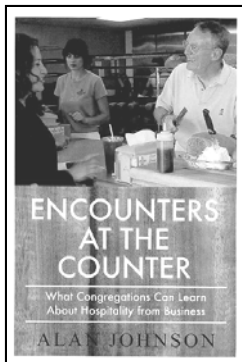




## FOCUS ON: Encountering Christ in Us



During this holiday season, many of us are having "Encounters at the Counter" - times when we have experienced the hospitality of customer service representatives as we prepare to celebrate the high, Holy Days of our faith. How have you been greeted, welcomed and assisted while you have been shopping for food and gifts and participating in pre-holiday events? Ask yourself, "What can I learn from these encounters that I can take to my congregation to help visitors we will have during this holy season feel more welcomed and encouraged to worship with us again?"

This is precisely what Alan Johnson did when he spent a year working as a customer service representative at the Great Harvest Bread Company in Boulder, Colorado. He wrote the book, Encounters at the Counter: What Congregations Can Learn about Hospitality from Business, so we all could learn from his experience. Alan is uniquely qualified to write this book because in addition to serving customers at the bread company, he is an ordained UCC minister and was formerly on the UCC national staff, serving as secretary of evangelism for spiritual and membership growth.

While you are thinking about your encounters at the counter, consider giving this book as a gift or sharing it in a study group. A free, down-loadable study guide is available. This book would make a good "Epiphany" read for an evangelism committee, greeters and ushers, and anyone wanting to welcome the stranger into their midst. It is equally good for the persons in the pew who are unsure about what to say and how to extend a welcome to people they don't know. This book is full of great stories about a college professor who wears gloves and hat into the store because his office is too cold, a young woman stuck on a highway in a severe snow-storm, the father of a child with cancer and more—stories that engage us and encourage us to provide an ever warmer welcome to those visitors who have come to worship in God's house.



*Prayers and best wishes for a blessed Christmas  
from the Church House staff*

*Ann Geneva Kay Wanda Joe Bob Josh  
Jeremy Marge Donna David Torane Mary Jerry*

### Send Prayers and Wishes to Bethlehem for Christmas 2009

As we prepare to celebrate Advent and Christmas in the security of our homes and communities, let us not forget to pray for justice, peace and security for Palestine and Israel. For the 10th consecutive year, Christmas celebrations will take place in a difficult climate for people in the Holy Land. Read more at: <http://globalministries.org/news/mee/send-prayers-and-wishes-to.html>



**PSEC OFFICES CLOSED FOR CHRISTMAS WEEK** - The Church House offices in Collegetown will be closed from Dec 24 thru Jan 4.



**PRAYER PARTNERS** - Prayers are welcome for Rev. Claude H. Schach and Christ Fountain UCC as they continue a benevolent fund that began in 2004-5. Since then they have paid heating bills for needy families totaling \$22,000. They are preparing for the winter of 2009-10 with a beginning balance of \$7500 to continue the program.