

## Pastor's Ponderings – June 2022

From June 9-12 I will be attending the NY Conference UCC Annual Meeting in Silver Bay, NY. Representatives from UCC churches all across the state will be there—pastors and lay leaders. There will be special guests and speeches and workshops and times of worship together, as well as discussions of conference business matters and the administration of our work and ministry together as a denomination. It is good to be reminded that we are part of something larger than ourselves. Our church is connected to hundreds of UCC churches in NYS and thousands across the country and around the world. Together we pool resources to carry out mission projects beyond what any of us could accomplish on our own. And together we fund and make available resources of expertise, advice, and support for pastors and congregations at particular times of need or transition. Perhaps even more importantly, there is something joyful and fulfilling in being part of a wide community of believers, experiencing fellowship together and learning about and from one another.

Our congregation is connected also, of course, to all Christian churches everywhere—the church universal. Even while we are not all technically connected in terms of administrative and governance structures, and despite whatever differences there may be in some of our particular practices and beliefs, we are all “the church” together, the larger body of Christ. And in that regard, we are many, with something like 2.4 billion Christians in the world. I suppose the forced isolation of the pandemic has made me more appreciative of these kinds of connections, these larger communities through which we are all connected.



Our UCC logo carries the slogan: “that they all may be one.” The United Church of Christ was formed in 1957 by the joining together of two prior denominations: the Congregational Christian Church and the Evangelical & Reformed Church. And those two denominations each themselves had been created by two prior denominations. In other words, whereas most Protestant denominations were formed by splitting off from some other prior denomination, the UCC has at its core and in its beginnings an impulse to unite rather than divide. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, there was the optimistic hope that this trend of unification might continue and expand.

It was also at this time that the National Council of Churches (NCC) was formed, creating a network of shared work and collaboration among 37 different Protestant Christian denominations in America. Leadership positions in the NCC have often been held by representatives from the UCC (for example, our current General Minister and President of the UCC, John Dorhauer, is past president of the NCC).

The UCC's welcoming openness to other churches and our desire and impulse toward unity is something to be proud of. It is also a characteristic of our own congregation, of which we can be proud. We gladly welcome all who wish to worship with us regardless of religious background or identity, or any other backgrounds or identities. Unity, inclusion, and community are strong values for Faith Church and for our denomination. Let us cherish, embrace, and promote those values, and celebrate and support the wider communities of which we are a part.

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