

@ The Table with MESA

Holding History

I was in New Orleans recently to meet with the UCC Association of Conference Attorneys. We talked about legal trends, current litigation, possible changes to clergy housing allowance, intellectual property rights for pastors and the potential impact of the Affordable Care Act for health care plans sponsored by religious groups. It was fascinating and hard work. The highlight of the trip however was an afternoon visit to the Amistad Research Center on the campus of Tulane University. This center houses some of the most important documents related to the UCC's legal and ecclesiastical work for justice. Our forbearers in faith raised the funds necessary to defend the rights of Mendi Captives brought to the United States on the Amistad slave ship. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court, argued by none other than John Quincy Adams. I held in my hand a letter from four of the freed slaves thanking Mr. Adams for his work on their behalf and celebrating the gifts of God in their lives. Several of the Amistad captives returned to Africa as some of the first Christian missionaries, the funds remaining from their legal case went to form American Missionary Association (AMA) schools across the country for the education of Freed Slaves, many such school continue to celebrate their relationship with the United Church of Christ.

More information about The Amistad Research Center; the nation's oldest, largest and most comprehensive independent archive specializing in the history of African Americans and other Ethnic Minorities can be found at www.amistadresearchcenter.org

Rev. Holly MillerShank

Team Leader MESA, United Church of Christ

Member St Paul's UCC, Schaefferstown PA