

Mission Moment

“What am I going to do with my life? How can I make a difference? For what purpose was I created?”

Maybe these are questions most of us ask at one time or another in our lives. For some, they are questions that lead to wondering about a “vocation”—a call to serve God through ministry in the church.

In the United Church of Christ, we have a special website designed for anyone who wonders whether ministry is for them. Even if you’re just curious, you might want to check out www.askthequestion.org. It’s a site to help people on their journey of exploration. There are video testimonies from others who have asked themselves the question, resources for prayer and study, and an online forum about church vocations.

In February, we celebrate Church Vocations Sunday. Maybe someone you know would make a wonderful pastor . . . maybe you are someone who has wondered about answering God’s call in your life. Go to askthequestion.org and explore. If you don’t ask, you’ll never know.

February 2010

God is still speaking,

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



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UCC Women's Week

“From now on you’ll be fishing for men and women.” Luke 5:10,
The Message

Reading this Scripture, which is the theme for the 2010 UCC Women’s Week, I am reminded of another of Jesus’ teachings, from Matthew 25: “That which you do unto the least of these, you do unto me.” You know that one, too.

If we are to truly live as disciples, we have to be willing to let our nets down all the way to the bottom and “catch” our sisters and brothers who are farthest from our reach, like those who have given up hope, or those who hide away in deep holes of denial, or addiction, or abuse, or those in prison. Sometimes we may have to go after them patiently, one by one, letting down the line until it hits the bottom, then waiting, and waiting.

You have to make sure that what you have on the hook is something they want – food for the soul as well as the body. And if you do get a nibble, you have to pull them up gently and be prepared for the unexpected.

Try baiting your hook with justice, with possibilities, with self-empowerment, with love, with hope, with patience. See who bites. And trust me – you will nourish one another in God’s kin-dom, the Beloved Community not of our making but of God’s making. There are treasures out there in the deep, deep recesses of life’s seas. Go, then, into the deep.

--Loey M. Powell, Justice and Witness Ministries, United Church of Christ, as quoted in Common Lot, Winter 2010.

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Hands Wide Open

Lent is a time of spiritual discipline in preparation for the celebration of Easter. At root, penitence, like repentance, involves a turning away from self-reliance to trust in God—a change of mind and life direction evoked by the good news of Jesus Christ.

At heart, stewardship is about where we place our trust. It is less about possessions than possessiveness. Our capacity to love is hampered by our need to have. This is an issue of control: How much must I maintain to feel secure? Stewardship is a spiritual discipline that loosens our grip on what we have for the sake of what we love. Loving and trusting God in the spirit of Christ, we live and give more freely and openly, less anxiously, less selfishly, more generously.

An ancient rabbi wrote, “We are born with our fists clenched and die with our hands wide open.” The plain facts of life and death confirm God’s will and point to God’s way for us. In effect, we have to find a way to hold onto life with open hands. That is the Lenten discipline of stewardship: learning how to hold what we have less tightly, without clutching, more openly and hopefully—turning toward God, hands open.

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In the days just after January's devastating earthquake in Haiti, giving to the UCC's Haiti earthquake response exceeded previous online giving rates, indicating a generous outpouring from across the United Church of Christ.

Within six days of the disaster, a total of \$250,603 had been received from 2,366 online donors. "It's no surprise that UCC people are being very generous in reaching out to our sisters and brothers in Haiti," said Susan M. Sanders, the UCC's minister for global sharing of resources. "But this unprecedented outpouring also shows that people are remembering to give through the UCC in times of disaster, and demonstrates that we are getting more comfortable with offering our gifts through online methods."

UCC funds are flowing to mission partners in Haiti, including support for relief kits organized by Church World Service and funds for medicine and supplies for area clinics provided by Interchurch Medical Assistance. Funds have also been shared with Global Ministries for support of partners, the National Spiritual Council of Churches of Haiti (CONASPEH) and House of Hope. Additional distributions are being made as relief and recovery efforts continue.

Sanders reminds UCC supporters that while the church responds immediately at times of natural disasters, its commitment to recovery and rebuilding is long-term. "The UCC will be working in Haiti for many years to come, long after the media spotlight has turned elsewhere," she says.

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