



From Your Sr. Pastor– Rev. Delle McCormick

Dear Friends,

I can't begin to tell you the excitement I feel at this UCC General Synod gathering in Cleveland! The sense of celebration over the Supreme Court's double rulings on the Affordable Care Act and Marriage Equality pervade every Synod gathering. At the Open and Affirming Coalition dinner on Friday night, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning and straight allies alike wept and hugged and repeatedly leapt to their feet in jubilation over the right to marriage equality that many never thought they would live to see.

And of course, presentations and worship experiences have been over the top in outrageous proclamation of Jesus Christ in and through the lives of all of God's people. But the UCC isn't just all "show" and no "go." This morning's keynote speaker, syndicated columnist, Connie Schultz boldly proclaimed, "Christianity means fixing ourselves and helping others, and not the other way around." Our church has a history and continued commitment to doing the hard work on ourselves, as well as in the world.

The background music to all of this is the nomination of our Southwest Conference, John Dorhauer, as General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. The job description of the General Minister and President ("GMP") of the United Church of Christ for which John is the only candidate, reads:

"The GMP is the spiritual leader and pastor of the Church, charged with the care and nurture of the spiritual life of the Church. The GMP is responsible for the unity and wellbeing of the Church, its covenantal life, and ecumenical and interfaith relationships. The GMP is the public voice and principal spokesperson for the denomination. The GMP is the Chief Executive Officer of the General Synod and the denomination, and is responsible for the work of the Church. In each of these roles, the GMP serves with excellence to prepare the Church for the future, leading the visioning, planning, coordination and implementation of the mission of the United Church of Christ."

Notice that "General Minister" and "spiritual leader" come first on the list of responsibilities. John has been a wonderful pastor and prophet for those of us who have ministered under his care in the Southwest Conference. His care for all of God's people has always come first before institutional maintenance. His role as "President" will, I am sure, be fulfilled with administrative rigor, strong leadership and vision and his commitment to pastor will help to nourish, sustain and inspire us in the coming years – which are sure to be among the most challenging many of us have lived.

If you don't know John, I think his comments to the UCC Board that interviewed and nominated him for the position he will soon hold say everything about who is and why he is called to this new position. John told the group:

"I love my church. If you're asking me why I'm here, and why I responded to this call to serve, it's because I love my church.

"[The UCC] is the Church that ordained the first black man," he continued. "This is the church that ordained the first woman. This is the church that ordained the first gay man, lesbian woman, and transgender man or woman. This is the church known for clear commitment to justice. Our goal of providing a bold, public voice must continue if we are to be a denomination that matches words and actions. This is the church of extravagant welcome."

On Monday, July 13 at 7pm, we will gather in Fellowship Hall with other UCC churches from Southern Arizona and you will have a chance to say goodbye to John as he heads off to Cleveland his new position. I invite you to take this opportunity to get to know him better, to thank him for his generous service to the conference, and to wish him well on his way to this new pivotal calling with the national church. May we mirror the blessing to John that he has so generously been for us over the past eight years.

Peace and grace,

Pastor Delle