



The United Parish

# *ECHO*



July 2005

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Growing Together in Christ



May I  
boast of  
except the  
our Lord Jesus Christ,  
by which the world has been  
crucified to me, and I to the world.  
Galatians 6.14

never  
anything  
cross of

## **Pastor's Desktop**

The past month has brought a couple of opportunities to see how issues addressed in past articles work out in reality.

In the September and October Echoes last year, we looked at giving from the perspectives of it all belongs to God, and that our giving is to let us grow in trusting God's provision. This year a church member suggested giving meals to the carnival crew as an outreach activity. The Harvest Festival Committee took the courageous step of adopting the suggestion and saw God bless that with an increase in our gross income. This happened even though many people estimate that there was a relatively low turnout for the Harvest Festival this year. God does not always bless our giving with an immediate tangible reward like that, but often does. I would encourage you to trust the Lord's provision in your own life and follow Christ's lead no matter where it takes you. If it is truly the Holy Spirit leading, only the best possible outcome will occur no matter how rough the journey may be.

This year's April Echo addressed communication. When concerns were brought to the attention of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, teamwork and open, honest communication resolved the issues quickly & easily. Keeping in mind that our struggle is 'not against flesh and blood' (in other words not against each other), but is 'against the spiritual forces of evil'. Pursuing God's Truth will always bring light to any situation.

Finally, in the August Echo last year, I wrote of new life springing up in the desert. I assured everyone that treasured the old Peace building that taking it down would clear the way for new life to spring up. That assurance came from the way that God has worked in my own life in the past, and the testimony of many others, including some of the events recorded in the Bible. While the direct result you may be looking for (making concrete steps toward building a new building) are only just beginning to start, I would like to show you some more important growth that has occurred. Instead of continuing to use our collective energy on walking in circles and being unsure of what to do, some have begun to seek the direction God has for our church. One of the clearest steps in that direction has been the beginning of the Prayer Quilt Ministry. In the last month two families have already been significantly touched by the love of Christ that is demonstrated by the prayer

quilts. This is a strong testimony to God's Spirit working amongst us. As we seek the Lord's leading, and step out in obedience, we will become a strong, healthy church, ready for a new building.

God keeps His promises.

### **Parish Board Meeting**

The United Parish board met on June 6, 2005 in the church fellowship area. Board members present were President Ed Timm, Treasurer Dawn Boltjes, Financial Secretary, Donna Magnus and Lay Leader Bev Buller. Others attending were Pastor Daren, Evelyn Stuefen, Virginia Fixsen, Linda Kampmann, Carol Styf and Rufus DeZeeuw.

In the absence of the Secretary LaRee Farnham, Linda Kampmann read the minutes. They were approved as read.

Dawn reviewed the treasurer's report and with one correction about the CD that was cashed being one bought from the general savings, the report passed. Dawn is doing an insurance comparison with Bankstar and UCCIB for the best rate of insurance on the church van. She also informed the board that the health insurance will be raised by \$33.20 per quarter.

Donna Magnus gave the financial secretary report and it passed as presented.

### **Committee reports**

**PPR.** They met on June 1, 2005 to work on defining what the church means by a constituent. A mailing will be sent out to each member for guidelines on certain definitions regarding church membership. This is to see how others define certain words used in our church membership updating.

**Trustees.** No report. Still need repairs to the parsonage entry and church entry. Also, a suggestion to get the trustees input to possible having the east side of the outside church painted.

**Christian Ed.** Linda reported that we had met with St Mary's regarding Vacation Bible School. Colleen from God's Treasure chest met with us and displayed and explained about 7 different programs for VBS. All agreed on using a safari theme based on God is King.

**Worship committee.** No report but explained there is some problems with acolytes not showing up on Sunday mornings so usher need to be aware so that they can ask another child in attendance to fill in.

**Mission.** Linda and Bev reported that the first prayer quilt was tied in church on Sunday June 5, 2005. That quilt was sent to Patrick Middleton, the 19 year old son of Irene Gebhart who was paralyzed in a football accident. On Sunday June 12, 2005 we will tie a prayer quilt to be sent to Tom Carpenter who is slowly recovering from numerous and serve injuries sustained in Iraq.

**UPW.** June was member's night out and 15 members met at the Old West Diner for a nice dinner and a relaxing time of visiting.

On June 25 the UPW will provide lunch at the auction lunch for Leonard Reinke sale.

Bev Buller is in the process of making new curtains for the church basement.

**Old Business.** Donna Magnus still has some items from the 2nd time capsule from the UCC church. It was decided she should bring the items to the next parish board so that everyone could see what was there and decide how to display it.

Evelyn Stuefen has many old records and files from the UCC church. She will also bring them to the next meeting so it can be decided where they should be stored.

Plans are under way for new pictorial directory in July.

**New business.** Plans for the Harvest Festival stand (June13-14) are under way. The committee will be handing out coupons for the carnival workers and families good for a free meal up to \$4.50 at the United Parish stand on Monday night only from 4:30 – 6:30pm. This is part of our outreach program to spread God's love to all we meet.

Pastor had information about an online service called Church Secretary Today. If we subscribe to this service it will cost us \$18.95 a year and we would have access to church clip art, children's' bulletins. Study guides and numerous other helpful sites. All were in favor of trying this service for a year.

On June 12, 2005 Pastor Daren will be at conference in North Dakota. Rufus DeZeeuw, Adam DeZeeuw and Nikki Glover will show film and describe their trip to Jamaica. This Sunday will be designate as Mission Sunday. The service will be held downstairs so that the film will show up better in the darker basement.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm with all reciting the Lord's Prayer. The next meeting will be July 13, 2005 at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted  
Linda Kampmann  
acting secretary

## **UPW**

The UPW "Members Night Out" was held June 1<sup>st</sup> at 6:30 pm at the Old West Diner. Fifteen members attended and had a delicious meal.

President Linda asked if we would be willing to serve lunch at the Leonard Reinke sale. It was decided that we would serve the sale. Linda, Gert and Bev will be the committee.

Bev asked for volunteers to help get the strings on the prayer quilt so that it would be ready to tie on Sunday.

Secretary  
Beverly Buller

## **Praying Your Church to Life**

If you love your church, but feel frustrated because...

- It is stagnating or declining
- Growing older and losing its young people
- Struggling financially
- Seems uncertain about what it believes and why
- Doesn't seem to be able to find or keep a good pastor

- Recycles its leaders who are themselves struggling with depression
- Comes back to the same old divisions and quarrels on a periodic cycle
- You are the pastor and think about quitting at least once a week

Then it is time to pray your church to life. Your Lord, Jesus Christ loves your church more than you do. He died for it. It is His bride. He promised that if you would ask, He would act. Most of us, however, feel small and powerless before such a task. How do we begin? What do we ask God to do? What difference will it make? Here are 10 simple strategies that have brought UCC churches back to life across the United States. Some of these churches had come down to fewer than a dozen people in worship. Some were deeply divided. One entertained a motion to close at their annual meeting and the motion died for lack of a second. Today, they are thriving, spiritually dynamic congregations reaching their communities with the saving reality of Jesus Christ. Today, they have 150-1200 in worship. The sanctuaries are filled with children and young families. Your church can be prayed to life.

1. Ask and seek for a group that will pray with you every week. The key in almost every congregation that has experienced transformational renewal has been a group of 5-7 people praying for that church every week for 5-7 years. Ask God for partners and you will find them. Then pray. Don't gossip or commiserate, just pray.
2. Start with yourselves. Thank God for all He has done in the church since its founding. Acknowledge His purpose, role, and position in all of its history. Confess your own sins. Allow the Holy Spirit to conduct a thorough examination of your heart in order that your intercession can be effective.
3. Pray strategically. Pray for the pastor and leaders by name. Pray through all the things that take place in the body life of the church.
  - Pray for the gospel to be preached,
  - Pray for people to come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord,
  - Pray for the Holy Spirit to come upon the members of the church,
  - Pray for evil to be bound and for false teaching and practice to be exposed and removed.
4. Pray in concert with the call and mission of your church. Go back and read the history. Why was your church called into existence? What scriptures are on the pulpit, or windows or narthex or doorposts? What was its original mission? What is its founding statement of faith? Renewal always involves restoration and completion of what God began (Philippians 1:6). Then pray for these realities to once again define your life together. In New England many churches were founded to be the "light set upon the hill" that would take the gospel to the whole world. Almost every renewal church in New England from Wethersfield, to Byfield, to York, is a living rebirth of that vision.
5. Prayer walk. If you have never done it, now is the time to begin. You may want to read some books by writers like Frangipane and Dawson to get the drift, but it isn't hard. You find a friend or a group and you walk the church grounds, the neighborhood around the building, and then strategic areas in the town. While you walk, let the Holy Spirit prompt you to pray for things that come to mind. Don't hesitate. When it comes to mind, say it! You may find the first time "spiritual" realities and forces are revealed to you to be a bit "spooky," but God is still speaking and it is all right. One congregation after prayer walking the neighborhood and town for a number of years,

now owns several of the surrounding properties for ministry, has watched Christian faculty at the school be hired and come together for Bible study and prayer, seen the business district revived and a number of Christians take key positions in town government.

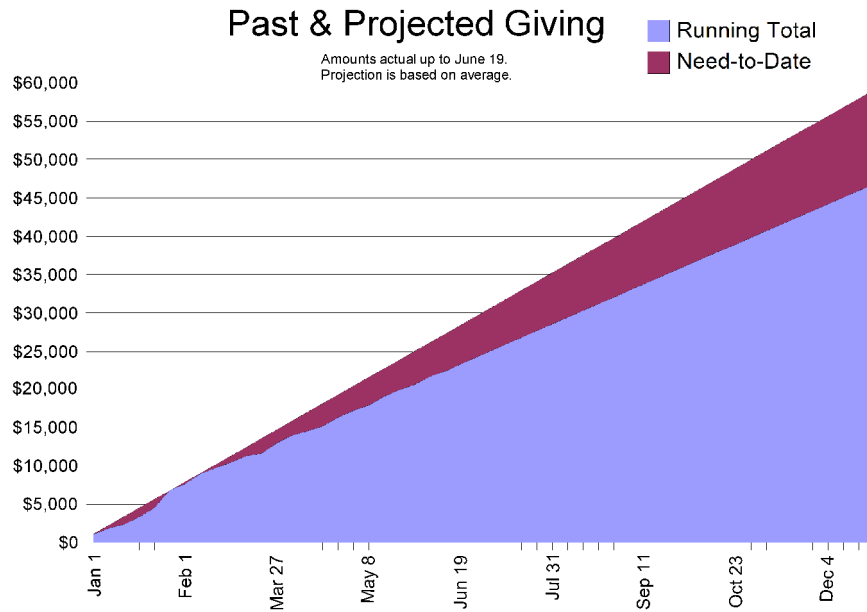
6. Pray for the men. Many churches lack effective male leadership. Many men in our society feel confused about their role in spiritual leadership. Fatherlessness is THE presenting social problem of our age. If you are the Pastor or a key leader, make a list of men that God lays on your heart. Twelve is a good number. Pray for them as often as possible, once a day if you can. A year later, review your list. You will be amazed by what God has done in the lives of those men. You will be thrilled to see how some of them are impacting the life of the church. Some of them, however, will have made decisions to go in the other direction. Prayer is a catalyst both for commitment and rejection. When you review the list with the Lord, He will often give you new names to add and subtract. In our ministry, all the men who are and have been effective Spirit-filled leaders have been on the "list" at some time in the last 21 years.
7. Pray for the church that isn't there. Every historic church lives with ghosts. They are ghosts of old pastors and confirmation classes and building committees and women's groups. Occasionally they are the ghosts of old moral failures and bitter disputes. Often these ghosts seem to speak more loudly than the living in shaping the current life of the church. In one congregation each historic family had their section in the pews. When an influx of newcomers responding to an outreach gravitated toward one section, the pastor was told they shouldn't sit in the "Hutchinson pews," even though the last remaining Hutchinson was in a nursing home and was unlikely to procreate. The old days aren't coming back. As Coach Rick Patino once famously said when he coached the Boston Celtics, "Larry Bird isn't walking back through that door." Prayer can exorcise these ghosts.  
But there is even a more dynamic prayer for the invisible church that should be pursued with passion. This is your prayer for the church of the not yet. Pray for the children to be born. Pray for the newcomers whom God is going to bring through the door to find Christ. Pray for missionaries God is going to send from your church. Pray for the seminarian who will one day be your pastor.
8. Pray during worship. If you are now a group, split up. Put an intercessory prayer person in different key places around the sanctuary including the balcony (where you can see everything), the choir loft, and the ever-popular back rows. Pray for every key person in the sanctuary, especially the pastor. Pray for the message. Pray for the not yet there. See what a difference it makes in what happens.
9. Keep a journal. Real prayer will produce real change. Write down what you ask for. Write down the insights you receive while praying. Write down the answers God gives and the changes prayer produces. God is honored by the testimony to his action in response to our request. Besides, this is the real history of the church.
10. Persevere. If you watch the trends of political change in the United States you will see that power is achieved by those who persevere. The movement that mobilizes support for one vote on one issue and then loses interest, gives way to those who, undaunted by single defeats, continue to mobilize to produce change over the course of a generation. Authentic church renewal requires deep commitment. Prayer is a tough ministry. Pursuing God in prayer on a regular basis over an extended period of time requires far more stamina than serving on all those committees and subcommittees for

back to back terms. Yet all the organizing in the world is of small consequence to the exercise of the power of God.

*Rev. David Runnion-Bareford*

*Sr. Pastor, Candia Congregational Church, NH*

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## Grape Vine

The grapes dried up.