3fmkqwzj1.app245b>>

And if I Want to Give Cash...

At this time the most urgent need is for funds for emergency relief. Global Ministries has wired funds from the Disciples Week of Compassion (WoC) and the UCC One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) to CONASPEH and House of Hope, our denominational partners in Haiti. To donate, please send a check to UCCSV, with "OGHS—Haiti Earthquake Appeal" on the memo line.

From Global Ministries:

As we walk in solidarity with CONASPEH and the House of Hope during this difficult time, let us re-affirm our commitment to pray for them and their leaders, Patrick Villier and Polycarpe Joseph. Let us do all that we can to help "meet God's people and creation at the point of deepest need" with our gifts and service. Let us also remember that as Disciples and UCC, our *Critical Presence* with our partners in Haiti will be required over the long haul as we help re-build the infra-structure that is so essential to the life-giving ministries of our partners. For those that have visited the CONASPEH headquarters and the House of Hope center, you will know how important these places are to the ministries of our partners... May God give us all grace for the journey ahead!

.....

Many, many thanks for your continued generosity to the ministries of the United Church of Christ of Seneca Valley and to those who minister on our behalf in Haiti.

A Word from our Conference Minister...

Several news reports have commented that CBS has reversed itself in order to show an ad from Focus on the Family during next month's Super Bowl.

Most of these reports have also noted that CBS refused to air the UCC's "Bouncer" ad in 2004. Several reports have shown our ad again.

A statement regarding this from UCC Director of Communications Ben Guess follows:

<op-ed submission: United Church of Christ reaction to CBS change in policy on advocacy ads, 548 words>

In an attempt to address ad-revenue shortfalls during a tough economy, CBS — in hot water for accepting a controversial Super Bowl ad from Focus on the Family — said Tuesday it would finally accept the United Church of Christ's 2004 request to air ads that advocate welcoming all people, including gays and lesbians, into the church.

For the United Church of Christ, CBS' decision comes six years late and \$2.8 million short given the denomination's current fundraising priority focused on long-term recovery in Haiti.

Not surprising, the UCC doesn't have extra millions lying around for Super Bowl ads. In fact, it never did. Back in 2004, the church spent a full year in grassroots fundraising — eliciting contributions from supporters and preparing our congregations — in advance of a media campaign intended to convey an all-inclusive welcome to people who feel marginalized by institutional religion.

Tested widely on various channels in multiple markets, including CBS affiliates, the church never once heard a peep of concern about our ad's content or message. Then CBS dropped the bombshell only days before the ad was to air nationally, writing, "Because this commercial touches on the exclusion of gay couples and other minority groups by other individuals and organizations, and the fact the Executive Branch [Bush Administration] has recently proposed a Constitutional Amendment to define marriage as a union between a man and a woman, this spot is unacceptable for broadcast on the [CBS and UPN] networks."

We were dumbfounded.

But now, when CBS needs the money and the church has moved on to other mission priorities, the network announces a change in its policy, saying our ad is just fine.

CBS' about-face only underscores the arbitrary way the networks approach these decisions, and the result is a woeful lack of religious diversity in our nation's media. Such flip-flops only lead the public to believe that broadcasters own the airwaves when, in theory at least, they do not.

The UCC encountered a similar situation in early 2005 when the denomination sought airtime on the ABC network, only to be told that ABC did not accept any religious advertising. The very next month, Focus on the Family was allowed primetime advertising on ABC's Super Nanny show.

The denial of the UCC's ad in 2004 prompted the church to file a complaint with the Federal Communications Commission, a petition never given full consideration by FCC Commissioners because it was dismissed by FCC staff in 2007. Obviously, broadcasters still stand in need of some clear FCC guidance.

What concerns the UCC is the appearance that one religious viewpoint is continually accommodated by the TV networks. There is a common misunderstanding in this country that all religious people hold a monolithic view on certain issues, such as reproductive choice or same-gender marriage equality, and this is not the case.

This April, in an attempt to reach newer audiences, the UCC does plan to unveil a new 30-second commercial with purchased spots on internet sites; however, our media-buying plan, at present, does not include national TV. But the larger issue of access remains, not just for the UCC but for all religious groups. When and if the UCC does return again to CBS or another network, will our distinctive religious viewpoint be heard or will there be yet another policy change?

The Rev. J. Bennett Guess is director of communications for the 1.1.-million-member United Church of Christ, based in Cleveland.



Bob Abernethy

Photo PBS

Bob Abernethy, host of [Religion & Ethics Newsweekly](#) on PBS is the next recipient of a special Wilbur Award from the Religion Communicators Council. Abernethy, a member at [Cleveland Park Congregational UCC](#) in Washington, D.C., is to receive the honor, one of the oldest in religion communication, April 9, in Chicago during Religion Communication Congress 2010. The special award recognizes contributions Abernethy and the program have made to public discussions of faith topics.

"Since 1997, Bob has promoted intelligent, insightful examinations of faith issues on American public television," said council president Douglas F. Cannon. "As executive editor and host of Religion & Ethics Newsweekly, he has shown that the spiritual side of America is important and deserves our attention."

Abernethy proposed the program concept to public station WNET in New York partly in response to widespread criticism that American television news didn't pay attention to religion, Cannon noted. Over the past 12 years Religion & Ethics Newsweekly has provided a regular place on television for fair discussion of religion and spirituality.

The council has presented Wilbur Awards annually since 1949. They honor excellence by individuals in secular media—print and online journalism, book publishing, broadcasting, and motion pictures—in communicating religious issues, values and themes. The award is named for the late Marvin C. Wilbur, a pioneer in religious public relations and longtime council leader. Religion & Ethics Newsweekly has earned Wilbur Awards for outstanding national television coverage of religion news in 1998, 2002, 2004 and 2005.

From time to time the council Board of Governors confers a special Wilbur Award. It recognizes a person or organization whose body of work in secular media makes a substantial and unique contribution to public discourse on religious faith and values or interfaith dialog and understanding.

Past recipients of special Wilbur Awards include President and Mrs. Jimmy Carter; John Dart, former religion editor of the Los Angeles Times; Martin Marty of The Christian Century; Bill Moyers of Bill Moyers Journal; Fred Rogers of Mister Rogers' Neighborhood; cartoonist Charles Schulz, creator of Peanuts; and filmmaker Ken Wales.

Founded in 1929, the [Religion Communicators Council](#) is the oldest public relations professional association in the United States. It has more than 500 members and 13 regional chapters. Members represent Baha'i, Christian, Hindu, Islamic and Jewish organizations and work in advertising, journalistic print and electronic communication, and public relations.

February Birthdays



- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| February 5 | Floyd |
| February 12 | Sue
Cathy |
| February 16 | Heather |
| February 17 | Chris |
| February 19 | Joanne |
| February 20 | Anne E |
| February 25 | Renee Morales |

Congratulations

Congratulations to Jeanne on the birth of her grandson, Henry W.. Henry joins parents Amanda and Bill and brother Jack at home. All are doing well.



February Worship Overview

Sunday, February 7

Theme: Into the Deep
 Isaiah 6.1-8 (9-13)
 Psalm 138
 1 Corinthians 15.1-11
***Luke 5.1-11**

Sunday, February 14

Theme: Astounding Glory
 Exodus 34.29-35
 Psalm 99
 2 Corinthians 3.12-4.2
***Luke 9.28-36 (37-43)**

Sunday, February 21

Theme: Wilderness Companions
 Deuteronomy 26.1-11
 Psalm 91.1-2, 9-16
 Romans 10.8b-13
***Luke 4.1-13**

Sunday, February 28

Theme: Strong and Tender
 Genesis 15.1-12, 17-18
 Philippians 3.17-4.1
***Luke 13.31-35**

****Denotes scripture reading***

Please See February Calendar On Next Page



February Calendar of Events

Monday, February 1

7:30p – Deacons

Tuesday, February 2

11:00a – Human Resources

Sunday, February 7

10:00a – Worship

6:00p – Super Bowl Party

Wednesday, February 17

Ash Wednesday – Joint service with
Trinity United Methodist and Boyds Open Door

Sunday, February 21

Noon – Women’s Brunch (Renner Home)

Monday, February 22

7:00p - Trustees

Tuesday, February 23

7:00p – Christian Education (Brant Home)



Regularly Scheduled Meetings

Sunday – 8:00p - AA

Tuesday – 10:00a - Staff

7:00p – Discernment

Wednesday – 7:00p – One Anothering,

7:30p – Girl Scouts

Thursday, 7:30p – Choir, *Boy Scouts*

Saturday – 7th Day Adventists

2nd Tuesday of the Month

7:00-9:00p – 7th Day – Narthex Only

7:30p – Mind, Body, Spirit

If you have any comments or suggestions for the Voice please call (301-540-3449) or email Marilyn in the church office: marilyn223@verizon.net