



Northwest Word

News from the Northwest Wisconsin Association
United Church of Christ

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Five for Five

By Ann Larrabee, Division on Mission of the Church in the World

From time to time I find special envelopes in my bulletin on Sunday morning, asking me, gently urging me to help with the United Church of Christ's mission work, at home in my little town and out in the big world. Over the years, because I tend to bury my head in day-to-day concerns of family, church, school, etc. these little special envelopes became merely the initials we referred to them as: NIN, OGHS.

One day I realized that I didn't have a clear idea of what these missions were or why we participate in them. That's when I started learning about the 5 For 5 program.

There are five special missions that the United Church of Christ. The first, **One Great Hour of Sharing**, was the easiest (for me) to understand because I remember it from childhood. Usually collected the third Sunday of Lent, the funds support disaster relief, refugee relief and the development of other such missions. The money we send to help victims of Katrina or the Tsunami, those displaced by the terrors of war; this comes from One Great Hour of Sharing.

On Pentecost Sunday we find the **Strengthen the Church** offering. This money goes to start up new churches, support lay ministry and youth programs, help existing churches, and support the GOD IS STILL SPEAKING ministry. Our Church is changing just as our communities and social structure is changing: this fund helps us to remain strong and continue to be a positive Christian voice in the world.

Neighbors in Need offering is collected in October as part of World Wide Communion Sunday. Our neighbors are not just the people next door but the people in the next state, the next country. These funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (20 American Indian congregations), as well as Justice and Witness Ministry (just-peace programs, advocacy and other direct service projects). The money is also available for community

The Christmas Fund was new to me but is rapidly becoming very special. My father served the UCC for 33 years, and although he has passed away, this mission goes to help men like him, retired, who have dedicated their lives to preaching and ministry in the Church. Many of these families are having a hard time in this economic down-slide living on small fixed annuities and pensions.

The fifth mission is **Our Church's Wider Mission**. Each church chooses how much it can support the **OCWM** and its programs. Where there is need; that is where our mission goes. Part of the job of the **Church** in the World committee is to fund some of these projects with scholarships for those who want to help. But there is so much more.

I encourage my readers to do two things after reading this article. Go to the UCC website (www.ucc.org) and learn more about these missions for yourself. And work with your home church to make sure you too are **5 for 5**.

Flooding in Wisconsin 2008

by Gerald Bertsch, Disaster Ministries Wisconsin Conference

The 2008 flooding in June was worse than the flooding of August 2007 in terms of overall material damage to homes and business while affecting a larger number of communities. By the time it was over 30 counties were declared disaster areas by the Governor's office.

Four congregations in the Wisconsin Conference UCC received grants from OCWM in the hope that special offerings from the rest of the churches might help off-set them. Immediate action was required in order to express solidarity with these particularly hard hit communities in which these churches minister.

Three of these four congregations in the Conference also received OGHS grants from the UCC office of Disaster Ministries to assist them in their efforts to respond to the immediate needs of members or individuals in their communities during this crisis.

Florence Cappola also arranged for 6,000 tyvec suits to be sent to Wisconsin for volunteers working at clean up in flooded dwellings in Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Conference was able to contribute \$20,000 to the WIVOAD recovery efforts for 2008 flooding, gifts given by local congregations for flood recovery work.

House Calls

We often talk about the United Church of Christ as being a denomination of "firsts." Our denominational forebears were the first settlers to this new land, the first to form churches and governments, the first to found colleges, the first Protestant denomination to ordain an African-American to the ministry (1785), the first to ordain a woman (1853) and an openly gay man (1972), the first to form an integrated anti-slavery society (1846), the first integrated denomination to elect an African-American man as its president (1976), and so on.

Now, in 2009, a man who came to faith and was nurtured for 20 years in a United Church of Christ congregation has become the first African-American president of the United States. This is a momentous occasion, for the nation and for the United Church of Christ.

One of the things we know already about President Obama is that he will sound the call to this nation to become involved in service to others as we all move forward together to move our nation from crisis to healing and renewal. He sounded this call early on, before the Inauguration, encouraging people to get involved in community service on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. That call will continue.

Fortunately, we in the church have a head start in replying to this call to service. We've been doing that since our inception. We've always been a church in mission. This will be a good time to re-evaluate our current mission and service work and see where our communities have the greatest need. If you're not already involved in community mission, this would be a great time to start looking around and seeing what needs to be done.

One of the things I appreciated about President Obama's inaugural address was that he didn't sugar-coat the situation in which we find ourselves these days. We all know that times are tough economically. Most of us probably know at least one person who is out of job because of this economy. Perhaps that person looks at you in the mirror each morning. Perhaps she is sitting in the pew with you or standing in front of you at the grocery checkout.

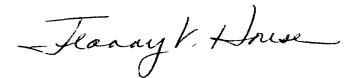
It is counter-intuitive, but it is precisely in these difficult times that those of us who still have relatively secure jobs and incomes will want to look at our own spending and see where we

can economize a bit and find more to give to others in their time of great need. Those of us who have time to spare will want to see where we can pitch in to help others.

More than ever, this is a time for us to listen to and heed Christ's call to remember that when we serve "the least of these," we are, in fact, serving Jesus himself. We see Christ in the poor, the unemployed, the hungry, the hurting, the homeless, the sick, the imprisoned, and so many more. Sometimes it's hard to recognize him because he doesn't look like we think he's supposed to look. But when we meet together in the breaking of the bread, we will recognize the Christ in each other.

Let us be first, once again. Let us be first in the struggle to rebuild an economy that serves all with justice and blessing. Let us be first in compassion and caring. And, remembering that Jesus said "The first will be last," let us be last in our need for glory, gratitude, and credit for a job well done.

Thanks be to God.



The Northwest Association has a new online presence. The "Northwest Wisconsin Association UCC" group is up and running on Facebook, the social networking site. It's a great way to stay connected in the Association, to let others know what you're doing in your churches, what mission trips or activities you're part of, and much more. It's a place to post a link to an article and start some discussion, to share news and information, and to see some of the faces of your brothers and sisters in the NW Association.

If you have a Facebook account, click on the "Groups" icon and search on the group name or just on "Northwest Wisconsin." It should pop right up with a link to follow.

Come join us!

(We continue to have a website at <http://www.nwwaucc.org>.)

Bits and Pieces

Souper Bowl of Caring – The Youth from **St. Stephens UCC of Merrill** will once again be participating in the Souper Bowl of Caring on Super Bowl Sunday. They are collecting monetary and food donations to be donated directly to the Merrill Food Pantry. The national movement has raised over \$50 million to help fight hunger and poverty in local communities. Thanks!

Urban Immersion – The ministry from **First Congregational UCC in Eau Claire** will be taking 6 students to Minneapolis for an Urban Immersion experience on January 23-25. Please pray for those travelling, for their experience and for the leaders. I'm sure this will be an awesome service trip for the students to enjoy.

Back Bay Mission – Members of **Community UCC in St. Germain** will be heading to Biloxi, Mississippi January 24-31. Many people have been helping this community and it is so nice to see that this is still continuing. Community UCC members will be helping our Southern neighbors, working to build up the body of Christ, reaching out in service to others, learning about a different culture, supporting the work of Back Bay Mission...and spending a week on the Gulf Coast in January...right now, I'm thinking that sounds like a great idea and much warmer than Wisconsin!

Chicago Retreat – The High School Youth Group from **First Congregational UCC of Eagle River** traveled to Chicago December 5th-7th. They shopped. They took a train to the Museum of Science & Industry where they were treated to a personal tour of the U-505 Submarine. They also helped lead worship at St. Paul. They are truly blessed to have such a fine group of young adults in their church!

Habitat for Humanity: Many thanks going to **Roberts Congregational UCC in Roberts** for their donation of 14 gallons of primer and 12 gallons of eggshell finish paint for the Spring Valley Houses. They are helping to build a better community by working with other organizations. If everyone helps a little...a lot can be accomplished!

If anyone has a specific topic you'd like me to discuss in these newsletters, please send me an email:

jewels4u@mwt.net.

Think warm! J Christine

"The point is not to pay back kindness but to pass it on." -- Julia Alvarez

IN OUR PRAYERS

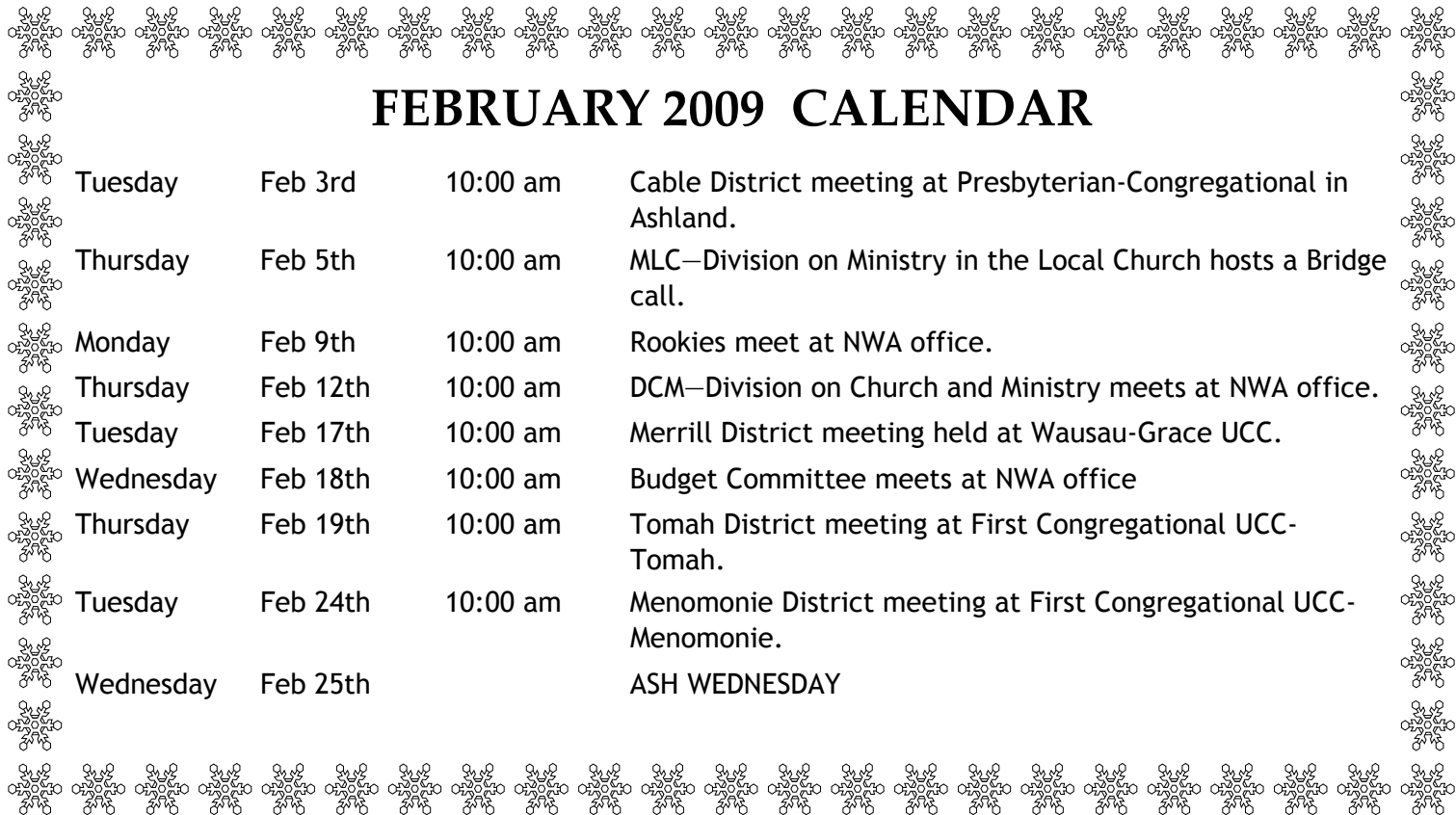
Those who live in harm's way, those who hunger and thirst, those who mourn.

- ✠ Lynne Panci, the office manager at Moon Beach, living with cancer.
- ✠ Rev. Deris Rice, deployed on active duty as a chaplain, awaiting orders to Iraq.
- ✠ All those who govern our cities, states, and our nation as they work to find solutions to the problems facing all of us.
- ✠ Our sisters and brothers who are facing difficult and stressful financial times.



Five NW Association churches: **Roberts** – Congregational United Church of Christ, **St. Germain** – Community United Church of Christ, **Schofield** – Peace United Church of Christ, **Sparta** – Congregational United Church of Christ, **Stevens Point** – Peace United Church of Christ. (Each month, we ask you to keep five churches and their ministry in prayer for the general health, growth, and welfare of the congregations.)

FEBRUARY 2009 CALENDAR



Tuesday	Feb 3rd	10:00 am	Cable District meeting at Presbyterian-Congregational in Ashland.
Thursday	Feb 5th	10:00 am	MLC—Division on Ministry in the Local Church hosts a Bridge call.
Monday	Feb 9th	10:00 am	Rookies meet at NWA office.
Thursday	Feb 12th	10:00 am	DCM—Division on Church and Ministry meets at NWA office.
Tuesday	Feb 17th	10:00 am	Merrill District meeting held at Wausau-Grace UCC.
Wednesday	Feb 18th	10:00 am	Budget Committee meets at NWA office
Thursday	Feb 19th	10:00 am	Tomah District meeting at First Congregational UCC-Tomah.
Tuesday	Feb 24th	10:00 am	Menomonie District meeting at First Congregational UCC-Menomonie.
Wednesday	Feb 25th		ASH WEDNESDAY



NORTHWESTWORD-Feb

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