

141<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL MEETING—PART II, FALL 2008  
CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
(Congregational Christian Churches)  
*Meeting in the 210th year of the Missionary Society of Connecticut*  
Central High School, Bridgeport, CT  
October 17-18, 2008

Friday, October 17, 2008 - Pre-meeting Events

The Authorized Ministry Event was held at the United Congregational Church of Bridgeport. This Event included a luncheon honoring those ordained for 50 and 25 years. The Reverend Stephen Gray, Conference Minister of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference was the speaker. His topic was *Growing Beyond The Reluctant Steward*.

The following individuals were honored:

***50-Year Recipients:***

The Reverend James H. Ameling, New Haven, CT; The Reverend Donald H. Baker, Brookfield, CT; The Reverend Stuart C. Brush, Woodbury, CT; The Reverend John W. Cook, Guilford, CT; The Reverend Robert W. Hoskins, Falls Village, CT; The Reverend James L. Kidd, Punta Gorda, FL; The Reverend Donald G. Miller, Tolland, CT; The Reverend Wayne G. Rollins, West Hartford, CT; The Reverend Howard W. Smith, Great Barrington, MA.

***25-Year Recipients:***

The Reverend Susan DeSimone, Greenwich, CT; The Reverend Blaine A. Edele, Stamford, CT; The Reverend Peter M. Hammond, Bridgewater, CT; The Reverend Linda J. Higgins, Marlborough, CT; The Reverend Lynne C. Holden, Harmony, RI; The Reverend Susan Iazard, West Hartford, CT; The Reverend Elizabeth S. Kennard, Storrs, CT; The Reverend Dennis P. Moon, Granby, CT; The Reverend Sandra L. Olsen, Middletown, CT; The Reverend Brenda J. Stiers, Macungie, PA; The Reverend Margaret B. Williams, Stratford, CT; The Reverend Michael D. Zeman, New York, NY.

Welcome, Registration and the Displays opened at 4:00 p.m. Hearings on the proposed Resolutions and a hearing for the Proposed Resolution/Primer Changes were held. Prior to dinner the Hartford Seminary Reception was held.

Friday evening—The Meeting Begins—Session One

The opening plenary was called to order by the Moderator, the Reverend Mark Abernethy, at 6:34 p.m. He called upon the Reverend Peter Allen to lead us in a time of worship assisted by the Reverend Cynthia Robinson.

The Reverend David Spollett, Senior Pastor of the First Church Congregational, Fairfield brought greetings from the Fairfield East Association and expressed appreciation to the Fairfield East Association for all the work done to get ready and to Sue Wilber from the Conference Staff for the arrangements made to prepare for this Annual Meeting. Mr. Spollett said what an honor it is to gather in Bridgeport. He introduced Dr. John Ramos, Superintendent of Bridgeport Schools. Dr. Ramos brought greetings from the Bridgeport Board of Education, the staff, and the students of Central High School of whom they are very proud.

The Reverend Mark Abernethy called upon the Reverend Davida Foy Crabtree, Conference Minister, who shared her excitement of being here at this meeting this evening and being able to see the group

that is gathered. She expressed appreciation to the Conference staff, especially to the Reverend Ronald Brown, for his extra help during her time of medical needs. Davida shared a figurative hug of greeting and said how good it was for her heart and soul to see everyone. Ron Brown introduced the Conference staff.

The Moderator introduced the Rev. John Arens of New Preston, Scribe, and the Assistant Scribe, the Rev. Suzanne Wagner of Trumbull.

The honored guests were introduced. Upon motion duly moved and seconded, it was

**VOTED**

2008-10C-01 to grant Voice without Vote to the following honored guests:

- *The Rev. Malcolm Bertram, of South Wellfleet, MA, Parliamentarian*
- *Connecticut persons serving on boards of National Ministries of the United Church of Christ*
- *General Synod delegates*
- *Keynoter, Rev. Steve Gray of Indiana Kentucky Conference*
- *Rev. Daehler Hayes, Cornerstone Fund of the UCC*
- *Representatives of Health and Human Service institutions:*
  - *Mr. Bill Fairbairn, New Samaritan Corporation*
  - *Rev. Marshall Hughes, Charles Hall Youth Services*
  - *Rev. Fred Grosse, Elon Homes and Schools for Children*
- *The Rev. Kent Ulery and Representatives of Bangor Theological Seminary and Dr. Priscilla Deck and Representatives of Andover Newton Theological School*
- *International guests: Partners from Kyung-Ki Presbytery from Korea*
- *Seminarians (In-Care Students)*

First Call in Connecticut Pastors were welcomed by the body as follows:

*Rev. Ann Aaberg, Rev. Nancy Allen, Rev. Allison Buttrick Patton, Rev. Matthew Crebbin, Rev. Rebecca Crosby, Rev. Jack Dale Cook, Rev. Kate Forrer, Rev. Jennifer Habetz, Rev. Robert McGrath, Rev. Mark Montgomery, Rev. John Nelson, Rev. James Olsen, Rev. Deborah Roy, Rev. Shannon Rye Wall, Rev. Sue Strachan, Rev. Wayne Strever, Rev. Eileen Sypher, Rev. Delores Szyzsko, Rev. Mary Willis, Rev. Lawrence Wood, Rev. Sara Worcester*

Adoption of the Consent Agenda – Ms. Joan Burgess, Chairperson of the Board of Directors, member of Congregational Church of Greens Farms, Westport, called attention to the Consent Agenda mailed to the delegates. She explained that any delegate can remove an item from the consent agenda for separate consideration and vote during the plenary session. Ms. Burgess moved the adoption of the Consent Agenda.

Committees of the Annual Meeting - It was

**VOTED**

2008-10C-02 – that the Executive Committee of the Conference shall act as the Business Committee at the Annual Meeting as follows:

Ms. Joan Burgess	Chair; Westport, Greens Farms
Mr. Martin Ewing	Treasurer; Guilford, First
Rev. Mark Abernethy	Moderator; South Windsor
Mr. Keith Roberts	Chair- Silver Lake Board; Newtown
Rev. Jonathan Lee	Finance & Budget Committee; Rocky Hill
Rev. Richard Koenig	Vice-Chair; Plantsville Congregational Church
Rev. Carolyn Young	At-Large, Whitneyville UCC

And that the Program Committee for the Annual Meeting will act as the Committee on Amenities.

Rules of Procedure – It was

**VOTED**

2008-10C-03 – that the Conference adopts the Rules of Procedure for the Annual Meeting as printed and distributed to the delegates in their packets.

Annual Meeting Agenda – It was

**VOTED**

2008-10C-04 – that the Conference adopts the Agenda as printed and distributed to the delegates in their packets.

Minutes of the 140<sup>th</sup> Part II and 141<sup>st</sup> Part I Annual Meetings – It was

**VOTED**

2008-10C-05 – that the Minutes of the 140<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Part II and the 141<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting Part I, as published on [www.ctucc.org/reports/2008](http://www.ctucc.org/reports/2008), are approved.

Receipt of the Treasurer's Report – It was

**VOTED**

2008-10C-06 that the Report of the Treasurer, as published on [www.ctucc.org/reports/2008](http://www.ctucc.org/reports/2008), is received.

Acceptance of Annual Reports – It was

**VOTED**

2008-10C-07 that the Annual Reports in ConnTact, Volume I and in Volume II, are received as published on [www.ctucc.org/reports/2008](http://www.ctucc.org/reports/2008).

General Synod Delegates – It was

**VOTED**

2008-10C-08 that the Conference, in addition to General Synod Delegates and alternates fulfilling unexpired terms, elects for a period of four years, beginning in 2009, those persons nominated prior to the Annual Meeting of the Conference by Associations according to the following pattern:

Association	Class of 2011
Central	1 ordained (Rev. Melanie Enfield)
Fairfield East	1 ordained; 1 lay
Fairfield West	1 lay, 1 ordained
Farmington Valley	1 lay (Craig Patton)
Hartford	1 ordained, 1 lay (Rev. Michael Bush and Ed Turner)
Hartford East	1 lay (John Kidwell)
Litchfield North	1 lay (Tracy Gray)
Litchfield South	1 ordained (Rev. David Peters)
Middlesex	1 lay; 1 lay youth
Naugatuck Valley	1 ordained (Rev. Donna Ives)
New Haven	1 ordained (Rev. Andrew Nagy-Benson)
New Haven E. Cons.	1 lay youth (Ms. Janna Britt)
New London	1 lay youth (Mr. Steve Burger)
Tolland	1 lay
Windham	1 ordained (Rev. Hillary Dahlberg)

In addition to those nominated by Associations, the Nominating Committee of the Conference will nominate delegates-at-large to fill out our delegation as authorized by General Synod.

Further, the Conference authorizes the Board of Directors to elect delegates and alternates to the General Synod to fill any vacancies existing at the close of the Annual Meeting of the Conference or any vacancies which may occur subsequent to the Annual Meeting of the Conference before or during the meeting of the General Synod.

General Synod Nominations from the Nominating Committee of the Conference – It was  
**VOTED**

2008-10C-09 that Upon nomination of the Nominating Committee of the Conference, the 141<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting Part II elects the following people to

At Large General Synod Delegates Class of 2011  
Mr. Keith Roberts, Southbury, Fairfield East Association  
Mr. Jim Robertson, Southbury, Litchfield South Association  
Ms. Joelle Hays, Middletown, Hartford Association  
Ms. Sara Sneed, South Windsor, Hartford Association  
Mr. Mark Stevenson, Farmington, Farmington Valley Association

Assistant Scribe Nomination – It was  
**VOTED**

2008-10C-10 that upon recommendation of the Nominating Committee the Conference elects as Assistant Scribe for the 141<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting the Rev. Suzanne Wagner of Trumbull.

Reports to the Annual Meeting

*Now For The Future: The Campaign for Silver Lake Committee* - the Rev. David Peters, Senior Pastor of the Roxbury Congregational Church and Co-Chair of the Campaign reported that this is a time of watching and waiting—time that the church is looked to for its witness of hope and strength. During these economic times, the Campaign wants gifts to match our enthusiasm. So we have set four intermediate goals to make progress visible. Davida Crabtree reported that other Conferences' lack of action in times like this brought them loss of their camps. Therefore, we cannot leave well enough alone. Kate McLean reported that 100 churches desire to join in participation and more than \$2.5 million will be received – we celebrate and thank God for generosity expressed. Now For the Future will partner in local church campaigns in creative ways and celebrate their commitment and planning. (A video was presented) Mr. Bruce Barrett shared his 9-year old daughter's first experience at Silver Lake Conference Center as testimony.

*Guests from Kyung Ki Presbytery* – The Rev. Gordon Rankin, Senior Pastor of the Congregational Church of Naugatuck welcomed and introduced Rev. Choy, Moderator and Pastor of a 114 year old church, and his wife, Sun, and he noted that we have shared time together at our Annual Meetings for over a decade. Youth from Korea came to the Sacred Journey Conference at Silver Lake this past summer to build relationships across a very long set of differences. Rev. Choy gave the following greeting:

**On behalf of the Kyung-Ki Presbytery Church of the Republic of Korea and all our churches and members, I bring greetings to the 141st Connecticut Conference Annual Meeting.**

**We want to also offer our gratitude for your invitation and hospitality to our youth delegates during last summer's Sacred Journey at Silver Lake Conference Center.**

**That was an extraordinary life experience for our youth and this exchange demonstrates our mutual commitment to work together in mission and to grow in our understanding of each other's culture.**

**We express our appreciation for your continued prayers and commitment toward peace and reconciliation in the Korean Peninsular, in light of the recent decision by the United States to remove North Korea from the terrorism blacklist.**

**Last September, we were greatly blessed by the delegation of Connecticut women that attended our 80th Anniversary of the PROK Women's Association and we hope to find even greater ways to strengthen our relationship with you.**

**We continue to pray for your presidential election and that God will give His wisdom to ensure your country's role as a peacemaker in the world.**

**May God bless this meeting, your congregations and faithful ministries, your commitment to global mission, and your willingness to be a prophetic voice in making our world a better place.**

**Thank you.**

Reverend Choy presented Davida with the gift of a lamp to continue to shine her ministry.

*Tim Rose, Global Ministries Missionary from France* – Rev. Ronald Brown introduced Tim Rose who is spending some time in Connecticut sharing his ministry as missionary in France and Lebanon for the past 13 years.

*Back Bay Mission Report* – The Rev. Ron Brown introduced the Rev. Jonathan Morgan, Senior Pastor of the First Church of Christ in Simsbury, who is a member of the Board of Directors of Back Bay Mission in Mississippi. He brought greetings and an update from Biloxi which was devastated by the hurricane in 2005. They are encouraged and inspired by the work of our church; however, the challenge continues. Back Bay Mission is doing a great job but needs continued support. They send their appreciation for workgroups' support and funding support. They desperately need affordable housing, so building homes is a big part of the ministry of Back Bay, both now and for the next 20 years. Thank you to everyone for their prayers. The meeting was encouraged to find new and creative ways to support Back Bay's vital ministry.

*New England Seminaries Report* – The Rev. Ron Brown introduced the Rev. Kent Ulery, President of Bangor Theological Seminary and Dr. Priscilla Deck Vice President of Andover Newton Theological School. Mr. Ulery, who is from Michigan where many churches were started by the Missionary Society of Connecticut, reported that BTS has turned the corner and needs prayers and financial support. He said that a seminary student can look forward to a 30-year career and can touch 100,000 people over time. Dr. Deck came from Connecticut with vivid memories of Silver Lake Conference Center. ANTS is a school with a passion for the parish. Please continue to consider them as a resource and be in touch.

*Treasurer's Report* – The Moderator called upon Mr. Martin Ewing of Guilford, Treasurer of the Conference to present the Financial Statements. He reported that the Conference is in a positive healthy financial condition as of 12/31/07. He gave a power point presentation and then answered questions.

Mr. Abernethy then reviewed the process for Speak-Outs and announced that this evening's special offering would go to scholarships for Silver Lake Conference Center and that tomorrow's special offering would go to fiscally challenged conferences.

The order of the day was called and Mr. Abernethy introduced the Rev. Dr. Davida Foy Crabtree to present her Conference Minister's Address.

Conference, United Church of Christ  
The Address of the Conference Minister  
October 17, 2008

Wilderness, God, Joy

The Biblical wilderness is hardly a place most people would choose to go. It is harsh, barren, dry, unforgiving. Unlike a North American wilderness, there are few trees, no water, only a few large boulders and some caves for shade. The sun is unrelenting during the day and the cold bone-chilling at night. If you are there, chances are you are seeking either to traverse its land as fast as possible, or you are seeking a spiritual experience.

The two are not always mutually exclusive. I have found myself in a wilderness these past two months or so, the wilderness of a cancer diagnosis and chemotherapy. As I've traversed its landscape, I've sought the spiritual in the midst of the deprivation, and found abundant signs of God's blessings. You are among those blessings, with your prayers and your journeying with me. My amazing spouse, David, has simply and lovingly accompanied me, setting aside his ordinary life to care for me. What a blessing he is! The desert wasteland that this might be has been transformed into an oasis in the midst of life, filled with a powerful sense of God's presence, of being surrounded by a community of thousands, of being lifted up in prayer that sustains and heals.

Yes, I want to pass through this desert as fast as possible, but while I'm here, I'm seeking and finding God in new and rich ways, and hoping that some of you are as well as you accompany me, even in my isolation.

So a wilderness of the near eastern sort, unforgiving and barren at first blush, may indeed hold signs of God's abundance. And perhaps all the more so because we have absolutely no reason to expect it. There are no lush oases that can be seen from where we've landed, no date or fig trees from which to pluck the fruit, no streams of water, or even stagnant pools. Yet this is the wilderness to which Jesus chose to go for forty days to seek God.

We would do well to remember that in these days in our nation's life, for we are in the midst of a desert wilderness experience. The ground is so dry and hard that others' footsteps cannot be seen. We have no trails to follow, no guide for our way. We are disoriented. We are angry. We are scared.

When people are lost in any kind of wilderness, in their panic, they tend to keep moving, believing they will find a way out if they just keep going. In the frenetic pattern of their wandering, they trample what few signs of others' passage there may be. They miss important clues. Far better they should simply sit down a bit and observe. Find which way is north and where the wind comes from, what creatures share the space and what it is that God is whispering to them.

The near collapse of our financial markets has set us in a wilderness in which we are completely disoriented. Few of us have the capacity to offer a cogent analysis of all the factors that led us here. We do not know yet what it means to be here but we sure know we are here. Our worries are deep. For which of us does not worry about our future and how we will live, about our children and the debts they will be saddled with – the debt of war, the debt of bailout, the debt of the animosity of nations, the debt of an earth in deep trouble. Those who have been poor all along have always known these worries, and now the rest of us share them.

I hardly need to recite the financial woes we are all facing; we've all been listening as the media have recounted them and given advice that none of us knows whether to follow or not. And so I won't.

**The Unsought Wilderness**

Instead I want to speak of wilderness and God and joy. Framed by my own experience in these weeks, I want to lead you to discoveries that only come in wilderness that is unsought. I am not sure I can do that, but I will try.

You will remember that in the early days of this crisis, many were saying this is a market correction; it's going to be a bad one but all will be fine. Our economy is basically sound. One pastor told me of a man who insisted that the pastor was being too bearish in expressing concern on Sunday morning just a month ago. That same man came to him two weeks later and acknowledged he'd been wrong, that this is no market correction; this is the loss of an entire way of life.

One thing about life transplanted to the desert -- it cannot go on the way it used to. Life here is fundamentally altered, and the sooner we adapt, the better off we will be. We don't need a complete map to know that there are changes we need to make.

When I went for my mammogram on July 25<sup>th</sup>, I was pretty sure I knew the outcome, but I had no idea what it would mean. I was scared. I was angry at myself for having slacked off on my self-checks through the late spring. I was distressed because to me it meant that I would be failing you and unable to give you the vigorous leadership you deserve.

I had to decide how I would go through this. Would I spend hours and hours on the internet researching every aspect of the disease and the initial indicators? Would I slump into depression, dig a hole and bury myself in it? What was the most important way for me to spend my energy? As it turns out, my spirit made that decision for me. I decided that I would invest myself in being spiritually and emotionally centered. I did not spend any time on the internet. I haven't experienced a moment of depression, nor even any worry about survival. In the midst of my wilderness, I've chosen to focus on adapting to this new reality and seeking God in the midst of it.

Life for me is completely changed, for now. I have to take great precautions around people and food to avoid becoming ill because my immune system is compromised. I don't have the energy to do much. Sometimes I can't read or work at the computer because the chemo dries my eyes out. Life is changed. Yet when one can't do the normal things, there is still much that one can do and be. Contemplation and reflection become second nature. Thankfulness becomes one's mode of being. Observation of the little things of life yields unending joy.

So in this unsought wilderness we all now inhabit, our first and most important step is acknowledgement that life is changed, that we can't go on the way we have in the past. We will do well to conserve, to teach ourselves some better habits, to practice generosity. We will do well to take a good long pause and assess where we are spiritually, emotionally, and physically instead of pacing frenetically. We will do well to pay more attention to the needs of others than our own. Ultimately we will do well to ask ourselves how we got here and to analyze that deeply. And, among all the other things important in a time like this, it is absolutely essential that we keep our churches strong and vital through this time, for it is our ministries that will make a difference in people's lives.

If indeed a way of life has now disappeared, not only for those who made portions of that life for us, but for us as well, we need to acknowledge just how dependent we had become on the assumptions and the benefits of that way of life. Even those of us who don't understand the complexities have built our futures in those houses of sand that have now been to some degree washed away. My heart goes out in every direction these days,

- ❖ to those who lose their homes and livelihoods, good working people who were chasing their dreams of a home to live in and a chicken in the oven once a week;
- ❖ to those who are poor and have been all along for whom jobs will now be even more elusive, and food and charity harder to come by ;
- ❖ to those who anticipated retirement, some of our own clergy among them, who now must work for years to come;
- ❖ to average citizens who aren't going to lose their homes but for whom heat and food and basic services are an increasing stretch;
- ❖ to those persons of integrity who work in the financial, insurance and mortgage markets, who worked to build a strong economy and are now vilified for their participation in that very effort.

We are disoriented. We are angry. We are scared. In this unsought wilderness, we cannot help but look for someone to blame. We need to keep a watch on our character so that we do not become a twisted people, full of rage and retribution. It is fine to be in touch with our fear and our anger; we must not let it be our dwelling place.

### **God in the Unsought Wilderness**

It is the case that some, like Jesus and the desert saints, seek the wilderness as a place to encounter God. Most of us seek God in lush landscapes, on mountain tops, near flowing water or in the secret places in our souls and sanctuaries. Yet the desert with its stripped-down harshness bears a certain experience we should attend to in this time. There is no room for artifice, or pretense; no way the usual loafers or spike heels will make it, nor business suits or bathing suits. Only sandals and a simple robe will do. In the desert wilderness, like it we are stripped down. Here we come face to face with God in the dry wind, the sandstorm, the beating heat.

No wonder Jesus went to the wilderness to clear out his mind and to prepare for the temptations that were to come! Forty days – and nights! -- of fasting is a very long time in those extremes. And those temptations were mighty ones, coming as they did as he was famished at the end of his sojourn. His faithfulness in response was breathtaking, and can inspire us in these times.

We too will be tempted as we emerge some day from this desert wilderness. If we will build a stronger future for ourselves, our families and our world, it will be best for us to use this time to gain spiritual strength. We need to meet the God of the wilderness, not the one we've been thanking for our prosperity; not the one we've concocted in our minds as the source of our health; not the one we've believed protected us while others suffered. No, we need to meet the God of the wilderness, where all the mountains have been made low and all the valleys lifted up and all of us are the same in God's sight. We need to meet the God who expects the best of us in our generosity and our faithfulness.

For here in the wilderness, many of us will find that our being deprived of what we depended on is a profoundly spiritual experience. We will discover that ultimately we can only rely on God and on God's people, not on the accoutrements of life. We who encounter the God of the wilderness will, yes, be brought up short, but in the process we'll discover a richer and deeper life than we had ever imagined.

To encounter God in the wilderness, however, is not just a matter of being there. It is a matter of desire and of discipline. We must decide, as I had to, will we fret over the conditions and all we've lost, or will we slip into a funk, or will we focus on being spiritually and emotionally centered in God? We must, as the scriptures urge, follow our deepest yearning and make space for God in our pain and fear. We must desire God, and seek the ancient paths of righteousness and peace.

Here in the desert, the sight of a single locust can be a sign of hope, the discovery of a flock of birds, an evening's meal. What we must learn is that God's abundance is unending, even in the desert. We arrive here and experience deprivation. But if we pause and wait, if we adapt to our new environment, we will find that all around us are signs of God's blessings. It will take us a while to see them, addicted as we are to wealth and comfort. But they are here, and so in their own way are riches and comfort even if we cannot recognize them yet.

In the midst of this wilderness experience, God, I think, is giving us new life. And here I speak of us as a nation, not just as a collection of individuals. With this seismic shift in the tectonic plates of our existence, we have a renewed opportunity to focus our values and our ethos. Have we been the nation we want to be? As a people, do we really want to live in such extremes of poverty and wealth? We have slipped into a pattern of ignoring the poor and admiring the wealthy. We have spent billions, trillions on wars yet our own people suffer greatly. We have tolerated torture as a national policy; we have abused our power and forced our will on other nations, not always with good reason. Do we want to be that kind of nation?

In this moment, we have a chance to reflect on the most important issues of any generation's life: what is most important to us and how will we achieve it? Maybe in this crisis, we can commit ourselves to ending poverty as we rebuild our economy. Maybe we can recover a sense of the holiness of God's creation. Maybe we can

commit ourselves to the best and highest values in our relationships with other nations. Maybe we can dismantle the figurative mansions of greed and build a new nation – and a new world – of hope for all. Or maybe not. It's going to depend on whether we meet God in this wilderness, and how deeply we listen to God's whispered hope for humanity.

### **Joy in the Wilderness**

While it is certainly the case that the Biblical authors use the image of the wilderness as a place of privation and punishment, it is also true that many of the most memorable life-giving events in Biblical history take place there.

Remember with me these images from the wilderness:

- ❖ The burning bush through which God made known the cries of the people for justice and mercy
- ❖ Miriam dancing after the crossing of the Red Sea
- ❖ Manna in a time of hunger and complaint
- ❖ A pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night
- ❖ God in the still small voice, not wind or fire or earthquake
- ❖ The vision of a land flowing with milk and honey
- ❖ A voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord!
- ❖ The one lost sheep in the wilderness

In the midst of privation, there is joy. It is the joy of people rediscovering God. It is the joy of the assurance that God will not allow us to wander alone and untended in the wilderness if we are faithful. It is the joy that, stripped down, unencumbered, set free, in God's great generosity, we will find grace anew and gratitude will suffuse our lives.

These are joys we rarely know when we think all is well with us. Even in the most difficult wilderness experience, joy is there for the discovery.

Now I have one last thing to say and it concerns the election. Like most of you, I am disappointed at the inability of the American people to sustain a civil conversation about significant issues that confront us at such a crucial moment in history. I am beside myself with the incivility, the racist rumor-mongering, the fomenting of fear at a time when we need steadiness from our leaders. I am appalled at the hate that advocates for each side seem to have for the other. My deepest worry is that no matter who is elected President of this great but faltering nation, the people will not have the patience for the long and difficult work that lies ahead. I worry that we are creating our own wilderness in politics, a wilderness from which we will not emerge a stronger people.

And so I urge us all to turn our best minds to work on the solutions to the many challenges that confront us. I pray that each and every one of us, Republican, Democrat, third party, or no party will commit ourselves to support this new President. We have monumental work to do together, and every one of us is essential. We must commit ourselves for the long haul, with patience and conviction in staying the course toward renewal.

I also want to urge us to reach out across the lines of bitterness and hatred and the fear-formed barriers of class and race and do all we can to unify this nation and inspire this world. Every member of the United Church of Christ has gifts to give in rebuilding our common life. Let us give them. Let us not live in fear, nor be consumed by gloom and doom. In our gifts to our nation's life, let our witness be one through which we exemplify our core values of extravagant welcome of the other, and evangelical courage in standing up to bigotry and hate. Above all, let us live with faithfulness and generosity as Jesus did, our exemplar, our savior, our hope.

Rev. Dr. Davida Foy Crabtree

Following Davida's address closing worship with communion was held. The meeting was at recess until Saturday morning.

## Saturday Morning—Session Two

Orientation of delegates was held in the auditorium prior to the opening of the meeting.

The Moderator, Rev. Mark Abernethy, welcomed the delegates called the meeting to order at 8:58 a.m. The Rev. Peter Allen lead morning worship.

The Rev. Jane Heckles, Minister for OCWM Development brought greetings from the leaders in the national setting of the UCC in Cleveland.

Keynote Address – The Rev. Stephen Gray, Conference Minister of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference and Chairperson of the Financial Development Committee of the Council of Conference Ministers, was introduced by Dr. Crabtree. Mr. Gray is skilled in financial development and stewardship in the UCC and brings great insight and inspiration.

Mr. Gray, predicated his speech on the concept that "if a congregation wants to generate resources, it can." The talk helped us all to resurface things we probably have already known. It is important for congregations to understand that we are about God's work, and not our own. Congregations must be helped to move from the fear of scarcity to reality of abundance. We must help congregations understand that "God always provides enough to meet human need, never enough to meet human greed."

We must never forget "the birds of the air." When we believe that we can succeed, and only then, can we help our congregations understand that we can face anything, we can overcome anything. With prayer we can achieve anything, and everything.

The Rev. Davida Foy Crabtree announced that the Spring 2009 Annual Meeting will be on May 9, 2009 and the topic will be health & health care ministries. The Fall 2009 Annual Meeting will be one week later in the month than in the past – the dates are October 23 & 24, 2009.

Speak Out #1 – The first Speak Out was held. Following the Speak Out, the Moderator made announcements and recessed the meeting until 1:00 p.m. for workshops and lunch.

## Saturday Afternoon —Session Three

Speak Out #2 was held at 1:00 p.m. prior to the opening of Session Three. The Rev. Peter Allen and the Worship Team lead Worship which included the Installation of the Rev. Da Vita McCallister as Associate Conference Minister for Youth and Young Adult Ministries.

2009 Budget Presentation and Board of Directors Report – Rev. Mark Abernethy, Moderator, reminded delegates to have their voting card available and reminded the delegates that motions from the Board of Directors do not need a second. He then introduced Ms. Joan Burgess, Chairperson of the Board of Directors. Ms Burgess called upon Bob Giles, Chairperson of the Budget Committee for a presentation of the 2009 Budget. Mr. Giles gave a video presentation of the proposed 2009 Budget and responded to questions.

The Basic Mission Support Goal for 2009 – Ms Joan Burgess, Chairperson of the Board of Directors, moved the suggested action from the Board of Directors. It was

### **VOTED**

2008-10C-11 that the Conference adopts a Basic Mission Support Goal of \$2,201,680 for 2009.

Distribution of Monies – Ms Joan Burgess, Chairperson of the Board of Directors, moved the suggested action from the Board of Directors. It was

**VOTED**

2008-10C-12 that the Conference adopts the following distribution of monies received for the Connecticut Conference and the ministries of the United Church of Christ:

1. Basic Mission Support monies to be divided on the basis of 37% for the Conference and 63% to the United Church of Christ nationally for distribution among the ministries according to the payment schedule adopted by the General Synod of the United Church of Christ.
2. Investment Income to be used entirely for Conference work unless otherwise stipulated by the donor.
3. Special Support, capital, and emergency appeal monies to be designated entirely to the purposes for which they were authorized.

Per Capita Contributions - Ms Joan Burgess, Chairperson of the Board of Directors, moved the suggested action from the Board of Directors. It was

**VOTED**

2008-10C-13 that the Conference recommends the per capita contributions for 2009 be increased to \$6.00 per member to be used entirely for Conference work.

There were abstentions.

Proposed Budget for 2009 for the Missionary Society of Connecticut - Ms Joan Burgess, Chairperson of the Board of Directors, moved the suggested action from the Board of Directors. It was

**VOTED**

2008-10C-14 that the Conference adopts the 2009 Proposed Budget of \$4,205,292 for the Missionary Society of Connecticut, and the Conference grants to the Society the privilege of revising the budget during the year as funds are available and needs arise.

There were abstentions.

Proposed Budget for 2009 for the Trustees of the Fund For Ministers - Ms Joan Burgess, Chairperson of the Board of Directors, moved the suggested action from the Board of Directors. It was

**VOTED**

2008-10C-15 that the Conference adopts the 2009 Proposed budget of \$542,238 for the Trustees of the Fund for Ministers, and the Conference grants to the Trustees the privilege of revising the budget during the year as funds are available and needs arise.

Bylaws Revision - Ms Joan Burgess, Chairperson of the Board of Directors, moved the suggested action from the Board of Directors. It was

**VOTED**

2008-10C-16 that the Conference adopts the proposed Bylaws revisions as presented as follows:  
Proposed Amendments to the Bylaws, Article III, C:

*Board of Directors:*

*2. The Board of Directors shall elect a Finance and Budget Committee composed of a Chairperson, the Treasurer, a representative of the Investment Committee and at least five at large members, to be named by the Board of Directors. Within the composition of the committee each region of the conference shall be represented. The Board shall appoint the members of the Investment Committee which serves as a subcommittee of Finance and Budget. Neither members of the Investment Committee nor at large members of the Finance and Budget Committee are required to be members of*

*the Board of Directors. A member of the Board shall serve as chairperson of the Finance and Budget Committee.*

*It shall be the duty of the Finance and Budget Committee to supervise the management of assets, funds and investments of the Conference, to develop budgets and to make related policy recommendations to the Board of Directors. A full record of the actions of the Finance and Budget Committee, since the prior meeting, shall be presented at each following meeting of the Board of Directors.*

*3. The Board of Directors shall elect an Audit Committee composed of a Chairperson, the Treasurer and three at large representatives at least one of whom shall have professional audit or accounting experience. The Audit Committee shall report directly to the Board of Directors at its meeting immediately following the completion of the annual audit. The Committee shall oversee the production of annual financial statements by an independent, external audit firm and present these financial statements to the Board of Directors with recommended actions.*

There were opposed and abstention votes. It passed with a 2/3 majority.

Actions on Resolutions – Mr. Abernethy reminded the delegates that resolutions are moved by a committee charged with the task of bringing them to the Annual Meeting; therefore, they do not need a second. He then introduced the Rev. Barbara Libby, Chairperson of the Resolutions Committee. Ms. Libby invited the delegates to take note of the report of the Resolutions Committee regarding the Resolution on Healthcare '07 passed at the 140<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting.

Resolution: On the Urgency for Action on Climate Change – Ms. Libby moved the motion submitted by the Council of First Church of Christ, Congregational in West Hartford, Council of Immanuel Congregational Church in Hartford, United Church of Christ in Cornwall Congregational, and the Asylum Hill Congregational Church in Hartford. It was presented by George Stone of West Hartford. Discussion was held. It was

**VOTED**

2008-10C-17 that the Conference adopts the Resolution: On the Urgency for Action on Climate Change as follows:

**RESOLUTION ON THE URGENCY FOR ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

**WHEREAS**, *Scripture reveals God's will that humans shall have dominion (stewardship or responsibility) over all the earth (Genesis 1:26); that we must provide for the future, acting as trustworthy stewards (1 Corinthians 4:2) of the earth's finite resources on God's behalf (Genesis 41:46-57); that Jesus Christ teaches the church that our actions on the earth have cosmic consequences in God's will for redemption (Matthew 16:18-20)<sup>1</sup>; and*

**WHEREAS**, *responsible stewardship of Creation is integral to Christian discipleship (General Synod resolutions 1959,1975,1989,2005,2007); and we are called to compassionate action on behalf of those who disproportionately bear the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation (General Synod resolutions 1977, 1983, 1989); and*

**WHEREAS**, *the scientific consensus concerning climate change persuades us that we must intensify our efforts beyond what has previously been adopted (General Synod resolutions 2005, 2007); and there is growing evidence that climate change is occurring at an accelerated rate and it is primarily caused by human activities; and unless the use of fossil fuels is immediately reduced, the amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere will reach irreversible harmful levels within the next two decades; and*

**WHEREAS,** *the evidence that glaciers and high altitude snow packs from the Andes to the Himalayas are melting at alarming rates is incontrovertible and the effects of this unprecedented circumstance has permanent life-threatening implications for millions of people in many regions of the world; and recent satellite and observational evidence indicates an unexpected rapid increase of global warming in the North polar region, some three decades ahead of warming trends projected by most computer models; and*

**WHEREAS,** *the projected long-term consequences of current trends include sea level rise, coastal flooding, wide-scale loss of species, migration of vector-borne diseases, and more heat-related episodes among vulnerable members of urban populations; and when taken together, these trends pose the most serious threat to humanity in recorded history and demand our urgent, immediate response to significantly alter our current course; and*

**WHEREAS,** *the Collegium of the United Church of Christ, in a pastoral letter issued on April 8, 2008, reminded us that “We may not remain indifferent. We are called to face the challenges, engage deeply and with hopeful attention... to invite those who seek and those who love, those who lament and those who act on prophetic and imaginative dreams, to journey with us, build greening places and spaces for the holy and one another;”*

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** *that we, the delegates to this 141<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, declare a profound sense of urgency about the present and potential environmental and social consequences of climate change; and*

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** *that we urge the entire United Church of Christ, clergy and laity, officers and members, to listen carefully and prayerfully to the scientific consensus now available, to make education on these matters a priority throughout the United Church of Christ, and to take immediate steps, both individually and collectively, to address the changes required at all levels by this unprecedented global crisis; and*

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** *that we urge all United Church of Christ churches to achieve energy conservation, material-use reduction and other life-style changes as soon as possible; and that we urge all conferences of the United Church of Christ to assemble and distribute currently available resource materials to assist members and churches to increase their level of “green” activity and practice within the next two to five years, with the aim of moving toward a carbon-neutral footprint over the next five to seven years; and*

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** *that we urge the United Church of Christ, at all levels, to advocate the prompt enactment of state and federal legislation that will forward these practices throughout the nation and will support the creation of new international agreements that address the fundamental causes of climate change. Those actions include, but are not limited to:*

- a. passage of meaningful cap and trade legislation on carbon emissions;*
- b. enactment of stringent gas mileage standards for motor vehicles;*
- c. incentives for investing in renewable sources of energy;*
- d. financial disincentives for fossil fuel consumption;*
- e. allocation of significant public finances for research and development of alternative energy technologies;*
- f. meaningful participation in international treaty negotiation, thereby improving our country’s moral standing in the community of nations; and*

**BE IT FUTHER RESOLVED** that this resolution be forwarded to the 27<sup>th</sup> General Synod of the United Church of Christ for its adoption and be distributed to our sister conferences for their endorsement and support.

<sup>1</sup>1989 Resolution of the Connecticut Conference, UCC – *Solid Waste and Ecologically Sound Lifestyle*.

There were opposed and abstention votes.

Recognition of New Open & Affirming Churches – The Moderator called upon the Rev. John Gage, Co-Chair of the Open & Affirming Committee for recognition of new Open & Affirming Churches as follows:

West Avon Congregational Church  
First Congregational Church of Stamford  
First Congregational Church of Stratford  
United Congregational Church of Norwalk

Recognition of Tithing and Step-Up Churches – The Moderator called upon the Regional Ministers and the Rev. Jane Heckles to present the Five for Five, Tithing and Step-Up Churches as follows:

1. Fairfield County-Rev. Susan Townsley

Tithing Churches in 2007:

Monroe Congregational Church 10%

Step-Up Churches in 2007:

Norfield Cong. Church Society, Weston 3%

Huntington Cong. Church, Shelton 1%

North Stamford Congregational Church 1%

Cong. Church of New Fairfield, Inc. 1%

Newtown Congregational Church, Inc. 1%

2007 “5 for 5” Churches:

Olivet Congregational Church, Bridgeport

2. Valley Northwest Region-Rev. Michael Ciba

Tithing Churches in 2007:

First Congregational Church of Derby 12%

Oxford United Church of Christ

Congregational 10%

Step-Up Churches in 2007:

First Church of Bethlehem, UCC 2%

Bridgewater Congregational Church, Inc. 1%

First Congregational Church, Kent 1%

Winchester Center Congregational Church 1%

The UCC in Cornwall, Congregational 1%

First Congregational Church, Ansonia 1%

Morris Congregational Church, Inc. 1%

Bunker Hill Cong. Church, Waterbury 1%

2007 “5 for 5” Churches: none

3. South Central Region-Rev. Michael Penn-Strah

Tithing Churches in 2007:

Shalom UCC, New Haven 14%

First Congregational Church of Guilford 13%

First Church of Christ, Cong., Bethany 11%

North Guilford Cong. Church UCC 10%

Step-Up Churches in 2007:

Shalom United Church of Christ 11%

South Cong./1<sup>st</sup> Baptist Ch., New Britain 4%

Plantsville Congregational Church 3%

Second Cong. Church, Middle Haddam 2%

First Congregational Church, Westbrook 2%

First Congregational Church, West Haven 2%

First Congregational Church of Guilford 2%

Congregational Church in Killingworth 1%

Spring Glen Church, Hamden 1%

First Church of Christ, Cong., Bethany 1%

First Congregational Church, Branford 1%

Woodmont UCC, Milford 1%

Berlin Congregational Church 1%

Center Congregational Church of Meriden 1%

First Church of Christ, UCC Woodbridge 1%

The United Church of Chester 1%

First Congregational Church of Portland 1%

2007 “5 for 5” Churches:

Whitneyville United Church of Christ, Hamden

Higganum Congregational Church

Woodmont United Church of Christ, Milford

Church of the Redeemer, New Haven

First Church of Christ in New Haven

North Branford Congregational Church  
Plantsville Congregational Church  
First Congregational Church, Wallingford

4. Eastern Region-Rev. Lois Happe  
Tithing Churches in 2007:  
United Congregational Church, Tolland 10%

Step-Up Churches in 2007:  
First Cong. Church of Norwich, Inc. 3%  
Newent Congregational Church, Lisbon 2%  
Cong. Church of North Stonington 2%  
Colchester Federated Church 1%  
First Cong. Church of Vernon, Inc. 1%  
United Congregational Church of Tolland 1%  
Second Congregational Church of Stafford 1%

2007 “5 for 5” Churches:  
First Congregational Church, Andover  
Columbia Congregational Church  
Hampton Congregational Church  
Congregational Church of North Stonington  
Congregational Church of Somersville  
Storrs Congregational Church  
The Congregational Church of Union

First Congregational Church of Willimantic

5. North Central Region-Rev. Ineke Mitchell  
Tithing Churches in 2007:  
First Church in Windsor 11%  
Rocky Hill Congregational Church 11%  
First Church of Christ, Simsbury 10%

Step-Up Churches in 2007:  
Congregational Church of Plainville 3%  
First Church of Christ, Cong., Suffield 1%  
Iglesia Cristiana Nueva Esperanza, East  
Hartford 1%  
The Flagg Road United Church of Christ, West  
Hartford 1%  
Congregational Church of Burlington 1%

2007 “5 for 5” Churches:  
First Congregational Church, Canton Center  
First Congregational Church in Hartland  
Enfield Congregational Church, UCC  
Center Congregational Church, Manchester  
Congregational Church of Marlborough  
Congregational Church of Plainville  
Wilson Congregational Church, Windsor

The Moderator reminded the delegates to complete the Evaluation Form and either drop it into the boxes on the way out or mail it into the Conference Office. He announced that the Annual Meeting 2009 would be held in two Parts. Part I will be Saturday, May 9, 2009, at Asylum Hill Congregational Church United Church of Christ in Hartford. Part II will be held Friday and Saturday, October 23 and 24, 2009, at a place to be determined.

Mr. Abernethy then announced that following closing worship, the 141<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, acting also as the Connecticut Conference of the Congregational Christian Churches, is adjourned.

Closing Worship—Commissioning Service – The Reverend Peter Allen, Conference Preacher and the Worship Team, lead the body in a Commissioning Service. Adjournment was at 3:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



The Rev. M. John Arens, Scribe

Registered Attendance: 454