

## PACIFIC CURRENTS

# General Synod followup: Sudan relief, same gender marriage

*Editor's note: UCC General Synod in Atlanta in July made history with many important actions. The August Pacific covered some of them, reported at the scene. Here are some more detailed followups. More at <www.ucc.org> and <www.ncnccucc.org>.*

## One Petaluma member's effort leads to national action by UCC and Church World Service

Tim Nonn of United, Petaluma, started the "Dear Sudan" effort last year in response to the growing genocide there. He challenged his church and community to send enough money to feed the equivalent of the population of Petaluma for one day. He found Church World Service to be the best conduit for the \$8,800 they easily raised to feed 55,000 people for one day. (See December 2004 Pacific for full story.)

Church World Service was so impressed with the Petaluma strategy to raise funds and make personal connections that they went from simply transferring the money to promoting the plan.

"We applaud this creative,

grassroots effort and urge communities across the country to join in." said Rev. John L. McCullough, executive director and CEO of Church World Service in July.

Church World Service's 22 regional offices will assist in launching Dear Sudan campaigns in communities throughout the country.

A new website was launched: <www.dearsudan.org>. Write <newsletter@dearsudan.org> for regular updates.

At General Synod in Atlanta, delegates passed a resolution "Promoting Peace for all in Sudan," which included the words, "Let it be further resolved that the 25th General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages congregations and members of the United Church of Christ to participate in the Dear Sudan Campaign."

Congregations around the nation are signing up.

Nonn started this effort at the urging of his 5-year-old son.

Margaret Mead said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world: Indeed it's the only thing that ever has."



Church World Service

## NCNC leaders take Synod "Marriage Equality" endorsement to the California legislature

NCNC moderator and General Synod delegate Rev. Elder Tauoa Head had barely gotten off the plane from Atlanta when the Conference was contacted for someone to speak on behalf of Mark Leno's bill in support of marriage equality. Head reports that only two people, including him, were allowed to testify in support of the bill; 200 people were there in opposition. The committee voted in favor of the resolution.



Tauoa Head

"Remember the story about David and Goliath?" Head recalls. "God is still speaking. Praise the Lord."

Here are excerpts from his testimony. At press time the bill has passed both the Senate and House, but the governor is expected to veto it.

"The Resolution in Support of

Equal Marriage Rights for All was passed by over 80 percent of delegates on July 4 at the General Synod of the United Church of Christ. Mr. Chairman, and the members of the Judiciary Committee, I am delighted to represent the United Church of Christ in this hearing and to be a voice in the city whose name reflects the sacrament of God; a rite considered to have been established by Christ as a channel for grace, as baptism and the Lord's Supper, to which we welcome all.

"Many of us in the Christian world find that the demise of gender-specific roles brings us closer to the teaching of Jesus who described marriage as a Spirit union where the two become one. In the church we call it a covenantal relationship. That covenant is so wonderful and I am grateful that it no longer needs to be limited to two people of the opposite sex. Marriage denied solely because a couple shares the same gender is cruel and unjust. It's not Christian as Jesus taught love and justice for all.

"God is our Father, who loves us much more than we love our

own children. And He is dealing with us according to his time and season. God is still speaking.

"When we close the Bible, we are not shutting up God. God makes laws as parents set up rules. Yet we put our rules aside to make ways for our children's freedom, because we love them so much and don't want to hurt them. Isn't that God's character, Love?"

"On behalf of the United Church of Christ, I humbly submit our support for this bill. Let us put an end to the long suffering struggle of our brothers and sisters. May the State of California be the leader of the union, to preserve justice and rights for all the people.

"You will never regret this move, because you are standing for the right and justice for all. Let the freedom bell ring not for only some people, but all the people.

"Others are drawing a circle to keep gays, lesbians and transgenders out. I'm asking you today to draw a big circle so we can all be in it, in one people, one love, and one nation under God.

"God bless California. God bless America."

## Bicycle

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brought many members together for a potluck dinner.

Rev. Blythe Sawyer of Petaluma UCC gave us lunch and a tour of their beautiful sanctuary. In Sebastopol, Elena Larssen's parents, Tom and Beth Larssen, served us barbecue at their house and even washed our clothes. Denise Wilbanks of First UCC, Sonoma sheltered us from the heat and gave us lunch in their lovely social hall.

At the Vallejo UCC, Pervin Jalapit, his parents Rev. Pepito and Perla brought us to their house for showers, pizza and fried chicken, and even rearranged the church's Bible school schedule to accommodate our visit. At the Danville Congregational, Judy Leach made us lunch including a delicious peach pie. Little Brown Church of Sunol gave us lasagna dinner and a very refreshing swim in the community pool.

At First UCC, San Jose, Debby and Alan Haggard let us cool off in their pool while Maurice and Marsha Stevenson made us barbecue and delicious burnt almond cake. Finally on August 7th the

Palo Alto UCC family welcomed us home with sparkling Martinelli's to celebrate the end of our ride.

Our trip was also a mission; each cyclist spent time raising pledges at his or her own church for Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM). Together, we raised over \$2,000 for OCWM.

At each church we visited we talked about how OCWM provides UCC staff at the conference and national levels, ministries to local churches, missions in other countries, retiree support, and active justice ministries. OCWM supports our entire UCC family and, without that family, so many things, like our Bicycle Adventure, would never be possible.

Highlights of the trip were watching the fog lift as we crossed the Carquinez Bridge, climbing 1,000 ft. past the Calaveras Reservoir, turkeys and goats, 20 miles of bike path on the Iron Horse Trail, evening discussion times together, and all of the wonderful food (nothing tastes as good as a meal after 50 miles of riding).

Maurice Stevenson, a rider and a member of First UCC, San Jose, said: "The ride is probably why you're drawn to participate - as

I've done twice now - but what I found out is it's about the people. The people you ride with, share meals and miles with and the welcoming people at the different UCC churches along the route. As Lance Armstrong says, it's not about the bike; it's a metaphor for our journey through life."

Daniel Furlong of First UCC, Palo Alto, said, "I admit that before I went on this bike trip, I couldn't really get my head around the concept of a 'UCC family.' I wondered how complete strangers could be so kind and welcoming

that they could be considered as a part of your family.

"This trip has made me a believer, however. Every one of the hosting churches made our group feel welcome in their own way.

"These generous people were what made the trip such an enjoyable one."

I believe cycling and faith are very similar. Both work better with exercise. Just as you cannot bicycle up a mountain without training, you can't expect your faith to support you in the difficult times unless you exercise your

faith in the easy times. Cycling and faith are both easier with the support of others. Finally, cycling and faith both bring me closer to God and give a sense of purpose to my life.

I thank God for being able to lead the UCC Bicycle Adventure. I thank God for all the beautiful things we saw along the way. I thank God for all of our cyclists and support staff for taking care of one another.

Thanks be to God for once again making the UCC Bicycle Adventure such a success!

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