

AWARE

A Monthly newsletter
supporting the building of community
in the NPCUCC
a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual,
multi-national community of faith
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As I Look At It:

One of the questions that has been before me since I was very young asks, "What are the Religious Issues of our Life". For in the name of Jesus the Christ we Christians have done some of the most outstanding acts of selfless care and some of the most heinous deeds that would deny God's very existence. Unless we are very careful, the faith that can do so much good can also enable the perpetration of the grossest forms of evil. There seems to be a self-righteous blindness that blocks the view of God's presence in those whom we do not understand and transforms the normally caring into demagogues. So, the question of the moment is, "What in public life are religious issues and how are we to respond to them."

If the Bible is to be our guide, and if the Gospel proclaims God's vision manifest in Jesus the Christ, then I believe Matthew 25:40 holds the answer. To put this directly and simply, poverty and justice are faith based issues. How we live our faith in relation to the poor and those who are being denied their just due, is a declaration of what we believe. It is as clear a declaration of what God means to us and how we see that God. If we respond and How we respond to the needs of our brothers and sisters says volumes about what we believe. In reality how we treat them is a declaration of how we would treat Jesus. After all Cain asked God if he was his brother's keeper and God said yes and that has not been changed. How we relate to people that are around us in their times of need is a living, breathing declaration of faith.

To allow a brother or sister in the human family to be denied their just due is to ignore the presence of God alive in that person. I believe that God expects the hymns we sing and the prayers we say to be consistent with the actions that we take.

The other side to this story is that if we want to find life through our faith for ourselves and for our congregations we need to be the channel by which the healing touch of that faith enfolds other lives.

The strength of our faith and of our congregations comes not from the elegance of our worship or the stateliness of our buildings, but from the integrity of our service. The key to church renewal is mission. When we respond to the needs of the poor, and when we have an active passion that the marginalized are treated justly, we have set our feet on a path that leads to whole and fulfilling lives.

The questions, "What are the Religious Issues of our time?" and "What is the key to finding meaning for ourselves and for our congregation?" have the same answer. The answer is found in how we respond to our brothers and sisters who are poor and who are being denied their just due as children of God.

*Grace and Peace
Wade*

Let us continue to support our Brothers and sisters in New Orleans

Because of your generosity, a much-needed truck is used every day for recovery work in New Orleans. The people there sense your support every time our NPCUCC leased truck is used. We still need to support this vital out-reach. Help us continue our support for this ministry by funding the truck. Please see on the website (use www.npcucc.org/flier).

Congregations Seeking a Pastor

United Church of Christ, New Town
Filipino United Community, Winnipeg
Parshall Memorial UCC, Parshall

Pastor's post Lenten Retreat

The pastors' Post Lenten Retreat will take place April 20 – 22 at a location to be named in the very near future. Edith Guffey of the national church will be the guest presenter, and the theme will be "Celebrating the Joy of Being UCC." Nancy Edgar of the National Council of Churches Environmental Office will inform us about "Green Churches." All pastors are invited to mark those dates on their calendars and make plans for a very special gathering. Please check the NPCUCC web site for an informative flier (use www.npcucc.org/flier)

Mission and Ministry Gift Forms

This is a reminder that the 2008 Mission and Ministry Gift Forms can be printed from the web site, by going to the web page (www.npcucc.org) and then clicking on Forms (left side) and on Mission and Ministry Gift Forms. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the Conference Office and we can either help you or send you preprinted forms.

Year Book Forms Have been Sent:

You should have received the year book forms for your congregation at this time. They were sent from the Conference Office to the pastors of each congregation. Please look them over and fill out your part and return them to the Conference Office by January 31 so that we can get them to the National office in time. It is vitally important that these forms be filled out as accurately as possible so that we can represent to the National Church, the most accurate picture of life in the Conference. When there are several copies for each form (white, yellow and pink) please keep the pink copy for your records and send the white and the yellow one to the Conference Office. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to give the Conference Office a call.

Special Conference Wide Lenten Offering – East Timor

During the sacred season of Lent, we receive a Conference Wide special offering for our mission partner, the Protestant Church of East Timor. Your support and that of others has built a school will provide for students the opportunity for growth as they are prepared for leadership in this developing nation. Now we need to look at ways to staff and equip this vital school and then on to other projects. In a few weeks there will be a special mailing asking for your support. Please read it carefully as you prepare to faithfully respond.

Checking out the NPCUCC WEBSITE

As the Conference Web site continues to undergo changes we invite you to check in on it regularly (www.npcucc.org). There are pictures being added and new bits of information made available. The latest additions are: the 2008 prayer Calendar, Mission and Ministry Gift forms, updated Leader's Guide, Fliers announcing the 2008 Annual Meeting and the Post Lenten Retreat and several pictures. Please take time to get acquainted with the important material found on this site.

Calling all NPCUCC Youth to share in a BUSY AND MEANINGFUL Summer.

This summer there will be many opportunities for NPCUCC Youth to explore their faith, make new friends and generally have a great time. There is a special youth gathering on the Friday Night of Annual Meeting (June 6th) featuring Ken Brown from the National Church. Then from July 23 – 29 there will be the National Youth Event in Lexington, Kentucky and rounding out the we have the NPCUCC Youth Camp experience at Wesley Acres from August 3 - 7. Please watch for fliers and registration forms on the NPCUCC web site.

Did You Know?

There are many ways that our OCWM dollars serve us and the ministry of the local congregations that go unnoticed. Each month in the AWARE we will be highlighting another one of these "Best Kept Secrets" of our church. Did you know – About UCC Scholarships? Thanks to our church's Wider Mission, UCC members can learn about college scholarship assistance just by calling Veronica Jefferson in the Parish Life and Leadership Ministry toll – free at 866 822 8224 (ext 3839) or email jeffersv@ucc.org, and she can provide a brochure informing of all UCC scholarships available through the national offices and forms to apply. Our Church's Wider Mission provides for the administrative task of granting these scholarships so all our gifts to scholarship funds increase amounts available to students.

Date	Time	Event	Location
2/2	11:00 am (ct)	ALWL #4	Jamestown
2/6	-----	Ash Wednesday	-----
2/12	10:00 am (ct)	MV Cluster	New Salem
2/13	12:00 Noon (ct)	Ft. Berthold Cluster	New Town
2/18	-----	*Central Cluster	-----
2/20	-----	*Minot Cluster	-----
2/21	-----	*Wilson Health Care Collaborative	-----
2/21	10:00 am (ct)	Fargo Cluster	Fargo/Plymouth
2/22	-----	NPCUCC Committees	Valley City
2/23	9:00 am (ct)	NPCUCC Council	Valley City
2/24	CUE Advisory	12:00 Noon	Albuquerque, NM
2/25-29	CM Consultation	-----	Albuquerque