

***“No Matter Who You Are or Where You are On Life’s Journey,
You Are Welcome Here”...***

“And we mean it!!”, say members of St. Mark’s UCC, New Albany, IN. The Mission Committee filled 75 plastic bags with a variety of items they donated - a bottle of water, a jar of peanut butter, a foil packet of chicken, crackers, socks, soap, a wash cloth, toothpaste and a toothbrush, McDonald’s gift certificates, a comb, tissues, a sheet listing local social service agencies, shelters, feeding programs, etc. and an invitational brochure from the church, St. Mark’s UCC. The brochure proudly proclaims “No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.” And we mean it! The bag is truly “A Bag of Grace!” The bags have been dispersed throughout the congregation and our members have been commissioned to share them with folks in need.

Many of the bags have already been given both nearby and far away. The first one was given very close by when Jim saw a man rifling through the dumpster behind the church. One was given in Florida while another was given in Indianapolis. Katrin was leaving her office in Louisville this winter and it was a bad night - very icy - and so she had to

clean her windshield off before she could drive home. As she was doing so, she was approached by a man who asked her for money. She said she had none, but that she had something in her trunk that she could give him. When she handed him his bag, he told her that he was homeless and that his wife was too. She offered him a second bag, and he fell apart with gratitude. She honestly believes it was her bag of grace also, because she could have been robbed.

This project, born from an article in the Upper Room, began at St. Mark’s in 2008. It is designed to place bags filled with nonperishable food and other items, and resource information in the hands of our congregation so that they can be passed to those we encounter in need. Joy and Carol, members of the committee, shared the idea with friends in Hopkinsville, KY. Now their church is also giving bags away in their community. This is just one of the many innovative projects initiated by the Mission Committee at St. Mark’s. They are making it so easy for all of us to be missionaries in our New Albany community and beyond.

Submitted by Pat Miller

Kentuckiana Association

Women Choose to De-organize

At its Spring meeting, the Kentuckiana Association (KYA) Women’s organization closed its traditional structure. With waning interest during the past several years, the women chose to close out its treasury, giving \$100.00 each to its three 2009 missions: the Sri Lanka Home for Girls, the UCC National Women’s Leadership fund, and Choices, Inc. (a local transitional housing for homeless women and children.)

The group was reminded that women’s groups were founded and flourished during the years when women were not included in local church leadership positions. Today, women have access to those positions, and church committees and missions include both men and women working in concert.

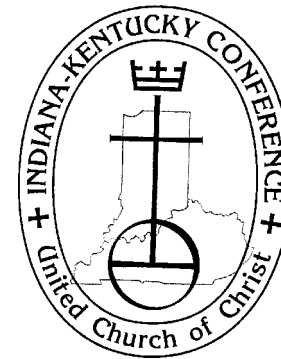
To honor covenant with the IKC Women’s Board, a volunteer will represent KYA women. She will report to the Board significant happenings in KYA congregations, and will communicate Board sponsored activities (Leadership Education Day and the Women’s Retreat) to the local congregations via snail and/or e-mail. Nancy Shannon of Lynnhurst UCC will serve as Volunteer Representative during the 2009-2010 term.

Submitted by Rev. Diane Snowa
IKC Staff Volunteer Representative
to the Women’s Board

Search Committee Update

Norman Overly, Chairman

The Search Committee for the new Indiana-Kentucky Conference Minister has met twice since the last report. We are well underway in getting to know each other and understanding our responsibilities. We have received, from the Personnel Committee and the Board of Directors, a job description for the position. We are in the process of developing the conference profile which will incorporate a discussion of the Vision Plan and the progress we are making on the implementation. We plan to have the application forms and profile available for downloading from the internet around June 1, 2009. We encourage any and all to nominate individuals and encourage applications for the position. Search Committee members are preparing very brief biographies to introduce themselves to prospective candidates before they are interviewed. Our next meeting will be April 29, 2009.



May 2009

I-K Collage

Linking 153 Congregations Together in Mission

Indiana-Kentucky Conference, United Church of Christ
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General Minister and President of the UCC to be Elected at General Synod

The Rev. Geoffrey Black has been nominated as candidate for the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ by the Search Committee. The Executive Council has affirmed the nomination, and the nomination will be forwarded to General Synod 27 for election on June 26 - 30 in Grand Rapids, MI.

Rev. Black was elected Conference Minister of the New York Conference in 2000. Prior to that, he served on national staff in the Office of Church Life and Leadership. He has also served as Assistant Chaplain at Brown University, Associate Minister at St. Albans Congregational Church UCC in New York, lecturer in the Field Education Department of Union Theological Seminary in New York, and Protestant Chaplain at Adelphi University. In addition, he is currently a member of the Board of Trustees of Lancaster Theological Seminary.

“God’s Light” to be Theme For Annual I-KC Women’s Retreat

RETREAT ‘09 will be September 25-27 at Merom Conference Center. Attendees will again have the option of attending Friday & Saturday, or attending Friday, Saturday & Sunday. The retreat will focus on “**God’s Light.**” Nancy Shannon, from the Kentuckiana Association, is chairing the organizing committee. Mark your calendars and plan to spend this weekend with your sisters of faith for a time of relaxation and restoration.

Great Things Are Happening at St. Luke’s

Podcasting is popular! In March, St. Luke’s UCC, Jeffersonville, IN, began posting podcasts of the Sunday sermons. There have been more than 100 hits every week, and an average of 15-25 sermon downloads.

They now have video! Rev. Jennifer adds a weekly video update to the sermon blog site, about one minute, talking about the upcoming sermon, and giving ideas for what to think about to get ready for Sunday. She e-mails the link church-wide, and posts the video on Facebook and YouTube.

The Facebook group is growing! There are now 28 members in the St. Luke’s Facebook group.

The Youth Fund-raisers have sponsored two after-church meals which have raised about \$400 to help send young people on a mission trip this summer.

Thanks to Johnny Hall, the Music Room has internet access! The whole building is wireless, and every member of the staff has access to a computer with internet and a printer!

There’s a tree growing in the sanctuary! Artist Pat Hall has designed and created a tree growing on the back wall of the sanctuary, inspired by the Lenten sermon series on The Roots of Christian Life.

The Heritage Room is revived and open! Eden Kuhlenschmidt and a corps of volunteers have reorganized and redecorated the Heritage Room. The door is now open all the time!

Pastor Jennifer Mills-Knutsen



The Trouble With Change

by Stephen C. Gray
Conference Minister

A word that has seen a great deal of usage as of late is the word "change." It was front and center

in the recent presidential election. It is used continually in the present recession in relation to how the financial markets need to be regulated. It is a word that I often see in the congregational profiles of churches looking for a new pastor.

But talking about change, and actually doing it, are two entirely separate things. And in my experience this is especially true in the church. Churches may say that they welcome change only to discover themselves behaving to the contrary.

Consider the story told by Loren Mead of his first pastorate in an Episcopal Church in Virginia. It was the Vietnam era and, at that time, the location of flags in the sanctuary tended to be a divisive issue. Following a congregational meeting, it was decided to move the flags from the front of the sanctuary to the back on either side of the sanctuary doors. There the flags stayed for the rest of Mead's ministry in that church. Loren was quite proud of himself. So you can imagine his chagrin when several years later he was invited back to the church. Where were the flags? You guessed it – back in their "proper" place at the front of the sanctuary!

This response should not surprise us. All of us are usually more comfortable with that which is familiar to us and that, which in our experience, has been the "tradition" of the church. By their very nature churches are the conservers of values and traditions. In fact, along with other systems, churches can unknowingly collude to stop change from happening!

But change can be achieved – even in the church! Years ago, in the church I was serving in Nashville, TN, the number one goal was church growth. For about three years I did my best to attract visitors to the church, but rarely did they ever return. Frustrated, I decided to conduct a little experiment. I invited three sets of UCC "spies" who were members of other UCC churches in other communities to come and visit on three successive Sundays. Following worship, they went to their cars and wrote down everything they experienced.

A month later all three sets of people returned to a congregational meeting and shared what they had experienced as visitors. My members were stunned, for their behavior totally contradicted their goal to grow! It was then, with increased awareness, they decided to be proactive about changing their behavior and becoming more welcoming with visitors. In fact, they even began to laugh at their old behavior! As a result, the church began to grow!

Is there resistance to change in your congregation? Expect it. If there isn't resistance, get concerned! But resistance to change can be overcome. It requires patience, humor and a plan to help people see their behavior from a different perspective. Change, especially in the church, cannot be micro-waved! It must be slow baked!

Over the next several months, as we begin to implement the Vision Plan for our conference, we will encounter the threat of change and discover resistance in others – and just perhaps in ourselves as well!

A Beacon of Light - Honored Lay Women of I-KC

Three women from the I-KC have been chosen from the many nominees to be the Honored Lay Women for 2009. They will be honored at the Annual Meeting in Indianapolis on June 5th, and also at a special luncheon honoring those chosen from each Conference during General Synod 27 in Grand Rapids, MI.

Sharon Crosby, Lynnhurst UCC, Louisville, is a retired teacher and currently a reading tutor for Jefferson County Public Schools. She is presently Consistory President, Elder, Chancel Choir Member, Sunday School teacher, Hand Bell Choir member and coordinates and writes the annual Hanging of the Greens worship service. She has served as a Steward, president of the KYA Women's group and is currently on the KYA Committee on Ministry. She has also served as a delegate to the I-KC Annual meeting and attended women's retreats. She serves as a volunteer at the Olmsted Academy, is a member of the Joyous Singers and Masterworks chorus, and Church Women United. Sharon has been **A Beacon of Light** by serving tirelessly in every task in which she is involved and is supportive and encouraging to church members of all ages and is truly the spark that ignites the fire that carries the flame into the world.

Joyce Loudon, St. Andrew UCC, Louisville, taught in a Christian preschool for 22 years, serving as director for 9 years. She has served 4 terms as Council President, youth leader, drama actress, coach, director, and writer, Sun-

day School teacher, chairperson for several teams and a choir member. She served as Christian Education chairperson, on the nominating committee and served as church camp nurse in the KYA. She also served on the I-KC Christian Education committee and conducted workshops at the Annual Meeting. In her community, she has been a Girl Scout leader, and assisted with the Red Cross Bloodmobile. She has been **A Beacon of Light** in both leadership and spiritual guidance. Her light shines whether she is participating in worship, leading a council meeting, or just carrying on with her life throughout the community.

Ruth Redman, Zion (Lippe) UCC, Mt. Vernon, IN, is a homemaker and helps her husband with the farming operation, serves as a school bus driver and township trustee. She has served as president of the Women of Zion, organized dinners and programs for the senior citizens of the church and community, serves on the shut-in committee, has served on Church Council, as liturgist, Sunday School teacher and done/assisted with various sewing projects. She has served as delegate to the I-KC Annual Meetings twice. She has also been active as a 4-H leader and served on the Posey County 4-H Council and volunteers at the homeless shelter. She and her husband founded the "Food Finders", an organization which helps supply meat for the hungry in the community. Ruth's **Beacon of Light** shines through in all she does and she is an excellent example of "Let Your Light So Shine." She sets an example for all to follow by living Christ in her life, not just talking about it.

UCC Chaplains Serving in Iraq

The following Chaplains are now serving in Iraq and have sent their email addresses to us. They really appreciate hearing from us. Take a moment to send them your greeting.

Chaplain (Captain) Anthony L. Taylor, Sr.,
anthony.taylor@us.army.mil

Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) Bruce D. Farrell,
bruce.farrell@us.army.mil

Grace St. John's UCC, Fort Wayne, sends monthly care packages to one of its members now serving in Iraq. Let us all be more aware of the sacrifices these men and women and their families are making for us as we remember them in our prayers and let them know of our support.

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