



The Seneca Valley Voice

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

Sometimes characterized as the “journey inward/journey outward,” Lent is the season in which we look more closely at ways in which our personal faith aligns with Jesus’ life and teachings. While we often have a mental image of the gentle Jesus, surrounded by freshly-scrubbed small children, a serious reading of the gospels paints a far more challenging picture.

Virtually all of Jesus’ teachings had public and social ramifications. These ramifications are especially apparent concerning issues of peace. In fact, Jesus’ teachings concerning peace are so strong, that until the State sanctioned the Church, Christians were pacifists.

As Christian Americans, this creates tension, especially with our principle of the separation of church and state. This principle is so deeply engrained that we often hear that faith is only a personal matter. However, the underlying principle that personal faith has public expression dates back at least to the time of Israel’s prophets. Even a cursory review of American history reminds us that collective Christian expression has been foundational to major social change within the life of the United States from its conception.

Historically this has had positive and negative outcomes; from the abolition of slavery to prohibition, to child labor laws, to civil rights.

While I love the traditional hymn, *Once to Every One and Nation, comes the moment to decide*...it is both misleading and incorrect. Most of us make multiple incremental decisions over a period of time even—or especially—regarding major social issues. On the other hand, moments *do* come to give public witness to those decisions. One such moment to give public witness is March 16.

On March 16 at 7:00pm, Christians are gathering for worship at National Cathedral, followed by a march to the White House and a vigil. The event will call for an end to the occupation in Iraq, along with a commitment to rebuild that tortured country, and saying ‘no’ to torture. Workshops addressing the broader issues will be conducted by Christian Peace Witness for Iraq from 1-4pm at the cathedral. Although the worship service will have limited space, and those wishing to attend must be registered, the march and vigil are open to all who wish to participate. Those wishing to register, or looking for more information, may go to www.sojo.net.

I hope you will join me.

Blessings,

Carolyn

From the Moderator

It's hard for me to believe that our congregational meeting was only a month ago. It seems like so much has happened since then. For those of you who were unable to attend that meeting, we had good food and fellowship and open discussion about several church issues. About fifty people attended, which was wonderful. Key items that were discussed were the budget for the year, a lease with Nextel and the recording of the church property deeds.

The budget was approved as presented with the understanding that additional pledges may come in or additional expenses may be incurred. One such expense was the possibility that we would need to pay almost \$12,000 in recording fees to record our ownership (now that the loan is paid off) of our property. If we needed to pay that entire amount, we would have an unbalanced budget. Since then, we have recorded the deed, but the county did not want to collect the fees. Right now those checks have been put back into our checking account. However, we still have not received word as to whether they will be collected or not. We should know by the end of March. Copies of the budgets (06 and 07) should be on the bulletin board for your review.

Additionally, the stewardship committee has done a great job and our pledges are now up to \$180,000 for 2007. Perhaps as a result of the "Sudoku mission moment?" Once we know about the above mentioned fees, trustees and council will evaluate the budget for any additions. Also, at the congregational meeting we agreed to go forward with leasing part of the loft space to Nextel for their equipment. Property Operations has done a great deal of work on investigating this offer and negotiating with Nextel. I'm sure they will be happy to answer any questions regarding this.

We also approved our strategic plan goals with the focus to be on worship for the coming year. The council also received information from the Natural Church Development Study that was done and is working with Carolyn to utilize the information. There will be a workshop in March on worship and each board is charged with determining how they can contribute to enhancing worship at UCCSV. Those of you who signed up to work on specific goals will be hearing from the various committees and boards.

On February 10 we celebrated the burning of the mortgages with a game of churchopoly and wonderful food and fellowship. Then less than two weeks later we celebrated our own Fat Tuesday with a traditional pancake supper. I am constantly amazed at the

number of hours people put into this church and its activities. At council this month Carolyn talked about the importance of thanking people and I personally have been trying to practice gratitude, so even though I don't know what everyone is doing and I know I will forget someone, I'm going to try to thank those people who I know have been working on something this last month.

Thank you Jean and Mike Sue, Anne and the fellowship board, Al, John, the Deacons, the Choir, Ruth, Marilyn, Carolyn, the Deb and Len, Wayne and Barbara, the Band, Bernard, Pat, the women's retreat committee, all the boards and committees, the greeters, the ushers, and everyone else who gives of their time and talents. Thanks everyone!

Sandra

Burning of the Mortgages

Dear Carolyn and members of the United Church of Christ of Seneca Valley,

It was with great joy that I read in your newsletter that you will be burning all the mortgages. I do wish that I could be there for the party!

I carry with me fond memories of the founding years. It was not easy to get the funding to purchase the land and build what is now your church. Nor has your task been easy as you have needed to both pay bills generated to build the church and the funds to maintain it.

It often seemed quite impossible to do. But God makes possible impossible possibilities.

You continue to be in my prayers.

Johnny

Rev. Dr. John W. Mingus, Sr.

Dear UCCSV Friends:

Wow – de – dow! What a great accomplishment! I must confess, I could not see this end to our debt when I was pastor there in the '90s. But you kept at it, and now, you have done it! May this accomplishment free you for even more ministry and mission than you have been doing up until now.

Peace, David Keller

The Season of Lent

Ever wonder, even vaguely, what “Shrove” Tuesday means and where Carnival comes from and how this all connects with Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent? You’re not alone. When parishioners asked similar questions, colleague Barbara Daniel (Evangelical Reformed UCC, Frederick), responded with material included below. I’ve added material to her comments.

The term ‘Lent’ means ‘to lengthen,’ referring to the lengthening of days we in the Northern Hemisphere experience in the journey toward Easter. Traditionally, Lent is a forty-day period of fasting, meditation, reflection, and penance. It is intended to prepare the individual spiritually for the new life of resurrection we celebrate at Easter.

Brett Webb-Mitchell and Diane Archer write in their book, *Sacred: A Journey through the Church Year*:

When Pope St. Gregory decreed that Lent should have no meat, the Sunday before Lent became known as Carnevala (farewell to meat), from which came the word ‘carnival.’ The carnival became a time to clean out the meat and fats from the cupboard so that fasting could begin on Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. In the early Christian church, people often went to confession the day before Ash Wednesday. This day of confession became known as Shrove Tuesday, because the confessed were forgiven (shriven) of their sins.

And those pancakes we serve on Fat Tuesday/Shrove Tuesday/Mardi Gras? It’s a night to eat all the sweet and savory foods left in the kitchen. One way to use up eggs, milk and fats was to add flour and make special pancakes. In England, Shrove Tuesday is known also as Pancake Day. In other parts of the world, this day is called Mardi Gras. In Pennsylvania Dutch country, it is known as Fasnacht Day – donut day.

The Lord’s Table

The Lord’s Table is a soup kitchen serving upper Montgomery County. It is a volunteer organization made up of people of all faiths and the community at large who use donated foods to provide a

nutritious meal for the homeless and needy. Located in St. Martin’s

Church in Gaithersburg, the kitchen is open six days a week from the middle of September to the middle of June.

Counselors and referral people are present every day to assist the guests in finding emergency help (food, shelter, clothing, medication, etc.) The goal of the soup kitchen is to serve the needy, while keeping their dignity in mind.

Volunteers from UCCSV work with a group from Rockville United Church on the fourth Tuesday of every month. A number of students and teachers from Ridgeview Middle School assist us in serving the meal. We begin preparing the meal and setting the tables at one o’clock. The guests arrive at 3:30 and we start serving at that time. It takes many helping hands to cook and serve a dinner for approximately eighty people. The work is divided between a group that cooks and another group that serves. We have volunteers who come every month, when possible. Others, who can’t commit to working on a regular basis, are on our substitute list. We also have individuals or families who sign up for one particular Tuesday. This past December, when we served on the day after Christmas, two families from UCCSV joined us. Most people sign up either to cook (1:00 to 3:15) or to serve (3:30 to 5:00.)

Working at the Lord’s Table helps provide a vital service to our immediate community. It’s also an opportunity for good fellowship and lots of fun. If you would be interested in volunteering to help or want more information, speak to Ann Lowrey (301-540-6571.)



Equal Exchange Sales

Remember: sales of Fair Trade coffee, tea, hot chocolate take place in the Gathering Room on the second Sunday of each month. Fair Trade items guarantee small-scale growers a fair price for their harvest. In turn, this gives these growers access to better housing, healthcare, and education. Our purchases help support their economic independence.

Board of Property Operations Nextel Update

This is my first such update. I plan to utilize future editions of the Voice to provide you with monthly updates on this project.

Nextel has advised me that:

- a) Nextel has obtained approval from Montgomery County to operate their equipment in our facility.
- b) Nextel has submitted to the county a construction permit to install their equipment in our facility. As you may know, Montgomery County does not respond to permit requests within a prescribed number of days. Rather, they advise you when the request has been approved or rejected. In our case, that could be as early as tomorrow or next week, or maybe a month or more away. Nextel has been working with officials at the Montgomery County Planning Department on other wireless communication projects for several years, so I'd bet on a sooner rather than later approval from the county.

General Dynamics Wireless Services (technically the owner of Sprint, who technically owns Nextel) has identified Chris as their Construction Supervisor. He toured our facility on February 23, during which time he took countless photos and asked numerous questions - all of which I was fortunately able to answer. I think we'll be pleased with Chris's supervision of the construction project.

- a) Chris has requested a General Dynamics Wireless Services structural engineer to conduct a site inspection to determine the precise requirements for their communications room and for our roof. This structural engineering analysis is significant because if the results of it conclude that the expense to modify our floor and/or roof exceeds their budget, Nextel can legally decline to proceed, and the lease with Nextel will be void.
- b) Chris is assuming Nextel will obtain approval for their construction permit within the next 30 days. Accordingly, he has scheduled a site inspection on Friday, March 2, for all interested subcontractors to look at our facility and bid on the various aspects of the construction project, e.g., electrical, HVAC, drywall.

Chris led me to believe that UCCSV would get the final construction drawings from Nextel by the end of March. This, of course, assumes that the Montgomery

County Planning Department approves their plan.

Nextel and General Dynamics are "off and running" on their respective parts of their wireless communication support facility project at UCCSV.

Respectfully submitted,

Chair, Board of Property Operations

Fellowship

Tapas – March 17, 7:00pm – Spanish Tapas* on the quintessentially Irish Night? Why not?! Join us for Tapas Night, a time for adult fellowship, delicious appetizers and desserts.

*Tapas are hors d'oeuvres

New Bible Study Group

A brand new morning study group will begin on March 21 at 10:20 am. The focus of the day is Mark 5.21-24, *A Women's Healing*. Call the church office for more information.

A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey toward an Undivided Life

Author, teacher, spiritual guide and activist Parker Palmer will present a lecture and workshop on "*A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*" from 7 to 9 pm on Friday, May 18 and 10 am to 4 pm on Saturday May 19. The sessions will explore what causes separation between our inner and outer lives, and the spiritual practices that help us claim our "hidden wholeness." This Second Gerald May Seminar is sponsored by the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation. You may register through the Shalem web site, www.shalem.org

The location for the seminar is:
 Saint Mark Presbyterian Church
 10701 Old Georgetown Road ,
 Rockville, MD 20852



Woman's Retreat

Dear Beloved Women of UCCSV,

You are cordially invited to join other church women on May 5 from 9:00am - 4:00pm at the UCCSV Women's Retreat. We have a lovely gathering spot (And it's only 10 minutes from the church!

This year's theme is "Beloved Women, come away and rest awhile." We will use the Biblical story of the Feeding of the 5,000 as the centerpiece for the day.

Here's what you can expect if you choose to attend:

- * Time to rest and reflect
- * A chance to get to know one another on a deeper level
- * An opportunity for meditation and singing by local artist, Cary Creed
- * Free time to read, hike, kayak, or just be!
- * Healthy food: continental breakfast, lunch, and snacks

The cost is \$15. To register, complete the form below and send or give your form and check to Pam Van Prooyen, retreat registrar, by April 1. We want everyone who can to participate so we are offering carpooling from the church and reduced fees as needed. Please see Pastor Carolyn Roberts if you would like help with the cost of this retreat.

You'll want to know that we can accommodate 25 women on a first come, first served basis. So reply early to reserve your spot. After April 2, you may invite friends. More details will be forthcoming once you register.

Women's Retreat Registration Form - Give to:

Name _____
 Email Address _____
 Check Number _____
 Special food requirements _____

Ecumenical Advocacy Days

2007 Conference – March 9-12, Washington, D.C.

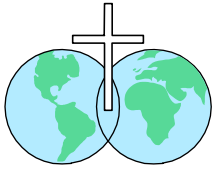
The fifth annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days conference will focus on the theme, *and How are the Children?* The question will guide and inspire the gathering of over 1,000 religious advocates. Experts will train participants on advocacy and policy issues, and on Monday the conference will conclude with lobby visits on Capitol Hill. Please consider making this a part of your Christian witness during the weeks of Lent.

Registration Information:

- The cost for the 2007 conference is \$150. This price includes two lunches and Sunday dinner.
- Registrations received after March 1 will be assessed a late fee of \$50.
- An optional Friday dinner buffet can be purchased for \$27.
- Student scholarships are available. Visit website or email scholarships@advocacydays.org.

Please consider giving an extra donation to help students attend the event.

For more information please visit www.advocacydays.org. The United Church of Christ is one of the many churches sponsoring this Advocacy event.



Lenten Sermon Series on Forgiveness – focus scripture in BOLD

World Day of Prayer – Friday, March 2

Lectionary Scripture Readings - March

Sunday, March 4

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Psalm 27

Philippians 3:17-4:1

Luke 13:31-35

Sunday, March 11 –

Guest Preacher: Cally Rogers-Witte, Executive Minister, Wider Church Ministries, UCC

Isaiah 55:1-9

Psalm 63:1-8

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Luke 13:1-9

Sunday, March 18 - New Members Received

Joshua 5:9-12

Psalm 32

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Sunday, March 25

Isaiah 43:16-21

Psalm 126

Philippians 3:4b-14

John 12:1-8



Snow Policy

In case of inclement weather, please check the following to determine if worship or church events have been cancelled:

Our Answering Machine: 301-540-3449

Our Web page: www.uccsv.org



MARCH 2007

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 7:30p - Choir 7:30p - Boy Scouts	2	3 8:30a - 7th Day Adventists & 4:30p
4 Communion Newsboys Concert - Baltimore *	5	6 10:00a - Staff	7 7:00p - Disciple 7:30p - One Anothering	8 6:00p - Pastoral Relations 7:30p - Choir 7:30p - Boy Scouts	9 Ecumenical Conf.	10 9:00a - Noon - Worship Workshop Ecumenical Conf.
11 Guest Preacher Ecum. Conf Daylight Savings Time *	12 7:00p - Property Operations	13 10:00a - Staff 7:30p - Mind, Body, Spirit	14 7:00p - Disciple 7:30p - One Anothering	15 7:30p - Choir 7:30p - Boy Scouts	16	17 Tapas St. Patrick's Day
18 New Members Received 6:00p - Lenten Souper *	19 7:30p - Social Concerns	20 10:00a - Staff 7:30p - Council	21 7:00p - Disciple 7:30p - One Anothering	22 7:30p - Choir 7:30p - Boy Scouts Voice deadline	23 CAC Vitality Retreat	24 CAC Vitality Retreat
25 6:00p - Lenten Souper *	26 7:00p - Deacons	27	28 7:00p - Disciple 7:30p - One Anothering	29 7:30p - Choir 7:30p - Boy Scouts	30	31

Outside Groups Meeting Regularly at UCCSV:

Sunday & Tuesday Nights – 8:30p – AA

Thursday Nights – 7:30p – Boy Scouts

Friday Nights – 6:30p - Salem Church

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