

# Mission Moments

## March 2006

**M**ission Moments are brief ways to highlight your congregation's connection to the whole United Church of Christ. Take some time during worship to draw attention to them.

This month, please draw attention to the One Great Hour of Sharing special offering, suggested for March 26, with the Mission Moment printed here. Also included is a Mission Moment on Lent, which begins March 1.

Whether your congregation recognizes these special Sundays or not, you can use these Mission Moments to bring interesting information about the United Church of Christ to the attention of your members. We hope you find them useful!

### **SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THESE MISSION MOMENTS:**

- Photocopy and include with your worship bulletin each Sunday.
- Draw attention to them during announcements.
- Reprint in your newsletter (go to [UCC.org](http://UCC.org) and download).
- Post on your bulletin board—a new one each week of the month.
- Post on your website.
- Photocopy and place in your pew racks.

## God is still speaking,

# 9 Mission Moment

## Making Room for God

**L**ent is a good time to reflect on the deep meaning of the word “sacrifice.” The root words for sacrifice are “to make sacred,” and that’s exactly what we do with our lives when we choose to give up, or to offer, one thing for the sake of another. When we share our time and our love generously, our families grow stronger. When we share our talents and our wisdom generously, our churches and our communities grow stronger. When we share our treasure and God’s gifts generously, the relationships we have even with strangers grow stronger, and the world is transformed.

The words “self denial” have a negative connotation in a consuming society, but the irony rests in the truth that we are most human when we choose to offer, rather than to cling to, our blessings. The generous outpouring of gifts during a time of natural disaster illuminates the human capacity to share those blessings, just as the quiet, faithful support of our churches, week in and week out, turns on the lights, warms the sanctuary, and strengthens the ministry and witness of our United Church of Christ congregations. Real hospitality makes room for each new person, and in that sharing of blessings and space, we make room for God’s own hand at work in the life of the church. Perhaps the “sacrifice” and “emptiness” of Lent are ways of making room for God in our lives.

## God is still speaking,

# 9 Mission Moment

## Something to Drink

Last August 25, Hurricane Katrina moved across southern Florida into the Gulf of Mexico. Four days later Katrina was a Category 4 hurricane, and it stormed ashore with horrific force. Extraordinarily strong winds and heavy rains caused extensive damage from Florida to Louisiana.

In Mississippi a thirty-foot surge of water lifted buildings off their foundations and set them down again — even landing on top of homes. In New Orleans the levees broke open, and residents were stranded on the rooftops of buildings. Thousands of people took shelter in the football stadium.

People cried out for help, “I am thirsty!” Clean water was not available. Simple household items such as bleach and laundry detergent contaminated the water. Chemicals leaked from industrial plants, causing massive pollution. Ninety million gallons of oil spilled into the Gulf from storage tanks. Bottled water was precious, suddenly the only safe drinking water.

One Great Hour of Sharing rushed funds to the impacted areas, to provide clean water and other forms of immediate relief. In the longer term, One Great Hour of Sharing is helping local communities to address water contamination along the Gulf Coast. Our hope is that one day people will, once again, turn on the kitchen tap for a drink of clean water.

Thank you for joining with thousands of others in churches across America in giving to One Great Hour of Sharing. When we give, hope flows.

***“I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.”***

— Jesus

# God is still speaking,

# 9 Mission Moment

## Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters

**L**et justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." When the prophet Amos proclaimed God's word, who could have foreseen the justice that would roll down from the Amistad Event of 1839? Justice rolled when European American and African American Congregationalists came to the defense of illegally captured and traded Africans transported on the schooner, La Amistad. The Amistad case, won in March, 1841, is regarded as the Supreme Court's first civil rights decision.

Justice rolled as the Amistad Defense Committee became the American Missionary Association (AMA), opening more than 500 schools for slaves freed during the Civil War. Six AMA historically black colleges and universities are still producing many of the country's top educators, lawyers, doctors and other professionals.

Justice rolled as these schools and colleges led to the creation of still-prominent UCC congregations in the South. The UCC's justice-oriented Christian voice continues to draw entire congregations, such as 5,300- member Victory Church in Stone Mountain, GA. Atlanta's progressive Virginia-Highland Church became part of the UCC in 2002 after being "disfellowshipped" by Georgia's Southern Baptist Convention. Moreover, new church starts, such as Atlanta's Sankofa UCC and Birmingham's Beloved Community UCC, have positioned themselves as welcoming alternative Christian communities.

Justice rolls as Our Church's Wider Mission supports the work of the AMA successor body, Justice and Witness Ministries. Today our commitment to justice rolls down from the struggle evidenced in the Amistad story.

## God is still speaking,

# 9 Mission Moment

## Still Speaking!

*“God is not God of the dead but of the living...”*

Luke 20:38b (NEB)

**I**n the United Church of Christ, we worship a living God. We believe in God’s continuing revelation. We always have.

When the Pilgrims set sail for the new world in 1620, their pastor, John Robinson, told them: “The Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth from His holy Word.” Translated into a 21st century idiom, we believe that God is still speaking, (and we never place a period where God has left a comma).

Our United Church of Christ has been called the “early” church, because we’re usually among the first in addressing important issues facing our society and in taking bold positions that challenge the status quo.

That’s because we believe God continually calls us into new ministries of love, justice, and inclusiveness. And we live out that calling in new settings and circumstances.

The roots of our faith are over two thousand years old. But our thinking is not. We are a seekers’ church. Our worship doesn’t exclude questions and explorations. At our best, our congregations seek to include anyone and everyone who wants to listen for the voice of the still speaking God.

So, no matter who you are, or where you are on life’s journey, you’re welcome in the United Church of Christ.

## God is still speaking,