

# THE NEWSLETTER

*We welcome everyone who welcomes everyone!*

Union Congregational Church of Hancock, UCC

May 2014

## Out the parsonage window...

### SUNDAY, MAY 18

Fred and Melinda Quivik (Kwee-vick) will offer Power Point (a.k.a. slideshow) presentations at our church on Sunday, May 18th.

Melinda is a Lutheran pastor (ELCA) with a PhD in worship and preaching, which she has taught at Lutheran seminaries in Columbus, Ohio, and Philadelphia, PA. She now writes books and gives workshops on the ecumenical liturgical renewal movement. She is currently writing a 13-session Bible study on worship for Augsburg Fortress Press. Just a few weeks ago, she returned from teaching at two Protestant seminaries in Indonesia (North Sumatra, to be exact). Her slideshow, during coffee hour, will be about her Indonesian adventure and **Muslim-Christian relations** in this emerging nation with the world's largest Muslim population and a large Christian minority.

Fred has a PhD in Industrial Archeology and teaches both the history of technology and environmental history at Michigan Technological University (and is a member of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church) in Houghton, Michigan. He has long been interested in the environmental, social, economic, and technological dimensions of humans' uses of energy. He also free-lances as an "Expert Witness" for the Environmental Protection Agency—he researches and testifies in court cases involving major corporate polluters. Just a few weeks ago, he testified at a water hearing in Sacramento, CA. Fred will give a slideshow in our worship service on **global warming and the Christian faith**.

But Fred and Min's greatest claims to fame are that they have both been among my best friends since childhood, when we were all Young Republicans. Min and I went to high school together and all three of us to St. Olaf College, where she and I were English majors and Fred was an art major. They are under strict orders not to tell you embarrassing stories about me. Help me welcome them to Maine!

With you in God's grace,

*Dan*  
Pastor Dan

*The liturgical season of Easter lasts for seven weeks until Pentecost Sunday on June 8th.*



## **A “SNAPSHOT” OF OUR CHURCH TODAY** **on the first anniversary of Dan’s ministry with us**

What a year it has been for spiritual growth! Nearly one year ago, my neighbor, Fran Treft, called me and said, “We have a new minister coming this Sunday. Would you like to go with me to hear him?” It turned out to be a significant decision.

The friendliness of the congregation put me at ease. The words of the new pastor caught and held my attention. He challenged several of my beliefs. Over the summer, I attended Sunday services with increasing frequency. By fall, I found myself looking forward to seeing my new church friends and reflecting about the sermon. I started to participate in the sermon-discussions following Social Hour. Since then, I have become part of the church community. When I’m out-of-state, I miss the fellowship and examples of practicing faith. I’m ready to join!

Over the last year, my heart has been opened to change. Not only do I understand why we do not have stained glass windows, I appreciate being part of the outside world. Not only do I understand why children can take communion, I have grown to agree that everyone should be invited to the table. Little by little, my beliefs are becoming less about rules and more about love. Most of all, I feel the love of God through the people, led by the example of the pastor of our church.

--Nancy Cooledge

I like it when Pastor Dan uses a snippet from his life story to help illustrate a sermon. Rather than rely entirely on what might be a distant, cold and impersonal text, his personal reflection helps to bring the message directly to Hancock in a warm and insightful way. It helps to bring additional relevance and meaning to the lesson.

--David Wildes

I am an only child, but one year forward on this amazing home we call planet Earth, I realize now that I do have brothers and sisters! Pastor Dan is my brother, and the people who come to Hancock Congregational UCC are my family, too—in a real and healthy way. Sunday mornings bring me back to my family, and open my consciousness, prying up the edges a little more each visit. Thank you, brother Dan.

--Renata Moise

As a summer resident, May to October, I was anxious a year ago about my summer church having a new pastor, especially as a conservative Christian from Georgia. I was afraid he would bring a homosexual agenda. Once the Pastor and I got over our initial pre-mature assumptions about who we thought the other was, we were able to see the good in each other and find the true value of sharing our common love of the LORD. Things smoothed out and we got about the business of helping each other serve the LORD where we are. When the HOLY SPIRIT showed up during one of Dan’s first worship services, that did it for me. I knew he was ordained by God. There is much more, and it’s all good.

--Jack Candy

Mr. Geslin,

I found your “Evolution Sunday” sermon sent out to the congregation to be very disturbing. What kind of a pastor tells his congregation that reliance on the Bible—God’s word for us—is “idol worship”? It is ironic that you quote scripture as the basis of your sermon and then refer to it as a “security blanket.” Why are you so bold as to suppose that God’s church is a platform for your personal homosexual agenda? Talking about blacks and queers from the pulpit has *never* been done in our church before. That’s why my friends and I have quit the church. Fundamentalists are not the enemy, Mr. Geslin; your sin is the enemy. The reason you don’t choose to embrace the Bible is because homosexuality, which is *your* idol, is clearly condemned in it—Romans 1:27. You are going to get the punishment you deserve.

The Bible warns of the cancer of false prophets in the End Times. The remaining congregation in Hancock is being led down the evil path that you have chosen for your life. Those who stay in that church are going to hell. Yes, Christ welcomed all, but only on the condition that we become transformed into the likeness of Christ and, Mr. Geslin, Christ is not a faggot. Your agenda is more suited for a Unitarian church which has no Bibles and no mention of God in their weekly services. You should move on with your idolization of homosexuality and leave the Hancock congregation to idolize God and His word. Get out of town, Mr. Geslin.

--Unsigned  
No return address

*Pastor’s note: The writer forgot to quote Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:1-2, “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you give, you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get.” Please join me in praying for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44) and in hoping that they will come back to the church someday. The heart of the Christian gospel is the truth that we have all sinned and fallen short of God’s glorious standards (Romans 3:23). But we are not saved from that by our heterosexuality, our white supremacy, or even our wealth. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing—it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). All that I have said I have said in public for all to hear, and I host Sunday feedback sessions and Wednesday discussion groups so that all can respond in public, too. That’s why I am saddened by those who attack and do not sign their names and who left without discussing their issues openly, in community. But that takes integrity. I wish no one ill will. I am just being myself. And I am grateful for the community of faith, hope, and love (First Corinthians 13:13) that our church is today.*

*By the way, the Bible is not part of the Trinity. It is not our God. But its ancient writers are part of our congregation-through-time, and we take their writings seriously, if not literally or slavishly, measuring the comparative value of each verse by our ruler, the once crucified, now risen Jesus Christ.*

Since Pastor Dan has come to our church, we have had many changes and for me it has been enlightening. Our loving church family has remained the same and I have

been a recipient of that love many times. The children are a joy and a blessing, and I am always waiting to see how Norm deals with their exuberance! The art work has added so much beauty to our bulletins and our walls, and the restroom looks like *House Beautiful!* I so appreciate all of Dan's personal kindnesses to me in my time of loss.

--Roberta Scott

In my over 40 years as a member of this church, first as full time, then summers, I have felt we were blessed with the clergy who have come to serve us. I have enjoyed knowing and working with each, and found each helped me to grow. I was raised in conservative Catholicism, so these years since have been my real education in spiritual, religious and, yes, community values of a liberal Christian nature with which I can live with peace of mind. But the education and awareness must continue to grow.

I have been so pleased with the church's choice of Reverend Dan Geslin to be our pastor. For me, he is the right person at the right time. He clarifies scripture, reviews history, challenges my attitudes, and prods me to action...all the while reminding me of God's ceaseless and abundant love. —And he reminds me that it's OK to have fun, too!

It has been many years since I was year-round in Hancock. I know I miss out on a lot, therefore. I can only cheer from a distance, keep my membership active, studying the sermons that I'm so glad Dan sends by email, and being as helpful as possible in summer. I consider Hancock UCC to be my church family, and I pray for our future. I've noted seeds of a lot of good things in the year just past, and I dearly want them to be allowed to flourish. I love you all.

--Sally Knapp

Dan tells us that "Hosanna" means "Save us now!" Last year when we called him, we were starting from Hosanna. I doubted that anything could save our church. I was blown away when I read Dan's *Annual Report* in February and saw that he had already put into motion everything he had promised he would do in his interview with us before our vote. I love our church, our people. Dan's holistic, personal, multi-faceted understanding of spiritual life as a cup-running-over is contagious. The constant creativity and rebirth of feeling in our church now is a great blessing of rejuvenation and love. I have re-arranged my work schedule, sacrificing income, so that I can support this great project and travel with Dan and our whole congregation from Hosanna to Hallelujah.

--Peggy Emigh

The easiest way for me to explain what our first year with Pastor Dan has meant to me is to describe it as "waking up." Now I know SO much more about what being UCC stands for, in the smallest of UCC churches and in the greater church. I see the parallels between the injustices in our world and the injustices that Christ faced. I have greatly expanded my knowledge of the historical aspects of the Bible.

All of this new knowledge has greatly deepened my faith and my commitment to my church and to Christ. I am braver now than I have been in a long time about reaching out to DO something meaningful. I have found so much new energy and excitement! I have had several very emotional experiences now that I am more open to

God's Spirit, and those experiences serve to keep me focused. I am so grateful that Pastor Dan and our Search Committee followed the Spirit and came together, extending and accepting his *Call Agreement* and job description as our pastor. I feel such new life and energy in our church. Here's to an even greater second year!

--Judi Crowley

Dan's sermons certainly hold my attention. I like the new order of worship, and especially the community prayer/meditation time. In the past, I've attended Methodist, Universalist, Presbyterian and other UCC churches in three states. Now, here in Hancock, I feel a new energy in the church even though we may sometimes be out of our personal comfort zones—but that's how we grow. Keep up the good work!

--Eleanor Ritchie

My 2¢ worth is that I welcome the changes in the worship service and Dan's thought-provoking, meaningful sermons. I like *learning* and therefore *changing* as part of our church experience. I enjoy Dan's sense of humor and I like his reflections going back to his roots and to our roots with respect and caring.

--Clint Ritchie

We have enjoyed Dan's ministry this past year, feel included and affirmed, and look forward to more. We appreciate his calls when we face health problems and loss.

--Earl & Betty Johnston

It's been a year since Pastor Dan joined our congregation, and in that time he has led us in new directions. Having all the new children at church is reassuring and at times entertaining. I find his sermons thought-provoking and very inspiring. With these new directions, we are engaging with our church and its future. Isn't that what we want?

--Dennis King

About 15 years ago, I took an advanced algebra course. It was interesting, quite challenging and even fun. I thought I could feel my brain "stretching and creaking" in my effort to comprehend and use new (to me) mathematical concepts. During Pastor Dan's first year with us, my spirituality is stretching and creaking as I consider new (to me) ways to understand and live through my faith. I have felt the challenge in Pastor Dan's witness and worship to think about what is important in my spiritual growth and in the evolution of our church. All this while I have laughed with my fellow spiritual travelers and felt the warmth and loving support that is so alive in the church around me.

--Linda King

As I look back now, I want to write a note of thanks to the church for Dan's presence with our family at the time of my mother's death. Dan's willingness to honor her wishes for an Episcopal service, his many efforts to ready the church and coordinate volunteers, and his gracious welcome to all who came to mourn will not be forgotten. The celebration of her life in that beautiful church was the loveliest farewell

I could have imagined for her. Thank you, Dan, from the bottom of my heart, for your role and guidance in making it so. I look forward to seeing you all again this summer.

--Billy O'Meara

I served on the Search Committee and we decided more than a year ago that what we wanted and needed in a new minister was:

- 1) someone who would help us increase the number of children in our congregation and Sunday School. That wish has been fulfilled.
- 2) someone who would help us to grow spiritually. I believe that each sermon preached and the way each service is composed and conducted does, indeed, enhance our spiritual growth.
- 3) someone who would lead study groups. And we got him.

Personally, I wanted someone "smarter than I." (Someone reminded me that almost anyone would qualify for that, to which I wholeheartedly agreed.) I like running into Dan at community classes, dinners and events—he's out there representing us. We also know what a great party he can throw. Many of us attended his parsonage Open House and really enjoyed the gathering. Thanks, Dan, for being YOU!

--Fran Trefts

Kenny has been a member of this church for 67 years and Marcia joined in 1984. That means we've both been through a lot of ministers—some were better than others, in our different opinions. But we both think Dan is a great pastor. We think he is very, very personable. We find him easy to talk to, whether it's about fun things or serious things. We like the change of format in the service, like when he comes down into the center aisle and prays with us. And his sermons are good. Our grandkids are excited now to come to church with us, and that excites us!

--Marcia & Kenny Stratton

Even as a newcomer, I miss all of you at church while we're traveling! Thank you for a great Holy Week. Our boys really enjoyed the Easter egg hunt. The Maundy Thursday service was powerful. The last ecumenical Lenten sermon on your call to Christ's ministry as a gay man was beautiful, powerful, and brave, Dan. (I'm sorry that not all of the faces were smiling in response.) Thank you for being strong and honest enough to witness even in the face of ignorance and opposition. You demonstrate how to witness, whether we're gay or non-gay. We're blessed to have you in our community. I especially liked Palm Sunday. The sermon was deep, insightful, and rabble-rousing (which I mean as a compliment of the highest order). I am very thankful for Dan's gifts of ministry. I learn something every Sunday, taking away much to think about. Strange as it is for me as a hardline (one might say militant) Quaker, I never thought I'd look forward to hearing someone preach from a pulpit, but there you have it. Dan's sermons are a great blend of head and heart. Now that Holy Week is over, I look forward to the return of our Wednesday discussion groups. I recently went to a panel discussion with three representatives from the Wabanaki tribes at the UU church. Of course, as an

unfamiliar face there, many people offered to send me information or talk to me about their church. It felt great to say, “Thank you, but I already have a spiritual home!”

--Susan Dickson-Smith

Since Pastor Dan arrived last spring, there has been significant and welcomed renewal at our church, both in our building and in our collective spiritual life. One of the most important renewals is the expansion of our program for children and families. Dan heard our concerns, helped to re-arrange the budget, and fought to bring Norm to be our Minister of Youth and Young Families. Norm and our education committee are doing a great job of sharing our faith with a younger generation. Other highlights for me were the amazing trip to Faith Congregational UCC in Hartford, Connecticut, and the weekly *Holden Evening Prayer* services during Advent, which I really liked.

--Cynthia Wood

The last year has seen lots of changes in the life of our church. Since Pastor Dan arrived, I've seen the spiritual life of our church come alive! I love the fact that we now have a study group on Wednesday nights as well as mornings. It is so great to see the Sunday School grow by leaps and bounds. I'm glad to see where the church is headed.

--Vicky Espling

This past year we've gone in a new direction—almost like letting the light in—and it pleases me to no end. Change means we're still alive! Dan's sermons are great. I enjoy all his historical references; I learn a lot. He has a great sense of humor! I also appreciate his calls and visits, and know that other older members of our church do, too.

--Betty Denniston

We love Pastor Dan. He is very nice. He marries people like Brad & Norm and Doug & Ron. He likes his quiet time. He is not loud. He is very kind, always helping people. He gets everyone involved in a community prayer. He does fun stuff like the Easter Egg Hunt and lets the Easter Bunny come to his house. He is funny. He loves his dog, Pip, and he lets him visit with us.

--our Sunday School kids

Don't you feel it, too?

There is a new, fresh breeze  
weaving slowly but steadily through the church -  
Touching our hearts in new ways -  
Leading us steadily into deeper meditation  
toward our innermost feelings -  
Strengthening our relationship with the Spirit -  
Helping us to navigate into the unknown -  
Leading our faith and love to new dimensions  
And deeper understanding of the Scripture -  
Thank you, Dan!

--Ruth Dietze

A year ago, our church made a covenant together with Pastor Dan. We promised to support, to love, to grow, to worship and to build something special together. In the time since then we have done so many wonderful things that prove our commitment to one another and to the long term legacy of our church. Our children's ministry is rich and so beautiful! We have brought the beauty of art and music into our space making it even more sacred. We have renewed a connection to the wider UCC and Pastor Dan is continuing to educate us about its historical context and current relevance in our world today. As we look forward and continue the good and sometimes hard work required of a congregation and its members, let us use the successes and challenges of this past year as proof that we are capable of holding a beautiful vision and making it come true!

--Tamara Crowley



**Birds & Bloom sale on June 21**, so keep your eye out for bird houses and plants to divide and sell at the church to raise money for kids going to Pilgrim Lodge.

**Vacation Bible School—5:30-8 pm--June 26-28.**

A graduation celebration at Sunday's service will be followed by a Bar-B-Q. To teach and support, see Norm.



### **DEACONS' NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS**

The deacons have organized us into neighborhood groups, each facilitated by a current or former deacon. This will make socializing and checking-in simpler; provide a friendly setting for newcomers and old-timers to meet and ready-made small groups to explore topics that might come up in our church, for sharing or in preparation for congregational meetings. The neighborhood lists will be posted on the bulletin board.



**Guild Spring Rummage Sale:** The Guild will host its annual Spring Rummage Sale on Saturday May 3<sup>rd</sup> beginning at 8:30 am. Donations of gently used clothing, household linens, bedding, fabric, yarn and craft items are needed. Items can be dropped off beginning Sunday April 27. Volunteers are needed to help set up the sale on Friday, May 2. Please call Gertrude Wildes at 422-3539 if you can help or have questions.



**Annual Church Fair and Silent Auction:** Please start thinking about our summer's most exciting event! All the action takes place on Saturday August 2—rain date August 9. We'll need many helpers and lots of donations to make the event the success it always is. Think about what you can contribute as you clean up from winter and get ready for summer. Your participation is vital. An organizing meeting will be held soon. Please call David Wildes at 422-3739 with any questions or suggestions.



## WHAT'S NEW IN OUTREACH?

Board of Outreach is discussing how the **home-care equipment program** will go on after Lewis' well-deserved retirement. Our heart-felt thanks to Charlie and Betty!

June is our church's month to staff the **Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry**. There will be a sign-up schedule in the social hall. Please consider helping. Also note we collect non-perishable food items for the food pantry each Communion Sunday.

The **Heifer Project** arks were collected Palm Sunday for a total of \$231.45. Our Sunday School children will decide which farm animals they will buy and donate.

The Outreach Board will sponsor a **four-part monthly film and dessert series** that will highlight thought-provoking films around several social justice topics (the environment, economy, etc.). Our idea is to spark discussion with an emphasis on community-building and moderate sugar intake. Stay tuned for details!

Lastly, the Board of Outreach is forming a sub-committee to reach out into the wider community with Norm. It will be called the **Reach-Out Committee**.

As always, we're grateful for your support and welcome any suggestions or ideas.

--Linda King, chairperson

## THE LEGACY FUND — AN OPPORTUNITY FOR PLANNED GIVING

As we contemplate the meaning of our lives, it is useful to consider organizations that are important to us. Many of us want to ensure that the places we love and support will continue well into the future. This legacy can give a renewed sense of purpose to



our lives and show our commitment to something that will be maintained for future generations. Our legacy might be a simple statement in our life insurance or investment policy devoting part of that asset to our church. It might be a statement in our end of life plan, such as a will or bequest that we've worked out with a financial advisor.

Our Church is beginning a thoughtful program to help members and friends think prayerfully about the importance to us of Union Congregational Church of Hancock, United Church of Christ. In the next months, some church members will be learning and teaching about planned giving and reaching out to the members and friends to consider the importance of this church in our community and the legacy we wish to leave for the children and grandchildren of our church and its place in our community.

The Council has approved the Mission Statement and the Gift Acceptance Policy for the project, so we can now move ahead this summer.

--Doug Kimmel, for the ad-hoc Legacy Committee  
Judi Crowley, Dan Geslin, Doug Kimmel, Ron Schwizer, David Wildes