



All Peoples
United Church of Christ
SOJOURNER NEWS

A Central Oregon House Church

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TOO MUCH TRUTH?

Sometimes stories of overwhelming poverty are more than one can take. Sometimes, when the weight of the truth is too heavy one looks away. Looking away may not be denial; it may be a simple effort to find a brief “time out,” a sort of respite before returning to the bombardment of truth about hardship that continues to fall all around.

A progressive L.A. radio station’s “Democracy Now” program recently aired an interview with a modern-day, “Biblical Amos,” a filmmaker who told of his 7-year journey into documenting poverty in the U.S. The resulting film releases on December 5th.

Michael Matheson Miller, Producer and Director of *Poverty, Inc.*, is Chair of the

[PovertyCure](#) Advisory Council and a Research Fellow at the [Acton Institute](#). Michael holds graduate degrees in philosophy, international development, and international business. He has traveled the world. He speaks extensively on themes of international development, entrepreneurship, political economy, and moral philosophy. He has been published in The New York Post, The Washington Times, The LA Daily News, The Detroit News, and Real Clear Politics. Such credentials were hardly the primary drivers of the compelling radio interview; the prophetic zeal that his travels and his discerning eye have fostered appeared to energize the focus of his message.

Michael Miller’s new film, *Poverty, Inc.*, has taken recent film festivals by storm. During
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the interview he told of his experiences with filming and interviewing those in poverty across our country. The injustice of circumstances, the struggles of real people made one want to turn away from their harsh truth. From gang violence in Camden, N.J. to the ghettos of L.A., he covered the nation. And yet, Miller claims that *Poverty, Inc.* is the most hopeful film of his illustrious career! By way of explanation, the film presents numerous emerging solutions to the abuses of common people that corporations and governments have imposed.

Miller's film closes by recounting cooperative efforts and communal successes. He holds up examples of groups supporting each other, of not-for-profit enterprises where all parties share in the yield... where oligarchy is held at bay and local leaders work closely with their constituencies.

When and if *Poverty, Inc.* becomes available, try to see it. In the meantime, watch to see what the media do with reporting about this radical, truth-filled film.



CELEBRATE THROUGH THE CHRISTMAS FUND

What describes the importance of the Christmas Fund offering better than the following copied (blatantly) from the Ainsworth UCC newsletter.

Thanks, Lynne Smouse-López, for your clear message:

Most of the annual offerings the UCC collects, such as the Neighbors in Need, One Great Hour of Sharing, provide funds to organizations that support communities in need within the US and around the world. The UCC's annual Christmas Fund offering (the "Ministerial Assistance fund") offers a unique opportunity to provide financial assistance for people who have served our greater Church.

It is easy for us to pay so much attention to those in need outside our greater Church that we often forget that there are also those

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in need who serve our greater Church. The Christmas Fund reminds us that there are UCC clergy and lay employees who are also having a hard time making ends meet. The Christmas Fund is our primary way to show and offer support for our UCC leaders who are going through hard times.

SPEAKING OF UCC LEADERSHIP

Missouri Governor Jay Nixon has formed an independent, 16-member Ferguson Commission. The commission's charge is to investigate more than the one case of the Michael Brown shooting. It is to examine broader issues that the Michael Brown case exposed and to recommend actions that will lead to a better environment throughout the St. Louis area. Composed of representatives from business, clergy, health care, law enforcement, civic and educational leadership, two of the commission members are UCC pastors! Rev. Starsky Wilson, pastor of St. John United Church of Christ and CEO of the Deaconess Foundation, cochairs the group. "As much as our voices are

independent, our lives are interdependent," Wilson said. "We commit to listening more than we talk."

Rev. Wilson's cochair Rich McClure is chairman of the St. Louis regional Board of Teach for America.

McClure said the significant challenges we face as a region have been vividly exposed by events in Ferguson.

"Committed and thoughtful citizens must identify necessary actions to take and policies that have to change," McClure said. "Then, our state and our region must pursue their implementation vigorously."

The other UCC commission member is Rev. Traci Blackmon, pastor of Christ the King United Church of Christ in Florissant, a city just adjacent to Ferguson. Florissant's population encompasses both mainly African-American neighborhoods and Euro, comfortably fixed ones (my mother's favorite term for financially well off).

Keep the work of the commission in your prayers as they approach their difficult task. The commission is expected to report its findings no later than September 15, 2015.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

*What better "note" to share for Christmas than the following reflection?
...from a Guest Editor*

The Long Wait

I still remember the long wait for Christmas when I was a child. The more the anticipation built, the longer it took. Christmas, it seemed, would never get here! Despite my impatience, it always finally arrived, complete with lights, tree, and a miraculous pile of gifts. I'm grateful for the magic of that childhood experience of Christmas. It opened a window to imagination and mystery and possibility that is still open for me today.

It was also a set-up for disappointment. I now understand, in a way that a child cannot: the things we long for don't always come in miraculous abundance. Sometimes, the long wait simply turns into a longer, even endless one. Not all illnesses, addictions and broken relationships are healed, no matter how much we hope or pray. Not all homes are safe or warm or filled with abundance. Not every

journey, or story, or struggle for justice ends well. In a world of violence and war, we still wait for Isaiah's beautiful dream of peace. Sometimes, beyond all hope, we wait.

But isn't that the point of the Christmas stories? Light shines in the deepest darkness. Jesus is born in poverty, not a palace. His parents are refugees, not lords and ladies. A ruthless king slaughters innocent children just to prevent any threat to his power. Now that sounds like our world, and that, we are told, is where God can be found.

The Holy, it turns out, doesn't live in some far off realm, but comes to life in the most unexpected place—our flesh, our lives, our hurting world.

This is the mystery of Christmas, a mystery that stretches the imagination beyond the reach of reason and into the realm of soul.

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We were waiting for the birth of Christ ... but it was here all along, waiting for us! It is here, offering us the chance to become fully human, to see one another with new eyes, and to drop the swords from our hands. This is the mystery of Christmas, deeper than the magic of my childhood, more glorious than a pile of gifts. If the Love that created all things can be found alive and breathing in a newborn child in a forgotten corner of a conquered land, then that same wondrous Love can be found anywhere— even here, waiting to be born in us today!

The Rev John Gill
Church of the Savior, UCC
Knoxville, TN



EDITOR'S NOTE

The following article comes to us from the UCC Writer's Group. The message— revitalization and growth are NOT the same.

THE G-WORD

Rev. Dr. Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi

A UCC pastor colleague of mine always writes the following tagline on his outgoing emails: “Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell.” (This phrase was originally written by Edward Abbey in 1977 regarding land expansion in the West.)

I used to find it strange that these words held such a great deal of meaning for him that he would go so far as to place it in a signature line for all email communications (though knowing his environmental justice commitments, it makes sense). These days, however, I have found myself coming back to this phrase when thinking about the church.

A couple of weeks ago at an ecumenical gathering of church planters and denominational workers, results of a multi-denominational study on new churches were shared.

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The research concluded that the vast majority of new churches are thriving as smaller niche communities, as 30 percent of these churches did not increase attendance over the last two years. What this tells me is that smaller is becoming the “new normal” and that growth is not really a focus for many of these new ministries, at least not in the way that a previous generation of church planters would have envisioned.

It might be that God is calling the church to shift its focus away from numerical growth to something else—or, at the very least, to become more inclusive in the way we think about the g-word. More than 20 years ago, Loren Mead introduced the ideas of maturational, organic, and incarnational growth into our lexicon. Since then, we have used different words to describe growth—such as nurture, development, formation, transformation, and many others.

The image of a cancer cell is quite unsettling and personal to many of us, but the cell’s repetitious and unwavering commitment to expansion is a powerful symbol of what can be removed from our minds and hearts when we start to envision the g-word differently.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

At the Dawg House II—On November 24th, in spite of snow and ice on many of the roads, eleven hardy APUCChers gathered for the regular last-Monday-of-the-month fellowship and supper. A good time was had by all. Milly Whatley reported on her visit with Ruth Locke, en route to the Dawg House. Ruth was feeling low over the death of a dear friend but her spirits lifted upon hearing Milly’s news that a guitar-playing friend has volunteered to join Ruth at the bi-monthly worship services she accompanies at The Heights home for her fellow residents. **WATCH FOR WORD** about whether December’s “Last Monday” gathering will be cancelled due to the holidays.

Mission giving in November totalled \$175 from the church budget: \$125 to Bethlehem Inn and \$50 to Jericho Road. From the congregation, \$60 went to St. Vincent de Paul in Bend and \$25 to St. Vincent de Paul in Redmond. Jericho Road received \$30.

Jericho Table—In November, All Peoples helped to serve the hungry at the Redmond Senior Center for the last time!

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Jericho Table has moved to the Redmond Grange Hall, just south of the Fred Meyer store. January will be the next month for All Peoples to serve. ... a new year, a new location and new server procedures. Sadly, the need for food assistance continues.

Melanie Feiltzer is our new leader/liaison, guiding APUCC volunteers in the new systems. Tate and Tate Catering brings food and support supplies. Serving hours are **short**—from 5:15 to 5:45 p.m.! Volunteers, arriving at 4:45, will be hard pressed to be ready for them. Everyone is to be out by 6!

JERICHO ROAD MOVING FORWARD

With the major move of Jericho Table, there is more than location to consider. Leadership is changing hands. Stalwart and experienced, Irv Norgren is retiring from his long, loyal service. He has been solving problems, opening doors and helping folks in need since before APUCC became involved. All parties concerned owe a special debt of gratitude for his service. Sue Flory reports that the new head coordinator John Smallwood, was instrumental in finding

Jericho table's new location and is a solid "go-getter." Welcome to the task, John.

In her new role as APUCC leader, Melanie is cataloging task descriptions to guide our volunteers as we learn the ropes in the tighter schedule in the Grange Hall facilities. Mel's "manual" will come out before the start of AUCC's next duty in January.

Also, our partners from St. Albans Episcopal will be short of their volunteers for January. They are counting on All Peoples to fill in until they come back up to their usual supply of willing hands.

Sue Flory, Jericho Road board member and steady "backpack jockey" to the Terrebonne Community school, continues to deliver 5 backpacks per week. Due to the snow days, several recipients of backpacks did not collect them. However, Sue reports that up until the winter break, the backpacks will likely be heavily loaded in an effort to help food-challenged families get through the school vacation period.

"The lack of material well-being among the poor reflects a lack of spiritual well-being among the rest." William Sloane Coffin

DECEMBER WORSHIP PLANS

All Peoples UCC meets for worship the first and third Sundays of the month at 11 a.m. in the Juniper Room, at the Redmond Hospital.

Advent study meets from 10 to 10:45 a.m.



FINDING ST. CHARLES HOSPITAL IN REDMOND

- **From the north**—From Hwy 97 reroute in Redmond, right on Larch; first left on Canal, right on Kingwood, 3rd right into parking lot.
- **From the south**—coming north on Redmond Hwy 97 reroute, exit left at Glacier, right on 5th all the way north through town to Kingwood, right on Kingwood, go 1.75 blocks, and turn left into the hospital parking lot.
- **From west** on Hwy 126, left on 5th and follow southside directions to hospital.
- **Finding the Juniper Room**—Enter at the main entrance or the next door on the left.

Go left to the end of hall and then right to the first room on left, opposite the rest rooms.

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

- Dec. 7th**—11 a.m. Worship— Fran Davis and Laurie Power
10 a.m. A Special Focus on Advent
- Dec. 21st**—11 a.m. Worship—Liz Douville
10 a.m. A Special Focus on Advent
- Dec. 25th**—Look for details of a Christmas gathering at someone's home—currently in the planning stages.

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PO Box 1287, Bend, OR 97709

allpeoplesucc@gmail.com
Please join us for worship every first and third Sunday.
Sunday worship is at 11 a.m.

For additional information and location/date
of the next worship service,
email the above.

Moderator: Gloria Olson: gloryo@peak.org
Newsletter editor: Pris Hardin, prisbill@earthlink.net
Facebook: facebook.com/allpeoples.ucc
Web site: www.allpeoples-ucc.org