



United Church of Christ

“A Global Ministry Church”



Bismarck, North Dakota

June, 2010

The Long Haul

Attention spans are short—and getting shorter. Consider the reaction to a sermon preached by the Congregational minister Jonathan Edwards in the early 1700's. The sermon title was “The Unchangeableness of Christ,” and it lasted upwards of two hours. Even so, it was reported that the congregation listened with rapt attention and that “they were unconscious of the lapse of time, and surprised that it closed so soon.” Unimaginable today!

The influence of television and the internet where things move quickly has drastically reduced the amount of time an average person remains attentive. Studies indicate that an adult listening to a presentation is focused for about 20 minutes before the mind begins to wander. Children's attention spans are shorter.

I was greatly encouraged recently when our church received an award from the United Church of Christ's Council for Health and Human Service Ministries for our outstanding support of Charles Hall Youth Services. It was given because our faithful commitment over the course of many years.

Charles Hall was started 45 years ago to meet the needs of high-risk children in our region. The vision and leadership for this special ministry largely came from our congregation. And over the decades, our support has not wavered. Even as I write, approximately 30 Charles Hall staff members are gathered in our fellowship hall for a training event. In a world of short attention spans, we have remained focused.

There are other areas where we have also bucked the trend. We are now in our eighth year of working in East Timor, and our work is bearing fruit. Over a hundred students are now studying at the village school we helped establish. We've come a long way, but we still have a long way to go before the Timorese will be able to sustain the operation. In the meantime, our ongoing support is critical.

We've also operated Jack's Place Food Pantry for over twelve years. Last month we received ten families as our guests. We remain the only food pantry in town where people can receive food on a no questions asked basis. In June we will use funds donated to the pantry to host the community meal known as The Banquet.

In a world of short attention spans, nothing captures headlines for very long. The January earthquake in Haiti was a catastrophic natural disaster; rebuilding will likely take an entire generation. Sadly, it remained part of the news cycle for mere days. The fact is that very little that is worth doing can be accomplished quickly. God calls us to a lifetime of faithfulness.

Pastor Jim

News and Notes.....



VBS Decorating Items Needed

We are looking for the following nautical theme items as decorations for Vacation Bible School:

Anchors, ship's wheels, old maps, telescope, parrots or seagulls, barrels, lanterns, chest/trunk, life rings, large sea shells, tropical fish, light houses, rope ladder, lobster trap, hourglass, stuffed whales, dolphins, sharks and monkey.

Please mark your name on the items, contact Dawn for more information.

Mission Project: Kits for Haiti

Church World Service (the CROP Walk people) reports that the need for Baby and Hygiene Kits for Haiti Relief remains high. Vacation Bible School is taking up the challenge for a mission project. The goal is to send 2 complete Baby Kits and 3 complete Hygiene Kits. Individual items can be donated by selected a pull-tab from the "Kits for Haiti" sheet on the VBS Registration Table in the foyer. Thank you for supporting your children and the people of Haiti!



Thank-you from Haiti

Earlier this year, our church responded to the tragic earthquake in Haiti with prayers and monetary support of nearly \$5,000. The funds are being spent on relief and recovery through Global Ministries, our UCC mission agency, in cooperation with Haitian church partners. For detailed information on the effort, see the Global

Ministries website, <http://globalministries.org> The following thank-you comes from our partners in Haiti:

Honor and respect to Global Ministries, their churches or others who have made this ministry so great. The National Spiritual Council of Haitian Churches (CONASPEH) takes this opportunity to thank you for everything: love, solidarity, Christian spirit and responsibility. This appreciation comes from our hearts, from the churches, from a people who never forget this great gesture, manifested and approved by Christ, our head, who is surely crying at this time. . .With a heavy heart, and in spite of the trembling ground, I send you all an embrace of love and gratitude.

Be blessed.

Patrick Villier

President, CONASPEH

New Windows

New windows have been installed throughout the church; many of the ones they replaced were 50 years old and very energy inefficient. The new windows cost approximately \$16,000 and were paid for by donations to the Building Fund. The next project Building Fund project will be to have landscaping done in the back yard in hopes of solving persistent water problems in the basement. The Board of Trustees has contracted with an engineering firm to draw up the plan and oversee the project. Thanks to everyone whose gifts to the Building Fund has helped to make these projects possible!



Sunday Morning Coffee Enjoy having coffee and goodies after church? Sign-up to bring treats some Sunday, the sign-up sheet is next to the coffee pot in the fellowship hall. You needn't be a baker—store purchased goodies are perfectly acceptable!

Still Speaking Magazine

The United Church of Christ has discontinued publication of the *United Church News* in favor of a new periodical: *Still Speaking Magazine*. This oversized, full color magazine will include articles and promotional materials for the life of the church. Three year subscriptions for the semi-annual publication are available for \$29 before July 1 and \$39 after. It can be ordered on the website of the national church at: www.ucc.org/magazine, or by calling 1-800-537-3394.



Scholarships Available

Scholarships are available for youth in the congregation to go to church camp or a school sponsored trip. Please see Dawn for more information.

Did You Know?

In 1943, Reinhold Niebuhr preached a sermon that introduced the world to the now famous Serenity Prayer: “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” Niebuhr was from the Evangelical and Reformed side of the United Church of Christ, and was one of the greatest theologians of the 20th century.



Coming Events.....

Summer Worship Schedule

On Memorial Day weekend we entered our summer worship schedule. Instead of two Sunday morning worship services, we are having one at 10:00 a.m. The fall worship schedule will begin after Labor Day weekend.





Conference Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Northern Plains Conference of the United Church of Christ will be held June 11-13 in Valley City. Pastor Jim, Evan Mandigo, Camille Grothier and Louise Zuern are delegates from our congregation.

The Banquet

Our church will serve the community meal known as The Banquet on Thursday, June 17th at Trinity Lutheran Church. Sign-up sheets for helpers and donated items are in the foyer. In the past we have served between 350 and 400 people.



Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School will begin on Monday, June 21st. This year's theme will be High Seas Adventure. Pre-school through 4th grade VBS will be held Monday through Thursday from 6 to 8 pm (dinner provided). 5th and 6th grade will have a sleepover from 2 pm on Friday, June 25 to Saturday morning at 8:00 am. Registration forms and sign-up sheets for donated items are on the table in the foyer. Contact Dawn if you have any questions

June 2010

As I Look At It:

First of all, I have to admit that I am a news junkie. I constantly search for news. I do not discriminate; I seek national, international, state and local news. The other reality I have to impart is that, in my opinion, there is really very little news being shared. Much of what we receive as news is really musings coming from an ideology. It appears to me that for much of what we receive under the heading of news we are getting a partial point of view rather than unvarnished truth. While today we have many more news outlets, some of them putting out their product 24/7, I dare say, we are getting less and less news than our parents did. Two facets of our modern news bother me. First, as I have already suggested, is that there seems to be a lack of truthfulness. Most of what comes to us as news seems to focus more on interpreting what is happening about us than simply telling us what is taking place. It appears to me that very little of what we receive can be taken at face value. The second concern I have is the lack of civility among those of us who share, receive and respond to the news. All too often instead of having a spirited discourse around the important issues of the day, we have attacks on those who are in the news, sharing their ideas. Rather than debating issues, we seem to focus on maligning one another. While this is true of our national leaders, I am especially bothered that it is become part of our town hall meetings, public school gatherings, community functions, home life and even congregational deliberation. Instead of focusing on issues before us, we waste our time attacking each other.

I have a vision of us in the Northern Plains Conference United Church of Christ modeling a more civil and faithful way for people to live together. I see us proclaiming by our actions a message proclaiming that diversity is the bridge to a new unity rather than the wall that segments, divides and weakens the very fabric of our culture. I urge us to seek NAMASTE, that ancient belief that is built upon the understanding that what we share is much greater than all that can divide. The ancients spoke of Namaste as the Spirit within me reaching out and finding unity with the spirit in you. Henry Nouen, the renowned theologian of the past century, spoke of it in terms of the Christ in Me connecting with the Christ in You. Let us celebrate the diverse lives that look at the events of each day differently. Then let us thank God that God has such an infinite creativity that there can only be one of us. May we with grateful hearts thank God that there is within each of us the living presence of the Spirit of God, which means for me that there is a foundation upon which we can seek understanding in those areas where we have differences so that together we can search for the hope that would embrace all life. Namaste is not a call to ignore the differences that confront us; in fact, I believe it is just the opposite. It is a call to embrace the differences and grow together through and beyond them. May we in the church be a community that is not afraid of differences but rather embraces them. May we be a people that do not attack the person that voices the difference but seeks to explore the issues that inform the various viewpoints. Let us not seek to win or lose but to build together the faithful path to tomorrow. Let us strive to live Namaste.

***Grace and Peace
Wade***