



SYNERGY

The Newsletter of the Eastern Ohio and Western Reserve Associations

Volume 6 Issue 11
December 2011

Next submission deadline is
Friday, December 16

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Mission: Accomplished

<p>Goal: 1,000,000+</p> <p>GOAL EXCEEDED 11/10!</p> <p>1398279</p> <p>Items of healthy food donated</p> <p>KEEP DONATING!</p>	<p>Goal: 11,111+</p> <p>GOAL EXCEEDED 11/6!</p> <p>37116</p> <p>Letters mailed to Congress</p> <p>KEEP WRITING!</p>	<p>Goal: \$111,111+</p> <p>GOAL EXCEEDED 11/2!!</p> <p>113398</p> <p>Money donated to NIN hunger-related ministries</p> <p>KEEP DONATING!</p>	<p>Goal: \$111,111+</p> <p>GOAL EXCEEDED 11/2!!</p> <p>108649</p> <p>Money donated to East Africa Famine Relief</p>
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Mission: 1 - Next Steps

-Jan Resseger

"Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled." Luke 6: 21

During Mission 1, members of United Church of Christ congregations across the United States have blessed the poor with food, blessed each other with the joy of giving, and blessed our public life with faithful engagement.

Many of us in the national church have also been blessed through these eleven days with your question: *"How can we harvest the concern and commitment we have seen as our church has begun to realize there are deeper issues that must be addressed if we are to overcome the poverty that causes so many to be hungry?"*

General Synod 27 anticipated this question when it established the Economic Justice Covenant Program: "As Christians we sing the hymns of justice, equality, and unity; we pray for the well-being of all God's children; and we continue our activities to feed the hungry and house the homeless. But all the while we watch the gap between rich and poor in our own nation and in the world become ever wider, with many millions left in poverty... The United Church of Christ and its predecessor church bodies ... have received Christ's summons to call our churches and our societies toward the blessed vision of God's Realm, including justice in our economic life."

The Economic Justice Covenant Program provides materials and suggests opportunities that can assist local congregations to explore what they feel called to do. There are resources for worship, prayer, study, and exploration within and outside the walls of the church. There is also guidance to help your congregation engage the process of drafting and adopting an Economic Justice covenant to express your commitment to a new course of action to promote economic justice. Finally there are suggestions for your congregation to live out the covenant you have created.

You can also find resources for eliminating poverty on the United Church of Christ Poverty web page. A new call to eradicate poverty that is posted there, *Ending Poverty: A Christian Social Contract for Our Times*, concludes by naming many different ways your congregation can begin to address the causes of inequality and poverty. The ideas in this resource will help your congregation take concrete steps to ensure that fewer people in the United States and around the world are hungry in the future.

Moderator's Musings

-Sandra Hutchinson

The year 2011 is drawing to a close and already most of us are well into making plans for 2012. So it is in the association. Personally this has been a memorable year for me as association moderator. I have been appreciative over the years of those who served as moderator and the leadership they provided. I was humbled when asked to serve and welcomed the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of those who have lighted the way. Thank you for the myriad of opportunities to be in mission and ministry with all of you. I regret I was not able to be at the fall association meeting due to the death of my aunt. Rich Miller, vice moderator, and I worked closely together this past year so I knew the meeting would be in good hands. And all the reports from the meeting affirmed it was so. Thank you Rich!

At the last Council meeting of the year on Nov. 11th members focused on the financial health of the association. It was only the beginning as a retreat is planned for February to continue the discussion on what is the mission and ministry of EOA and how to financially support what God is calling us to do and be. 2012 will be an exciting year.

But before we get to 2012 I wish for all of you a joy filled Christmas 2011.

Attention all Church Treasurers and Financial Secretaries; please have all OCWM and Special Gifts for 2011 into the Association Offices or Lock-box by January 10, 2012. Any receipts that come in after this date will be credited to 2012. Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter

photojournalist and publish a photo with the article. Photos can also be used on the associations' web pages.

Cheryl McGraw will give out the assignments well in advance and try to match people to areas that interest them most. Reporters will also have the freedom to write "breaking news" stories they may come across. If you're interested, you can contact Cheryl at cherylm@eoaucc.org or call her at 330-453-8178 x100.

EOA/WRA Stewardship & Finance Task Force

Do you have a passion for Stewardship and Church Finances? We'd like to invite you to become part of our group, which meets about six times a year. We are not an elected committee, so a long-term commitment is not required, just come to a meeting and see if you would like to join us in this important work. Our next meeting is Wednesday, February 8, 2012 from 3:00-4:30PM at Bethany UCC, 1235 Broad Blvd., Cuyahoga Falls.

Got Resources?????

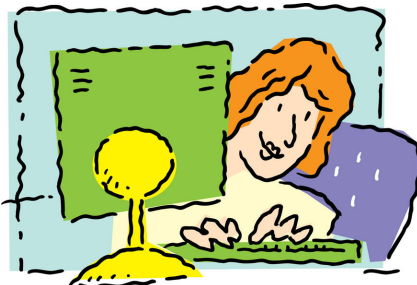
Gerry's House has nearly completed the online listing of all the resources in the center! Please visit our growing list at <http://www.librarything.com/profile/gerryshouse>. You will be connected to a page that allows you to look at many collections of resource materials. Books can be reserved by emailing us at jgrigg@wraucc.org or by calling 216-749-3116 ext 100. The resources can be picked up at Gerry's House 1375 West Clifton Blvd., Lakewood, Ohio 44109 (we are located on the 2nd floor at Lakewood Congregational UCC). Resources can be shipped to you at your expense or resources can also be dropped off (and picked up) for you at the EOA/WRA Support Center by request.

Your resource center needs your help too. As most of us have entered budget time in our churches, please consider a contribution to Gerry's House! Your resource center strives to keep the latest materials on hand to help save you money and time. Our books and videos are free to check out and use. Trying out books and videos offers a significant savings for you and your church! Consider honoring your pastor, church educator, confirmand and others by sending a designated contribution to Gerry's House Resource Center. Your designated contribution can be for a specific resource or for the purchase of resources in general. A commemorating placard will be put in the book(s) honoring your thoughtful gift. Please call or send donations and designated gifts to the above address. Thank you for your contribution!

Journalists Wanted!

Do you enjoy putting pen to paper or do you know someone who is a budding journalist? Well, *Synergy* is

looking to build a news team of people who would like to write about association churches, people and events. These people will need to commit to writing at least one article a month and be able to meet the submission deadline. Got a digital camera? Be a



Synergy
WANTS YOU!

Youth Calendar

-Margaret Mills, Minister for Stewardship, Education and Youth

Date	Event
<p><u>PLEASE MARK THESE DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR OR POST THIS PAGE ON YOUR REFRIGERATOR.</u> <u>THEY WON'T BE REPEATED IN SYNERGY AGAIN UNTIL CLOSER TO THE EVENT. THANKS!</u></p>	
January 27-28	It's Your Turn: EOA/WRA Youth Leaders Lock-In. "YOUth". Taking the emphasis off youth and putting it on YOU. A time for Taize, journaling, massage, quiet reflection, learning ways to take care of ourselves in the midst of busy youth group schedules. We'll be back at the Radisson and Church House in Cleveland. Watch for details.
March 3-4	EOA/WRA Junior High Retreat at Pilgrim Hills. Theme is <i>Let Justice Roll.</i>
March 16-17	Ohio Conference Educators Retreat at Tempeld Hills.
April 26 10AM to 2PM	EOA/WRA Educators Gathering. WRA will host.
July 10-13	National Youth Event in Purdue, IN. For more details go to UCC Youth on Facebook or the UCC website at www.ucc.org/youth/nye/ .
July 28-August 4	Kentucky Immersion and Work Experience.
<p>If you have events you would like posted, please send them to Margaret at mmills@wraucc.org.</p>	

Youth Group Challenges Congregation for Mission: 1 -Belinda Lentz

The youth group at St. John's UCC in Dover challenged the congregation to participate in Mission: 1 in three ways. First, the youth group planned a lock-in for Saturday, November 5 through Sunday, November 6. But this was no ordinary lock-in. The youth committed to spending the 24 hours from noon on Saturday until 11:00 Sunday morning (we did have that extra hour added at 2AM) without eating. For each of the twelve hours, the congregation was challenged to pledge to the youth by donating \$1.11 for each of the 24 hours spent at the church. That amounted to \$26.64 per pledge. The youth collected pledges amounting to \$1579.90. While at the church the youth scrubbed down the walls in the sanctuary, wiped the tops and edges of the pews, dusted and washed the woodwork and vacuumed the carpet. Second, the congregation was invited to a youth sponsored spaghetti lunch which was served Sunday (the

6th) after worship. Over 80 lunches were served and the youth raised \$520.00. Third, the members of St John's were challenged to bring in non-perishable items of food for the Urichsville Food Pantry. Over 377 items were collected. Gen-



Youth Challenge

eral donations from the congregation amounted to \$653.10. Twelve youth at the church participated in the weekend events. For three weeks prior to November 1, the youth made announcements at the beginning of each worship service explaining Mission: 1 and their participation. Over \$2753.00 was raised to be divided equally between Neighbors in Need and the Dover/New Philadelphia Food Bank. Thanks to the huge support of the congregation and family members, St. John's youth were able to help many others.

For the Joy

November 13 was Dedication Sunday at Bethany United Church of Christ in Cuyahoga Falls. It is the Sunday we receive and dedicate our Estimates of Giving for the year ahead. EOA Associate Minister Rev. Rich Plant preached, sharing about the joy he finds in his work and inspiring us to use our gifts and talents.

Our Stewardship Emphasis this year was "*For the Joy!*" and we focused on the joy of discipleship. In the covenant presented to the congregation by the Stewardship Committee, we noted: When scripture speaks of living *for the joy* it means with everything:

Our time – in living *for the joy*, we gain life when we give the gift of time.

Our talents – in living *for the joy*, we are blessed as we share these gifts for others.

Our treasure – in living *for the joy*, we are enriched as we share what God has given us.

It has been 22 years since Rev. Earl Miller, then the executive director of the Stewardship Council in the National setting of the UCC introduced the *Consecrating Stewards* program to us. We followed it exactly the first year, and each year we have made modifications to "make it our own." The program uses a faith-raising (as opposed to fund-raising) approach, emphasizing the need of the giver to give. For three Sundays, a member of the congregation (Witnessing Steward) speaks briefly in worship, sharing their story of faith and involvement. It has been my joy to be part of this committee and experience our learning and development over all these years.

A number of years ago, we designated the Sunday before Dedication Sunday as "Celebration of our Congregational Life" Sunday. The sermon that morning is the sharing of seven or eight members telling a story of a mission or ministry in which they have found their joy. This is a well-attended Sunday, with many members saying it is one of their favorite Sundays. Over the years, the stories have ranged from someone speaking about the work, struggles and commitment of getting a new ministry or mission started; a youth sharing about his joy in attending a family retreat ("I got to catch frogs and my Mom let me get dirty!") to a pet parent sharing "My dog really appreciated the Blessing of the Animals". They are simple, heartfelt stories about what it means to be part of our Family of Faith.

As part of this Stewardship time, we enjoy two meals together, and this year, our kick-off was an Oktoberfest, complete with a German Band, a member decked out in Lederhosen, and great German food. On Dedication Sunday, we share a meal after each service, and for the last two years, members of Williard United Church of Christ in Akron have prepared and served the meals for us. In return we give a gift to support their vital ministry in the inner-city.

During the meal, an announcement is made of the Estimates of Giving received that morning. We received over two-thirds of our anticipated total that morning and a follow-up mailing went to those unable to attend. The Finance Committee will begin crafting our Mission Spending plan for 2012 in December.

I'd like to share a few of Stewardship lessons I have learned:

- ♦ Stewardship is much more than the Sunday when we ask for pledges of estimates of giving. Stewardship is how we live our whole life and decide what has meaning for us. How we allocate our resources, our hopes and plans for the future. It's been said that our checkbook tells the story of what has meaning in our life.
- ♦ Preach and practice "first fruits giving". Encourage members to plan the family budget making their gift to the church the first item. This can be modeled by the church mission spending plan showing the designation for the wider church (Our Churches Wider Mission) the first item on the church budget.
- ♦ Encourage the sharing of personal stories of involvement as Mission Moments in worship, newsletter articles and postings on the church website. Consider a Sunday when these stories are the sermon.
- ♦ Involvement encourages generosity. Members active in the ministry and mission of the church tend to be more generous in their giving. They gain a better understanding of the "cost" of the discipleship in which they find their joy.
- ♦ Invite members to be involved. When recruiting helpers, don't just call those you know will say "yes", but intentionally try to get others involved. Encourage people to even start new missions and ministries.
- ♦ In addition to your line-item budget, present a mission spending plan at your annual meeting. Use a narrative approach, divide the budget into five or six categories with a description of dollars needed.
- ♦ Remember to make members aware of giving opportunities. In addition to the monies needed for the church to operate, encourage planned giving. Make folks aware of new missions and ministries you would like to start. Create a list of capital needs, including deferred maintenance. Remember, other causes are asking for support, too.

The EOAWRA Stewardship and Finance Task Force is available to assist your church in planning the annual stewardship effort, to help you assess giving potential, to talk about setting up a planned giving program or Endowment, to lead a workshop on personal finance or to talk about financial policies and procedures. We even have a Sunday Morning worship service sharing the story of OCWM we would love to present it at your church.

Would you like to talk about any of these issues? If so, contact Mary Seymour by email at seymourm@ucc.org or by phone at 888-822-3863 (daytime) or at 330-603-5445 (cell). You may also contact Rev. Ron Dauphin of Olmsted Falls Community Church by email at rondauphin@gmail.com.

Wishing you joy in your journey!
Mary Seymour

Quilters Provide Relief on Local Level



From left: Marilyn Castleman, Cheryl Edwards, Claudia Green, Ellen Armstrong and Edith Scott. Jane Moser, who took the picture, is an important part of this group. These quilts went to children in Japan.

On any given Saturday morning, one may find the First Congregational Quilters hard at work sewing and crafting quilts and blankets for those in need.

The group was first organized by member Doug Moore, to learn quilting while producing a quilt. The queen-size quilt was completed this year and raffled off following the Ravenna Balloon A-Fair in September. The group has grown to include a core number who have donated quilts to the survivors of the Japanese tsunami and the Alabama tornadoes.

It was quilting member, Claudia Green who first suggested they donate quilts to the remote villages of Japan through the *Mission of Love*, a 30-year-old organization whose past endeavors include more than 3,000 medical supplies and comfort items for victims of 9/11.

Green was touched by the plight of the Japanese last spring and suggested the First Congregational Quilters add to the 2,155 quilts donated, which they did.

Later, the group saw an opportunity to help on a national level with a personal connection when tornadoes touched down in Alabama on April 27. As a native of north Alabama, the minister of First Congregational Church in Ravenna got in touch with a cousin who lives in Birmingham and who distributed the 17 blankets and quilts to those hardest hit in Tuscaloosa. The donated quilts are made primarily for the children of these disasters who had lost everything.

Now that they have provided relief on the international and national levels, they are working on a service project for a local agency, in hope that their motto, "With Love From Our Hands to Your Heart," becomes a reality.



Zion UCC, 2716 W 14th St. in Cleveland will host their annual Christmas Concert with the Cleveland Philharmonic on Sunday, December 11, 2011 at 3PM. An Italian buffet will be available from 1 - 2:30PM before the concert at \$8 per person. Concert tickets are \$15 each or 2 for \$25. For

tickets, please call 216-938-5521. Reservations are strongly suggested. Zion is handicapped accessible.

The Christmas Fund

It is likely that you have received numerous requests for gifts during the Christmas season. Many solicitations come from organizations you know, while others may come which are unknown to you. How can you tell where your gift will do the most good?

When you make a gift to the Christmas Fund, also known as the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund, you can rest assured that your gift will reach an active or retired UCC clergy person or lay employee who is experiencing genuine need. Here are some examples of messages of gratitude received from those who were blessed by your gifts last year:

"Please extend to the Pension Bds. my heartfelt thank you for the most generous check. It indeed came at the right time. We needed a new dryer & with your thoughtfulness, it appeared. Many thanks."

"Now that my husband has passed away and my health has deteriorated, I am living on my retirement salary of less than \$1,500 a month. Yours was a blessed gift and very greatly appreciated....."

"As a relic from the deep past when ministers' salaries were small and women ministers' salaries even smaller, I appreciate the gift."

Your gift can, and does, make a difference.



Share and Connect

The Department of Church and Education of the Eastern Ohio Association met recently to welcome new members and attend to upcoming business. The goal of the Department is to "become resources, supporters, nurturers, and encouragers of local church programming, passing the word to other local churches and communicating this effort with local pastors".

The members of the department meet every other month at one of the local churches in the association. We would like to open our meetings to any and all who are interested in sharing, connecting, and networking with what is happening in our local churches, the association, faith formation and youth ministry. Bring your ideas, concerns, joys. Please join us as we meet on January 26th at St. John's UCC (409 N Wooster Ave. in Dover), on March 22 at Paradise UCC (619 E Main St. in Louisville) and/or on May 24 at Pilgrim UCC (130 Broad Blvd. in Cuyahoga Falls) beginning at 10AM and ending with sharing lunch at a local restaurant.

EQA Has Talent!



Saturday, February 18, 2012
6:30 to 9:30PM
Trinity United Church of Christ, 3909 Blackburn Rd NW,
Canton, OH 44718
330-492-3383



Volunteer to Share Your Talent

Sing?

Juggle?

Play an Instrument?

Acrobat?

Recite Poetry?

Performance Art?

Dance?

Tell a Good Joke?

Acting?

Walk & Chew Gum?

Stay tuned for show times and ticket information.

To volunteer for the show or for more information,
Contact Joni Christian at jonichristian@gmail.com.

Lessons Learned from Mission: 1

-Your Life, Better

Lord, when was it we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink?
(Matthew 25:37)

If you can't feed a hundred people, then feed just one.
(Mother Teresa)

There are people in the world so hungry, that God cannot appear to them except in the form of bread.
(Mahatma Gandhi)

Churches in Transition

(* denotes churches receiving profiles)



Eastern Ohio Association

- Atwater Congregational UCC (Atwater)
- *Bethel UCC (Beloit) [On Hold]
- Edinburg UCC (Ravenna)
- *Emmanuel UCC (Akron)
- First Federated (North Jackson)
- First UCC (Sugarcreek)
- *Grace UCC (Canton) *Part Time*
- Grace UCC (Uniontown)
- Paradise UCC (Canfield)
- Richville UCC (Navarre)
- *St. John UCC (Bolivar) *Part Time*
- St. John's UCC (Dover)
- *St. Paul (Port Washington)
- *St. Paul's UCC (East Canton) *Part Time*
- *St. Peter's UCC (Apple Creek) *Part Time*
- *Suffield UCC (Suffield)
- * Zion UCC (Hannibal)/Immanuel UCC (Clarington)

Western Reserve Association

- *Burton Congregational UCC (Burton)
- *Claridon First Congregational UCC (Huntsburg) *3/4 Time*
- *Dover Congregational UCC (Westlake)
- *Federated Church (Chagrin Falls) Associate Pastor
- *Fellowship UCC (Wickliffe) *3/4 Time*
- First Congregational (Andover)
- *First Congregational (Lorain) *Part Time*
- Newbury United Community *Part Time*
- St. Paul UCC (Elyria)
- Strongsville UCC (Strongsville)
- UCC Congregational (Vermilion)
- Unionville UCC (Unionville)
- *West Park UCC (Cleveland)
- West Side UCC (Cleveland)



Vital Signs



EOA Vital Signs	
As of October 31, 2011	
Total actual income for operations	\$474,566.56
Total actual expense from operations	\$504,275.85
Difference	(\$29,709.29)

WRA Vital Signs	
As of October 31, 2011	
Total actual income for operations	\$599,797.20
Total actual expense from operations	\$626,098.61
Difference	(\$26,301.41)

We wish to thank you for your continued giving to Our Churches Wider Mission!



*Wishing You
a Blessed Christmas*



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United Church of Christ
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Visit us online!

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