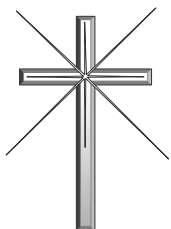


The Seneca Valley Voice

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

Over the past two hundred years few people have had as profound an impact on our understanding of the world and our faith as English naturalist Charles Darwin, February 12, 1809 – April 19, 1882. Once a student at Christ's College in Cambridge with plans to enter the priesthood, Darwin became increasingly interested in natural sciences. Following his graduation in 1831, he was invited to join the *HMS Beagle* on what became a five-year expedition to chart the coastline of South America. That expedition was like putting Darwin into a living laboratory, writ large, and provided for many of the observations that took form in his landmark publication, *On the Origin of Species*. Knowing that the book would be highly controversial, Darwin waited nearly twenty years before his theories took print in 1859.

Darwin was not disappointed when he predicted a controversial response to his book. It took until September 2008 for the Church of England to issue an article saying that the 200th anniversary of his birth was a fitting time to apologize to Darwin "for misunderstanding you and, by getting our first reaction wrong, encouraging others to misunderstand you still."

The following reflection by Tom Sherwood bears testimony to that ongoing and often contentious misunderstanding.

Blessings,

Carolyn

Charles Darwin

*Tom Sherwood is head of the Ecumenical Chaplaincy at Carleton University in Toronto. His e-mailed reflection for Thursday, February 5, 2009, was shared by colleague Steve Anderson in Pilgrim UCC's **Keeping In Touch**, February 17, 2009. (For additional thoughts, see the UCC website, www.ucc.org for the Pastoral Letter on Faith and Science "A New Day Arising," published July 2008.)*

It is Darwin Week at Carleton and I'm hearing some very primitive remarks from some religious people. I know that some Jews, Muslims and Christians give a literal reading to the Genesis myth, but I'm always a little disappointed to hear that view uncritically quoted on campus. I'm always a little disappointed at pious mocking of science. I'm uncomfortable with the lack of respect and the anti-intellectualism. I'm disappointed by the fear and defensiveness on God's behalf.

I believe in Genesis

I believe it is True.

I just don't know what actually happened and how.

I don't know when God did what or how.

I do know however that Genesis 1 is
 theological not scientific,
 a proclamation not a proposition,
 a faith statement not a schedule or calendar.

To reduce the Truth of that myth to the literalism of a 6-day workweek of 24-hour days is an abuse of Scripture. In fact, I would suggest that such literal Creationism is heresy, outside the range of Christian thinking and founded on an anti-intellectual fear of science.

(continued on next page)

Creation is a dynamic process:
 a vital verb, not a numb noun.
 Creation is not just a long ago, far away moment,
 the single or six-day act of a long ago, far away God,
 up There,
 back Then.
 Creation is here and now.
 It is happening here and now.
 God is still creating.
 What began has not ended.
 Think about it:
 if Creation is occurring as we consider these thoughts,
 then Moses and Muhammad were no closer to
 Creation than we are,
 even though they lived centuries ago.

In Canada, United Church Christians have been
 standing in worship for two generations in order to say
 A New Creed,
 "We believe in God who has created and is
 creating..."
 Other churches have adopted this creed, too,
 translating it into several languages.

During Darwin Week at Carleton,
 I expect to learn more about
 God's timeless and continuing energy of Creation.
 Evolution?
 The theories of evolution seek to explain some of a
 mysterious energy that deserves our awe.
 Scientists marvel at it as much as ministers, maybe
 more.
 Extinction of species?
 It is troubling to think that God's energy of Creation
 may include that possibility.
 Degradation of the environment?
 It is easier to understand extinction and pollution as
 Sin.

A New Creed continues with a second paragraph
 (after a Trinitarian profession of faith)
 listing the ethical implications of our belief.
 These include the statement that we are "to live with
 respect in Creation."
 No wonder it has become ever more popular since it
 was first published in 1968.
 After centuries of a bent Church emphasis on dualism:
 humanity vs. nature,
 anthropocentric dominance of God's Good Creation,...
 these words bring us back into a close relationship
 with Creation,
 back into Creation.

Nearly 300 years ago, the English poet
 Alexander Pope wrote:
 The way of the Creative works through change and
 transformation,
 so that each thing receives its true nature and destiny
 and comes into permanent accord with the Great
 Harmony: this is what furthers and what perseveres.

Last year, the United Church of Canada was one of
 the sponsors of the major Darwin exhibit at the Royal
 Ontario Museum in Toronto. I paid the \$20 admission
 fee to see it.
 Neither the church's sponsorship
 nor my attendance
 betrayed our Christian commitment
 or our reverence for Scripture.

Change is a sign of life,
 a sign that the world in which we live
 is dynamic and still developing,
 a sign of
 the Living God, the Saving God, the Creating God,
 a sign of the Holy Spirit
 which is the Presence of the Future among us Now.

~Tom Sherwood

Changing Colors/ Changing Seasons

With Ash Wednesday we begin the forty-day season
 of Lent, the period of meditation and reflection that
 prepares Christians to hear once again the great
 stories of resurrection. Lent takes its name from the
 same root word as *lengthen*, denoting the lengthening
 of days in the northern hemisphere.

Lent is preceded immediately by Mardi
 Gras/Carnival/Fat Tuesday/Shrove Tuesday/Pancake
 Day. Traditions vary depending on the cultural
 background. Mardi Gras is French; Martes de
 Carnaval (Tuesday of Carnival) is Spanish, and both
 reflect the Catholic tradition of giving up meat during
 Lent, so the Tuesday before Lent begins is the day to
 eat fats and meat (carnivore). Carnival and carnivore
 share the same root word.

The word *shrove* is the past tense of the English verb
shrive, which means to be forgiven for one's sins (after
 confession and penance). Shrove Tuesday gets its
 name from the shriving that English Christians are
 expected to do immediately before Lent begins.

Those with German/Pennsylvania Dutch roots may recognize Fastnacht Day. The fastnacht, made from fried potato dough and served with dark corn syrup, found its way into John Updike's novel, *Rabbit Run*. The main character remembers a Fasnacht Day tradition where the last person to rise would be teased by the other family members and called a "Fasnacht." [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shrove_Tuesday] Many of the old-style bakeries in Frederick sell fastnachts during the pre-lenten season, and some of our congregations in Catoctin association have fastnachts along with or instead of pancakes on Fat Tuesday.

Once Fat Tuesday is past, Lent begins in earnest. Traditionally Lent has been a time of fasting and prayer. The mood is somber and reflective, traditionally indicated by the color purple which symbolizes penitence. Some churches have begun using browns, beiges, and grays as an alternative way of reflecting the same mood. This is the season to look inward, to assess our lives, to ponder where we are in our relationship with God. It is the season to recall God's covenant and promise, God's faithfulness as we grow in God's ways.

During the lenten season, the scripture readings from both the Hebrew and Christian traditions are chosen to work together thematically. The emphasis this year will focus on the Psalms, Israel's hymnbook, until we come to the last Sunday of the season, Palm/Passion Sunday, when we return to a focus on the gospel according to Mark. The psalms are a timeless expression of the full range of human emotion—praise and thanksgiving, sorrow and anger, longing for God's presence, desiring to live in God's ways.

Lenten Soupers

This year's offering for our Lenten journey will provide opportunities for prayer and discussion about our prayer life. Prayer is not necessarily something we "know how to do" just because we a) are a church member, b) attend worship—no matter how regularly, or c) feel a close relationship to God. Since even Jesus' first disciples asked for guidance in learning how to pray, it should come as no surprise—and a large measure of comfort—to be reminded that prayer is something that is taught and learned.

Join us for a simple supper of soup and salad, followed by a shared devotion.

We will use Jane Vennard's recent book, *A Praying Congregation*, both as the springboard for discussion

as well as the basis for exploration of our own practices.

Childcare is available, but those wishing to bring young children are asked to call the church office so that appropriate arrangements may be made.

Notes from the Deacons

The Season of Epiphany ends with the celebration of Shrove Tuesday.

Shrove Tuesday: The Pancake Fest

Historically, Shrove Tuesday marked the last day before beginning of the 40-day Lenten fasting period when the faithful were forbidden by the church to consume meat, butter, eggs or milk. However, if a family had a store of these foods they all would go bad by the time the fast ended on Easter Sunday. What to do?

Solution: use up the milk, butter and eggs no later than Shrove Tuesday. And so, with the addition of a little flour, the solution quickly presented itself in... pancakes. And lots of 'em.

The Youth hosted an evening for members and friends offering a delicacy of satiating fats and carbohydrates (the indulgence before the sacrifice). Pancakes and sausages with orange juice sounds more appealing doesn't it?

The Ash Wednesday Service on February 25 officially started the season of Lent. As creatures of habit and tradition, whether you choose to omit something for Lent, commit to extending yourself beyond your norm, or simply choose another direction, please consider one of the two options offered this year at UCCSV.

- For a quiet, individual focus there is a series of 6 weekly reflections available through the office for a nominal cost of \$2.00.
- "Simple Soupers" is another option. Join with others at church and share light dining every Sunday evening through Lent.

The dinner is followed by a discussion led by Carolyn based on the book, *A Praying Congregation*.

All are welcome, and child care is available. Please contact the church office if you plan to bring young children, and we will arrange to have Ms. Noor on site.

Dates to note:

Palm Sunday, April 5
 Maundy Thursday, April 9
 Good Friday, April 10
 Easter, April 12

We look forward to sharing this time with you.

Chair

Social Concerns**Guatemala Mission School-Building Trip
July 18- July 28**

Do you have a desire to be part of a mission experience that will change your life?

If so, contact the church office at 301-540-3449.

The dates of this summer's trip are Saturday, July 18, through Tuesday, July 28. The cost for the 11-day mission is ~ \$1,100 (plus airfare) which includes lodging, food and transportation while inside Guatemala. The majority of the trip is tax deductible and some scholarship money may be available through our own UCCSV and Lumunos-Faith at Work (the non-profit organization in charge of the trip for the eighth consecutive year).

This year the 24-person group will be starting the foundation for an elementary school in the Mayan highlands of western Guatemala. No special skills are required, just an earnest desire to mission to others and be missioned unto in return. Enrollment is on a first-come first-served basis and people are already signed up. It will be a spiritual, educational, and physically rewarding adventure!

Prayerfully consider whether God might be calling you to this experience and contact the office or www.lumunos.org [click on Get Connected and Upcoming Events] to learn more.

Flowers for Easter

If you would like to place flowers in the Sanctuary for Easter Sunday please fill out the form located in Sunday bulletins and return with payment to the office or place in the offering plate. Orders may be placed from Sunday, March 1, through Sunday, March 29.

Please make your check payable to UCCSV, and mark the memo line: *Easter Flowers*. If you are paying in cash, please put your payment in an envelope marked with your name. Price of plants: \$10.00 each.

Flowers may be taken home after Easter worship.

2009 UCCSV Youth Mission

Date: July 25-August 1

Where: New Orleans, LA

Please watch future bulletins for more details.

You may also call the office to sign up or obtain more information.

Help Needed to Provide Some Landscape TLC

Spring is just around the corner. If you enjoy working with plants and shrubbery, we would love to have your help in maintaining the prayer garden and the landscaping in front of the church. You can spend time whenever it is convenient to you in weeding, trimming, mulching, etc. You can even plant some annuals if you would like. Property Operations will provide any mulch or other supplies you might need. Please see John or Wayne if you can help.

THANKS to the Art Committee for the new visuals on our hallway walls, the attention to our worship space, and to the rest of our common space as well. Lookin' good!

Mind, Body, Spirit

This group meets on the second Tuesday of each month from 7:30-9:00 pm at the home of Dianne Kaseman. This group offers the opportunity to learn meditation as a means of improving health through relaxation and provides a path for drawing closer to God. For directions and to confirm that you will be attending, please call the office. The next meeting will be Tuesday, March 10.



Don't forget to change your clocks!

Daylight Saving Time begins

March 8, 2009

March Scripture Readings



Sunday, March 1

Genesis 9:8-17

Psalm 25:1-10

1 Peter 3:18-22

Mark 1:9-15

Sunday, March 8

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Psalm 22:23-31

Romans 4:13-25

Mark 8:31-38 or Mark 9:2-9

Sunday, March 15

Exodus 20:1-17

Psalm 19

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

John 2:13-22

Sunday, March 22

Numbers 21:4-9

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

Ephesians 2:1-10

John 3:14-21

Sunday, March 29

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Psalm 51:1-12 or Psalm 119:9-16

Hebrews 5:5-10

John 12:20-33



March Calendar

Regular Meetings

Tuesdays – 10:00a – Staff

Wednesdays – 7:30p – One Anothering

Thursdays – 7:30p – Choir and Boy Scouts

Saturdays – 7th Day Adventists –all day

Sundays – 8:30p – AA

Sunday, March 1

10:00a – Worship

11:15a – Spreading the Hope (Youth Room)

11:15a – Pulp Fiction Book Club (Narthex)

Noon – Inquirer Class

Monday, March 2

7:00p - Deacons

Tuesday, March 3

10:00a – Staff

Wednesday, March 4

Carolyn Roberts on vacation through March 7

Sunday, March 8

10:00a – Worship

Noon – Inquirer Class

Tuesday, March 10

10:00a – Staff

7:00p – Hope Task Force

Sunday, March 15

10:00a – Worship – New Members Received

Noon – Completing the Circle

Tuesday, March 17

Happy St. Patrick's Day

Wednesday, March 25

6:00p – Boy Scouts – Eagle Scout Ceremony – Sanctuary/Gathering Room

Sunday, March 29, Monday, March 30 and Tuesday, March 31

7:00-8:30p – 7th Day Adventists