

## June Justice Newsletter: "Getting to the Root of It"

We've asked UCC advocates to help us unpack the complex justice issues that we're working on. Using our General Synod pronouncements as the basis for these reflections, we hope to provide insights into the issues you care about that are rooted in our shared faith, and can inform your advocacy efforts.

### **Will my child be uninsurable?**

by Rev. Gunnar A. Cerda,  
UCC Minister and Chaplain

### **Trump's Budget and Our Call to Love Our Neighbors**

By Rev. Jason Carson Wilson  
UCC Justice and Peace Fellow

**Justice Events: Torture Awareness Month, The Equality March for Unity and Pride: 49 Bells to Remember Pulse Off-Ramps to War: Paths to Building Peace with North Korea; Refugee Justice Sunday is June 18; Put Faith and Justice into Action with OWL! Labor Sunday**

Justice in Action:

**Our Whole Lives: The High-Quality Sex-Ed Program on Offer from Churches**

Resources:

**'Rise Up' Devotions by Stillspeaking Writers Group**  
**PalestivePortal.org.** Provides opportunities for learning and action for the growing network of church-related organizations working for Palestinian human rights AND our Muslim, Jewish and secular allies in the U.S. and globally.

**Drone Warfare and the Religious Community: Moral and Safe? Was, Peace, Drone Warfare, and the Religious Community**

**Witness for Justice:** A weekly editorial opinion column written by the staff of Justice and Witness Ministries.

## "Happy 60<sup>th</sup>

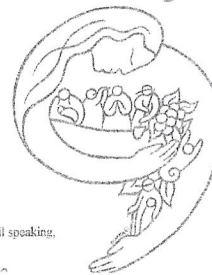
The identity of the United Church of Christ is historically shaped by the work of the Holy Spirit who united and continues to unite the fragmented church; the inclusive love of Christ Jesus; and the strong prophetic concern of God for the poor and vulnerable.



*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

*Hebrews 13:8*

The United Church of Christ was formed in 1957 during a wave of ecumenical fever in America when four Protestant denominations voted to unite as one. Churches in the Evangelical and Reformed Church, and most in the Christian Church and Congregational traditions decided to merge because they believed that divisions and schisms in the universal church body of Christ went against the united and uniting Spirit of God's Love. They took to heart the words of Jesus from the gospel of John when he prayed for his disciples, "That they all must be one," and inscribed them on the outside of the UCC logo. In the center of the logo they put symbols of their faith: Crown (Christ the king and head of the church); Cross (resurrected life that faith in Christ Jesus brings); Orb (God's encircling and never ending Love for all the world).



God is still speaking.

Thirteen years ago (2004), in an effort to emphasize the Inclusive Love of Christ Jesus for all persons, we created a new "God Is Still Speaking" logo, and adapted a quote from Gracie Allen: "Never place a period where God places a comma."

“This then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven . . . “  
(from Matthew 6:7-15)

A UCC devotional, “Our Father,” by Rev. Kenneth Samuel helps us wonder about our God Who is Still speaking to us today. He wrote: “In all my life, I have seen my mother visibly shaken and upset on just a couple of occasions. One of those occasions occurred a few years ago. My sister, my two brothers, and I were at my mother’s apartment in New York discussing some family business. The discussion got heated and exploded into a fireball of disagreement among the four of us. Out of anger and frustration, things were said that should have been tempered, or not said at all. That’s when I saw my mother visibly shaken; deeply disturbed. She didn’t calm down until she’d extracted a promise from me and each of my siblings that nothing else would be said until each of us got over the anger and remembered that we were family. Days later I asked my mother why she had become so upset. None of our angry expressions were directed at her. “We go at one another all the time,” I said to her. “It’s no big deal.” She looked at me squarely and with a solemn tone said, “Perhaps you do . . . but not in my presence.” If prayer is an acknowledgement of the presence of God, our Divine Parent, then we can never pray without remembering that each of us is a part of God’s human family. We cannot really go to God in prayer without taking with us the quality of our relationships with one another. Prayer can be personal, but it can never be private. It always exposes our relationship with our brothers and sisters. Prayer reminds us that without human community there can be no divine communion. Prayer lifts each of us out of the secluded silos of our own self-centeredness and ushers us into the communal consciousness of “Our Father”/ “Our Mother”/ “Our Creator”/ “Our Redeemer”/ “Our God”. And there is nothing that displeases “Our God” more than our disrespect and disregard for one another. Dear God, today, as we acknowledge your presence we also acknowledge our need to reconcile and be reconciled to our brothers and sisters. In your presence, help us to find better ways to love one another. Amen.” (God is Still Speaking, p. 302-303)

This year is our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Beginning with General Synod 2017 in Baltimore this summer, the United Church of Christ will begin the transition to a new logo for our denomination. The new colors were chosen to work with the theme, “A Just World for All,” and our ‘3 Great Loves of campaign---Love of Children, Love of Neighbor, Love of Creation. Blue has replaced red in the new design, with black retained as the second color, to visually and symbolically represent Creation elements of water and earth. Matthew 6:24a: “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other.”



In “Choosing Justice,” Marchae Grair reflected on the theme, ‘A Just World for All.’ “When a person oppressed by the evil of racism proclaims “Black Lives Matter,” you have two choices—you can validate their pain or you can condemn them for speaking it. When a person wounded by rampant homophobia declares that “Love Wins,” you have two choices—you can unapologetically affirm them or you can legitimize discrimination against them. When a person fearful of deportation says “No Human Being is Illegal,” you have two choices—you can make more room at the country’s hypothetical table or you can hoard safely and resources based on a birth certificate. You cannot serve the paths of justice and injustice simultaneously. You cannot strive to emulate the Agape love of a self-sacrificing Christ, yet center legislation and country over the well-being of the people who inhabit it. In an attempt to be apolitical or non-confrontational, churchgoers can mistake passivity about ‘tough issues’ as sticking to the church’s business. However, in that passivity still lives a choice—a choice to ignore the cries of the oppressed and therefore empower their oppressors. The gospel makes it clear that this Christian journey requires decisions about our allegiances. Justice or injustice. What do you choose? God, your justice rolls down like waters. I won’t swim against the current. Amen.”