



HCC Connections

...to inspire people with love for truth, passion for righteousness, and enthusiasm for service.

July 2009



Special points of interest:

- Pledge Update - p3
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Results of Our Congregational Vote

On the front page of last month's newsletter we featured the announcement that after worship on June 7th we would hold a **special congregational meeting** for the purpose of having our members **vote on extending a formal call to Erin Heisler to become our Director of Youth and Children's Ministry.** We're delighted to announce that at that meeting **we voted joyfully and unanimously to extend the call to Erin.** She'll be moving into our church's parsonage in August and will officially begin her duties in this new posi-

tion on September 1st. **The title of the position has been changed to Minister for Youth and Children's Programs since it's one to which Erin will be ordained by the Covenant Association of our United Church of Christ.** We're hoping **Sunday, August 23rd will be the day of her Service of Ordination,** but the date for it hasn't yet officially been set. Once it is, we'll be sure to spread the word. In the meantime, we get ready to welcome her into this wonderful new calling she now has in the life of our church!

Special Congratulations!

On Saturday, June 20th, at the annual meeting of our Michigan Conference-UCC, our own **Bill Burrus graduated from the Systematic Training for Effective Ministry (STEM) program** that's offered jointly by our Conference and the Michigan Region of our partner denomination, the Disciples of Christ. It's a two-year program originally founded in 1982 to help members of UCC and Disciples churches in our state to further discover and develop their gifts for leadership and service. It's a two-year program that requires 12 classes in,

for example, theology, spirituality, Scripture, missions, and worship, and Bill, of course, has completed it with flying colors. We look forward to all the ways in which his STEM training will continue to enhance the ministry that he provides to so many both within and through our church!

If you're interested in knowing more about STEM, Bill and Pastor Kurt both have informational brochures about it and Bill would be happy to speak with you about his experience in it.

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Pastor's Corner

As announced on the front page of this newsletter, our church has called Erin Heisler to be our Minister for Youth and Children's Programs. In preparation for our vote on that issue at our June 7th congregational meeting, I presented substantial background information designed first to help explain why I've thought offering this call to Erin is such a good idea and, secondly, to describe more specifically how we've envisioned her work with us in this calling. This month I want to use this column to highlight some of that background information again, especially for those of you who weren't able to be at the June 7th gathering.

First of all, when we realized earlier this year that Mike and Danna Dixon were going to have to let go of the work they've done so wonderfully with our Middle School Youth Group in recent years and that Chris Bawden and Susan Witkus were going have to do the same with the wonderful work they've been doing with our High School Youth Group and Children's Program curriculum development, respectively, we were reminded again of how great it would be if we could find a seminary-trained or perhaps even ordained person who could work effectively as staff leader in both our youth and children's ministries and for a

longer period of time than the couple year stints to which we've become accustomed. From past experience, we knew this was a very long shot and, as such, probably not worth pursuing UNTIL- until Erin let us know, as she was looking forward to her graduation from seminary this past spring, that she'd be interested in interviewing for a position with us that would combine the work the Dixons, Chris, and Susan were needing to let go of, even if it still amounted to only a part-time position.

Trying to make the most of the special opportunity this presented, we pursued the ins and outs of it with her and developed a job description we thought was appropriate. Our Search Committee was then pleased to find several other strong candidates who were also seriously interested in the position and eventually decided to interview one of them in addition to Erin. After the interviews, however, the committee was unanimous in its decision that despite the many strengths of our other interviewee Erin was indeed the most qualified for it.

For those in our congregation who know her well from her years growing up in HCC and from the leadership of our youth groups she provided for two years along with Kyle Carnes during their college days several years ago it's no surprise, I'm sure, that the committee felt this way. Here are only a few of her qualifications that those who already know her will be aware of:

She's grown up in Haslett and has gone to and graduated

from the elementary, middle, and high schools in our town. She dearly loves this community and our church and knows life in both of them from the inside out. Her Christian faith and sense of calling into the church's ministry, especially youth ministry, are deep and mature. She's wonderfully bright and personable, youthful and energetic, hard-working and creative, responsible and organized. She not only loves but genuinely likes youth and children. Only in her twenties she's already had an abundance of experience in working with both. Now she also has the seminary training we long have hoped we could have in the person who would be leading us in these areas.

And it's not just any seminary training she's received. She's earned both the Master of Divinity and the Master of Arts in Youth Ministry degrees from Princeton Theological Seminary, a seminary widely recognized as one of the best in the world, especially in the training it offers in Christian education and youth ministry. And it's not as if Erin was just any student there. At the school's 197th Commencement Exercises this past May 23rd she was given The Robert K. Kelley Award in Youth Ministry, an honor given annually at the seminary to a graduating Master of Arts or Master of Divinity student who "demonstrates great promise for youth ministry marked by the enthusiastic leadership" for which Dr. Robert Kelley was known. Even more impressive is the recommendation of her that our



Children's Program

Dear Friends:

All the children are invited to participate in Summer Sunday school! We will be meeting at 9:25 am in Tent and Temple. The summer curriculum will be a celebration of the 12 disciples. Jesus said " Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." What amazing people! We will learn more about them every Sunday!

Please check your calendars and see if you can teach one

Sunday. The sign-up sheet is in Friendship Hall - We still need help on June 28th, July 12th, July 19th, July 26th and August 9th. Consider teaching - I can't do it without your help! Thanks!

I want everyone to know that I have enjoyed working with your children for the last two years - and I appreciate all your support! As of September, Erin will be taking over all the curriculum writing, shopping, making sure supplies are ready and teacher packets, etc. However, I will be staying on as the worship leader for the children on Sunday. We plan on the transition going smoothly, but if you have any concerns or questions - please do not hesitate to contact me.

Peace

Susan C



This column is left blank intentionally to protect the privacy of our members.

Greetings Family and Friends;

Although our weekly youth group gatherings have come to an end, we have been busy preparing for the final events of the year. Within days of your reading this newsletter, our youth program will be hosting our annual **Pop-and-Dog fundraising event!** As a precursor to fireworks, we are inviting the congregation and the public to join us for hotdogs, burgers, root-beer floats and desserts from **5:00 pm to 8:00 pm** on the church lawn on **Saturday, July 4th**.



The next day nineteen of our youth and five adults (including me) depart on the Annual Mission Trip. We are departing for **Monessen Valley, Pennsylvania** for a six-day mission trip to work with local youth, and undertake apartment repairs. This will mark the end of the church year, and I look forward to seeing everybody at Pop-and-Dog!

Have a joyous and holy summer!

Chris Bawden

Pledge Giving Update

At this point in 2009 we need \$4458 each week to remain current in our pledged giving receipts. As of the end of May we're \$3834 behind in the amount of those gifts we've received. Any effort we can make to keep our pledges current, especially during the summer time when traditionally there's a slump, is a major help to our church's cash flow and to the ministry that everyone's giving makes possible. Thanks to all!

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United Church of Christ received and that was made available to our Search Committee from Dr. Kenda Dean, the leading professor of youth ministry at Princeton. Dr. Dean wrote of Erin (and I quote her in full):

"I am writing to enthusiastically recommend Erin Heisler—one of our most outstanding future graduates, and one of the church's most thoughtful and creative servants—for ordination in the United Church of Christ. I am Erin's academic advisor, and I have known her since her first day at Princeton Seminary. I have taught her in several classes, where she always excels, and I have worked with her as a colleague on youth ministry events, where she is a joyful, calming presence. I have seen a lot of students come and go, and have helped many through their ordination process. You will look long and hard to find a candidate with either the caliber or clarity of her sense of call to the ordained ministry.

"Erin is one of those rare people who is so at home in her own skin that she immediately makes the rest of us feel comfortable in ours. She is a fine theologian, a critical thinker, and outstanding teacher, a young woman with a wide embrace of "otherness", and a healthy ability to stand up for what she believes without ever shutting out other points of view. She is able, in all situations, to remain completely 'herself'- and teenagers (not to mention parents, pastors, and parishioners) immediately respond to her easy authenticity.

I think Erin's intelligence, theological integrity, and personal and spiritual depth speak for themselves; she has an indefatigable energy that lets her invest deeply in assignments, ideas, and human beings, not to mention faith itself. She simply draws from a "deeper well" than many of us have.

"So let me speak instead to her leadership and her relational maturity—for these are 'make or break' issues in many congregations. Erin has one of the most organic leadership styles I have ever witnessed. She never 'seizes' leadership in a group or in a room full of teenagers; instead, she inspires leadership. People give her their trust, and offer to follow her lead. I have seen this pattern in every class I have taught that involves Erin. She has an easy authority that is never authoritarian; in fact, she often leads from behind the scenes, giving over the limelight to others, especially young people. She is no prima donna; to Erin, all the world is a mission field, and she willingly—without fanfare—pitches in on the most menial tasks as well as on the most gratifying ones. She is an extraordinarily hard worker (not that you ever see her sweat), and an organizational whiz. If Erin is involved in a task, it will be done right, on time, and with far more attention to detail than most mortals can muster. Through it all she exudes a kind of care—of others, of the world, of her own relationship with Christ—that makes those around her feel nourished and blessed.

"It is easy to forget Erin is starting out in ministry, for she

is wise beyond her years, and possesses a profound emotional intelligence that makes youth and adults alike trust and identify with her. She walks with equal ease, as someone has put it, "among commoners and kings," and her own theological maturity never makes others feel awkward or inferior. She is not naïve; she has the ability to exegete a situation as deftly as a Biblical text, allowing her to discern the important issues in any conflict in a way that somehow clears the brush away, letting people absorb what really matters in a discussion. One question many churches have about 'fresh seminary graduates' is: Can they supervise others? In Erin's case, the answer is a clear yes. While she has not yet done this on a church staff, she has plenty of short-term supervisory experience in camps, retreats, mission trips, and informal ministry settings; I have seen her marshal troops of volunteers at events for the Institute for Youth Ministry here at Princeton, demonstrating the same kind of pastoral care and program efficiency that she shows teenagers. She has the core confidence that allows her to organize others without imposing it on them. Theologically, she is in a place that takes many pastors years to reach; she has an ability to know when to act in Christ's name, and when to abide in Christ's love, letting God be God and Erin be human.

"In short, Erin's leadership, her integrity, and her maturity, not to mention her joyful presence, make her a colleague in ministry I welcome wholeheartedly.

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edly. You are lucky to have her as part of your denomination. She has my highest endorsement."

As a result of our vote on June 7th, Erin now has our congregation's highest endorsement, too, for her ordination into the United Church of Christ. I personally am thrilled that she's accepted this call we've extended to her and am thoroughly convinced it's a position to which it's completely fitting for our denomination to ordain her. Ordaining her to this work means that at the recommendation of our church as the calling body our Covenant Association of the Michigan Conference-UCC agrees that this is a position to which Erin is called by God and one in which she also will be authorized to administer the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion.

In her work with us, as we initially envision it, she definitely will have regular opportunities for this kind of sacramental leadership. Once she's ordained, she will join with me in leading Communion in our usual communion services of which our children and youth are always a part. On her own, she will also have opportunities to hold communion services with our youth within the setting of their own youth group gatherings. Depending on the circumstances of particular baptisms, she'll also have occasions to join with me in administering that sacrament.

It's important to be clear, however, that in this position to

which we've called her, Erin will not be an associate minister, one who typically would have broader responsibilities in a church's program life as well as in preaching and pastoral care. She certainly will have opportunities to preach in our youth-led services if she, the youth, and the Youth Ministry Team choose to have her do so. She also will be the first person I'll always ask to serve as our preacher whenever I'm away, but in that case, too, she'll do so only if she chooses- not as a prescribed part of her job description. Neither will she be called on to do any general administrative work or pastoral care or hospital visitation or weddings or funerals. Her focus will be solely and specifically with our youth, children, and their families to develop our programs with them to the best of her ability. That's her calling and passion and the work we most need for her to do with the many wonderful gifts she has for it.

She's let us know that she'd like to do this work with us for at least five years, if not longer. Our Search Committee found that to be another of the great strengths she offers us. With that kind of commitment to the position, she'll give us the longer-term stability in our youth program leadership we've been hoping and looking for. In combination with Susan who also has indicated she'd like to stay with us for the longer term in the work she does so well with our children and their teachers on Sunday mornings in our Kingdom Makers Workshop, Erin will give us similar stability in our children's program leadership. Both these

areas are of such great importance to the present health and future vitality of any church, that I believe bringing Erin onto our staff to lead our youth programs and to join with Susan in further developing our children's program is one of the very best things we can do for our church's ministry, both for now and the future.

Her position as we've designed it to start is roughly three-quarters time and officially begins on September 1st. The starting compensation for it is \$25,000 annual salary plus housing in our church's parsonage. The plan is for her to move into the parsonage as soon as possible after August 1st, but exactly when she'll move in will depend on how long it takes for us to prepare the house for her once our current tenant moves out, which will be July 31st at the latest. In August we'll also pay her for 10 hours or so per week of preparation work we know she'll be doing for the fall. We have funds readily available from within this year's budget to cover her compensation for the rest of 2009, but in coming years we'll need to raise extra money to continue funding her position. That's a challenge, however, that I'm fully confident we'll meet. It will be a key element in our continuing effort, as we say in our church covenant, to seek in every way to be a power for the building of the Kingdom of God!





A thank-you note from the City Rescue Mission for the Parable of the Talents gift we sent to them:

Friends:

The City Rescue Mission of Lansing has worked diligently to meet needs in the capital area since 1911. During those years of service, we began to notice a growing change in the "face" of homelessness, as more and more single women and mothers with children expressed a need for temporary housing. Soon, the need outgrew the capacity at our women and children's shelter. For this reason, we purchased and are in the process of renovating the former Maplewood school, to meet needs among the most vulnerable among the homeless population. By giving toward this project, you are bringing us one step closer to providing protection and help to women and children in need.

Thank you for your compassion. Your gift to the Mission will make a difference in the lives of women and children in our community, with the completion of our Maplewood Center. Thank you for helping us help others!

In Christian Service,

*Mark Criss
Executive Director*

A thank-you note from Heifer International for the Parable of the Talents gift we sent to them:

Dear Friends at Haslett Community Church:

On behalf of Heifer International and the many people that we work with around the world, thank you! Your recent donation of \$2251.22 will bring hope and opportunity to families living in poverty through the gifts of education, training, and livestock.

I wish I could personally take you to our projects in the field to see the impact of your generous dollars, prayers, and concerns, and to meet project recipients like Evelyn Manyi Ngufor. Thanks to your support, our project partners will learn how to care for animals in ways that can be sustained for future generations. The lives of men, women, and children around the world, like Evelyn and her family - people that you may never meet - will be transformed thanks to the gift you have made.

As a supporter of Heifer International, you are special for caring about the world's neediest families and your donation will be used to help others gain access to a better quality of life, a new sense of self-reliance, and hope for the future! Please know that your support for our work couldn't come at a more critical time as the dollar loses its global punch and food prices and related costs are soaring. We are honored that you have put your faith in Heifer to help us help others around the world.

Wishing you peace and joy in 2009,

*Vicki Clarke
Midwest Regional Director*

A Note of Gratitude,

A warm *thank you* to all who offered help, delicious meals, and the many, many cards and notes during my recent illnesses.

We felt comforted and blessed by all the prayers offered, concern and caring extended by our HCC family. Having to contend with so many "health issues" and hospitalizations in rapid succession was overwhelming at times.

All the love and support given in so many ways helped sustain us in the difficult times. Now I am well along in recovering and delighted to be able to rejoin the life at HCC.

With love and thanksgiving,
Mary & Tom Nelson

CROP Hunger Walk



Sunday, October 11,



Spiritual Life

The adults of the congregation are invited to join in these many activities sponsored by the Spiritual Life Committee. You are encouraged to take advantage of these opportunities for personal and spiritual growth.

Sunday after Worship

The groups that usually meet after worship on Sundays will resume meetings in the fall.

PeaceCircle

PeaceCircle was begun as a way to get to know our neighbors, especially those from different religious and ethnic backgrounds. The premise is that by beginning peace gestures on our local scale, the ripples can be felt globally. Already, those coming to PeaceCircle have met many new friends and have learned much about other religions. World Peace is an awesome goal and PeaceCircle is reaching towards that. On, **Sunday, July 12th, 4:00 pm**, PeaceCircle will meet in Friendship Hall. The topic of discussion will be how the lives of Islamic women are affected by cultural and political influences.

Men's Group

The Men's Group has been meeting for breakfasts, book discussions, barbecues, and a fishing trip up north. Dave Vietti is constructing an email list of all those interested in the Men's Group. Contact him at 339-5731 or vi-etti@msu.edu to be included on this email list or to ask questions.

Next Fall

The Spiritual Life committee is looking for ideas of activities, discussion groups or topics that will encourage the congregation on their spiritual journeys. Several suggestions have been made about topics and resources to use as the basis for discussion groups. Please contact Becky Leefers (337-0560) or Joyce Bischoff (339-9935) with feedback about these suggestions or with any other suggestions for next fall.

The Meaning of Jesus – Two Versions by Marcus Borg and N. T. Wright

In alternating chapters, Marcus Borg, the most popular revisionist voice on Jesus and a

member of the Jesus Seminar, and N. T. Wright, the most prominent standard-bearer for the traditional stance and an outspoken critic of the Jesus Seminar, present their views of who Jesus was, what he taught, and what he did. Candid, spirited, and thoughtfully debated, this compelling discourse will stimulate fresh ideas and intense dialogue among anyone concerned with what it means to be a Christian today.

The Once and Future Faith by contributors from the Jesus Seminar

Scientific knowledge has stripped Christianity of the mythical matrix in which the creeds were conceived. The historical study of the Bible and the quest of the historical Jesus have raised the future of the faith to crisis level. Fellows of the Jesus Seminar joined to sort through the issues and attempt to form an agenda for the reinvention of Christianity. Their suggestions — on questions such as life after death, the meaning of God, apocalypticism, and the significance of Jesus' death — fill the pages of this book.

Listening to the Parables of Jesus Edward F. Beutner, editor

From time to time even scholars scratch their heads in puzzlement over the meaning of Jesus' parables. This concise, well edited book brings together insights from world-renowned scholars into the interpretation of parables.

Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World by Joanna Weaver

With her fresh approach to the familiar Bible story and its creative, practical strategies, Weaver shows how all of us - Marys and Marthas alike - can draw closer to God, deepening our devotion, strengthening our service, and doing both with less stress and greater joy.

The Bad Girls of the Bible and/or ***More Bad Girls of the Bible*** by Barbara Essex

Essex brings to life the Bible's "bad girls" - notorious women we love to hate. Exploring lives filled with betrayal, deception, rejection, jealousy, and exploitation, she looks beyond the notoriety to show us women of exceptional boldness, courage, determination, and independence.

The Power of Forgiveness DVD-based course, directed by Martin Doblmeier

This DVD and companion book explore recent research into the psychological and physical

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effects of forgiveness on individuals and within relationships under a wide variety of conditions and translates it into a popular, accessible documentary film for national public television. This includes feature stories on the Amish, the 9/11 tragedy and peace-building in Northern Ireland, along with interviews with renowned Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, best-selling authors Thomas Moore and Marianne Williamson and others. The film also explores the role forgiveness holds in various faiths traditions.

Eclipsing Empire DVD-based course

Join preeminent New Testament scholars Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan on location in Turkey as they trace the Apostle Paul's footsteps throughout the Roman Empire. This DVD and web-based study explores fresh insights into Paul's message of the Kingdom of God, its challenge to Roman imperial theology, and the apostle's radical relevance for today. Filmed across Turkey, Greece, and Italy with a Participant Guide written by John Dominic Crossan.

Religion and Science: Pathways to Truth DVD-based course

Must we reject belief in God to accept the findings of science? Join a group of world experts as they consider how religion and science might coexist and even complement one another in the 21st Century.

The Shack by William P. Young

In a world where religion seems to grow irrelevant, *The Shack* wrestles with the timeless question "Where is God in a world so filled with unspeakable pain?"

Books by John C. Maxwell

John Maxwell is an expert on leadership and teamwork. His ideas are based on Christian principles.

Parenting discussions – led by Kurt Kirchoff

Discuss issues of importance to parents as they try to raise their children in a Christian environment.

Rebuilding Relationships discussions – led by Kurt Kirchoff

Discussions based on the Sermon on the Mount, involving our relationships with others.



Commendations to...

Thanks to these individuals who have recently served the church in special ways:

- **Mike and Danna Dixon** for their four years of service as leaders of our Middle School Youth Group and to **Chris Bawden** for his two years of service as our High School Youth Director.
- To all those who served on the Search Committee whose work has led to our calling of Erin Heisler to be our Minister for Youth and Children's Programs: **Mike Dixon, Tim Hiller, Katie Riley, and Stefanie Zin.**
- To **Dick Ledebuhr, Rich Newport, Betsy McLernon and Pastor Kurt** who cleaned up the basement when it flooded.
- To **Phyllis Keith** for the donation of the projector screen.

Pastor Kurt Kirchoff will be gone on vacation and sabbatical time from June 29th to August 16th. While he's gone, Erin Heisler, Carol Ingells, and Alan Martling will serve as guest worship leaders and preachers (see the back page of this newsletter for specifics). In his absence, emergency pastoral care will be provided by Rev. Bob Frederick and Rev. Romi Chaffee. Call the church office, 339-8383, or Kurt's voice mail at the church at extension 11 for information on how to get in touch with them should the need arise.



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HCC Connection

July 2009

Worship for July 2009

Sermon titles and Scripture readings include:

Sunday, July 5th, 9:25 am
Erin Heisler - Guest Preacher

Sunday, July 19th, 9:25 am
Carol Ingells - Guest Preacher

Sunday, July 12th, 9:25 am
Erin Heisler - Guest Preacher

Sunday, July 26th, 9:25 am
Alan Martling - Guest Preacher

Haslett Community Church

Church Office Hours: 9:00 – 12:00, M-F PHONE – (517) 339-8383 Fax (517) 339-8526

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Pastor Kurt - pastorkurt53@att.net **Children's Ministry** - Susan Witkus - susanwitkus@peoplepc.com
Beverly Wegener - bev.wegener@att.net **Youth ministry** - Chris Bawden - crbawden@hotmail.com

Worship and Church School, Sundays at 9:25 a. m.