

Report from United Church of Christ Board members

The Montana Northern Wyoming Conference is very fortunate to have two people among the 36 elected at-large members of the United Church of Christ Board, Carol Shipley from Great Falls and Doug McClelland from Billings. Others sitting on the 52 member board are appointed from some other entity (i.e. Council of Conference Ministers) within the denomination or serve because of the position or elected office they hold within the denomination. The UCCB meets biannually in Cleveland, and it gathers an additional time at General Synod. Carol serves on the Governance and the General Synod Planning committees. Doug serves on the Development and Marketing committees. Be assured that this Board is a working board, and there is much work that is done via technology in the interim periods of when the Board meets.

Within the past year, there have been 2 rounds of staff reductions in our Cleveland offices as we continue to be deliberate about living within our means at a time when the denomination declines in membership as well as resources. There has also been some change in existing staff assignments and some resignations as folks move on to other employment. At our most recent meeting in March, it was reported that our expenditures were less than budgeted while giving was on target. The Governance committee continues to evaluate our bylaws under the new structure which began in 2013. As during the last General Synod, there will be bylaws revisions at the 2019 Synod to align with our Constitution as well as clarify the existing relationship between functioning bodies within the church such as the Nominating committee.

General Minister and President, Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer reported at the March board meeting on the work his office has accomplished or upon which the focus has been in the previous 6 months. He emphasized that the UCC continues to be a people willing to proclaim a gospel that, "No Matter Who You Are or Where You Are on Life's Journey, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE." John also indicated that a mission upon which he focuses daily is to do everything possible to empower local congregations and churches as these are the backbone of our existence. A toolkit has been established for local churches to use for philanthropy. Rev. Dorhauer has announced his intent to run for another 4 year term so a committee has been formed to assess and decide whether to place his name before the Board to fill another term. A vote is then taken at General Synod in 2019.

Carol also serves as one of the UCCB appointees to our Common Global Ministries Board, our joint effort with the Disciples of Christ. This partnership came to be in the 1990's and has been and continues to be a healthy and viable entity in mission work around the world. Prior to this partnership, our overseas mission organization is the oldest of mainline denominations. Our first organization was established in 1810 and the first missionary was sent to India in 1812. What a history we have of global involvement! Today, we partner with approximately 290 churches, councils, and religious organizations and institutions in more than 70 countries to assist in humanitarian and justice work. Every two years, Global Ministries focuses on a specific region of the world. The current focus is the Caribbean Initiative, "Embrace the Spirit" with particular emphasis on seven Latin American countries. In April, Carol was privileged to participate in a Board pilgrimage to the Dominican Republic to witness and learn from our partners there about the work that they do with our support. Read more about this pilgrimage in the May Conference e-newsletter. Plus you will have an opportunity to hear more about it at Conference Annual meeting.

Our Conference was very fortunate to have Mission Co-worker (the new term for missionary) Bruce Van Voorhis visiting some of our churches in May. Bruce just retired from performing justice and peace work in Southeast Asia, headquartered out of Hong Kong for the past 27 years. Our OCWM dollars and One Great Hour of Sharing provide funding for Global Ministries. Additional donations may be made by visiting the Global Ministries web site www.globalministries.org.

Lastly, we are very blessed to welcome and have present with us in Great Falls our General Minister and President John Dorhauer and Chairman of the UCC Board, Frank Bolden. You won't want to miss this Conference Annual meeting!

Carol Shipley and Doug McClelland