



Southwest Conference  
United Church of Christ

Embodying God's  
unconditional justice and love ...

Building Relationships - Deepening Spirituality - Extending Hospitality

Serving Arizona, New Mexico and El Paso, Texas

## In the Loop with the Southwest Conference

**November 16, 2011**

### John Thomas featured at January 27/28 Lay Academy

The next Lay Academy will be held in the Phoenix area on January 27th and 28th and our featured instructor will be Rev. John Thomas. The topic will be "Ecumenism" which is a movement promoting unity among Christian churches or denominations and worldwide unity among religions through greater cooperation and improved understanding.



Thomas, the immediate past General Minister and President of the UCC, is a senior advisor to Chicago Theological Seminary president Alice Hunt, and a visiting professor in church ministries. From 1992 to 1999, he served as assistant to the president of the United Church of Christ for Ecumenical Concerns. In that role, he represented the UCC in theological dialogues, in councilor bodies including the World and National Councils of Churches, served as the ecumenical representative to the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and was instrumental in developing the 1998 full communion agreement between the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and three reformed churches: the Reformed Church in America, the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the UCC.

More information will be on the SWC website later this week. You may register and pay via credit card online (\$75) or you may call the SWC office to register and mail a check.

### Junior High Event Registration is Now Open

#### JUNIOR HIGH YOUTH EVENT

**3 DAYS....**

50+ Youth,  
Worship,  
Workshops,  
Live Music,  
Plug In,  
Celebrate!



**March 9, 10, 11, 2012**

The Junior High Youth Event will be held at Church of the Beatitudes in Phoenix from March 9 to 11, 2012. This is an excellent opportunity for Junior High youth to meet new friends, see camp friends and strengthen current friendships. This event will provide Junior High youth the freedom to explore their faith relationship in a new way through the reflection of social justice issues, music, dance and so much more!

Music is an important part of our social life and it is just as important in our spiritual life. So, this year our theme will be "Plug into God." We will explore some of our favorite music on

the radio, reflect on praise music and listen to a live keynote band. What else will we be doing during the weekend? We will be cooking, baking, going to workshops, singing, dancing, laughing, playing games, eating lots of yummy foods and so much more! Visit the [SWC - Youth & Outdoor Ministries page](#) for all the details.

**Although you may register and pay on line, all forms (Registration, Covenant, and Health Form) must still be sent to the SWC office.**

## Can Sexuality be "Repaired"?

UCC Clergy and Churches respond to NARTH event. On Saturday, Nov 5th, UCC churches and clergy joined PFLAG, H.E.R.O and No Longer Silent/Clergy for Justice in voicing their opposition to the National Association of Reparative Therapy Convention. The **Revs. Vernon Meyer, Dave Ragan, Steve Wayles, Jeffrey Dirrim, John Herman, Doyle Burbank-Williams** and others called for the acceptance of GLBT people as God made them and denounced the therapy promoted by NARTH that believes gay and lesbian people can be fixed of their homosexuality or changed into straight people. [Read more](#)



## MISSION 1 Updates

Many of our SWC churches really got into the Spirit of the Mission 1 campaign. Here are a few of the results. Please send us your own stories and we will post them on our website.

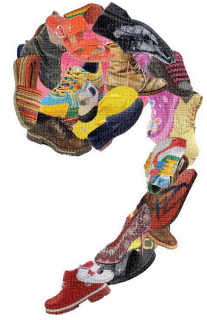


- **St. Paul's UCC in Rio Rancho** is collecting food to donate to Storehouse West in Albuquerque. Sunflower Farmers Market donated 111 grocery bags for us to fill. We estimated that the average amount of food to fill each bag would cost \$21. If we fill all 111 bags, our donation will equal \$2331!
- The 5 Ministries at **Church of the Beatitudes in Phoenix** are on for the Mission 1 Challenge! The ministry that collects the most food will have dinner cooked for them by the ministry that collects the least amount of food! This challenge is serious and fun! So far, the Youth are ahead with 304 pounds.
- **First Congregational UCC in Flagstaff** did even better than our goal...Randy Wilson took all the food to St Mary's Food Alliance yesterday. It totaled 347 lbs!! Thanks also to John Leung for putting together the Hunger presentation with Carol Thompson. There were about 60 people in attendance, many from the community and NAU.
- The response by members, at the **Good Shepherd UCC in Sahuarita**, to our goal of 1,111 items of food for our Sahuarita Food Bank was great. We counted 890 items as of Monday morning. In addition, we received \$119 for the food bank. Our participation in Mission 1 also included a goal of \$1,111 for the Neighbors in Need Offering and we have received \$1003 so far.
- Members at **Shadow Rock UCC in Phoenix** delivered 324 food items (347 lbs) to Desert Mission Food Bank, sent 25 letters to Congress asking them for protection and reform to help reduce poverty and hunger (others sent on-line via [ucc.org/mission1](http://ucc.org/mission1) and contributed \$1,925.82 to the Neighbors in Need offering.

## Christmas Shoe Drive for Homeless Teens

"It's the story of our birth, it's who we are, and it's what we do," said **Footsteps United Church of Christ** Founding Pastor, the **Rev. Jeffrey Dirrim**.

Footsteps UCC is a new church plant in the Phoenix area that was inspired by a new shoe drive Rev Dirrim led while serving First Congregational Phoenix as Associate Pastor. The 2009 Christmas day mission project, to provide homeless lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender teens with new shoes, was so full of grace that both teens and volunteers were transformed. That Christmas day moment ultimately led to the planting of a new progressive faith community. Today, Footsteps UCC is inviting you to join them in participating in its first annual Christmas shoe drive for homeless LGBT teenagers. For more information, contact Jeffrey Dirrim at [footstepsucc@gmail.com](mailto:footstepsucc@gmail.com).



## Crusin' Around the SWC

**November church newsletters:** ROMEOs, upcoming ONA vote, new migrant ministry, retreat them: "The Golden Years - are they tarnished?" and more. [Read Nov. crusin'](#)

## More Tidbits from Around the Conference

- **Church of the Good Shepherd in Albuquerque** was one of 20 churches that participated in the Albuquerque CROP Walk on Oct. 23. This is a major fund-raiser through Church World Service to fight hunger in more than 80 countries. Good Shepherd had the largest group of walkers (20) and raised over \$4000, the largest amount raised of any of the other churches. **Watch a new video created about by Church World Service: [Change the Equation](#)**



- **United Churches Fellowship in Nogales** will be celebrating their 125th Anniversary on Dec. 11. The church was interviewed by the local TV station, an article on its history will be published in the newspaper, a church ad is running at the local movie theater, and one member has funded 3 months of advertising on a local billboard. What a celebration! Congratulations!



- On behalf of the **Rev. Ilai Tupuola** and the entire **First Samoan Congregational Christian Church in AZ**, we would like to thank **First Congregational UCC of Phoenix** for their support of our Golf Tournament. Thank you Team Holy Hackers (Greg Essenmacher, Stephanie Brown, Ron Trunnel and Rich Beardsley) for being there for us. Greg's team enjoyed the food, entertainment, raffles, and prizes. This is the 2nd time they came to support our small community. And thank you to the Rev. Lee Albertson from **First Congregational UCC in Albuquerque**, for your donation to us.



- **Lauri Hasler** from **West Congregational UCC in Phoenix** has agreed to represent the SWC to the **Justice Witness Board of the National UCC**. Thank you, Lauri!

- **Noel Anderson**, recently approved for ordination pending call, will be ordained at the **Good Shepherd UCC in Sahuarita** on January 28 at 2:00 pm. Noel will be heading to Washington D.C. to work with Church World Service.



- The **Rev. Donald J. Longbottom** has accepted the call to be the interim pastor at **Shepherd of the Hills Congregational Church in Phoenix**. The Rev. Longbottom was born and raised in Yuma, Arizona where he worked in the cotton fields as a young boy. He graduated from ASU in 1972 with both a Bachelor and then a Masters degree. He studied at Golden Gate Seminary in San Francisco where he received his Master of Divinity and then received his Doctor of Ministry degree from Andover Newton School of Theology in Massachusetts. Don is trained in UCC interim ministry and his task will be to prepare the congregation to receive a new pastoral leader. He will begin in early January.



## StillSpeaking Magazine, Fall / Winter 2011



Have you received the latest issue?

There are lots of **photos of Southwest Conference members** in the current issue. Make sure you look closely at the photos on the *Community* and *Parting Glance* pages.

## Advent Mission Stories Series



The Southwest Conference office regularly posts Global Ministries stories on our website for use in church bulletins. This year, we are posting a series of Advent mission stories, one for each week of Advent. Here are the first two:

**For Sunday, Nov 27: Ymas and Amal in Bethlehem**

**For Sunday, Dec. 4: Alternative Christmas Giving**

The rest of the series will be available on the SWC website.

Visit the **Global Ministries Stories page** on the SWC website to read other mission stories, too.

## Upcoming Dates:

Nov. 12-16	Clergy Retreat
Nov. 19	Executive Board Mtg.
Jan 28	Ordination of Noel Anderson, 2 PM, Good Shepherd UCC, Sahuarita

## Next Summer Camp dates:

Feb 17-19	Senior High Sneak Trip
March 9-11	Junior High Retreat
June 17-22	Super Camp
June 24-29	Senior High Camp
July 10-14	National Youth Event

**This communication is made possible by your contributions to Our Church's Wider Mission.**

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