

From the District Superintendent  
by The Rev. David Underwood

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Rabbi Edwin Friedman was writing a book when he died entitled, *A Failure of Nerve, Leadership into the 21st Century*. The book has been completed by colleagues and the edition out now is more complete than the first one. I have referred this book on a number of occasions and in response I have been asked what it is about. I suppose the quick and easy response is to have courage to face the fears of your reality. Because I suppose sometimes that might be like crossing the unknown. But that is too simple and I probably should write just a little more.



Rabbi Friedman was student of Bowen Theory. Murray Bowen was the psychiatrist known as the Father of Family Therapy. Rabbi Friedman took the theory and applied it to religious (and other) organizations. He is perhaps best known for his book *Generation to Generation* which I think is a must read for any systems thinker, but I digress.

To summarize part of the other book (*A Failure of Nerve*) even more completely is to hear Rabbi Friedman talk about geography and how the early pioneers coming to the New World sought the most expedient route to the near east. The pioneers knew the riches there and were in such a hurry to find the Northwest Passage that would lead them to the near east, they did not see the riches under their own feet.

A failure of nerve will use “the grass is always greener” approach to faith when the value of what a person really believes is right under their own feet, or in their own soul. The failure of nerve causes people to want to move on, point fingers of blame, look for the easy way to the riches of faith. A failure of nerve finds people building a faith of convenience rather than a faith of commitment.

Perhaps the real failure of nerve comes when any of us finds the Gospel an embarrassment to share when the opportunity to share the riches of our own faith arises. And so to find the nerve, I think disciples of Jesus Christ are called to not float aimlessly about trying to find the easy way to the riches of faith, but to be bold enough look around and find, and live into the riches of faith where you are. It may still be a journey, but to focus on life with Christ where you are makes one wealthy, that’s what I think.

Peace,  
David

## 25th Anniversary Celebration

The Rev. Marti Swords-Horrell of Trinity United Methodist Church on Morgan Road in Clay will be honored on Saturday, May 10th, in celebration of her 25th anniversary as an ordained minister.

Marti is a valuable and treasured asset to the conference as well as to her local congregation, and it is our pleasure to invite you to join us on this occasion.

The party will be held at Clay Trinity beginning with a social hour from 6 – 7 p.m., followed by a roast beef dinner at 7 p.m.

Reservations are requested no later than May 3rd. You may call the church office at 315-652-9186 or email [claytrin@cnymail.com](mailto:claytrin@cnymail.com) with any questions.

### Crossroads District

*The Heart of New York*

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## A quadrennial celebration of the Crossroads District

”What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness and walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

After some consultation with district leaders and a very busy April 6 schedule we are going to designate May 17 as the Quadrennial Celebration of our district. We have been a district now for almost four years and I think we are going to use this day to celebrate our fledgling Mission and Ministry.

We will begin with worship at 11 a.m. at the Calvary United Methodist Church. I (David Underwood) will be preaching and all in the district are invited. I understand that you have your own worship services, but if you want to come to Calvary Church we will be focusing on Micah 6:8 along with a celebration of Heritage Sunday and confirmation. I think it would be really cool to have a district confirmation. My hope and prayer is that your church use Micah 6:8 for a worship theme on the 18th.

At 1 p.m. we will have our District Conference in the Calvary Church sanctuary.

Last fall I spent time in every church listening for ideas about mission and ministry that are at work in a church and

can be shared with another church. The District Council on Ministries invites you to come and share your ideas. And so at 2 p.m. we would invite you and your church to come and share those things working in your church. There will be display space for this “It Worked for Us Time.” I heard great ideas and I hope that you will come and share them with others.

For a lot of reasons the Laity Award banquet has been changed to a Laity Award Celebration. Rather than a banquet there will be a Decadent Dessert reception that will be held from 2 to 3:30 p.m. That’s right! It is being held the same time as the It Worked for Us event. Just imagine all of the good ideas and witnessing for Christ that will be shared in the hallways and rooms of the Calvary Church. Start planning now the decadent dessert(s) you are planning to bring, and bring copies of the recipe too. Oh, and by the way there is a District Superintendent award for the most Decadent Dessert.

And at 3:30 p.m. we will gather in the sanctuary to hand out the Laity Awards, celebrate Lay Speaking and whatever else presents itself between now and then.

What a great day to celebrate! I’m looking forward to see you there!

## It’s not about us

For a number of years the members in Circle of Friends have been saying to each other, “you know we sound pretty good, we should be playing at more churches, we should play for the Bishop, Why aren’t we doing this and doing that. We, we, we: string enough together and we probably sound like a nervous donkey!

One of our members (Beth) came to practice a few weeks ago and grabbed a drumstick. With eight or nine members, a visual cue such as the drumstick is often needed to emphasize an important message. Beth said, we were looking at our music ministry from the wrong perspective It is not about us!

Try it, it can be tough trying not to be self oriented; musicians often think they are pretty cool. As members of Circle of Friends we are trying to direct our talents in a positive manner and it is not about

us. It is about our faith, it is about our church, it is about worship, it is about our community, it is about touching your heart and soul and bringing you a time of peace and a reason to reflect on your personal faith journey.

Circle of Friends was honored to be singing for the good people at the Borodino UMC April 26 and will sing at the annual conference this year on May 30. We look forward to finding time to sing at the UMC in South Onondaga. Ellen and I happened to meet several members last weekend driving by their church.

As always, Circle of Friends will be home at St. Paul’s UMC in Syracuse most every Sunday thanking the Lord for the gift of talent and dedication to sing of His praise. Thank you to all we’ve met along the way.

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