

Blessings Flow

48th Annual Meeting

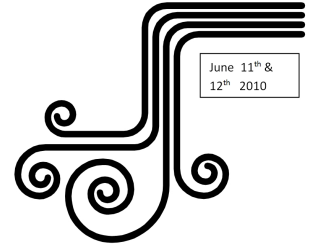
Iowa Conference of the United Church of Christ

JUNE 11-12, 2010

Grinnell College; Grinnell, Iowa

www.ucciaconf.org

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Who's Who at Annual Meeting



Rev. Holly Whitcomb has been a pastor and clergywoman in the United Church of Christ since her graduation from Yale Divinity School and has served churches in Connecticut, Iowa, and Wisconsin. She was ordained at Faith UCC in Iowa City and was the pastor there from 1978-1983.

Holly is also a graduate of the two-year program for spiritual directors at the Shalem Institute in Bethesda, Maryland. A widely traveled retreat leader who directs Kettlewood Retreats, she is also a spiritual director and writer who has published dozens of articles on spirituality. She is the author of four books including *Feasting with God* and *Practicing Your Path*.

Her latest book, *The Seven Spiritual Gifts of Waiting*, sold out in three weeks and had to be immediately reprinted. It also took her to New York where she did a taping for the Hallmark Channel's show, *New Morning*. Holly lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin with her husband, Dr. John Whitcomb. They are the parents of David and Kate, both in their twenties.



Elaine Blanchard earned an associate degree in nursing from Union University in Jackson, Tennessee. She earned a BS from UT Martin in 1992, with a double major in English and philosophy. She has earned a Master of Arts in Religion and a Master of Divinity from Memphis Theological Seminary.

Elaine began her ministry in the United Methodist Church, serving as a local pastor for Methodist congregations from 1989-1994. Ordained in the United Church of Christ in 2000, Elaine has served UCC churches in Denver and Birmingham. She currently preaches and tells stories in churches and other venues around the country and serves as a Regional Consultant for Women's Ministries in the West Central Region of the United Church of Christ.

Pilgrim Press published and recorded her first book, *Help Me Remember* in 2005. Her short fiction has won Honorable Mention in the 2008 Memphis Magazine Fiction Contest, and her nonfiction has been published by Christian Century magazine.

Elaine co-wrote the play, *For Goodness Sake*, with David Prete. It is a one-woman performance. Voices of the South produced the play in Memphis and it played for sold-out houses in the fall of 2009. "For Goodness Sake" is a story about racial, sexual and religious oppression. It is a story of redemption and transformation. The solo show is touring this year and next.



Thom Chu is a faith-based organizational developer with over 20 years of experience in working with children, youth, young adults and adults to unleash their potential to participate fully in God's mission of reconciliation. For 18 years he worked in the churchwide setting of the Episcopal Church, and has consulted with various settings, national, regional, and local United Church of Christ, Unitarian Universalist Association and other religious organizations. His latest focus is to combine his work in generational studies with creative approaches to conflict transformation. Thom is completing his law degree at Hofstra University in alternative dispute resolution.



Andrew and Melissa Dunham own and operate Grinnell Heritage Farm which produces USDA organic vegetables, flowers and herbs. Andrew is a 5th generation Iowa farmer. The 80-acre farm, located northeast of Grinnell, has been in the family for 153 years, and is counted among the oldest family farms in central Iowa. Andrew's interest in pursuing a career in local agriculture came from his experience as an agricultural extension officer serving in the Peace Corps in Tanzania, East Africa.

Melissa and son Collin moved to Grinnell from the Twin Cities. Melissa adeptly handles accounting tasks, website, brochures and goes to the farmers' markets. Collin lends a hand where needed all summer. A new addition to the family, Emma, isn't yet able to pack boxes but we have high hopes she will appreciate all of the veggies produced on the farm. Seasonal employees and lots of help from extended family, friends, and shareholders put the Community in CSA.



Caroline Rendon grew up at Urbandale UCC and Crossroads UCC, Indianola, and now lives and works in Chicago, Illinois. Caroline has served two terms on the Council for Youth and Young Adult Ministries, including one term as the liaison for the Justice and Witness Ministries Board of Directors. Last summer she spent ten days in Syria and Lebanon with nearly 50 other Muslim and Christian young adults learning about the role of interreligious dialogue in peacemaking. She enjoys reading, cold beer, and riding her bike.



Bill Spangler-Dunning was born in Ottumwa, IA. He graduated from Culver-Stockton College and Lexington Theological Seminary. He served as youth minister at Glasgow, KY and as part of a "team ministry" position at First Christian Church in Owensboro, KY and found a calling along the way to find ways of bringing churches and individuals together through camps and retreats while serving as the West Area (of Kentucky) Youth Coordinator. In time this desire to help create connections between our churches led to Bill's place of service as Associate Regional Minister for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Upper Midwest. Bill presently serves as the Transitional Regional Minister for the Christian Church (DOC) in the Upper Midwest. Bill seeks to produce curriculum material that encourages youth and adults to think and share their faith convictions with passion without the need to condemn others for their different theological understandings.



Rev. Karl & Jan Whiteman served as (UCC) Common Global Missionaries in the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia from 1996-2003. Karl has served churches in Michigan, Illinois, Florida, Ohio, Tennessee and currently is Sr. Pastor of Union Memorial Church in Milford, Iowa. Jan is completing her theological education and presently is seeking a call to ministry while doing pulpit supply in northwestern Iowa churches. They both have a passion for "One Great Hour of Sharing", Biblical archeology and traveling to Israel.



Alaire Willits is the Director of Program and Christian Education at First Congregational UCC, Sioux City. She earned her BA in education from Morningside College in Sioux City. Many schools contributed to her education as she attended seminaries when she could (and where the best professors were!). Her hard work and determination earned her a position as a Diaconal Minister in the United Methodist Church, certified in Christian Education. She has been a Christian Educator for 20+ years and has worked at First Congregational UCC since Oct, 2000. She enjoys spending time with her three children and three grandchildren.



Sharon E. Strohmaier is the Executive Director of Iowa Religious Media Services, the official resource center for the Iowa Conference. During her nine-year tenure at IRMS, she has overseen the purchase of new resources for Christian education and worship valued at \$135,000 – so she know resources! A nationally recognized resource centerleader and presenter, Strohmaier is a member of the steering committee for the national UCC Resource Center Network and also serves as their treasurer.



The current line-up of the **Saturday Night Band** has been playing together for almost two years. However, the band has existed for more than 10 years, and has been an integral part of the “come-as-you-are” Saturday night worship service at Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ in Des Moines. The band plays folk rock, folk, country, blues, bluegrass, gospel, Irish, Taizé, African American, and world music, and is always trying to evolve stylistically. **Mary Beth Mardis-LeCroy** (band leader), vocals, guitar, and banjo, is a Presbyterian minister who serves as a hospice chaplain in the Des

Moines metro area. Her favorite activities in the world are music, hanging out with her husband and her cat, yoga, and eating. **Angie Witmer**, keyboard and vocals, is a minister at Plymouth. Angie began the Saturday Night Service over 10 years ago, and has led it through many different phases of growth. She runs and practices yoga, and her husband Paul is cool too. **Dwight Deason**, mandolin and guitar, has been playing all kinds of music for at least 40 years (usually at night). By day, he is a social worker. **Joel Gettys**, drums, is a free-lance musician in Des Moines, and a Russian studies graduate (2009) from ISU. He plays jazz, folk, blues, rock, and whatever you throw his way. **Seth Hedquist**, electric and acoustic guitar, is a guitar instructor and performer in Des Moines. He teaches and plays folk, jazz, blues, rock, and some classical music. He is particularly gifted in leading the band in the bluesy-gospel (“blospel”) style. **Julie Noland**, vocals, has been a member of Plymouth, and a member of Plymouth’s Sunday morning Chancel Choir, for 20 plus years. She has sung in the band for many years as well. Julie works for Iowa Finance Authority. **Zach Rohlwing**, electric bass, is a music student at Simpson College. He plans to teach high school music or pursue higher degrees in music performance and education. He enjoys art, thrift shopping, and spending time outdoors.