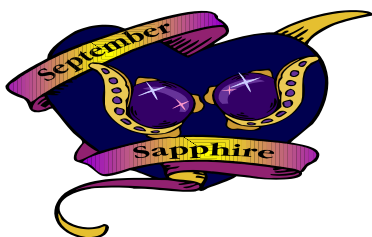


## SEPTEMBER AWARE 2011



### AS I LOOK AT IT

There is a memory embedded in my mind of a rainy night when I was 16. My mother, father and I were standing with a neighbor, watching their farm burn. The fire was started by a lightning strike that must have hit where the hay was stored in the barn and quickly spread to all of the other areas of the building and then to the other buildings. Animals were trapped within, and machinery was on fire. The fire department had given up on trying to put the fire out and was focused on saving the house. At times this seemed to be a very tall order.

The neighbor who owned the farm was by many considered to be "Not to Bright". Some in the area would refuse to talk with either the husband or the wife, and resorted instead to making crude and often off color jokes.

The scene as I remember it has fire on three sides, with steam from the rain hitting the blazing buildings and the noise was deafening, there was the fire, the screams of trapped animals and the sounds of tractors plowing furrows to build a barrier to protect the house. I remember the man (a 6 ft. plus, 280 pound individual), bending over to rest his head on my 5 ft. 2 in., and 125 pound father. The woman and my mother were standing in an embrace

that seemed to never end and I was with the children all of who were younger than me. The night passed in such a fashion.

Several days later as we were together for dinner and the family, whose farm burned, was sharing their plans to move on with their life, when the man looked up at us and said, "Thank you, we could not have gotten through it without your help."

My question was, "What did we do, we were just there". The answer I believe is that "We were the channel and God's grace did the healing." The message that I took away from this story is to never underestimate what God can do with the simple gifts we provide. For the question is not "What can we do," but "What can God do through us?" It is not about us, it is all about God.

My prayer would be for us to take the risk of allowing God to work through us that we might experience the miracles that can happen. Take the risk of befriending the one that others shun. Take the risk of committing a sleepless night so one that is frightened does not have to be alone. Take the risk of caring about someone whom others have overlooked. Be ready to be amazed by what God can do. Our simple actions and our seemingly dull words can carry the gift of life and

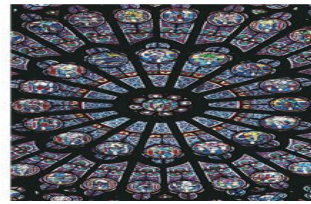
hope when they become the channel for God's renewing grace. The wondrous gift that God gives to us is the gift of healing and strength which we can share with others. In fact it is only in sharing that we can truly experience this gift. We cannot hoard God's creative love we can only share it. But in sharing it we become a part of God's re-creative presence.

Namaste  
Wade



**Don't Forget to Mug Your Guests and Visitors.**

At the last Annual Meeting in Fargo guests and delegates were invited to take home mugs imprinted with the UCC logo and the "Northern Plains Conference" name imprinted. The purpose was to give the mugs to visitors so that they would have something to help them remember this time with you. The mugs could be filled with literature and possibly some candy or cookies from your church. This would hopefully work as an invitation calling the visitors to come again and visit your community of faith. You may wish to develop some pieces that could be fit into the mugs that would have helpful information about worship and activity times. A number of the mugs were given out at the Annual Meeting following the banquet on Saturday evening. The mugs are available through the Conference Office. Please contact us that we can make arrangements to get additional ones to you. Do not forget to "Mug your Guests".



**Congregations Seeking A Pastor:**

The following churches are seeking new pastoral leadership:

**Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ in Fargo** (currently with a hold on profiles), and  
**United Church of Christ in Bismarck**



**Kate Huey** from the National Church will be presenting a workshop September 30 – Oct. 1 at Bismarck UCC entitled "Stewardship As A Spiritual Practice". This exciting program will provide all who participate an excellent time to explore what would work in their congregation and then to put together some of the skills necessary to make it work. An informational flier can be found on the NPCUCC web site by going to [www.npcucc.org](http://www.npcucc.org) or by going to the search area and typing in Stewardship or by looking under "Church News". The registration forms can be located under "Church News" and click on the Registration tab.



**AWARE Available in TWO Versions:**

The Northern Plains Conference AWARE will come in two versions. Please

let the Conference Office know how this works for you. There will be one version held to two pages, and may have a smaller print size to accommodate that limitation. This is especially helpful to Congregations that mail it out via the US mail. Then, there will be a second version of the AWARE which will be an expanded version and sporting a larger font and photos. This version will serve Congregations that send out the AWARE via email. Please inform the Conference Office at 701-255-1104, which version works for your Congregation most efficiently.



The South Dakota Conference invites us to join them for a **Sacred Conversation on Race**. The event will take place at the South Dakota Conference camp in the Black Hills, (Placerville) which provides a beautiful atmosphere for this meaningful conversation. The Sacred Conversation will take place September 12 – 14, with Norm Jackson, whom many of you know, facilitating. The cost for the event will be \$80. The gathering will begin at 4:30 pm (mt) on Sept. 12 and will conclude after lunch on the 14<sup>th</sup>. All who are interested are invited to contact the Conference Office for more information.



### **Voices From The Prairie:**

#### **A Time to Teach . . .**

Where has the summer gone?  
It's an age-old question; one that I ask

every Fall. Yet, I am convinced that summer really does go by faster and faster as I get older. The swimming pool is closing, the agony of football practice is underway, and the kids have to go back to school. This year will be a little different as we are sending our daughter, Andrea, off to school a bit further than across town. There are sure to be a few tears as we leave our new "freshman" at her dorm room at Jamestown College. Whether or not her parents are ready, she is looking forward to this new stage in her learning with excitement and anticipation.

Speaking of education, has the Christian Education committee at your church met to plan and organize Sunday School yet? It's time to organize the classes and rooms, line up teachers, choose curriculum. For many of our churches, we have had to become creative in how we do Sunday School with fewer children, wider age ranges, and busy schedules. Curriculum for our "creative classes" is a bit more challenging. At Wishek UCC, we have been using the UCC Gather Round Multi-age curriculum. Our teachers and children are enjoying it. There is no magical formula for choosing curriculum -- just lots of trial and error.

Some questions to ask as you consider curriculum . . .

1. Does the curriculum fit your church's theology? (i.e. view on salvation, social justice, nature of God)
2. Does the curriculum use inclusive language? (i.e. using "male language" when it would be more inclusive to use "men, women, and children")

3. Does the curriculum include photos, artwork, stories, and examples from a variety of cultures, faiths, and abilities? In the global community we live in today, an important lesson we teach our children is the value and worth of all the peoples of the earth.
4. Does the curriculum include an awareness and care for creation? Again in this global community, another lesson our children need to learn is care of the earth.
5. Is the material teachable? Let's be honest . . . Saturday night lesson planning is the norm in our busy lifestyles. Is the material organized in an easy-to-use way for teachers to follow?
6. Finally . . . evaluate the curriculum after a month or two. Do the teachers like it? Are the students learning and enjoying it? If not, you may need to try a different resource next quarter.

Though I'm writing with our church children and youth in mind, these guidelines are useful when choosing material for adult studies also.

The United Church of Christ offers three curriculums for all ages:

1. Gather Round -- follows Bible story tracts.
2. Seasons of the Spirit -- follows the three-year lectionary schedule of Bible readings which your pastor may be using for Sunday sermons.
3. Faith Practices -- a brand new computer web based curriculum allowing you to choose the topic series you wish (i.e. worship, hospitality, sacraments, etc.).

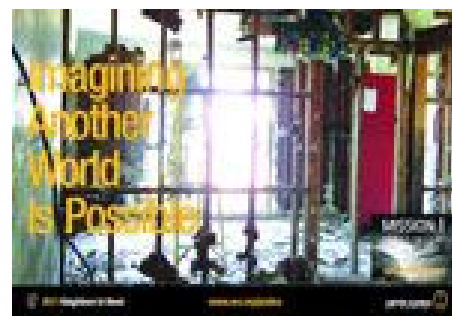
We've all heard this one: "Confirmation is graduation from the church." At Wishek UCC, we have been able to continue the Christian Education of our youth by offering a Youth Coffee House! A variety of adults in our congregation lead the group on a variety of topics -- sexuality, health, death, bullying, and a

look at the daily newspaper headlines. Sometimes our youth suggest topics they would like to discuss. Sometimes adults with particular skills and interests share these with the youth. This allows the group to see the stuff of life through the lens of faith and to learn some useful life skills. This also allows intergenerational relationships with adults who have a wealth of faith to share. Oh, a coffee pot and a variety of cappuccino and hot chocolate are essential! Snacks optional! A useful resource for the Coffeehouse is the [Caffeine series by Steven Case available through the Pilgrim Press.](#)

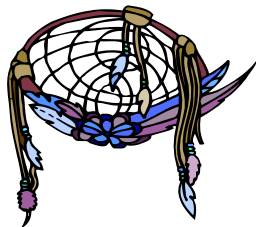
One more place to find excellent Christian Education resources is the Media Resource Center which is supported by our Conference, the South Dakota Conference UCC and the Presbyterian Church. Find video/DVD resources for children, youth, and adult learning. Church membership costs are minimal (\$15-25 per year depending on size of congregation). Contact: website: [www.plainsmedia.org](http://www.plainsmedia.org); e-mail: [mrc@sodakucc.org](mailto:mrc@sodakucc.org).

As important as our Sunday School curriculum is, I believe that the most important and treasured lesson we can teach our children is love and acceptance; God's love for each one of them as shown through teachers and the church family.

Written by Tammy Toepke Floyd, pastor of the United Church of Christ in Wishek, N.D.



**Imagine Another World Is Possible** is the theme for the **Neighbor's In Need** Special Mission Offering which is to be received on **World Communion Sunday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>**. This special Offering provides us with the opportunity to reach out to brothers and Sisters across the nation and world with help at those special moments that are life changing and yes life saving. This Offering touches NPC in a very meaningful way, as one third of all the money received goes to CAIM (the Council For American Indian Ministry) which helps to support 7 congregations in our Conference. Please be generous as you prayerfully prepare for this all church offering.



**State Women's Retreat** at the Abby in Richardton, September 16 – 18, 2011. Charlene J. Smith of the National Church will join the NPC and South Dakota women for their annual retreat which will be held this year at the Abby in Richardton. The theme for this year's retreat gathering will be **"Communing With God"**. On Friday evening the focus will be "Letting Go and Welcoming God", On Saturday Morning "Communing with God through our Gifts", On Saturday afternoon the focus will be "Communing with God through Nature". On Saturday evening the focus will be "Reflection of the day with God" and on Sunday morning the closing focus will be "Communing with God and sending forth with a communion service". All the women of our Conference are invited to come and make this special time of reflection, fellowship and service one to remember.

The mission project for the gathering will be collecting food items for the food shelf in Parshall. A listing of items needed can be found on the NPC Web Site [www.npcucc.org](http://www.npcucc.org), under "Church News". The flier and a registration form can also be found under the "Church News" tab. The registration form can be found under the "Church New" tab and click on the Registration tab for the form. Scholarships are also available. Please contact the Conference Office for the application process for this scholarship. If you have questions please do not hesitate to call the Conference Office.

### Media Resource Center



At the end of August, what many of us consider the end of summer; our minds are in a re-entry mode. Vacations are over. A new school year has begun (or soon will). Sunday School Rally Day is quickly approaching. And our church calendars remind us: "order Stewardship theme materials".

Have you thought about stewardship and what it encompasses? While we know that stewardship is not just about the money we give, we sometimes tend to forget how fortunate we are in a global perspective. If you visit [www.globalrichlist.com](http://www.globalrichlist.com), you can see where you rank on the list of the world's wealthiest people. It's quite a wake-up call.

We have many resources in our media center which apply to stewardship. What can we do to take better care of ourselves, our families, our neighbors, and our planet? How do we impact our world? Log onto our website @ [www.plainsmedia.org](http://www.plainsmedia.org). You can search for stewardship, neighbors, missions, parables, etc. to get a listing of media which you might like to use personally, or in a small group. There are resources available for all age groups.

Carmen Gill, Administrator  
6509 S. Cliff Ave. Sioux Falls, SD 57108  
[www.plainsmedia.org](http://www.plainsmedia.org)  
[mrc@sodakucc.org](mailto:mrc@sodakucc.org)



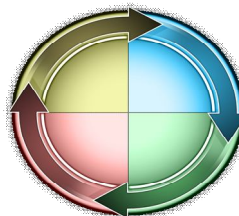
**2012 National Youth Event  
IMAGINE**

Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana  
July 7<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> 2012

The Northern Plains Council of Youth and Young Adult Ministries is proud to announce the selection of the NPCYYAM - NYE2012 Contingent leader. Rev. Tammy Toepke-Floyd of Wishek UCC has agreed to be our 2012 NYE Northern Plains Leader. We still need to build our team of leaders for this amazing event. We will begin the journey in Fargo on July 7<sup>th</sup> leaving by bus for NYE early on July 8<sup>th</sup>. The NPC will take two days to get down to Indiana and three days afterwards to return to Fargo. Plans are still being developed for those days.

With this announcement, we want your youth to begin to think about the 2012 National Youth Event. We are looking for adults who wish to be the additional leaders/chaperones for this fun and great event. NYE-2012 will be one of those great moments your youth will talk about for years. Help us help them to have a great time. This is where we need you and the adults in your church. We hope to have information available for your local church by the Conference annual Fall Youth Rally (October 20<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> @ the Bismarck UCC).

If you are interested in being an adult chaperone please either contact: the Northern Plains Conference Office or the Borden's' @ [revcarletonborden@gmail.com](mailto:revcarletonborden@gmail.com)



**Northern Plains Conference Fall Youth Rally  
October 20 - 22, 2011**

**Location:** Bismarck United Church of Christ

**Address:** 1200 East Highland Acres Road

**Time:** Thursday @ 1 pm - Saturday @ Noon

**Cost:** \$50 /Save \$5 If Registration Postmarked by October 8<sup>th</sup>

**Registrations Due:** October 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Bring:** Sleeping Bag, Pillow & Personal Care Items.

Clothing (appropriate for sports & service project) Swim Suit.

Work Gloves & Rake.

Money for Snacks (while traveling).

Talent Show Items (instruments, etc.).

Adult Chaperone / Advisor.

**Make Checks Payable to: NPCUCC**

**Mail Registrations to:**

Bismarck United Church of Christ

Attn: Dawn Archer

1200 East Highland Acres Road

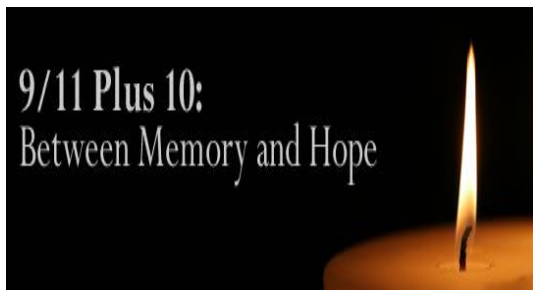
Bismarck, ND 58501

The Fall Youth Rally flyer and information can be located by going to the search engine and type in "Youth". There is a registration form there and also under the "Church News" tab and click on the Registration tab for the Registration form for the Fall Youth Rally.



### The Northern Plains Conference/South Dakota Conference Conversations of Union continues.

Empowered and guided by a positive vote from both the Northern Plains Conference and the South Dakota Conference the conversation on union of the two Conferences continues. We are in a critical point in that conversation and seek God's guiding hand to direct our words. The conversation has been very fruitful thus far and it is our hope that we will continue to explore and expand our understanding of God's vision for our ministry.



As we come to the **tenth anniversary of the tragic events that brought down the World Trade Towers**, let us take some time to **reflect, and move forward guided by prayer**. On the UCC Website [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org) you will find helpful information that will provide materials for thought, worship and personal prayer time. Go to **9/11plus10** in the search area and follow the links to helpful and inspirational materials. These materials will be updated over the coming weeks so you may wish to check often.



### What is Mission 1:11:11?

One United Church on a shared mission for 11 powerful days to feed the hungry and confront food related injustice. This is **Mission: 1**.

**Mission: 1**: is an opportunity to make real Jesus' prayer for his disciples. "That they may all be one." It is also an opportunity to live out our faith –in unity – by offering the worship that God most desires from us: loosening the bonds of injustice and sharing our bread with the hungry. The staggering facts compel us to act with compassion and to be voices for justice. 925 million people still suffer from chronic hunger worldwide, nearly 90 million higher than in 2000. In the United States alone, 50.2 million people (up from 35.5 million in 2006), including 17.2 million children, are food insecure. They don't

have the money or assistance to provide food for themselves and their families. We can be God's instruments of change.

For the first 11 days of November (11.1.11-11.11.11), United Church of Christ congregations, colleges, seminaries, and health and human service agencies, will join together in a collective mission campaign to collect more than 1 million food items for local food banks, raise \$111,111.00 in online donations for Neighbors in Need, and write 11,111 letters to Congress (in support of Bread for the World's 2011 Offering of Letters) asking that U.S. foreign assistance be reformed to more effectively serve the world's poorest people.

A continuously updated national tote board at [ucc.org](http://ucc.org) will keep the entire church comprised of our collective efforts.

Churches also are encouraged to engage in creative local mission projects, service opportunities, and educational events. Here are some examples:

- One church is volunteering to paint the interior of its local food pantry during **Mission: 1**.
- One congregation is planning to feed 1,111 people during a massive community lunch.
- One church has identified 11 food items that members will be bringing with them to church over an 11-week span leading up to November.
- One church is asking members to commit to losing 11 pounds in the weeks leading up to Mission:1 and donate food-cost savings to Neighbors in Need.
- On large church is planning to prepare 111,111 hot meals throughout **Mission: 1**.
- Many churches are organizing friendly competitions with other UCC congregations, either locally or

in other areas of the country, to see which congregation can collect the most food items, money, and letters.

- Some churches and Conferences are planning to become Mission: 1 "pacesetters" by working in advance of the campaign so that they can be among the first to report big totals on the campaign's first day, Nov. 1. Creativity is key to engaging your congregation in **Mission: 1**. How can your church make Mission: 1 come alive in your context?

In addition to powerfully addressing hunger and food-related issues for 11 days, **Mission: 1** is a time for intentional theological reflection on our oneness as a church. "**That they may all be 1.**" How do we accomplish more together than we do in isolation? Plans to make "oneness" the central theme that undergirds your approach to **Mission: 1** in your worship, education and prayer life. Resources are available to assist you at <[ucc.org/mission1](http://ucc.org/mission1)>.

### How can my church/organization participate?

- Share the idea of **Mission: 1** with your churches – or institutions' – appropriate leadership and ask for their explicit buy-in and support.
- Convene a small **Mission: 1 Implementation Group** to set local goals and promote and coordinate your church's campaign. Campaign materials (t-shirts, buttons, stickers, posters, etc.) are available at <[ucc.org/mission1](http://ucc.org/mission1)>, including a **Mission: 1 campaign kit** that contains two posters, 100 bulletin inserts, 100 offering

- envelopes, 100 pledge cards, 25 buttons, 25 stickers, and 25 wrist bands.
- Discuss ways to integrate an existing emphasis of your congregation during November with the coordinated church-wide vision of the **Mission: 1** campaign. For example, your church may want to adopt: **That they may all be 1"** as its annual stewardship theme.
  - Playfully determine your piece of the overall national goal and set your own goals for your local setting. How about 1,111 food items? Can you find and celebrate 11 or 111 persons or families that will contribute at least \$11.00 to Neighbors in Need online during this 11-day period? Will your congregation commit to writing at least 111 letters to Congress?
  - Publicize and promote your church's goals and devise a strategy by which you will reach and celebrate your local commitment, in addition to the national tally.
  - Once your church has decided on its specific goals, share them at <[ucc.org/mission1](http://ucc.org/mission1)>. Your stories will be shared across the

entire UCC leading up to and during **Mission: 1**.

- Designate at least one person in your congregation who will be responsible for tallying and reporting your church's participation. (See "how will the national tally process work? In the **Mission: 1 Manual**.)

**When Do we get started?**

Although **Mission: 1** is designed to be an 11-day mission emphasis across the United Church of Christ, Nov. 1-11, you should begin now to put this on your calendar and prepare for how your church will participate. Effective planning is key to widespread participation, especially since **Mission: 1** will include many different components: food collection, fundraising, letter writing, education, advocacy, community service and public witness. It's encouraged that you work ahead and build momentum. Early on, you should decide how your church will participate and plan specific events and goals that will be widely owned by your members.

**Copies of suggested letters are on the [npcucc.org](http://npcucc.org) website under "Resources". If you have any questions, please contact the Conference Office.**

**The September Calendar for the Northern Plains Conference:**

Date	Time	Event	Location
9/1	-----	CM on vacation	-----
9/2	-----	CM on vacation	-----
9/3	-----	CM on vacation	-----
9/5	-----	Labor Day	-----
9/7	12:00 pm (ct)	Annual Meeting Planning	Aberdeen
9/8	10:00 am (ct)	MV Cluster	Hebron/First
9/12	12:00 Noon (et)	Council for	Cleveland

		Theological Education	
9/12	4:30 pm (mt)	Sacred Conversations	Placerville Camp
9/13	-----	CTE	Cleveland
9/13	-----	Sacred Conversations	Placerville
9/14	-----	Sacred Conversations	Placerville
9/14	12:00 Noon (ct)	Ft. Berthold Cluster	New Town
9/15	10:00 am (ct)	Fargo Cluster	Plymouth, Fargo
9/16	4:30 pm (Mt)	Women's Retreat	Richardton/Abby
9/17	-----	Women's Retreat	Richardton
9/18	-----	Women's Retreat	Richardton
9/19	9:30 am (ct)	NDCC	Bismarck
9/22	11:00 am (ct)	Minot Cluster	Garrison
9/23	5:30 pm (ct)	Multiple Paths	Valley City
9/24	-----	Multiple Paths	Valley City
9/25	10:30 am (ct)	CM shares in worship	Fargo/Plymouth
9/26	11:00 am (ct)	Central Cluster	Jamestown
9/28	4:30 pm (ET)	Pension BD Meeting	New York
9/29	-----	Pension BD Meeting	New York
9/30	5:30 pm (ct)	Stewardship Workshop with Kate Huey	Bismarck

