

### **Biographical Introduction – Rev. Dr. Martha A. Brunell**

I was born in Little Falls, New York into a family with two teaching parents and one older brother. My growing up took place in upstate New York and Vermont. I received my B.A. from Middlebury College (Middlebury, VT), Phi Beta Kappa with high honors in history in 1974 and my M.Div. from Andover Newton Theological School (Boston), cum laude in 1978. I graduated with a Doctor of Ministry in preaching from Aquinas Institute (Saint Louis) in 2002. My doctoral writing was titled: *Perspective From Urban Preaching: Love Incarnate At The Intersection Of The Desert And The Poetic*. I was ordained by the Oneida Association of the New York Conference on June 10, 1978. I have spent all of my adult life in ministry. It is a vocation that I love and a vocation that calls me to season and deepen in God's love.

I have served churches as a settled pastor and as an interim on both sides of the historic merger that formed the United Church of Christ. I have also been the pastor of one congregation organized since the merger. These churches are in Missouri, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Illinois. I have celebrated with them congregational anniversaries ranging from a 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary, to a 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary, to a 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary to a 275<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I was the pastor of Friedens UCC in Saint Louis for a number of years. Friedens was located in a marginal urban neighborhood. While there, I was usually bi-vocational. Other pieces of my ministry have included the founding of a domestic violence agency, hospice chaplaincy and other end of life care, and adjunct teaching at Eden Seminary and Aquinas Institute of Theology. I have been, as well, a frequent speaker, workshop presenter, writer, and retreat leader on topics of spirituality and spiritual practices, preaching, ministry in the margins, dying and death, grief, loss, and bereavement, writing, and creativity. I am currently completing a two year interim at Open Prairie United Church of Christ in Princeton, Illinois. I have shared ministry with a multitude of people with whom I have learned so much.

My family includes two young adult daughters whom I love dearly. Amanda is in Rockford, Illinois where she works for the Winnebago County Department of Health as a bilingual specialist in maternal and young children's health. She will soon finish her Master's in Public Health. She and her fiancé Carmelo will be married at Spring Creek UCC in Rockford on June 18, 2011. Molly is a first year Chicago public school teacher. She is currently on a preschool team. She is also a dancer and will be teaching dance this summer in a Chicago camp for children who have lost a parent. Molly is a member of Wellington Avenue UCC in Chicago.

In addition to my life as a pastor, teacher, writer, and parent, I am an avid reader, a walker and hiker, a story gatherer, one who loves to travel and be with all sorts of different people, and a person who treasures moments around table with others. I am more familiar with western Michigan than I am with Ann Arbor. I have a good friend in Saint Louis who has long made his family cottage in Ludington available to me for spring and fall writing times. I am very excited to meet you and to prayerfully enter ministry together at Bethlehem (in Hebrew "house of bread") where we will be nourished and sent forth by God's vibrant and unpredictable spirit.