

Historian's Notebook

by George Blanchard

What was happening 100 years ago?

In 1909 the pastor of our church Rev. Shepherd Knapp sent the following invitation to the men of the church. It was a very unusual approach and the question is, was it successful?

"I invite you to meet me and the other men of Central Church, of eighteen years old and upward, in the chapel," [the original name of the large parlor] "on Sunday evening at eight o'clock, to confer about the men's share in our church work.

If you do not wish to join heartily in such a movement, stay away. If you are willing to let the women go on doing the larger part of the active work of the church, stay away. If you are not ready to face squarely your own personal responsibility in this matter, stay away. This is not a joke, but serious: read Judges 7: 1-8. To speak plainly, your coming will be construed as a promise. Yet I hope to see you there."

There has been no record found of the response or turnout on that night, however, several months later another letter from a committee of five men, may answer the question. It is quite lengthy and wordy but several sentences sum up the situation.

"The committee...appointed by the Men's Union of Central Church, to assist the minister in the maintenance and development of the 'Wednesday

night service,' finds, upon investigation, that the average attendance of men at this service is lamentably small, being less than ten from a total number of men in the congregation of about one hundred and seventy-five. It would be difficult for us to convey to you who have not been in attendance any adequate idea of the unique character and value of these meetings, under the conduct of our pastor. In variety and flexibility, power and sustained interest, they have been remarkable. At times the sense of shame and injustice, in view of the great amount of work which has been put into the preparation of these services by the pastor. and the mere handful of us who have availed ourselves of them...has been discouraging to us, and must have been much more so to the pastor."

I guess some things never change!

Dear United Congregational Church,
Thank you for your contribution of \$1,000 to the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns. Your generosity helps to sustain The Coalition as we work to transform church and society toward the full inclusion of lgbt/same-gender loving people and our families.
Thank you for joining us in mission!
Rev. Ruth Garwood
Executive Director



Spring flowers will adorn the Sanctuary Easter Sunday, April 12.

Following worship, the plants will be distributed to ill and less mobile members of our congregation as well as those who have lost a loved one since Christmas. Spring flowers may be given



"To the Glory of God" and

In honor of living person[s]
In memory of someone who has died
In celebration of the season

If you are interested in donating a plant, please mail your payment, to the office by March 27. The cost of a plant is \$12.50.

The GREEN ROOSTER CoffeeHouse
Doors open 7:30
All shows 8:00 p.m.
508-798-3010



Feb 28	PLAIN FOLK – Worcester's best!
Mar 14 \$12	FISKE & HERRERA and ROB ADAMS
Mar 21	CHUCK & MUD – 30 th Anniversary Show at the Hanover Theatre
Mar 28	DON WHITE & THE LOOMERS
	Thanks for dropping in! We always need volunteers.

I.H.N. HOSTING IN MARCH

United Congregational Church will be hosting homeless families for the Interfaith Hospitality Network the week of March 8-15. For more information stop by the sign-up table in Robinson Room on Sundays, or call Hosting Co-Coordinator, Tim Camp at 508-798-6997.



March 21, 2009
THE CHUCK & MUD
30th ANNIVERSARY SHOW
2 SHOWS

at the Hanover Theatre
4:00 p.m. Children's Show
featuring Chuck & Mud and the Hole in the Dam Band, Mr. Kim, and Jason the Magician

8:00 p.m. Adult Show
featuring Chuck & Mud and the Hole in the Dam Band, the Duke Levine Band, Riverband, Ric Porter, Blackstone Valley Bluegrass Band, and many more surprise guests.

This is a benefit concert for Chestnut Nursery School.

For more info:

www.HanoverTheatre.org

WIDER CHURCH UPDATE



Hello all,

This is an update from a recent meeting of the Wider Church Covenant Ministry (WCCM). The Saturday meeting transcended the scope of traditional Wider Church meetings and focused on both funding outreach efforts, as well as a broader view of what God is calling WCCM to do. In many respects, this meeting could be considered a retreat. Thanks to Sandra Johnson for graciously offering her home to host this important meeting.

After an opening prayer, the meeting kicked off with discussion of budget related topics. A decision was made to allocate \$1,000 from the First Night Fund (profits from United's First Night efforts) to United's food cupboard. WCCM is also investigating how the Footsteps (halfway house on Woodland St.) facility can be assisted after a recent fire.

Conversation then turned to how United can further support the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN). Liz Brown, with the assistance of other WCCM members has developed a plan to collect donations of cleaning, grooming and school supplies for IHN families. This plan will allow members of United to contribute inexpensive, but essential items. Look for this plan to be rolled out in the near future. A discussion of spiritual gifts was then introduced by Sandra Johnson. Sandra circulated copies of a "Spiritual Gifts Inventory" survey. WCCM members will complete this survey to better understand/rank individual spiritual gifts

(such as: evangelism, teaching, administration, hospitality, music). It was suggested that a discussion of spiritual gifts may make for an interesting discussion/luncheon event at United. WCCM members concluded that a survey of individual spiritual gifts will allow us to better align our talents with what God is calling us to do.

Following lunch, Tim Camp led a brainstorming exercise focused on how WCCM members view the strengths and weaknesses of WCCM. Summary results below:

Doing Well

Well coordinated mission spending
Communication to congregation
WCCM is an active group that meets regularly and is passionate
Aligned well with missions supported by United

Needs Improvement

Encouraging others to participate in outreach ministry
Need to be more active in our own neighborhood
Organizing mission projects with emphasis on "hands-on" activity

WCCM members viewed the meeting as a fulfilling experience during this challenging period of merger exploration. The question of, what is God calling us to do may not have been fully answered, but those in attendance at this meeting may now be closer to an answer

From your Wider Church Covenant Ministry: Liz Brown, Tim Camp, Chuck Demers, Dorista Goldsberry, Sandra Johnson, John Owanisian

VNA CARE HOSPICE Spring 2009 Grief Support Group A general support group for adults who are coping with the death of a loved one

When: Alternate Tuesday evenings beginning February 17, for seven meetings (dates below)

Time: 6:00 p.m. — 7:30 p.m.

Location: United Congregational Church



2009

February 17

March 3, 17, and 31

April 14 and 28

May 12

There is no fee for participating in this group
New members accepted up until the 2nd or 3rd meeting

To register please call Susan Tarantino
800 521 5539 ext. 5624 or email
starantino@vnacarenetwork.org

If you wake up Sunday morning, and it is snowing, be assured that Church will still be held. We will not cancel worship, but we urge you to use discretion for your own safety.



SUNDAY WORSHIP IN MERRIMAN HALL



We continue to worship in Merriman Hall, and we will return to the sanctuary on April 5, Palm Sunday.

Even with the efficiency of new boilers, it is still our desire to be responsible stewards not only of our own financial resources, but also of the earth's precious resources.

We are always the people of God, the Body of Christ, whenever we come together to pray and sing and worship God.

We are always a community of God's beloved wherever we find ourselves. We are always a community filled with the Spirit as we try to live out our faith on whatever new paths God calls us.

So please come so that we can continue to worship together as a faithful and faith-filled community!

Food Cupboard



THE FOOD CUPBOARD NEEDS:

CANNED MEATS & FISH
PEANUT BUTTER
CANNED BEANS
MAC & CHEESE • PASTA & SAUCE
POWDERED MILK
SOUPS • CEREAL
CANNED FRUITS & VEGGIES


**United's Food Cupboard Receives
Donation from
The United Way of Central MA.**

The United Way of Central Massachusetts has donated \$20,000 from its Community Support Fund to the Worcester County Food Bank to be used to help local emergency feeding programs meet their increased requests for food assistance. The Food Bank used this donation to acquire food for distribution directly to Partner Agencies located within the United Way of Central MA service territory, which includes United's Food Cupboard. The food received includes a variety of "meals in a can", including Spaghetti with Meatballs, Beef Ravioli, Cheese Ravioli, and Macaroni with Beef as well as canned carrots, potatoes, and mixed veggies.

SCHOLARSHIPS MADE AVAILABLE

The Corner Shop in Holden will be awarding two \$1,000 scholarships made available to any resident of the communities served by the Corner Shop.

Students who have successfully completed one semester of study beyond high school at an accredited school or institution may apply. Application forms may be obtained from the Corner Shop located in the First Congregational Church, 1180 Main Street, Holden, MA, during shop hours (Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m.) or from the church office. The deadline for applications will be April 30 with awards to be made in June. Further information may be obtained by calling the Corner Shop during regular hours. 508-829-9270.



Judith Page	2
Leon Blanchard, Jr.	3
Maurine Bastille	14
Warren Page	16
Shirley Hines	
Peter Dzaugis	19
Corinne Hansen	22
Doug McAllister	23
Carolyn Dik	25
Frederick Kimball	28
Marion Erickson	



**DAYLIGHT
SAVING TIME
BEGINS
MARCH 8**

**2009 PANCAKES AT THE FARM
March 14 & 21 9:00 a.m. 1:00 p.m.
Heifer International/Overlook Farm
216 Wachusett St., Rutland, MA**

Observe the maple sugaring operation, tour the farm, and enjoy a hearty pancake breakfast with maple syrup and pork sausage.

Admission \$10.00,
Children (3-10) \$5.00
(Under 2) free

Reservations are required
508-886-2221



**THANK YOU
FIRST NIGHT
VOLUNTEERS**

*Last New Year's Eve,
United Congregational*

Church served as a site for Worcester's 2009 First Night celebration. Despite the midday snowstorm and the bitter cold evening, our church's First Night activities were successful, thanks in large part to United's volunteers. Literally dozens of church members braved the elements, came to church, and made our building a fun-filled and welcoming place!

The Gym and Merriman Hall were venues for musicians, magicians and storytellers. The entertainment (including our own Chuck and Mud) began at 3:00 p.m. and lasted well into the evening. Special thanks go to those who directed the crowds coming to see these shows as well as those who shoveled the snow to keep our building accessible.

Our café in Robinson Room served soup, hot dogs, assorted beverages and snacks and revelers were grateful for the warm food. Special thanks go to all who worked in the café. Although the cold and snowy weather diminished the number of First Night attendees citywide, our café's sales totaled over \$600! Proceeds will be donated to community ministries our church supports.

Many visitors remarked about the physical beauty of the church as well as the warm hospitality extended to them. I personally observed the hard work and gracious welcome extended to everyone coming to

our doors. The volunteers made my work as our church's First Night Coordinator a joyful experience. They should be proud of their representation of our church to the community. May God bless all of you!

Tim Camp

SECOND SUNDAY



HEALING SERVICE In accord with one of our most ancient of Christian traditions, the Diaconate would

like to offer Healing Services on a regular basis. Immediately following worship on the second Sunday of the month, the pastor and a Deacon will be available to anoint and offer a brief prayer for those of you who would like to receive this healing blessing. It is our desire as pastor and as Deacons to provide for your spiritual needs.

**Bereavement Support Group
in Worcester**

Worcester Pastoral Counseling Center
128 Providence St., Worcester
(in the Worcester Senior Center)
Mondays 1:00-2:30 p.m.

Facilitators:

Doreen Hardy and Marion Howard
For more information please call Jean at
508-757-0376.

