



C SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA NEVADA CONFERENCE

UNITED CHURCH
NEWS

**BE SURE
TO SAVE
THESE DATES**

**Southern California Nevada Conference
Annual Gathering 2007**

***Salt & Light:
Shiny Spicy Faith***

**June 1–2, 2007
Community Congregational UCC in Chula Vista**

Dr. Randi Jones Walker, keynoter

(Be sure to read her book, *The Evolution of a UCC Style*)

REMINDER

To facilitate the Conference-wide study of the exploration of the UCC, copies of Randi Walker's book *The Evolution of a UCC Style* are available at a reduced cost from Loletta Barrett at 626-798-8082, ext. 16 or email her at barrett@scnuc.org

REMINDER

let it shine
the UCC at 50 years

UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST

**BE THERE
IT'S WHERE THE ACTION IS**

The UCC at 50 years!

**Hartford, Connecticut
June 22–26, 2007**

God Is Still Speaking...

San Bernardino church celebrates 140th anniversary!

Sunday, February 18 is a big day in the life of **First Congregational Church in San Bernardino** with worship at 10 and lunch at 11:30, in honor of this oldest Congregational church in Southern California, officially organized on February 17, 1867.

The Pastor, **Rev. Petra Malleis-Sternberg**, has issued an invitation to all to celebrate this historic occasion with the congregation. They have enjoyed digging out colorful stories from their founding in the 'Wild West' and their rich history. The celebrations will include music accompanied by a melodeon which originally came around Cape Horn from New York in 1854 as a wedding gift to Ms. Eliza Robbins. She used it to accompany the Union Sunday School that preceded the forming of this congrega-

tion. Included in the program is a hymn written for their centennial celebration and more recent music led by Rev. Jim Manley.

Petra has written that "we celebrate the blessings of our connections over the decades with our brothers and sisters in what is now the **United Church of Christ**, and give thanks for each of your congregations in this anniversary year for all of us."

February 8 is the deadline for your RSVP to 909-886-4911 or office@sbcc.org, or to the church at 3041 North Sierra Way, San Bernardino 92405. Please contact the church for directions and further information. Any who are unable to attend are welcomed and encouraged to send written greetings to be read during the program.

Missionaries to Swaziland on home visit

The Rev. Wayne Wilson and his wife Ingrid, UCC/DOC missionaries in Swaziland will be on home assignment in February. Wayne grew up in this Conference and is eager to share his own experiences in the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, and

where Ingrid serves as the coordinator of the women's work. If you wish to schedule a visit in your church with Wayne and Ingrid please contact Conference Minister Dan Romero at 626-798-8082 or romero@scnuc.org.

Missionaries to Turkey share their experiences

By Elsa M. J. Seifert

Betty and Ken Frank began their ministries as missionaries in the 1970's and especially to the nation of Turkey since 1982 and their presence continues to the present in that country. This fall they have been in the Southern California Nevada Conference on a six-month home assignment and have appeared in many of our churches to share their experiences of living and working in Turkey during these times.

Betty is a librarian, and Ken is an administrator at the American School in Istanbul at the central office for the school system. Sharing the title of General Secretary(s) of the American Board of Global Ministries there, they have been involved with the lives of the Turkish people in Istanbul. Prior to being in Istanbul, they were stationed in Izmir, where their two children were born and raised. Their son and daughter are now in the United States where they have completed their University schooling.

Ken speaks of the Muslim calls to prayer at varying times during the days, according to the lunar and solar calendars. The first takes place at the first sign of daylight and the final call of the day is at the extinguishing of the light, sunset. The calls come from the main minaret in the city as well as from other high points. The calls now are amplified with speakers. He comments that the calls give a "sense of security and stability as life goes on". He is struck with the sense that "praying to God continues despite the transient troubles of the people with their illnesses, conflicts, successes and joys." He feels that "with regularity, God is still looking after us."

The Franks last appeared at **Altadena Community UCC** five years ago, and at their recent visit the question arose regarding their presence in Turkey during the trying times



Betty and Ken Frank, our missionaries to Turkey"

Photo by Elsa M. J. Seifert

of 2006. The Franks have a somewhat different profile in Turkey as foreigners and American Christians. Ken spoke of there being a sense of a harder edge to their presence. The difference is slight in the public eye; people who meet them for the first time are not quite sure of them, however, those who have known them well over the years continue to be warm and welcoming.

The Franks are expecting to be re-appointed to Turkey and hoped to return to Istanbul at the end of January 2007. Their work is supported by funds given to One Great Hour of Sharing and individual church gifts. Websites that may be helpful as an overview of the work of the Global Ministries are: www.globalministries.org. and www.ucc.org/oghs.

Keeping our Saltiness



**Rev. Dan
Romero**
Conference
Minister

Our Annual Gathering Planning Committee has selected as our 2007 theme for next June's meeting: **"Salt and Light: Shiny, Spicy Faith"** based on the scriptural text from Matthew 5:13-16. Although I was not privy to the thinking and development of this theme, it is intriguing and builds upon the General Synod Anniversary theme of "Let It Shine". The selected text is part of the larger Sermon on the Mount which we have come to cherish. Nestled in this significant chapter we find the words of Jesus: **"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled under foot."** (vs. 13, NRSV). Jesus makes it fairly clear that once you've lost your usefulness, you're toast! It sounds a bit harsh but Jesus was serious about the mission to which the disciples had been called. It was a mission to and on behalf of the world. In Matthew the use of the word "earth" is equivalent to "world". The very essence of who you are, Jesus was instructing, is to be present to the world. It was a word spoken not just to individuals but to the community of faith, those who were inheriting the message and ministry of Jesus.

For individuals, our faith requires continuous nurture in order to maintain its effectiveness and meaning in our lives and in the life of our communities of faith. Often we may use the phrase when referring to special people in our lives: "he/she was/is the salt of the earth" describing their qualities of genuineness, integrity, generosity and compassion. These are fruits of an active life in the spirit.

As we enter into a new year, let us commit ourselves to the renewal and nurture of our faith. In the climate in which we live today, our faith is continually tested by all kinds of realities and forces: lack of time, isolation, materialism, anxiety and fear, cynicism, and despair which inevitably leads to hopelessness. We witness the Christian faith being hijacked by the religious right and publicly portrayed as harsh, legalistic, judgmental, self-serving and exclusive. All this is enough to make any salt go sour. I believe the ingredients to a life in the spirit are those mentioned

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in the beautiful and poetic words of Jesus we have come to know as the beatitudes that precede the statement of Jesus on "salt and light". (Mt. 5: 1-12). You cannot separate out the call of Jesus to faithfulness in verses 13-16 without absorbing the depth of the earlier teachings. How do we maintain a zest for life and a morality anchored in Christ's life and ministry? I suggest we begin with the beatitudes.

No one individual can embody the litany of virtues contained in the beatitudes, but collectively as a community of faith we can share our individual gifts so that we are present to the world. Without the strength of community, the mission to which God has called us in the world is lonely and ineffective. Furthermore, Christians are not the only instruments of God's mission in the world. Persons of different faiths and traditions are equally as committed to the fulfillment of God's mission. In humbleness we approach our task of ministry knowing that we are only a small part of the whole, and that our understanding of God's mission agenda is limited. The diversity that we are only now beginning to reflect as a community of faith is a source of considerable insight as we move forward in the days ahead as a United Church of Christ. May this year of 2007 move us closer to finding ways of appreciating our diversity and maintaining our saltiness so that our faith and mission remains spicy.

Activist Bob Stiles speaks out on US corporations' involvement in other countries

By Elsa M. J. Seifert

Editor's Note: Bob Stiles is one of many of our denomination's members who are actively working for a better world and who are passionate about the message of our Gospel. Let me hear from those others who have their mission stories to tell.

Mentioning "peace and justice" in one breath will evoke a response from Bob Stiles such as "Peace without justice is empty. I prefer to use the phrase **Justice and Peace**".

Recently Stiles attended the **World Social Forums**, one in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2005 and in Caracas, Venezuela, in January 2006. In January of 2007 he headed for the Forum in Nairobi, Kenya. Stiles states that "American corporations have a political war going on with the Majority World countries regarding income, working conditions and wages of its people." In retirement he has

become a full time Justice and Peace Worker. Lectures and a newsletter are in the works in his future.

Stiles, a member of **First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, in Long Beach**, an ordained UCC minister retired since July 2006, recalls that he has been working on justice and peace issues for as long as he can remember. In the late 1960's he trained with Saul Alinsky at the Chicago Urban Training Center for community organizing, where he was in company with Jesse Jackson and Andrew Young. Besides living in the inner city much of his life, he has been intensely interested in community organizing.

His MDiv is from Eden Theological Seminary in Missouri. During his time there he was active in the movements against racism in the South and the Vietnam War. He continued being active at Andover Newton Seminary in Massachusetts where he completed a master's degree in pastoral counseling. He also was involved there in justice work for minorities in Boston. After serving as a pastor in Everett, Massachusetts, he moved to Southern California in 1976 to serve the Downey Congregational Church, which was one of the many new church starts in

the 1950's.

Bob is passionately engaged in his work. He sees a direct link between social justice, the poor and pastoral work. He says, "If the church is to survive, it must be intimately connected with the poor." No justice, no peace: **Know Justice, Know Peace**. Bob may be contacted at bobstiles@verizon.net or by calling his home office phone at 562-923-3722.

Suggested websites for more information on this subject:

www.KIVA.org
www.GlobalExchange.org
www.killercoke.org

Conference Mid-Month Mailer Deadlines

Issue in 2007	Deadline	Issue Mailed
Mar/Apr	Feb. 16	Mar. 2
May/June	Apr. 20	May 1
July/Aug	June 22	July 2
Sept/Oct	Aug. 17	Sept. 1
Nov/Dec	Oct. 12	Nov. 1

Please submit your flyer or article by the deadline dates to:

Virginia Arroyo
Southern California Nevada Conference
2401 N. Lake Ave., Altadena, CA 91001
Phone: 626-798-8082 FAX: 626-798-6648
arroyo@sncucc.org

Deadlines for SCNC News in 2007

Please send in any articles or call with information about events to (626) 798-8082 and ask Virginia for my phone number, or email to: eseifert@pacbell.net by the following dates:

February 27	for April/May issue
April 26	for June/July issue
June 20	for Aug/Sept issue
August 28	for Oct/Nov issue
October 28	for Dec/Jan issue

19th Regional Convocation

Disciples Women in association
with United Church of Christ Women

Saturday, March 3 and Sunday, March 4
Holiday Inn Select, La Mirada

"Dancing Through Life—
The Rhythms of Grace"

Contact the DOC office at 626-296-0385
for information and registration forms

One Great Hour of Sharing goes a long way

By Margaret Jacoby, Wider Church Ministries Board Member

The theme for the 2007 **One Great Hour of Sharing**® Offering is “Who is my neighbor?” While neighbors can be defined as those who live near us, we are also invited to see neighbors as everyone in the world. The use of neighbor in this way can be seen in the bible verse “love your neighbor as you love yourself”.

One Great Hour of Sharing supports neighbors both near and far. When floods arose in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, emergency supplies were sent immediately by the United Church of Christ for assistance. Likewise, when water flooded the streets of New Orleans, funds were sent because of donations received by the Offering.

Disasters are just one example of how your gifts make a difference.

One Great Hour of Sharing is improving lives in more than 90 countries by providing support in the areas of health, education, and agriculture. Thanks to your gifts, wells and running water have been provided to communities where women and children once spent hours each day gathering water. Now the children are in

school, and some of the women have received small loans to start their own businesses that give them hope for a brighter future.

This type of hope is what the offering is really about. It gives parents an opportunity to feed and to educate their children. It gives communities hope because families become better able to improve their own neighborhoods.

As a member of Wider Church Ministries and Common Global Ministries Boards, I was privileged to visit Colombia, Zimbabwe and South Africa over the past several years. It was evident to me how much **OGHS** dollars mean to our neighbors in those countries. Until I saw with my own eyes the great need that exists around us, I had no real concept of the impact my donations have had and will continue to have. Even though you may not have had such an experience, I would encourage you to invite others who have to speak with your church group and tell the positive, uplifting and heartwarming stories of the good works accomplished by **OGHS** funds.

Together, we make a world of difference! Please support the offering generously.

Calling All Youth

6th through 12 grades

Youth Uniting in Mission

Saturday, April 28—10 am to 4 pm
Location TBD in Eastern Association

“Caring for Creation:
A Special Program for Communities of Faith”

Juana Torres, Sierra Club, leading
and coordinating service projects in the national forest

Further info: Phil Jenkins 626-798-8082 or Jenkins@scncucc.org

Coming Soon—Sign Up Now

Confirmation Camp at Pines

Friday, March 16 to Sunday, March 18

Rev. Lisa Maddox is facilitating. Further information can be had by contacting Pilgrim Pines Camp or visiting www.pilgrimpinescamp.org.



Pilgrim Pines greets summer campers with new program focus: *Faith Shines...On The Way*

Greetings from the mountain. A lot of planning has gone into this summer’s camp session, “**Faith Shines...On The Way.**”

The brochures sent to all churches contain some exciting additions to camp this year, as well as some important changes of which I want you to be aware.

This year, along with our general camp offerings, several new “**Specialty Camp Programs**” have been added to our programs. In addition to Creative Expressions (Week 4) and CYMC (Week 3), during Week 2 you will find “Pool Time” for minis, “CSI: The Pines” for Juniors, “First Edition” for Junior High and “Photo Finish” for Senior High. Please be sure to look over all the options found between pages 3–6 as you begin to register.

Changes have been made regarding our registration process. The only items required initially are: Registration Form, a \$50.00 deposit (or full payment), along with a signed Camper Expectations and Covenant. This guarantees the camper space at camp. When these three items are received, a Confirmation Letter will be sent, including any additional forms necessary for the camper; ie, health form, low/high rope release form, camper release form—all to be returned with final payment two (2) weeks prior to the beginning of the camp session.

As in the past, payment may be made either by check, money order or credit card charge. A new policy requires a 3% fee to be added for each Credit Card transaction.

As you begin the registration process, here are some important dates to remember:

- March 2007—United Church of Christ members may register
- April 2007—All returning campers may register
- May 2007—Open registration until the camp is full
- June 1, 2007—Last day to register at the “early bird” rate
- June 11th postmark—Financial Aid Deadline
- July 8–August 11th—Camp is in session

If you have any questions do not hesitate to call the camp office (1-800-616-6612) or (1-909-797-1821) or e-mail us at info@pilgrimpinescamp.org. We look forward to sharing our summer camp with you.

From the mountain,
Renee D. Smith, Summer Camp Director

Diamond Bar UCC utilizing StillSpeaking door hangers

By Rev. Bo Young Belko

The **Diamond Bar United Church of Christ** and **Diamond Bar Asian American Ministry** are challenging themselves with **EVANGELISM!** The congregation is utilizing pamphlet-style door hangers to tell the community of how they will be extravagantly welcome at the **DBUCC** (see picture). The advertisement card is bi-lingual and reaches both English and Korean language speakers. Members of the congregation have gotten together on various Sundays to distribute them throughout the church’s community. In addition to using them in the church’s immediate vicinity they were taken home by congregation members and given to friends and neighbors in order to spread word of their ministry. Also, they are being used to advertise upcoming events such as special music performances, festivals, lectures, classes, etc. It is another way for **Diamond Bar United Church of Christ** to reach out to the community.



AROUND THE CONFERENCE...

If you have an event you wish to share about, please send it to me by email at eseifert@pacbell.net and place SCNCNews item in the subject line.

■ We are saddened to report that **Rev. Samuelu Taesali**, pastor of the **Samoan Community Christian Church of Los Angeles** died of a heart attack on December 10 while in the midst of enjoying a family night at the church. Sam served this Conference well in many ways and he will be sorely missed. Prayers are requested for his wife, Loretta, sons George and Bernard and their families, and the congregation of Samoan Community.

■ **Progressive Christians Uniting** continues its 10th year celebration with a dinner and program including Marcus Borg and Tom Hayden as speakers on Monday evening, February 19 at the Pasadena Hilton. Please contact the PCU office for further information at 213-989-1630 or admin@pcu-la.org.

■ **The Reverend Sarah Halverson** will be installed as senior pastor at **Fairview Community Church** on March 25 at 3:30 p.m. Fairview, one of the newest UCCs in our Conference, is located at 2525 Fairview Road, Costa Mesa, CA. Phone 714-545-4610 for directions and further information.

■ **Southern Association** will hold its annual Association meeting on Sunday, Feb. 25 at 3:00 p.m.

■ **Mitchell Young**, pastor at **Montebello Plymouth UCC**, is at it again, encouraging pastors in Central Association to exchange pulpits on April 29. In 2006, two of these exchanges took place. Pastor Mitchell suggests that a lay preacher from the congregation can be sent in place of the pastor if it is not possible for the pastor to be absent from the congregation on that date. Contact him at the church 323-721-5568 or at mpccucc@yahoo.com.

■ Also, Mitchell has been hard at work expanding the **God Is Still Speaking** your language concept to 50 languages, in honor of the 50th birthday of General Synod. Contact him for information about the project and the T-shirts that are imprinted with these languages.

■ February 7 will see **Exalt the Valleys** Meditation Improv Group of **Claremont School of Theology** in a worship service at 7:30 p.m. in Mudd Theater. The worship experience includes jazz improv, spoken word, drama and video—truly a spirit-led jam session. Contact the school at 909-447-2582 or at www.cst.edu.

Hillcrest Festival of Fine Arts celebrates 47th year

By Gail Stier

Celebrating its 47th year with a weekend full of beautiful art, music, and entertainment, the annual Hillcrest Festival of Fine Arts will be held Friday through Sunday, February 23–25, 2007 at **Hillcrest Congregational Church, UCC, in La Habra Heights**. Hours are 10:00 am to 5:00 pm Friday and Saturday, 11:30 am to 5:00 pm Sunday. Parking and admission are free to all attendees.

Over 200 talented artists exhibit and sell an extensive variety of art, including watercolor and oil paintings, jewelry, ceramics, acrylics, pottery, hand-woven clothing, fiber arts, photography, stained glass, metal and wire sculpture, wood-working, and crafts. There will be many artists demonstrating their artistic skills as well. Free art workshops for children to make their own creations will be on Saturday and Sunday. Festival attendees can browse, shop, enjoy various entertainment, and have lunch or a snack at the Starving Artist Café.

Local award-winning artist, author and illustrator Suzette Hodnett has been selected as the Featured Artist for the 2007 festival. She utilizes a unique three-dimensional medium combining foils, acrylics,

low-thermal plastics, and lightweight metals. Discovering a way to cut, heat-infuse, and assemble the materials into a dazzling array of artistic designs, her artwork results in images that are highly textural and brightly colored. Hodnett's large-scale framed art is displayed in galleries, corporate and private collections throughout the world. All her work is original, having no prints or reproductions, and she knows of no other artist producing similar work.

"Art is play" Hodnett says. "Everyone is an artist who dares to explore the uncharted lands and deep waters of spontaneity, creativity and expression. My art is rooted in the joy of making something from nothing and from gathering images and emotions during long walks out in the 'left field' of my imagination." Strong elements of design, texture, dimension and color combine to express Hodnett's love for play, travel, music, dance, tai chi, and the artistry of different cultures.

Started 47 years ago as a community outreach project to celebrate the arts, the Festival is now also one of the premier juried art shows in the West. The church is located near the border of Whittier and La Habra Heights at 2000 West Road. For more information call (562) 947-3755 or visit www.hillcrest-church.org.

Risk and Reward

By Gary Roberts, Conference Associate for Church Development and Renewal

My ultra-short biography is that I've been active in church development for about 15 years, but I've been in commercial real estate for 35 years now. Before I was even interested in church development, I was a real estate developer in Portland, Oregon. You can't be successful in either real estate development or in church development without being attuned to people's attitudes, i.e. customer attitudes towards houses, shopping centers or whatever, and church leaders' attitudes towards development of their own church. I'm still fascinated by the parallels in the attitudes that people bring to these two very human activities. I thought you'd be interested in just a few of them.



Rewards without Risks: We've just come through a long period of time where real estate ownership has been considered a way to make lots of money without any risks whatsoever. And it can be very rewarding. But real estate investments, though different from other investments in some ways, remain investments with risks. Great wealth has been built with real estate investments, but great wealth has been lost as well.

At church, the desire for reward without risk usually involves being reluctant to try something new. But in a world where attitudes towards Christ, Christianity and organized religion are more and more indifferent, even hostile, continuing to do what worked 10, 20 or 30 years ago takes the biggest risk of all: the risk of being irrelevant.

The Formula for Success: Both at church and in investing, people look for formulas, and there are lots of "experts" out there willing to sell their particular product, idea, or strategy. It's smart to learn from the experience of others, but it remains your money invested in real estate, and your church. You have to decide how best to develop your property, or your church. And that's likely not found in one book, one strategy, or one expert.

Other People's Money: In real estate, this is such a common attitude, it is often abbreviated, as in an "OPM investment." When the investment goes well, this can obviously be a very rewarding strategy. But by definition, these are investments without any cash equity, which clearly increases investment risk. Further, these kinds of loans are typically only available to people with experience, track records, and resumes in the kind of development being financed, so that the lender has assurance that their investment is still protected. These loans will generally cost more, and often also include an equity-sharing feature in addition to guaranteed interest.

At church, OPM attitudes usually show up when a congregation wants to do something, but is reluctant to ask more of themselves financially. There are times when this is the only realistic financial strategy: new church starts, rapidly growing churches and churches in very low-income locations are but three examples. But when I worked in a loan office at Local Church Ministries, I used to get a call every week from a church that was looking for a grant to do something like add a handicap ramp, fix a roof, or replace a boiler. These were requests for their church's financial challenges to be solved by OPM. There are grants available for some church programs. But most often, a good idea that a congregation is passionate about can be financed most easily by the congregation itself being willing to increase individual giving to the ministry.

OPM, formulas, reward without risk, are all very human desires. Jesus said, "Where you invest your treasure, your heart will follow" (Lk 12:34). There is no substitute for the investment of time, talent and one's own money, in either your real estate investments or in your church's development.

The Southern California Nevada Conference News is published six times each year for churches, friends and related organizations of the Southern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ.

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Don't forget to visit our website www.scncucc.org