

# THIS WEEK AT THE CREEK

August 13, 2009

*"I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and don't notice it."*

-Shug Avery, one of the wise women in Alice Walker's book *The Color Purple*

**WARNING: THIS ISSUE OF THIS WEEK AT THE CREEK IS LONGER THAN NORMAL IN ORDER TO SHARE SOME TIMELY INFORMATION FROM THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AS IT RELATES TO THE NATIONAL DEBATE ON HEALTH CARE. IT IS HOPED THAT THE INFORMATION SHARED WILL BE HELPFUL AND INFORMATIVE AS YOU TRY TO MAKE SENSE OF THIS COMPLEX MATTER AMIDST SO MUCH NOISE.**

## Dear Cross Creeker:

One of the great joys and privileges I had as a delegate to the United Church of Christ General Synod 27, which gathered in Grand Rapids, Michigan back in June, was the opportunity to serve as one of the 15 committee chairs. I spent two days being trained on how to lead a large group of people to process, discern, and present an important matter of business for a vote by the full body of General Synod delegates, which numbers around 800. Neither delegates nor committee chairs know the committee to which they will be assigned until they arrive. I ended up chairing wonderful "Committee 12" which was asked to consider a resolution on "Single Payer" health care that was presented to the General Synod by the Council on Racial Ethnic Minorities (COREM).

The United Church of Christ has a long history of supporting universal health care for all. And this time around, the issue was timely! Earlier this year, at the leadership and insistence of President Obama, the country was just beginning to enter into a national debate on health care, which we all know now has turned divisive and nasty.

As I think back on my diverse and wonderful "Committee 12," which was comprised of 70 UCC folks from around the country, my heart is warmed by their spirit, their care and compassion, and their commitment to a just and equitable health care system for everyone in our beloved country. My wonderful "Committee 12" diligently wrestled with the resolution that was presented to them, not in opposition to it, but with an intense desire to make it better...to get the words just right...to say it loud and clear: NOW is the time for health care for all. When it was all said and done, the resolution was entitled "**AN URGENT CALL TO ADVOCACY IN SUPPORT OF HEALTH CARE FOR ALL, AS IN H.R. 676,**" and from what I could tell, it was unanimously approved by all the delegates of General Synod 27. Here is the gut of that resolution:

(FULL TEXT OF RESOLUTION AT: <http://www.ucc.org/health-care-reform/pdfs/DRAFT-OF-HEALTH-EQUITY-RESOLUTION.pdf>)

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that:

Based on our belief that health care is not only a basic human NEED but also a basic human RIGHT and our belief that it is a moral imperative to transform health care so that it is: inclusive, accessible, affordable and accountable, The Twenty-seventh General Synod calls upon the United Church of Christ in all its settings to act with urgency to:

--affirm its support for universal health care which meets the following criteria:

- 1) it covers all persons;
- 2) it presents no financial barriers;
- 3) it provides comprehensive benefits;
- 4) it offers a choice of physicians and other health providers; and
- 5) it eliminates racial, ethnic and all other disparities for health care.

-- advocate for and supporting legislation to be passed by the fall of 2009 by the 111th congress which meets these criteria. Endorse and support a national health insurance program such as the proposal found in Congressman Conyers' legislation, H.R. 676, "Expanded and Improved Medicare for All" or a public health option as long as such legislation meets the above criteria. Pursue interfaith and ecumenical cooperation with the goal of immediately obtaining passage of H.R. 676 or such legislation as meets our

criteria by the fall of 2009 by the 111th Congress and its signing by the President of the United States.

This past week, the Rev. Dr. John Thomas, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, released a pastoral letter to members of the United Church of Christ called “Don’t Put a Period on Health Care: God is Still Speaking.” Here is his letter to YOU and to ME:

( FULL TEXT OF PASTORAL LETTER AT: <http://www.ucc.org/health-care-reform/pdfs/pl-health09FNL2.pdf>)

*Jesus asked, which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?*

*He said, “The one who showed him mercy.”*

*Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”*

— Luke 10:36-37

This familiar story of the Good Samaritan in Luke’s Gospel makes a clear case for universal access to health care. Jesus reminds us of what it means to love our neighbor; it means we stop and assist in a caring manner that nurtures the neighbor back to health and wholeness. Persons in need are not to be passed by, nor are they to be left abandoned and ignored by the side of the road. Those who would be caring neighbors cannot rest until proper care and services have been obtained for the ones in need.

The United Church of Christ declares that we must serve God’s intent for humankind by being extensions of Jesus’ ministry in the world. We have a long history of providing health care through our health and human service ministries, parish nurse programs, etc. Where the church is involved in healing ministries, we continually seek new ways to enable the liberation of the oppressed and reconciliation of the alienated through acts of love and justice. All parts of creation deserve to be healed when broken, injured, or sick. All persons regardless of race, ethnic origin, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, income, legal status, health status or geographical location deserve to be tenderly touched by concerned healers.

Health care is not only a basic human right but a human need. As people of faith we believe that it is a moral imperative to transform health care so that it is **inclusive, accessible, affordable and accountable**. We call on our churches to actively work towards the creation of a national health care system and to affirm the moral and justice imperatives of equal access for all people.

Over 47 million people (one in six) and over 9 million children are without health coverage and 25 million more are under-insured. The number of Americans going without or delaying needed medical care has increased sharply between 2003 and 2007. Every year, 18,000 people in the United States die from a lack of health insurance — that’s two people every hour.

People of faith are called to engage in the work of transforming our nation’s health care system into a just and compassionate system of healing. Where political and market-driven forces have failed, the faith community can proclaim that health care for all is the mark of a just and compassionate society. We have the power to change the conversation and envision a society where each person is afforded health, wholeness, and human dignity.

Just one month ago, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ adopted a Resolution entitled **An Urgent Call For Advocacy in Support of Healthcare For All, as in H.R. 676**. While we as a denomination believe that a single-payer plan is what is needed to truly have universal coverage which is our moral and justice imperative, we acknowledge that it will probably not be the health care proposal of choice. However, we must support a strong public plan option that provides meaningful access to all...

The UCC participated in the Faith Leaders Summit on Health Care, held July 7 in Washington, D.C. There we agreed:

*No longer can we afford to squander the hopes and dreams of the American people through a much-too-costly system that contributes to economic despair. Families and individuals must be able to rely on affordable care in times of illness or accident and preventative care to safeguard health and well-being. Those who are ill need the assurance that coverage will not be canceled by illness or employment circumstance. They should also be afforded the dignity of selecting their own caregivers.*

We insist that legislation be passed by the fall of 2009 by the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress.

As the debate about Health Care simmers in the August sun, I can’t help but think about the “practice of paying attention,” the theme for our worship this weekend. There is no better time and no better

presenting opportunity than a contentious debate to give the practice of paying attention a good ole college try!

Here are some things you might consider paying attention to: What's behind the fear? What's behind the anger? Who is doing all the shouting and screaming? What voices are NOT being heard? Where is God in all of this? Which side of the debate do you think Jesus would be on...why? What is motivating people to be "against" health care for everyone? What is motivating people to be "for" health care for everyone? Where is the color purple that needs to be noticed and named?

For me, when it comes to health care in America I am hoping and praying that as Americans we can rise to our better nature and practice the golden rule, that nugget of Wisdom shared by all the enduring religions of the world: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." And for those of us who are Christians, I hope and pray that we will not forget the words of Jesus when it comes to health care:

*I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, **sick** and in prison and you did not visit me." Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or **sick** or in prison, **and did not take care of you?**" Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me."*

I will be looking for you in worship this weekend. In the meantime, *practice* away!

Peace,

**MIKE CASTLE**, Pastor

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## **IN WORSHIP THIS WEEKEND**

This weekend Pastor Mike will continue the series of sermons he started last weekend, entitled **AN ALTAR IN THE WORLD: A GEOGRAPHY OF FAITH**, based on a book with that same title by Barbara Brown Taylor. The prompting is entitled "*The Practice of Paying Attention: Reverence*," which follows Chapter 2 of Taylor's book. **MARK KENNEDY** will be singing.

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For a complete listing of events, please go to [www.crosscreekchurch.org](http://www.crosscreekchurch.org).

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### **RIVER BAPTISM -- Sunday, August 23**

Our annual River Baptism service will be held Sunday, Aug. 23 at the Jacoby Road Canoe Launch, located between Xenia and Yellow Springs. Participants, along with friends and family, will meet at 12:30 p.m. for a brown bag meal along the banks of the river. The service will begin at 2 p.m. If you are interested in being baptized, contact Pastor Mike Castle as soon as possible.

### **Shaun and Abigail Bengson In Concert - Saturday, September 5 @ 8:00 p.m.**

Fresh back from South Africa, Shaun and Abigail will offer a special Saturday evening concert. No tickets required, but a free will offering will be taken. Shaun and Abigail will also be our guest musicians in worship on September 5-6, 2009 for our "Out of Africa" theme.

### **HOLY C.O.W. -- CELEBRATE OUR WELCOME WEEKEND - September 26-27, 2009**

Cross Creek Community Church, United Church of Christ is pleased to announce that **JASON & deMARCO** will be in concert on Saturday, September 26 at 8:00 and **CANDACE CHELLEW-HODGE** will be conducting a workshop on her book *Bulletproof Faith: A Spiritual Survival Guide for Gay and Lesbian Christians* on Saturday, September 26 from 10:00 - 1:00 (including lunch). Costs for the Concert is \$20 per ticket and cost for the workshop is \$20 (includes lunch) per person, or a special package discount that can be purchased for \$30.00 which includes both the concert and the workshop. In addition, JASON & deMARCO and CANDACE CHELLEW-HODGE will be special guests in all three weekend worship services on September 26-27 at 5:30 p.m. Saturday and 9:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. on Sunday. All of this is part of Cross Creek Community Church's **HOLY C.O.W. (Celebrate Our Welcome) Weekend**. A brochure with complete details for the weekend, as well as a registration form to order tickets is available in the church lobby or online at [www.crosscreekchurch.org](http://www.crosscreekchurch.org).