

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time  
September 5, 2010  
Philemon 1-21

#### ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

United Church of Christ congregations don't scrimp on Christian education for children and youth. And we don't stint on Christian education opportunities for adults either, as the following sampling from several churches last spring shows:

**Wellesley Hills Congregational Church** in Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts, was excited to offer "programs for adults to connect not only with God, but with other like-minded members," including **Discover God's Presence in Contemporary Literature and Images**. "While secular fiction may not be the most predictable place to listen for God," they admitted, "it may well turn out to be among the most rewarding, transcendent, and, ultimately, the most personally felt. Where do you listen for God? The challenge is to pay attention everywhere."

The Adult Ed Committee at **First Congregational Church of Western Springs**, Illinois, called their program "Mindbenders": "Bend. Reach and Stretch. Exercise your Mind. Deepen your Faith." These Sunday Morning Seminars were built around the theme, **Food for Body and Soul**. Some of the weekly subjects included "Personal Healthcare Reform: Diet-Related Why's and Wherefores," "Feeding a Growing and Hungry World: A Family Farmer's Perspective," and "Can Ethiopia Become the Bread Basket of Africa?"

Throughout the church year, adults at **Mayflower Community Congregational Church in Minneapolis**, Minnesota, considered the role of **The Body in Our Spiritual Lives**. Sessions included discussions of J. Philip Newell's *Christ of the Celts*, the congregation's common reading for the year, as well as series on "Mindful Eating," which they considered not only a health but also a justice issue, and "The Art of Living," which included "practices to help participants become more mindful and aware of the spirit moving in their lives."

**University Congregational United Church of Christ in Seattle**, Washington, calls their program Adult Christian Formation. "Formation seeks to balance the intellectual content of faith with the deeper resources of our shared experience," they say. Their winter program was entitled **Choices for Sustainable Living**, and explored "the meaning of sustainability, connections between lifestyle choices and our impact on the Earth, and steps we could take to move toward ecologically sustainable lifestyles and communities."

With the words, "back by popular demand," **Elon Community Church** in Elon, North Carolina, announced that it was offering the third segment of **Living the Questions 2**, the video- and internet-based small group exploration of progressive Christianity, which features UCCers Walter Bruggemann, Ron Buford, and Yvette Flunder. Entitled "Call to Covenant," it strives to "create an environment where participants can interact with one another in exploring what's next for Christianity."

As the saying goes, in the United Church of Christ our faith may be two thousand years old, but our thinking isn't!

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
September 12, 2010  
1 Timothy 1:12-17

### PARTNERS

We know the scene: Jesus' last moments on earth. It comes to us from the Gospel of Matthew. Our mind's eye is upon Jesus. Our ears are attuned to his words, the famous "Great Commission": "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them ...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (28:19-20) We see and hear Jesus all right. But most of us tend to ignore the group to whom he delivered those orders, his last words--the eleven disciples. We shouldn't. After all, it was to them that Jesus entrusted nothing less than God's mission. And who were these, his followers, who received this daunting command? By our standards, and those of their own time, they were common people, humble members of the rank and file of Palestinian society. No landowners or merchants among them. In short, Jesus assigned the most important work in history to some of the poorest, least-educated people in Galilee.

Last January, in response to that ruinous earthquake in Haiti, millions of dollars worth of aid was pledged for the relief of its victims and the rebuilding of their economy. Even before much of the money could be spent, some donors began to ask if the recipients could be trusted to use it wisely. All these donors could see was the poorest, least-educated people in the Americas.

The United Church of Christ Wider Church Ministries and our partner, Church World Service, were not among those who questioned the stewardship of the Haitian people. Our aid and assistance don't come with strings or conditions attached. We don't tell people we help how we can help them. We ask them how we can help them help themselves. And we don't go anywhere we aren't invited. Furthermore, we always work with partners we already know from programs--whether in agricultural development, education, or health improvement--we have supported in their land for years. And we don't call what we do charity, we call it accompaniment.

Our denomination's disaster responders come back filled with admiration for the initiative and responsibility of the people we help in times of great need. In part, that's because they go expecting the best from the people they wished to help to help themselves. No misgivings, no paternalism, no criticism.

When it comes to our way of responding to people in need, we don't listen to warnings of those who question their trustworthiness. We get our instructions from the Word of God. The Bible tells us that Jesus turned over his work to a group of *peons*, and they became his witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Thanks be to our Still-speaking God.

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
September 19, 2010  
1 Timothy 2:1-7

#### HELPING PEOPLE FIND A PLACE IN THE UCC

"I'm excited when we can welcome new people and new churches into the UCC," says Rev. Douglas Anders. In the South Central Conference, where he serves as Conference Minister, the United Church of Christ is relatively small in numbers and not widely known. That reality presents both a challenge and an opportunity. For many people living in the Texas-Louisiana area the Conference serves, "church" is synonymous with conservative, evangelical Christianity. The challenge, then, is to differentiate the United Church of Christ from that common conception. The opportunity is to welcome the many people in the region who are seeking an open, diverse and progressive alternative.

Under Rev. Anders' leadership, the South Central Conference's Committee on New and Renewing Churches is pursuing three kinds of initiatives in church development:

The first is new church starts. Although not yet officially received into the UCC, Journey UCC in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Gathering UCC in San Angelo, Texas, already show great potential, having grown in membership and commitment with only limited outside financial support. A more recent new church start, Hope United Church in Georgetown, Texas, appears to have a promising future, too.

Inviting existing churches to affiliate with the UCC represents a second model of church development being implemented by the South Central Conference. Following the example of Church of the Savior UCC in Cedar Park, Texas, at least two other existing Alliance of Baptists congregations in Texas have expressed an interest in affiliating with the South Central Conference because they, too, share many of the core values of the UCC.

Sometimes initiatives in church development come from established congregations. That's the case with the dynamic Cathedral of Hope UCC in Dallas, Texas, which has committed some of its resources to create and nurture a new congregation in Houston and is in the process of creating another in the Fort Worth area. "Church multiplication," as this third model is called, may be just the beginning of a trend in South Central, as not only the Cathedral of Hope but also Friedens UCC in Geronimo, Texas, is exploring the possibility of adding another location.

While there may be different ways to develop new churches, Rev. Anders and the Conference Committee on New and Renewing Churches emphasize that there is only one way to nurture them--through follow-up work after they join the UCC. "We need to walk with them, educate them in their journey of faith, and help them understand the wider covenantal bond so that they can find their place in the UCC," Rev. Anders says. In that way, these new member churches can continue to grow not only in numbers but also in their passion for carrying out God's ministry and mission.

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
September 26, 2010  
Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15

#### AMERICAN INDIAN MINISTRY SUNDAY

For most of us, church is a priority. If the local movie theater, or say the café around the corner, were about to close for lack of business, we'd shake our heads, mumble something about it being a shame, and then get on with our lives. But if our local church were in financial trouble... Why, we'd call a meeting and pass the hat, not once but as many times as it took to keep the doors open. We couldn't imagine being without our church.

Our American Indian brothers and sisters in the United Church of Christ need their twenty-two churches, which they built themselves, just as much we need ours. But they can't afford to pay their pastors even a modest salary. Their pledges and offerings cover the utilities, and they raise the money and do the work of upkeep and repairs.

They can't support their pastors simply because they don't have the funds. The rate of unemployment among both urban and reservation Indians is higher than for any other group in American society. And their per capita income is lower.

In an impoverished community where hope is in very short supply, the local church may be the only lifeline left, and Sunday morning worship the only reason not to stay out all Saturday night. Youth fellowship may be the only reason for an adolescent not to despair. And church school the only place where children learn about the Bible.

Take away the pastor and you take away the lifegiving meal at the Lord's Table. Who then will baptize the infants, marry the betrothed, and bury the elders? Who then will visit the sick and comfort the bereaved?

Because no single American Indian church could support itself financially, years ago they formed CAIM, the Council of American Indian Ministry, to seek and distribute funds equitably among the member congregations. A portion of our gifts to NIN, the Neighbors in Need all-church offering, goes each year to CAIM. That share, distributed among the churches, covers the very modest salaries of the dedicated men and women who lead those congregations.

Next Sunday many United Church of Christ congregations will receive the NIN offering. Today, on this American Indian Ministry Sunday, let us give thanks for the vital ministries of our American Indian congregations, and then resolve to help to insure their future with our gifts to NIN next week.

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time  
October 3, 2010  
Psalm 137

## NEIGHBORS IN NEED

**Neighbors in Need (NIN)** is a special mission offering of the UCC that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM). Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects.

As a 2009 Neighbors in Need grant recipient, Des Moines, Iowa's *Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement* (CCI) understands that their success lies in the power that comes from thousands of citizens standing together and getting things done. Their current slogan is "We talk. We act. We get it done."

CCI is a grassroots organization that empowers and unites people of all ethnic backgrounds to take control of their communities. CCI involves them in identifying problems and needs and in taking action to address them, encouraging residents to be vehicles for social, economic and environmental justice.

Executive Director Hugh Espey says, "CCI has helped thousands of its members across Iowa from all walks of life – whether urban or rural, black or white, immigrants and lifelong Iowans - to work together to get things done. CCI staff has over 100 years of combined experience to provide training and expertise. However, it's our members that provide the focus and the leadership and the power in numbers."

As CCI celebrate three decades of assisting ordinary people to transform their own lives, Espey says, "We are one of those organizations that is truly by the people and for the people. We believe you don't have to stand by and just let things happen, which is probably why we're growing so much."

In April 2010, the series finale for PBS's "Bill Moyer's Journal," a weekly public affairs program, featured a 20-minute segment about the powerhouse known as CCI. For more information about CCI visit [www.iowacci.org](http://www.iowacci.org). And to help support CCI and other organizations like it, please give generously to the Neighbors in Need offering.

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 10, 2010

Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7

"THEREFORE WE WILL NOT FEAR"

On October 15, 2006, a 6.7 magnitude earthquake in Hawai'i shook more than the earth. It unsettled a whole congregation as well, when members of the historic Kalahikiola Congregational Church learned that their beloved 150-year-old sanctuary had been devastated in the quake.

As members gathered to assess the damage, their pastor, George Baybrook, read to them from Psalm 46: "God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed." Then he counted the church's blessings: 1. No one had been injured and, 2. Kalahikiola Congregational Church was insured by the UCC Insurance Board.

Good news indeed. Some of the congregational leaders and members hadn't even known that their church had earthquake coverage. Not only were they relieved to learn that their sanctuary was insured, but the Insurance Board program was comprehensive enough to allow them to rebuild it under the strict guidelines that apply to structures listed in the National Historic Registry. Restoration would take a long time because of the historic character of the church, but the Insurance Board would work with the congregation throughout the process.

Last February Kalahikiola Congregational Church was ready to hold its rededication and blessing ceremony. At the time, Patrick Ku, a member of the Reconstruction Committee, spoke for the entire congregation: "We are extremely grateful to the Insurance Board. As we work toward the rededication and blessing ceremony, we recognize the significance of what you have done for us during this time. We are blessed, and we thank you."

This year the UCC Insurance Board celebrates thirty-five years of "Keeping the Promise" to the churches and related ministries of the United Church of Christ. Almost half of our UCC churches enjoy the breadth and depth of coverage in the Insurance Board program.

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 17, 2010

Luke 18:1-8

"SO WE WILL KNOW WE ARE FAMILY"

Petrus Almet, a friend of mine for more than twenty years, is a subsistence farmer and the patriarch of a clan in the mountains of South Central Timor, Indonesia. In recent years the clan has become scattered, with a number of the younger generation leaving the village. Like many tribal elders, Petrus is concerned that over time people will lose their sense of connection to the village and their appreciation for tribal traditions.

One day several years ago we received an invitation from Petrus to come to the village. He was going to put a new thatched roof on his house. When we arrived in the village we were surprised to find nearly a hundred people gathered, including various cousins and inlaws. The women were busy cooking while the men gathered thatching material and removed the old grass from the roof. While we were sitting and watching with the elders, Petrus joined us.

"There are two ways to do this," he explained. "For not very much money I could have hired local laborers to do the job. But I decided to do it according to Timorese tradition, which means I have to invite my wife's family and all the aunts and uncles and cousins on my father's side, and we all do it together. Then we have a feast to celebrate the completion of the work. This is going to cost me a cow, several pigs, and who knows how much rice."

"Why have you gone to such expense just to keep tradition?" I asked Petrus.

"Because it's worth it," he replied. "If we don't do this, how will we know we are family? If we don't come together to work and eat and tell stories, they will all just go their own ways, and that will be the end of us."

I often remember this story whenever I reflect on the considerable investment of time and money that is often needed to maintain the human bonds of community. That is certainly what a lot of our work in the church is about, including the matter of sending and receiving international missionaries. In economic terms it may be difficult to justify the "cost effectiveness" of such investments. But whenever I am called upon to explain why, in this day and age, we still need missionaries and mission boards and board meetings, I remember Petrus' words: "We do this so we will know we are family."

Rev. John Campbell-Nelson

*A Global Ministries missionary, the author serves the Evangelical Christian Church of West Timor.*

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
October 24, 2010  
Luke 18:9-14

### RESULTS

Most mission stories focus upon needs. This one is about results. We often lose sight of our gifts after we've made them, but here is an example of where they go and the good they accomplish. It comes from Dr. Anil Henry, a Global Ministries missionary, who is acting director of the Christian Hospital in Mungeli, India, affiliated with our partner, the Church of North India. It's a story about a set of twins born prematurely who, in Dr. Henry's words, "were spared because of an incubator we received." The incubator was part of a shipment of medical equipment made possible by gifts to Our Church's Wider Mission, and by private donations.

As soon as Dr. Henry received word that the shipment from America had arrived at the port, he flew down to Chennai (Madras) and went to work on the customs officials. It took him eight long days of cutting through red tape just to get to see the huge container of the shipment. When the officers finally opened it, they discovered that someone in the United States had written "Packed with love" on each of the cartons inside. Not only Dr. Henry, but even the hardened customs officers were touched by that sign of fellowship and affection. Four days later--record time--the consignment was finally released to Dr. Henry. It took almost all night to load the shipment on the five trucks that would transport the equipment to the hospital. "We finished the work at 5:30 in the morning and I threw my suitcase in the last truck and we started the 1,200 mile trip back to Mungeli," recalls Dr. Henry.

Almost two days after they left Chennai, the trucks pulled into the hospital compound, where the chapel bell summoned all the staff to help unload the equipment. But before everything had been unpacked, Dr. Henry was called away from the work to deal with a medical emergency. A woman had just arrived, and was already well into labor; the doctor would have to deliver her premature twin babies immediately. "We took her to the delivery table and delivered the first baby and then the second," he reports. Then, while nurses looked after the tiny newborns, Dr. Henry returned to the trucks. "I saw the infant warmer with the phototherapy unit being unloaded," he continues. "We immediately cleaned up the machine and shifted it into the small room we use as a nursery." The tiny babies were quickly put into the warmer where they were stabilized. "The family and the community were amazed that we were able to save these little babies," Dr. Henry concludes.

And we in the United Church of Christ are grateful to our stillspeaking God that we could help.

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 31, 2010

Luke 19:1-10

### OUR INESCAPABLE INTERDEPENDENCE

As Election Day approaches, we face the challenges of high unemployment and economic recovery, the urgency of developing a sustainable energy plan and addressing the crisis of climate change, the need to establish a fair, humane immigration policy, the struggle for a just peace in Iraq, Afghanistan and other regions around the world, to name but a few. The public debate and dialogue around these issues has at times reached inflammatory and rancorous levels. Differences in perspective on the issues of the day have deteriorated into personal attacks and oversimplified sound bites. Town hall meetings and public gatherings have become shouting matches, and there is a deeply troubling layer of fear and mean-spiritedness underlying many of the exchanges we hear on radio and TV talk shows or read in print publications.

Divisive, inflammatory debate on the issues of the day can cause some people to turn away from the polling booth out of cynicism, disappointment and resignation. Whenever I encounter such sentiment, I always remember my many and varied encounters with people around the world who remind me of the power and responsibility I have as an eligible voter in the United States, a power and responsibility that reaches from my local school district to the lives of schoolchildren halfway around the world.

As one scholar of philosophy and ethics has noted, “we have lost the art of public conversation,” we have lost sight of our inescapable interdependence. If nothing else, the global economic, environmental and political challenges before us should make clear that we are, as Martin Luther King, Jr. declared, “caught in an inescapable network of mutuality” – what happens in one part of the world ripples across the world. At the very time when fear and despair might lead many to draw lines, “to circle the wagons,” and to put up walls and fences and boundaries of every kind, it is now when we most need to engage with each other in shared struggle within an understanding of our common humanity.

As we face the decisions of Election Day, there are reminders all around us that we are truly in this together. Will we strive for the highest level of cooperation or settle for the lowest common denominator?

Sandra Sorenson  
Justice and Witness Ministries  
United Church of Christ

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 7, 2010

2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17

LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS . . .

For Open House United Church of Christ, in Portland, our first new church start in Maine in over twenty years. Known for its "wide open heart," and its contemporary worship, community service, and wider witness, this dynamic new congregation is open, affirming, accessible, multiracial and multicultural. We help churches like Open House reach unchurched seekers with our gifts to the Strengthen the Church offering.

LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS . . .

For ten-year-old Boo, as her friends call her, who lives in a remote mountaintop village in northern Laos. Boo wants to be a doctor someday, a dream denied by tradition to females there until we helped her village build its first school with our gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing.

LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS . . .

For Back Bay Mission, which dedicated its restored and expanded facilities four years after Hurricane Katrina severely damaged the property. For almost a century, Back Bay has been serving the needs of the Biloxi, Mississippi, community with the help of gifts and volunteers from UCC congregations and Conferences.

LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS . . .

For the wide span of partnerships that have allowed the United Church of Christ to respond generously to the emergency needs of Haitian communities in Port-au-Prince and beyond. Working through CONASPEH and House of Hope, and with Church World Service, our gifts have brought relief and hope to thousands of earthquake survivors.

LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS . . .

For Wollaston Congregational United Church of Christ in Quincy, Massachusetts, which reversed a precipitous membership decline and became "a new church start in an old church building." Known for its children's outreach and Family Fun Nights, this "turnaround church" benefitted from a grant from our Strengthen the Church offering.

LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS

WE LIFT THEM UP TO OUR STILL SPEAKING GOD

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 14, 2010

Isaiah 65:17-25

### OUR VERY BEST

We've all seen it many times . . .

On Communion Sunday, the ushers bring the filled offering plates forward, followed by others bearing the elements of the Lord's Supper. If we thought about it at all, we probably never attached any importance to that pairing of a collection with a sacrament. It was just a convenience in the order of worship. Or is it? Is there a relationship between the offering and communion?

Recall the Old Testament stories of priestly sacrifices to God: how the Hebrew people brought their very best--beasts and produce--to lay on the temple altar as a sign of their gratitude for all God's gifts. To be sure, Christians believe that God turned the tables, and sacrificed even Jesus--God's very best--not as a gift of gratitude to us, but as an atonement for our sins. Accordingly, every time we gather at the Lord's Table to partake of the bread and the cup, we do so in remembrance of God's sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

With so much to be grateful for, we have ample reason to present our very best to God in return. That is what we try to do in the offering, and why the collection is brought forward just before the communion service.

But we cannot offer the best of our fields and barns to God as the Hebrews, and even our own ancestors, did. We live by cash and credit, not barter and exchange. How can a cash offering represent our very best? Not by placing a price on the gift--even if it is expressed in dollars. The amount doesn't matter, as Jesus reminded his disciples that day in the temple, as they watched rich people putting large sums of money into the treasury. Then a poor widow came and put in a penny's worth of coins. And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had...." (Mark 12:41-44)

On this Stewardship Sunday, let us remember that the measure of our gratitude is the proportion of our substance we return to God.

Reign of Christ  
November 21, 2010  
Colossians 1:11-20

### GIVING THANKS

Why wait until Thursday to give thanks? Here are ten good reasons to be grateful now:

1. For the diligent leadership of Geoffrey A. Black, General Minister and President of our United Church of Christ.
2. For all the church volunteers: trustees and deacons, greeters and ushers, babysitters and teachers, waiters and dishwashers, and all those who bring the same casserole to every church supper.
3. For our church choirs, who sing like the angels in heaven...most of the time.
4. For our pastors, who give even more than we ask, which is more than we should.
5. For the Christmas Fund, which cares for our retired pastors and their surviving spouses in need.
6. For all those who work and pray for Christian unity, here and around the world.
7. For this congregation and for the United Church of Christ.
8. For God's creation, which renews itself daily despite our constant abuse and neglect.
9. For our next breath; and life itself.
10. And, above all, for the overflowing blessings we receive every day from the stillspeaking God.

Have we forgotten something? Add your own reasons to be thankful in the space below.

First Sunday of Advent  
November 28, 2010  
Matthew 24:36-44

### READY AND WAITING

What an odd lesson to begin Advent. Today's passage from Matthew's Gospel isn't from the first chapters with their stories of Jesus' birth, the wise men's journey, or even his baptism as he begins his ministry. Instead the passage comes from Chapter 24, in the middle of the last week of Jesus' life.

It's an odd *place* to begin as well. Not in Bethlehem or even Galilee, but outside Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives. He's alone with his disciples. From where he sits, he can see the huge Temple where he's just been grilled by the religious authorities. He can also see Herod's palace, Pilate's courts, and the place called Golgotha.

On this First Sunday of Advent, we start our journey to Bethlehem, not at the beginning of Jesus' life and ministry, but at its end. Four weeks before Christmas, we focus on Jesus' words three days before the Crucifixion.

What strange words they are. Not Isaiah prediction's of the Messiah or even John the Baptist's proclamation of "Prepare ye the way of the Lord!" Instead it's Matthew's "Little Apocalypse." In the shadow of the cross, Jesus tells his disciples to get ready not for his birth but for his return—when the sun will go dark, the stars fall from the heaven, and "they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven."

While the world around us sings, "Here comes Santa Claus," we Christians are told to be ready for the *Second* Coming of Christ.

Matthew's urgent warning to "keep awake" and "be ready" for that coming made sense to first-century Christians. They had reason to believe Jesus would return in their lifetime. But 2,000 years later, on the First Sunday of Advent, what do we do with this teaching about the "end of time?"

We can listen to its truth. When it comes to the end of time, none of us knows "that day or hour." That's true not only in the great cosmic Second Coming, but also in the end of our own times. We face those endings every day of our lives—the loss of a loved one, downsizing of a job, a child leaving home.

We also know God's promise of new beginnings, born in the stable in Bethlehem. The one who promised to be Emmanuel, God with us. A promise renewed throughout his life, even from the cross. Especially from the cross.

As Jesus told his disciples, we don't know when the end of time will come, neither our time nor the world's time. What we do know is the One who is with us in all times—if only we are awake, ready, and open to his coming.

Rev. Talitha Arnold  
United Church of Santa Fe  
Santa Fe, NM

Second Sunday of Advent  
December 5, 2010  
Isaiah 11:1-10

## THE CHRISTMAS FUND

*“The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.” (Isaiah 11:6)*

*“In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’” (Matthew 3:1-2)*

To a powerless and discouraged community living under political oppression in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., Isaiah’s vision was a message of promise and expectation. In God’s new order, wisdom, understanding, righteousness and justice prevail, and creation is once again reconciled and restored to the *shalom* intended by the Creator from the beginning of time. More than 700 years later, John the Baptist – preaching in the wilderness of Judea, not far from where his covenant ancestors had once heard Isaiah’s words of holy hope – affirmed that the wait was over. God’s Reign is near. The covenant has been fulfilled by the coming of Imanu-el, God-with-us, reconciling God and humankind.

Throughout its history, the **Error! Reference source not found.** has lived out its calling as the Body of Christ – a living witness to the incarnate God in Jesus Christ, ministering in a spirit of holy love.

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund, administered by the Pension Boards on behalf of the United Church of Christ, is now in its 108th year of “serving those who serve the church.” One of four Special Mission Offerings received each year in the United Church of Christ, the Christmas Fund helps provide assistance to lower-income retired clergy and lay employees as well as to active clergy facing unforeseen financial crises. Your gift to the Christmas Fund is tangible witness to the love of Imanu-el – God-with-us. Through this ministry of giving, we reach out in love and compassion to the retired pastor who receives a thank-you gift check at Christmas; to the widowed spouse for whom pension supplementation means the ability to live with dignity; to the retired couple who receive health premium supplementation; to the clergy family whose home is destroyed by fire or flood; to the many individuals – lay and ordained – who receive some type of ongoing ministerial assistance.

We invite you to covenant with us – and with thousands throughout our beloved church – in this ministry of care. Your gift can and will make a difference.

Third Sunday of Advent  
December 12, 2010  
Luke 1:47-55

## THE CHRISTMAS FUND

***“The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing... Say to those who are of a fearful heart, ‘Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God.’” (Isaiah 35:1-2a, 4)***

***“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my savior... for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.” (Luke 1:46b-47)***

The prophet Isaiah proclaimed a much-needed message of joy in the face of fear and despair. The sufferings of the present had rendered the spirit of the covenant community as arid as the Judean wilderness. But through God’s reconciling love, parched spirits are transformed into fertile ground where new life takes root. Nearly eight centuries later, an encounter between an aging woman and her young kinswoman bears witness to the blossoming of new life in unexpected places. As Mary approaches, the child in Elizabeth’s once-barren womb leaps for joy in the presence of Imanu-el – God-with-us. Mary’s song of joy proclaims the mighty acts of the God of endless possibilities and unimaginable surprises.

For 108 years, the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund has been a tangible expression of the love of God-with-us. This annual offering, one of four Special Mission Offerings received each year in the United Church of Christ, supports ministries to lower-income retired clergy and lay employees as well as to active clergy in times of financial crises. Gifts to the Christmas Fund bring joy and gladness – in the form of a Christmas thank-you gift check to an elderly annuitant; as pension supplementation to a minister who faithfully served small congregations that could not afford adequate salaries, and now finds that her retirement income is not enough to meet basic needs; as emergency assistance to a family recovering from illness or disaster; as health premium supplementation to a retired couple; as ongoing ministerial assistance to many individuals – lay and ordained – throughout the course of the year.

We invite you to join us in proclaiming good news this Christmas to those who have served and those who continue to serve our church, through your prayerful contribution to the Christmas Fund.

Fourth Sunday of Advent  
December 19, 2010  
Matthew 1:18-25

### THINKING BACKWARDS

Christmas is a time for lights, carol sings, and wonderment. But the wonder of the season began on Easter day. For twelve scattered disciples, who had run from Jesus' crucifixion, Easter day was a miracle. They went around telling one another the all-but unbelievable good news—"Risen, He is risen!"—and in the awe of his appearing, they knew they were forgiven, indeed, a whole world was forgiven. God had revealed Jesus in risen glory.

Then thinking backwards began. If God was with Jesus in risen glory, then God must have been with him in his terrible dying. And yes, in his living too. All along God had been with him; God in his healing, God in his speaking. All he had said and done was now certifiably true.

Then the logic of thinking backwards went even further: If God was with him in his living, then surely God was with him even in his being born. The result is the Gospel of Matthew's strange story of the virgin birth. God's Spirit must be involved in Jesus' conception. To modern readers the story is a stretch; biologically, girls do not usually get pregnant and give birth without a male involved. But Matthew's story is not about biology. No, Matthew tells a theological story to say that God has been involved in Jesus' birth. The child is God's gift to humanity—a baby born to redeem us all.

Now spin around and start thinking forward. Yes, God was with us in Jesus' birth, in his brief life, in his dying, and in his risen glory. But more, God has been with the forming Christian movement. And then, with Christians, continuing the work of the risen Christ in different times, in different lands. God with us, through time and space, all the way to you, here in church on the Sunday before Christmas, 2010. If you think deeply, you know your life has been shaped and changed because of a child born long ago.

What were the angel's words in Matthew's story? "She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (v. 21) Yes, even us people, here in church, all of us, entirely forgiven.

Prof. David Buttrick  
The Divinity School, Vanderbilt University  
Nashville, Tennessee

First Sunday after Christmas

December 26, 2010

Psalm 148

### PRAISE

The Psalms, those most-beloved of all Old Testament writings, are meant to be sung, and none more so than the 148th, our focus scripture for today. Psalm 148 inspired no less than five of the hymns included in our United Church of Christ's *New Century Hymnal*. Little wonder, given that the Hebrew designation of Psalms means "praises," and that Psalm 148 overflows with "cosmic praise," to borrow the words from the front cover of this bulletin.

With the sounds and sights and smells of Christmas still fresh in our minds, what better time for us to praise God in song? "Praise the Lord!" shouts the Psalmist, urging everyone to join in the song: "Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! Young men and women alike, old and young together! Let them praise the name of the Lord..." (vs. 11-13a) And so we must.

Among the choices in our denominational hymnal, one old and one new stand out:

#### "To You, O God, All Creatures Sing" (#17)

Almost eight hundred years ago, St. Francis of Assisi, whose love of creation almost rivaled God's, translated Psalm 148 into a hymn that Medical Mission Sister, Miriam Therese Winter, adapted in 1993. "I felt called to enable

that...poet's wisdom to live on into the future," she explains. And so it does:

"To you, O God, day after day, your planet earth in every way sings your praises,  
alleluia,

As savory fruit and fragrant flower show forth your glory and your power, singing  
praises, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia."

#### "Creating God, Your Fingers Trace" (#462)

Episcopalian priest Jeffery Rowthorn's paraphrase of Psalm 48 won a prize in a hymn competition seeking "New Psalms for Today." Although thirty years old, his words don't betray their age, as the first stanza testifies:

"Creating God, your fingers trace the bold designs of farthest space;  
Let sun and moon and stars and light and what lies hidden praise your might."

Second Sunday after Christmas  
January 2, 2011  
John 1:(1-9), 10-18

### CAPTIVE

When Frances Thompson answered God's call to overseas missionary service, how could she know that she would spend three years as a prisoner in a Japanese internment camp?

After studying at the Union Theological Seminary in New York City, Frances was commissioned in 1937 by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, one of the predecessors of our Common Global Ministries. The Board then assigned her to teach philosophy, Christian ethics, and Bible at Silliman University on the southern island of Negros in the Philippine Islands. Founded by Americans in 1901, and still affiliated with the United Church of Christ, Silliman University was noted throughout the Islands for its academic excellence.

The University faculty, made up both of Filipinos and Americans, welcomed twenty-eight-year-old Frances to their campus, located in the thriving city of Dumaguete. Although the clouds of war were forming on the horizon, it was hard to feel threatened in that little oasis of learning and fellowship far from Manila.

Then the news of Pearl Harbor reached the community, and a day later the Philippines were attacked. Still, some Americans hoped that the Japanese would only occupy the larger islands of the archipelago, and not bother with their remote outpost. However, on May 26, 1942, the Japanese landed on Negros and quickly occupied the city of Dumaguete, rounding up all the Americans who had not fled into the jungle-covered mountains.

Frances Thompson was one of more than five thousand American civilians held captive during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines. Buoyed by General Douglas MacArthur's pledge, "I shall return," they awaited their liberation with expectation, or at least hope. But as the months turned to years, spirits flagged as internment conditions deteriorated.

Still, Frances Thompson did what she could to help, caring for prisoners who were sick, organizing an informal school for the children in the camp, and tending a small vegetable garden to augment the meager rations provided by the Japanese.

Early in February 1945, American forces liberated the camp where Frances Thompson was held. After years of deprivation, she weighed only 87 pounds.

Repatriated to the United States on a troop ship, Frances slowly regained her strength on home assignment. After her ordeal in the Philippines, she could have been forgiven for resigning her commission. Instead, she resumed her studies at Union Seminary and then returned to the Islands with a new assignment: literacy education using Congregational pioneer Frank Laubach's famed "each one teach one" method.

Frances Thompson remained in the Philippines until her retirement in 1972. Looking back on 35 years in the mission field, she concluded, "This world needs so much of what God's Word promises." We give God thanks for Frances Thompson, who resided at Uplands, in Pleasant Hill, Tennessee, until her death, on March

21, 2010, at the age of one hundred.

First Sunday after Epiphany

The Baptism of Christ

January 9, 2011

Matthew 3:13-17

"A VOICE FROM HEAVEN" (Matthew 3:17a)

"My wife and I were at the theater last evening," the pastor told his congregation. "And, of course, they asked everyone to turn off their cell phones.

We don't do that here," he continued; "because in the United Church of Christ we believe that God is still speaking. So, if your telephone rings during the worship service, answer it!"

True story.

What began in 2004 as a new branding campaign has now grown so wide and powerful that more than half of our local churches have signed on, and pastors make knowing but humorous references to it from the pulpit.

God is still speaking, which is why we never put in a period.

Being a church that balances religious tradition with religious relevance, we offer an extravagant welcome to all God's children: "No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here."

And we do so in the name of our Stillspeaking God, who loves us too much to remain silent.

"Here is a God that speaks through human families and relationships of all shapes," says Rev. Felix Carrion, Stillspeaking Coordinator in the United Church of Christ. "Here is a God that speaks through a young person on a skateboard defying the laws of gravity and displaying heart. Here is a God that speaks the language of protest and poetry and presence. Here is a God that speaks through song and dance, hugs and kisses, hopes, laughter and joy. Here is a God that speaks through prayers and choirs and preachers and those who held and hold dreams, still."

We are a church where Jesus the healer meets Jesus the revolutionary: where, in the light streaming through the church's windows, God's voice is heard, and where, in the march for justice, God's voice is also heard.

We are the God is still speaking church.

Second Sunday after Epiphany  
January 16, 2011  
Isaiah 49:1-7

### STRENGTH IN COMMUNITY

All too often we honor our national heroes--and heroines--in isolation, as if their achievements were self-made. That may have been the case, comparatively, with Abraham Lincoln. But it wasn't with Martin Luther King, Jr., whom we remember on the eve of his holiday.

Pay a visit to Sweet Auburn, the Atlanta neighborhood where Martin grew up, and you appreciate how he was formed in a loving family that was an integral part of a close-knit community. The National Park Service has wisely preserved not only the King family home, but many of the houses along Auburn Avenue, indicating who lived in them during Martin's childhood and youth. Furthermore, many of those homes are occupied today, making the site a living history museum rather than a mausoleum of the past.

We Americans may cherish the image of the lonely leader, the prophet without honor in his own country, and the woman crusader who was not appreciated in her time. But most of us, like Martin Luther King, Jr., find strength not in isolation but in community. And that community is often anchored by a church--which was the case in Sweet Auburn. Like his father before him, Martin's father was pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, just down the street from the parsonage. When Martin joined the church staff after his pastorate in Montgomery, Alabama, he was only following in a long tradition in the black community. He knew where his roots lay.

Roots. We Americans tend to disparage that word. We "pull up stakes" as soon as opportunity calls--or misfortune arrives. We start over on our own. For us, freedom means a sort of rootlessness. Frederick Jackson Turner, the great American historian, cited the closing of the frontier in 1890 as marking the end of our uniqueness as a nation. He may well have been thinking of Abraham Lincoln's odyssey--born in Kentucky, moving next to Indiana before he found his fortune on the Illinois frontier.

Family and community did not loom large in the formation of Abraham Lincoln. Pay a visit to restored New Salem, where he spent the years 1831-1837, and reflect on its difference from Sweet Auburn. Conspicuously missing is a church building--as if the settlers didn't intend to remain long enough to need one, which as it turns out they didn't. Still, New Salem is as close as Lincoln ever had to community in his formative years.

The New Salem and Sweet Auburn sites have at least one thing in common, however. They preserve something that otherwise might be lost. In one case, the freedom of the frontier. In the other, the strength and stability of community. Each nurtured the greatness of a young man. But have we now lost both?

Third Sunday after Epiphany  
January 23, 2011  
Matthew 4:12-23

#### STATEMENT OF FAITH

In 1959, our Second General Synod approved a Statement of Faith, since revised in order to be more inclusive, which has not only been widely accepted in the United Church of Christ, but also commended by the wider Christian community.

Just as other Christian churches have employed our Statement of Faith to enrich their worship and study, we, too, can perhaps find meaning and inspiration from other such statements, especially on this Ecumenical Sunday.

Here, for thoughtful consideration, is an excerpt from the Brief Statement of Faith of the Presbyterian Church (USA):

We trust in God the Holy Spirit,

everywhere the giver and renewer of life.

The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,

sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor,

and binds us together with all believers

in the one body of Christ, the Church.

The same Spirit

who inspired the prophets and apostles

rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,

engages us through the Word proclaimed,

claims us in the waters of baptism,

feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,

and calls women and men to all ministries of the church.

In a broken and fearful world

the Spirit gives us courage

to pray without ceasing,

to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,

to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,

to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,

and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,

we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks

and to live holy and joyful lives,

even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,

praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

(For the full text, go to [www.pcusa.org](http://www.pcusa.org))

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany  
January 30, 2011  
Matthew 5:1-12

### PHOEBE MINISTRIES

In 1903, a group of German Reformed pastors in Northeastern Pennsylvania founded the Phoebe Deaconess and Old Folks Home in a three-story brick farmhouse in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Five residents moved into Phoebe that first year.

Affiliated with the United Church of Christ, Phoebe Ministries has grown through the years, and now includes four Continuing Care Retirement Communities, eight affordable senior housing programs, nationally-recognized memory support services, a geriatric care manager program, adult day services, and comprehensive pharmacy services in eastern and central Pennsylvania. Through its continuum of care, Phoebe Ministries now serves more than 2,500 individuals each year.

Today Phoebe Ministries continues to be guided by its original mission to provide compassionate care to residents of its communities regardless of their ability to pay. Over forty percent of Phoebe's nursing home residents and a smaller percentage in other living situations rely on Phoebe's promise of charitable care. Older adults living in poverty—who are so often forgotten in our society—remain at the heart of the Phoebe mission and ministry. In 2010 alone, Phoebe provided more than eight million dollars in charitable care to individuals who had exhausted their resources.

Two years ago, the Governing Board of Phoebe Ministries approved, and President/CEO Scott Stevenson implemented, a Faith in Action Initiative that developed new mission and vision statements to highlight Phoebe's faith-based ministry.

#### The Mission of Phoebe Ministries

A community of faith, called by God, to serve the needs and to enhance the lives of our elders, their families and the broader community.

#### The Vision of Phoebe Ministries

A faith-based ministry recognized as a leader of innovative services, education, and community resources that promote fullness of life.

Through its membership in the UCC Council for Health and Human Service Ministries (CHHSM), Phoebe Ministries is a Covenantal Partner with the Penn Central, Penn Northeast, and Pennsylvania Southeast Conferences of the United Church of Christ.

In recognizing Phoebe Ministries on this Health and Human Service Sunday, we honor all of the institutions and programs in health and welfare related to the United Church of Christ.

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

February 6, 2011

Matthew 5:13-20

### ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

Today's Gospel lesson in Matthew comes from the familiar Sermon on the Mount preached by Jesus. In it, he essentially was instructing us symbolically, through the use of two very common elements, salt and light, about how we should live our lives. In Jesus' day salt was held in high value and sometimes distributed in place of money to laborers. In fact, the word salary comes from the Latin word for salt, *salarium*. Not only was salt important for trade purposes, it was also an essential commodity for curing the food people consumed, giving it longer shelf life. So for Jesus to refer to us as the "salt of the earth" is to say we are both valued and given the opportunity to show it daily in our actions toward others.

'Funny how certain childhood phrases never seem to leave your memory: my mom would often tell me, "words are easy, but your actions are what really count." So, like the salt, if we are each a unique and valued gift from God, then it's imperative that our actions show those qualities and encourage others who might not be feeling quite so gifted at the moment! Luckily for us, those actions can often be as simple as a smile or a "hello."

Similarly Jesus instructs us on letting our light shine on a lamp stand as a source for others, helping them find their way, rather than hiding it under a basket. Again, reminding us to be that living light so others are able to see potential around them. No doubt you remember in Sunday school singing, *This Little Light of Mine*. How I loved the animations; either trying to blow out our imaginary finger candle or better yet, yelling, "hide it under a bushel - **NO!**"

Today across the United Church of Christ many of our churches are celebrating the beginning of Women's Week. This special Sunday offers churches the opportunity to celebrate the many gifts of leadership women offer the church. Take a moment and reflect on the women in your life who have been "salty" at those times when you most needed it. Likewise, who are the women who have offered illumination on life's path for you? Individually, each of us has unique value and possibility for ministry. So today, in honor of the special women who provided salt and light in your life, show those around you that actions really do speak louder than words!

Deborah Bailey

Congregational Vitality and Discipleship Ministry

United Church of Christ

Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

February 13, 2011

Matthew 5:21-37

#### IN FAITH WE SEEK THE BELOVED COMMUNITY

Many of us continue to struggle with the economic downturn. Millions are jobless, millions more have seen reductions in their pay and work hours, and many have lost their homes or apartments through foreclosures.

The downturn has affected everyone, but the impact has been most severe among people of color. We have an African American president and some pundits proclaim a post-racial society, but economic disadvantages associated with race and ethnicity are still with us.

During the recession, as unemployment rose among whites, it skyrocketed among people of color. Unemployment reached 8.9% among whites but soared to 16.5% among African Americans and 13.1% among Hispanics. These disparities are shocking but not atypical. African Americans are about twice as likely to be unemployed as whites and Hispanics are 50% more likely.

During the housing boom, some mortgage lenders – including those associated with major national and international banks – engaged in shady and even fraudulent practices. The targets for subprime loans with higher fees and interest were, most commonly, people of color. In 2006 during the peak of the housing boom, blacks and Hispanics were more than twice as likely to have subprime mortgages as whites with comparable incomes. In Memphis, one major national bank intentionally targeted African American neighborhoods for the most expensive and objectionable mortgages. In New York City, black households making over \$68,000 a year are almost five times as likely to hold high-interest subprime mortgages as are whites with similar or even lower incomes.

The workings of the economy are often assumed to be fair and rational: layoffs are based on workers' performances and the needs of the company, mortgages on credit scores and income. But the outcomes we see tell a different story. Race and ethnicity still matter. Unequal treatment that disadvantages people of color is common.

In 1967 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., wrote: "Depressed living standards for Negroes ... are a structural part of the economic system of the United States." Many things have changed since these words were written 43 years ago, but racial injustice persists. The factors behind biased economic structures range from the personal to the systemic and institutional. On this Racial Justice Sunday, let us as people of faith renew our commitment to root them out so that the Beloved Community can flourish.

Edith Rasell  
Justice and Witness Ministries  
United Church of Christ

Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

February 20, 2011

Matthew 5:38-48

"LOVE YOUR ENEMIES" (Matthew 5:44)

The group of American visitors to Iran were Quakers, but they could just as well have been from the United Church of Christ or the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), or from any other faith group that heeds those words of Jesus—"love your enemies"--and believes, as the Friends like to put it, that there is that of God in every person.

The Americans had come to Iran to see for themselves, and they immediately realized that many generalizations about the "Muslim world" have to be discarded. Not only is Iran profoundly different from its neighbors, there are also plenty of differences within the country, as well. They discovered, for example, that their guide, Mana, was thoroughly secular, and chafed under Islamic dress restrictions, which she scarcely observed. "There are more Iranians like me every day," she announced to the group. A few days later, another Iranian woman, Elham, joined the Americans. She wore the traditional black chador, which exposed only her face. When Elham first saw Mana, she declared, "You are not dressed right." But Mana just ignored her.

For Elham, as for many Americans, Islam and Iran are synonymous. But for Mana, whose post-graduate studies concentrated on pre-Islamic Iranian culture, the Arabs who brought the religion of Islam to Iran in the seventh century were nothing more than foreign invaders. When asked about Islam, according to a member of the group, "her answers were short and concise; but when she was asked about Persian culture, her answers were passionate and effusive."

Whatever their differences, Mana and Elham shared one quality in common: "each in her own way was extraordinarily hospitable to us," according to a member of the group. "My sense was that their hospitality was not just a result of Iranian culture, although indeed hospitality is engrained in Iranian culture. Instead, their hospitality, and that of other Iranians we met, was based on a genuine interest in America and Americans, not based on a desire to make the past thirty years of difficult relations to vanish, but rather based on the knowledge that such issues are so much easier to work with when there is genuine friendship and dialogue between our two countries, not just at the level of leadership, but also at the level of people-to-people relationships."

But do such encounters really make a difference? As the group was boarding its tour bus in Tehran, an elderly man approached one of them. "American?" he asked. Everyone held their breath. "I am so happy," he announced with a big smile.

Eighth Sunday after Epiphany

February 27, 2011

Matthew 6:24-34

#### A LEARNED LAITY?

“After God had carried us safe to New England and wee had builded our houses provided necessaries for our livelihood reard convenient places for Gods worship and settled the civill government one of the next things we longed for and looked after was to advance learning and perpetuate it to posterity dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches when our present ministers shall lie in the dust.”

The idea of “lying in the dust” might be disconcerting to present-day ministers. Yet for generations, lay church leaders have known that educating new generations of pastors is critical to congregational vitality. Written in 1650, these words are no less true today. We need a learned ministry and ways “to advance [their] learning.”

The United Church of Christ’s seven seminaries, which we honor on this Seminary Sunday, educate a new generation of ministers—deepening faith, exploring ancient wisdom in new contexts, and preparing for pastoral leadership. These seminaries have faculties that love the church. They do not simply pass on ideas, but engage students in deep reflection that will help them serve the church.

Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis is one of these schools. Our students read many of the same texts read by those preparing for the ministry in 1650—but they read and do much more. Not only do they read the Bible and philosophy, but they also “read” cultural contexts; they deepen their faith not cloistered in a quiet library, but in lively classroom discussions, online blogs, creative chapel worship, with the church in foreign countries, and in community service.

The church leaders of 1650 worried that the next generation might not have a learned ministry. With its seminaries, the United Church of Christ need not worry about an educated clergy in the next generation. Today’s worry is different.

We must worry whether there will be a learned laity. Will the women and men in our congregations have opportunities to deepen their faith, using it to understand better themselves and the world? Or will the absence of such opportunities make our members susceptible to the seductive belief that a return to “the old time religion” will make the world’s complex and troubled aspects go away? What are needed today are Christian women and men with a level of faith understanding that at least matches the level of sophistication they demonstrate every day in their work lives.

At Eden Seminary we are not only committed to educating the next generation of pastors. We are also committed to engaging a new generation of lay women and men—the people in the pew. We look forward to increasing the opportunities for lay people to explore Christian faith for life in the complex contemporary world.

Rev. David M. Greenhaw, President  
Eden Theological Seminary  
St. Louis, Missouri

