

Central Southeast News

Central Southeast Ohio Association

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Comments and suggestions are welcome. Please send copy to the Association office by the first of the month for publication the following month.

CSEOA Spring Annual Meeting – May 6

The Central Southeast Ohio Association Spring Annual Meeting is Saturday, May 6 at **St. Paul United Church of Christ, Columbus**. The church is located just south of historic German Village at 225 East Gates Street. The theme for the meeting is *Called to Discipleship, Sent to Serve*.

The day will have three breakout periods with learning opportunities for all participants to share in. One session will be about refugee resettlement, with leadership from Church World Service and

the Columbus Refugee and Immigration Service. A second breakout session will focus on hunger in the United States and around the globe, and the third will be about the reality of living on a minimum wage in the United States.

As the annual meeting of the Central Southeast Ohio Association, reports will be received from the Departments and Committees of the Association, and leadership for the next year will be elected.

The day will begin with registration and fellowship at 9 am, fol-

lowed by opening worship at 9:30 am. The meeting will end by 3:30.

Groups and ministries are being invited to have displays at the meeting which will be available for browsing during registration and over the lunch period.

Registration information has been sent to each local church. The cost for the meeting is \$18.00 (which includes the noon meal) if registration is received by April 21. After that date the registration cost is \$22.00.

St. Paul UCC enjoying rebirth

By Rev. Dr. Herbert Goetz
Pastor, St. Paul UCC

The 98-year-old German ethnic congregation of **St. Paul United Church of Christ** on the south side of Columbus is in the throes of a re-birth of activities. With a steady increase in membership — 15 new members in the last 15 months — St. Paul UCC continues to attract community members in worship and fellowship opportunities.

Even though it has practiced inclusiveness since its very beginning, the congregation recently voted to officially become an Open and Affirming church. New members are adding to the richness of the mixture of St. Paul's people who want to walk together in a common faith.

The Southside Food Pantry is an integral part of St. Paul's total mission. Not only is it a distribution point for food (7,000 individuals from the neighborhood were served in 2005), but it has broadened its service abilities by adding a nurse and social worker to its staff of volunteers. The new staff members enable St. Paul to provide a holistic health care and social referral program.

Six members of St. Paul will



St. Paul UCC welcomed eight new members in February. They came from various backgrounds in response to the congregation's Open and Affirming invitation to all of God's people.

join eleven other UCC members on a trip to Italy to explore an inner-city mission partnership with a ministry in Naples.

We anticipate that within the next two years St. Paul will become an education center for seminary students who want to work in the urban/inner city environment.

We are excited to host the Central Southeast Ohio Association Annual Spring Meeting on May 6, and our members are working vigorously to prepare for it. St. Paul's facilities — including parsonage, church building, parking lot and surrounding green space — have been renovated.

St. Paul UCC is alive and well. The success of this exciting congregation rests in the fact that we believe that *God Is Still Speaking*, and we are doing something about it!

We welcome you and look forward to seeing you in May.

North Congregational UCC celebrates 10th year Open and Affirming

North Congregational United Church of Christ, Columbus will observe the tenth anniversary of the church becoming *Open and Affirming* on Sunday April 26.

North Congregational was the first Central Southeast Ohio Association congregation to go through the pro-

cess of study and discernment around issues of human sexuality that resulted in the church declaring itself to be welcoming of all people, including those whose sexual orientation is to the same gender.

Since the action of North Church, **First Community, Columbus; First**

Congregational UCC, Columbus; Orchard Hill UCC, Chillicothe; First Congregational UCC, Huntington and St. Paul UCC, Columbus have engaged in processes of discernment and declared themselves to be *Open and Affirming*.

St. Paul UCC A Short History

St. Paul UCC, Columbus, had an exciting birth and continues growing through adolescence and into 100 years of adulthood.

Its history began with German immigrants who arrived in the Midwest in the 1840s, searching for freedom, wanting to experience a new form of political life and an opportunity for religious expression. They found what they were seeking in a challenging life in America.

St. Paul Church began at its East Gates Street location in 1908, on land purchased by the Evangelical Mission Board from the old German Target Club, with the help of a nearby sister church, St. John's Evangelical Protestant Church.

The congregation steadily grew, and a new church building was completed in 1950 and paid for within five years.

The congregation increased to more than 500 members by the late 1950's, during the tenure of the Rev. Paul Kaefer, who ministered to St. Paul's people for 34 years.

St. Paul has been served since Rev. Kaefer's retirement by a number of called, interim and supply pastors. Most recently, the Rev. Ed Miner was St. Paul's pastor for nine years, until fall 2004. Since that time, The Rev. Herbert Goetz has provided pastoral ministry to the congregation.

While membership had been steadily declining, it has begun to increase again; a rebirth has begun. God is still speaking at St. Paul UCC!