

## April 4

Isaiah 26:1-4  
1 Peter 1:13-16  
Psalm 116:1-4, 12-11

God sets up victory like bulwarks  
A holy life  
will call upon God

**D**isasters do not give special consideration to those with disabilities. The results of a Harris survey commissioned by the National Organization on Disability have serious implications about how emergency preparation needs to change in order to accommodate the needs of the disabled. Rita Fiero, co-chair of Disabilities Ministries for the United Church of Christ, volunteers her time to educate disaster personnel in how to meet the needs of disabled persons in disaster situations. When she asked a class how a person on a respirator should be evacuated, the only response she got was, "I never thought about it." Disabled as a result of a car accident, Fiero helps emergency personnel think through a myriad of situations so that necessary equipment and medication is not left behind in the rush to evacuate.

### PRAYER:

*Elusive God, companion on the way, you walk behind, beside, beyond; you catch us unawares. Break through the disillusionment and despair clouding our vision, that, with wide-eyed wonder, we may find our way and journey on as messengers of your good news. Amen*

## April 5

Isaiah 25:6-9  
Luke 14:12-14  
Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19

The feast for all peoples  
Welcome those in need to your table  
I will call upon God

**F**aith brought us through the despair of the crucifixion to the joy of a risen Christ. After 2,000 years, we are still finding ways to explore and share that faith. "Talking Faith: An Eight-Part Study on Growing and Sharing Your Faith" is a new resource written by Heather Kirk-Davidoff and Nancy Wood-Lyczak, suited to mainline congregations looking for something different from traditional evangelical methods. The eight-week study includes singing, prayer, role-playing and Communion and draws participants into deep reflection on faith. The Rev. Mary Simpson Luckey, pastor of United Church of Strafford (VT) said, "Talking Faith" is not a class so much as it is an adventure." She and her congregation serve as a pilot group for the curriculum and were impressed with the program's ability to "foster hope and responsible action in a complex culture that seems increasingly confused about what Jesus called the church to be and do in the world," she says.

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## SUNDAY, MARCH 30

S E C O N D S U N D A Y O F E A S T E R



## Faithful Doubt

Acts 2:14a, 22-32  
Psalm 16  
1 Peter 1:3-9  
John 20:19-31

God fulfills the promise to David  
Fullness of joy  
New birth to a living hope  
Beholding the wounds of the risen Christ

**H**ere lies George Generous (1903-2003). He left behind more than an empty pew." The picture of a headstone has this intriguing inscription as a reminder to us all that our ability to give lives on,

even after we have passed away. The Financial Development Ministry of the United Church of Christ can help you to arrange a gift annuity – an irrevocable agreement in which a donor transfers assets (such as securities or cash) to the United Church of Christ in return for lifetime annual income of a fixed amount. Because this is a gift as well as the purchase of an annuity, there are important tax benefits. But the more important benefit by far is the knowledge that we have extended our generosity to generations that we will never see. As Maya Angelou has said, "When we cast our bread upon the waters, we can presume that someone downstream whose face we will never know will benefit from our action, as we who are downstream from another will profit from the grantor's gift."

Many of our ancestors in faith had the vision to leave financial resources in trust to the church, so that the proceeds from these gifts, like an abundant harvest year after year, might nourish and sustain the good works of generation upon generation. May our generosity reach forward "through the ages"! For more information about gift annuities, contact the UCC's Financial Development Ministry at 800-846-6822.

### PRAYER:

*Blessed are you, O God of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we receive the legacy of a living hope, born again not only from his death but also from his resurrection. May we who have received forgiveness of sins through the Holy Spirit live to set others free, until, at length, we enter the inheritance that is imperishable and unfading, where Christ lives and reigns with you and the same Spirit. Amen*

## March 31

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Judges 6:36-40  
1 Corinthians 15:12-20  
Psalm 114

Gideon and the fleece  
Paul teaches the resurrection  
God saves through water

**A**s I approach five years at First Grace UCC in Akron, OH, I have come to believe that anything is possible if we are willing to get out of God's way. I began attending Sunday services at First Grace because I was invited to attend. I soon realized that when our interim pastor had the "eternal child" quality that I needed, someone to whom I could tell everything or nothing. I came out to him as a recovering Catholic who never had the opportunity to become fully involved in the life of the church. I knew that First Grace UCC, was a place where I could grow, and that no idea was too insignificant or too grand to be considered.

Welcoming, witnessing and being "totally present" for myself and for others have shown me a joy which I now know is God's extravagant welcome. As others come to find their own special gifts, the miracles will continue to increase in ways which are yet to be told. I came to believe. This is a place where dreams are coming true.

### **P R A Y E R :**

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## April 1

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Jonah 1:1-17  
1 Corinthians 15:19-28  
Psalm 114

Jonah saved from the sea  
Paul teaches the resurrection  
God saves through water

**T**hanks to the vision and hard work of the Rev. Linda Smith, the Southeast Conference successfully started their first Comma Connection at Emory University in August 2006. "Comma Connections" is an experimental ministry model being tested by the Southeast Conference. Aimed at providing a UCC presence for students attending Emory University, the Rev. Smith's Comma Connection hopes to gather students from across the campus for worship, discipleship through biblical study and community engagement. To start her Comma Connection, Linda contacted the Episcopal House on the campus and asked to borrow their meeting space for Comma Connection gatherings. Because of the very gracious welcome of The Rev. Nancy Baxter, not only did they grant Linda a place to meet, but they are also providing her with office space and the full use of the facility. "We are very grateful for the generosity of our Episcopal colleagues and are excited about the launch of our first Comma Connection. Linda is an outstanding leader and will provide great vision to this work," said the Rev. Cameron Trimble, Associate Conference Minister of Church Development at the Southeast Conference.

### **P R A Y E R :**

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## April 2

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Jonah 2:1-10  
Matthew 12:38-42  
Psalm 114

Jonah's praise for deliverance  
Jesus speaks of the sign of Jonah  
God saves through water

**S**andy Kealy-Blackburn and her husband Tom survived the 6.7 magnitude earthquake that destroyed their Hawaii Island home on October 15, 2006--and they have survived every day since with the help and prayers of many people. After the quake, churches throughout Hawaii immediately responded. The Hawaii Conference set up an Earthquake Relief Fund to help those living in communities affected by the earthquake. It was these gifts from churches and individuals in the Hawaii Conference that allowed the Blackburns to pay for temporary shelter as they re-built their house. In addition to the Blackburns, over 100 other people were helped by the \$85,000 donated to the Hawaii Conference Earthquake Relief Fund.

### **P R A Y E R :**

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## April 3

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Isaiah 25:1-5  
1 Peter 1:8b-12  
Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19

Praise for deliverance  
The promised salvation comes  
I will call upon God

**T**he Congregation of New Spirit Community Church envision their church to be a place to come together in community to gain strength in order to work for change in the world. The church has provided 300 volunteer hours toward building homes for Oakland families through Habitat for Humanity; prepared over 5000 bag lunches for distribution to homeless youth on the streets of Oakland and Berkeley through the HomePlate Program of the Chaplaincy for the Homeless; contributed volunteers to the YEAH shelter for homeless youth in Berkeley; responded to relief efforts aimed at the Tsunami Disaster of 2004, and the Hurricane Katrina disaster of 2005; sponsored AIDS orphans in Africa, and contributed seed money for similar churches in Montana, Oregon and California. As a matter of justice, our Wednesday Prayer Gathering (Taizé) offerings go to local agencies that provide direct services to meet critical needs in the local community. Regardless of your church experience or background, your spiritual or religious beliefs, there is a place for you in this community. We hope you will find a life-giving, meaningful spiritual home here.

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