

# 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.

## Fall Gathering of the Central Southeast Ohio Association

Saturday, October 25

St. John's Evangelical Protestant UCC  
Columbus

## Zion, Delaware creates sensory room to welcome special needs children

Anyone who has been at **Zion UCC, Delaware**, lately has noticed that there are a lot of changes going on down in the basement. One of the major projects going on is the creation of a *sensory room*. This is a very exciting and wonderful opportunity for the church, as it will open the doors to families who have children with special needs.

It is a sad statistic that only 25% of families with members having autism spectrum disorders (ASD) attend church. Of the 75% who do not, the most common reason is that they do not feel comfortable due to a lack of under-

standing of their children's special needs.

And yet, when we remember that each child is created in the image of God, we also realize that these special children bring special gifts to the church to minister to us, too!

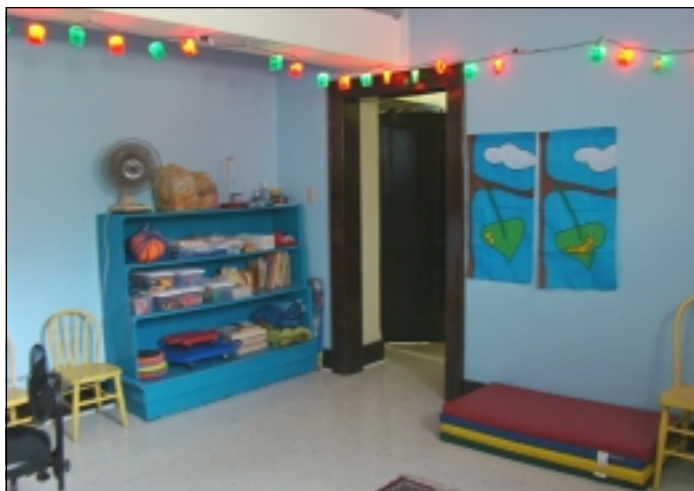
Many churches do not have accommodations for these families. We generally look at special need accommodations as providing elevators, accessible bathrooms and hearing devices. What this room provides a safe haven for children

**"Children with these challenges need to have a place to go and decompress for a few minutes..."**

who are on the autism spectrum and others with sensory needs.

Many of the children with ASD are hypersensitive to the sights, sounds, scents and other external stimuli that "neuro-typical" people do not recognize or have learned to tune out. Children with these challenges need to have a place to go and decompress for a few minutes when they are feeling overwhelmed by all of the stimuli on a Sunday morning. The goal for this room is to provide that haven.

A sensory room is not a play room or another nursery. By integrating soft lighting and a variety of textures and colors, children find a place of comfort and refuge from the chaos through the opportunity to touch and see objects



## Weekend of peace and justice activities planned to honor Bill Barndt

*Tent of Hope: A World in which many worlds fit* is being planned as a weekend of working toward justice and peace in memory of Bill Barndt. It is scheduled for October 18 and 19, 2008 with the venue still to be determined.

Bill was probably the most prominent Christian peace and justice advocate in Central Ohio over the past several decades. The idea for *Tent of Hope* came from Bill's immediate family, who want to celebrate his life by having an event for peace and justice to honor Bill's work.

Representatives from the Central Ohio Darfur Solidarity Net-

work, Pastors for Peace, Central Ohioans for Peace, Worldwide Humanitarian Aid and the Interfaith Association of Central Ohio, plus others inspired by Bill's life and ministry, have come together with members of Bill's family to plan an event to both honor and build upon his legacy. Bill was either a founder or a member of all these organizations.

Organizers hope to host a weekend that is intergenerational, faith filled, educational and fun as people are brought together to learn about the issues and concerns that Bill found so compelling.

Artistic expression will be en-

couraged, and African dance groups are being invited to participate. *Tent of Hope* will be organized around some central themes which, it is hoped, will unite and increase understanding between peace and justice issue groups and individuals.

Participants will seek the common threads of justice in the myriad of issues to which Bill gave his life. One of the marks of the life of Bill Barndt was the way he brought people together to build bridges and relationships. Planners hope that the weekend will continue Bill's efforts by fostering the development of new relationships and the formation of new coalitions.



Bill Barndt and members of peace network raising awareness during a speakout session at the 2004 Ohio Conference Annual Gathering.

which comfort them. In the room there are objects such as bristle blocks, "gym" mats, a pilates ball, Legos, stress balls, a sand garden and much more! After time with these objects in a controlled environment, the child is able to "calm down" and re-engage with the rest of the group.

Zion is very excited that this special needs ministry takes another important step toward full inclusion of all persons in the life of the church. It is also an outreach to otherwise spiritually homeless families who have felt uncomfortable in other settings due to the lack of facilities for their special members.

<http://uccdelaware.com/>

