

The Peace Visitor



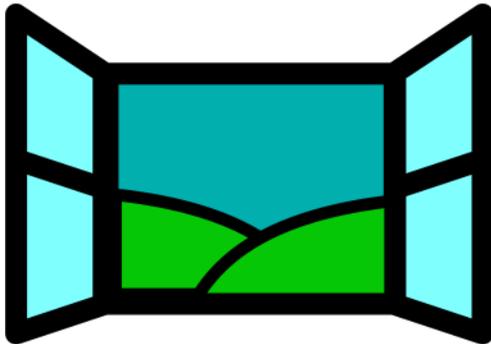
Windows, Mirrors and X-rays

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. 1 Corinthians 13:12

Have you ever pondered how marvelous is our gift of vision? We are able to see the faces of those we love. We can watch as autumn unfold around us in shades of red, orange and yellow. We can view eagles lazily floating over the Mississippi river held in place by invisible updrafts. We even build our self-understanding on our own images in the mirror. Our sight tells us much about our world, our neighbors and ourselves. I think on a metaphoric level, sight can even guide us to a deeper understanding of the church.

Proportionally most of us spend far less time looking into mirrors than we do looking out windows. Our focus is intentionally outward. I think that is the way church is meant to unfold too. We are all looking at ways that we can connect and help our neighbors. We see suffering and pain and we feel connected to it. We view our fellow travelers quite clearly. But we can't lose sight of ourselves either. It is important to look into the mirror and really understand what we look like. There is a need for caution here; we can't be so focused on our own image that we become more interested in maintaining that image than living our true identity. Perhaps, what we could really benefit from is X-ray vision. Seeing ourselves at our very core would be a great thing.

I think, that deeper x-ray image, is the meaning of Paul's words in Corinthians. We see ourselves dimly in reflection but God asks us to reflect deeper into ourselves and also into our world. In some of the conversations that I have had with New Beginnings groups and church leaders lately, it feels as though we have been doing that deeper x-ray work. We see the possibility hidden under the outer perceptions. We are looking at ways to take what we have uncovered buried deep in our hearts and bring it out to the light of day. Maybe with God's help we are again seeing ourselves more fully, and then looking again out our windows to the world we are called to help.



Pastor John

October 2016

Pastor John's Theology Word of the Month:

ec·cle·si·ol·o·gy [ə,klēzē'äləjē] **NOUN**

1. the study of churches, especially church building and decoration.
2. theology as applied to the nature and structure of the Christian Church.

*One of the ways we can understand the **ecclesiology** of the United Church of Christ is to be aware and attentive to Tony's path to ordination. It takes a lot of hard work and dedication to arrive at the point of an ecclesiastical council and we all pray for the Holy Spirit to guide Tony on that day.*



YOU are invited to Tony Romaine's Ecclesiastical Council! October 19

An Ecclesiastical Council (EC) is a special meeting that is convened by a vote of the Committee on the Ministry for the specific purpose of examining a candidate for Ordination or Privilege of Call.

The EC is moderated by a representative from the Committee on the Ministry (COM), supported by a second person from the COM who serves as clerk and makes a record of attendance, of the motion, and of the vote on

the motion. This record is sent to the Conference office to become part of the candidate's permanent file. The host pastor gives words of welcome and leads in an opening prayer. In-Care Advisor introduces the candidate to the EC. Questions are asked of the Candidate to determine readiness to be ordained.

Each church in the Conference may send voting delegates to attend the EC in the same number that they do for the Annual Meeting of the Conference, plus one youth/young adult at each membership level. Since we are the host church for Tony's EC, we can have as many attendees as we like (though only two will be eligible to vote.)

Please plan to attend this special day in the Romaine family's life and the life of our church! A luncheon will follow the meeting. (Tony is bringing his world-famous Pioneer Beans!)

There are some members interested in exploring what it takes to become a Just Peace church. If you have an interest in discussing this movement and the designation, please let Moderator Jon Tufte know!

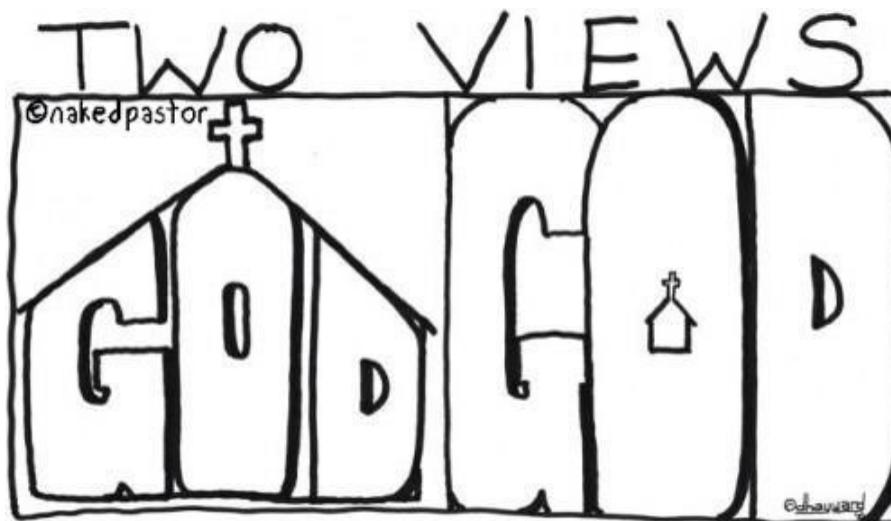
What is a “Just Peace” Church?

The Just Peace Church vision is a hallmark of United Church of Christ theological identity. For 30 years, the Just Peace Church pronouncement has inspired a grassroots movement of UCC congregations committed to corporately naming and boldly proclaiming a public identity as a justice-doing, peace-seeking church. The Just Peace pronouncement articulated the UCC position on war and peace distinct from other approaches such as crusade, pacifism, or “just war.” Grounded in UCC polity and covenantal theology, the position focuses attention on alleviating systemic injustice of all types using non-violence and calls us to offer the message, grounded in the hope of reconciliation in Jesus, that “Peace is possible.”

Justice and Witness Ministries is committed to a revitalized Just Peace Church movement and to empowering and resourcing congregations to create a stronger justice and peace witness. Now is the time to rekindle our commitment to Just Peace and make visible our longstanding witness to this approach. To do so, we will be working to update the list of Just Peace Churches in the UCC and will keep this site up to date with educational resources.

Does your church consider itself to be a Just Peace congregation? What is your church doing to live out its calling to be a Just Peace church? What does it mean to be a Just Peace Church in times like these?

For more information contact uccjustpeace@gmail.com and join us in conversation via Facebook and Twitter@JustPeaceUCC.



FAITH FORMATION

The Journeys of Flat Jesus

In September, Flat Jesus really travelled!



Flat Jesus joined Bev T. at Butchart Gardens in Victoria.



Flat Jesus spent time with Pastor John at a retreat in Texas.



Participants learn under Jesus' watchful eye.



Posters featuring Flat Jesus were a popular activity.



FAITH FORMATION

An interesting little book caught my eye at the thrift store. It was written here in Minnesota about ten years ago. John Sweeney had gone to the Minnesota Zoo with his wife — a favorite artist was performing a concert. He was fuming because the artist actually had to stop the concert to ask people to keep the volume of their conversations down so she could hear herself in her monitors. He couldn't understand how an audience of mostly upper-middle-class, educated, 30– to 50–year-old “Minnesota nice” people could be so very disrespectful. His wife reminded him that **“they’re not trying to be rude, they’re just forgetting to be civil.”** This experience spurred Sweeney to challenge himself and his co-workers to come up with 365 ways to bring civility back to mind.

As I read these words, I realized that our society is STILL at a point where we often forget to be civil. In fact, in our wider culture, incivility is accepted, even lauded. In 2016, we still need a Return to Civility. Combining this book with a suggestion from a member of our congregation to **“give us one concrete thing each week to focus on and practice,”** let’s journey through the book together.

Faith Formation is not just Sunday School classes or a moment of the service. It’s the day-to-day wrestling with how to be God’s people, doing God’s will in the world. I share this book to start family conversations. Try on these suggestions for a week or so. The first suggestion is below. The next four (of the book’s 365) are printed on the Fridays of the calendar. Then discuss your experiences. Was it obvious? Easy? Hard? Ridiculous? Did trying a particular suggestion lead to a different or interesting experience? **Talk, share, wrestle, discuss.** Find examples of civility (and incivility) in action. Discuss them with neighbors in your pew the following Sunday. Take the time to notice what “Minnesota nice” really means — and what it should mean. Start your own list.

Let me know how it goes. —Michelle Dettmann, *Faith Formation Chairperson*



Make the World More Civil, Idea #1—Be the “yes person” for those around you. When your friends, family, or coworkers have an idea, need to talk, want feedback, or just need a listener, be the “yes person” - the person who listens with an open mind and always says “yes, I can see your side of it” or “yes, I can help you with that” or “yes, I can see how that might work” or “yes, I am listening.”

Return to Civility: a Speed of Laughter Project, John Sweeney & The Brave New Workshop. 2007.

“A Humble Presence”

It's interesting these days when everything seems to have to be bigger, or brighter, or . . . competing with others for a small segment of the buying consumers. Is that possibly what is meant by “doing church?” Competing with each other for congregation members?!

“Doing” church is having the best and most modern church building and sanctuary. Having the best choir, the best organ, the best community festival, etc. Assuming that “if we build it, they will come.” Having that “extravagant” welcome, or that “extravagant” invitation. But, is that what God is calling us to do?

Or, are we being asked to meet people at their point of need? Are we to meet them out in the community, our neighborhood, and not expect them to come to us? In some cases, church is the very place that has disenfranchised them in the first place!? And, are they wanting “extravagant help” or maybe more of a humble servant in covenant with them? Working together with other faith communities, not doing by ourselves.

I believe we are being called to walk humbly with each other, being in covenant with those who are living in the margins, serving those in need, just as Jesus did. We are being called to “Be the Church.”

I encourage you, when asked where our church is, that you answer with, “We hold our Sunday Worship Service at 4th Street and 8th Ave South, but our ‘church’ is in our community, our neighborhood: that's where you'll find us.”

Blessings to each of you in answering God's call to you to follow the teachings of Jesus and to be of service to all you touch, in all you do.

Jon Tufte, Moderator



COMMAnts from the Conference Minister – October 2016

What Legacy Will You Leave?

Last week I had one of those unique opportunities afforded a Conference Minister from time to time. Reverend Carolyn Fure-Slocum, one of our own authorized ministers and College Chaplain at Carleton College, asked me to speak at an event marking the 100th anniversary of the chapel at Carleton in Northfield. It was part of a larger celebration honoring the 150th anniversary of the college.

Carleton College was founded in 1866 by the Congregationalists, one of four streams of church that eventually became the United Church of Christ. This much I knew, but when I started doing some more extensive research in preparation for my evening at Carleton, I was inspired by what I learned.

The founding of Carleton was a visionary, risky, and thoroughly faithful enterprise of the Church. The Congregationalists in Minnesota back then were at the vulnerable place of their

own very tender beginning. A book titled “Congregational Work of Minnesota, 1832-1920” described it this way: “The territory of Minnesota had been organized only in 1849. Its population at that time was about 4000. When the decision was reached in 1860 to found a Congregational college, the population [of MN] had risen to 172,023. There were, in the MN of 1860, 47 Congregational churches, ten of them less than a year old, and the average membership of all of them 28. There were only 30 ministers and about 12 church buildings. Not more than three of the congregations were self-supporting.”

Just think of that! Just 47 small churches with a tenuous grip on their own future made the bold commitment to found a college. And that college still flourishes today, nurturing the intellectual and spiritual development of students, reflecting those foundational impulses of the Congregationalists all those years ago to blend a zeal for learning with a deep respect for the sacred.

This narrative of our church ancestors’ forethought and vision causes me to think about the concept of legacy. What legacy are we in the Church of today leaving for those who come after us?

It seems a worthy exercise for us to consider this question. Each of the four predecessor churches of the United Church of Christ left its own imprint on the United Church of Christ of today and on our world. Educational institutions, health & human service organizations, bold missions, & a daring witness for justice in critical moments of history are all part of the enduring legacy they left us. What will our legacy be?

The legacy we leave depends on the vision and character of our ministries today. So take some time to consider questions like these with leadership in your ministry setting:

- What enduring impact does your ministry have on the lives of others? How is that impact evident?
- What are you so passionate about doing in your community that the ripples of that work are felt far beyond the doors of your building?
- How are you planning today for the legacy you wish to leave in the future? Does the vision you have for your congregation’s ministry somehow extend beyond the confines of your current reality? Are you willing to take a risk for the sake of something bold?
- If your church were to ever make the very difficult decision to close, how could your plan for the distribution of your remaining assets leave a legacy that would far out-live your building and your church?
- What do you want your ministry’s legacy to be? What can you do to ensure that legacy?

The context of Church is very different today than it was when our ancestor Congregationalists stepped up so faithfully to found Carleton College. Yet I hope we remain today a people of bold vision and faithful forethought, eager to leave behind a legacy that endures.

With gratitude for all you do,

Reverend Shari Prestemon, Conference Minister





Submitted by Dorothy Zika

Our Little Free Pantry will be installed and blessed at the People's Fair on October 8! Like the Little Free Libraries that have popped up all over, there is a movement to place and stock Little Free Pantries — accessible boxes where people in need can find some of the basics, like toilet paper, socks, peanut butter, crackers, etc. There are no photos of our particular box — yet — but here are a couple other examples!

This one's in Brownsdale, MN, and was featured on KAAL in southeastern Minnesota.

Ours will probably look like this one.



Remember to keep us up-to-date on your address and other contact info.

Did we miss your birthday on the calendar? Let us know!

Thought of the Month

If you could have any building or institution named after you, which one would you choose?

From *The Conversation Piece: Creative Questions to Tickle the Mind*

Remember to let us know if you are ill or hospitalized. The hospital can't let us know you are there, due to HIPAA and other privacy concerns. The only way we know to put you on the prayer list and come visit is if you call the office and leave us the information.

Also, let us know if you **wish** to be put on the prayer chain or the prayer list in the bulletin. We want to know how much information you are comfortable sharing.

Thanks so much!



Are you able to visit or send a note to members who are homebound or living in long-term care?

They would love to hear from you.

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We are constituted so that simple acts of kindness, such as giving to charity or expressing gratitude, have a positive effect on our long-term moods. The key to the happy life, it seems, is the good life: a life with sustained relationships, challenging work, and connections to community.

~Paul Bloom, Canadian psychologist

The Sunshine Report—Joys and Concerns

Herman & Barbara Schleicher's daughter Jodi —
get well

Herman Schleicher—get well following knee surgery

PEACE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Treasurer: Lisa Hanson
Financial Secretary: Michelle Dettmann
Council Secretary: Val Broste Members at Large: Brad Hanson, Curt Hutchens

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Faith Formation: Michelle Dettmann, Sue Towler, **OPEN, OPEN, OPEN**
Mission: Eleanor Conrad, Brad Hanson, Shirley Hoff, Becky Nieland, Mary Stamps