

## Gerhard Hille visiting pastor at St. John's, Columbus

St. John's UCC in Columbus, which began as a German congregation, has welcomed into their midst a visiting pastor from the land of their ancestors' birth. The Rev. Gerhard Hille, serving at St. John's from April 15 to July 24, will work side by side with St. John's pastor, the Rev. Kathy Dwyer, for much of the summer and will serve as acting pastor while she is away for five weeks.

During his first week, in addition to several joint pastoral calls with Kathy and becoming acclimated to the area, Gerhard was welcomed into members' homes for many special dinners and lunches. The week culminated with his first worship service at St. John's and a congregational potluck.

Rev. Hille's service at St. John's was arranged through a partnership initiative between the United Church of Christ and the Evangelical Church of the Union in Germany and specifically between the Ohio Conference of the UCC and the Church of Westfalia in Germany. This international program allows pastors to have an immersion experience in a congregation

within the other country.

Rev. Hille has extensive pastoral experience. He was ordained in 1977 and has served the church primarily as a pastor. Gerhard has served congregations in Retzen, Bad Meinberg and Bielefeld. He has had experience



Gerhard Hille and Kathy Dwyer outside St. John's UCC in Columbus

with rural and inner-city churches and has done extensive work with Christian education, persons who have dementia, and also those who are incarcerated.

He has taught homiletics at preachers' seminars in Eberfeld and has particular interest in the work of Karl Barth, Karl Rogers, and Rudolf Bultmann. In his free time he enjoys music (including playing the trumpet), riding

horses, and cooking. He is married and has three daughters.

Before Gerhard's arrival at St. John's, he and Kathy talked on the phone weekly to learn more about each other and their expectations for this three-month period.

Kathy describes their first meeting this way: "There was immediate recognition, and the conversation that ensued could have lasted for hours. It was great to finally meet in person! Gerhard has a caring spirit, a wonderful sense of humor, and intellectual, theological and cultural curiosity that is inspiring."

When asked what his goals are and what he hopes to receive from this experience, Gerhard says, "I want to understand and experience Christianity in the United States, in Columbus, Ohio and specifically at St. John's Church."

He is also fascinated by how St. John's members live out their core values, as his own church has gone through a similar process.

"Values aren't something that should just be written down on paper ... they need to be lived out. I want to see how that happens here," Hille said.

# 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.

## Three new churches starting

The Central Southeast Ohio Association is committed to supporting three new church starts.

The first congregation is being organized as a partnership with the Christian Church in Ohio in northeast Columbus. A search committee from the Disciples of Christ and CSEOA is looking for a new church start pastor.

The second congregation, with the "working name" of *The Oasis*, will be located in the Reynoldsburg/Pataskala

area on the east side of the Columbus metropolitan area. The Rev. Deb Click is the organizing pastor for this faith community.

The third effort will be in West Virginia, just west of Charleston. Forest "Cutch" McAtee has been selected to be the organizing pastor for this congregation.

The east Columbus metro and West Virginia new church starts are using a different model, as both Deb and Cutch will be bi-vocational pastors.

## Peace Bubble will arrive at Orchard Hill UCC, Chillicothe in July

By Kim Carter  
Orchard Hill UCC

UCC minister Jerry Leggett, a singer-songwriter, began a year-long peace mission on January 12 that will include stops at 50 UCC churches in observance of the denomination's 50th anniversary celebration, as well as dropping in at General Synod in June.

In keeping with the UCC's legacy of promoting peace and justice across the land, Leggett's rousing live music will take place on an intimate sound stage—a converted, tear-shaped, vintage travel trailer that has been newly christened as "The Peace Bubble."

In addition to stops in UCC churches, the tour will include regular noon-time song fests, where people in communities across the country will be

asked to envision a more peaceful world and to share that vision in videotaped interviews. Leggett says he wants to ask children, grandparents, friends and neighbors to answer two simple questions: "Is peace possible?" and "What would a more peaceful world be like?"

The tour is a "nonsectarian, nonpartisan effort to celebrate the ideals that make for peace in the heart and peace in the world," says Jerry. "What if we all paused for a moment of peace at noontime and pondered another world? What if the world we imagine is possible?"

His music includes classic peace standards by the Beatles, Bob Dylan and Tracy Chapman, plus a mix of his own soul-stirring originals.

Orchard Hill UCC, under the pastoral leadership of Rev. Martha Kline, is a voice for peace, justice, and extravagant welcome in mostly rural, mostly



conservative south central Ohio. We are always looking for ways to share our fervent belief in the StillSpeaking God with those in our area who aren't aware that a loving, open and affirming spiritual family exists right here.

With the help of a "Media with a Mission" matching grant from the UCC's StillSpeaking Initiative, Orchard Hill has aired the "Ejector" and "Bouncer" ads hundreds of times on local cable television in 2007 from Lent to Mother's Day. The local paper also printed a report on the national grant award and a letter to the editor from an Orchard Hill UCC member expressing

hope for peace during these turbulent times. We are excited to have the Peace Bubble coming to join our chorus of hope!

We invite all of our extended UCC family in the area to join us and "Sing Out

for Peace!" Jerry will be singing for the local community at noon on Saturday, July 14, in Chillicothe's Yoctangee Park Rotary Shelter. Chillicothe's Mayor, Joe Sulzer, and U.S. Congressman Zack Space are planning to be there, and UCC's own Ron Buford has the event on his digital calendar!

Jerry will also be joining Orchard Hill's congregation for Sunday worship at 10:30 am on July 15. It will be a wonderful, peaceful, uplifting weekend!

Call the church at 740-772-4235 if you have any questions or need directions.

Until then, check out the daily video casts that are filmed at all of the Peace Bubble stops on the official website: [www.peacebubble.org](http://www.peacebubble.org).

Visit Orchard Hill UCC online at [www.orchardhillucc.net](http://www.orchardhillucc.net).