

Mission Moment

Celebrating Freedom

This month we celebrate Independence Day and the heritage of freedom practiced by our United Church of Christ forebears. The Pilgrims came to North America seeking religious freedom. Pastor John Robinson urged them to keep their minds and hearts open to new ways, as God “has yet more light and truth to break forth out of his holy word.” As the Congregational churches grew in New England, they aimed to create a model for a just society lived in the presence of God. In an early experiment in democracy, each congregation was a self-governing unit electing its own pastor.

In 1640, the Congregationalists published the Bay Psalter, and a free press was established in North America at a time when the European press was silenced for criticizing King James. Today’s Pilgrim Press, an imprint of the United Church of Christ, is the oldest publishing house in the United States. The first published African American author was Phillis Wheatley, a young member of the Old South congregation who was freed from slavery soon after her poetry was published in 1773.

Just four years later, the British occupied Philadelphia, seat of the rebellious Continental Congress. The British planned to melt down the Liberty Bell to manufacture cannons, but members of the Old Zion Reformed Church in Allentown hid the bell under the church floorboards. They saved the bell, still a famous and beloved symbol of liberty.

The desire to worship God freely led to these and many other acts in support of the freedoms we know today.

July 2008



God is still speaking,

Mission Moment

DO'S AND DON'TS

Be sincere in your love for others.
Hate everything that is evil and hold tight to everything
that is good.
Love each other as brothers and sisters and honor others more than
you do yourself.
Never give up.
Eagerly follow the Holy Spirit and serve the Lord.
Let your hope make you glad.
Be patient in time of trouble and never stop praying.
Take care of God's needy people and welcome strangers into
your home.
Ask God to bless everyone who mistreats you.
Ask God to bless them and not to curse them.
When others are happy, be happy with them, and when they are
sad, be sad.
Be friendly with everyone.
Don't be proud and feel you are smarter than others.
Make friends with ordinary people.
Don't mistreat someone who has mistreated you.
But try to earn the respect of others, and do your best to live in
peace with everyone.

Romans 12:9-18

(from *Holy Bible, African American Jubilee Edition, Contemporary
English Version*)

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Church Camp: Brought to you by Our Church's Wider Mission

What percentage of Our Church's Wider Mission goes for administration? That's a question often voiced by church members wishing to give responsibly. It can be difficult to answer. Keep reading and you'll see why.

Lives can be shaped or changed at church camp. Ask the campers and you'll hear:

"I really enjoyed who I was at camp. I was able to be myself."

"We had a special sense of community where everyone could feel loved and included."

"Camp gave me a safe place to talk about my beliefs and questions, surrounded by others doing the same thing."

"Great friendships and great memories."

"A place to grow in trusting God and appreciate God's creation."

"Music, music, music. Discovering my gifts."

And a camp counselor says, "A week at church camp can have as much impact as a year of Sunday school. A lot of kids will remember camp as one of the most significant faith events in their lives. I do."

Conference camp trustees work creatively to promote camp usage and set registration fees to cover costs—directors and staff, training volunteers, processing registrations, food, equipment, program supplies, insurance, facilities upkeep, and remodeling and additions. Our Church's Wider Mission may supplement fees, paying staff salaries, promoting camp, providing camp scholarships, or balancing the camp budget when needed. Is that administration? Or is it program? If it builds faith and transforms lives, does it matter?

July 2008

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



God is still speaking,

Mission Moment

UCC Hospitality

KEEP OUT.

Two bitter words that cut and sting.

KEEP OUT

The words send a chill through us, and we hurry along our way.

United Church of Christ congregations tend to emphasize welcome and hospitality. Here is a sampling of the sayings on some of our churches' signs:

"Jesus Welcomed All...So Do We!"

"Warm Hearts, Open Minds"

"Intentional in Faith, United in Diversity"

"A Family of Faith for EVERYONE"

"God Accepts You as You Are and So Do We"

"Our Door is Opened Extra Wide!"

"Where God Loves, a Church Cares, and People Are Friendly"

"There is a Place Here for You!"

"A Family Church Where All Are Welcome!"

How does your congregation announce that it's ready to welcome everyone?

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OF CHRIST**



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