

# eCURRENTS

LITTLE RIVER UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Volume 55 Number 11

June 2, 2008

Editor: H.E. Beckwith

## Sacred Conversation on Racism

Racism is alive and well among us and, as always, it is not pretty. The emergence of the first serious African-American candidate for the U.S. presidency, and the Jeremiah Wright controversy, have presented our nation, and certainly our denomination, with an opportunity to resume a long-delayed conversation on racism. If we thought we had "arrived" as a nation (or as individuals), if we thought that racial prejudice was a thing of the past, we were kidding ourselves.

Like many of you, I have been reading lots of articles and opinions on this subject, and in the week following my May 11 sermon on this topic, I participated in no less than three formal discussions on racism. Participants at each discussion embraced the concept that we have work to do—and we're willing to do it.

When Little River's Church Council set aside its usual business May 14 to engage the topic, there was both energy and apparent unanimity that we need a sustained and meaningful conversation that is broadly focused including at least some of the immigrant groups in our community, a conversation that will move beyond gingerly politeness in order to grapple with issues of substance. The question is how to do this.

Although the Potomac Association of thirty UCC churches offers one obvious opportunity, at the moment the clergy are initiating a conversation among themselves (one that is not always easy) that may or may not result in opportunities to involve laity. In the meantime, what can we be doing at Little River? In Annandale? In some broader community?

Your pastors welcome your feedback, as do moderator Barbara Lowrey and other church leaders. Please share your thoughts.

*Verne*

## Summer Worship, Schedule

Our summer worship schedule has started! From now through August, we will worship together at a single 9:30 service. Care is offered for children age two and under. Children age 3-9 will begin in worship, then after the Time with Children they may either remain in worship or attend class.

**Summer office hours:** Starting Monday, June 30, the church office will close at 2:30. Normal hours (9-4:30) resume Monday, August 25.

**Offerings:** And don't forget that our ministries (and operating expenses) continue, even when you're on vacation. Please arrange to keep your pledges and offerings current while you are away.

## What's Current...

Central Atlantic Conference Meeting	2
Gifts from Caring Hands	2
For and About Seniors	2
Pride Parade and Celebration	2
Book Study: <i>Jesus: Revolutionary</i>	3
Fair Trade Pre-Summer Sale	2
Place Setters	2
Support Day for Torture Victims	3
Call for Brochure Write-Ups	3
Playground Renovation	3
Comment on Safe-Church Policy	3
Take Me Out to the Ball Game!	3
IRS Clears UCC's Obama Speech	3
Women's Book Group: <i>Salem Falls</i>	3
Stewardship Is What You Do: Greening	4
A Tribute	4
Passages	4
Links: Events, People, News	<i>back page</i>
June Calendar	<i>lrucc.org &gt; About Us</i>

**Next deadline: Thu. June 12, 4:30**

[lrucc.org/Currents/Currents\\_Schedule.html](http://lrucc.org/Currents/Currents_Schedule.html)

## "Strengthen The Church" Offering

On Sunday, June 15, Little River will receive the "Strengthen the Church" offering. Through our gifts we will deepen our commitment to be a multiracial, multicultural denomination: open, affirming, and accessible to all. We also will strengthen and renew existing congregations and provide new programs for youth and young adults. Please give generously.

## Church Council: Thinking Green

Church Council will hold a special meeting Wednesday, June 18 at 7:30 to discuss the recently adopted Thinking Green initiative. All in the church family are welcome to attend. If you have ideas or concerns about how our church should respond to this focus on environmental stewardship, please pass them on to your Council representative (if you are on a board or committee) or directly to moderator Barbara Lowrey (703-750-1966, [lowreybr\[at\]iopening\[dot\]com](mailto:lowreybr[at]iopening[dot]com)).

## Central Atlantic Conference

The annual meeting of the Central Atlantic Conference of the UCC will take place Friday-Sunday, June 13-15 at the University of Delaware in Newark. Speakers will include President and General Minister John Thomas, UCC historian Barbara Brown Zikmund, and the Rev. Paul Bryant-Smith. Besides worship and the business meeting the meeting will feature a roundtable discussion "The UCC at 50: So What?" as well as follow-up sessions.

Little River UCC will be represented by our clergy and official lay delegates, but the weekend is open to everyone. For information see the Conference website ([www.cacucc.org](http://www.cacucc.org)) or speak with Verne or Ginna.

## Gifts from Caring Hands

Caring Hands began at Little River RUCC last September to unite knitters and crocheters interested in making items for others. Projects made this year include an assortment of hats for various recipients including premature babies, the homeless, and soldiers, as well as baptism blankets for Little River babies and more.

On Sunday, June 8, a collection of items made by our knitters and crocheters will be presented during the offering before being given to Inova Fairfax Hospital, the Dinner Program for Homeless Women, our church, and the organization that will direct them to our soldiers.

If you have handmade items to add to the Caring Hands offering, please speak to Ginna Minasian Dalton or Carrie Douglas ([bdouglas1 \[at\] cox \[dot\] net](mailto:bdouglas1[at]cox[dot]net)). Everyone who has participated in Caring Hands or made items to be donated is encouraged to be present at church on June 8.

## For and About Seniors

Please join the Supportive Group on Aging Issues at the Interfaith Summit 2008 seminar "Where to Start: Closing the Gap in Serving Seniors" Wednesday, June 11, 8:30-4:30 at George Mason University in Fairfax. Please contact Ginna if you would like to go.

Speakers at the Lincolnia Senior Center in Alexandria will present information for independent living on two Thursday afternoons in June at 12:45-1:45. The topics are food safety (June 19) and nutrition (June 26). For details contact Jennifer Edge.

## Book Study: *Jesus: Revolutionary*

On Sundays June 15 and 22 at 11:00, Verne will lead a discussion of Marcus Borg's recent book *Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings, and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary* (Harper, 2006).

## Pride Parade and Celebration

Come join us to show support for the local LGBT community! March behind Little River UCC's banner in the **Capital Pride Parade** on Saturday evening, June 14. We'll assemble at about 6:00 at St. Francis Junior High School on 24th and N Streets NW. The parade will begin at 6:30. This is our chance to walk the talk of our Open & Affirming commitment. Everyone is welcome! E-mail Jennifer Atkinson ([jatkins2 \[at\] gmu \[dot\] edu](mailto:jatkins2[at]gmu[dot]edu)) if you're planning to come or if you need a ride.

Hope UCC in Alexandria will be the site of this year's **Northern Virginia Interfaith Pride Celebration** held on Monday, June 16 at 7:00 p.m. A variety of Christian and Jewish congregations are sponsoring and participating in this year's celebration, including Little River. Let Verne or Ginna know if you'd like a ride.

## Fair Trade Pre-Summer Sale

Ready for summer? Sunday, June 15 is the last chance to obtain Fair Trade items before the program's summer break—and all prices are reduced to sell out for the year! Thank you for your support of Fair Trade at Little River UCC. Net proceeds this year were designated for the Heifer Project. (Learn more about how the Heifer Project provides farm animals to the poor in developing countries at [www.heifer.org](http://www.heifer.org).)

By the way, if you do use up your supply of Fair Trade coffee, tea or chocolate during the summer, you can sometimes obtain Fair Trade items at local grocery stores. They may not carry the familiar "Equal Exchange" brand offered at Little River and other churches, but a logo of "Fair Trade Certified" and its black-and-white graphic is a trusted identifier. (See a picture and more details at [www.transfairusa.org](http://www.transfairusa.org).)

Keep in mind that buying Fair Trade items is one way we can contribute to a more just relationship with our global neighbors.

Thanks!

*Mark & Rebeca Prell*

## Place Setters

Share meals and conversation with old and new Little River friends through the summer version of Place Setters. The sign-up sheet in the atrium offers three different ways to enjoy food and friendship:

- *Dinner for Six*, where six or seven people gather in each other's homes on perhaps three occasions, sharing meals usually as a potluck;
- the *Lunch Gathering*, for people who have more free time during the day or may not like driving at night;
- the *Brunch Bunch*, which meets midday Sundays.

Each group sets its own dates, times, menus, locations (restaurant or home), and age range (adults-only or welcoming children). Sign up through Sunday, June 15.

## Support Day for Torture Victims

For many years, the United Nations has designated Thursday, June 26 as International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. That is the date the Convention Against Torture entered into force in 1987, as well as the date the United Nations Charter was signed.

Here in our local area, an organization called TASSC (Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition) designates the entire month of June each year as Torture Awareness Month and sponsors a variety of activities to highlight the need to end the scourge of torture. These activities culminate in a 24-hour vigil in Lafayette Square, attended by survivors of torture from around the world.

Also during that week, a replica of a cell from the Guantanamo detention facility will be on the National Mall, courtesy of Amnesty International. The cell is touring several US cities and will be in Washington Wednesday-Sunday, June 25-29. The cell is expected to be placed on the Washington Monument grounds near 14th Street. It will provide visitors with a glimpse of the harsh realities of indefinite detention and prolonged isolation. They will be able to record a 30-second video and will learn about what they can do to make their views known to policymakers. Constituent visits to members of Congress will take place Monday, June 30, focusing on ending torture, secret prisons, and indefinite detention.

If you would like more details, contact Gay Gardner ([gaygardner\[at\]msn\[dot\]com](mailto:gaygardner[at]msn[dot]com)).

## Call for Brochure Write-Ups

If you are in charge of publicizing activities for your group or for a special church event, please note the deadline of Thursday, July 2 for both the next Education & Enrichment Opportunities brochure. This includes both the annual (red) edition for September 2008-August 2009, which gives general descriptions of church programs, and the quarterly (black) schedule for September-November 2008. Please send write-ups to Darlene Lane ([darlene\[at\]lrucc\[dot\]org](mailto:darlene[at]lrucc[dot]org)).

## Playground Renovation

Our friends from the Annandale Co-op Preschool will be renovating the playground this summer. Work will start in early June and will include removing and replacing all equipment, grading the area, and laying new mulch. Work should be completed by the end of July. The playground will be closed during this period, but we will all look forward to enjoying the new space when it is finished.

## Comment on Safe-Church Policy

A draft of Little River's Safe Church Policy Concerning Abuse Prevention is available on Little River's web site: click on "Our Life Together," then on "Caring." Church members and friends are encouraged to study the proposal and share any feedback with Hal Price, who chaired the committee that developed this proposed policy, or with moderator Barbara Lowrey.

## Take Me Out to the Ball Game!

Summer PF invites all youth grades 7-12 to see the new stadium and watch the Nationals play the Orioles on Sunday, June 29 at 1:30. We hope to purchase \$10 tickets and take Metro to the game. Please reply to Darlene Lane ([darlene\[at\]lrucc\[dot\]org](mailto:darlene[at]lrucc[dot]org)) by Thursday, June 5 if you'd like to attend.

## IRS Clears UCC's Obama Speech

The Internal Revenue Service has ruled that the UCC did not violate conditions of its tax-free status in connection with Barack Obama's featured speech at the fiftieth-anniversary General Synod last summer. In a letter dated May 13, the IRS reviewed complaints, filed by an unnamed party, that the UCC engaged in prohibited political activity, as well as the denomination's responses concerning the timing of its invitation to Obama (which preceded his presidential candidacy), its nature (as a personal faith testimony, not a political discourse), and the safeguards the UCC took to isolate his appearance there from campaign activity.

*UC News* reports the story in a May 21 article by J. Bennett Guess ([www.ucc.org/news/](http://www.ucc.org/news/), "Concluding Its UCC Inquiry, IRS Offers Complete Vindication") and posts the complete text of the IRS letter ([www.ucc.org/news/pdf/irsmayltr.pdf](http://www.ucc.org/news/pdf/irsmayltr.pdf)).

## Book Group: *Salem Falls*

All Little River women are invited to meet on Sunday, July 20 at noon in the conference room for the next Women's Book Group discussion. The subject is *Salem Falls* by best-selling author Jodi Picoult (paper: Washington Square Press, 2002), a modern-day recasting of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. Publishers Weekly calls it "genuinely suspenseful and at times remarkably original," a "romance-mystery-morality play" whose protagonists "are forced to confront the difference between who people are and who they say they are." Amazon.com finds this story of a wronged girls'-school teacher seeking a new life in a small town "a skillfully sustained work of deep emotion and innovative plotting."





## A Tribute

Do churches have First Ladies? I've never given much thought to that question until now: "now" referring to the peaceful death of Elizabeth Beckwith May 29. The title seems not altogether inappropriate when applied to Elizabeth. Was she "first" in the sense of being a paragon of faith, hope, and love? She would have just chuckled at the question. Was she "first" in the sense of being the most important woman in the congregation? The very notion would have appalled her. Rather, Elizabeth was "first" in the sense of being the wife and partner of the founding pastor of our church, Hubert S. "Beck" Beckwith. In the early years it was in their living room that so many meetings were held, and in their yard that summer services were held. When worship took place at Annandale Elementary School, doubtless there were occasions when Elizabeth hauled folding chairs, hymnals, and other worship essentials along with everyone else. Elizabeth knew everyone, and everyone knew Elizabeth—and depended on her quiet, graceful, caring ways. If it truly can be said that Little River is a place of warmth and hospitality, Elizabeth had a critical role in making it so. I look forward to joining with you and her family in thanking God for her life and service.

*Verne*

Perhaps you have noticed the colorful rendition of the Stewardship theme for 2008 posted on the Social Hall bulletin board. It reminds us that in our actions we live out our commitment to Little River and to the church at large and to God's creation—our environment.

Recently many friends and members considered our stewardship of the earth during former member John Rogers's stimulating Public Policy and Faith class. What can each of us do in the face of climate change and its predicted consequences? John urged us to begin with conservation and be alert to opportunities to influence public policy.

This spring Claire Peterson and the Christian Social Action Committee spearheaded efforts to put some "legs" on the call to Go Green at Little River that Steve Rogers presented at our last annual meeting. Claire secured the assistance of Greater Washington Interfaith Power and Light, a nonprofit organization that helps congregations work for a more just, sustainable, and healthier creation by reducing the threat of global warming. GWIPL conducted an energy audit at Little River, which yielded a rich compendium of suggestions for our consideration and action.

And, thinking locally, lantha Baker tended our garden outside the Social Hall and narthex windows with love and skill and persistence for—how long, lantha? A long time. Because of lantha's dedication, we can enjoy beautiful seasonal and perennial blooms in our natural setting. (We hear that lantha continues to share her gardening skills in her new home outside of Richmond.)

Stewardship Is What You Do. Conserving God's creation. Little River can't do it without you.





## Links: Events, People, News

- **Calendar:** Find out about church events at [www.lrucc.org](http://www.lrucc.org) by clicking on About Us > Calendar, or pick up a printed copy of *Currents*.
- **Passages:** Pick up a printed copy of *Currents*, or subscribe to the e-mail edition, to share the latest celebrations and concerns in our church family—as well as the latest address, phone, and e-mail updates and changes in our church organizations.
- **UCC news:** Read the latest news from the United Church of Christ and learn about our denomination at [www.lrucc.org](http://www.lrucc.org) > About Us > Our Links > The UCC
- **Currents by e-mail:** See the *Currents* web page at [www.lrucc.org](http://www.lrucc.org), > About Us > Newsletter: *Currents*, or write [webteam@lrucc.org](mailto:webteam@lrucc.org).

### LITTLE RIVER UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Phone: 703-978-3060  
Fax: 703-978-3372  
E-mail: office [\[at\]lrucc \[dot\] org](mailto:office@lrucc.org)

[www.lrucc.org](http://www.lrucc.org)

#### *Senior Pastor*

The Rev. Verne E. Arens  
Verne [\[at\]lrucc \[dot\] org](mailto:Verne@lrucc.org)

#### *Associate Pastor for Christian*

*Education, Youth, and Evangelism*  
The Rev. Ginna Minasian Dalton  
ginna [\[at\]lrucc \[dot\] org](mailto:ginna@lrucc.org)

#### *Minister for Community Relations*

The Rev. James M. Bell  
jim [\[at\]lrucc \[dot\] org](mailto:jim@lrucc.org)



**Currents** is published usually biweekly (monthly in summer) for the members and friends of Little River United Church of Christ, Annandale, Virginia, and is mailed third class or by e-mail (contact the office for instructions). A public version, *eCurrents*, is posted at [www.lrucc.org](http://www.lrucc.org); click on About Us > Newsletter: *eCurrents*.

**Submissions:** Include your name and phone or e-mail address (not for publication). Please submit electronically if possible (MS Word, Word Perfect, or plain text; e-mail to [currents@lrucc.org](mailto:currents@lrucc.org)). Submit notices 3 weeks ahead of events if possible.