



let it shine

the UCC at 50 years

Basic Information

An Invitation

The 50th anniversary year of the United Church of Christ begins officially on All Saints Sunday — Nov. 5, 2006. The 50th Anniversary Committee invites you and the churches in your Conference to be part of a national celebration. It is hoped that every Conference will have at least one regional gathering where members from many congregations can share a common experience that lifts up our unique heritage, acknowledges our role in today's complex world, and focuses our vision as we seek to embody a vitally alive ministry in the 21st century.

Your Gathering

UCC members are encouraged to create regional and local celebration events, gathering as Conferences, Associations, church clusters, or congregations. Your gathering will be the wrap-around event for a live, webstreamed presentation. It can take the form of a worship service or a programmatic event. Decide which type of gathering best fits the mood of your group, as well as the location and time of the event. Whatever you decide, be sure to make food (a meal or refreshments) a primary part of your time together.

The first step in successfully implementing your event is to establish a planning committee to organize the celebration, create your own unique program, plan a celebratory meal, and develop a promotional strategy to advertise your gathering.

The Webstreaming Event

The centerpiece of All Saints Sunday will be a “real time” webstreamed presentation — live from the Amistad Chapel at the UCC's national offices in Cleveland, Ohio. This online production (currently scheduled to be 30-to-40 minutes in length) will be accessible at ucc.org. Specific webstreaming details will be made available as the date draws nearer. While the program can be viewed on individual computers, we suggest that you connect an LCD projector and an audio sound system so that it can be seen and heard by a larger audience. Remember to test all technical aspects so that when the appointed hour arrives, everyone can see and hear the broadcast. Simple set-up directions will be provided in the near future for those who are unfamiliar with basic web technology. Additional online applications will be designed in the near future to provide opportunities for pre and post production interactivity.

The tentative plan is to have the webstreaming event include:

- greetings from UCC leaders
- presentations by artists and performers
- stories of gratitude and hope
- documentary footage
- a brief keynote address
- information about upcoming programs and resources for the anniversary year
- an invitation to General Synod 26
- interactive activities

It will be broadcast at 6 p.m. EST, making it available for simultaneous viewing in each time zone: 5 p.m. Central; 4 p.m. Mountain; 3 p.m. Pacific; and 1 p.m. in Hawai'i.

***An All Saints
Sunday
template
of ideas
to celebrate
the 50th
anniversary
of the UCC***

***for use in
conference,
association
and
congregational
gatherings
on All Saints
Sunday, 2006***



How to Use This Template

This template offers programmatic ideas for All Saints Sunday gatherings to celebrate our first half-century as a united and uniting family of faith. These resources can be used in two ways:

- **Pick and Choose** Decide which component pieces best fit into your celebration or worship service, then create your own program or order of worship.
- **Make it Your Own** Adapt the text, mix and match, come up with your own ideas and use this as a catalyst to plan it your own unique event.

This template format offers a variety of participatory options. To insure the success of your event, consider these tips:

- **Choose** hosts, readers, and liturgists who bring a sense of exuberance and flair.
- **Feature** a variety of musicians, artists and creative performers.
- **Create** an all-star choir from the churches in your area.
- **Seek** people who have an engaging faith story to offer “shining light testimonies.”
- **Make** it an intergenerational presentation — include children where ever possible.
- **Use** the right equipment, and test it thoroughly beforehand.

Structure your event/worship so that the web streamed presentation is strategically placed during the program/liturgy. It is best not to schedule the webstreamed presentation as the opening act of your event. Having a gathering meal and introductory segments builds community and allows participants to share in a common experience. Placing the meal at the end of the program/worship helps create a sense of closure and an opportunity to reflect on the overall experience.

Resources

These resources are by no means an exhaustive array; rather, they represent a start. They are a catalyst for your church, cluster or Conference to design its own 50th anniversary celebration. Use your imagination: be creative and construct an event that will prepare people to kick-off the anniversary year in a big way. And remember – have fun and let it shine!

Introductory Gatherings and Calls to Worship

Gathering

- Host 1: While the roots of our denomination stretch back to the earliest settlers of this nation, the United Church of Christ, as we know it today, was born almost 50 years ago through the uniting of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches.
- Host 2: That makes us the youngest protestant denomination in the United States, with some of the oldest congregations in this country.
- Host 1: 2007 is our official half-century birthday — our golden anniversary! Just imagine, we’re turning 50!
- Host 2: And with any momentous birthday or anniversary, what better way to celebrate than by throwing a party?
- Host 1: A year-long party that begins today – All Saints Sunday.
- Host 2: It’s time to celebrate, kick up our heels, and party!
- Host 1: Time to put on our dancing shoes?
- Host 2: Absolutely! Let the celebration begin.

Call to Celebration

- One: After 50 years of faithful ministry, we acknowledge that God is still speaking.
- Two: We listen, and God says: “let your light shine.”
- Many: In churches small and large; urban, suburban and rural; from many different backgrounds, possessing a vast variety of abilities and talents; as a people united in our diversity; we celebrate our call to minister in the name of Christ Jesus.

One: After four centuries of covenanted partnership in this, our homeland, we remember the God who spoke in ages past.

Two: We listen anew for God's call to "let our light shine."

Many: The legacy of our forbears lives on, and we step forward into a new era of faithful ministry continuing to seek justice, love mercy and pursuing the pathway of peace in humbleness with our God.

One: Looking ahead to the next 50 years, we proclaim that God will continue to speak in every time and every place.

Two: We will listen again and again for God's call to "let our light shine."

Many: The future is a great unknown filled with obstacles and challenges, but also opportunities and possibilities. We move ahead with confidence knowing that nothing can separate us from the love of God through Christ Jesus.

One: Let us celebrate our past:

Many: God has spoken.

Two: Let us celebrate our present:

Many: God continues to speak.

One: Let us celebrate our future:

Many: God will speak anew on our journey of faith.

Call to Worship #1

One: Like a whisper that awakens the imagination ...

Many: God is still speaking.

One: Gentle as a prayer that eases our pain ...

Many: God is still speaking.

One: Loud and boisterous, even rollicking with laughter ...

Many: God is still speaking.

One: Lyrical, melodious and yet sometimes prophetically dissonant ...

Many: God is still speaking.

One: Clearly, creatively, compassionately ...

Many: God is still speaking.

One: Let us worship the Holy One who has led us through the past 50 years.

Many: Let us worship the God of all creation who speaks anew to us each day.

All: Let our worship prepare us for a future that calls us to be light to the world.

Call to Worship #2

One: As we gather to remember our 50 years of ministry: Let it shine!

Many: We are the light of the world.

One: As we gather to celebrate our 50 years of ministry: Let it shine!

Many: Don't hide your light, it's not a secret.

One: As we gather to affirm the next 50 years of ministry: Let it shine!

Many: Let your light burn brightly for all the world to see.

One: Yes! Let it shine!

Many: Yes! We are the light of the world.

All: Amen!

Music, Hymns and Celebration Songs

The New Century Hymnal has many appropriate selections for this event, including:

- All Saints Day: Hymns 295-299
- Anniversaries and Dedications: Hymns 369-373
- Communion of Saints: Hymns 374-385
- Discipleship: Hymns 491-504
- Witness: Hymns 522-531
- Justice and Peace: Hymns 570-590

The following hymns use alternative words set to traditional hymn tunes. Use these words, write your own, or commission a new hymn by one of your musicians.

Come and Listen (“Glory, Glory Hallelujah” NCH #2)

- 1: Come and listen, God is speaking, God is speaking to us here.
God is speaking, are you listening, for God’s calling bold and clear?
- 2: Gather children, in the Spirit, clap your hands and raise your voice.
Feel the Spirit flowing through us, gather children and rejoice!
- 3: Bring your burdens, and your blessings, to this hour and to this place.
Seek renewal in the promise of the Spirit’s amazing grace.
- 4: God is speaking with a challenge: to follow Jesus on the way,
Live as servants, be a blessing, as disciples, day by day.

This Little Light of Mine (“This Little Light of Mine” NCH #524)

1. This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine ...
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.
2. Through the day and night, I’m gonna let it shine ...
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.
3. Fifty years of light, I’m gonna let it shine ...
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.
4. Sharing Jesus’ light, I’m gonna let it shine ...
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.
5. Everywhere I go, I’m gonna let it shine ...
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

O, Let It Shine (“For All the Saints” NCH #299)

1. O, Let it shine; don’t hide your light away.
Boldly proclaim your steadfast faith today.
The world needs you: illuminate the way. Alleluia! Alleluia!
2. For fifty years we’ve sought to do what’s right,
Sharing our faith within the darkest night.
The future calls: walk boldly in the light! Alleluia! Alleluia!
3. And God still speaks to those who would draw near.
Open your heart and bring a listening ear.
More light and truth breaks forth for us to hear. Alleluia! Alleluia!

Free choral arrangements and children's music by Jim Ahrend are available at <www.singpeace.com/ucc>.

"God is still speaking," musical resources are available at <www.stillspeaking.com/spirit>.

Prayers

Prayer for Illumination

Almighty, still speaking God: in ages past your people listened intently for your Word of grace and peace. Today you speak anew, inspiring us to commitment and faithful action. Where your voice will lead, we do not know, but one thing is certain: where ever you call us to sojourn, there will you abide.

Loving, still speaking God: the journey of faith before us calls for decisiveness, bold action and a compassionate heart. To live and minister as a discipleship of the Christ is no small task. We seek clarity of purpose and your light to illumine our way.

Living, still speaking God: the joy of your Spirit burns within us, renewing us as your holy people. Let our lights shine as we celebrate your guiding hand in the ministry of our beloved family of faith – the United Church of Christ. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Holy God, you forever beckon us to draw near, forever call us to travel on your road of love seeking the source of our deep gladness as we encounter the hungers of the world. Yet we often choose the easy pathways intent on maintaining the status quo, afraid to rock the boat, often unwilling to take decisive action. We are hesitant to step forward into the unknown and instead cling to the old ways of safety and security.

Fifty years ago, you inspired our forebears to unite in a holy calling — a risky, yet thrilling enterprise of faith. At many steps along the way our family of faith has fallen short of your great commission. We ask your forgiveness for our times of timidity, short-sightedness and, yes, our failures. Yet, even when we fail to understand your still speaking word, you continue to speak, to nudge, to challenge, and to forgive.

Merciful God, help us to surrender to your Spirit, listen anew to your compelling Word, and offer our lives to each other in this risky vocation called life. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Prayer of Dedication

One: As Moses led the children of Israel through the wilderness seeking a promised land ...

Many: We follow the light of your love, O God.

One: As Jesus led his followers from village to village healing the sick and proclaiming the good news of the gospel ...

Many: We follow the light of your love, O God.

One: As Mary and the other women set out for the garden and witnessed the miracle of an empty tomb ...

Many: We follow the light of your love, O God.

One: As Cleopas and friend walked the grief-filled road to Emaus, yet encountered the risen Christ ...

Many: We follow the light of your love, O God.

One: As sisters and brothers struggle in our world today to overcome oppression and injustice ...

Many: We follow the light of your love, O God.

One: In confidence, commitment and hope we ask your blessing on our church, the United Church of Christ, as we rededicate our mission to bring the light of Christ to a complex and chaotic world.

Many: Let us be the light of your love, O God. Let us shine! Amen.

Scripture References

There are many references to light in the bible. Here are just a few that can be used as the scriptural foundation of your event:

- Psalm 119: 105 God's Word — a light for our path
- Isaiah 60: 1-3 Arise, shine your light has come
- Matthew 5: 13-16 Jesus' followers are the salt of the earth and the light of the world
- John 1: 1-5 The Word, the Life, the Light of all
- 2 Corinthians 4: 5-6 God's message of light shining out of darkness
- Ephesians 5: 8-10 Walk as children of the light
- 1 John 1: 5-7 Walk in the light

Creative Presentations

Traveling the UCC Timeline

Have someone be an internet tour guide and navigate people through the 50-year timeline on the UCC home page. To project the timeline:

- Hook your computer up to an LCD projector
- Using your browser, access the UCC web site (ucc.org)
- Click on the anniversary page icon on the home page
- Follow the link to the 50 year history timeline

Highlight some of the events that have taken place during this historical period and offer some "creative" commentary. **Note:** to speed up the time line click on the forward or backward arrow prompts. Clicking on a picture bordered in blue enlarges it or links you to additional pictures and information.

Be sure to plan and practice your presentation ahead of time to avoid any glitches. Accessing the timeline requires the installation of "Flash," which is easily downloaded through prompts. This presentation is educational in more ways than one, it also enables folks to go home and scroll through UCC history themselves.

A Creative Look Back Over 50 Years

Use the following Reader's Theatre presentation to "spice" up the presentation. Use props, costumes and your creative ingenuity to add color to the script.

Have someone begin with these words:

Leader: A great deal has happened during the past fifty years. Let's recall some of the highlights of how God has spoken in our culture, and through the United Church of Christ, these past fifty years.

Then have four speakers present an abbreviated history:

Voice 1: The year? 1957!

Voice 2: The Soviet Union launches Sputnik, the world's first satellite, into space.

Voice 3: Dr. Seuss publishes *The Cat in the Hat*.

Voice 4: The Broadway musical, *The Sound of Music*, debuts.

Voice 1: And in 1957, the United Church of Christ is born with the uniting of the Evangelic and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches.

Voice 2: The year is 1963.

Voice 3: President John F. Kennedy is assassinated.

Voice 4: The Equal Pay Act determines the right of women to receive equal pay.

Voice 1: The audiocassette tape is introduced.

Voice 2: And the UCC Committee for Racial Justice is created.

- Voice 3: Let's take a look at 1971.
- Voice 4: Walt Disney World opens in Orlando, Fla.
- Voice 1: The world's first e-mail is sent.
- Voice 2: The U. S. lowers the legal voting age to 18.
- Voice 3: The UCC establishes the Task Force on Women in Church and Society, and CAIM, the Council for American Indian Ministry.
- Voice 4: In 1972, just one year later.
- Voice 1: *M*A*S*H* debuts on television.
- Voice 2: Bobby Fisher becomes the first American chess champion.
- Voice 3: The Watergate scandal is uncovered.
- Voice 4: The UCC ordains the first openly gay man to ministry — William R. Johnson.
- Voice 1: Fast forward to 1975.
- Voice 2: The Vietnam War ends.
- Voice 3: *Saturday Night Live* premiers.
- Voice 4: Arthur Ashe is the first African American to capture the Wimbledon Tennis Championship.
- Voice 1: The UCC Council for Hispanic Ministries is formed.
- Voice 2: It's 1980! Mt. St. Helens erupts.
- Voice 3: 1981 — Sandra Day O'Connor becomes the first female U.S. Supreme Court Justice.
- Voice 4: 1984 — Apple introduces the Macintosh computer.
- Voice 1: 1985 — United Church News begins publishing.
- Voice 2: In 1986 the UCC publishes its *Book of Worship*.
- Voice 3: The Council for Youth and Young Adult Ministries is established in 1987.
- Voice 4: And that's just the first 30 years of the UCC in a nutshell.
- Voice 1: If you want to learn more about what's happened in the past twenty years just log onto ucc.org.
- Voice 2: By the way, the Internet Society was only created a few years ago ... in 1992.
- Voice 3: So much has happened during the past 50 years.
- Voice 4: I wonder what the next 50 years will bring?

Introducing The Anniversary Theme

This segment can be used to introduce the basic concept of the anniversary. The build up leads to a showing of the promotional video which has been sent to every Conference office. If another copy is needed, please call Sherrell Johnson (216.736.2187) at the Proclamation, Identity and Communication office in Cleveland.

- Reader 1: Fifty Years!
- Reader 2: Five decades!
- Reader 1: A half-century!
- Reader 2: So, how will we celebrate 50 years of faithful witness?
- Reader 1: And affirm who we are right now, at this point in history ...
- Reader 2: While committing ourselves to living into God's future.

- Reader 1: We need a theme to anchor our celebration of past, present and future.
- Reader 2: And, indeed, we have a 50th anniversary theme — a theme that affirms our calling as the United Church of Christ to minister in the name of Jesus Christ. It is a theme that is brief and to the point.
- Reader 1: Celebrative, profoundly theological, inclusive and expansive.
- Reader 2: A theme so simple, a child can remember it.
- Reader 1: So universal that all our members can catch a glimpse of their own faith story.
- Reader 2: A theme that builds upon the amazing experience we've had with God is still speaking.
- Reader 1: And so, sisters and brothers, we lift up the theme and logo for our 50th anniversary celebration in 2007.
- Reader 2: Let's learn about some of the exciting events, resources, and opportunities we'll have the chance to experience in the year ahead.

Show "Let It Shine" — the 50th Anniversary video production.

This presentation is six minutes in length. If projecting to a large screen, please remember that an audio speaker system should be used to make the presentation audible for larger audiences. At the conclusion, the readers continue with their presentation.

- Reader 1: Let it Shine! Simple, direct, theological ...
- Reader 2: Musical, imaginative, and potentially — a lot of fun.
- Reader 1: Let! As in: Let ... Let us celebrate who we are as a people of faith.
- Reader 2: It! It is it with a capital "I." It is God's grace, Christ's love, devoted discipleship, committed mission, the essential "it" of our United Church of Christ heritage.
- Reader 1: Shine! To shine is to emanate the present of God in our world — to continue the work and witness of the gospel message in our world.
- Reader 2: The theme is a simple reminder of Jesus' words in the gospel of Matthew:
- Reader 3: You are the light of the world.
- Reader 4: A city built on a hill cannot be hidden.
- Reader 3: You are the light of the world.
- Reader 4: No one after lighting a lamp puts it under a bushel basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all the house.
- Reader 3: You are the light of the world.
- Reader 4: In the same way, let your light shine before others.
- Reader 3: Let your light shine so that they may see your good works and give glory to God your Creator.
- Reader 4: You are the light of the world.
- Reader 3: Let your light shine!
- Reader 1: So, how have you let your light shine?
- Reader 2: If God is still speaking, what have you heard that sparks your imagination and fans your flame to burn brightly for all the world to see?

Shining Light Testimonies

This is a creative way to personalize the anniversary theme and can be used at the end of the "Introducing the Anniversary Theme" segment or as a stand alone. Invite several people (chosen before hand) to share their personal story — their reflections about how they let their light shine as a follower of Jesus and as a faithful member of the UCC. Have your selected people introduce themselves and share their brief 2-3 minute testimonies by completing the following sentence:

God is still speaking. I'm listening. Here's how I let my light shine ...

Encourage your presenters to answer this question in creative ways — as a narrative, in music, by storytelling, through poetry, offering a dance, etc. If you are planning a liturgical program consider using this as your sermon, or intersperse these testimonies throughout your worship or celebratory event. During the meal, have folks share their testimonies around the table.

Additional Litanies

Into the Future

Host 1: Let us remember our past:
Host 2: God has spoken.
Host 1: Let us rejoice in our present:
Host 2: God continues to speak.
Host 1: And let us respond faithfully as we live into the future:
Host 2: God will speak anew again and again.
Host 1: Let it shine!
Host 2: And let all the people say ...
All: Amen!

Benediction

One: Our worship is ended, our celebration over.
Many: Now the service begins!
One: God is still speaking. Listen carefully.
Many: Speak, O God, for your servants listen!
One: Let your light shine.
Many: Illumine our pathway, O God!
One: Go forth with all your senses attuned to God's call... and shine!
Many: Amen and amen!

Children's Resources

Anniversary Seeds

The following activities/explorations/lessons can be used with small children as part of your event/worship service or as a complementary activity solely for children while adults are engaged in the main part of the program. Use these "seed" ideas, revise them for your particular setting, and relate them to the concepts of anniversaries, birthdays, growth, adventure, etc.

Seed #1 — Happy Birthday to You

Prop: Birthday cake with 5 candles and a "memory" hat or cap
Idea: Don't forget the God who gave you birth (Deut. 32:18)
Action: Choose a child and have him/her put on the "memory" hat. Can you remember the day you were born? No? Try another child. We can't remember the day we were born, but here we are ... living proof that we're children of God.
Lesson: The UCC also was born [relate some aspect of the historical birth in 1957]. Why 5 candles? Each represents a decade. Sing happy birthday, blow out the candles, eat the cake, celebrate what it means to be a family of faith celebrating our birth as the United Church of Christ.
Prayer: O God of birthdays, anniversaries, and memories, we thank you for our birth — as your children and as your church. Help us to celebrate each day by helping others in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Seed #2 — Don't judge a Face by its Cover

- Prop: A mask
- Idea: No matter what we look like on the outside, God claims each one of us as kindred (Psalm 133:1)
- Action: Put on the mask. Who's underneath? Me! I haven't changed. Let different children wear the mask. Are they any different? How does it feel to be inside a mask? Can you make a mask out of your own face — frowning, smiling, sneering, etc.
- Lesson: We all put on masks sometimes to hide our feelings. Don't hide behind a mask. Be honest and respect each other no matter how different we may appear. It's what's inside that counts and the UCC is a church that welcomes everyone, no matter how different they may appear.
- Prayer: God, thank you for our faces, no matter how different they are from one another. Help us express our feelings honestly and love those whose faces look different from our own. Amen.

Seed #3 — How Big is the Church?

- Prop: A tape measure
- Idea: Christian maturity is not measured in inches or years, but in the way we share our love (Ephesians 4:15)
- Action: Ask for volunteers to have their height measured. Have them measure your height. Compare the results. Does being taller make you better? More wise? How do you measure love — in inches, pounds, years?
- Lesson: We must all grow up — physically, mentally and spiritually. A Christian is as big as his or her heart, which is measured by how we share ourselves in love. What about the church? The UCC? How does the church measure up by sharing its love?
- Prayer: God of all growth and life, show us how to measure up by following Jesus. Teach us how to love others — individually and as your church. Amen.