

Letters to the Editor, Democrat & Chronicle, Rochester, NY From Rev. Glenda Prins and 11 Other UCC Clergy

Dear Editor,

We are clergy of the Genesee Valley Association of the United Church of Christ. We gladly claim the Rev. Jeremiah Wright as an esteemed colleague and brother in ministry.

We abhor the way that the media have distorted his prophetic message. Rev. Wright stands in the Biblical tradition which we honor and share. He stands with Old Testament prophets who call nations and peoples to justice for the poor and the marginalized. He follows Jesus who shunned the power brokers of his day in favor of mingling with the poor and the outcast.

Furthermore, we believe that his message of racial justice has been unfairly branded as racist. The church he has led is on the South Side of Chicago; therefore, many of his congregants are black. However, there are numerous white members of his congregation. In addition, Trinity UCC has chosen deliberately to remain active participants in the life of our whole, predominantly Caucasian denomination. Trinity UCC, in fact, is one the largest financial supporters of national, regional and international ministries in our denomination.

Finally, we highlight the unique place of the sermon in the life of any congregation. The sermon can never be encapsulated in a “sound byte”, but invites engagement, thought and interaction within a congregation. No pastor speaks for an entire denomination or even local congregation; we believe that it is in the interaction of congregation, pastor, and the Word of God that the Holy Spirit engages our hearts and minds, and disciplines us for service. We may ourselves disagree with some of any pastor’s points, but we affirm the process of preaching as a creative act as well the integrity of the pastoral office. We encourage members of our congregations to express their disagreements, comments or questions about any sermon, knowing that it is in the relationships with one another that we hear most clearly the voice of God. Plucking a single phrase from a single sermon and taking it out of the context in which it was preached is a cynical and underhanded response to an act of faith and worship.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Dr. Glenda W. Prins and 11 UCC ministers