

June 5, 2009

The Neighborhood Playhouse is a professional theatre company in residence at The Neighborhood Church, Palos Verdes, CA. Started in the memory of Robert Wright, producer of the legendary Carol Burnett Show, and long time supporter of the Neighborhood Church, the Playhouse operates on Bob's standard for excellence. Mixing local talent with professional guest artists and designers, The Neighborhood Playhouse's unique collaborative aim is to provide quality theatrical productions as a means of community outreach. Each production works closely with the Neighborhood Church and local business to raise funds and awareness for a specifically designated charitable organization. The motto of the Neighborhood Playhouse is "Art is Alive When You Embrace it," and each effort strives to provide an artistic experience that challenges the mind, and stimulates the heart and soul of its audience and cast members. The audience for The Neighborhood Playhouse brings hundreds of new visitors to the neighborhood Church each year.

Isaiah 2:1-5 A vision concerning God's people
Romans 8:9-11 The Spirit dwells in you
Psalms 29 Worship God in holiness

Strengthen the Church. God is Still Speaking,

June 6, 2009

Just as in the parable of the growing seed, Global Ministries volunteer Nancy Diepenbrock doesn't know how she became a sower of seeds or how seeds planted will grow. Nancy – a registered nurse from Eagle River, Wisconsin – went on a month long medical mission to India and served at Willis Fairbank Pierce Memorial Hospital in Wai. She expected to help the indigent, she said. She expected to see poverty and need – which she indeed found there. But she also found the unexpected – young, hungry, open and willing minds in a nursing school where students were dedicated and resolved to make India a better place to live – despite their own hardships. Nancy doesn't know whether the seeds she planted while teaching there will grow. But she knows that the blessing she found in planting them was an unexpected God-given grace.

Isaiah 5:15-24 A vision concerning God's people
John 15:18-20, 26-27 Testify in the face of persecution
Psalms 29 Worship God in holiness

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2009 A Calendar of Prayer for the United Church of Christ

Spirit for All

May 31, 2009
Pentecost Sunday



Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, a 6,000-member predominantly African-American congregation, has been involved in planting more than 15 new UCC congregations! One of the most recent is Trinity UCC in Gary, Indiana.

The new church boldly envisions: "We seek to be a 7-day-a-week church, which not only gives God praise on Sunday, but praises God through our service to God's people Monday through Saturday." Its "Sisterhood Ministry" hosts a book club and "Sistahood Sundays" with forums receiving a strong, excited response from the community. They've brought the "Lost Boys of the Sudan" into community with members and Gary residents to tell their heart-gripping stories. The church has given out over 150 turkeys and other food items through its "Comfort and Care Ministry" and is active with area ecumenical groups and social agencies.

Conference Minister Stephen Gray enthusiastically shares that Trinity "has grown to about 70 on Sunday and we expect it to take off after getting into its new building. Also, in its third year of life, Trinity UCC in Gary will be given the award at this year's Conference Annual Meeting for the highest per capita Our Church's Wider Mission giving in 2007 - \$158 per person!!!" Over 15 months of regular meetings with the new church leadership, Trinity UCC-Chicago and the Indiana-Kentucky Conference have faithfully tended and financially supported this "daughter church." Our gifts to Strengthen the Church provide grants so that new congregations can have a skilled full-time minister to nurture leadership development, growth, vision and ministry in the critical first years, as the Rev. John E. Jackson, Sr. is doing for Trinity UCC-Gary. Won't you help plant a church?

Spread the Love. Strengthen the Church. God is Still Speaking,

Acts 2:1-21 Filled with the Spirit or Ezekiel 37:1-14 Life to dry bones

Psalms 104:24-34, 35b Renewing the face of the earth

Romans 8:22-27 Praying with the Spirit or Acts 2:1-21 Filled with the Spirit

John 15:26-27, 16:4b-15 Christ sends the Spirit of truth

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2009 A Calendar of Prayer for the United Church of Christ

June 1, 2009

June 2010 will mark an auspicious anniversary for the UCC, mission-minded people everywhere and perhaps especially for one particular church in Boston. The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions will celebrate its 200th anniversary and Old South Church plans on highlighting this Board's inspiring work. The congregation will focus part of its celebration on the life and achievements of one of its most revered members, Reverend Neesima Joe Hardy. Neesima escaped from Japan, in search of learning, on a ship belonging to Alpheus Hardy. Mr. and Mrs. Hardy, members of Old South, took Neesima in and made sure he received the education he desired. Reverend Hardy was ordained at Mount Vernon Church in 1874 and returned to Japan where he founded Doshisha University in Kyoto. Mr. Mochinobu "Mike" Shimo is a current member of Old South and a graduate of Doshisha. It is his hope that a memorial to the Neesima-Hardy story will help preserve the history -- and the future -- of this global partnership.

Joel 2:18-29 God's spirit poured out
1 Corinthians 12:4-11 Various gifts, the same Spirit
Psalms 104:24-24, 35b Renewing the face of the earth

CENTERING PRAYER (May 28—June 3, 2009)

Creator Spirit and Giver of life, make the dry, bleached bones of our lives live and breathe and grow again as you did of old. Pour out your Spirit upon the whole creation. Come in rushing wind and flashing fire to turn the sin and sorrow within us into faith, power, and delight. Amen.

June 2, 2009

The Spirit of God is active in the Philippines – a known and living reality. Nancy Molin Longatan, a long term volunteer serving the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, experiences the power of the Spirit in rural churches there and on the shores of small fishing villages as well. She witnessed a group of fishermen pulling in a net full of squid, struggling to walk the net up the beach with back straps attached to their bodies. Soon, they were joined by young village boys who added their strength to the haul. Together they pulled the net up the beach, securing their catch. In churches, Nancy sees this same community struggle. Just as in churches everywhere, the budget discussions involve committee memberships, hymnals and allocating funds. Pastors struggle to divide "the catch" reconciling the needs of families with the demands of the call of God. We are blessed to have brothers and sisters like these.

Genesis 11:1-9 The fragmenting of human tongues
1 Corinthians 12:12-27 Many members, one body of Christ
Psalms 104:24-24, 35b Renewing the face of the earth

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2009 A Calendar of Prayer for the United Church of Christ

June 3, 2009

How Great Thou Art rang out during the worship service in Liter, Kenya as visiting members of First Congregational UCC in Appleton, Wisconsin prayed and sang with their sisters and brothers from the District Council of Churches of the Kerio Valley. First Congregational has had a partnership with the Kenyan church since 1999 and on their most recent trip there, installed the first water purification system in the Kerio Valley. The congregation's Director of Volunteer Ministries Deb Burich heard stories of Kenyan women risking their lives to help young girls flee from the ritual of female genital mutilation and of church buildings being built brick by brick. Burich became caught up in the spirit as the blended group prayed often and openly. She was grateful for their Kenyan partners, who taught them to overcome their awkwardness and inhibitions when it comes to community prayer. Praise God!

Ezekiel 37:1-14 Life to dry bones
John 20: 19-23 Jesus breathes the Spirit
Psalms 104:24-34,35b Renewing the face of the earth

CENTERING PRAYER (June 4—10, 2009)

Holy God, the earth is full of the glory of your love. May we your children, born of the Spirit, so bear witness to your Son Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, that all the world may believe and have eternal life through the one who saves, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

June 4, 2009

Seventeen-year-old Jeff Galasyn has made three trips from his home in Maine to help rebuild homes in New Orleans through the South Central Conference Disaster Ministries and UCC Volunteer Ministries. But he's the one who feels a debt of gratitude. Like so many tens of thousands of others who have gone there with an open mind and a pair of work gloves, it has changed his life. "I've learned a lot of life lessons down here," says Jeff. "I respect people a lot more than I used to. I listen to my teachers a lot more, what they say, and I just grasp everything I can. I've definitely learned that life doesn't revolve around myself. ...Listening to people's stories down here got me thinking: Maybe people in Maine have different stories that they'd like to tell. So I started opening my ears a little bit instead of just living inside my little circle of friends; I have tried to reach outside my safety zone. I listen to people a lot more than I used to."

Isaiah 1:1-4, 16-20 A vision concerning God's people
Romans 8:1-8 The Spirit is life and peace
Psalms 29 Worship God in holiness

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