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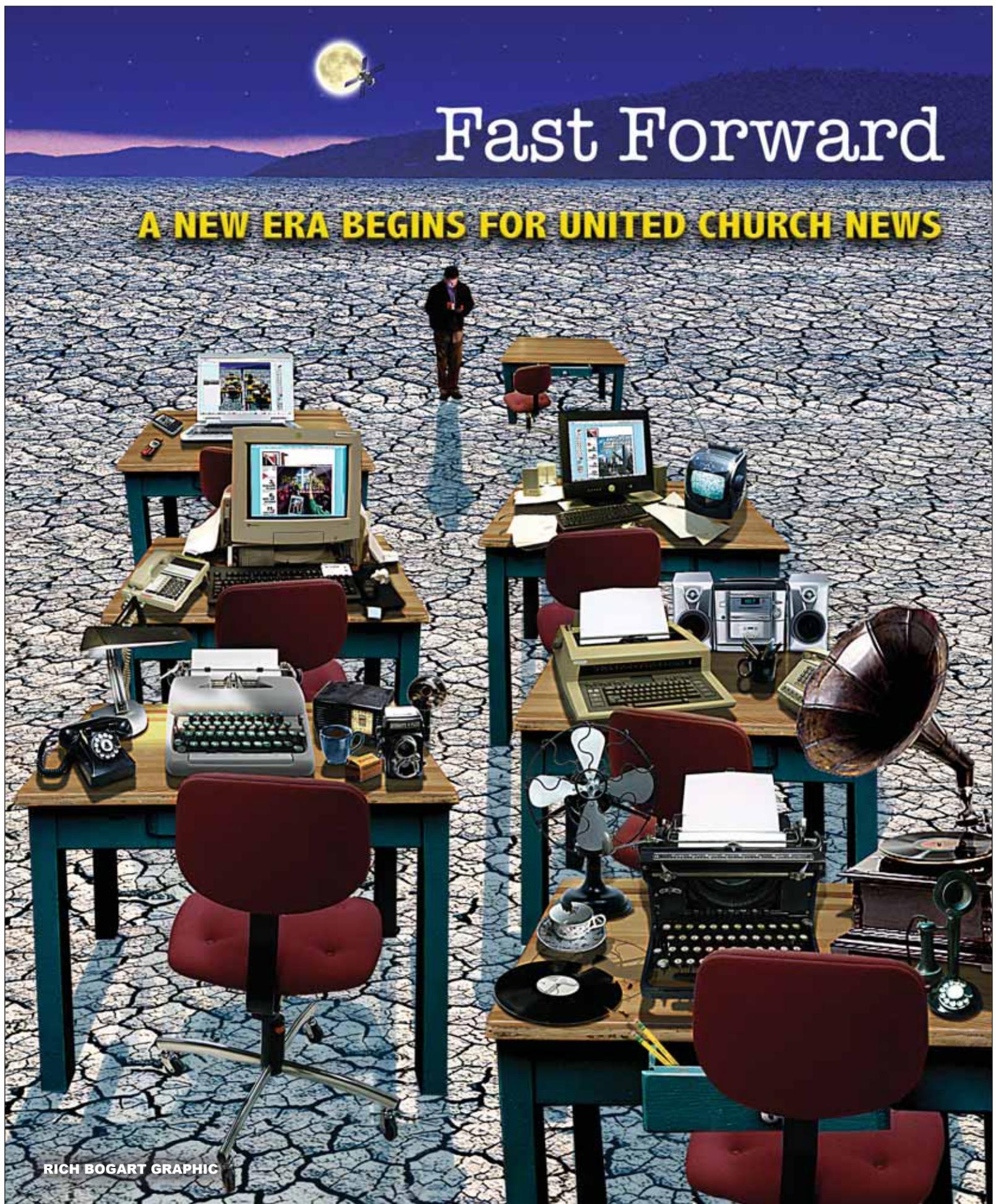
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Being a global mission church: Loving the world

FROM THE COLLEGIUM



Cally Rogers-Witte

Alleluia! The recent General Synod declared itself "A Global Mission Church" and invites you to do the same. This is not the promotion of one program of the church; it is an affirmation of a core identity that we share — it's in our DNA!

In these days of globalization, when the world gets smaller, the imperative to reaffirm our identity as a global mission church is more urgent than ever. We couldn't

be isolated from the rest of the world if we tried. And yet sometimes the global connections we are part of are ones that deny the sacred truth of our God-given unity with God's children around the world.

Our clothes may have been made in sweatshops. Our food may be mass produced for export at the expense of hungry children from small farm families. The coltan in our cell phones fuels a horribly violent war in the eastern part of the Congo. The world creates connections that may contradict our values. We are called to affirm and create connections that reflect the love and justice of God.

Believing that God's global mission calls us to share life together, we've turned "doing to" and "doing for" others into "doing with" or simply "being with" in genuine global partnerships. This "being with" is what we call critical presence at the point of deepest need, sharing the healing, teaching and reconciling love of God in Christ with those who live in desperate poverty or great danger.

Our critical presence today means sending, at our church partners' request, medical missionaries to Haiti, East Timor and India. Our critical presence supports HIV/AIDS educational programs and hospice care in South Africa. Critical presence means walking with those who work for peace between the two Koreas or in Israel/Palestine. It means responding to a special appeal of One Great Hour of Sharing for victims of a major earthquake in China, floods in Bangladesh, or hurricanes in the Caribbean and southern United States.

Critical presence means sending a theological educator to work with a new generation of pastors in the Peoples Republic of China. Sometimes the critical presence our partners ask for is our advocacy with our own government to change a U.S. policy that can make a huge difference for partners in another country. Sometimes our critical presence simply means holding hands with, or holding in prayer, courageous churches in Myanmar, Columbia or Zimbabwe.

Your support of Our Churches Wider Mission (OCWM) undergirds all this critical presence and much more. Your own engagement in God's global mission extends the presence of the UCC even farther. Being a Global Mission Church can challenge your members to stretch toward a new level of commitment to God's so-loved world.

Whether your next step is to pray regularly for a missionary, study globalization, sponsor a child, or plan a People-to-People group mission or study trip, using the Be a Global Mission Church workbook <globalministries.org/about-us/be-a-global-mission-church> can deepen your church's participation in God's global mission. Alleluia!

The Rev. Cally Rogers-Witte is the UCC's executive minister for Wider Church Ministries and co-executive of Global Ministries. She also is a member of the UCC's five-person Collegium of Officers.

news.ucc.org

PARKER LECTURE MARKS 50 YEARS OF MEDIA JUSTICE

The Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ, Inc. — the media-justice arm of the UCC — will hold its 27th annual Everett C. Parker Ethics in Telecommunications Lecture and Awards Program Sept. 30 at The Riverside Church in New York City.

This year's event, commemorating OC, Inc.'s 50th anniversary, has shifted to the UCC's original national headquarters city of New York after several years at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.

Created in 1982 to recognize the Rev. Everett C. Parker's pioneering work as an advocate for the public's rights in broadcasting, the Parker Lecture is the only lecture in the country to examine telecommunications and the digital age from an ethical perspective.

The Rev. Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in the USA, will give this year's lecture.

2009 honorees include: Patti Miller and Ben Popken, co-executive editors of *The Consumerist*; Patti Miller, vice president of public policy, Sesame Workshop; and Samuel Simon, chairman of Amplify Public Affairs and former president of the Telecommunications Research and Action Center (TRAC).

For more information or to register, please visit <ucc.org/media-justice/parker-lecture> or contact Jeff Woodard at 216/736-2211.

2009 CALLING CONGREGATIONS CONFERENCE

The 2009 Fund for Theological Education (FTE) Calling Congregations Conference brings together those concerned about the impact of pastoral leadership and the need to identify talented young people to serve congregations in the future.

The open-registration, ecumenical gathering takes place Oct. 8-10 at the Georgia Tech Hotel and Conference Center in Atlanta.

Theologian and author Walter Brueggemann, professor emeritus of Old Testament at Columbia University, and Judy Fentress Williams, associate professor of Old Testament at Virginia Theological Seminary, are the featured speakers.

The conference focuses on the role of pastors, educators, church staff and lay leaders in cultivating and supporting young adults with leadership gifts for ministry. Anyone with an interest in developing future church leaders is welcome.

FTE's Calling Congregations initiative seeks to establish a national network of 500 congregations and church-related partners engaged in supporting future pastoral leaders. It offers regional workshops, a national conference, web-based resources and up to 40 fellowships annually which match a congregation's financial support toward tuition and expenses for a young church member's first year of seminary.

FTE is a leading ecumenical advocate for excellence and diversity in pastoral ministry and theological scholarship. It provides more than \$1.5 million annually in fellowships and support to gifted young people from all denominations and racial/ethnic backgrounds.



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ADVERTISING Connie Larkman at <larkmanc@ucc.org> or 866/822-8224 ext. 2196 for display and Marketplace (classified) ads, four-page inserts and web advertising.

SHORTHAND



More information is available at <callingcongregations.org/conference>.

OUR WHOLE LIVES EXPANDS FALL TRAINING SCHEDULE

More than a dozen regional training events are being held this fall in support of the UCC's sexuality education program — Our Whole Lives.

The program was jointly developed by the UCC and the Unitarian Universalist Association. Based on the values of self-worth, responsibility, sexual health, justice and inclusivity, these resources have provided life affirming and life saving information to more than 40,000 children, youth, young adults and adults.

Since 2000, the United Church of Christ has trained over 1,100 facilitators. Parents, pastors, children and youth are giving Our Whole Lives high praise. As Rev. Melanie Oommen of **First Congregational UCC in Eugene, Ore.**, says, "Our Whole Lives is demonstrating that church can be a place where we truly bring our whole selves, at every stage of our development as human beings."

A complete list of Our Whole Lives—Sexuality and Our Faith training events can be found at <ucc.org/justice/sexuality-education/training-schedule.html>. Please check back often as more facilitator training events are being planned on a regular basis.

For further information please contact Ann L. Hanson, UCC minister for sexuality education and justice, <hanson@ucc.org> or 216/736-3718.

UCC PARTNERS IN SERVICE SEEKS VOLUNTEERS

The UCC "Partners in Service" program invites anyone between the ages of 19 and 89 to consider serving as a full-time volunteer for a period of one month up to a year or more. The program deadline is Sept. 30, 2009, for placements beginning on or after January 2010.

A variety of skills and your critical presence are needed in diverse mission settings throughout the United States, including disaster recovery ministries, community organizing for justice advocacy, UCC camps and conference centers, direct service with homeless populations and within poverty contexts, housing ministries, mental health ministries, and youth settings, among others.

A list of placement possibilities is available online at <ucc.org/volunteer/2009-partners-in-service.html> or in a printed booklet.

Complete the introductory application online to start the conversation <ucc.org/volunteer/volunteer-on-line-application.html> or contact the Rev. Mary Schaller Blaufuss, executive for UCC Volunteer Ministries, for more information at <blaufusm@ucc.org> or 216/736-3214.

PILGRIM PRESS FALL 2009 TITLES

Pilgrim Press has announced the release of seven titles in the coming months. Titles are available from UCC Resources online <ucc.org/store> or by calling 800/537-3394.

"Encounters at the Counter: What Congregations Can Learn About Hospitality," by Alan Johnson (Spirituality/Congregational Vitality)

"The Evangelical Catechism: A New Translation for the 21st Century," by Frederick R. Trost (Religion/Christianity/Catechisms)

"New Ecclesiology & Polity: The United Church of Christ," by Clyde J. Steckel (Religion/Christianity/United Church of Christ)

"The Healing Word: Preaching & Teaching Health Ministry," by Deborah L. Patterson (Health & Wellness/Spirituality)

"Plato or Paul?: The Origins of Western Homophobia," by Theodore W. Jennings, Jr. (Religion/Gender Studies)

"The Singing Bowl: 26 Children's Sermons with Activities," by Randy Hammer (Children's Sermons)

"Kneeling in the End Zone: Spiritual Lessons from the World of Sports," by Josh Tinley (Spirituality)

AXIS OF FRIENDSHIP WITH IRAN EVENTS

UCC congregations are encouraged to act upon a General Synod 27 resolution and help build an Axis of Friendship with the people of Iran.

Two simple events are suggested: light a candle on the evening of Sept. 12, the day after we commemorate the events of 9/11; lift up the Axis of Friendship and the people of Iran in your worship service on Sunday, Sept. 13.

The Axis of Friendship coalition is co-sponsored by six UCC congregations and the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries. More information can be found at <axisoffriendship.org>.

MINISTRIES OF JARAMILLO AND STERNER AFFIRMED

Geoffrey Black elected general minister and president of UCC

By J. Martin Bailey

The Rev. Geoffrey Black, who served for nearly a decade as minister of the UCC's New York Conference, was called by election to succeed the Rev. John Thomas as general minister and president of the United Church of Christ. The June 30 vote took place during the UCC's 27th General Synod. Thomas was ineligible for an additional term.

Black's June 26 nomination speech invited all members of the church, in every setting — in local churches, in covenanted ministries, in theological seminaries, and as ecumenical partners — to work together. "In the UCC," he said, "ministry is not a social act. We are in this together."

He quoted scripture: "We do not lose heart. We are all of us in this ministry together." And he insisted that "we are adequately and incredibly gifted to serve the world."

Black also spoke of the denomination's commitment to the struggle for justice and peace as "part of our identity." It is possible, he said, "for us to be an inclusive church and still be a church of faith. This is why our voice

is needed: so that all people will know that they are God's people."

The announcement of Black's election was greeted with a standing ovation. In brief remarks, the new general minister and president thanked the delegates and spoke of his high expectations of working with other members of the UCC's five-person Collegium of Officers. Echoing remarks made at the time of his nomination, Black affirmed, "We are in this together."

Prior to his service in New York, Black was pastor of local congregations for 15 years, a university chaplain, and was on the staff of the UCC Office for Church Life and Leadership. He is a graduate of Lincoln University and Yale Divinity School.

Also called by election to new terms were the executive ministers of two covenanted ministries. The Rev. M. Linda Jaramillo was re-elected as executive minister of Justice and Witness Ministries and the Rev. Stephen L. Sterner was chosen as executive minister of Local Church Ministries. All will serve four-year terms beginning Oct. 1, 2009.

Jaramillo oversees the denomination's work in human rights and social, racial, and economic justice. She told delegates earlier in the day when she accepted re-nomination that "when we are told that the church should not meddle in politics, we need to answer that justice is not political — it is theological." She also said that justice work requires interdependent leaders. Ours is not an isolated task but requires many hands, she said. "A leader is most effective when he or she is barely visible."

Sterner originally was elected to complete the term of the Rev. José Malayang, who resigned. The present election was for a full four-year term. Before coming to Local Church Ministries, Sterner had served local churches



The Rev. Geoffrey Black, general minister and president-elect, confers with the Rev. John H. Thomas, outgoing general minister and president, during General Synod 27.

Randy Varchos photos

and as a staff member of the former United Church Board for Homeland Ministries. His pastoral experience was in historic old churches and in a new church start.

At the conclusion of the elections, other members of the Collegium joined

the newly elected three on stage.

Following warm mutual greetings, Thomas stepped to the microphone and offered a prayer written by the Rev. Dale Bishop four years ago, when Bishop completed his service with the Collegium.

Synod delegates honor John Thomas

By W. Evan Golder

With a spirit of thankfulness and appreciation tempered by disappointment, a humble John H. Thomas received the tributes of a grateful General Synod for his 10 years of service as the UCC's sixth general minister and president.

The June 27 celebration included music, singing, liturgical dancing and words of praise from UCC and ecumenical colleagues. However, it was a series of seven video clips from a conversation between Thomas and the Rev. Dale Bishop, a former Collegium colleague, that best captured Thomas' experiences as GMP.

When Bishop asked Thomas

about the tension between courage and caution, Thomas replied, "We privilege courage over caution. At critical moments we have been willing to be courageous rather than retreat to caution."

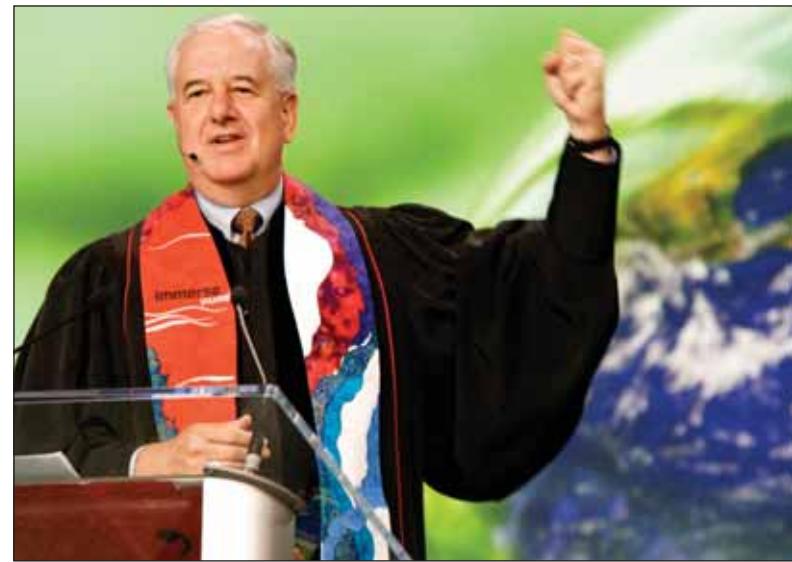
In answering another question, Thomas spoke specifically about "evangelical courage." "We need to be attentive to the whole mandate of evangelism," he said. "If

we are not able to claim that mandate, we'll be a shrinking, declining church."

He specifically cited the decision to use the controversial "God is still speaking" television commercials featuring bouncers and the ejector seat. "We knew that these would offend some UCC members," he said. "But we were convinced that the audience we were trying to reach required a different kind of commercial." As the video screens showed these commercials, the audience burst into applause.

Many speakers commended Thomas' ecumenical sensitivity, both as the UCC's first ecumenical officer and as GMP. The Rev. Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, quoted Armenian Archbishop Vickey Aykasian, NCCC President, as saying, "He is the best ecumenical leader in all the church."

To mark Thomas' transition to assistant to the president at Chicago Theological Seminary, the evening concluded with a Litany for an Invitation to the Journey: "In your ministry with us, you have reminded us that we have a legacy of early truth telling, that we must stand firm in our evangelical courage, that we must continually offer an extravagant welcome, that we're on a journey from safe centers to exciting edges, and that God is still speaking."



The Rev. John H. Thomas delivers the sermon during the General Synod 27 Sunday afternoon community worship service in Grand Rapids, Mich.

General Synod affirms principle of unified governance structure

By W. Evan Golder

After more than three years, and in excess of \$250,000 in legal and meeting expenses from a shrinking national budget, a resolution affirming the principle of a single, unified governance structure was adopted by General Synod 27. The effort required 49 minutes, with 29 speakers engaging in debate.

The Synod committee charged with finding consensus in nine separate resolutions submitted on the single-structure issue met for six hours, eventually voting unanimously on a resolution to submit to Synod.

The issue captured the attention of many at Synod and the committee's meeting room was standing room only, with more than 250 persons in attendance.

The compromise resolution titled "Toward a Unified Governance" contains five parts.

By adopting the resolution, General Synod 27 asked the Executive Council and the Covenanted Ministry Boards to bring to General Synod



28 a proposal for a single governance board, along with necessary constitution and bylaw changes. That Synod is planned for Tampa, Fla., in 2011.

Racial and ethnic constituency groups, concerned about losing their hard-earned representation on the current Ministries governing boards, previously fought hard against a single governance board.

But, with the exception of Justice and Witness Ministries board—three boards and the Executive Council, concerned about the economic, logistical and theological problems of the current structure—voted for a single structure.

Yet conspicuous by its absence was any floor discussion of the issue that had attracted the most opposition prior to Synod: the concern of the racial and ethnic constituency groups about losing their hard-earned representation on the current governing boards.

After the floor vote, protesters gathered at microphones to request reconsideration of the vote in hopes they could introduce a minority resolution.

The moderator ruled the request out of order and the motion carried as voted.

Complete coverage of General Synod 27 can be found at ucc.org/synod/news



commentary | letters | soapbox

AS ALWAYS, OUR AIM IS TO KEEP YOU INFORMED

Change punctuates our history as a church, including communications



I know from the many letters and phone calls I've received that the transition to online newsmaking isn't popular with everyone. I'm especially aware that some older readers and those with limited or no internet access are particularly affected by this change.

You'll notice something different in this issue. While we are carrying some stories about General Synod 27, an interview with outgoing General Minister and President the Rev. John H. Thomas, letters and a smattering of informational notices, the bulk of the writing is dedicated to concluding the printed edition of United Church News.

It may be curious for some to read the words "printed edition" referring to our denomination's newspaper. In fact, the tradition and tenor of United Church News is continuing in its online version without interruption.

Features, editorials and opinions, theological reflections, meeting and event notices, letters to the editor, local church news and personal profiles already are being actively published to the United Church News online news portal at <ucc.org/news>. The free-press spirit that birthed United Church Herald, A.D. and United Church News remains alive in the online edition.

I know from the many letters and phone calls I've received that the transition to online newsmaking isn't popular with everyone. I'm especially aware that some older readers and those with limited or no internet access are particularly affected by this change.

As editor, I am working diligently to reach into the margins of our communications options. Printable news will still be available from the UCC and most likely from your Conference. We'll also begin publishing a twice-annual membership oriented magazine next spring. Details of these offerings are found in the Centerstage article, "UCC

communications: What's next on the horizon?"

But knowing that a technology gap exists for some does not justify spending over \$750,000 annually to support free subscriptions to United Church News. This is especially true when more efficient, not just cheaper as some have asserted, means of communications exist.

I sincerely believe that even if every recipient of United Church News had responded to our repeated requests and sent in at least \$5 per year, which would have covered the costs of production and distribution, we'd still be making this transition. Maybe later than we are, but it would have happened.

The ways we communicate as a society have changed. Why should the church straddle itself to old methods, hoping it is immune from the way the world is now?

News or archive?

By the time you receive this paper via postal mail, the news of General Synod 27 will be at least two months old. The main articles were submitted in mid-July and the letters were collected no later than the beginning of August. Classically defined, this isn't news — it's an archive.

I invited a host of writers — former editors, editorial staff and communication directors — to weigh in on the subject of the imminent transition and the histories that relate to communications in the UCC. All but Everett Parker, due to hospitalization, submitted their first-hand accounts.

Former editors J. Martin Bailey and W. Evan Golder, along with long-time UCNews copy editor and production manager Barb Powell, tell the story of how newsmaking has evolved in the UCC.

Communication directors Beverly Chain,

Art Cribbs and Bob Chase remind us that the way the church tells its story is an ever developing dance with many partners, including society and technology. Current communications director J. Bennett Guess informs us on the course communications in the UCC will take over the next few years.

I'd also like to acknowledge that a period of grief — with its associated disbelief, guilt, anger, reconciliation and acceptance — is appropriate. It's also important to point out that the end of the printed edition of United Church News is not a failure on the part of the church or its communicators.

An end, a beginning

A decade ago, the Minneapolis band Semisonic had a hit song, "Closing Time." The most memorable refrain from the song for me was the lyric, "Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end."

This is an important theological concept — one most eloquently spoken by the Rev. Otis Moss III at General Synod 27. "If there had not been a Moses, there would not be a Joshua ... COMMA!" he began as he punctuated his way through church history.

Whether it's an important justice issue, the change from printed to digital communications, or the transition of general minister and president from John H. Thomas to Geoffrey Black, we affirm that we are not to place a period where God has placed a comma.

My prayer is that the end of the printed edition of United Church News is merely a comma in the history of communications for the UCC, not a period but a continuing and sometimes messy sentence that leads to communicating not just the news but also more Good News with those to whom Christ has called us.



LETTERS

Online news — yea!

Hard times force difficult decisions. The leadership in our national offices should be commended for tightening their belts and acting as wise stewards of the reduced resources we have. One such example is ending the print edition of United Church News.

I'll miss having that hard copy in my hands. At the same time, I know that more and more people use the internet to receive information. Over 75 percent of our members use e-mail and we often reprint UCNews articles in our Sunday bulletin to help get the word out to those not online.

I deeply appreciate the efforts made by the UCC to be on the cutting edge of technology. But it is up to all of us to make sure that information gets out to parishioners not online. Nothing comes for free and we have to take responsibility for spreading the news.

The Rev. Chuck Currie

United Church News blogger and interim minister
Parkrose (Ore.) Community UCC

Online news — nay!

I do understand the need to no longer print UCNews, but I am also dismayed that it is happening. I have loved every issue. I

personally would be happy with two or three issues of UCNews each year, and wonder how the figures would come out between the proposed magazine and fewer issues of what we already have.

The decision highlights, of course, that a sea change is inevitable but difficult for people my age. I am 78. I am thankfully very active and very healthy, and I am computer literate. However, I absolutely detest reading things "on line," and, for the sake of the trees we are hopefully saving by our move to having to do most things online, I don't like to print things. Such a dilemma.

I am glad to be part of a denomination that is addressing the needs of the environment and of the younger generation of those active in the UCC. But I may sit down and cry a bit nonetheless.

Betty Edison
Bethany UCC, Randolph, Vt.

Conversion to what?

I'm bothered by a remark in the article on "evangelical courage" (Editorial, June/July '09) speaking of "converting new peoples." It conflicts with the "Still speaking" emphasis that "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome ..."

We welcomed 15 new members this past year because of that evangelical vision and praxis.

Some among them still don't consider themselves "Christian" in any traditional

sense, nor do they need to be "converted" in any sense.

They came to us precisely because we are open and affirming, transcending any distinctions based on gender, sexual orientation, nationality, race or religion as we pursue ways to reflect God's mercy, justice and peace in our community.

If more "traditional Christians" had the evangelical courage to be converted to such principles, they might attain the evangelical vision to which the article aspires.

The Rev. Don Prange
St. James UCC, Lovettsville, Va.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Good point. The intent of the editorial comment was, in part, to foster a discussion of what the word "conversion" means in the current UCC context.]

Fuzzy math: church growth

As a lifetime UCC member, baptized in the Deutches Evangelische Kirche, and confirmed and married in the Evangelical & Reformed Church, I read in the United Church News the 14 resolutions to be presented to the General Synod, and find something missing.

Once again, we are out to solve all the problems of the world, instead of concentrating on solving our own problems. At the Southwest Conference annual meeting a few weeks ago, it was announced that every week the UCC lost three churches for every 0.7 church gained. Page A5 of June/July '09

UCNews proudly announced that we gained 165 churches since 2006. By my calculations, that means we lost more than 500 churches!

I join with the Rev. Mark D. Arnold, of Community UCC, Baker, Mont., who wrote of his frustration over the apparent disorganization existing in the national office, in expressing my frustration also.

Charles G. Crook
Desert Garden UCC, Sun City West, Ariz.

Reviving ecumenism

I understand the UCC cooperates with other Christian denominations in many areas as missions and disaster ministry. A number of these churches, like us, suffer from slow growth if not declining membership. This causes me to see the elephant in the room: the need to work toward full ecumenical church union among the nation's mainstream reformed churches.

In 1925 Presbyterians, Methodists, Disciples of Christ and Congregationalists formed the United Church of Canada. Isn't it time to fully integrate our mostly common and parallel expressions of the Gospel together with the United Church of America?

Kevin Mann
Yuma (Ariz.) UCC

SEND LETTERS of fewer than 150 words to United Church News, 700 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115; e-mail <brekke@ucc.org>. Please note that letters may be edited for brevity and clarity.

CONNECTING PIETY WITH ACTION

John Thomas reflects on a decade of leadership

IN CONVERSATION

With his tenure as UCC general minister and president scheduled to end Sept. 30, United Church News posed a few parting questions to the Rev. John H. Thomas:

How has the UCC changed in the 10 years you've been GMP?

The easy answer, and the hard answer, is that we're smaller than we were 10 years ago. We're not alone among denominations in this, but that doesn't make it feel any better. The reasons for this are complex and long standing, and that cautions against simplistic finger pointing.

At the same time, during these 10 years I've encountered an increasing number of local churches across the UCC that are growing. Those that are growing have been welcoming to all, courageous in their commitments to justice and peace, committed to excellence in worship, and passionate about transmitting the Gospel to a new generation of Christians.

Paradoxically, we have grown smaller as a denomination at precisely the time we are learning more and more about how to be faithful and vital in the waning years of Christendom. I've described this as the transition from "respectable religion" to "evangelical faith." Every generation has wrestled with this, but it seems particularly challenging and important today. Will we make this transition? I would say I'm anxious, but still hopeful.

What do you feel was your biggest accomplishment as GMP?

I've long felt that we don't effectively articulate the deep connection between personal piety and public responsibility. This has often left our justice work looking very much like secular political activity or, on the other hand, turned piety into private introspection, what one theologian described as "the manicure of our own souls."

In my preaching, teaching, writing and public witness I have tried hard to make the connections, showing how sacraments, scripture, prayer, and theology shape a spirituality of resistance to the dominating and demeaning powers. I think people have noticed this about me, and have appreciated it.

As products of the Enlightenment, we've tended to believe that if we think and do the right things, we'll succeed. Perhaps the pre-Enlightenment reformers have something to teach our post-Enlightenment church, namely that our only comfort is that we belong to Jesus Christ. To the extent that I have prompted a rebalancing of head and hand with heart, I think I've made a contribution.

What was your biggest disappointment?

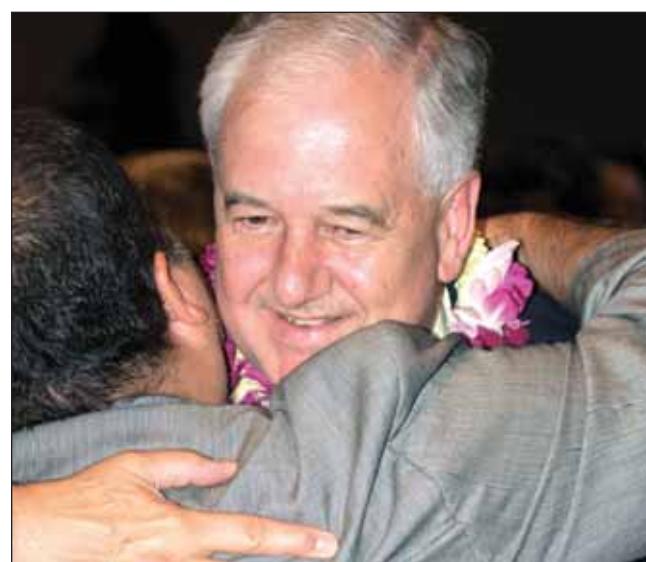
The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the struggle for justice in Palestine have dominated the 10 years of my leadership. Arrogance and idolatry have swept across our political landscape and horrible things have been done in our name. Voices of protest and resistance have been raised, ours among them. But for the most part, and in the main, we have sounded a cautious, at times a timid note of resistance.

I've been sorting through my bookshelf, getting ready to move my library. Today I came across this quote: "One might argue that the deep malaise afflicting American life in the last decades is rooted in the fact that for the first time in our history we have confronted a situation that would not yield to American power or acquiesce in the notion of America as bearer of a special destiny to the whole world" (Clifford Goen). That was written in 1974, the year before I was ordained! Some years ago I participated in a protest against the Iraq war in Washington. Standing next to me were Joan Baez and Ramsey Clark. It occurred to me that they were both part of a protest I attended on that very spot in 1970!

Have we learned anything? I continue to be haunted by a quote from Bonhoeffer: "Are we still of any use?"

What is the greatest challenge the UCC faces in the next decades?

Leadership, leadership, leadership! Whether for large, vital congregations, or small, vital congregations, or for congregations ready for renewal, or for emerging and developing congregations, the role of the pastoral leader is crucial.



Well-wishers greet the Rev. John H. Thomas after a program honoring him June 27, 2009, at General Synod 27 in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Dan Hazard photo

As products of the Enlightenment, we've tended to believe that if we think and do the right things, we'll succeed. Perhaps the pre-Enlightenment reformers have something to teach our post-Enlightenment church, namely that our only comfort is that we belong to Jesus Christ. To the extent that I have prompted a rebalancing of head and hand with heart, I think I've made a contribution.

Courageous congregations need leaders who can equip them biblically and theologically for the prophetic task. Generous congregations need leaders who can inspire sacrifice. Evangelical congregations need leaders who can teach the faith and nurture deep practice. And good leaders need a church prepared to discern their gifts, train them, support them, and continually challenge them.

Our system has worked hard over the last years to ensure that leaders don't transgress the boundaries of good ethical behavior. Our system has not yet done enough to ensure that leaders reach toward new horizons of excellence. This will take sustained commitment and more money and attention than we have provided of late.

Our whole church needs to shift from a culture of leadership consumption to leadership production!

Under your leadership, the UCC embraced technology and digital communications. What sort of opportunities and obstacles does and will this present for the church going forward?

My colleagues would get a good laugh at the thought that my leadership had enhanced our embrace of technology. I'm not a Luddite, but I'm not cutting edge either!

For the most part I've tried to stay out of the way and let creative people take the lead. And lead they have!

I'll confess that as one who loves the feel and texture of paper in my hand, I lament the demise of print media, and as a pastor who knows the value of attentive presence, I worry over the excessive electronic multi-tasking that often intrudes into our encounters.

At the same time, I've grown tired of pervasive resistance to the church's embrace of technology and electronic community because not everyone is ready. Too often we fail to engage those in my sons' generation because we were shaped by and are still reluctant to leave the world of filmstrips that were the electronic mainstay of ministry in the '70s when we started out. By the way, if you don't know what a filmstrip is, just Google it!

What would you like to say to the UCC as you depart?

Embrace Geoffrey as you embraced me. Support him, care for him, celebrate his gifts. He has great gifts to offer. And above all, thank you for an amazing ride!



OVERHEARD

"The prophetic ministry of communication must be cautious and reserved. Our witness must be honest. It may neither defend our prestige nor manipulate people into our position. It cannot be objective, because we are biased. But it can be honest because it is based on facts: the facts of the scandal of the cross and the glory of the resurrection."

The Rev. Everett Parker

1963 theological statement on the UCC Office of Communication

"[We] must help the church go beyond 'resolutionary Christianity' to 'revolutionary Christianity.'"

David Ostendorf, executive director of the Center for New Community, encouraging participants at the "Angels in Our Midst: A UCC Consultation on Immigration" pre-General Synod 27 event, June 25, 2009, to be advocates for changes to immigration policies.

"In significant ways, those early 19th-century 'Christians' have a lot to teach the United Church of Christ today. Like many people today, they were impatient with organized religion but were committed to a strong faith; they were turned off by sectarian debates but interested in strong Christian character."

Historian Barbara Brown Zikmund speaking to attendees of the "Christian preservation project" at General Synod 27, recalling the important contributions made by the "Christian" strain of the UCC's theological heritage.



TABULATIONS

BY THE NUMBERS

224

Number of United Church News print issues published during its 24-year run.



people | places | things

Single-payer health care gets nod and a march from UCC assembly



Bert Perry of the UCC's Florida Conference, Grand Rapids Mayor George Hartwell and the UCC's Barbara Baylor lead the march for health care during General Synod 27.

Randy Varcho photo

By Micki Carter and Jeff Woodard

Citing both specificity and urgency, General Synod 27 passed without amendment a resolution "Calling for the Support of H.R. 676 – Single-Payer National Health Care Reform to Advance Health Equity for All and to Eliminate Health Disparities."

Mary Beth Cross, a delegate from the Nebraska Conference, said after a unanimous vote out of committee, that the time to rally is now. Prior to the Tuesday, June 30, vote, she said, "This is a Gospel-mandated mission of faith for everyone to make sure that universal health care becomes a reality."

Several delegates expressed the necessity for action within the next four months, before another election cycle begins. They agreed that it was crucial for the resolution to support a specific action — H.R. 676, in this case — rather than a general endorsement of universal health care.

The resolution was submitted by the Council on Racial and Ethnic Ministries (COREM). Key among its proponents was Barbara Baylor, UCC Minister for Health Care Justice. "We lift up our [belief] that all persons deserve and must have quality, accessible, affordable health care and related social services — including mental-health service and full accessibility for the disabled," said Baylor.

Two hundred Synod-goers marched from DeVos Place to City Hall Monday afternoon, June 29, and gathered in the shadow of Grand Rapids' signature Calder stable to demonstrate their commitment to universal health care.

Chanting "Health care now!" they wound their way through downtown streets on a path cleared by city police. Leading the 15-minute walk was Mayor George Heartwell, a UCC pastor, and the demonstration organizers, Bert Perry of the Florida Conference and the Rev. Peter Wells, an Associate Conference Minister from Massachusetts.

At the Calder stable, marchers were joined by Paul Mayhew, a Baptist minister and Kent County Commissioner who also is a mental-health activist.

"We've got a president who's committed to health care for all, but we have to keep him on task," Mayhew said. "We've got to get on the telephone to our Congressmen and the White House so everyone knows where we stand."

The complete texts of General Synod 27 resolutions can be found at ucc.org/synod/resolutions

Perry introduced Baylor, who told marchers, "The UCC still speaks prophetically for health care for all ... Remember that two people die every hour every day due to the lack of health care."

Recalling the story of Joshua and the walls of Jericho, Baylor led the marchers in a chant, repeated six times, "All the walls of health-care injustice came down!"

The protest event was organized and staged within 36 hours. Perry and Wells were chatting on Saturday, and "we couldn't believe that the UCC was meeting in the middle of a city and we weren't out in the streets

making a public statement," Perry said. "Quality health care should be available to all, and that's the issue on everyone's mind right now."

Perry and Wells recognized that they needed to enlist some local help and they knew just whom to call.

"When the mayor welcomed us to the city, he gave out his cell phone number and said to call him if we needed anything. So I called him," said Perry.

And he answered.

"We called the mayor on Saturday," Wells said, "met with him on Sunday and marched with him [on Monday]."

'Multiple paths to ministry' approved

By W. Evan Golder

The issue of changing the UCC Constitution and By-laws to include multiple paths to ministry, first voted on by General Synod 25 four years ago, was adopted by delegates to the UCC's 27th General Synod.

The Rev. Holly MillerShank of the Ministry Issues Implementation Committee introduced the necessary amendments by explaining the four themes that run through the Ministries Issues project and are reflected in the proposed amendments.

First is an emphasis on authorization of all UCC ministers: ordained, commissioned, and licensed. Second is the responsibility of the Association in determining fitness for ordination. Third is discernment in the ordination process

in all settings of the church. Fourth is the importance of covenants of mutual responsibility.

Despite the years of planning and preparation for these changes, the value of having an "educated clergy" occupied most of the debate time, with several amendments being proposed and defeated.

Most persistent on this subject was Jonathan Page, a delegate from the Massachusetts Conference. "These things matter!" he insisted, while arguing that a bachelor's degree and Master of Divinity should be the "normative" path to ministry. "An educated clergy matters!"

"We want to affirm the inclusivity of our church," countered the Rev. Martha Ann Baumer, who chaired the committee bringing the amendments, "and this is one important way to do it."

Chanting "Health care now!" they wound their way through downtown streets on a path cleared by city police.

Leading the 15-minute walk was Mayor George Heartwell, a UCC pastor, and the demonstration organizers, Bert Perry of the Florida Conference and the Rev. Peter Wells, an Associate Conference Minister from Massachusetts.

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"We've got a president who's committed to health care for all, but we have to keep him on task," Mayhew said. "We've got to get on the telephone to our Congressmen and the White House so everyone knows where we stand."

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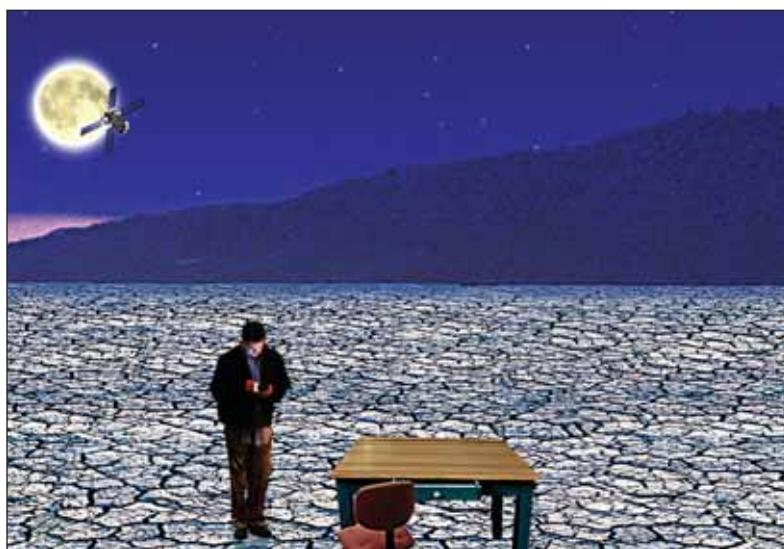
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UCC communications: What's next on the horizon?



By Gregg Brekke

United Church News and the Proclamation, Identity and Communication (PIC) staff have experienced a period of rapid transition over the past several months. In addition to re-visioning how to communicate the news of the church, PIC has carried the load of Synod communications and production, and experienced the loss of almost one-third of its staff due to downsizing.

Other denominations' communications groups are undergoing similar cuts and expanding staff workloads, as are many UCC Conferences. Secular news organizations have been reorganizing for several years and have yet to establish a consistent and sustainable model for daily news delivery.

Still, the necessity of national communications for the UCC has received consistent approval from the Office of General Ministries Board of Directors and the General Synod.

The end of the printed edition of United Church News is not the end of newsmaking in the UCC. New and more efficient means of communicating news will be deployed to facilitate this transition. As the Rev. J. Bennett Guess, UCC communications director, has said, "With shrinking resources, we can either struggle to pay for what's comfortable and familiar to us, albeit less of it, or we can choose to invest these same dollars in creative, emerging ways of communicating that will invite new interactions, conversations and people into our church."

Here is a sampling of the new or enhanced offerings that you may already be seeing in your email inbox or at your local church.

Online news and news digests

With the elimination of the printed edition of United Church News, all national news publication will shift to the internet and the UCC news portal <ucc.org/news>. The positive side of this shift is that all news will be "real time" or, at the very least, "near time." The bi-monthly print production schedule called for the collection of feature stories and notices in bundles, so they could be submitted

in the print edition. The potential of a two-month delay between events and publication is eliminated by using these technologies.

Another upside to online news is the breadth of coverage offered on the news portal. Rather than being limited to the timeliness or "UCC-worthy" qualities of a story, the news portal allows the communications staff to highlight many more stories from around the UCC; give substantial space to ecumenical and interfaith news; feature updates from myUCC bloggers; and provide fresh coverage of theological and cultural issues.

This online version of UCNews will continue to publish letters to the editor, commentaries, changes and obituaries in addition to offering advertising opportunities to our ministries and partner organizations.

The OGM Board and PIC staff are aware that not everyone has email or internet access. To that end, a bi-monthly news digest will be produced in PDF format that churches and institutions can easily download, print and distribute to those without internet access.

The digest will contain feature stories, a sampling of letters and commentary, and with changes and obituaries. While it won't be as large or as comprehensive as a 16-page edition of United Church News, the most requested articles and features of UCNews will be found in this digest.

Keeping You e-Posted

Last fall the UCC launched the weekly online newsletter "Keeping You e-Posted." The name is a throw-back to a monthly print newsletter that was mailed prior to the development of UCNews. It contains at least one feature story, a ministry

highlight, sermon and Bible study resources, stewardship links and news headlines from the UCC and the wider church.

Most national feature stories, event notices and worship resources will be made available in Keeping You e-Posted. In addition to visiting the news portal mentioned above, Keeping You e-Posted is the best way to stay up to date on what is happening at the national setting of the UCC. You can sign up at <ucc.org/kyep>.

Conference newsletters

What started as a partnership in publishing — the inclusion of Conference newspapers with the national edition — has also ended. Just as each Conference co-published its edition of UCNews a bit different from each other, the ways they will continue to communicate vary.

Most Conferences and Associations are publishing weekly or monthly electronic newsletters or plan to do so in the near future. In some cases, the software being used to distribute these newsletters has a simple "print" button that allows pastors or church administrators to print copies for distribution to members without computer access. If you

are not yet getting these communications, please ask your local church, Association or Conference if such a newsletter is available — online or in print.

Online Conference news

The latest development in the news strategy going forward is the inclusion of Conference news on the UCC's national news portal. Conferences soon will be able to use the UCC's electronic publishing tools to create and distribute their news

II The end of the printed edition of United Church News is not the end of newsmaking in the UCC. New and more efficient means of communicating news will be deployed to facilitate this transition.

alongside national news items.

The addition of Conference news to the UCC's news portal is one way the partnership between Conferences and United Church News can be maintained. It is also an exciting opportunity for people across the country to read what is happening in other settings of the UCC.

Social networking on myUCC

Social networking invites news gathering, news sharing and relationship building in multiple directions. More than 4,000 UCC members are now posting, commenting, blogging, ranting and sharing at myUCC, which launched just six months ago. The community is just beginning to tap into the power of "citizen journalism," an exciting possibility for the future of newsmaking in the UCC. Join myUCC at <community.ucc.org>.

Looking forward

The Board and staff of OGM, along with Conference ministers and communicators, realize that for many the transition to electronic newsmaking is a difficult one.

Yet collaborative ingenuity — and faithfulness to the many constituents within the UCC — has yielded several options for delivering news to our denomination and the broader world. As you read the following stories of how church communications have changed, you are invited to reflect on how this pivotal time can be used to continue the UCC's witness of the still speaking God to new and existing generations.

UNITED CHURCH NEWS: More than ink on paper

By Barb Powell

As an eager, idealistic 30-something, I walked into my office on the 8th floor of the Church House for the first time in December 1990. My role, as the Office of Communication's new copy editor, was to help shape United Church News stories, edit news releases, and assist with the layout of the paper and other assorted print projects.

I came to the national setting of the UCC with high expectations and almost 15 years of journalism, PR, and print design experience. My UCC experience was a bit less, however. Having joined a UCC congregation just four years earlier, I arrived filled with hope, but a bit scared to take on my role in the production of an important part of the national communication effort of the church. Especially in those early years, I relied on — and learned much from — my colleagues.

Some of my best experiences working on the news of the church have involved the friends I've met through the paper, particularly the oft-unheralded but crucial volunteers in the General Synod newsroom. Professional journalists all, they bring their extraordinary gifts — along with their humor, their support, and their heart — to the production of the Synod United Church News is-

sues and the secular GS-related news releases. You can see some of their most recent handiwork in the General Synod pages of this edition of the paper.

Over the past 19 years, I've witnessed many changes in our beloved United Church News. Slowly, it has morphed from a rather traditional-looking publication to one that has won several design awards. At the same time, shrinking budgets have meant that the once-full cadre of reporters — both

on staff and in the form of stringers — has dwindled to next to none,

meaning a larger responsibility thrust upon the shoulders of the editor and

a smaller communication staff whose

regular responsibilities encompass

much more than just the production

of the paper.

So I suppose it is time, albeit with some sadness, for the print publication of the denomination to transform into its next incarnation, leaving behind the news function for its cyber-cousin to fulfill — an intersection of talent with the world's need that might make theologian Frederick Buechner proud.

My one hope is that the journalistic standards that were defined by its predecessors and nobly continued to



Barb Powell works on an issue of United Church News in the summer of 1991.

W. Evan Golder photo

be maintained by its online successor. Especially today, when good journalism, and the ideals of journalistic integrity, have disappeared from much of broadcast news and most of the blogosphere, we have great need for the re-emergence of the standards set when the industry was young by Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite, whose motto — forged in the 1940s when he was with United Press — still resonates today: fast, accurate and unbiased.

Whether in print or online, may that be the way it always is for United Church News.

Barb Powell can't quite believe how quickly time has flown. She currently is Director for Production and Administration for the UCC's communication office.

feature presentation



New denomination's communication advanced by Herald, A.D.

By J. Martin Bailey

United Church News has roots in the early years of the 19th century, but the story of the publications of the United Church of Christ begins in the 1940s.

The magazines of the Congregational Christian and Evangelical and Reformed churches — Advance and The Messenger — played an important role in the sometimes contentious conversations that led to the Uniting General Synod in 1957.

There was no question where editors John Scotford of Advance and David Baker of The Messenger stood. Their editorials, for which they alone had responsibility, made it clear that they believed in church union. Later, when some E and R leaders showed impatience with the seemingly endless debate and litigation among the CCs, Theodore C. Braun, who had succeeded Baker, pressed his church to declare again its eagerness for the United Church.

Important to UCC identity

In 1957, when the new church was born at a historic convention in Cleveland, the first tangible evidence across the world was the appearance of a new magazine, United Church Herald. The co-editors, Braun and Scotford's successor, Andrew Vance McCracken, agreed that their task was to introduce the people of the UCC to each other.

A series of "how-do-you-do articles" claimed major space, along with news of local churches, reports of mission efforts at home and overseas, and the story of the UCC's poetic new Statement of Faith. Historian Louis Gunnemann noted, "The birth of the Herald was not only of symbolic importance but also proved to have immeasurable influence in giving the United Church a sense of unity and identity."

In 1960 I went to work with the co-editors, seeking to broaden the readership of the Herald, using as a model The Messenger's "100 Percent Plan" in which congregations sent UCH to every family. Three years later I was elected editor by the denomination's Executive Council. I got the news during a mid-winter meeting of the Council and the boards of all the church's national agencies.

Tom Garner, a pastor from Nazareth, Pa., came out of the meeting to inform me. "I was told to assure you that the Council affirmed the principle of editorial freedom," he said.

There was often strenuous discussion about my editorials and some of the articles, especially when the United States came to terms with the civil rights movement and when it was torn apart by the war in Vietnam. Occasionally, the editorials forced animated conversations among the church's leaders and boards. But always, the principle of the freedom of the editor was reaffirmed — even

when the Herald began publishing the salaries of the officers of the church and the instrumentality executives each year.

I was especially pleased at the 9th General Synod, during a heated debate on the use of inclusive language, when the magazine was cited as a useful model. We had been following our inclusive style for more than a year, accepted almost without notice.

The magazine also had been redesigned. We moved from every two weeks to a fatter, monthly book with an emphasis on graphic design. Our readers were used to Life and Look; we reasoned that the church's historic interest in art and architecture could be better served with lots of photos that would help make church identity real; in a sense it was incarnational — words were shown "in the flesh."

A new idea is tested

Our editorial and design approach had won its share of awards when Bob Cadigan, the editor of the popular Presbyterian Life, called one day. "Put your feet up on your desk, if you have time to talk ... I have an idea I want to test with you." He proposed that P.L. and the Herald invite the magazines of the churches related to the Consultation on Church Union to enter a joint publishing effort. We set a date for a face-to-face conversation and several months later, with the approval of the two churches, announced that we would together produce and distribute a common magazine with specialized pages to meet denominational needs. Because both churches were emphasizing evangelism, we thought the name "A.D. 1972" declared a fresh and contemporary approach to affirming a faithful witness "in this year of our Lord."

A.D. was an exciting opportunity that gave a completely integrated staff the chance to offer the churches lively journalism. We were disappointed that other churches weren't ready to join our effort. We published articles on the major issues of the day, and a popular series about prominent "interpreters of our faith." In separate editions, we carried more articles about the identities of each of the churches than either publication had done before.

After 11 years, when the United Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in the USA ended a

century-long division over slavery, the Presbyterians terminated the magazine. We had published 126 issues — double that number if you count the two editions of each issue. It had been an exciting ecumenical venture. I understood then, and I understand today, that the Presbyterians needed to emphasize their new unity. My only regret was that the end came so suddenly; my great satisfaction is that 25 years later I still hear members of both churches say they miss A.D.

My gratitude is that having made good use of the technology of the 1960s and 1970s, the United Church of Christ today is embracing contemporary communications methods, both creatively and enthusiastically.

At the time of his retirement, the Rev. J. Martin Bailey was associate general secretary for communication for the National Council of Churches.



The Rev. J. Martin Bailey, who edited United Church Herald and A.D. Magazine, and the Rev. W. Evan Golder, former editor of United Church News, combined talents in 2007 to co-edit "UCC @ 50: our history, our future."

Randy Varcho photo

'News' continues tradition of high standards

By W. Evan Golder

On Easter Monday in 1985, I strode down New York City's Madison Avenue, headed for the United Church of Christ's national offices. I had been called to be the first editor of its new newspaper. Waiting in my office was a 24-pound, "portable" Osborne computer, the size of a Singer sewing machine, equipped with a new device called a modem. Using it, I planned to transmit news instantly to our printer in Dallas.

Despite a history of excellent journalism since 1804 by the UCC and its predecessor bodies, for 22 months the UCC had not had a national publication. In July 1983, the magazine A.D., a joint publication of the UCC and the United Presbyterian Church, had ceased publication. That same year Beverly J. Chain had succeeded the Rev. Everett C. Parker as director of the UCC Office of Communication.

Fill the communication gap

One of her first tasks was to fill this national communication gap. In her role as publisher, she envisioned a national newspaper containing Conference sections. We achieved this by printing the paper at UMR Communications, which could "wrap" the national edition around a Conference section. In its first issue in May 1985, United Church News had six "wrap-around" Conferences on board. That number eventually grew to 31.

Like its predecessors, United Church News would be committed to editorial freedom and telling the truth. As its Statement of Purpose put it, "Its editorial policy will emphasize freedom with responsibility and demonstrate sensitivity to

General Synod and to the diverse perspectives, groups and bodies that make up the United Church of Christ."

The name itself, United Church News, tells the story. Many names were proposed, among them Mayflower, Pilgrim, Messenger, and Agora.

Finally a Conference Minister at this meeting blurted out, "Enough of this nonsense! If it's gonna be a newspaper and tell the news, then let's just call it United Church News."

Freedom of the press

Even so, there were those who hoped it would be more of a house organ than a newspaper, parroting the glad news of the UCC rather than the good news of the gospel.

Instead, from its inception, United Church News has endeavored to seek out the truth, encouraging fairness with accuracy, and offering a readable, reliable single news source for and about the United Church of Christ. Anything less, according to one reader, would be to turn United Church News into United Church Marshmallow.

The paper was barely a month old before its editorial policy was tested. The issue was the dismissal of 10 professional staff members by a major UCC executive. To our staff, this was news. The executive, on the other hand, argued that this was purely an in-house, administrative matter.

The issue was resolved when the Christian Century ran a story dubbing the firings the "Maundy Thursday Massacre." This presented a credibility crisis: If UCC members could read news about the UCC in other publications but not in their own newspaper, then why bother to read United Church News? We ran the story.

During its 24 years, readers came to expect United Church News to tell the truth, even when it was not pleasant. As one Conference Minister put it, "If I were being written about in newspapers all ... across the country, I would expect to read about it in United Church News. I wouldn't like it, it wouldn't make me happy, but I would expect it. And it would be appropriate."

Also important has been the paper's role in connecting UCC members. "It helps me feel I belong to the family," wrote one reader.

Ushering in electronic age

When the Rev. Arthur Cribbs became publisher, we intensified our effort to connect the parts of the UCC family, broadening our coverage of racial and ethnic persons, young and older persons, persons with disabilities, LGBT issues, and more conservative viewpoints.

When the Rev. Robert Chase succeeded Cribbs, he invoked far-reaching changes: all editions had the same large photo, good-news-story front page and the paper was free. Circulation tripled.

After 18 years as editor, I retired and was succeeded by the Rev. J. Bennett Guess. Five years later, Ben was followed by the Rev. Gregg Brekke. Now it's Gregg's task to take this publication into the electronic age.

In the first edition, 223 issues ago, I wrote, United Church News "is here to help us stretch our vision, challenge our resources, air our differences, and unite our energy in the hope that the unexpected might happen and God's will might prevail."

Whether on a printed page or a computer monitor, a BlackBerry or a Kindle, I still expect that to be true.

The Rev. W. Evan Golder is editor emeritus of United Church News.

Times of transition allow phoenix to rise out of traditions

By Beverly J. Chain

When I think about "Transition," I am immediately reminded of the musical "Fiddler on the Roof" and its emphasis on "Tradition!" Transition is traumatic because it is hard to overcome tradition, not just the habits of generations, but the heartstrings that ripple with memories of the way we were or thought we were.

One of the transitions the Office of Communication had to weather on my watch was the move from New York City to Cleveland. Suddenly we were separated from ecumenical colleagues who could be counted on to help. We were farther away from Washington, D.C., and advocacy groups there. We had to say goodbye to trusted staff and find new staff. And let's face it: a Cleveland address still doesn't have the cache of a New York one! Yet the move to the heartland seems to have been a success.

I admit to a bias for print journalism. I like to hold a newspaper, book or magazine in my hand while I sip a cup of coffee, relax by a pool, or to read from before nodding off to sleep. TV is great for entertainment

and I love my computer for research and instant communication, but they are not so portable or convenient or *lasting* as print. So, while I am all for innovation and new approaches to communication, I shall mourn and miss United Church News.

Rich communication history

I, along with then-editor Evan Golder, introduced to the UCC the concept of a national newspaper with Conference wrap-arounds. I like that model of sharing and I think the local church is poorer when it does not have a consistent link with the news of national and Conference settings.

True, national and Conference news stories are available online, but a local editor has to believe that na-

tional news is worthy of the space and spend the time to make it available, or it never gets to the families in the pews. I know this because I still edit a local church newsletter and I rarely have space for Conference or national news. Besides, my read-

communication advocacy. No other communion in history has had the impact on rule making in the public interest. No other communion has even tried.

Beginning with Everett's intervention in the historic WLBT case,

ming for children in several communities. We supplied the research and our filings with the FCC to require at least a minimum amount of educational children's programming (not just Saturday morning cartoons).

Similar procedures helped put in place the requirement that telephone companies provide lifeline service to isolated communities and persons unable to afford basic telephone service. The idea was that the phone companies should provide this service out of their profits, not pass it on to their customers as they have done since the legislation was passed. I find it a bittersweet victory every time I look at my phone bill!

I also testified before the U.S. House telecommunications sub-committee on fairness in broadcasting and cable, and was given a feature editorial in USA Today on the need for broadcasters to present both sides of a controversial issue. I was opposed by Edward Fritts of the National Association of Broadcasters, and supported by Reed Irvine of Accuracy in Media. I cite these events because it is always about mobilizing public opinion if you want to sway Congress. Office of Communication writer William Winslow's news releases always got picked up.

Tradition vis-a-vis transition is gut-wrenchingly difficult. It is hard to give up the familiar. It is terrifying to envision something new. But experience has taught me that once the transition is accomplished it is hard to predict what the heart will remember.

Beverly J. Chain was executive director of the UCC's Office of Communication, then an 'instrumentality' of the national setting of the church, from 1983 to 1995. She considers that call her "career summit," bringing together the three themes of her life: communication, work for justice, and mission. She resides in North Palm Beach, Fla.



No other communion in history has had the impact on rule making in the public interest. No other communion has even tried.

— Dr. Beverly J. Chain

ers don't find denominational news nearly as compelling as a photo of their own children's Easter egg hunt.

The UCC has a rich history of communication. Martin Bailey's contributions are legendary in the magazine field, as are Everett Parker's in

the years of working for diversity in broadcasting content — as well as promulgating employment in and ownership of media outlets by women and persons of color — have been a unique contribution of the UCC and its Office of Communication.

Continuing media justice

It is hard to follow as dynamic and unique an individual as Everett. He did everything first and he did it better! I had always been active in the National Council of Churches communication arenas, so I had allies willing to sign on to UCC initiatives in communication advocacy. Therefore, I did have some modest effect on a number of important issues. One was to keep cable companies from being able to "redline" or wire around communities of color. A second was to convince broadcasters to supply educational children's programming.

With help from several UCC churches, we gathered information on the lack of appropriate program-



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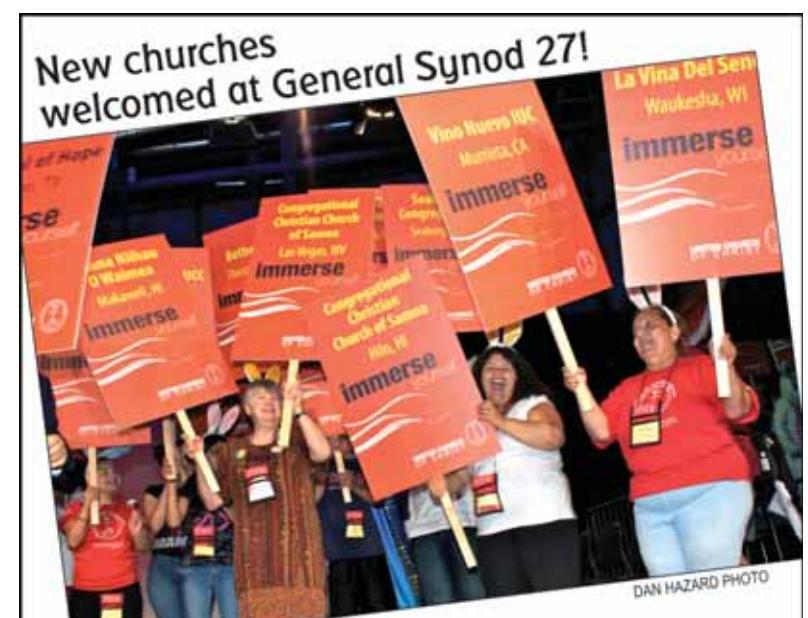
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Embracing technology enables UCC message to reach all ages, places

By Robert Chase

All change is loss," I remember the Interim Ministry Network trainer admonishing us would-be interim pastors long before I became executive director of the UCC's Office of Communication. It has proven to be good advice in many settings, including this moment when United Church News ceases its print edition.

Yet, when I reflect on my tenure as publisher of United Church News (1999-2007), I am aware that several transitions occurred, times when the paper reinvented itself to better inform her readers and better serve as the connective tissue for the denomination. Though such transitions are not always smooth, they often offer opportunities for transformation.

The past decade has seen nothing short of a communications revolution. Through such a time, a static, inflexible, unchanging news service would have poorly served the church, rendering news distribution in the UCC inadequate for the rapidly changing world in which we live. Three themes seemed operative over the past decade: increased participation, intentional branding and emerging technologies. All are relevant in the current circumstances.

Re-energize participation

In 1999, while few questioned the quality of United Church News as a source of information (though some quibbled with its "constant harping on hot button topics"), distribution of the paper left much to

be desired. Our circulation stood at around 45,000, with fully one-third of those papers (two copies each) sent to churches, Conference offices and UCC institutions. It was uncertain who — if anyone — actually read them.

Minimal subscription revenue, little ad income, and no coordinated way to increase circulation did not make for a smart business plan. We knew we had to get the news into more hands in order to provide a vital connecting link for our members. We also knew that we had to increase Conference participation if the paper was going to reflect the ministry of the church in all its settings.

So we embarked on an aggressive campaign to build news gathering and publication capacity within Conferences. We trained editors, paid for printing and distribution costs and, within a few short years, realized an increase from a dozen disconnected Conference wrap editions to a national paper with about 30 distinctive Conference sections. We hired professionals to manage a database of mailing addresses and watched as our distribution numbers

grew to more than 200,000.

You are holding that product in your hands which, at the time, was produced 10 times a year by an enormously talented and dedicated United Church News team at both the national and Conference levels.

Get it all branded

One result of this new strategy was that we created, perhaps for the first time, a national UCC "brand." We standardized design and typography. Most conference sections appeared inside our papers instead of "wrapping" around the national edition, thereby giving greater visibility to a national identity.

This challenged notions of Conference versus national loyalty but in the end, the case for a unified brand prevailed and, I believe, paved the way for a wider buy-in for the UCC's soon-to-emerge identity campaign.

One interesting bit of trivia: the first time that our soon-to-be ubiquitous denominational branding — God is Still Speaking, "Never place a period ...," big comma, black and red color scheme, new UCC "stacked" logo — appeared was in a November 2001 United Church News ad designed to attract readership, not as a national identity campaign to welcome people into our churches.

Embrace new technologies

About the same time that our circulation was increasing, conversation was beginning about developing a news portal on the UCC website.

As a society, we had begun the

radical shift from mass media to participatory media. When our "Bouncer" television commercial was rejected by the networks and the blogosphere grabbed hold of the story, spreading the word so fast that our website crashed from too much

traffic, we realized the potential in viral communication. Within weeks we developed a strategy to enlist the bloggers in our identity efforts.

It wasn't long before we were quizzing ourselves about the role digital communication should play in our evolving newsroom and in the life of the church.

We discovered that we had more than 40 databases at the national level, none of them talking to each other. UCC Associate General Minister Edith Guffey — no early convert to technology, though she has since become a disciple — called the way we shared information "a mess." In service to an ever-more informed audience, things needed to change — and our news department led the way.

As once-monthly deadlines yielded to weekly, then daily, then hourly deadlines, analogue information, often shared via "snail-mail," came to be replaced by digital bits and bytes. Citizen journalists, social networking, blogging and push/pull

It wasn't long before we were quizzing ourselves about the role digital communication should play in our evolving newsroom and in the life of the church.

— The Rev. Robert Chase



technologies emerged, each offering new opportunities to inform, connect and inspire.

Which brings us back to today — the end of an era for United Church News. A sense of loss? No doubt.

But also there is recognition that the mission of United Church News is and always has been news distribution, not print publication.

By changing with the times, we can increase participation, expand the profile of the United Church of Christ and engage new technologies in ways that better connect us one to another.

The news is dead. Long live the news!

The Rev. Robert Chase currently is founding director of Intersections. Based in New York City, Intersections is a global, multicultural, multifaith initiative dedicated to building respectful relationships among diverse individuals and communities and developing strategies that promote justice, reconciliation and peace.

Teamwork essential to improving and creating new communication possibilities

By Arthur Cribbs



Walking into the UCC's Office of Communication in January 1996 offered a special treat. As the new executive director, it meant I was following in the footprints of giants Everett Parker and Beverly Chain.

Eventually, my role became the unintentional bridge between the historic feats achieved under my predecessors' leadership and the progressive vision of my successor Bob Chase, who jettisoned some of the past in favor of a highly technical advance into worldwide media access.

The immediate challenge I faced was creating an environment where professional, creative skills could be applied to the variety of communication streams available among our staff. The staff members were an incredible collection of talented, faithful lovers of the United Church of Christ. Among that special group of dedicated religious communicators were Laurie Bartels, Cade Bursell, Eric Caldwell, Nancy Erickson, W. Evan Golder, Daniel Hazard, Sandra Hirano, Hans Holznagel, Judy Jaye, Andy Lang, Kofi Ofori, Sylvia Pen-

ny, Monica Pombo, Barbara Powell, James Ray Reid, Charlene J. Smith, Randy Varcho, Jackie Wilkins, and William (Bill) Winslow.

Re-imaging everything

We debated philosophical differences about the role and relationship of religious journalists to the wider church. The task of reporting on the complicated and sometimes contradictory nuances peculiar to our beloved denomination forced us to craft a policy and statement of purpose to guide our understanding of our ministry. It was hard work that required pastoral care, team cooperation and a prayerful commitment to open our minds to new possibilities.

United Church News was central to our work. Each member of our department was encouraged to re-think the paper's look and its content. Ev-

erything was subject to change. Color was added to the front and back pages and special sections were dedicated to issues confronting church and society.

United Church News reflected the troubling concerns affecting local congregations and mega-issues like the restructure of the UCC's national ministries. We were on our way into the future.

Working in teams consisting of staff persons from each unit allowed us to create unified projects for our website, video production and print.

We began reaching out to every setting in the UCC and its constituency groups. We wanted United Church News to be owned by all members and ministries of the church. We felt as diverse as the UCC was becoming, so it was necessary to make sure that a wide range of theological, political and social perspectives were represented and our stories were generated

from every segment within the UCC. Doing so was not always easy.

As we moved deeper into a new direction, confirmation of our achievements swept through the national offices. Executives of instrumentalities and ministerial agencies requested our assistance in developing new communication strategies for their programs. We forged partnerships with Conferences and affiliated ministries of the UCC.

A banner which signaled that new things were happening at the Office of Communication was hung in the entrance, "We Are Going Positive!" Several of our staff wanted an explanation of its message. Instead of a direct response, they were asked what they thought it could mean. Their answers formed the basis of how we went about improving every aspect of our department.

The Office of Communication

and United Church News were recognized inside and beyond the UCC as producers and providers of top quality media. Evan Golder, editor of United Church News, announced with his usual brand of enthusiasm, "I feel like I have gone to work at a new job without leaving my old one!"

The escalating cost of printing a monthly newspaper for our denomination required creative designs and strategies. Even as readership increased, we were hard pressed to keep up with production expenses.

Today, we are looking ahead with hope that the digital age will provide a more cost-effective way to deliver the news of the church without compromising the quality and expansive coverage needed to give voice to the variety of constituencies and perspectives that make us one in the United Church of Christ.

Former newscaster the Rev. Arthur Cribbs was executive director of the UCC's Office of Communication from 1996 to 1999. Currently pastor of San Marino (Calif.) Congregational UCC his resonant voice is often heard in UCC board settings and at General Synod.



feature presentation

EVEN AS BREAKING NEWS GOES ONLINE, NEW TWICE-ANNUAL MAGAZINE TO DEBUT NEXT YEAR

Printer's ink will change, not disappear, for UCC communications

By J. Bennett Guess, Publisher

If it's true that misery loves company, then the newspaper world has lots of anxious comrades. Almost every news cycle, it seems, is filled with another I-never-thought-that-would-happen surprise in the publishing realm.

On Aug. 19, the parent company of Reader's Digest filed for bankruptcy, citing declining subscriptions and falling ad revenues.

Earlier in the summer, the once-biggest-selling publication in the world announced plans to print 3 million fewer copies of each edition and reduce its publishing frequency from 12 to 10 issues. Two weeks earlier, Ann Arbor, Mich., a big university town where nearly 50 percent of its residents have graduate degrees, became the first city of significant size not to have a daily newspaper. The highly respected Christian Science Monitor opted out of print in April.

In March, Time Magazine listed 10 papers that appear to be good (or unfortunate) candidates to go either digital or belly up by the end of the year. Among them are some of this nation's newspaper icons: Philadelphia Daily News, Minneapolis Star Tribune, Miami Herald, Detroit News, Boston Globe, San Francisco Chronicle, Chicago Sun-Times, New York Daily News, Fort-Worth Star-Telegram and Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Even as most of those papers have rebuked their print obituaries, most still acknowledge that big and difficult changes are coming. At least a few big-name dailies appear likely to join the ranks of the Rocky Mountain News and the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, both of which ceased print publication earlier this year.

Obviously, increasing costs and decreasing readership and revenues are the most significant factors, but ever-changing readership behaviors

point to the looming question, which is how to deal with the underlying cultural shift. Perhaps it's a case study in irony, but more people are reading newspapers than ever before and the conundrum is how we are reading them — *online*, not from newsprint.

The Ann Arbor News attempted to squarely face this reality. As Time reported, the paper didn't so much "die" as much as it was "killed" by its owners in a gamble to try to get ahead of the communications curve — to create something radically new, given the monumental changes we are witnessing. The owners decided that it made little sense to continually whittle away at the newspaper's operation. Instead, they tried something bold.

The result, AnnArborNews.com, is a hybrid that strangely mixes news and social networking. News is generated by paid content creators but also unpaid citizen contributors. While subscribers can purchase a print summary of the online content that is delivered twice-weekly to their homes, it is a totally different approach. Will it work? Only time will tell.

Decision time

At United Church News, we've already tried the whittling away approach. Now the time has come to attempt a bold new thing.

In December 2004, the UCC's then-monthly newspaper announced that it would publish just six times

annually, making it impossible for the paper to remain a true *news*-paper. Headlines were often weeks old before they reached your doorstep, even when the same stories had been available online the whole time.

On the flip side, our news presence at <ucc.org/news> was invigorated with an increasing number of readers who quickly expected and began finding news stories posted there daily, not monthly as had once been the norm. UCC members wanted the story as it happened: online. Today,

changes in front of us.

In 2003, when I became editor of United Church News, it cost about \$65,000 to print and mail United Church News to about 200,000 households. In 2009, now working as the newspaper's publisher, I know that those expenses have nearly doubled to about \$120,000 an issue. The culprits are postage increases and paper costs, which continue to increase.

Even though our stellar advertising manager Connie Larkman actually helped us steadily increase our ad

the necessity to end the print edition of United Church News was the way it abruptly ended the seamless partnership we had developed with most of the print publications of our UCC Conferences. Although a few are working to make a go of it on their own, most Conferences have decided to follow suit with the national setting. We are exploring ways to recreate our partnership using different technology, but this will take conversation and time for development.

'LIFE'-like magazine?

When we convened UCC leaders and members to discuss the future of United Church News, most understood the need for change and agreed that an increasing number of people, regardless of age, would be looking online for instantaneous news, even from the church. But what most said they would lament was the absence of connection, the lost feeling of graceful intrusion that a church publication offers when it arrives in the mailbox.

Ironically, the "potential loss" they were speaking about was something that United Church News, as a newspaper, was never meant to be. That led us to envision a different type of print publication, one that had the form, feel and function of a colorful member magazine — even if published only twice annually — to take the place of a smudgy, inky newsprint *news*-paper that was being asked to pretend it was something else.

If people were freed to get quality UCC *news* online, that left open the possibility that we could create a wholly different publication, one that could serve other purposes:

What if we developed an elegant/eloquent coffee table magazine, much like LIFE, National Geographic or a college alumni magazine, that offered powerful photographs, in-depth theological essays and thoughtful personal reflections in a format that readers would find too impressive to throw away?

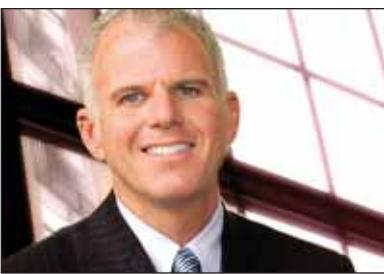
What if each issue warmly captured the essence of who we are as a church, making it a fitting and timely give-away for visitors, new members and devoted old-timers alike?

What if it promoted a sense of longing, inspired us to generosity and cultivated our oneness in Christ?

What if individuals could subscribe, but we also made it affordable in quantity so that churches could use it in creative evangelistic ways?

In Spring 2010, we are planning to launch such a to-be-named publication. By year's end, we will reach out to our current subscribers with an invitation to invest in and receive this print piece. Yes, it won't come as often, but it may just meet the needs that a newspaper could never fill.

And, in the days between, you'll still be able to find United Church News online 24/7.



The time has come
to attempt a bold
new thing.

— The Rev. J. Bennett Guess,
Publisher

the addition of at least one or two new daily headlines is commonplace.

Still, the decision to shutter the print publication of United Church News after 24 years of operation has been sad and painful, especially for those of us who have been personally invested in formulating, writing, designing and copy editing the news.

For those of us who still love the feel and layout of a newspaper, it's a go-kicking-and-screaming sort of moment. As a college journalism student, I once thought I had a bona fide addiction to newspapers, since I subscribed to or purchased no less than four or five daily. The newsprint-cluttered backseat of my car was proof to my neat-and-orderly parents that I had a problem. Still, despite my personal fondness for newsprint, even I can't ignore the fast and furious

revenues in recent years, and even as many readers were quick to respond to the 2005 cutbacks with more-consistent contributions, these new dollars still were not sufficient to overcome the exponential cost increases.

As with the secular world, United Church News finds itself among other religious entities making similar decisions. At its 2009 General Synod, the Reformed Church in America called for the "orderly cessation" of its publication, the Church Herald. The Wesleyan Christian Advocate, the 172-year-old newspaper of the North and South Georgia United Methodist Conferences, ceased publication. In May, Christianity Today announced it was ending four of its sibling periodicals. Other denominations are having similar conversations.

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Aiello, Barbara E. to Cong. UCC, Acton, MA
Alexander, Audrey to St. John UCC, Indianapolis, IN
Alley, William W. to Park St. Cong. UCC, Mazon, IL
Bannerman, Jennifer to Lakeview UCC, Maineville, OH
Boisvert, Elizabeth A. to First UCC, Longmeadow, MA
Bortz, Peter to Salem UCC, Westphalia, IN
Buch, Harry D. to Central Cong. UCC, Burton, OH
Burnard, Eric D. to Immanuel UCC, Neenah, WI
Cofer, Thomas J. to First Cong. UCC, Painesville, OH
Culp, David M. to St. John's UCC, Fostoria, OH
Davis, Jeffrey G. to First Federated UCC/DOC/PCUSA, North Jackson, OH
Dugan, Timothy P. to First Cong. UCC, Ramona, CA
Etheredge, Leslie to Church of the Savior UCC, Knoxville, TN

Fritz, Lucille L. to Huntington Cong. UCC, Shelton, CT
Fuller, Kenneth D. to Cong. UCC, Avon, CT
Hall, D. Houston to St. Paul UCC, Bellevue, OH
Hange, Adam to Plymouth UCC, Shaker Heights, OH
Hawker, Scott to St. Stephens UCC, Merrill, WI
Henderson, Kel to First Cong. UCC, Corona, CA
Hofmeister, Margaret to North Cong. UCC, New Hartford, CT
Horne, Elizabeth to Cong. UCC, Melrose Highlands, MA
Hoyt, Kenneth J. to Cong. UCC, Middlebury, CT
Hughes, Bridget F. to First Cong. UCC, Suffield, CT
Jackson, Cari to First Cong. UCC, Stamford, CT
Jones, Sarah R. to St. Peter's Lischeys UCC, Spring Grove, PA
Labolt, Robin A. to UCC, Sycamore, OH
Lavieri, R. Vincent to UCC, Spencerville, OH

Malone, Michael to First Cong. UCC, Haddam, CT
Marquette, Adam S. to UCC, Bath, OH
Myers, Rhonda D. to United Cong. UCC, Torrington, CT
McCarthy, Barry J. to Greendale Peoples Church, Worcester, MA
McGrath, Pamela W. to N. Community UCC, Marshfield Hills, MA
Ney, Christopher to Central Cong. UCC, Newburyport, MA
Oughton, Doreen C. to First Cong. UCC, Leicester, MA
Petersen, Ellen to Cong. UCC, North Hadley, MA
Peterson, Craig to Community UCC, Woodlands Hills, CA
Reed, Matthew G. to Cong. UCC, Wakeorman, OH
Ross, Christopher J. to St. Peter's UCC, Owensville, MO
Schlischer, David to Makawao Union Church, Paia, HI
Sim, Robert to Salem Walmer's Union UCC/ELCA, Annville, PA
Smith, Gerald to Old Zionsville UCC, PA
Smith, Sara D. to United Cong. UCC, Bridgeport, CT
Stabenfeldt, David C. to First Cong. UCC, Bakersfield, CA
Steinroeder, Bonnie to First Cong. UCC, Holliston, MA
Strang, Rebecca E. to St. Paul UCC, New Bremen, OH
Trimmer, Ronald to New Church Start, Georgetown, TX
Whitcher, Craig to First Church in Christ, Old Saybrook, CT
Williams, Michael to First Cong. UCC, Anamosa, IA
Winkel, Karen to Hillcrest UCC, Montrose, CO
Winters, Mark to First Cong. UCC, Naperville, IL
Yonkman, Nicole to Beneficent UCC, Providence, RI
Yonkman, Todd to Beneficent UCC, Providence, RI

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 Csia, Kalman, 98, 6/5/2009
 Driftmier, Frederick F., 92, 3/21/2009
 Eaton, Ellis F., 92, 4/28/2009
 Fabian, Eli R., 96, 7/24/2009
 Garcia, Rafael, 87, 6/14/2009
 Guerdat, Thomas E., 89, 5/12/2009
 Gwinn, William D., 79, 4/17/2009
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 Hay, Calvin, 82, 7/21/2009
 Henry, George W., 82, 6/16/2009
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 Knipmeyer, Arlie C., 87, 6/26/2009
 Kruckow, Thomas A., 71, 6/17/2009
 Lundberg, Stanley D., 88, 7/19/2009
 Mann, Richard J., 78, 5/24/2009
 Maugans, David E., 91, 6/6/2009
 Melhorn, James M., 49, 5/21/2009

Michalewicz, Paul M., 62, 4/26/2009
 Murray, Jeanne L., 61, 7/21/2009
 Oleson, Margaret H., 60, 6/14/2009
 Peterson, Dewey A., 78, 6/18/2009
 Pfeiffer, Joyce H., 63, 6/1/2009
 Rangoon, Richard R., 77, 7/24/2009
 Roberts, Linda H., 68, 7/21/2009
 Rohrbaugh, Allan L., 76, 6/29/2009
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 Wikstrom, Gunnar, 73, 5/24/2009
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**McKinney to retire in 2010**

McKinney

The Rev. William McKinney, president of UCC-related Pacific School of Religion (PSR) since 1996, announced that he will step down from his position at the end of the coming academic year, June 30, 2010. PSR is one of the UCC's seven seminaries.

"This has been a hard decision to make, because I love my job and I love Pacific School of Religion," said McKinney. "This feisty little theological school has a special role to play in the renewal and transformation of contemporary Christianity, and I feel very optimistic about PSR's future."

McKinney, 63, informed the PSR board last May of his decision to retire in 2010. He said he wanted to make the news public now, before the beginning of the school year, so that the seminary would have ample time to find a replacement.

An ordained minister in the United Church of Christ and a sociologist of religion, McKinney was born in Massachusetts and earned his B.A. degree from Colby College in Maine, his Master of Divinity and Master of Arts degrees from Hartford Seminary in Connecticut, and his Ph.D. degree from Penn State. Prior to his current position, he served as dean of Hartford Seminary for 11 years.

When he became president in 1996, PSR was going through difficult times, both financially and in terms of the relations among the board of trustees, the faculty and the students. In McKinney's first years as its leader, the seminary's financial problems were smoothed out, as were frayed nerves on campus.

McKinney is the author of "American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future" (1987), "The Responsibility People" (1994) and "Studying Congregations" (1998).

Upon leaving PSR, he hopes to complete writing projects that have been postponed over the past decade.

CLERGY DEATHS

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THE MUSIC IN US

Music ministry breathes life into work, worship of local churches

Memory, says the Rev. Scott Ressman, is the powerful thread that connects church music so inextricably to our hearts. Ressman, the UCC's minister for worship, music, and liturgical arts, says that whether the memories are positive or negative, music shapes the way we feel about church music, and quite possibly about church itself.

"Obviously, people feel comfortable with what they know," says Ressman. "That's why word changes in well-known hymns make some uncomfortable. Putting drums, guitars, etc. in worship is a shock to many who've grown up with the piano and an organ and a choir. But when one opens up to the possibilities and the experience, wonderful things can happen."

Pigeonholing church music into "traditional" or "contemporary" categories is a gaffe many churches make. "I am not a fan of churches breaking their worship into [those] labels," says Ressman. "To say that 'traditional' music only speaks to a certain generation, or 'contemporary' to another, is a mistake. All music should work together in the church, dropping the labels which tend to separate people into musical camps."

God will be pleased'

But how does a church define its music ministry? Ressman is well aware of the huge range of resources available to local UCC churches. There are certainly more than a few churches that have the means for extensive music programming. But, says Ressman, "we also have churches which struggle to pay the bills and cannot afford a professional musician or even an adequate one."

Ressman says those music ministries also are pleasing to God.

"It's about doing the best you can with what you have at any given time," he says. "If you only have a piano and a teenager taking piano lessons to play for worship, then run with it. God will be pleased! If you have a local band that plays for worship on Sundays, that's great. If you have a choir of 60 or 70, the music will soar if the effort matches the intent. Music speaks in ways that words cannot."

Get connected

Ressman oversees the UCC's Musicians National Network (UCCMNN, Inc.), affiliated with the national setting of the UCC. It is a group designed to create a common ground for church musicians, pastors, worship planners and liturgical artists to gather for brainstorming, support and networking. UCCMNN holds a conference every two years (the next one is slated for summer 2010), but members can discuss topics and share ideas any time on myUCC at ucc.org. Membership is free.

Connecting with other church musicians can be valuable, says Ressman, since a music director at a local church often wears many hats. In his years as a music director, Ressman often found himself playing a pastoral role to his musicians as well as being their director.

"To develop a musically tight group, it is

The Rev. Scott Ressman
at the Bedient tracker
pipe organ in the Amistad
Chapel of the UCC Church
House in Cleveland.
"Music speaks in ways that
words cannot," he says.

Gregg Brekke photo



necessary to build community and trust," he says. "When folks feel connected to one another, then they are more likely to commit to a more substantial role in the group." And a higher commitment level from the musicians will benefit everyone sitting in the worship service, Ressman adds.

Just as important, he says, is forging a symbiotic relationship with pastors and worship planners. As a musician, Ressman says he remembers many times when his selections didn't meld with the minister's readings or sermon.

"It was unfortunate," he says, adding that when the sermon, readings, music and other worship elements are constructed to work together, it moves the worship to a new level of meaning.

"Periodic meetings to brainstorm and plan worship themes and needs are a must," he says. Advance planning leaves plenty of lead time to track down music and musicians for certain themes. "You can tell when the worship is coordinated and when it is not," says Ressman.

Stretch your budget

Ressman encourages congregations to explore putting more dollars into their music ministries. He notes that the common expectation for musicians to "donate" their gifts is unfair. "This is well-intended," says Ressman, "but musicians need to make a living just like anyone else."

Still, there are ways of stretching the music dollar. For instance, budding musicians at local schools often are glad to offer their talents for minimal compensation. The musicians get valuable experience, and the congregation benefits by being part of the musician's growth.

Ressman also suggests scouting out hidden talent in the congregation. "Often people won't respond to requests to participate unless they are directly asked," he says.

If you feel you've exhausted your search, Ressman suggests branching out to asking sons, daughters and grandchildren of the congregation who don't attend church, or those who play unique instruments. Talk to private teachers in the area, he says. Search the internet for musical groups that travel the country and stop at churches along the way. Many such groups will book a date at your church in exchange for a free-will offering. And don't forget the children.

"Young ones can easily add rhythm to a song by shaking an emptied water bottle half filled with beans, rice, etc. The rhythm might not be perfect, but the joy will make it so," Ressman says with a smile.

Finally, once the music ministry is up and running, Ressman says the next step may be thinking outside the confines of Sunday morning. Music is a great way to get community members into your church for, say, a Friday night program, he says. Or, church musicians might go out to local nursing homes and assisted living centers.

"Once the music program gets established and begins to 'work,' don't be afraid to move beyond the worship service to other settings," says Ressman. "Face-time at secular events might just reach people enough to encourage them to show up on a Sunday morning."

TOP 10 KEYS TO MUSIC MINISTRY SUCCESS

A handy Letterman-style list by Scott Ressman

- COMMUNICATE** with everyone, especially the pastor.
- COORDINATE** the music with worship themes and/or the lectionary.
- COOPERATE** and be a team player. Establish "diva-free" zones.
- DIMINISH** the use of "traditional" and "contemporary" labels. It's all music!
- DEDICATE** yourself to excellence. Do the best you can with what you have.
- DISCOVER** the possibilities as you invite people to share their musical gifts.
- EXPLORE** all types of music and all kinds of instruments. Remember the youth members of your church!
- EXCITE** the congregation as you keep them guessing.
- EXPECT** the presence of all things Holy.

And the number one key to music ministry success ...

IF IT'S NEVER BEEN DONE THAT WAY BEFORE, WHY NOT TRY IT NOW?

TO FIND RESOURCES ON MUSIC MINISTRY, AND LEARN MORE ABOUT THE UCCMNN, INC., VISIT [UCC.ORG/MUSIC-ARTS](http://ucc.org/MUSIC-ARTS).

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