



## Forgiveness: Never Forgotten

Without a doubt, one sermon topic which consistently elicits energetic engagement by the congregation is forgiveness. When forgiveness was the topic September 14, there was a mix of heartfelt thank-yous, penetrating questions, and meaningful comments as I shook hands at the door. Such are the Sundays when we really need time for a Sermon Talkback session, but our September-May schedule does not easily permit it.

Why does forgiveness strike such a responsive chord? I have to assume it's because that's where we live: in the midst of debts and trespasses which we have committed or which have been done unto us, and we earnestly seek the grace to forgive and to be forgiven. The good news of the gospel is that God's love is offered to us all; we are invited to receive and live in response to it. Admittedly it's a tough, demanding journey; however—as Ginna wisely reminds us—it has no time requirement. In other words: it's not too late!

*Verne*

## One Service, One Forum

On September 28 there will be *no 11:00 worship*. Instead, you are urged to attend a special forum at which Central Atlantic Conference Minister Rev. John Deckenback and Associate Conference Minister Rev. Kwame Osei Reed will help us understand the process of finding new pastoral leadership following the retirements of Verne and Ginna. Barbara Lowrey, our moderator, will lead the forum; bring your questions.

## Fall Work Day

The Board of Trustees will host a work day on Saturday, September 27, from 8:30 am to 12:00 noon. A list of projects will be available for advance sign-up, or just come out and join the fun. There will be indoor and outdoor projects available, so come rain or shine. Refreshments will be provided!

The next work day is planned for November 27.

## October 5: Day of Unity & Care

**World Communion Sunday** falls on October 5. Help us celebrate, if you will, by wearing some article of clothing that represents your country of origin or a country you have visited, or that simply reflects the breadth and diversity of the world.

The **Neighbors in Need offering** will be received on October 5 as well. It is one of several ways we in the United Church of Christ commit ourselves to compassion and justice throughout the United States. Funds support many advocacy programs and are distributed to a wide array of congregations and nonprofit organizations that help neighbors in their communities. Please give generously because the need is great. Thank you!

**Non-perishable food** is welcome October 5, as on every communion Sunday, as an offering for the Fairfax FISH food bank, which helps neighbors in our own community who cannot provide for themselves.

## Young Adults Brunch

Little River members and friends in their twenties and thirties will meet Sunday, September 28 at 12:15 in the atrium to go to brunch, where we'll discuss possibilities for activities such as serving meals at the Dinner Program for Homeless Women in Washington.

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**Next deadline: Thu. October 2, 4:30**  
[lruc.org/Currents/Currents\\_Schedule.html](http://lruc.org/Currents/Currents_Schedule.html)

## Confirmation Class

An introductory session to the 2008-09 Confirmation Class will be held Sunday, September 28 from 5:00-6:00 p.m. in the Conference Room. If you are in the ninth grade or above, or at least 14 years old and have not received a letter of invitation, please contact the church office or speak to Verne.

## Women's Book Group

*Three Cups of Tea* by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin is the selection for the September 28 book discussion. Please join us to talk about this much-talked-about nonfiction work about an American climber's mission of love in remote Pakistan.

## Place Setters Signup

Share meals and conversation with old and new friends this fall. Sign up through Sunday, September 28 a Dinner for Eight group, a Lunch Gathering, a (Sunday) Brunch Bunch, or a shorter-term Mini Dinner Group.

## First Friday: Let the Games Begin!

Go for the gold October 3 at 6:30 with First Friday Olympics! Games, guests, and menu will set records!

As always, First Friday provides good fun and a caring environment for children six months through sixth grade. The program is open to all in the community.

For the new school year, each child must have new registration forms. Find them at [www.lrucc.org](http://www.lrucc.org): click on Our Life Together > Fellowship > First Friday. They are also looking for fun-loving people to assist each month. Contact Mike or Lorri at [frstfriday@lrucc.org](mailto:frstfriday@lrucc.org).

## Wake Up and Smell the Coffee

Coffee is second only to oil as a world commodity. It generates roughly \$80 billion in retail sales. Much of that goes to the giant conglomerates that control the coffee market. The farmers who grow the beans receive about three cents for every \$3 cup of coffee.

*Black Gold*, a recent documentary film, follows a representative of an Ethiopian cooperative union as he tries to secure a living wage for some 70,000 coffee farmers. It exposes how international markets are rigged against the nations of the global South. *Black Gold* offers an introduction to the fair trade market which has galvanized consumers throughout the world.

On Sunday, October 5 at 11:00, the Christian Social Action Committee and Public Policy and Faith will show this film. Please join us to learn how we consumers can

influence policy to ensure a more equitable relationship between those who grow coffee and those who purchase it. Drinks and light fare will be offered.

## Caring for the Caregiver

The Supportive Group on Aging Issues will discuss the crucial issue of caretaker care on Sunday, October 5 from 4:30-6:00. People who care for an older adult often ignore their own well-being. They may undergo more stress if the older adult suffers from depression or another mental illness. Teresa Dunbar discusses how caregivers can nurture themselves and talk about community service that can provide respite.

The Group's final meeting is Sunday, November 2. The topic is Brain Fitness. All are welcome.

## Casting Call for Christmas Eve

Auditions for "Matt and Lucy's Version Births," the warm-hearted play with music that will grace our 5:30 Christmas Eve service, will be held Sunday, October 5 at noon. Members and friends of all ages are invited to try out for speaking parts. Volunteers are also invited to help with coaching, stagecraft, or general support (refreshments!). Rehearsals start Sunday, October 12 and continue most Sundays through December 21. Questions? Contact director-producer Bonnie Hardy ([Barbra \[dot\] bhnotes \[at\] gmail \[dot\] com](mailto:Barbra@bhnotes@gmail.com)).

## "Tents of Hope" for Darfur

In October and November, our youth will participate in activities around Tents of Hope, a project supported by the UCC and the Christian Church (Disciples) that aims to increase awareness about the genocide and suffering in Darfur and among its refugees. Churches around the country have painted tents with messages of "hope, love, freedom, humanity, and peace" and will bring some 500 of them to the National Mall November 7-9. Our youth will attend workshops, presentations, concerts, and worship with other Potomac Association youth.

To support this event, PFers will collect used cell phones for recycling starting Monday, October 6. Look for phone recycling boxes at church—as well as the painted tent generously loaned by Rock Spring UCC.

Join a painting party October 12! Help write messages on canvas squares destined to be made into tents in Chad. A donation of \$5.00 per square is requested to cover costs and support Tents of Hope.

Can you host Tents of Hope visitors in your home November 7-9? Please contact Carrie Douglas ([bdouglas@cox.net](mailto:bdouglas@cox.net)). And learn more about Tents of Hope at [www.tentsofhope.org](http://www.tentsofhope.org).

## Public Policy: Warming & Poverty

On Sunday, October 12 at 11:00, Habiba Gitay, a specialist in climate change and adaptation at the World Bank Institute, will talk about how global warming affects the very poor, particularly in Africa, and will discuss what we can do to cope with the resulting problems. She will be accompanied by Maya Brahmam, a communications specialist at the World Bank, who will help answer our questions. All are welcome to this Public Policy and Faith discussion.

## Blessing of the Animals

Little River will offer its first-ever blessing of the animals on Sunday, October 12 at 12:30 in the grove behind the narthex. Bring your favorite animal(s) to this brief celebrative service of word and song, led by Verne, Ginna, and Bonnie Hardy.

## Food or Rent? Use More SALT

For many of us, higher prices mean shopping smarter and forgoing occasional treats. For the working poor, the choice may be dire: feed the family or pay the rent? Low wages, high rents, and meager emergency benefits mean homelessness for many Virginia families. What can you do?

Join Social Action Linking Together (SALT) and advocate for social justice for the poor and vulnerable. SALT's legislative agenda calls for a modest increase in temporary assistance benefits and a rental assistance pilot program for low-wage earners. Come to SALT's fall conference on Saturday, October 25 from 9:00-11:30 a.m. at St. Thomas à Becket Parish in Reston to learn how to make a difference. Find out more at [www.S-A-L-T.org](http://www.S-A-L-T.org) or contact John Horejsi ([jhorejsi \[at\] cox \[dot\] net](mailto:jhorejsi@cox.net)).

*Ginny Peters*

## College Student Contact Info

Parents of college students, both first-year and returning: please make sure the church has your student's current address and email! Simply leave a note in the Christian Education Administrator's mail box or email [darlene \[at\] lrucc \[dot\] org](mailto:darlene@lrucc.org).

## October OWL Retreat for Youth

The Our Whole Lives class on life, faith, and sexuality will not be held this church school year. Last year's OWL class was not able to finish important elements of the curriculum.

So on Friday evening, October 24, Little River invites all teens to a retreat from 5:00 to 11:00 that focuses on key aspects of the OWL program. This retreat is open to all teens, whether new to OWL or prior participants.

The aim is to help young people make informed, responsible decisions about their sexual health and behavior. The OWL program will equip them with accurate, age-appropriate information about human development, relationships, personal skills, sexual behavior, sexual health, and society and culture. Taking a holistic view of sexuality, OWL promotes building values and social skills based on self-worth, responsibility, justice, inclusivity, and sexual health. And OWL is fun too!

For a more thorough introduction, permission forms, and answers to your questions, please contact Eric Pankey or Jennifer Atkinson ([epankey \[at\] gmU \[dot\] edu](mailto:epankey@gmu.edu), [jatkins2 \[at\] gmU \[dot\] edu](mailto:jatkins2@gmu.edu)).

## Sunday School Surge

We are pleased with the great turnout—more than 60—for church school registration. Now we are looking for parents and other volunteers to help us fill some gaps so we can deliver the church school program to our terrific young people.

Our goal is to broaden participation from our congregation and gain some new ideas to tie church school activities in with the wider church. The curriculum has been planned for the year, and we are now seeking your help to make it happen.

The following age groups have immediate needs:

- 2-3: a third teacher so all can get breaks regularly.
- 6-11: two or three more guides to help gather and lead children to workshops throughout the year. We also need teachers after October for individual 3-week rotations.
- 12-13: two more adults to help the teacher.
- 14-18: two adults to help the current teacher.
- a church school host to greet the children as they arrive and see that teachers have what they need.

*We truly need at least 9 or 10 people to help out.* Come and join in the fun! The most important skill you need is simply being there for our kids.

Please contact Michael Craven ([michael\\_d\\_craven \[at\] msn \[dot\] com](mailto:michael_d_craven@msn.com)), Jane Wallace ([janehwallace \[at\] junocom](mailto:janehwallace@junocom)), or Liz Baker Horner ([bak2liz \[at\] comcast \[dot\] net](mailto:bak2liz@comcast.net)) if you can help.

*Liz Horner*



## Council Acts Against Torture

At its September 10 meeting, Church Council voted unanimously to endorse the Declaration of Principles for a Presidential Executive Order on Prisoner Treatment, Torture and Cruelty, sponsored by the National Religious Campaign Against Torture. NRCAT seeks endorsements of the six principles from as many congregations as possible as it prepares to make a post-election appeal to the newly elected President to issue an Executive Order that incorporates the principles. (See full text at [www.nrcat.org](http://www.nrcat.org): click on "Tell the President: Ban Torture!" and scroll down.) Their essence arguably is encapsulated in the first principle, the "Golden Rule," which states that the United States will not authorize or use any methods of interrogation that we would not find acceptable if used against Americans, be they civilians or soldiers.

Mindful that it can speak only for itself and not for the congregation, Council also discussed the possibility of bringing this matter before the next annual meeting in January, if it still appears to be timely then. Meanwhile, individuals can also endorse the Declaration of Principles by signing the petition at [www.nrcat.org](http://www.nrcat.org).

*Gay Gardner*

Christian Social Action Committee

## The Moral Courage to Act

All Sunday schoolers are familiar with the parable of the Good Samaritan. The parable illustrates the fundamental notion that man should be compassionate toward his fellow man. However, a corollary to that notion is that compassion by itself is inadequate. The Samaritan possessed not only compassion but also the moral courage to act on it, despite the apathy of others.

This church is full of individuals who have demonstrated the courage to act in the face of apathy. One of them is my father, Albert I. Kassabian.

In 1963, segregation in Fairfax County Public Schools was the law of land. The Commonwealth of Virginia was in the throes of "massive resistance" to the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision *Brown v. Board of Education*, which invalidated segregation in public education, but left it to the states to enforce the means of desegregation. Like many Southern jurisdictions, Virginia openly refused to recognize the decision. The Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act had yet been passed, and Virginia was run by the conservative Byrd machine. Plainly and simply, intentional government action prohibited African-American children from being educated with Caucasian children in Fairfax County Public Schools.

During this period, a courageous young mother came to my father's two-man law office in Annandale. She had refused to sign a mandatory pupil placement form which required her children to attend segregated schools. As a result, Fairfax County immediately suspended her children from school. She walked into my father's law office with no resources and asked for assistance.

It would have been easier for my father, like the priest and Levite in the parable, to "pass on the other side" and not act. Taking on this case meant no remuneration for substantial work, at the expense of paying clients. It meant taking on Fairfax County, an adversary with unlimited resources and the southern tradition of over 100 years of "separate but equal." Paying clients and even some distant relatives would be alienated by his decision to take on such an unpopular and divisive cause. He could have been apathetic; or worse, he could have been compassionate, but passive.

Instead, Dad championed her cause and successfully pursued the matter to the Virginia Supreme Court, the General Assembly's Thompson Commission, and finally the United States Supreme Court. His choice to act resulted in the termination of *de jure* segregation in Fairfax County Public Schools.

The members of this church should be cognizant and proud of its rich tradition of not only being compassionate towards others, but also having the moral courage to act on that compassion in the face of apathy.

There are no fewer opportunities to act today.

Stewardship is what you do.

*Brett A. Kassabian*



# LITTLE RIVER

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## Links: Events, People, News

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- **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
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