



UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE TWIN CITIES

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NEWSLETTER
December 2009

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Members of the United Community,

This fall has been exhilarating, with lots of planning for United's future already accomplished. This kind of work always unearths new possibilities; the pleasurable and sometimes surprising process of sorting among options as we move into the future is encouraging. I hope to be able to share more with you in the next edition of the newsletter.

Our partnership with the Guthrie Theater is flourishing. Panelists enjoyed a preparatory conversation with Joe Dowling in early November. The Guthrie received so many phone calls and e-mails that they recorded both panels of theologians and physicians, held after performances on November 10 and 17, and added them to I-Tunes. Both evenings enjoyed full houses; the panel on the 17th attracted the largest audience for a panel in the history of the Guthrie.

We are enthusiastic about using the educational television series entitled "Justice: What is the Right Thing to Do?" for interfaith religious education. Bill Hanley, executive vice president of TPT, and the Minnesota Council of Churches are our partners in this adventure. TPT will screen the series Sunday afternoons beginning January 3 at 2:00 PM on TPT Life, running for 12 weeks. It features Professor Michael Sandel teaching an introductory course on the subject at Harvard University; the series was developed in cooperation with WGBH. Sandel uses the Socratic method and engages students (and us) in impossibly difficult questions as we struggle toward clarity about our values and how our faith shapes them. So far, Bahai, Tibetan Buddhist, and Christian organizations have attended a screening and indicate they will use it. Shiloh Temple will offer a briefing for a number of inner city clergy. In addition, participants have asked us to get the word out nationally so many others can benefit from this resource. Our hope is that this material, which addresses key topics in ethics, will be useful and enjoyable in faith community and family education.

Through the fine work of Julie Brown and our development department staff, I have met many donors, friends, and alumni/ae of the seminary. I am continuously impressed with people's thoughtfulness and their real concern for our mission. Please let me know if you would like me to speak about United at your church. I would be happy to do so!

Wishing you every blessing in this holiday season!

Mary E. McNamara
President

Alfred Aeppli Supports Peace and Justice through a Bequest

Alfred and Dorothee Aeppli have been friends and supporters of United Theological Seminary for many years and were honored in May 2006 as new Joshua Society members. In September 2008, Alfred died of cancer, leaving a legacy rooted in his deep passion for social justice that had developed in his early years and continued throughout his life of teaching, love of music, and the church.

Alfred left United a generous gift of \$100,000 that will be used to support the seminary's mission and to establish an endowed scholarship in peace and justice. It will be named "The Alfred Aeppli Scholarship in Peace and Justice." We are truly grateful to Alfred, whose lifelong dedication to social justice will continue at United.

It was Alfred's activities as a Boy Scout and scout leader in Zurich, Switzerland, as well as World War II and the silence of the German churches, that sensitized Alfred to injustices, planting the seed to fight injustices and work for peace.

After earning a Ph.D. in mathematics, Alfred came to the United States in 1957 to accept a teaching position at Cornell University and, a few years later, joined the faculty at the University of Minnesota, where he enjoyed teaching mathematics until his retirement in 1998.

For 45 years, Alfred was a member of Macalester Plymouth United Church in St. Paul, where he sang in the choir early on and was ordained an Elder. He was a devoted Presbyterian who took his assignment as a delegate of the congregation to the Presbytery of the Twin Cities seriously. Until shortly before his death, Alfred was a driving force for the Peacemaker Overture adopted by the Presbyterian General Assembly in 2008.

Alfred's lifelong commitment to issues he found to be vitally important is an inspiration. He will be greatly missed.

If you would like to inquire about how to make a planned gift, please contact the development office at 651.255.6111.



May You Rejoice in this Season of Advent

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-7
The New Oxford Bible, NRSV

Consider These Year-End Gifts

As we approach the end of the calendar year and the season of 'Gratitude and Giving,' there are several kinds of giving opportunities to consider when you make your Annual Fund gift to United.

- **The Charitable IRA Rollover** enables individuals age 70 ½ to make a **tax free** gift up to \$100,000/year from a traditional or Roth IRA. This rare opportunity concludes December 31, 2009.
- If you are over age 59 ½, you may be able to take funds from a **tax-favored retirement account** without a penalty.
- **Gifts of securities** are greatly appreciated, and this may be a perfect time to transfer stocks to United that are worth more than you paid for them a year or more ago.
- **A recurring gift** – you decide the amount you want us to charge on your credit card each month. This is a worry-free way to give and saves you and United postage and other costs.
- **Gifts of cash** are always welcome and never go out of style.

To make a contribution easily and timely, you can always visit our Web site at www.unitedseminary.edu and click "Giving Opportunities."

Thank you very much for making United one of the high priorities in your giving at year-end and throughout the year!



Panelists at the Guthrie's Faith Healer, left to right: Rev. Dr. Richard Bliese, President, Luther Seminary; Rev. Martha Postlethwaite, Chaplain and Associate Professor of Spiritual Formation, United Theological Seminary; Fr. Anthony Ruff, O.S.B., Associate Director of Theology, St. John's School of Theology; Rabbi Barry D. Cytron, Visiting Assistant Professor, Macalester College; Dr. Gregory A. Plotnikoff, Medical Director, The Penny George Institute for Health and Healing, and United Theological Seminary Trustee.

Christie Neuger at United



Tremendous need, a scholar and teacher's deep sense of call, and a school's sense of mission united to give birth this summer to United Theological Seminary's Institute for the Support of Pastoral Ministries. The Rev. Dr. Christie Cozad Neuger, a national leader in the field of Pastoral Care and Counseling, had seen the evidence suggesting, as she puts it, "even though seminaries do their best to prepare students for ministry, much of their learning (particularly in the practices of ministry) comes after ministers leave school." She also knew how few were the forms of support for such continued learning by pastors. United's leadership knew that long after seminary graduation, pastoral leaders need significant resources to address the challenges facing church and society in times of tremendous change. Both shared a conviction that more was needed to promote pastoral excellence. Their shared vision led to the creation of the Institute.

Under the leadership of its founding director, Dr. Neuger, also the seminary's distinguished senior scholar in pastoral care, the mission of the Institute is to promote continuing growth in pastoral excellence by providing resources and support for ministers serving in parish and specialized settings. The Institute's first year of programming is focused on pastoral care and counseling, offering collegial supervision groups and short courses enabling participants to meet requirements for membership in the American Association of Pastoral Counselors as "Pastoral Care Specialists." The enthusiastic response to these offerings has been well beyond expectations.

In future years the Institute will expand its offerings and add programs to support preaching, worship, leadership, and teaching. It will also offer programs addressing critical issues in contemporary ministry (e.g., new church development, congregational re-vitalization, support for new pastors in the first five years of ministry, transforming conflict).

Assuming leadership of the Institute marks Dr. Neuger's return to United, where she served on the faculty for many years. Throughout her career she has also served as a pastor, chaplain, and pastoral counselor. An ordained United Methodist elder, she received her Master of Divinity from United and her Ph.D. from Claremont School of Theology. She has taught at Princeton Theological Seminary, Brite Divinity School, and United. She is a Diplomate in the American Association of Pastoral Counselors and an active member in the Society for Pastoral Theology.

Commenting on the Institute's creation, Richard Weis, United's dean, remarked, "We are delighted to welcome Dr. Neuger back to United Seminary in this important new initiative. The need in our society for vital and creative leadership of vibrant communities of faith has never been greater. Under Dr. Neuger's visionary leadership, the Institute will offer important support for the continuing development of such leadership. We hope it can be a model for theological education and the church."

The Critical Importance of Pastoral Care

Faith communities in November 2009 may include the spouse and children of a soldier serving in a combat zone, a returning veteran suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome, and families in which the chief breadwinner has been laid off. Considering all the potential anxiety, grief, guilt and shame, is there a more critical responsibility for today's ministers than providing pastoral care for parishioners in crisis?

Distinguished visiting professor of pastoral care at United since 2005, **Bob Albers** teaches in the areas of pastoral care and counseling, bereavement, mental illness, family systems, and addiction and recovery. Long concerned with authenticity in ministry, Bob writes in his book, *Shame: A Faith Perspective*, "It has also become evident to me over the years as a pastor that I not only need to be aware of my own shame issues, but that I need to process some of them before I can be of assistance to someone else."



Today Bob provides the calm, centered presence of one who has successfully wrestled with issues of grief and shame related to personal tragedies that include his father's death by suicide and a son's death in an automobile accident. His teaching philosophy flows from his well-integrated life experience; he believes that "care and concern are the purpose of education rather than indoctrination into a theological or ecclesiological school of thought."

Bob describes teaching as a two-way street: "My passion is to engage in dialogue so that the faith tradition embraced by each student might form an intersection with the existential realities of life." More concretely, he seeks to engage his students in dialogue even when evaluating written work. In addition to commenting on specific passages in a student's paper, this conscientious teacher adds a one-page typed response.

Bob's career as a pastor and teacher spans more than 40 years. "It seems I've always felt called to ministry," he said. Reminiscing about life with his extended family on a farm near Kiester, Minn., he recalled stories his paternal grandmother told him about his great grandfather, an immigrant Lutheran pastor who made his rounds on horseback to serve local German-speaking congregations.

After graduating from Wartburg College, Waverly, Iowa, and Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, Bob spent a year at Karls-Eberhard University in Tubingen, Germany. Ordained in the American Lutheran Church in 1968, he served as a pastor for several years before earning his Ph.D. at Southern California School of Theology. He taught pastoral care at Luther Seminary from 1981-2000, and he holds standing as an ordained minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

Paul Tillich and John Shelby Spong are among the many theologians who have helped shape Bob's ministry and life. When asked about his experience of teaching at United, he said, "It felt like I was coming home!"

United Hosts Faith Practices Workshop

In early November, United hosted a well-attended workshop on *Faith Practices* led by **Ken Ostermiller**, minister for curriculum development, United Church of Christ. *Faith Practices* is a new holistic resource applicable in a variety of church settings.

Ken said *Faith Practices* was developed in response to a big change in UCC congregations from "schooling to something members have so far been unable to put into words." He mentioned several factors driving the change:



1. Many UCC churches have chosen to use the lectionary, connecting education to life in the larger church;
2. Churches are creating their own resources to reinvigorate Sunday School education, engaging participants who were not previously involved;
3. There has been an explosion in adult education.

A six-year resource, *Faith Practices* provides four practices each year that connect faith with scripture and include relevant music and poster art. The four practices coming available in September 2010 are Forming Community, Being Stewards, Centering Life, and Living Creatively.

Each practice explores several topics that congregations can use in any order. For example, Forming Community offers explorations in giving and receiving hospitality, welcoming diversity, working together, covenanting, guiding, and mentoring. Poster art for this practice includes work by John August Swanson, Manuel Alvarez Bravo, George Tooker, Jacob Lawrence, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Diego Rivera. Music selections include *Come All You People*, *Wade in the Water*, and *Won't You Let Me Be Your Servant*. Genesis 18: 1-15 (21: 1-17) is the compass scripture used to guide all explorations for Forming Community.

Workshop participants at United enjoyed contributing their ideas to practices that are under development. Members of local churches who become development partners will also have the opportunity to contribute ideas.

The *Faith Practices* workshop was sponsored by the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ. Wade Zick, Ashley minister of faith formation for children and youth, was on hand to assist Ken Ostermiller.

More information about *Faith Practices* is available at the United Church of Christ Web site, www.UCC.org (type "faith practices" in the search box). You may also contact Ken Ostermiller toll free at 866.822.8224 ext. 3866 or e-mail him at ostermik@ucc.org.



Remembering the Past, Looking to the Future

A Mission House Gathering

On October 17, a typical fall day in Sheboygan, Wis., more than 40 Mission House Seminary alums and friends gathered for an exciting reunion at Lakeland College. Alums from the classes of 1943 to 1963 came from Arizona, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin to catch up with old friends. It was an amazing gathering of laughter, stories, song, and deep friendships! It was clear these alums were more than classmates, they were a family.

Mission House Seminary merged with Yankton School of Theology in 1960 to form United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. This reunion event was intended to unite alums and celebrate the legacy of Mission House and its historical and theological place in United's life.

During the program, the "Mission House Alma Mater" was enthusiastically sung, Mission House history was recounted, greetings from Conference Minister David Moyer were offered by Bill Rishel '82, and United's President Mary McNamara welcomed and thanked the Mission House alums for everything they've done in their exemplary service to the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the United Church of Christ in Wisconsin and beyond.

John Krueger '63 concluded the program by announcing the establishment of the *Mission House Seminary Scholarship*, recognizing the vitally important role of Mission House, its graduates in church ministry, and the historic relationship between United and Mission House. Once this \$250,000 endowed scholarship is fully funded, it will provide one year of tuition annually for a student from the Mission House region. It will be a wonderful way to remember the rich heritage of Mission House and continue its name.

For more information on how to make a gift to the *Mission House Seminary Scholarship*, please contact the development office at 651.255.6111.

DO WE HAVE YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS?

United is working to improve its lists of e-mail addresses. If you know of friends of the seminary, potential friends of the seminary, or alumni/ae who are not receiving this newsletter or other e-mails from United, please send the person's name and contact information, including address, phone, and e-mail, to Renee Flesner at rflesner@unitedseminary.edu or Renee Flesner, United Theological Seminary, 3000 Fifth St NW, New Brighton MN 55112.

2009-2010 Upcoming Events

DEEPENING KNOWLEDGE.
DEEPENING FAITH.

- December 15 The Festival of Lessons and Carols, 11:35 AM
- January 3 Launching of "Justice: What is the Right Thing to Do?" on TPT Life, 2:00 PM (12-week series) – study guide available from United
- February Evenings at the Bigelow: "Readings and Reflections on Love" (*Valentine's Day event, date tba*)
- Macbeth* Panels on Leadership, in conjunction with the Guthrie Theater (*dates tba*)
- March "Dead Sea Scrolls," followed by a guided tour of the exhibit (*date tba*)
- March 1 & 2 Susan Draper White Lectures in Women's Studies with **Joyce Mercer**
- March 30 "Leadership in the Bible" (*in conjunction with "Dead Sea Scrolls"*)
- April 11 New president **Mary McNamara's** inauguration and reception at Plymouth Congregational Church, 3:00 PM
- April 12 & 13 Multicultural Lectures with **Justo L. González**
- April 17 **Geoffrey Black** installed as general minister and president of the United Church of Christ (*Cleveland, Ohio*)
- April 28-29 Spring Convocation

For more information, check our Web site at www.unitedseminary.edu.



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