

# BEACON NEWSLETTER

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A Multi-racial, Multi-cultural, Open and Affirming Congregation

MAY 2009

## THE GREAT FIFTY DAYS!

*The only answer in this life, to the loneliness we are all bound to feel, is community.*

— Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*

The “great fifty” as they are called, refers not to that momentous birthday the leads to the second half of life --- but to the 50 days between Easter and Pentecost: that time when the Holy Spirit, in story after story as we read from the Acts of the Apostles, moves in and among the disciples to form *community*.

If there is anything that people want more than anything else in these apocalyptic times, *it is community*. I email with a high school friend who tells me again and again that the churches she visits all “lack something”. Could it be the presence of the Risen One among the church in *community*?

If you were to sit down and put black on white what it is you seek in a church community --- and let me assume that some of this information is currently getting fleshed out in your responses to the Search Committee Questionnaires --- I suspect we would find some agreement in our responses: ( we want) a place to grow in love and faith, a place where we can put our gifts and skills to use, a place where we can be involved in the wider community. That’s our longing!

But note: the church isn’t just “any” community. The church isn’t the Red Cross, Rotary, AA, CA or Kempo (who use our facilities), or any of the different fraternities/sororities we belong to. Christian Community belongs not to who is in and who is out but who knows and who doesn’t. Knows what? The saving message about Christ, who is found *in community*.

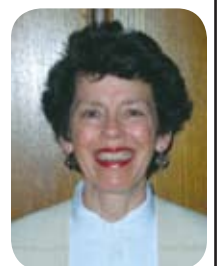
And note again: Christian community offers this message in relationship. Not only is our message unique --- notice I did not say better than, just different than --- it only happens in relationship.

Jeffrey Arnold in *The Big Book On Small Groups*, writes, “It takes a community of fellow disciples who can help each other learn to live a life transformed by the Holy Spirit ... Without a community in which we learn, practice, fail and eventually move out from as agents of change, we are left without a secure foundation. Without the foundation of community, the church will ultimately fail.”

Jean Vanier, founder of communities in France and North America for people with handicaps, describes *community* analogously: “If we are accepted with our limitations as well as our abilities, community gradually becomes a place of liberation. Discovering that we are loved and accepted by others, we are better able to love and accept ourselves. So *community* is the place where we can be without fear or constraint. Community life deepens through mutual trust among its members.”

Where do you find community at EACC? Is it in our fellowship times? During the Passing of the Peace on Sunday? Do you find it as you work on the various boards and committees? Do you know it at Bible study on Sunday morning? Does community happen for you at fellowship in the parlor following worship? Where is the Spirit moving among us to create community? What are your expectations for an increase in love, trust, growth and change during these Great Fifty Days?

Waiting for the fire to break out at Pentecost, Your friend and Interim Minister, Pastor Terri



### Interim Minister

Rev. Terri Young

### Director of Music

Timothy Robson

### Director of Gospel Choir

Joan Bacon

### Christian Education Director

Marcy Molmen

### Financial Manager

John Peterson

### Church Secretary

Diana Reid

### Custodian

Ernie Clark

### Director, Saturday Fun

Cheryl Wacasey

### Beacon Editors

Kathy Baker

Mary Sherry

### Design Editor

Cyndi Henderson

### Photographer

Kathie Buckner

### Sunday Schedule

8:45 a.m.

Adult Bible Study

10:00 a.m.

Celebrative Worship  
Service &  
Church School

Following worship  
Fellowship and  
Refreshments

Bus transportation  
available to/from church

## **MAY WORSHIP SCHEDULE**

### **SUNDAY, MAY 3 FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

Preacher: Rev. Terri Young

Scripture Readings:

Acts 4: 5-12

Ps 23

1 John 3: 16-24

John 10: 11-18

Worship Theme: Enfolded by Love  
Communion Sunday

### **SUNDAY, MAY 10 FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

Preacher: Rev. Terri Young

Scripture Readings:

Acts 8: 26-40

Ps 22: 25-31

1 John 4: 7-21

John 15: 1-8

Worship Theme: Abiding in Love  
Mother's Day/

Festival of the Christian Home/ Family Week  
Music by the Gospel Choir

### **SUNDAY, MAY 17 SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

Preacher: Rev. Randy Hyvonen

Scripture Readings:

Acts 10: 44-48

Ps 98

1 John 5: 1-6

John 15: 9-17

Worship Theme: Friends Together

### **SUNDAY, MAY 24 SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

Dialogue sermon between the Rev. Al Phillips  
and Pastor Terri Young

Scripture Readings:

Acts 1: 15-17, 21-26

Ps 1

1 John 5: 9-13

John 17: 6-19

Worship Theme: Guided in Prayer

### **SUNDAY, MAY 31 PENTECOST SUNDAY**

Preacher: Rev. Terri Young

Scripture Readings:

Acts 2: 1-21 or Ezek 37: 1-14

Ps 104: 24-34, 35b

Rom 8: 22-27 or Acts 2: 1-21

John 15: 26-27; 16: 4b-15

Worship Theme: Spirit for All  
Strengthen the Church Special Mission Offering  
Confirmation

Last Sunday Chancel Choir sings until fall

## **PULPIT GUESTS**

Please note in the May Worship Schedule that we will have two special guests in our pulpit in May. On May 17, Rev. Randy Hyvonen will be preaching, and following worship will tell us about "The State of the UCC." Then the following Sunday, May 24, Pastor Terri and the Rev. Al Phillips will be sharing the pulpit in a dialogue sermon.

## **STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH OFFERING**

The Strengthen the Church Offering grows the UCC's future by funding The Stillspeaking Ministry, new and renewing churches, youth and young adult ministries, and lay and pastoral leadership formation – especially among women and people of color. We are encouraged to "spread the love" and give to this Special Mission Offering on Pentecost Sunday, May 31.

## **ADULT BIBLE STUDY**

The Adult Bible Study group that meets before worship every Sunday in the Conference Room will be discussing the following topics and scripture passages in May:

May 3 – A New Family in Christ – Ephesians 1: 2-14

May 10 – New Life in Christ – Ephesians 2: 1-10

May 17 – New Revelation in Christ – Ephesians 3: 1-13

May 24 – New Life in the Home – Ephesians 5:21- 6:4

May 31 – Equipped for New Life – Ephesians 6: 10-18



## **HEALING SERVICES**

Healing and Prayer Services, open to the Cleveland Clinic Community as well as our own members, will continue every Wednesday at noon throughout May. These services are a blessing of peace and restoration in the middle of a busy week.

Then on the fourth Sunday of the month, a healing liturgy is a part of our Sunday morning worship service. The fourth Sunday of May is May 24.

## **SATURDAY FUN**

On April 11 we had our "Annual Easter Egg Hunt" with 38 children and 11 adults participating and of course everyone was looking for the golden eggs (we put money in those). We made bunny faces and told about the religious meaning of the colors of jelly beans and discussed the Resurrection of Jesus.

Then on the 25th we went to Loehman's Plaza for a movie. We have the following activities planned for May:

**May 9 – Mother's Day crafts • May 23 – Fun and Stuff (\$10 fee).**

Please call Cheryl Wacasey (216-513-8006) or Cecelia Pritchett (216-990-5575) for more information and to sign up.

## **MEN'S COUNCIL**

The Men's Council's annual brunch honoring the women of the church will be served this year on May 3rd, after worship. Men and children are invited to attend this event as well, but the food is especially prepared as a tribute to EACC women.

## **ICE CREAM SOCIAL**



The Christian Education Department is giving a fundraiser, an Ice Cream Social, on Sunday, May 17 from 11:30AM-1:00PM. The proceeds will help send eight of our church school kids to "Love the Pool Camp" at Templd Hills this summer. Please come eat ice cream after church on May 17, and be watching for other fundraisers that will help provide camper scholarships. Bring a friend!

## **TELLING OUR STORIES**

Make Memorial Day Weekend memorable by coming to a story-telling session in the parlor during coffee hour on Sunday, May 24. Come listen to stories of faith from some of our members. Then be thinking of a story you might like to share at a future story-telling session, about a turning point in your life, or an experience that was of particular significance for you. Can't think of a story you have to tell? Give it a moment or two – it will come to you! Everyone has such a story!

## **PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE**

Surveys were distributed on Sunday, April 19, 2009. Those members not in attendance received a Family Questionnaire or an All-Church Survey and a cover letter describing the next steps in the call process used in the United Church of Christ. Fill out the survey and questionnaire soon. We would like to have them returned by May 3, 2009 so that we can review your comments. We sincerely appreciate your input. If you have not received your questionnaires yet, or if you have any questions, please contact anyone on the committee: Adrienne Brockway, Mary Jane Cariens, Eleanore Dees, Calvin Humphrey, John Merritt, Noreen Roderick, Dean Sieck, Nikolas Southgate and Charles Williams. Thank you for showing your love and care of EACC.

## **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MINISTRY**

No human activity is guaranteed to bring a person closer to God. But many people have consistently found some pursuits to be helpful. Thanks to active support from EACC members who are concerned about our young people's Christian nurture, we're able to offer our students more of two such activities.

Music has been part of Jewish and Christian worship for at least three thousand years. Martin Luther said that, of all the disciplines, music was second only to theology. Some members of the clergy believe that lay people learn 90% of their religious beliefs from the hymns they sing.

Why should music affect people so much? One reason is probably that music can transplant emotion directly from one person's heart to another's. Handel's Messiah or folk music like "Amazing Grace" evoke strong feelings in many people. How would we understand the meaning of "glory" if not for music and the grandeur of nature?

Another possibility is that music helps us achieve unity. When reciting liturgy or singing, we are all doing the same thing at the same time. I believe the experience feeds our inner inclination to cooperate with each other.



We have more music in the Christian Ed Program these days, first, because Carolyn Smith volunteered to lead the students in singing on second Sundays when the Gospel Choir leads the service. As a member of the Chancel Choir, Carolyn is then free to slip away for a little while.

But we didn't have an instrument for Carolyn to use in leading the singing—until Judy Sieck told Dean that a friend of hers was willing to donate a piano if we'd pay the moving costs. So now we have a piano and I am eager to hear Carolyn and our students make sweet music together.

The other activity I think will draw our students closer to God is gardening. When I asked the students what they'd like to do in Church School during the summer, their top choice—far and away—was to do a gardening project. I was delighted by this result. Growing plants is almost intrinsically spiritual. We can plan and plant, weed

## **FELLOWSHIP AND COMMUNITY LIFE MINISTRY**

The church picnic will be Sunday, June 14th, after church services. We will be at Forest Hills Park again same location as last year).

The Maundy Thursday service was well attended. Thanks to everyone that volunteered and participated.

We are in the process of planning a beautiful Homecoming in September.

God's Blessings - Annie Buck & Charles Williams, Co-chairs



and water, but the harvest depends on the seeds' potential for life and the nature of plants to grow.

Our intention to work with nature this summer has been helped along by Charlene Higginbotham who, on April 19, spoke with the students about the "Integrity of Creation" and suggested that same theme for VBS this summer.

Eleanore Dees has been teaching the elementary class for a few weeks now, and is helping plan the garden project. As always, thanks to Pastor Terri and the CEFF Ministry for their on-going concern and constructive questions and ideas. Ruby Brooks of Stewardship has also given important advice and encouragement.

As the plans take shape, opportunities for sharing will

probably come along. If the students plant melons, for example, they may not use all the seeds; we'd offer extra seeds to anyone who could use them. If a member has extra seeds and offers them to us, we'd be grateful. Later on, maybe we'll want to have a fruits and veggies table on Sundays; bring your extra tomatoes and take home some beans.

Most importantly, I think our Church School teachers from these past months deserve a rest. I hope many of you will step forward to show us a gardening technique you like or just spend some time working side by side with the students. You may find it drawing you closer to God.

Marcy Molmen  
Christian Education Director

## UNITED BLACK CHRISTIANS

The tradition of recognizing graduates every year continues as the Greater Cleveland Chapter prepares to honor the class of 2009.

If you have a student entering or graduating from high school or college, please let Cloggie or Charlene know by **May 24** or the date of graduation if before our deadline.

Conversations with the Greater Cleveland UBC churches continue with three churches still to be scheduled. The ministers have been candid in their response to the questions posed and forthright in sharing their ideas and support for UBC. If you would like to participate in the conversation, talk with the co-chairs of Church in the World about an opportunity to view and provide feedback on the questions.

Cloggie Crowder



## USHERS MINISTRY

"Busy Basket" resources (books, paper, pencil, crayons etc.) are kept in the back of the church for children that remain in church with parents and may become restless during worship. The ushers will be happy to provide this resource to you.

Charlene Higginbotham



### Slimmed Down Finance Report

January through March, 2009

#### Celebrate

Contributions since the beginning of the year are 3% above the budgeted goal.

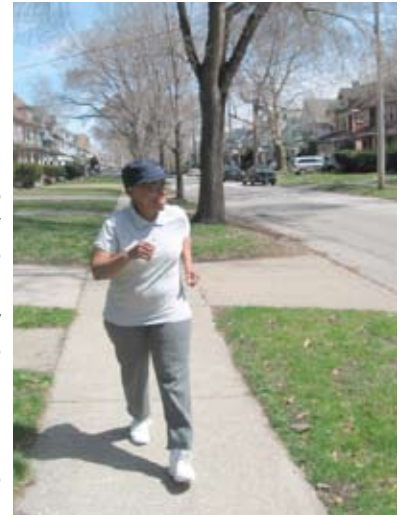
#### Take a Bow

Total Expenses of \$101,212 were just slightly more than the \$99,616 received in income.

Note: Please contact Financial Manager, John Peterson, for copy of the January – March report.

## WHERE'S JOAN?

Our very own 80-year-old Joan Southgate started her 250-mile walk from St. Catherines, Ontario to Cleveland on May 1, so as you read this she is literally on the road, maybe in the rain, maybe dodging traffic, but trying to maintain her usual 10 miles a day. She will be arriving back in Cleveland on Saturday, May 30, and we are all invited to join her in the last leg of her journey.



We will be meeting at the parking lot near Bratenahl Village Hall, 411 Bratenahl Road, at 10:30 AM to walk down East 105th, through University Circle and on then to the lawn of the Cozad-Bates House. You can walk the entire 3.5 miles or you can join us somewhere along the way; check the Restore Cleveland Hope website ([www.restoreclevelandhope.org](http://www.restoreclevelandhope.org)) to follow Joan's month-long journey and to see our May 30 route.

For sure be on the Cozad-Bates House lawn at 1PM on May 30 for a joyous celebration including music, speeches and refreshments!

And here's some good news: in addition to a \$500 contribution from the Woman's Association and \$500 from Men's Council, EACC has raised over \$700 to support Joan on this walk to raise awareness of Restore Cleveland Hope and the Cozad-Bates House. You can continue to send in your contributions or put them in the boot in the parlor until May 24.



## STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY

Building issues – windows, floors and bathrooms – continue to be the focus of Stewardship Ministry activities.

The windows on east and west side stairways have been badly in need of replacement for some time. The Ministry expects to select a contractor to do the replacement work within the next month.

Carpeting work on the floors – east and west landings, and narthex – is now partially complete. Delays were due to water damage causing additional work to remove old tiles before carpeting could be installed. Work is expected to be complete within the next month.

The ladies' first floor bathroom has new floor tile and has been spruced up. Repairs needed in the ladies' basement bathroom are next on the agenda.

John Baker, Secretary

## **A LETTER FROM THE AMERICAN GUILD OF ORGANISTS**

Dear Rev. Young,

This is a very late letter of thanks to the Euclid Avenue Congregational Church for the generous donation of \$760 in honor of your Music Director, Timothy Robson. What an asset to your church he must have been for these past 25 years! He has certainly shared many of his diverse talents with the Cleveland Chapter of the AGO over the years.

At our last Executive Committee meeting it was decided that we would add to the amount your church donated to make a full \$1000. We will use the money for a new scholarship in Tim's name to advance the study of the organ.

Sincerely,

Leslie G. Bauer, Secretary  
AGO- Cleveland Chapter



## **MOTHER'S DAY PEACE PARTY**

Bring your mother, your grandmother, or someone else who has been a mothering person in your life to the second annual Mother's Day Peace Party on May 10, from 2-4 PM in the Indian Cultural Garden (the one with the statue of Gandhi in it) on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. There will be gifts for Mom, music, refreshments, an opportunity to have your photo taken in front of the Gandhi statue, craft activities for the kids, and it's all free! And you won't want to miss a visit from Rosa Parks (AKA Sherrie Tolliver of Women in History), our guest speaker. Call 216-383-1684 for more information, and plan to join us!

## **FROM "INTERACTIONS"**

"Yes, we can!" was the resounding response to the question posed at our Homeless Stand Down (HSD) Kick Off. The question: can we commit to serving every single one of the 2,100 guests expected at HSD 2009?

"Yes, we can!" was no lie as this commitment turned into action. Our expectations were surpassed in every arena because of an overwhelming outpouring of support, money, hard work, donations, and time. Over 750 individuals [several were EACC members] and 140 congregations [EACC was one]... stood up together to create a Stand Down movement in which every single person who entered our doors had access to all the services and goods available, including a smiling and friendly face. This astounding (and humbling!) outpouring enabled us to serve hundreds more people who were not able to attend the event by sharing clothing, personal care kits, bagged lunches, and more with our partner shelters, drop-in centers, subsidized apartment buildings, and meal sites.

HSD Numbers:

Hygiene kits – 2,297  
Bagged lunches – 2,657  
Bus passes – 2,327  
Hair cuts – 350

Reiki/massage sessions – 250  
Mini check-ups – 200  
Podiatry checks – 200  
Photo portraits – 300

Toni Sacco, Coordinator  
Homeless Stand Down



Easter Sunday



Easter Sunday



**A MESSAGE FROM WILLS MORGAN**

Dear Family and Friends,

You will know by now that our mother, Linda Marie Douglas, sadly passed away this week.

We invite you to leave words of condolence at lindadouglas1935@googlemail.com. We can't promise to respond to individual messages (some of us may contact you via our personal email accounts) but we will read and cherish them all.

With thanks and warm regards,

Marjorie (Donna), Tony, Wills, Wayne, Dyelia, and Jannett  
*(Editor's Note: Wills Morgan, who lives in London, sang in our Chancel Choir during the '90s and wanted us all to know about his mother's passing.)*

**ERNIE CLARK'S HOURS**

Monday – 4 - 9 PM  
 Tuesday – 4 - 8 PM  
 Wednesday – 4 - 9 PM  
 Thursday and Friday – off  
 Saturday – 8 AM -12 noon  
 Sunday – 7 AM - 1 PM,  
 November 1- April 30

**JULIA HAYNES WRITES:**

*"Your prayers, cards, visits and calls during my hospital stay were wonderful and comforting. After coming home I received even more cards and calls. Thank you for your caring!!! Your thoughtfulness and prayers continue to play a great part in my healing.*



Love, Julia

**EASTER BALLOONS**

Remember the balloons we released on Easter Sunday? Cards were attached to them, with the request that the finders send them back so we'll know how far our balloons traveled. The first one that came back was from Fay Baughman in Carrollton, Ohio, who found a card from Noreen Roderick on April 17. Fay wrote, "I found this while mowing the Amsterdam Cemetery. This would be about a 3 1/2 hour drive south west of Cleveland. Christ is risen indeed!" Watch for more returned cards on the bulletin board at the parking lot entrance.



**\*\*\* KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS \*\*\***

- ◆ Margaret Brewer
- ◆ Samella Carroll
- ◆ Gyasi Cooper *(friend of Noreen Roderick)*
- ◆ Julia Haynes
- ◆ Karen Hostoffer
- ◆ Kevin Heely *(friend of Chris Sanders)*
- ◆ Calvin & Helen Humphrey
- ◆ Hallie K. Jones
- ◆ Phyllis Martien
- ◆ Dominic Martin
- ◆ Wills Morgan
- ◆ Doris Simmons
- ◆ Barbara Smith Weems
- ◆ Beverly Williams *(sister-in-law of Kathie Buckner)*
- ◆ Pastor Terri Young

**Rev. Terri Young's mother** passed away on Tuesday, April 28. She left for Texas on Tuesday. The service will be on Saturday. Pastor Terri plans to be in the office on Monday. Please keep her and her family in your prayers.

Please remember these persons in your prayers and notify Eleanore Dees, (216) 295-0872, or the Church Office to identify the names and/or needs of others who would appreciate being remembered in our prayers.

**\*\*\* JOYS \*\*\***

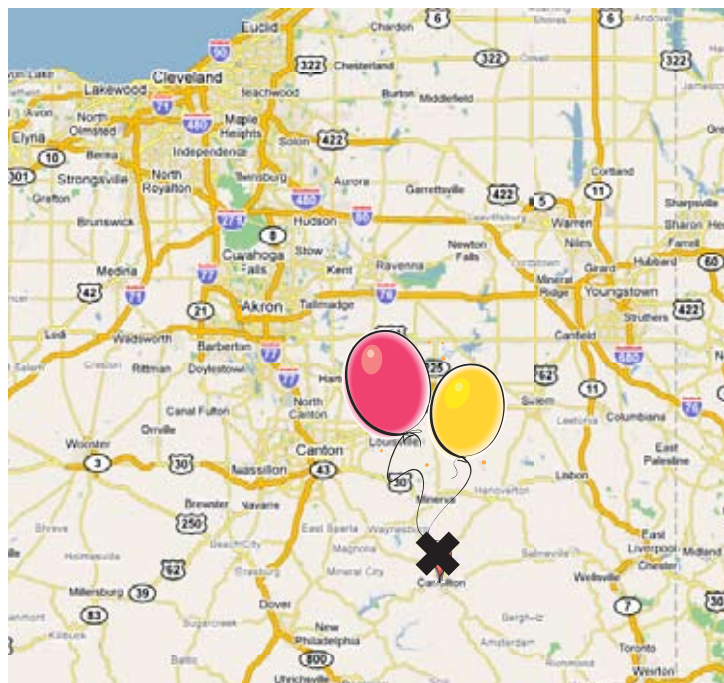
**James Franklin, Jasmine Franklin, Ty'mier Jones and Ty'wan Mauldin** made Easter Day even more joyful than it already was by being baptized on that day and increasing our membership. They came to EACC by way of Cheryl Wacasey's Saturday Fun program.

Then the following Sunday, **Jessica Stevenson and Sydney Stevenson**, the daughters of EACC members **Tony Stevenson and Kimberly Saint-John**, were baptized as well.

The Beacon is remiss in not having already reported the baptism of **Samuel Robert Nordstrom** back in March.

On May 31st, Pentecost Sunday, **Christian Sanders, Jeremy Southgate, Lavera Hampton, and Amber Green** will be confirmed during worship.

Welcome, babies, children, and youth!





# MAY 2009

(BIRTHDAYS/WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES NOTED HEREIN)



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; width: fit-content;"> <p>Your issue of the Beacon is available on-line in color. If you would like to receive your Beacon by way of e-mail, and save us the printing and postage costs, please call the church office or sign up online at: <a href="http://www.eacc-ucc.org/beacon.htm">www.eacc-ucc.org/beacon.htm</a></p> </div>					<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
					Karl Steckmann Julia Haynes	Western Reserve Association Annual Meeting
<b>3</b> 8:45 - Adult Study 10:00 - Worship 11:30 - Fellowship 12:15 Confirmation Class Brunch for the Women	<b>4</b> 5:30PM Transitional Steering Team 7:00 PM - C.A.	<b>5</b> 10:00 AM - Women's Association 4:30 PM - Kenpo Martial Arts	<b>6</b> 12 noon - Prayer & Healing Service 6:00 - Gospel Choir 7:00 PM - A.A 7:00 C.O.M.	<b>7</b> 8:00 PM - Chancel Choir	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> 10AM - Saturday Fun
					Ann Drysdale	Precious Bogard
<b>10</b> 8:45 - Adult Study 10:00 -Worship 11:30 - Fellowship 12:15 Confirmation Class 2-4PM Mother's Day Peace Party	<b>11</b> 7:00 PM - C.A.  Nancy Nigosian	<b>12</b> 10:00 AM - Women's Association 4:30 PM - Kenpo Martial Arts	<b>13</b> 12 noon - Prayer & Healing Service 7:00 PM - A.A	<b>14</b> 8:00 PM - Chancel Choir	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>17</b> 8:45 - Adult Study 10:00 -Worship Randy Hyvonen "The State of the UCC" 11:30AM-1PM - Ice Cream Social 12:15 Confirmation Class	<b>18</b> 7:00 PM - C.A.	<b>19</b> 10:00 AM - Women's Association 4:30 PM - Kenpo Martial Arts 5:30 PM Stewardship Ministry 7 PM RCH	<b>20</b> 12 noon - Prayer & Healing Service 6:00 - Gospel Choir 7:00 PM - A.A	<b>21</b> 8:00 PM - Chancel Choir	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> 10AM - Saturday Fun 10:00 - Men's Council
<b>24</b> 8:45 - Adult Study 10:00 -Worship Rev. Al Phillips preaching 11:30 - Fellowship 12:15 Confirmation Class Telling Our Stories	<b>25</b> 7:00 PM - C.A.  Rhonda Crowder	<b>26</b> 10:00 AM - Women's Association 4:30 PM - Kenpo Martial Arts 5:30 PM - Personnel Practices Committee	<b>27</b> 12 noon - Prayer & Healing Service 6:00 - Gospel Choir 7:00 PM - A.A	<b>28</b> 8:00 PM - Chancel Choir  George Barnum	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> 10:30 AM - last 3.5 miles of Joan's walk 1PM - celebration at Cozad-Bates House
<b>31</b> 8:45 - Adult Study 10:00 -Worship Strengthen the Church Special Offering Confirmation 11:30 - Fellowship						
					<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Monthly Ministry/Team/Council Meetings</b></p> <p>Monday - 4th - Transitional Steering Team</p> <p>1st Wednesday - Council of Ministries -</p> <p>3rd Sunday - Christian Education &amp; Faith Formation, Fellowship &amp; Community Life, Worship &amp; Arts</p> <p>4th Saturday - Men's Council</p> <p>4th Sunday - Church in the World</p> <p>5th Sunday - Ushers</p> </div>	

❖ Advisers tapped to help guide the White House's revamped faith-based office say their role is still evolving as the initiative expands its portfolio and tries to find its footing in the young Obama administration.

At a two day meeting on April 6-7, initial members of the council, who were named in February, along with White House officials, named nine additional advisers to the White House office for religious and community groups, adding a gay rights leader, an Orthodox Jew, a black bishop and others to an eclectic 25-person council. Among those named were Harry Knox, director of the religion program of the Human Rights Campaign and member of [First Congregational UCC](#) in Washington, DC and The Rev. Sharon Watkins, general minister and president of the [Christian Church \(Disciples of Christ\)](#), a UCC partner church.

The overhaul of the office centers on an expanded mission to go beyond matching faith-based groups with government funds, advisory council members said in recent interviews. One of the biggest changes is asking religious leaders to help shape policy on a number of issues, including (but not exclusively), economic recovery, abortion reduction, interfaith dialogue and responsible fatherhood.

Richard Stearns, president of the evangelical relief agency World Vision and a member of the advisory council, said the panel seems to have two roles: serving as "a council of elders" that can offer their expertise to the White House, and also representing their constituents to decision-makers. One aspect of the Bush office - partnering faith-based and community groups with federal funds - remains intact, but advisers stress they're not making the decisions on who is or isn't funded. The current council will serve for one year only to make way for other voices to be heard.

Members of the council have been pleased to feel they are being taken more seriously than they were during the Republican administration and the Clinton White House. For example, advisers were given a courtesy heads-up as Obama drafted his executive order permitting federal funding of stem cell research, and prior to his nomination of Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius as Health and Human Services secretary. When some members expressed concern about proposed reductions in charitable deductions or rescinding conscience protections for healthcare workers, the White House responded with explanations, they said.

Former Southern Baptist Convention President Frank Page, one of the advisers, said he has been surprised at the rapid pace of some policy decisions - many of which he has not agreed with - but believes his views were heard when he questioned the plan to rescind conscience protections for healthcare workers.

The Rev. Larry Snyder, president of Catholic Charities USA and another adviser, said it was helpful when faith-based director Joshua DuBois got on the phone and explained the administration's position on charitable deductions.

"I think there's a broader tent, if you will, in this group," he said. "President Bush's faith-based office, right or wrong, was associated with evangelicals within the faith community. I

think this group is broader and is including not just Christians of many stripes but also people of other faiths and people of no faith."

Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and a member of the advisory council, said the revamped office intends to continue the Bush plans for equal access to federal funding for social service groups, but the outreach from the Obama White House is more substantive.

Paul Monteiro, who handles religious affairs for the White House Office of Public Liaison, has made outreach to the black church a priority. He recently spoke on a panel about "The Role of the Black Church in the Age of Obama" and then held a conference call with bishops of McKenzie's AME Church.

"This president, I think more than some of our other recent presidents, sees a lot of policy issues that we talk about as moral issues," he said, from immigration to high percentages of African-American prisoners. "The black church is involved in almost any policy you can think of, and so we welcome different views."

In picking a diverse council, Obama fulfilled a campaign pledge to listen to an array of religious voices, said the Rev. Jennifer Butler, executive director of Faith in Public Life, a progressive think tank in Washington. The council includes noted conservatives, like the Rev. Frank Page, a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and high-profile liberals, like Fred Davie, the openly gay senior adviser for the non-profit Public/Private Ventures.

"There's always a temptation to just get people on board who agree with you on everything," she said. "But Obama is sticking to his word that he wants to bring diverse Americans together to talk about even some of the most controversial issues of the day."

Gay rights leaders said they were heartened by the addition of Knox to the council, but remain ambivalent about the faith-based program in general, especially since the White House has yet to decide whether groups that take federal money can discriminate in hiring.

"I am relieved to see good colleagues on the council," said the Rev. Rebecca Voelkel of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "But we need to see President Obama on a concrete level putting his language of inclusion and justice for (lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender) folks in practice."

❖ In its filing, 08-3078 - "Prometheus Radio Project v. FCC," the UCC Office of Communication, Inc. requested that the Federal Communications Commission be given an opportunity to revise its most recent set of media ownership rules before the court undertakes its review. These rules currently allow television stations to own newspapers in certain circumstances. The request was granted.

The Rev. J. Bennett Guess, Director of UCC OC, Inc., said, "A fresh look with appropriate deliberation will go a long way to ensuring the public receives a diversity of views from a multiplicity of media outlets in these trying times."

**[GOD], YOU HAVE ALWAYS  
MAPPED OUT TOMORROW'S  
ROAD; AND, ALTHOUGH IT IS  
HIDDEN, TODAY, I BELIEVE,**

*JEFFERY W. ROWTHORN*

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