

NEWSPIRIT

Spring 2014

50th Annual Meeting of the Central Atlantic Conference

Official Call

The Board of Directors of the Central Atlantic Conference hereby calls the Fiftieth Annual Meeting of the Central Atlantic Conference, United Church of Christ to convene on Friday, June 12, 2014, at the University of Delaware, in Newark, Delaware.

Voting Delegates: Each local church shall be entitled to representation at meetings of the Conference by the chief lay officer designated by the local church and two lay delegates plus an additional lay delegate for each additional 500 members, or major fraction thereof, above an initial 300 members, and one (1) additional lay delegate provided such delegate is under 30 years of age. Representation shall be based on the last published edition of the Yearbook of the United Church of Christ.

Voting Members: Each ordained minister who has standing, each lay minister, and each commissioned worker shall be a voting member. Members of each Association's governing body, members of the Conference Board of Directors, and the Conference delegates to General Synod shall be voting members. Elected members of Boards and Instrumentalities of the United Church of Christ residing in the boundaries of the Conference shall be voting members.

CAC Bylaws, Article II MEMBERSHIP - Section 3 (a, b, c, d) Voting Members

Fiftieth Anniversary of the Conference

With the theme, The CAC@50: Celebrating the Past – Envisioning the Future, plans are underway for the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Central Atlantic Conference. We have invited the Rev. Quinn Caldwell, Pastor & Teacher of Plymouth Congregational Church (Syracuse, NY), as our keynote speaker. The Rev. Dr. Barbara Brown Zikmund (BBZ) is our banquet guest. Registration is now open at the conference website, www.cacucc.org. Join us for the weekend or the day, but please join us.



The CAC@50: Celebrating the
Past-Envisioning the Future

The 50th Anniversary of the Central Atlantic Conference will be celebrated over two years beginning at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the Conference. We're in need of an Anniversary logo to commemorate the occasion.

Design the 50th Anniversary Logo using the theme above. The winning design will be displayed on t-shirts, stickers, the conference webpage, and anyplace else we can think of.

Deadline for submissions is April 1, 2014. Send your design to The Central Atlantic Conference, 916 S. Rolling Rd, Catonsville, MD 21228, Attention Arnetta A. Jones or ajones@cacucc.org - send in .jpeg or .tiff format - high resolution. Any questions, contact Arnetta Jones at ajones@cacucc.org

Conference Minister's Corner

Big Changes Coming!

* The Rev. David Popham has joined the Ministry Team of the Central Atlantic Conference. David comes from the staff of the UCC's Rocky Mountain Conference and will be based in the Conference's Glen Ridge, NJ, office. David joins Kwame Osei Reed, Marie Bacchiocchi, and me as we move into revamped job descriptions that will seek to put a primary emphasis on congregational renewal and new church development. Marie moved into a new position on the Ministry Team on January 1 of this year. Previously, she had been Interim Associate Conference Minister for the Shenandoah and Catocin Associations.

* Interim Associate Conference Minister Dan Schroeder completes his tenure with the Ministry Team at the end of February.

* At the June 2013 Conference Annual Meeting, we announced that our New Visions fund raising effort had reached its basic goal. At a recent Board of Directors meeting, we celebrated the campaign's surpassing its challenge goals. As a part of New Visions, we continue to work in partnership with the Center for Progressive Renewal to provide coaching for ministers, consulting for churches, and sponsorship of a variety of workshops. The success of the campaign also means that special staff will be added to the Ministry Team later this year.

* As a part of these changes, we will be developing new ways to work with local church ministerial search committees as well as the Association Councils and Church & Ministry Commissions. In addition, the Conference has assumed responsibility for Boundary Training and the Potomac Association's Institutes (which provide quarterly seminars on UCC history and polity).

* Nationally, there are big changes underway for the United Church of Christ as unified

governance is implemented. Instead of multiple boards to oversee the national and global ministries, a single UCC Board held its initial meeting late last year. Our Conference is represented on the new Board by Mr. Frank Bolden from Christ Church in Summit, NJ, and UCC Moderator Brian Holeman from Peoples Congregational UCC in Washington, DC. Other UCC groups like the Pension Boards, United Church Funds, the United Church Insurance Board, the Cornerstone Fund, and the Council for Health and Human Service Ministries are still separately organized and funded.

* Speaking of the Insurance Board (which I happen to chair), Tim Harris was welcomed as the Board's new CEO/President in January. Tim is a UCC member from the Cleveland area with an impressive résumé in the insurance industry.

* This month, the UCC Board will formally act on the recommendation that the 2017 General Synod of the United Church of Christ be held in Baltimore's Inner Harbor (at the Convention Center and four nearby hotels). We anticipate that a "brainstorming" committee will begin developing welcoming and hospitality plans later this year.

* On February 1, 2014, we "closed the books" on our finances for 2013. Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) receipts were down by approximately \$2000 from the previous year. We anticipate that when the audit is completed later this month, a \$20,000 deficit will be shown in the operating budget.

* On a better note, the Conference's invested funds did very well in 2013; in addition, two significant gifts were received for Congregational Renewal and New Church Development from churches that are closing. The Conference Board will receive the final financial reports later this month.

Thank you for the many ways in which you support the work and ministry of the United Church of Christ!

Rev. Dr. John R. Deckenback



On November 23, 2013, Heavenswill UCC in Palisades Park, NJ, was received unanimously into full membership into the New Jersey Association and, therefore, into the Central Atlantic Conference. The church is led by the Rev. Jae Han. (Photo courtesy of Ina Isobe)

Lazarus Will Rise (Again)!

Date: Monday, December 9, 2013

On the Sunday after their devastating fire, I joined the combined congregations of Lazarus UCC/ELCA as they worshiped at the Lineboro Fire Hall. Nearly all of the 150+ folding chairs were occupied.

The service incorporated a blended liturgy with portions familiar to both the UCC and ELCA congregations.

After the service, their newly created "Crisis Team" briefed the congregations on the steps that have been taken to recover from the fire that gutted the church building last Tuesday (December 3rd). The congregations will continue

to worship jointly at the Fire Hall throughout December.

Later, at a joint meeting of the leadership, they reviewed the agenda for the weeks ahead. In just a few days, Lutheran and UCC members had amicably addressed what otherwise could have been challenging questions: What time should we worship? What version of the Lord's Prayer should we use? Where can we put the Christmas tree? How do we continue our Christmas traditions under these new circumstances?

I was impressed by their positive spirit and commitment to move ahead.

It was reported during the meetings that fire marshals have been unable to determine the cause of the fire.

Afterwards, exhausted after an emotional week, the UCC pastor, Sam Chamelin, said: "I am going home for a good nap." It has truly been a challenging week.

Update: Tuesday, February 25, 2014

In the three months since that first week after the fire, the Lazarus UCC and ELCA congregations have continued to meet and assess their future. Teams have been established to review their insurance coverage, to work the county to determine rebuilding requirements, to recreate destroyed records, and to plan for future reconstruction.

The combined congregations have been worshipping in the Lineboro Volunteer Fire Department's bingo room, just a few feet behind the fire trucks. In late January, ELCA Bishop Wolfgang Herz-Lane and I met with combined council. We are committed to continued ELCA/UCC collaboration throughout the recovery process. Later this spring, the churches plan to host an event to thank the

firefighters for their efforts on the night of the fire and since.

I am very confident that Lazarus will rise again!!!

Rev. Dr. John Deckenback

New Visions Campaign Meets Challenge

The New Visions campaign was launched at the Conference annual meeting in June, 2012. One year later, it reached and surpassed its basic goal, raising commitments for \$303,000. As of December 31, 2013, the campaign had received commitments that would, when fully paid, carry the total campaign result above \$350,000. The Rev. Michael C. Murphy, Senior Minister at Peoples Congregational UCC and campaign Chair, noted: "This is a superb achievement. I am grateful to everyone whose financial commitment has assured the Conference will now be able to fulfill the objectives of the campaign."

With sufficient funds in hand, the Conference Board of Directors, at its late February meeting, considered and approved the final revisions to the position description for a part-time Associate for Church Development and Congregational Vitality who will support new church development and congregational vitality and renewal. A key function of the Associate will be to identify and resource individuals who seek to develop new congregations. As such, the Associate will be required to assist in developing support groups for new churches and in identifying appropriate coaching for new church pastors. In addition, the Associate will work with congregations interested in developing intentional programs of renewal and revitalization.

A search committee will soon be named to seek and recommend to the Board a qualified individual to assume this role. The incumbent will ideally be a person with experience in and knowledge related to developing new churches and promoting congregational renewal. It is hoped that the selection process will be completed in time to announce the appointment at the Conference's annual meeting in June.

Funding through the New Visions campaign has already supported the Conference's unique relationship with the Center for Progressive Renewal (CPR), which has been providing the Conference with workshops, seminars, consultations, and coaching for its pastors and congregations. It is anticipated that the Conference's relationship with CPR will continue.

Rev. Robert Peters,
New Visions coordinator



In late October/early November 2013, certain members of Rock Spring Congregational UCC in Arlington, VA, made a mission visit to its partner church in Jerusalem, The Church of the Redeemer, primarily "to get to know the pastors, members, and youth of the church, to learn from them their situation, concerns, and hopes, and find opportunities for meaningful future activities." (Howard Hjort) Rock Spring Congregational is a just peace church seeking to understand better and ultimately contribute to a just peace solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Pictured here is the delegation in the courtyard of St. George's Anglican Cathedral in Jerusalem. From left to right: Martha Stansell-Gamm, Laura Martin, Howard Hjort,

John Deckenback (CAC Conference Minister), Kathy Dwyer, and Sa'id (the guide). (Photo courtesy of the Rev. Dr. John Deckenback)

First & St. Stephen's UCC Answers Board's Call to Support the Trans Community

On October 5, 2013, the Board of Directors of the Central Atlantic Conference of the United Church of Christ voted enthusiastically and unanimously to sign on as a partner with the Maryland Coalition for Trans Equality and to support passage of a bill, the Fairness for All Marylanders Act, guaranteeing and protecting the civil rights of trans individuals. (This bill is currently being considered by the Maryland legislature.) The Board also resolved to call upon all CAC churches to become better informed about and to begin a conversation on the trans community and, for those located in Maryland, to sign on as a coalition partner and to support the upcoming bill as well.

Shortly thereafter, First & St. Stephen's UCC in Baltimore, MD, hearkened to that call and began to lay the groundwork necessary to work on and through this important matter. To facilitate intra-congregational conversations, all members were encouraged to consult informative and educational resources on the trans community that are located on the UCC website at <http://www.ucc.org/lgbt/>. In addition, members availed themselves of two excellent local resources:

www.equalitymaryland.org/ and <http://pflagmd.org/resources/>.

More formally, the church hosted a one-and-a-half hour workshop after its Sunday morning service on the 24th of November. The workshop allowed the members of the congregation to become better acquainted with the trans community and educated them about important issues in and for that community, including and especially issues of civil rights. Jim

Henkelman-Bahn, a principal in Bahn Henkelman Consultants and a member of Christ Congregational Church UCC in Silver Spring, MD, graciously agreed to head the workshop. In addition, two representatives from the trans community, Karen Holmes and Catherine Hyde, provided the congregation invaluable insight from their own experiences.

The conversations and workshop culminated in a special congregational meeting in December. At that meeting, the church unanimously voted to amend its Open & Affirming statement to include explicitly the words "gender identity" and "gender expression." It also voted to become a member of the Maryland Coalition for Trans Equality and, as a sign of its commitment, its Consistory also agreed to donate \$500 to the Coalition on behalf of the church. In addition, members signed petition cards asking their state senators to vote for the Fairness for All Marylanders Act.

First & St. Stephen's believes that affirming, accepting, and advocating for the trans community is consistent with who we are as a church community and who we are called to be as children of the graciously welcoming God whom Jesus decisively reveals. In a spirit of humility and solidarity, we invite other churches of the Central Atlantic Conference to consider conscientiously whether they, too, can answer the Board's call and think through rigorously with us the implications and applications of such radical inclusiveness for our common life together in Christ.

Alex Vishio

Member, First & St. Stephen's UCC

Stewardship Thoughts

Ten Reasons Not to Pledge

Note: This is the sixth in a series of Stewardship Thoughts.

Our family has pledged annually for the last forty-four years. Currently, we pledge to Evangelical Reformed UCC in Frederick, MD, and to Christ Church, an Episcopal church in St Michaels, MD, where we currently reside. I have never understood the reluctance to pledge, especially when knowing the amount pledged is so important to those making budget decisions in the church.

I regularly view The Episcopal Network for Stewardship (www.tens.org), an excellent resource for those of us interested in stewardship. I found the following article written by the Rev. Tim Schenck, Rector of Episcopal Parish of St. John The Evangelist in Hingham, Massachusetts. I am presenting the following information with approval of the author.

"As stewardship season rolls around in churches throughout the country and people begin to squirm in their pews, I thought I'd help parishioners who don't want to pledge with some helpful justifications. I encourage you to use these on your rector, stewardship chair, parish treasurer, or the poor sap designated to give you a follow-up phone call. With a little creativity, you too can do your part to avoid furthering the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth.

1. **"I'm morally opposed to pledging."** This allows you to stake out the moral high ground. And, after all, shouldn't the church live up to its name as a community of "faith" and take it on faith that there will be enough money to pay for the heating bill this winter?

2. **"The disciples didn't pledge. Why should I?"** True. Plus, this statement demonstrates your

expansive knowledge of Scripture. Never mind that they gave their entire lives over to Jesus — they never actually filled out a papyrus pledge card.

3. **"I don't attend church very often."** Only Christmas and Easter. Oh, and every family baptism, wedding, and funeral. You may not be there when the church needs you but, boy, that church better be there when *you* need it.

4. **"It can't cost that much to run a church. Just bread, wine, and a priest, right?"** Make sure to tell the priest you assume he/she took a vow of poverty upon ordination. And that if your priest actually wanted a lifestyle that included a working boiler in the rectory, he/she should have become a hedge fund manager instead.

5. **"You'd just waste my money on candles. Or give it away."** Accuse the church of spending too much on frivolous things like feeding programs.

6. **"I don't trust the treasurer. He has shifty eyes."** It's always good if you can blame others as the reason for not pledging. Some popular ones include "I don't like the rector's sermons" and "The senior warden avoided me at coffee hour last May."

7. **"I prefer to give my talent rather than my treasure."** Who cares if your real "talent" is avoiding contributing to the life of the community?

8. **"I give when I can."** In other words, you drop two single dollar bills in the plate (rigorously folded to look like an \$11 bill) on the one Sunday a month you happen to show up.

9. **"I can't tell the future. The stock market might crash."** It's possible. Then again, why go to the grocery store? You might start a hunger strike next week.

10. **"What if letting go of the fear of pledging makes me generous in every aspect of**

life and brings me unexpected joy and abundant blessings?” Sorry. I can’t help you with that one.

If these don’t work, you can always propose a new slogan for your church: ‘All of the benefits, none of the commitment.’ Think of all the money your parish would save on stewardship mailings.”

Bob Ziegler

About the author

For forty years, Robert (Bob) Ziegler has provided leadership to congregations, associations, conferences, and The Pennsylvania Council of Churches on subjects such as stewardship, budgeting, financial controls, and fund raising for annual operating and capital campaigns. Bob is available for consulting with congregations of the Central Atlantic Conference concerning: financial assessments and reviews; narrative budgets; stewardship education and campaigns; accounting and controls review and recommendations; and software recommendations. Bob is President of Robert E. Ziegler Consulting, LLC, an organization that assists congregations with financially related issues. He can be reached at 301-514-6277 or rezieglerconsulting@gmail.com.

In Memoriam: Nelson Mandela (1918 – 2013)

Today is a time of profound reflection. We remember. We sorrow. We rejoice. We give thanks. On December 5, 2013, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela slipped this mortal frame to join the ancestors and ascend to the ages.

The anti-apartheid years were a gale force time for many people of African descent the world

over. Through wearied years, in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds, the destructive design of hatred met its match in the indefatigable will of the people to love. It meets its match still.

In the presence of evil – the will to quarantine people based on their religion, gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, income, age, ability, and more – the struggle to love continues, daunted yet undeterred.

Through horrific enslavement, colonialism, neocolonialism, the new Jim Crow and caste systems of every kind, we have determined that gross inhumanity will not have the last word.

There is no progress without struggle and our magnificent human struggle is to find our way home to one another in a world beset with derision, division, and devastating defeat.

Nelson Mandela taught many of us for the first time and reminded more of us still what we already knew, that the world belongs to us all, that the universe is the exclusive prerogative of no single nation, corporation, worldview, or group.

Belief in the possibility of change and renewal is one of the great legacies the religions of the world have bequeathed us. In the words of our now ancestral statesman, “As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.”

On this day, may we embody the very change in the world we so longingly ache to see. Our beloved *Madiba* has passed on. His spirit of *ubuntu* lives on: I am because we are. Love always finds a way.

Amandla Awethu! Power, it is ours!

Dr. Alton B. Pollard, III
Dean of the Howard University School of Divinity

Welcome

We welcome to the Central Atlantic Conference

- Rev. Jeffry Dull – Pastor, Emmanuel (Baust) UCC, Westminster, MD
- Rev. Aaron Newell – Pastor, Christ UCC, Baltimore, MD
- Rev. Damaris Ortega – Pastor, United Church of Christ Congregational, Plainfield, NJ

Passages

✝ Rev. William Jorris Beckmann

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/fredericknewspost/obituary.aspx?n=William-Beckmann&pid=167556007>

✝ Rev. Charles Edgar Finertie Jr.

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/concordmonitor/obituary.aspx?n=Charles-Finertie&pid=169415933>

✝ Rev. Carl Marks

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/democratandchronicle/obituary.aspx?n=Carl-Marks&pid=168248433>

✝ Rev. Edward Bronson Harrington Staley

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/therecordherald/obituary.aspx?n=Edward-Staley&pid=168838044>