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# CAUCE Matters

Connecticut Association of United Church Educators

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Inside this issue:

***Focus on youth:***

***Mission in Boston***

***A Confirmation Mission Project***

***Spiritual formation:***

***A Retreat possibility: It's a matter of time***

***Creating Community:***

***Making Meaningful Connections***

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## Why Mission Trips

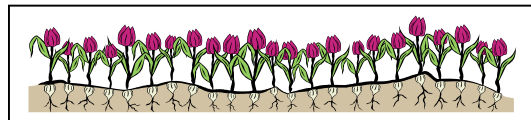
Submitted by Georgette Huie  
Youth Director, Saugatuck Congregational Church

Mission trips are growing in popularity as a tool for youth ministry. In some churches, the Annual Mission Trip is the primary draw for youth, who look forward to and plan for the trip all year. As a young adult, I was fortunate to have participated in two such trips; on one of them, I experienced profoundly the presence of God, and my life was changed forever.

It is not uncommon for adults and youth alike to have such life-changing experiences on mission trips. There is something about being away from familiar surroundings and routines that makes us more aware of our reliance on God. There is something about being together in work, play, and learning that makes us more appreciative of the community of Christ. There is something about meeting and serving with strangers that helps us see the Spirit of God moving among us all. With greater vision and awareness, we return home, often with increased gratitude for family, friends, church, and community.

During the school year, youth can find it difficult to participate fully in church activities, as many demands weigh in on their time and energy. A weeklong mission trip gives them (and their ministers!) a chance to build Christian community, to reflect on God's presence and calling in our lives, and to consider our faithful response.

Are mission trips fun? YEAH, DUDE – THEY ARE! It never ceases to amaze me that despite having to do hard and sometimes yucky work, despite having to live with people who may not be our best friends, despite the fact that the adults will take turns being cranky, and despite the fact that we'll talk about God every day, youth come back feeling that the mission trip was a highlight of their year. When we aren't working, we will actually do plenty of fun things. But when the youth are older and reflect back on these trips, I think they will understand that what they described as "fun" was actually the joy of helping others, the joy of being and growing together, and the joy of coming closer to God.



## Mission Close to Home

If you don't want to go far, Youth Mission trips can be done for a week, or a weekend, in Boston by contacting Carl McDonald at the City Mission Society of Boston.

**A group of youth from Andover Congregational Church spent a mission weekend in Boston at a cost of \$60.00 per person. We chose the City Mission Society's program "Are You the Missing Piece of the Puzzle" which is designed to help junior high youth discover the importance of their presence in completing the "puzzle." Through interactive games and programs the youth were engaged in opportunities to discover more about their faith and interact with youth from other churches.**

We stayed overnight in a city church then went to two mission sites. We volunteered at Cradles to Crayons where we sorted clothing, books, toys and craft supplies that are distributed to children living in shelters and transitional housing. Prior to our trip we collected puzzles in our congregation to donate to Cradles to Crayons. We also assembled craft activity bags for Birthday Wishes, an agency that offers birthday parties for children living in shelters. On Saturday we prepared a meal at a "wet shelter" – a shelter that accepts alcoholics- and made fleece scarves for the shelter residents.

The youth had a great time and got a sense of what mission is all about. On the Sunday of our return, we spoke to the congregation about our mission trip. It made an impression on the congregation. We have stated fund-raisers in our congregation in the hope we can return to Boston for a weeklong trip.

Submitted by Charlotte Lavoie, Director, Family Ministries  
Andover Congregational Church

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*"Be the change you  
want to see in the  
world."*

*Mahatma Ghandi*

Find the City  
Mission Society of  
Boston on the web  
at:  
**cmsboston.org**

Thinking about a  
mission trip to  
New York city?  
Check out Youth  
Services  
Opportunity  
programs at:  
**yso.org**

## Confirmation Mission Project

Youth in the class spent time learning about world hunger. We discussed as Christians what we thought God wanted us to do. Could a Confirmation Class really make a difference in world hunger? Each year the classes were given time without an adult present in the room to discuss their response to what they had learned about world hunger. They enthusiastically decided to do a mission project together called: *Bread for Hunger*. They chose what teams they wanted to be on to be sure they took care of all the details of the project and Mission Day.

First, they talked about the gifts that God had given them and decided how their gifts fit into what they could do toward the overall project.

### Teams:

**Core leaders** with the gift of leadership to help everyone stay on task

**Bread Team** – asked area bakeries to donate fresh made bread

**Publicity Team** – designed flyers distribution in town and an article for local newspaper

(continued page 3)

## Confirmation ... cont'd

**Event Day Team** – decided what was needed in terms of equipment for Mission Day  
**Outreach Team** - Decide where the money is going (local, global or both)

Research the possible charity organizations to give the money

Compare the charities to see how they use their money

Create flyers about where the money is going and how it will help

**Money Team** – Obtained a box for money and took in the money day of event

**Sign Making Team** – Made large signs to attract cars off the street to come and make a donation

**Refreshment Team** – made sure the group had snacks and drinks for the day

The point of the event was to invite people to make a donation toward fighting hunger and in turn they received a fresh loaf of bread as a thank you. The flyers the outreach team made describing how the money would be used and how it would help fight hunger were also distributed to each person who donated. Signs were made to decorate the bread table thanking all the bakeries that donated bread.

We had 200 loaves of bread donated from local bakeries and raised between \$1,500 and \$2,000 for the several years we did this event. We set up on the church green that is along the main road of the town. Youth lined the sidewalks with their signs inviting people to make a donation to fight hunger from 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. on the day of the event.

Submitted by Debbie Gravel  
 Commissioned Minister of Christian Education  
 Congregational Church of Cheshire

*Save the date ...*

Plans for the **CAUCE Annual Fall** gathering are underway!

Mark **November 8, 2008** on your calendar to save the date for a great event.

Kate Ott

co-author of

*A Time to Speak: Faith Communities and Sexuality Education*

will be out keynote speaker.

Watch for details in the August CAUCE Matters.

## Here's a retreat idea

***For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven...*** Ecclesiastes 3: 1

*This retreat will offer us the opportunity: to explore our relationship with TIME; to enjoy some TIME TOGETHER; and to take some TIME OUT for ourselves.*

While seeking a theme for our church's Women's Retreat this spring, I looked through the Program Resources for UCC Women that have been published over the years. As the foundation for this retreat, I chose the 1995-96 Program Resource, edited by M.J. Hunter, with the theme *Times of Change, Times of Hope*.

The theme of *TIME* is a rich and dynamic one for discussions of all kinds, with adults and youth. During the course of this weekend retreat, we explored the ways in which we view, image, and experience *TIME*. Participants expressed the familiar feeling that time seems scarce and rushed; those who had recently retired felt the challenge of that transition as well as the temptation to fill up their time.

Our retreat time together loosely followed the *daily cycle of monastic time*, which is divided into eight periods, each of which identifies an event in the salvation story. Every three hours (except the wee hours of the morning!), we paused to ring bells or chimes, sing praises to God, and reflect upon an aspect of time as it was linked to God's story in Benedictine monasteries. Our discussions included Sabbath time, creative time, Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, and the artwork of John August Swanson.

Submitted by *Ruth Martz, Associate Pastor, First Church of Christ Congregational, Glastonbury CT*

Listed below are several resources that I recommend to you as you explore the gift of time that God gives us, each precious moment, day, week, month and year.

Bass, Dorothy.

*Receiving the Day, Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time*

Chittister, Joan.

*There Is A Season,*

Art by John August Swanson  
 Cousineau, Phil, Ed.

*The Soul of the World, A Modern Book of Hours*

Photography by Eric Lawton.

Limburg, James.

*Encountering Ecclesiastes, A Book For Our Time*

Schaper, Donna.

*Sabbath Sense*

## Connecticut Association of United Church Educators

Any member of the United Church of Christ, who is involved or interested in Christian Education in Connecticut, whether in a volunteer or paid position, is automatically a member of CAUCE. There are no required dues, only a request for a free will contribution of \$15 per year to help cover expenses. The CAUCE brochure and membership form can be found online.

### We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.ctucc.org/program/cauce/html](http://www.ctucc.org/program/cauce/html)

## Making Meaningful Connections

Do you know the song from the King and I that goes, "Getting to know you, Getting to know all about you..." ???

After returning from NEAUCE last May, I was inspired by the message from key note speakers, the Rev. Dr. David Anderson and the Rev. Dr. Dick Hardel from the Youth and Family Institute, that our faith grows out of loving, meaningful relationships we have with one another. Our congregation needs help with making these faith connections with each other. Often times we tend to gravitate to the same people during coffee hour and many of us struggle to branch out and make connections with one another. Using the awesome "Faith Talk" Cards created by The Youth and Family Institute (copyright 1995) as a model I created some "getting to know you cards" for members of our congregation to discuss at our rally day picnic. The cards had to be intergenerational so I had things like....

What was your favorite toy growing up and why?

Tell of a time when you broke a rule and how you felt afterward...

Tell of a family favorite Christmas tradition...

What is your favorite Thanksgiving dish and who makes it?

What is your favorite church song/hymn and why?

Do you have a favorite bedtime prayer and why is it?

To mix everyone up, I color-coded the cards to match the tablecloths at the picnic. Each bulletin for the worship service had a different color insert. The congregation was instructed to sit at a table with a cloth that matched their insert.

And during a few coffee hours, we will sort everyone by colored inserts and have a few statements or questions posted on the walls to discuss. People have responded well to it and they appreciate the push to branch out and make meaningful connections with others.

By Sarah LeGeyt  
D.C.E & Y  
First Congregational Church  
Canton Center, CT

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Congregations in search of Christian Education leadership frequently call Amy Beveridge at the Resource Center as they begin their search process. It is very helpful for Amy to know who among Christian Educators is looking for a position. Please let Amy know (860- 233-5564) if you are seeking a new position.