



Rev. John Dorhauer

*General Minister and President
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In the eight years I have served as General Minister and President, I have worshiped on Holy Ground in sanctuaries across this broad country and around the world.

I have danced with an elderly indigenous woman high in the Andes Mountains in Colombia.

I have knelt at the communion rail of a Mercersburg congregation in rural Pennsylvania.

I have heard a majestic choir in Naples, Florida sing one of my favorite hymns, "We Would Be Building."

I have preached from the pulpit of the Berliner Dome in Germany.

I have sat with leaders from the Rocky Mountain Conference in, well, the Rocky Mountains at Camp La Foret, in Connecticut at Camp Silverlake, and in Rhode Island at Star Island.

I have sat on bean bag chairs and throw rugs at a church in Asheville NC.

In sanctuaries humble and gilded, architecturally traditional and contemporary, stain-glass lit and stone-wall structured I have watched and witnessed the stewarding of the ground we call holy. My worship among you has inspired, uplifted, and sustained me.

If I could name one thing that is common on that ground we call holy and where we meet our sacred, it would be that when we gather there lives are changed.

The outcast and the orphan, the trans woman and the gay man, the elderly widow and the hipster millennial, the rich philanthropist and the struggling single mother of three, the autistic child and the raging extrovert, the refugee and the citizen, the street-dweller and the home-bound, the disabled and the agile all find a place where they are loved, spiritually fed, and celebrated as the child of God they are. There are so many who find it hard to locate their place of uplift and welcome in what can be a cruel world. Our churches become that place of refuge, comfort, and sanctuary for so many.

As I close my time as the General Minister and President, I talk now openly and often about what has been for me the most gratifying element of the witness I have borne to the work of our churches. It is the need for a complete stranger to approach me and tell me their “The UCC Saved My

Life” story. Those stories collect and conspire to speak of a commitment to radical inclusion proclaimed by disciples of the risen Christ who see in him an extravagant love offered to the stranger and the outcast, the vulnerable and forgotten, the marginalized and the oppressed.

Strengthen the Church is an opportunity for your gifts to sustain not just our growing, renewing, and birthing churches, but also to ensure that the holy ground they create remains the sacred space in which the extravagant welcome of our beloved Jesus is embodied.

Thank you for your prayerful consideration of a gift to sustain this work of our churches. Thank you for helping us create the kind of sacred spaces where holy ground transforms despair into hope, fear into self-confidence, anger into compassion, judgment into hospitality, and disdain into love.

Learn more about the Strengthen the Church Offering and download materials for the offering at ucc.org/stc.

