



The Seneca Valley Voice

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

Over the past several weeks, the *Disciple* Bible study class has looked at those marvelous, but often-troubling, opening chapters of the book of Genesis, with its pre-history stories of creation, Adam and Eve, Noah and the flood. Ever since Augustine perverted Christianity's reading of these stories with his non-biblical doctrine of "original sin," these stories have been used to bolster conventional theology and its agendas—such as the supposed subordination of woman (as opposed to woman as the completion of creation, the creature needed to bring human community into being).

Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann posits a very different and far more challenging understanding: In its own way, each story explores what it means to be called by God and to live in this world on God's terms.

God's terms and our call are always deeply contextual, but there are common threads. These threads have to do with recognizing first and foremost that we belong to God, that we are God's creatures living in God's world; and second, that *how* we live with one another in this world and in community either builds up or tears down that community and everything we touch. The great prophets, biblical Isaiahs and Jeremiahs, and the more contemporary Dorothy Day, Oscar Romero, Martin Luther King, Jr., held firmly to both threads. Regardless of the era in which they lived, they struggled to heed the Niebuhrian advice to keep the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. That is, to bring our faith fully into the days of our living, so that our faith can inform the ways in which we live.

Therein lies the rub, of course. Members of the *Disciple* class were quick to point out that how we interpret a text is often at odds with the way in which other, equally committed faith communities interpret these same scriptures. It is an important notation.

None of us has an absolute lock on the truth, whether it is in our interpretation of scripture, or our interpretation of current events and the human condition. To my mind, this underscores the need for us to be intentional in our study of scripture in small groups so that we can learn from perspectives other than our own. Certainly it underscores the theological insight articulated by John Robinson—that there is yet more truth and light to spring from God's holy word, and updated by Gracie Allen and the UCC's national witness—that *God Is Still Speaking*.

May we continue to grow in faith and in faithfulness as we listen for God's still-speaking voice, both in the stories of scripture and in the context of our times.

Blessings,

Carolyn



Stewardship

The Stewardship Board would like to remind everyone about a few important items:

- Neighbors In Need. The UCC-wide Neighbors in Need offering will be collected on Sunday October 1. If you happen to miss the offering, you can still contribute - just write a check with "Neighbors In Need" or "NIN" in the subject line and drop it off at the church office or in the offering plate the following Sunday.
- Stewardship Campaign - "Loving God Back." The theme of this year's Stewardship Campaign is **"Loving God Back."** The campaign will kick off on October 15 and will conclude with Stewardship Sunday on November 5, when we will collect pledges. In addition to Mission Moments and letters about the campaign, the Board will be hosting two "Stewardship Dessert Nights" during the campaign to provide additional information and enable the congregation to ask questions...and to enjoy some good dessert! Please stay tuned for dates and times and additional information, and please begin to think about what Loving God Back means to you.

Social Concerns

Emergency Assistance Ministry

One of the ways the congregation expresses its mission to our local community is by providing emergency assistance on a one time per year basis (with a limit of \$100) to families in Gaithersburg or Germantown who experience problems such as being threatened by eviction or by termination of utilities. These problems are usually due to a loss of a job or extended sickness of the employed member of the family.

In 2005 the congregation helped 53 families by donating \$4,152, and, in addition, helped others by giving them food. As of September 19 of this year, you have helped by giving emergency assistance to 23 families for energy expenses, 16 for housing, seven for water bills, and one for medicine (totalling \$4,170).

Many thanks for all you have done (and continue doing) to make this aid possible.



Community Based Shelter

Thanks to all who helped UCCSV provide meals at the Community Based Shelter at the end of September. More than 15 people prepared entrees, salads, vegetables, dessert, and lunches. Others served the supper meal and provided supplies. Special thanks to the youth group who served a fantastic spaghetti and meatball dinner.

Christian Education

The Christian Education Board is actively researching and forming a "job description" for the hiring of a Christian Education Minister. If any member of the congregation has input and/or opinions about this matter, please contact Patrick, CE Board Chair, or any member of the CE Board.

Youth Update

Wow, it is October already...The youth have gone back to school and are in the groove of the school year. A new schedule for the youth has been planned with lots of stuff to do. We are looking forward to participating in the Community Based Shelter at the end of September and have started our evening gatherings with gusto and much to talk about. Our meetings for the month of October are the 8th and the 22nd from 5-7pm in the youth room at UCCSV. October also brings us to Halloween and the youth have a special party planned this year, just like last year. The all-church Halloween Party will be held on Sunday October 29 from 3-6pm. Everyone is invited to come and join in the time of fun and fellowship, in costume of course.

November Preview: Regular youth meetings at the church on the 5th and 19th. And the Walk for the Homeless DC on November 18th. Listen to announcements for more information in up-coming Sundays. Don't forget the Hanging of the Greens on November 29.



Board of Deacons

Piano Purchase Needs Your Support

The Board of Deacons and the Church Council have decided to replace the piano in the sanctuary. Toward that end, the church will be accepting donations, marked "Piano." Our choir, accompanists, band members, and guest musicians will continue working hard to bring a Joyful Noise to our worship experiences together during the new church program year. However, we know we are asking too much of our current instrument. If you have questions about this special fundraising effort, please contact a Deacon, Trevor, or Pastor Carolyn. And please be generous!

Audio Visual Upgrade

If you have attended our 11:00 worship service, you have seen our overhead projector displaying the words to the songs and hymns that we sing together. We'd like to upgrade our audio visual capacity in both worship services and for educational programs and special events through the use of computerized equipment. If you know of anyone who would be willing to donate a used laptop computer with capacity for PowerPoint and other audio visual programs, and/or a projector in good condition, please contact the church office. Thank you!

Hope Task Force

The Small But Mighty "God is Still Speaking" Bumper Sticker

Dan and I have two dear Jewish friends, who saw our God is Still Speaking bumper stickers and asked us about them. This opened a door for us to talk about the meaning behind the bumper sticker. A while after our initial conversation about "God is Still Speaking", Norman said to me, "You know that bumper sticker of yours is starting to fade. You need a new one. You want to make sure

that people see the words because they convey an important message."

Not long afterwards, our friends took a trip to their favorite place in the world, Santa Fe. While there they took a lovely photo of an adobe style church displaying the God is Still Speaking banner. They couldn't wait to show the photo to us.

It is evident to Dan and me that our friends have caught the spirit of God is Still Speaking. And it all started with the opportunity to share about the UCC through the small but mighty bumper sticker.

Meeting on How Becoming "Open and Affirming" (ONA) Has Changed One Local Church

Becoming Open and Affirming means to publicly declare that those of all sexual orientations are welcome in the full life and ministry of the church.

At 7:00 PM, Sunday, November 5, 2006, Reverend Bruce Swanson will join us for coffee and dessert to discuss "How becoming ONA has changed First and St. Stephen's United Church of Christ," which became the 425th ONA church in the UCC in June 2002. Bruce, pastor of First and St. Stephen's United Church of Christ in Baltimore since 1989, is also a consultant for the Central Atlantic Conference for ONA concerns from the United Church of Christ Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns. He is a graduate of the University of Montana and the Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Centre, Massachusetts.

The United Church of Christ first urged congregations to become Open and Affirming in 1985. At that time the national delegate body of the UCC, the General Synod, 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."

The United Church of Christ does not advocate any particular path for congregations to take in discerning the question of becoming ONA. Every church develops its own approach. Becoming ONA will also affect every church and its surrounding community differently. Reverend Swanson will share some of the blessings and challenges that his particular congregation experienced during and since they set off on their own unique ONA journey.

Last spring Seneca Valley formed a group to initiate a time of study, prayer, and conversation that will help us make our own ONA decision. This forum is the first of several discussions, seminars and other events to be held over the next year or so as we explore what being an ONA church might mean to us here at Seneca Valley.

A list of ONA "Frequently Asked Questions" is at: www.ucc.org/lgbt/ona.htm

More detailed ONA information is also available at: www.ucccoalition.org/programs/ona.html

Find out more about First and St. Stephen's at: www.first-ststephens.org

Touched by the Spirit Faith at Work Retreat

The retreat will be held on November 4-5, 2006, at the Inn and Spa at Berkley Springs, WV.

- Need help to stay healthy in all aspects of your life?
- Integrate body, mind and spirit in work and play?
- Focus on wholistic self-care with other fabulous women?
- Experience the Faith At Work process of sharing, meditation and body focus while relaxing at a spa and/or hiking in the woods...

Come away with women of all ages, sizes, life experience, and faith backgrounds to be 'Touched by the Spirit:' to learn from, laugh, rest and listen with each other. We hope you'll join us this fall in Berkley Springs, West Virginia, for a spiritual spa experience!

The location of the retreat is at a lovely inn, next to a modest spa. Women who would like to experience spa services can do so during free time. You may want to hike the WV hills, or sit in the warm springs.

Nurturing body, mind and spirit doesn't have to be expensive; an overnight away in a beautiful setting with others on the faith journey may be enough of a spa experience. Or, you may find a spa treatment with a spiritual context is just what you need for deep renewal.

Spiritual Spa Experience Schedule

Saturday

- 11:00 am: Renewing Our Spirits Gathering and check in
- 12:00 pm: Lunch
- 12:30 pm: The Joyful Spirit
- 2:30 pm: The Independent Spirit: Design your Resting
- 6:30 pm: The Nurturing Spirit: Dinner in town
- 8:00 pm: The Peaceful Spirit

Sunday

- 9:00 am: The Awakened and Integrated Spirit
- 12:30 pm: Releasing Our Spirits: Return to Everyday Life

To learn more about the venue, log on to: www.TheInnAndSpa.com

Administrative Information:

- Investment: \$195 for retreat activities and leadership, overnight lodging (double room), and lunch on Saturday
- Deposit: \$75 (non-refundable)
- Additional costs:
 - Spa services if you desire on Saturday, from 2:30-5:30 pm. Booked independently at www.OriginSpa.com
 - Saturday dinner and Sunday breakfast
- Reserve your place or ask questions:
Email: Tiffany@shalem.org
- Online reservations can be made at: www.FaithAtWork.com

Note: This retreat is not sponsored by the UCC, but is an alternative to the woman's retreat which had been attended by UCCSV women in prior years. Faith At Work is the same organization that sponsored the Guatemala trip.



October Bible Readings

Sunday, October 1

Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22
 Psalm 124 or Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29
 Psalm 19:7-14
 James 5:13-20
 Mark 9:38-50

Sunday, October 8

Job 1:1, 2:1-10
 Psalm 26 or
 Genesis 2:18-24
 Psalm 8
 Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12
 Mark 10:2-16

Sunday, October 15

Job 23:1-9, 16-17
 Psalm 22:1-15 or Amos 5:6-7, 10-15
 Psalm 90:12-17
 Hebrews 4:12-16
 Mark 10:17-31

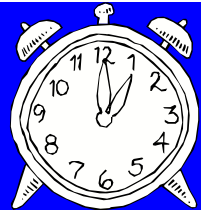
Sunday, October 22

Job 38:1-7, (34-41)
 Psalm 104:1-9, 24, 35c or Isaiah 53:4-12
 Psalm 91:9-16
 Hebrews 5:1-10
 Mark 10:35-45

Sunday, October 29

Job 42:1-6, 10-17
 Psalm 34:1-8, (19-22) or Jeremiah 31:7-9
 Psalm 126
 Hebrews 7:23-28
 Mark 10:46-52

REMEMBER
 to set your Clocks



**DAYLIGHT
 SAVINGS TIME
 ENDS**

**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29,
 2006**

OCTOBER 2006 – UCCSV Meetings and Events

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2 7:00p - Deacons	3 9:00a – Staff	4 7:00p – Disciple Class	5 7:30p - Choir	6	7
8 5:00p-7:00p Youth Group	9 7:30p – Social Concerns	10 9:00a – Staff 7:30p - ONA	11 7:00p – Disciple Class	12 7:30p - Choir	13	14
15	16 7:00p - Property Operations	17 9:00a – Staff 7:30p – Church Council	18 7:00p – Disciple Class	19 7:30p - Choir	20	21
22 5:00p-7:00p Youth Group	23	24 9:00a – Staff 7:00p – Ladies Night Out	25 7:00p – Disciple Class	26 7:30p - Choir	27	28
29 3:00p-6:00p Halloween Party	30	31 9:00a - Staff				

Outside Groups Meeting Regularly at UCCSV:

Sunday & Tuesday Nights – 8:30p – AA

Wednesdays – 7:30p – Salem Church

Thursday Nights – 7:30p – Boy Scouts

Friday Nights – 6:30p - Salem Church

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

OCTOBER CALENDAR OF EVENTS

