



C SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA NEVADA CONFERENCE

UNITED CHURCH
NEWS

SCNC SCHOOL KIT CHALLENGE: 500+ by Annual Gathering!

The SCNC Board has authorized a Conference wide mission project that can involve every congregation, youth group, Church School, families, all of us! The 2009 Challenge is for this Conference to produce 500—or more!—school kits for children to be sent by Church World Service for children in parts of the world where receiving a pencil, crayons and paper is as joyous as any electronic game or video is to children in the U.S. School Kits give children in impoverished schools, refugee camps, or other difficult settings some of the basic tools for learning. Gathering school kit items is fun for everyone—kids can bring items and help sort them; quilters or other sewers can sew up the bags; anyone can give to help underwrite the shipping (\$2 needed per kit). A school kit ‘children’s time’ to explain the project can help U.S. kids understand the value of things we take for granted.

Our goal is to produce 500 or more school kits by the Annual Gathering taking place June 5-6, 2009. You may go ahead and ship completed kits to one of the addresses below but please *be sure to report the number sent to the Conference office so we can keep count for our total.* Or you may bring completed kits to the Annual Gathering where the Executive Director of Church World Service, Rev. John McCollough, will be with us and can receive reports of those sent and any kits brought to the meeting.

There are some things important to remember about putting together the kits: all of the kits must be consistent in size and no substitutions are allowed—the children receiving them need to be treated fairly. NO religious or patriotic items are to be included, out of respect for the faiths and nations where the kits will be received. But be assured that the recipients will know they come from Christians of Church World Service. The requirements for the kits follow.

To assemble a School Kit you will need:

- One pair of blunt scissors (rounded tip)
- Three 70-count spiral or tape-bound pads of 8” x 10-1/2” ruled paper, for a total of

200-210 sheets of ruled paper. (Please do not provide loose-leaf or filler paper.)

- One 30-centimeter ruler (12”)
 - One hand-held pencil sharpener
 - One large eraser
 - Six new pencils with erasers
 - One box of 24 crayons (only 24)
 - One 12” x 14” to 14” x 16” finished size cotton cloth bag with cloth handles
- Pack all items inside the cloth bag. Go to the Church World Service website, “Kits”.

School Kit value: \$13

Processing/Shipping Cost: \$2 per Kit

Packing and Shipping Kits

- Pack CWS Kits in boxes with only one type of Kit in each box.
- Clearly indicate the type of Kit on the outside of the box.
- Secure the boxes with packing tape.
- Provide a return address on the box.

Ship all Kits prepaid to:

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE
Brethren Service Center Annex
601 Main Street
P.O. Box 188

New Windsor, MD 21776-0188

(Please include both the PO box and the street address on boxes.)

For individuals, churches, and groups west of the Mississippi River, CWS Kits may also be sent to:

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE
Ferneliff Disaster Assistance Center
1720 Ferneliff Road
Little Rock, AR 72223

Funds for Processing/Shipping and Purchasing Kits

Funds are needed to cover sorting, packing, and insurance, as well as shipping Kits to their final destination. **Please give at least \$2 for each School Kit you send.** Cash donations in lieu of assembled Kits also help us to provide much-needed supplies.

Send your check or money order payable to Church World Service to:

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE
P.O. Box 968
Elkhart, IN 46515

Annual Gathering 2009

The Journey Continues...
Claremont United Church of Christ
June 5 and 6, 2009

Keynote speaker: John Cobo
Emeritus Professor at Claremont School of Theology
and Graduate School

Keynote speaker: John L. McCullough
Executive Director and CEO of Church World Service
Watch your mail for more information

Conference E-News and Quick News now online

More and more Conference communication is going out electronically. It’s fast and saves paper and postage costs. There is concern, however, about reaching every pastor and member who wants to be informed about Conference educational events, resources and other information available.

The Rev. Jane Fislser Hoffman hopes that all readers are receiving these publications but asks “If you are not receiving these publications but have access to the internet, please go to www.scnuc.org and click on ‘Email News’ to sign on. You will automatically receive the E-News twice each month and other special news as needed.”

“If you do not have internet access, we want you to be informed, too. Please call or write to the Conference office with your address and we will print the news and send it to you by print-mail. We don’t want anyone to be left out! The Church Vitality Conference is coming up and other helpful events/resources so don’t miss anything. Sign up today!”



Southern California Nevada Conference

Annual Gathering

June 5-6, 2009—Claremont, CA

SAVE THE
DATE

MARK YOUR
CALENDARS

One Year Into The Interim Journey



Rev. Dr. Jane Fisler Hoffman
Interim Conference Minister

“**The Journey Continues**” will be the theme of our 2009 Annual Gathering. It emerged from conversations about the multiple layers and experiences of change happening in local churches, in this Conference, in the United Church of Christ and, of course, in the world around us. As your planning team talked together, we thought it was important to spend some time together reflecting on what it means to be the church, local and wider, in this time of constant and, it seems to me, accelerating change.

An interim season is a particularly evident time of change in a conference or local church. By the time this reaches your homes or offices, I will have had the privilege of serving as your Interim Conference Minister for almost one year. It has been a personally exciting and fulfilling time for me because this is a genuinely exciting Conference and you have all been remarkably welcoming of me and June and accepting of our leadership. Thank you! But I also know that we embody that word ‘change’ for you all and just our presence means there is a sort of unsettledness about life in this Conference. This article will not resolve that unsettledness but I hope it will help you to feel confident in the strong foundation of this Conference, even as it names some ‘cracks’ in the foundation.

- First, you have a truly outstanding group of staff and elected leaders. And no, I’m not ‘just saying that’. I’ve been doing Conference ministry for 17 years and have worked with many outstanding people but I’m particularly impressed with the committed and capable folks leading this Conference. Your Board, the “Self Study Team” and the Search Committee are all excellent leaders and will have their own updates and reports for you over the next few months. To me this means that every church and pastor can have confidence that your leadership is ‘on the job’ and that the Conference is in excellent governance hands, even in challenging and changing times. A firm foundation!
- Next, I have said to others so want to say to you that this is in many ways a remarkably healthy Conference in terms of lacking the ‘infighting’ that sometimes occurs among leadership or between Associations and ‘the Conference’. All such politicization chews up time and energy in the Conference life. Lacking it is a gift—Hallelujah! This, too, is part of a solid foundation for the future.
- There are a high number of local churches that are to some degree involved with and caring about the Conference and the work in which we share together. I ‘measure’ this somewhat intuitively—by responses I get to things we send out electronically, by invitations June and I receive to visit with congregations (to which we are ongoingly open), and by the feel of conversations I have with folks around the Conference. Another layer of solid foundation...
- At the same time, this Conference has a surprising number of congregations that do not support the Conference financially or who do so only nominally—and that has been true even before the current economic meltdown. In 2007, 38 congregations gave ‘0’ to Our Church’s Wider Mission and 39 gave ‘0’ to Per capita. That’s 29% of our 132 congregations! That is unusually high among Conferences, friends. And as I write, the year 2008 is not quite closed out but it looks like the numbers will be much the same for this year. Even so, some of our

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‘zero’ churches are calling on the Conference for search and call assistance or for support during conflicted times. Your Board and staff will be working during the coming year to encourage those non-giving churches in their covenantal commitments. This pattern is one of the cracks in the foundation.

- The above situation along with low or ‘flat’ giving by other churches has combined with the illusion of a deep well of ‘other’ revenue in the Conference from sale of properties. The result is that the Conference has been deficit spending out of that now nearly drained well for several years to maintain just the basic operations of the Conference. This was lifted up at the 2008 Annual Gathering so it is important to know that this reality is *not* something to be discounted as just a matter of the current economic crisis. The situation has, however, accelerated with declining property values and sales and decreasing investment income. Your Board of Directors will be confronting all of this at its meeting between my writing and your receiving this. I anticipate that a letter will go from the Board of Directors to every congregation with information about some major financial cuts in the Conference. If you haven’t heard about that by the time you read this, you will shortly. Another shift in the foundation.
- During the interim time, reviewing history and planning for the future are two key interim tasks. We did some of that history reflection at the Annual Gathering and at a leadership retreat in 2008. Now in 2009 we, your interim staff, the “**Self Study Task Force**” and the Board of Directors will be leading all who will participate through a time of discernment about the future of this Conference. You will have an opportunity to participate this spring. It is important to look at **what is the basic ‘purpose’ of a Conference in the United Church of Christ and what is the current mission to which God is calling this particular Conference at this time**. That is always a good exercise for a body of God’s people but with our financial limitations, it is more vital than ever that the Southern California Nevada Conference have a very focused sense of identity and purpose.

So in the coming year we will be considering together what it will take to build the next layer of a ‘foundation’ for the future of this strong and exciting Conference. I continue to be privileged to serve in ministry with you here as the journey continues. Please don’t hesitate to contact me, June Boutwell, or a member of the Board of Directors if you have suggestions or concerns.

Don’t Forget!

Hillcrest UCC in La Habra Heights presents the

49th HILLCREST FESTIVAL OF FINE ARTS
(A Community Service Project — Free Admission)

February 20-22, 2009

2000 West Road, La Habra Heights
562-947-3755

Festival website: www.hillcrest-church.org
For hours and details

Hemet area church is vandalized

In the Hemet area, **Pilgrim Congregational Church** pastor, the Rev. Greg Hepner, was preparing for a memorial service in late November when he discovered a brick had been thrown through the church’s 100-year-old stained-glass window. The window was created in 1908, dedicated to the church’s founder. Many hundreds of couples have had their wedding pictures taken with the window as background. The glass will be replaced in coming weeks.

The church’s history began in 1886, when it was established at a different location as the Little Lake Congregation of San Jacinto. The church has seen some previous disasters. It took in another San Jacinto parish after a 1918 earthquake demolished the other’s building. The current sanctuary was built in 1904.

Pilgrim Pines Camp offers Summer Camp training for volunteers

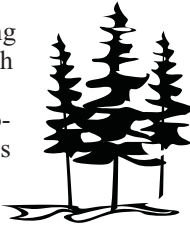
The staff at Pilgrim Pines Camp and Conference Center is offering training for volunteers interested in working with youngsters and youth at the camp during the summer of 2009.

They invite volunteers to come to learn the essentials, meet fun people and prepare themselves for the week of their lives at Pilgrim Pines in summer 2009.

The schedule for training of volunteers follows:

Eastern Association	April 5, 2009
First Congregational UCC Las Vegas	after church tba
Central Association	April 19, 2009
Seaside Community UCC Torrance	1:30 pm-4
Northern Association	April 26, 2009
Community Church UCC Atascadero	after church tba
Southern Association	May 3, 2009
UCC Escondido	12 noon-4
First Time Volunteer Orientation	May 1-2, 2009
Pilgrim Pines Camp	8 am-6:30 pm

Please call Anne Jeffrey (909)797-1821 or email annej@pilgrimpinescamp.org to RSVP your attendance.



In the path of life we are faced with Challenges, Exploration and Discovery.

Confirmation Camp at Pilgrim Pines offers UCC Confirmands a place to gather in community as they prepare to take an important step in their faith.

Confirmands will have the chance to engage in this transformational experience by learning about the UCC and building new relationships with other young people in the Southern California Nevada Conference of the UCC.

Many activities are planned for the weekend: The New Low and High Ropes Course, Campfire with S'mores, Hiking, Labyrinth, Music, Drums, and more!

We are honored to welcome Rev. Heather Miner as well as others to facilitate this spiritual retreat at Pilgrim Pines, a very special place of affirmation and faith.

If you are interested in helping facilitate or lead any activities during this special retreat, please contact Anne Jeffrey at 909-797-1821

For more information and costs of this retreat please contact the Pines office at the above number or visit www.pilgrimpinescamp.org

Confirmation Camp 2009

Pilgrim Pines Camp and Conference Center
Friday, March 20th 6:00 p.m - 11:00 a.m. Sunday, March 22, 11:00 a.m

Come Join Us In Gods Backyard



Pilgrim Pines announces new year-round staff

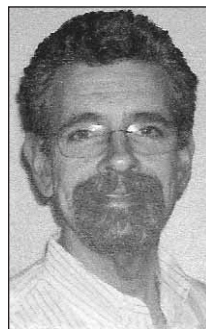
Pilgrim Pines Camp and Conference Center has several new faces lighting up its year-round staff. In the office is Lisa Rutherford (Guest Services Coordinator) and Sylvia Balandran (Office Assistant). On the maintenance crew is Ryan Baldwin, Dane Fritzsche and Charles Lynds. New in housekeeping are Maria Ahumada and Sandra Olson. In the kitchen we'll find Marie Hubert (Kitchen Supervisor), Linda Burstein, Susan Jakubczak, Sushanna Khamis, Kimberly Mastrangelo, Patricia Pierce and Michael Stewart. Associate Program Directors are Anne Jeffrey and Caleb Nichols.

Conference welcomes Neal Washburn to interim position

Neal Washburn is the new part-time interim coordinator to oversee the **Youth and Young Adult Ministries**. Neal will provide direction and implementation of all aspects of Conference Youth and Young Adult programming

Neal grew up in Greenfield, Massachusetts and was a member of First Congregational Church in Greenfield. He was also a youth member of the Massachusetts UCC United Church Youth Council. Neal spent many years working with that Conference Outdoor Ministries. Neal and his wife Pamela moved to New Hampshire and again spent many years in that conference serving as a counselor, unit leader and on the Board of Directors. Professionally, Neal is an Information Systems Engineer.

Neal relocated to Southern California in 2004 and became active at Pilgrim Pines as a counselor and with the youth in his local church. He has served in many capacities, including as an adult advisor of the Conference Youth Roundtable. Neal has been a counselor and dean at Junior High JANboree and FEB Camp, and a counselor and co-director of the Conference Youth Ministries Camp (CYMC). Neal and his family are members of the **First Congregational Church of Escondido**.



Neal Washburn

Pilgrim Pines expanding programs for 2009

The Pines proudly presents some brand new retreats for the new year. The schedule follows:

Refresh and Rejuvenate Ministers' Retreat

April 20-21 — A two-day retreat complete with rest, relaxation and ropes courses.

Womens Spirituality Retreat

May 1-2 — Terry LePage will lead a weekend full of spirituality and rejuvenation. This is a time to reconnect with your inner spirit and find peace and healing.

Spring Family Camp

May 8-10 — Jump start family week with a motherly twist. All families are invited to come together and rejoice in community with food, fun and family.

Youth Retreat

September 4-7 — With the commencement of high school and conclusion of summer, here is a chance to have one more escape from homework and books.

Fall Family Camp

October 9-11 — Come to this annual event with dancing, crafts, great food, good times and a whole lot of fun.

Pilgrim Pines Reunion Camp

October 23-25 — Celebrate our past campers and their dedication to the ministry of Pilgrim Pines over the years.

Apple Pie Day

October 31 — A scrumptious day with toasts to apple pie, apple crisp and apple cider!

For further information on the above events, please contact Anne Jeffrey, Associate Program Director, at 909-797-1821, ext 227.

Are You a 'Friend of the Conference'?

You are invited to go above and beyond your generous giving to your local church and give an individual gift to support the ministry of the Southern California Nevada Conference

You may send your contribution (clearly marked as 'Friend of the Conference') to

SCNC, 2401 North Lake Avenue
Altadena, CA 91001

or go to sencucc.org and give online

Thank you!

DID YOU KNOW?

Pilgrim Pines newsletter is now being offered electronically

Send request by email to:

annej@pilgrimpinescamp.org

or call the camp office 909-797-1821

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.

■ **United Church of Christ in Simi Valley** hosts an Interplay Intensive Retreat on February 13-16, with Phil Porter leading. Interplay is an active creative way to unlock the wisdom of your body. Contact www.interplay.org

■ Start the Lenten season on March 1 with a discussion of "The United Church of Christ: What We Believe" which is a discussion of autonomy and unity in the UCC. **Westwood Hills Congregational Church UCC** is hosting this discussion. Call 310-474-7327 for more information.

■ On March 6-7, **Irvine United Congregational Church UCC** is hosting the Jesus Seminar with the presentation of "Archaeology and the Origins of Christianity".

Contact Robinmarie McClement at the church at 949-733-0220, ext. 202.

■ **The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**, an annual gathering sponsored by the **Southern California Ecumenical Council**, was begun on Sunday, January 25, with services at the Pasadena Christian Church.

■ March 7-8 at the Double Tree Hotel in Santa Ana, the DOC Regional Women's Retreat will be held and **UCC women** are especially invited to attend. Contact the DOC office at 626-296-0385.

■ Jana Hoffman, Moderator at **Neigh-**

borhood Congregational Church of Laguna Beach writes in their newsletter "The Sandpiper" that her son gave her a book that many have enjoyed titled "The Four Agreements". They are: 1) Be impeccable with your word; 2) Don't take anything personally; 3) Don't make assumptions; and 4) Always do your best. Sounds like something we all could live by — and live well.

■ Rev. Stephen Amsden, pastor at **Woodland Hills Community UCC** writes in their newsletter about some signs and symptoms of inner peace: 1) A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than on fears based on past experiences; 2) A loss of interest in judging other people; 3) A loss of interest in judging self; 4) A loss of interest in interpreting the action of others; 5) A loss of interest in conflict; 6) Frequent, overwhelming episode of appreciation; 7) Contented feeling of connectedness with others and with nature; 8) Frequent attacks of smiling; 9) An increasing tendency to let things happen rather than make them happen; 10) An increased susceptibility to the love extended by others as well as the uncontrollable urge to extend it. He warns that the condition of inner peace may be so far advanced as to not be curable. If you are exposed to anyone exhibiting any of these symptoms, remain exposed at your own risk.

More than Numbers

By Gary Roberts, Conference Associate for Development and Renewal

One of my favorite books about church life is one of the oldest such books I own. In 1993, as my vocation began to shift from real estate development to church development, Loren Mead, founder of Alban Institute, wrote *More Than Numbers: The Ways Churches Grow*. It has shaped my understanding of church development since then. I'd like to lift it's concepts up here, in hopes that it will help you think about the ways in which your church may be developing.

Mead describes four different ways in which churches grow:

Numerical — the typical definition of church growth, at least in casual conversations.

Maturation — the growth in the spiritual maturity of each congregant; growth in individual faith and the ability to nurture others

Organic — the growth of the church as a functioning organism or organization, and the ability to engage other organizations in society

Incarnational — the growth of the ability to take the meaning of the congregation's faith story and make them real in the society where they live.

This is a good list, I think, and a good start at a better understanding of the nature of church growth (or, for that matter, stagnation and decline). In the last 15 years, I've had the privilege of analyzing hundreds of congregations, and would add a few other ways to Mead's list, but most of them are unhealthy ways. For instance, church growth by charismatic individual leadership is fraught with dangers. There are probably other healthy ways to grow, however. If Mead's list doesn't include the ways in which your church is growing, I'd love to hear from you.

I've also observed that most churches that are growing numerically are growing in at least one of these other ways. Samoan churches, for instance, usually emphasize maturational and organic growth. In fact, I've come to believe that numerical growth alone is probably not healthy church growth. Rather, numerical growth is usually the outcome of a church growing in individual spiritual maturity, organic strength, or incarnational presence. As my high school football coach used to say, if you tend to the basics, the score takes care of itself. That is why our Conference's Church Development Plan has numerical goals, but it also includes the goal of having the Conference reflect the cultural diversity of Southern California and Nevada, and the values of the United Church of Christ.

Churches that are growing in individual spiritual maturity, organic strength, or incarnational presence do not always grow in number of members, nor do they need to. But in these challenged economic times when most churches, and your Conference, are concerned about their immediate financial futures, it is useful to note that any kind of healthy growth is likely to lead to financial growth. Churches with more committed individuals, more engaged and functional organizations, and more relevant stories are going to attract more funds, even in a declining economy.

Mead's book is still available from Alban Institute, and is filled with worksheets and insights to help you gauge how your church is doing in these four areas of church life. If you are part of a church's leadership, I think you would find it a useful addition to your library.



New Boundary Awareness Training dates

Thursday, February 19	San Diego (to be determined)
Saturday, February 28	Orange (to be determined)
Wednesday, April 29	Riverside, First Christian Church
Tuesday, May 26	Metro Los Angeles (tbd)
Thursday, August 13	Orange, PSWR Satellite Office
Tuesday, September 22	San Diego (tbd)
Saturday, October 3	Los Angeles, All Peoples Christian Church (this date, training given in English and Spanish)
Tuesday, November 3	Claremont, Disciples Seminary Foundation

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.

Interim Conference Minister: Rev. Dr. Jane Fisler Hoffman

Interim Associate Conference Minister: Rev. June Boutwell

Interim Youth and Young Adult Ministries Coordinator: Mr. Neal Washburn

Business Manager: Mr. Keith Clark

Administrative Assistant: Ms. Virginia Arroyo

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Conference website: www.sncucc.org

SAVE THIS DATE

The First Annual Romero Lecture

April 17, 2009

"The Politics of Crossing Borders"
featuring Dr. Robert Orr

The Romero Lecture Series at
Chula Vista Community Congregational Church
276 'F' Street, Chula Vista
A series on Faith and Praxis

Contact SCNC at 626-798-8082
Or email arroyo@sncucc.org

Deadlines for SCNC News in 2009

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, or seifert@sncucc.org by the following dates:

Feb. 23

for Apr/May issue