



C SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA NEVADA CONFERENCE

UNITED CHURCH
NEWS

Revs. Dan and Jane leaving positions as Conference Ministers

By Elsa M. J. Seifert

A letter sent to all pastors and congregations on May 30 and an announcement at the Conference Annual Gathering shared decisions by Jane and Dan to leave their positions as Conference Ministers at the end of 2007.

The Revs. **Jane Heckles** and **Dan Romero** have been the mainstays of this Southern California Nevada Conference as Co-Ministers of this Conference for many years. Dan served for close to ten years (though he was Associate Conference Minister here prior to working with Global Ministries nationally), and Jane has served since 2000 (though prior to that, she was Associate Conference Minister here).

It was in the spirit of gratitude and appreciation that they sent the letter and made the announcement that both would leave their positions as Conference Ministers at the end of 2007.

Dan is retiring from active ministry. In June he celebrated 37 years of ordained ministry. Twenty-Seven of those years

were spent in this Conference as a local church pastor, Associate Conference Minister and now Conference Minister. **Jane** is looking ahead to new challenges in the ministry field after serving this Conference for fifteen years in various capacities, including Conference Minister for seven years.

Dan writes: "It is difficult to adequately convey my gratitude for the years of relationships, experiences, challenges, intellectual and spiritual growth that I have received as part of the UCC family... and the many prayers, patience and caring love that surrounded me during my health crisis in 2000-2001... After some time of rest, I plan to jump into the continuing debate on immigration... using my legal background, my voice and pen to seek justice... This conference has obviously had a deep impact on my life and I thank you."



Jane writes: "In 2000 I became Conference Minister along with Dan... This team ministry has been an honor and privilege. From the outset we have stated that we would leave these positions at the same time. It is most important that the Conference be free to shape its future leadership model, unencumbered by the past with openness to the future... I look forward to a new chapter in my own life and ministry. I am grateful for the experiences, challenges and joys that have deepened me as a human being and minister."

The Conference Board of Directors is now at work planning for this time of transition. Regular updates will be printed in the News and elsewhere. Please see page two of this issue for the first of these updates from Board chair, David Cavanaugh.

Philip Geissal named as Pilgrim Pines Executive Director

The Board of Directors of Pilgrim Pines Camp and Conference Center is happy to announce that after a year-long, country-wide search, the unanimous choice of a new Executive Director is Philip G. Geissal. Phil, who began as a Congregationalist, is coming to the Pines from Rome, Georgia. He has wide experience in camp directorship, having served as director of church camps in Tennessee, Hawaii and North Carolina. He has been successful in capital campaigns and in bringing in outside groups, such as outdoor education camps and Elderhostel, both of which the Pines Board is interested in pursuing so Pilgrim Pines can operate a full camp year-round. The Search Committee felt that Phil was the right person for the future growth and development of Pilgrim Pines in its service to our denomination and the greater community.



Photo by Elsa M. J. Seifert
Philip Geissal

riences of camping and retreat outings from his youth to continuing development as an adult, Phil is a strong proponent "that the camping and retreat experiences one has does more to impact and change lives for the better than any other program or service offered in our communities."

Phil and his wife, Priscilla, advise that they still have boxes to unpack after beginning the move to the Pines in June. He began fulltime on June 30. The Board is planning an installation celebration at the Pines on the afternoon and evening of Saturday, November 3. This will take the place of Apple Pie Day.

The Board expressed its deep gratitude to Rev. Gail Benson, who served since February 2005 as Interim Executive Director of the camp. The Board President, Rev. Charles Ensley states the "she has been extremely helpful in getting the camp headed toward a more sound financial future."

With his faith journey founded in the outdoors in the expe-

Official Delegates to General Synod 2007

Charles Ensley	Central Association
Guillermo Fernandez	Eastern
Signe Hardesty	Northern
Carolyn Kelso	Northern
Joyce Kirk-Moore	Eastern
Terry LePage	Southern
Joseph McGowan	Central
Janell Swick	Eastern
Sepulona Tanuvasa	Central
Nichole Thomas	Southern
Joe Zarro	Central
David Cavanaugh	Conference Associate (Moderator)
Jane Heckles	Conference Minister
Daniel Romero	Conference Minister

Fall Association meetings are scheduled

Southern
Oct. 14—La Mesa UCC

Central
Oct. 20—San Marino UCC

Northern
Oct. 27—Woodland Hills UCC

Eastern
Nov. 3—Location TBA

IN APPRECIATION

On behalf of the Southern California Nevada Conference, we want to extend our deep appreciation to the Rev. Gail Benson for her service as Interim Executive Director of Pilgrim Pines Camp and Conference Center since February 2005. Gail has done an extraordinary job in facilitating a very complex and challenging ministry. As an intentionally trained interim for local church ministry, she was able to use and build upon her considerable gifts, skills and insights toward meeting the urgent demands of the moment. Thank you Gail and may God continue to bless you in the days ahead.

Dan Romero
Jane Heckles
Conference Ministers

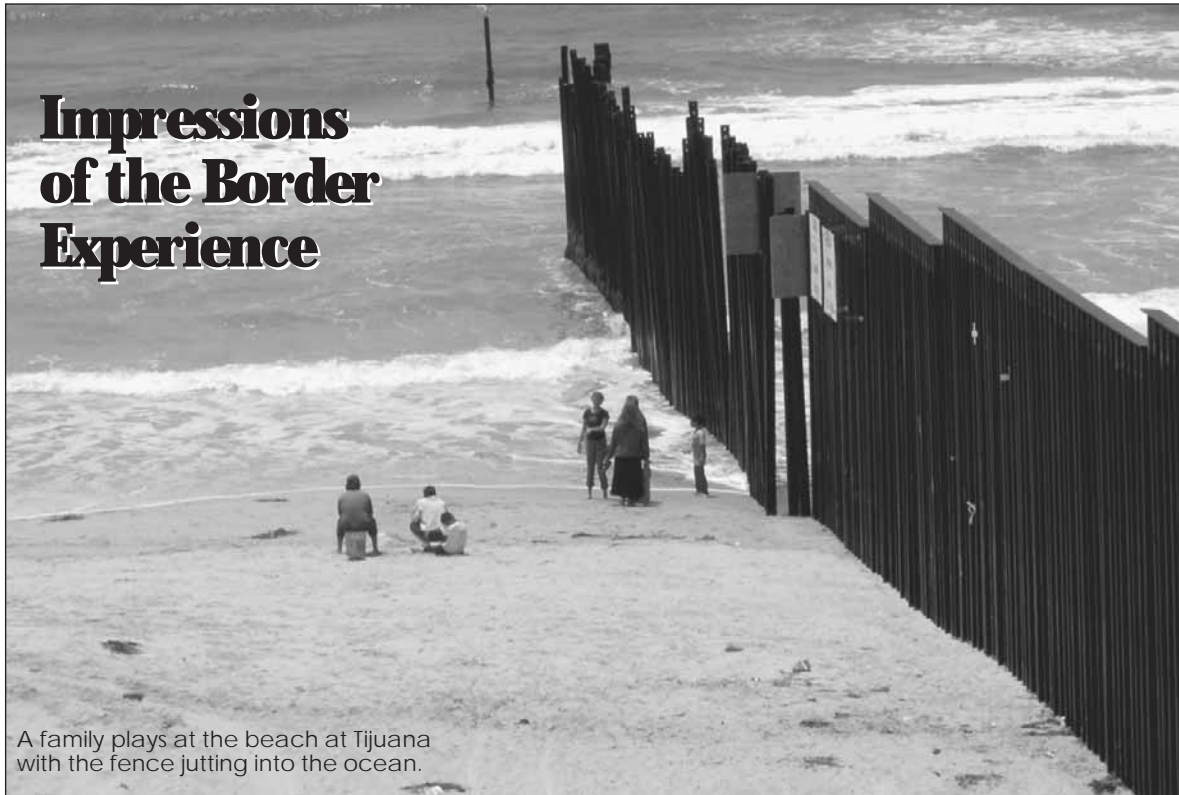
SCNC Samoan Ministries Recognized

By Dan Romero

At the recent Annual Gathering in Chula Vista, the Conference enacted a by-law to enable the Conference Board of Directors to identify and formally recognize groups that will add to the growing diversity of our Conference. The first group thus recognized is the **Samoan Ministries of the SCNC**. UCC Clergy and laypersons from Samoan congregations have met for eight years building fellowship, identity, and mechanisms for the sharing of information and decision making in order to strengthen the mission and ministries of the United Church of Christ. We congratulate this group for its commitment and loyalty to the UCC and look forward to many years of partnership in the UCC.

Photos from General Synod, Annual Gathering & The Border Experience Inside!

Impressions of the Border Experience



A family plays at the beach at Tijuana with the fence jutting into the ocean.

By Carol Fujita, as written in Montebello Plymouth UCC newsletter

Tijuana—a city of contrasts—upscale shopping areas and wealthy homes to poor communities of ramshackle homes next to polluted streams; transnational industrial companies to small neighborhood shops; dry dusty streets to a tranquil green park.

Amazing individuals—six nuns, with the help of volunteers, feeding many people a day, providing health care and counseling services, teaching

the youngsters, all with smiles and joy; four priests, providing shelter (12 days) for people deported from the U. S., helping them reconnect with family, find jobs, etc.; persons who work tirelessly for many years to improve the lives of factory workers and clean up the environment.

About 75 people made the trip across the border as a pre-event to the Conference Annual Gathering on May 31. Several San Diego university students who work with groups in Tijuana and some members from the UCC Justice and Witness Ministries were resource persons on the informative border experience.



Three canvases on the fence



La Casa de Los Pobres with Sister Lupe in front of a banner reading: "Que todos sean uno...para que el mundo crea" (That they may all be one so that the world believes—From John 22:21)

Conference Annual Gathering included broad perspectives of ministry

By Elsa M. J. Seifert

With the wonderful theme of "Salt and Light—Shiny, Spicy Faith" and "Sal y Luz – Fe Brillante y Picante" woven throughout all the events, the Annual Gathering of the Southern California Nevada Conference took place on June 1 and 2, with a special outing by bus for a "Border Experience" on Thursday, May 31. Impressions of the "Experience" are written in a separate article by Carol Fujita.

At the gathering a revision of the by-laws was approved to recognize special Ministries, such as the Samoan Ministries. Keynote speaker, **Dr. Randi Walker**, Pacific School of Religion professor, spoke of our changing religious attitudes, particularly in the West, and conducted Bible Study based on her book "The Evolution of a UCC Style". Elections were held and new Conference officers now include the **Rev. Petra Malleis-Sternberg of San Bernardino First Congregational UCC** as moderator, the **Rev. Mitchell Young of Montebello Plymouth UCC** as vice-moderator and **Mr. David Cavanaugh of Long Beach First Congregational UCC** as Chair of the Board of Directors. Many other persons were elected to fill important committees that keep our Conference running. The **Chula Vista Community Congregational Church** members and staff were well prepared for the gathering, and were wonderful hosts. Many thanks to Rev. Richard Freeman and Jerry May for their great organizing talents.

Many different workshops were held on Friday and Saturday and provided varied opportunities for learning and experiencing. The display space was spacious and offered



Left to right, Worship center at Annual Gathering; Dr. Randi Walker, keynote speaker at Annual Gathering in Chula Vista; Cynthia (Wally) Hoeger of Long Beach enjoys Annual Gathering

a large selection of goods, books, etc. as well as a large area for displays of our various outreach agencies. Some photos of the gathering time are printed in this issue, along with some photos of the Tijuana border experience.

At a debriefing session for those who traveled to Tijuana, the proposal for a covenant between the Conference and Justice and Witness Ministries regarding the use of the San Ysidro church (long ago closed, but still owned by the Conference) as a location for a Border Ministry was discussed as it was adopted by the Board of Directors in May and



From left: Edie and Carlos from Justice and Witness Ministries, Dan, SCN Conference Minister, and Mari from Justice and Witness Ministries.

later was approved by the general voting body during the meeting. As this plan unfolds, more of the purpose will be shared.

Board of Directors Update

By David Cavanaugh, Chair of the Board

At the **Annual Gathering** of the Southern California Nevada Conference in Chula Vista, Dan Romero and Jane Heckles announced that they are leaving their joint ministry as our Co-Conference Ministers. Having served as a team, it was their decision to leave as a team. Dan will retire at the end of 2007 and Jane will explore other opportunities for ministry. Please see page one of this issue for more details.

Immediately after Annual Gathering ended, the Board of Directors set a July 14 meeting date with Lorin Cope, Minister of Conference Relations for the national United Church of Christ. Lorin will advise the Board on the process of our transition and identifying interim leadership. He will also work with the search committee that will be charged with seeking new conference leadership.

By the time you read this article the July 14 meeting will have taken place and our plans for the transition will be taking shape. The Board and I will do our best to keep everyone informed of our progress.

Plans are also underway for a **Celebration of the Conference Ministry** of Dan and Jane in **early December**. We will also keep you informed of these plans as they develop.



PAAM and Montebello Plymouth youth and adults with Mitchell's t-shirts at Synod

Hartford was definitely shining for General Synod

By Elsa M. J. Seifert

Let It Shine...and lots of folks from Southern California Nevada Conference did just that in Hartford CT, on June 21-26 at the 50th anniversary Celebration of the birth of the UCC! Close to 300 folks from the Southern California Nevada Conference attended, including 47 youth and 7 young adults, meaning that we met the 50 4 50 goal of 50 youth or young adults from each Conference!

Official delegates to the Synod are printed elsewhere in this issue. The many others from our area went as visitors, had an opportunity to participate in the wonderful worship services, hear the best speakers, including Bill Moyers, Barak Obama, Marian Wright Edelman, Lynn Redgrave, and others of great stature too numerous to mention. Ken Medema delighted all with his wonderful spontaneous music and songs, and the Civic Center could accommodate the over 9,000 people who registered for all or part of the Celebration.

Ms. Lola Day of our Conference was named "Laywoman of the Year". Rev. Art Cribbs of San Marino UCC presented his play "Awaiting Judgment" during Synod in the City on Saturday, and the Beloved Bells of Long Beach First Congregational and the wonderful dancers from this Conference's Samoan churches were all part of this glorious celebration. SCNC was well-represented.



SCN Conference banner, lovingly created by Sharon Roberts.



Lola Day, Laywoman of the Year



Beloved Bells youth from First Congregational in Long Beach performed at Synod in the City

Conference Mid-Month Mailer Deadlines 2007

Issue in 2007	Deadline	Issue Mailed
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
rroyo@scnuc.org

Simi Valley UCC becomes Sanctuary Church

A July 8 press release has stated that the United Church of Christ in Simi Valley voted to become a sanctuary church in cooperation with the New Sanctuary Movement. A sanctuary church provides prophetic hospitality for a person or family that is in danger of being deported but has compelling grounds for remaining in the U.S.

Rev. Dr. June Goudey, pastor of the Simi Valley UCC directs others to the church website at www.uccsimi.org for further information. CLUE (Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice) is the central body that has revived the Sanctuary Movement in the Southland.

Faith Shines On the Way Fall Family Church Camps scheduled

September 28-30
 October 5-7
 October 12-14

Friday 7:00 pm thru Sunday 11 am



Call Pilgrim Pines Camp and Conference Center at 909-797-1821 or 800-616-6612 for further information and costs

CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY EVENT

with Rev. David Schoen
 of Evangelism and Congregational Vitality
 of Local Church Ministries, UCC

"How to ACTUALLY REACH Un-churched People"

3 DATES—3 LOCATIONS

October 2—Mission Hill UCC, San Diego
 October 3—Diamond Bar UCC, Diamond Bar
 October 4—Northridge UCC, Northridge

Registration and details in E-news and mid-month mailings soon



Ocean View folks with pastor Norma

Pioneer Ocean View UCC Celebrates 100th Anniversary

By Rev. Norma Nomura DeSaegher

“God’s Amazing Grace for 100 Years and Beyond” is the theme of the **Pioneer Ocean View United Church of Christ** Centennial Celebration. This celebration is to commemorate the founding of the first Japanese Christian Church in San Diego under the auspices of the First Congregational Church and the American Home Missionary Association. In October 1907 a small house church was established and a Japanese Chief Missionary and an English-speaking mission manager were called to be pastoral leaders.

Throughout the 100 years, many challenges were met by our Issei (first Generation Japanese). As new immigrants from Japan, they struggled with acceptance, and learning a new language and culture. World War II punctuated a dark cloud in American History when all the West Coast Japanese were incarcerated in Relocation Camps. However, upon their release, the Church was re-opened and under the pastoral care of Rev. Kenji Kikuchi (1941–1961) the church saw a resurgence of Christian Ministry. (Detailed in our Centennial Anniversary Album).

In 2000, the church called the Rev. Norma Nomura DeSaegher as senior pastor for the then named **Ocean View United Church of Christ**. In 2003 she discovered a church looking for financial help to keep its doors opened. Through the Holy Spirit’s guidance, the **Ocean View UCC** began merger conversations with **Pioneer UCC**. Rev. Dan Romero was called

to preach a special sermon and to have a question and answer dialogue with both churches, which was very meaningful to help move the church to the next level of conversations. After many cottage meetings, planning sessions, pulpit exchanges and potlucks we felt ready to bring it to a congregational vote.

On July 18, 2004 an overwhelming vote to merge and become one united church became a reality, and thus was formed **The Pioneer Ocean View United Church of Christ**. Like our Mother Denomination, we have come a long way since the first Isseis stepped out in faith to found the first Japanese Christian Church in San Diego in 1907!

Many special events are planned for 2007: On **Sept. 16** a Golf Tournament is scheduled and a Luncheon Banquet is planned for **September 22** at the Catamaran Resort with Dan Romero as our keynote speaker. In May we had a most successful musical, “South Pacific” where a special Japanese Udon meal was served after the show.

On **September 23, 2007** we will have an extravagant Worship Service at 10 a.m. to commemorate God’s Amazing Grace to us. **Dr. John Thomas, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ** will be our keynote preacher with a reception following. We invite all of our greater Church Family to join us on this Centennial Celebration! The church is located at **2550 Fairfield St., San Diego, CA 92110**. For further info email: povucc@sbcglobal.net or phone 619-276-4881.

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.

■ **Rev. Elaine Schoepf**, Minister for Christian Education at **Bay Shore Congregational UCC** for many years, has been called to be the interim pastor at the Wahiawa Christian Church in central Oahu, Hawaii. She started on July 1. Nice place to be, Elaine. Congratulations!

■ **Rev. Lutie Lee**, Christian Education Director at **Arcadia Congregational UCC**, is now called to Ministries for Church and Families at the UCC national office in Cleveland to begin September 1. Arcadia pastor **Rev. Jolene Cadenbach** wishes her well in her new position. Lee, originally from the Philippines, has written a book concerning the culture clash for children and youth in America, whose families are from different parts of the world.

■ **Rev. Paul Tellstrom**, pastor at **Irvine United Congregational Church**, emailed recently to share that he had completed his Doctor of Ministry degree in May. Great news from Rev. Dr. Tellstrom!

■ **Southern Association** now has an active website running. We can check it out at www.sascnuc.org.

■ **Central Association’s** Fall meeting is centered on drama and its uses as a tool for Christian education, evangelism and outreach. It will include a 30-minute version of **Rev. Art Cribbs’** new play and a presentation by the **Manhattan Beach UCC** youth of a segment of an original play “Barrabas” by Joe Zarro. As announced elsewhere in this issue, the meeting is on October 20 at **San Marino UCC** and starts at 8:30 a.m. The program is mentioned here as an invitation to other Associations to look into the arts for deepening of the religious experience.

Vital Churches

By Gary Roberts, Conference Associate for Church Development and Renewal

I learned long ago that the best way to actually be a church-development expert was to know people who had found a successful strategy that others might be able to use. In other words, I think the best way to answer someone’s church-development question is to introduce them to someone with actual experience grappling with their specific problem. In that spirit, I’ve decided to devote as many future church-development columns as possible to the story of individual SCNC churches that are having some success in reaching out to their communities. The first of these is First Congregational Church in Riverside. And if you know of a similar success story, I hope you’ll bring it to my attention.



Reflection on Growth at FCC Riverside

By Rev. Jane Quandt, pastor

First Congregational Church, UCC is located in the Historic District of Downtown Riverside, a city of approximately 300,000. Founded in 1872 it was Riverside’s first church and its history is closely intertwined with the history of the city. It is also a church that has a long and proud legacy of speaking out on behalf of justice in our city. And yet like so many other mainline churches it had been in steady decline for a number of years. Recently the church has been undergoing renewal, taking in **50 new members** last year, increasing its membership to 340.

There are **several factors** that seem especially important to this church’s turnaround. The **first** relates to what happened around us; Downtown Riverside underwent a major renaissance in the early 1990’s, one that continues today. Whereas people had been rapidly abandoning the area, suddenly they started coming downtown again and when they did they noticed the fabulous architecture of our building. In response to the downtown renewal the church also decided to spiffy herself up too. New people started walking through her doors, including young families who were seeking a more progressive voice of faith in our community.

Second, in 2002, a gay man was assaulted in the parking lot right behind our church.

(He died as a result of the wounds.) Because the church had voted to be an ONA church back in 1995, we were able to be very public in our response to the kind of hate that was behind the attack. We placed a huge rainbow flag out in the front of our church along with a large banner that said, “**Stand Up to Hate.**” Since doing that many from the LGBT community have joined our church.

Third, in 2001 I began my pastorate at the church. One of the main things which drew me to the church was the fact that it was located in Downtown Riverside. Faced with the changing demographics of Downtown Riverside I was drawn to the possibility of being and building a beloved community among the various “classes” which now lived in Downtown Riverside. My passion for “class diversity” fit well with the people who were walking through our doors. I look at the people gathered together around the table at my Adult Ed Class and I see what for me is the very kingdom of God—Vietnam Vet, caretaker of plants for UCR scientists, professor, an unemployed ex-con, owner of an electrical shop, marketing man, lawyer, handy-man, IT guy, retired office worker, house cleaner, water bottler, nurse, homemaker, homeless guy, librarian—some gay, some straight—some single some married, some young some old—we’re all gathered together around one table. **Kingdom of God, I say!**

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:

August 28
October 28

for Oct/Nov issue
for Dec/Jan issue

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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