



BROADVIEW COMMUNITY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

STEEPLE NEWS

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Steeple News
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Edited by Mary Mackenzie

EXCEPTS FROM "ON FACTS AND FAITH"

By Rev. Dan Stern

Remember the Peanuts episode where Lucy is in her usual position in right field when suddenly a batter hits a fly ball to her. . . . She looks to catch it, only to have it drop behind her. She saunters up to the pitcher's mound, gives the ball to Charlie Brown, and says, "Sorry I missed that one, manager. I was hoping I'd catch it, but hope got in my eyes." I don't think it was hope, I think it was wishful thinking.

The Dilbert comic strip also illustrates this. The conniving Dogbert decides to become an optometrist specializing in patients he considers 'nearsighted visionaries'. "They're ideal customers," he says, "Because they never expect the worst. So holding up an eye chart, he asks his first patient which price he's most likely to charge, and the optimistic patient says, "The low one." Then later, Dogbert gives a corporate CEO a pair of 'glasses' made of solid wood. "Is this better or worse?" he asks. "Better," says the CEO. "I foresee 40 quarters of solid growth." We tend to believe what we want to believe, and see what we want to see.

And then – at least equally deceiving – sometimes folks focus on the horrible and exaggerate the bad. With frequent color-coded provocation, a lot of people of late think they see terrorists at every airport, under every bush. When we're afraid, we do exaggerate the bad. We see bad things and bad people everywhere. If he wasn't such a little meany, Dogbert probably could have specialized in nearsighted pessimists instead. When we're afraid, well buy anything.

And precisely because it is so easy to be led astray by fear or by wishful thinking, for centuries, organized Christianity has attempted to 'discern the spirits' by balancing intuition with longer-term experience. We've been right to check the authenticity of both overly pessimistic and overly optimistic claims through the wisdom lense contained in scripture. We've also striven to get accurate facts. Taking science and history seriously as a church community is important. It's smart. Mere facts aren't sufficient, they are never the whole picture. And yet both, faith and facts when at their best, play on the same team.

Most of you know that I was selected to serve on a jury recently. At first, nearly all of us felt that we were being

terribly inconvenienced, but gradually came to appreciate what an honor it was, doing our civic duty in a participatory democracy. Out of a total jury pool of more than 75, fourteen of us were chosen; two would be declared in the final minutes of the trial to be alternate back-up jurors only. None of us knew who those two would be, in order that we'd all take seriously our responsibility to listen well and get clear about the facts of the case. We were to determine whether evidence provided us proved the defendant was "beyond any reasonable doubt" guilty of a number of somewhat complicated criminal charges. Over the course of more than a week, we did listen carefully to a variety of witnesses; we also got somewhat acquainted with the other jurors. Finally, after hearing both lawyers' closing arguments, I was feeling quite certain that the defendant, though clearly guilty of the lesser charges, had not been proven guilty of the most serious alleged crimes. And I was very much looking forward to our deliberation process. But at the last minute I learned from the judge that I was one of the two to be singled out as the alternates, and was dismissed from the actual team discernment process. The remaining jurors took two full days more to deliberate, and in the end, after convincing all holdouts for acquittal to change their votes, found the defendant guilty of the most serious felony charges. I doubt the decision was based entirely on factual evidence. Some jurors had hunches making them want to acquit, others – to convict. Would things have been any different had I, who had been leaning toward acquittal, been part of the discernment process? I don't know. I wonder.

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I'm told, by the way, that the defendant became quite pale when he heard the jury foreman announce that he had been found guilty of nine charges against him. That night I dreamed I was myself the defendant, being led away to prison. Then, since I'm a glutton for punishment, the very next evening, I drug Sam with me to see a local theatrical production of Dostoevski's *Crime and Punishment*. It only added salt to my wounded sense of uncertainty about the outcome. Sure, it could be that the defendant in the trial I witnessed was as guilty as Dostoevski's Raskolnikov. Maybe I'm one of Dogbert's nearsighted visionaries, soft on crime. I wanted to have faith in the judge and the jury deliberation process, but for me, doubts persisted. I just didn't think his guilt had been proven.

In one of our Sunday morning book studies recently, we read about and discussed Dostoevski's real Christian life experience – how early in his adult life, he underwent a virtual resurrection. He had been arrested for belonging to a group judged treasonous by Tzar Nicholas I. After spending eight months in jail awaiting sentence, suddenly on a frigid morning three days before Christmas, the so-called conspirators were ordered out of their cells and carted to a public square where to their horror an official read the sentence condemning them to death. They had no time to absorb the news, and no possibility of appeal. A firing squad stood at the ready. Bareheaded, robed in white burial shrouds, hands bound tightly behind them, they were paraded through the snow before a gawking crowd. A clerk pronounced the words, 'The wages of sin is death' to each prisoner, and held out a cross to be kissed. The first three selected to die, Dostoevski among them, were tied to posts. At the very last instant, as the order, "Ready, aim!" was heard, as drums rumbled and rifles were cocked and lifted to shoulders, a horseman galloped up with a prearranged message from the tzar: he would mercifully commute their sentences to hard labor in Siberia. Since he was considered a member of the nobility, Dostoevsky had a sword broken over his head as a sign of shame. One of the three prisoners fell to his knees crying, "The good tzar! Long live our tzar!" Another had a mental collapse from which he had never recovered. In a very different way, Dostoevsky, the third prisoner, never recovered either. But he had peered into the maw of death, and from that moment life became for him precious beyond all calculation. "Never has there seethed in me such an abundant and healthy kind of spiritual life as now," he wrote. "Now my life will change, I shall be born again in a new form." And it was true! He thus began his most creative and prolific period as a writer, even while imprisoned in the harshest reaches of Siberia. (from *Soul Survivor* by Phillip Yancey)

Concerning the consequences of the trial I witnessed: Will the one for whom I saw no certain evidence of the felony charges leveled against him, while imprisoned, turn his life around for the better? Stats show this to be unlikely. Doing hard time

rarely facilitates genuine rehab, let alone authentic faith conversion. More often, just the opposite occurs – incarceration breeds increased criminality. I don't know if justice was served. Whether rightly convicted or not, I want to believe that this man's sentencing could be as it was for Dostoevsky, a death – resurrection moment making life precious beyond calculation. Is that wishful thinking? Maybe. But I do know this: Faith and facts are not sworn enemies. When faith is mature and the facts accurate, we get closer to the truth with a capital T. Because what we see and what we don't see are ultimately part of a single whole.

Could we ever accomplish or decide anything at all if we had to see it before we would believe in it? "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

CELEBRATION AND CHALLENGE

From the Staff

by David Anderson

The General Synod of the United Church of Christ is a gathering every two years to worship and to conduct the business of the denomination. It also considers resolutions and pronouncements that if passed, in UCC polity speak to other settings of the church and not for those other settings. The General Synod met for five days the last week of June and in addition to its normal functions was a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the United Church of Christ.

My partner Tim Devine and I were present for Synod, as were some other UCUC members, including delegate Kathleen Morgan and visitors Don and Brenda Mallett, Glenn and Aileen Pruiksmas, Jerry and Sue Landeen, and Tamara and Miranda Roberts. For me it was an amazing and challenging experience. As part of the 50th anniversary celebration we heard from a variety of speakers who are members of the UCC, including Bill Moyers, Barak Obama, Lynn Redgrave, Walter Bruggemann and Leonard Pitts. I was particularly inspired by the passion and energy from Bill Moyers: not the quiet reserved PBS-style journalist approach but rather a challenge to us to be a church of conscience in the national arena: *"this new struggle for a just world – it's not a partisan affair... to see whose side God is on, just go to the record. It's the widow and the orphan, the stranger and the poor who are blessed in the eyes of God. It is kindness and mercy that prove the power of faith, and it's justice that measures the worth of the state, not empire. Kings are held accountable for how the poor fare under their reign; Presidents, too. Prophets speak to the gap between rich and poor as a reason for God's judgement. Poverty and justice are religious issues, and Jesus moves among the disinherited."*

My role at General Synod was as a member of the General Synod staff. I had been asked by the Synod leadership to provide support for the committee process, which is what interprets and implements the standing rules of the General Synod. This provides a structure and system that allowed the Synod committees to consider the seventeen resolutions and

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motions submitted, primarily related to issues of the day. I was glad to provide the support for the process, enjoyed the work and "policy wonk" aspect. In response to the actions of the General Synod two years ago, there were several resolutions that sought to reverse or alter that Synod's support for equal marriage rights for all couples, including gay and lesbian couples. It was gratifying to see that in the midst of serious and significant disagreement there was a willingness among the delegates to listen to all perspectives. And while the motions seeking to overturn Synod support for equal marriage rights were not even presented to the full plenary but instead were voted "no support" in committee, it was in an atmosphere of respect. And yet -- with a commitment to the progressive justice stands that the Synod has taken over the years.

So - wonderful worship, serious conversations about resolutions and pronouncements, and much celebration for the heritage and history of the United Church of Christ. Nearly ten thousand people present for the celebration and action: three times as many as most General Synods! It could have been quite the congratulatory fest, and was. And yet I also appreciated the sermon preached by UCC General Minister and President John Thomas during the Sunday worship service. (His sermon was included in the last edition of *Church and Home*.) Using I Kings 19:1-19 as his text, he talks about God's challenge to the prophet Elijah. Elijah was feeling justly proud of his accomplishments, on the run from the wrath of Jezebel, stopping his work to shine about Israel's lack of faithfulness. Yet God asks... "what are you doing here?" As with Elijah, we in the UCC can celebrate much. And yet.... there is much yet to do: genocide in Darfur... disaster and abandonment in New Orleans... a war born of deceit and involved with torture, demoralizing death and dismemberment... people around the world and in our own communities yearning for a voice of justice and the call of an evangelical faith.

And so our charge: as a denomination at 50 years, and as this church nearing the end of our formal interim period and ready to launch. As John Thomas said elsewhere, we are here "not out of self righteousness or to support the status quo or to be preoccupied with our own comfort. We are here to be deeply attentive of each other and those outside the church. We are here not to be afflicted with terminal politeness but to rise up with outrage on behalf of the poor and oppressed and violated in the world."

And that vision speaks to my heart. We are called out of quiet complacency and toward a radical, inspirational, marvelous and engaging plan of action and ministry: to embrace each other and the world, to celebrate God's grace, answer God's call, and to inspire, provoke, laugh, cry and engage along the way. So may we move back out into our future: with love, fervor, commitment and our whole selves, and always with the assurance of God's presence and inspiration with us in all these days.

MOVIE REVIEW: *SICKO* by 'Day' Murti

As I'm looking for medical insurance, my mom (a doctor) and I spent several days carefully researching and comparing medical insurance companies claims and offers. Having thus become savvy to the grossly convoluted U.S. healthcare system, we chose to see Michael Moore's views in his new film, "Sicko". Wow! I strongly recommend it for all to also see. The movie is great entertainment and is in the powerful line of his other Academy Award winning films, "Fahrenheit 9/11" and "Bowling for Columbine".

What struck out for me was the point in the film the U.S. healthcare system is compared to healthcare systems around the world. Ours ranks #37 in the world, just ahead of Slovenia and far below the versions in Europe, Cuba, Singapore, Canada, France, England, and Sweden, which have nationalized healthcare systems. At one point, several people with various illnesses, go to Guantanamo Bay for the free healthcare our country provides detainees from 9/11 and our war in Iraq. He carefully analyzes the malicious influences of the U.S. medical insurance industry - through their advertising campaigns, lobbying money investments in government, and HMOs cost cutting.

BROADVIEW COMMUNITY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Invites **YOU** to our annual

OUTDOOR WORSHIP SERVICE

A Celebration in song and prayer
of Creation and the Creator

**Sunday Morning, September 9, 2007
10:00 AM**

in the front yard (weather permitting)
125th & Phinney

Guitars - Music - Refreshments Following

BIRTHDAYS SEPTEMBER

September

Patti Kujac	9/2
Mary Lundt	9/6
David Herald	9/13
Joan Henjum	9/16
Dennis Hylander	9/17
Gary Law	9/22
Peter Bloch-Garcia	9/23
Lisa Denny	9/25

BIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT ABOUT

JESSIE PATTERSON

by Judy Zibbell

I want to introduce you to one of BCUCC's oldest and most loyal parishioner's - Jessie Patterson. Before Jessie started having trouble with her hearing, her passion was to go to Benaroya Hall and listen to wonderful classical music. Her favorite piece of music is Carmina Burana.

Jessie met her husband-to-be, Jack, at a church in Bremerton. Jack was an electrical engineer who worked for the Navy. He was transferred to Seattle at Sand Point Naval Air Station.

Jessie and Jack first attended Trinity United Methodist Church. Since the minister there at the time didn't believe in giving to charity, they started attending Broadview. Jessie still attends the Women's Fellowship. She spends a lot of time reading the newspaper.

Jessie has two sons and one daughter and one granddaughter. One son, Tim, used to work for Microsoft. Her other son, Douglas, is married to Ana, a beautiful African woman. They have one Daughter, Salome. Doug works as a host for two local public radio stations. Catheryn, Jessie's one daughter, is a very independent lady who does Chi Gun and also likes to dance. I told her once that I would be willing to pay money to see her dance.

I think the most exciting thing about Jack and Jessie was their travels. Jessie remembers visiting Siberia, where they actually have potatoes growing. (I can't quite imagine it.) Also, fascinating was a visit to Antarctica. They went on a big ship but then got off on a rubber boat, which holds about twelve people and got quite a good view of the ice bergs which were so much bigger than I thought they could be.

Jessie is such a good hearted generous, charitable person.

We wish all the Patterson family good health and happiness.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

Broadview Community United Church of Christ is looking for a Youth Coordinator, to work 8 hours a week. Interested? Contact BCUCC at broadviewucc@qwest.net for more information or to submit resumés. Youth Coordinator must be able to submit to and pass a Washington State Criminal Background Check.

TWO PRAYERS

Submitted by Rev. Dan Stern

Prayer Carkeek Park

The trees in heavenly prayer stand,
bending boughs of suppliants

yearning to be nearer Thee;
in quiet stillness we are born.

Prayer: Let Me Be Always Near You

God, let me be always near you.
Let me understand
that we are partners, you and I,
in this journey thru life
and that as I travel thru I come closer to you.
Let me take your hand.
Guide me closer to my dreams.
You and I are moving together
to make my dreams become real.

The more I love you, the more I value myself.
The more I rely on you, the stronger I get.
You have given me dignity.
You have shown me your love.
Thank you Dear Father.

READINGS

September 2, 2007

Let's Be the Church
Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Jeremiah 2:4-13; Psalm 81:1, 10-16
Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16; Luke 14:1, 7-14

September 9, 2007

Freed to Be
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Jeremiah 18:1-11; Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18
Philemon 1-21; Luke 14:25-33

September 16, 2007

Of Great Value
Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28; Psalm 14
1 Timothy 1:12-17; Luke 15:1-10

September 23, 2007

In Jesus' Name
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
Jeremiah 8:18-9:1; Psalm 79:1-9
1 Timothy 2:1-7; Luke 16:1-13

September 30, 2007

Generous Spirit
Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Jeremiah 32:1-3a, 6-15; Psalm 1-6, 14-16
1 Timothy 6:6-19; Luke 16:19-31

Help the homeless each month through

SHAREHOUSE – SEPTEMBER

September – Disposable Diapers

Contact Lin Takahashi for more information.

BILLY'S
by Deb Arnold

Reprinted with Permission: Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance Newsletter, Late Summer 2007. Check out the website: www.seattlefarmersmarkets.org.

Every Friday afternoon during market season, Billy Allstot packs up his truck and leaves his farm in Tonasket to start the trek to Seattle for another weekend selling prized vegetables and fruit at the University District and West Seattle Farmers Markets.

He'll be back home Sunday night, and up and ready to go to work on the farm by 6am Monday morning to meet the demands of the seven-day-a-week growing season that extends from March 1 through the middle of November.

"Billy's" has been a market fixture since 1994, the second year of University District Farmers Market operations, and that weekly routine has gone on for the past fourteen seasons. Billy has made the 520-mile round trip more than 300 times, and logged more than 162,000 miles on the road.

Billy comes from a long line of farmers, and was raised on the nearby farm that his son now owns, continuing the family farming tradition. he cultivates 30 of the 46 acres on his farm, which is located in the north central Washington Okanogan region less than 30 miles from the Canadian border. Billy's specialties include succulent strawberries, and a wide variety of tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants. Eight acres of peach trees will be producing for the first time this year to expand the array of offerings at the markets.

Billy has seen the development of a devoted clientele at the farmers markets who value quality and are committed to a lifestyle of good food. He enjoys interacting with his customers, and is pleased that the markets provide a unique opportunity for shoppers to see and meet the people who bring them their food. Billy appreciates all of the shoppers because "it takes both of us" to make the farmers markets work so well.

Billy feels that the best thing about farming for a living is being connected to nature and "trusting that by doing your part Mother Nature will do her part, too." He advises anyone who might be considering taking up farming to go to work for a farmer for a while.

It takes a real commitment to succeed, and the work is not glamorous. But reflecting the serenity that he says took thirty years to develop, Billy says that "it is glamorous to me, and I feel very privileged."

Billy's can be found every week at the U-District and West Seattle Farmers Markets.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Billy Allstot was raised in the same church community as Pastor Dan, and remains a good friend of his.

UNTITLED POEM
Submitted by Christy Qualin

It is from the bulletin board of one of our members, unknown author.

My little boy is growing tall
And, Oh Dear God, I pray
That he may keep on growing tall
And taller every day.
Not only till he stands my height
His eyes in line with mine
But tall enough to see Thy face
His will in line with Thine.
Tall enough to stand alone
Fearless, clean and true.
Tall enough to see the stars
And through the clouds, the blue.
Tall enough to stretch his hand
To share a neighbor's need.
Tall enough to lift the weak
And then forget the deed.
Tall enough to live above
The things that make men small.
Tall enough to walk with Christ.
God, help my lad grow tall.

BROADVIEW COMMUNITY UCC CHOIR PRACTICE

BCUCC choir begins practice on Tuesday, September 18 at 7pm. Please note the day of the week change from last year!

broadview community
United Church of Christ

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