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Christian Education & Formation Newsletter

New Hampshire Conference - United Church of Christ

October 2012

Editor's Corner



I recently had the pleasure of hosting an artist from Bulgaria.

He was here in New Hampshire participating in the 14th annual International Sculpture

Symposium at Andres Institute of Art.

This little known treasure is the largest Sculpture Park in New England with over 70 sculptures spread along miles of hiking trails winding through 140 acres of natural woodland on the slopes of Bear Mountain.

A visit to this Sculpture Park makes a great outing for a Youth Group. Tours, downloadable audio-files or the signs describing the sculpture all share the artist's vision for the work and often inspire thought provoking conversations.

When I walk the trails I am reminded of a piece, written by Lillian Daniel, of the Stillspeaking Writer's Group. In her Daily Devotional, [Spiritual but Not Religious? Please Stop Boring Me.](#) she challenges us to encounter God in our religion and in human community.

My experience walking these trails, with others or with the artists themselves, has lead to conversations about different cultures and different religious belief systems, giving me an opportunity to experience God in nature and God in human community at the same time.

The Sculpture Park is located in my small town of Brookline.

Reflections on "The Report"

I have lived in New England all of my life, yet I am still filled with a child-like sense of wonder each fall. I am in awe of God's creation and this natural process of transformation. I cherish the brilliant colors of the leaves but know they will fade as the winter dormancy sets in; all of this in preparation for the rebirth of spring.

As we reflect and formulate our new direction based on the findings in the ["Foundations, Findings, and Futures: Christian Faith Formation and Education in the United Church of Christ"](#) report, I ask to think of the changing seasons. Appreciate your past accomplishments, knowing they were vibrant and full of beauty in their time. Recognize that some things may fade away and be replaced with new growth. Other practices are fundamental and will endure the changing seasons, just as an evergreen.

During this time of reflection, I share the words of the Rev. J. Bennett Guess found in the article, [UCC, Education Consultants begin charting a new map for faith formation.](#)

"We must begin to use our financial resources to 'insource' best minds and practices, to lift up the effective models and home-grown curricula already at work in some of our more excellent faith-forming churches," Guess said. "The experts are out there, in our local churches, so the question and challenge is how we best utilize our resources to connect and network with one another so that all can share in that expertise."

In this issue of the Newsletter we begin to lift up effective models and best practices used right here in our local New Hampshire churches.

Small Church, Team Generated Church School Curriculum

"Living the Promise"

In his book, *Life, the Truth, and Being Free*, Steve Maraboli writes "Change is in the air. This change reminds us that we are made and beautifully sculpted by the same power that orchestrates the change of season. Let this be the season you embrace and align yourself with this change."

Seven years ago the [First Congregational Church of Dunbarton](#) accepted the fact that things around them were changing and that their traditional model of Church School was no longer working. Rather than resist the change, they responded to it. They have created a faith experience that engages both the children and volunteers. In their muti-age learning environment the volunteers share their gifts through hands-on lessons that integrate the Word of God with their every day life.

There is no set curriculum to follow, the volunteers are given a theme and then brainstorm ways to present it. I participated in a Stewardship lesson - a game that challenged us to define a community based on what was

I invite you to visit the park and offer my Youth Group as your hosts. We could climb the mountain trails together, share a picnic and have the opportunity to meet other Youth in our Conference!

Together may we continue to learn, share, and grow in our faith.
Ann.

important to us and what we had the resources to support. This was not a Parker Brothers game, it was a game developed and shared by a Church School volunteer.

The [Living the Promise](#) Church school involves many volunteers, each with a small commitment and each developing a lesson that is aligned with their personal gifts and talents. Imagine teaching Stewardship by baking cookies to care for others; learning about the Resurrection by hiking to a cave in the woods; practicing Yoga to better understand Hinduism. In describing the format to me, they used the words, "it is like a constant VBS, where we *experience* God in *our* world."

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Resource Center

Visit the
NH Conference Website
Christian Education &
Formation Webpage
On-line Resource Center

"The Guide"

[Called To Educational and Formational Ministries: A Guide for Local Churches, Educators, and Youth Workers](#)

edUCCators epistle

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Quick Links

The Association of United Church Educators (AUCE)
[National](#)
[New England](#)
[New Hampshire](#)

Reminder

Next NHAUCE meeting is
Wednesday
October 17, 2012
10:00 AM

A Network Approach to Life Long Learning

In her [report](#), Rev. Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi, Ph.D. identifies several best practices that are crucial to life long faith formation. Among these practices is the use of a network approach as defined by John Roberto. In his article,

["Faith Formation for Everyone, Anytime, Anywhere" A Lifelong Faith Formation Network for the 21st Century](#) Roberto reminds us that

"Networks-collections of people (and their resources) connected to each other through relationships-aren't new." What is new? New tools and technologies that are changing the way we communicate and connect.

Lizardy-Hajbi mentions the United Church of Christ in North Hampton, NH as an example of a church that has embraced this approach. She writes, *"in addition to Sunday School classes for all ages, {the church} has created a Wiki page specifically designed to share information and resources with parents "to help continue the growth in faith of your children at home." Emails announcing new resources, activities, and information are sent to parents as well, highlighting what's become available on the Wiki; and there are specific pages with resources on baptism, family devotions, talking with kids about death, and websites for families. This type of format, combined with in-person engagement, allows parents and children to create customized experiences to meet their respective needs."*

Faith Formation through a Care Package Ministry

Looking for a way to stay connected with members of your congregation who are away from home? Let your college students, missionaries, and members serving in the military know you are thinking about them.

A Care Package ministry can be wonderful way to serve God, serve others and build community. As part of a lesson on Stewardship, the Dunbarton Sunday School children will be baking cookies to send to their college students later this month. In other churches, the Youth Group has prepared packages to send during exam time or on Valentine's Day. For a service project, one Confirmation class collected toiletries, magazines, hometown newspapers, snacks and coffee to send to military personnel overseas.

Choose a theme, get creative, and have fun! Be sure to include a personal note with the "goodies". This ministry often takes on a life of its own and a response to those simple notes transforms into a pen pal relationship.

On-Line Resource Center Now includes Best Practices

Several of the Topic files in the [On-Line Resource Center](#) now include a

"Best Practices" section. The Safe Church and Confirmation files were updated with information on Best Practices shared at the September NHAUCE meeting and the Confirmation Roundtable.

Employment Opportunities

Visit the [Classified/Help Wanted Section](#) of the NHCUCC website for regular updates on employment opportunities throughout the Conference. There are currently opportunities for a:

- Part-Time Christian Education Coordinator in Somersworth
- Part-Time Director of Youth Ministries in Lee
- Coordinator of Children/Youth Ministries in Wolfeboro

Events - October 2012

Story Telling NHAUCE Meeting 10:00-11:30 AM October 17, 2012 NH Conference Center	2012 Learning Event with Marcus Borg Sponsored by USM Center for Religious and Spiritual Life and the Maine Conference, United Church of Christ October 19-20, 2012 Hannaford Hall, Univ. Southern Maine, Portland Visit http://www.maineucc.org/index.html for more information.
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New Hampshire Conference, United Church of Christ - Annual Meeting
". . . For the Healing of the Nations"
Including a [Youth Track](#) (Worship, Workshops, Games, Learning, Make New Friends)
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM
October 20, 2012
Grappone Conference Center
Concord, New Hampshire

For a complete listing of Events, visit the Christian Education & Formation On-Line Resource Center at the nhcucc.org website.

The Word of God

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:14-13 (NIV)

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