

August 1, 2007

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Rev. David Gerth
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To the family and friends of Joan Wagner:

We sometimes refer to a person as "a saint of the church." The label truly applies to Joan.

Her mind and spirit reflected the understanding that mission work is an essential part of being church. Mission is as integral to church as burning is to fire.

She demonstrated her understanding of mission's importance through her actions. She took part in mission committees in the Indiana-Kentucky Conference of the church and was at every event related to Wider Church Ministries that she was able to attend.

A group called "FOCUS" exists within Global Ministries, the common witness of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). FOCUS stands for Fellowship of Continuing Understanding and Support, and helps members connect with missionaries, mission partners, and their work in nearly 100 countries around the world. Joan was a life member of FOCUS. She was at a training event in Indianapolis related to FOCUS when she became ill last October and had to come home.

With the caring heart and the passionate concern for mission that Joan exemplified, it was natural that she would be offered leadership roles, and that she would accept them. She served on the United Church Board for World Ministries in the 1980's and again in the last part of the 1990's. Part of her leadership work was to be a strong proponent of local churches' giving to Our Church's Wider Mission, the common mission fund of the United Church of Christ that provides a significant portion of the money used for mission work.

One of my associates visited Joan on March 10. It was his first opportunity to meet her, and he was thoroughly impressed with her vivaciousness and her positive outlook on life in spite of her health circumstances, of which she was quite aware. She shared with him the details of this service in which you're participating today. But that wasn't until after a thorough discussion about mission activities and about a tour bus full of justice activists that arrived in South Bend the day before. Her attention and interest was very much on the condition of God's world and our work on God's behalf, not her situation.

We were blessed by Joan Wagner's life and her love for all of God's creation. I hope that you will be motivated and guided by her example to be an instrument of that love.



Rev. Cally Rogers-Witte
Executive Minister,
Wider Church Ministries,
United Church of Christ

let it shine
the UCC at 50 years