

eCURRENTS



LITTLE RIVER UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Editor: H.E. Beckwith

Thankful for Small Blessings

Last Thanksgiving, dinner began with our granddaughter Aghavni stepping up to offer the thanksgiving prayer without waiting for the usual debate about who was going to say it. Meshed in the circle of adults, out came this little but strong voice obviously full of conviction, singing:

*God our Father, God our Father
Here we are, here we are
Asking for a blessing, asking for a blessing
Thank you God, Thank you God.*

"Now everybody, you sing with me," she said. So who were we but those who follow such direction?! We all sang with equal enthusiasm as the smile on her face revealed awareness of her leadership.

Later her family—filled with female clergy—decided that we had to delicately encourage her to sing "God our Parent . . ." So the invitation was issued to her to consider that language. She thought for a moment, obviously taking in the idea, and then said with that

same assurance, "I don't think so."

So it goes—we sing what we are taught and we teach what we have come to know. For now, I will be grateful that she thanks God at all.

Blessed thanks live within you,
Ginna

Welcome New Members!

On November 16, Little River welcomed three friends into full membership. Congratulations to Cameron Lynn and Dave & Kathy Sukites. Watch for introductions in a future issue of *Currents*.

For the Recently Deceased

We will offer prayers of thanksgiving on **Sunday, November 23** for loved ones who have died during the past twelve months. We invite you to contribute the names of family members and close friends whose loss you mourn by contacting the church office. Please indicate your relationship to the deceased and, if you submit a name in writing, please include help with pronunciation if it is likely to be needed.

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Next deadline: Thu. November 27, 4:30
lrucc.org/Currents/Currents_Schedule.html

Thanksgiving Offering

You are invited to make a Thanksgiving offering to the Deacons' and Pastors' Benevolence Fund, which is used to respond to emergency needs that arise for individuals within our congregation and in the local community. You may use the "Thanksgiving" envelope that is included in your box of offering envelopes, or you may simply write a check payable to Little River UCC with "Thanksgiving" on the memo line.

Ember Evening: Hour of Calm

The Women's Ministry Team invites everyone to the sanctuary on **Wednesday, November 19** from 7:30 pm to 8:30 p.m. for a time of quiet personal reflection guided by music, prayer, and silence in order to prepare spiritually for the upcoming holiday season.

White Gift Christmas Tree

Beginning **Sunday, November 23**, the White Gift Christmas tree will be in the atrium expressing the Christmas hopes of young children from ACCA, Main Street Child Development Center, and Shaw Community Ministry. For each gift tag you select, please purchase one of the gifts suggested, or something similar, in the \$25-\$50 range. All gifts are meant to be offered at the December 14 White Gift service (or brought to church before that day). Take only as many tags as you are able to provide gifts.

Shepherd's Center Helpers

The Shepherd's Center Annandale-Springfield is a non-profit group whose goal is seniors helping seniors, providing opportunities for fellowship, education, and local trips. To help seniors remain in their own residences as they age, the Center is starting two new services. "Handy Helpers" will assist seniors who need, but cannot perform, repairs—minor carpentry, simple plumbing and electrical repairs, small paint jobs—to help keep their homes safe and livable. "Friendly Callers" will link senior volunteers with seniors who would appreciate an occasional phone call to hear a friendly voice and talk about local events and mutual interests, as well as learn about other services Shepherd's Center offers.

If you are interested in becoming a "Handy Helper" or "Friendly Caller," or if you or someone you know might benefit from these services, please contact the Center, which is located at 7610 Newcastle Drive, Annandale 22003 (703-941-1419, *info [at] shepherdscenter-annandale [dot] org*).

Birth of a Congregation

Little River members and friends are cordially invited to attend an Ecclesiastical Council called for 3:00 p.m. **Sunday, November 23**, here at LRUCC, for the purpose of considering of the recommendation of the Potomac Association Committee on Church and Ministry to receive the United Church of Christ of Fredericksburg, Virginia as a church in full standing within the Association, the Central Atlantic Conference, and the United Church of Christ.

An affirmative vote will mean that the UCC of Fredericksburg (which Little River has sponsored as a new church start) will officially be a UCC church. A happy "birthday" is anticipated.

Footsteps: Next Stop Mexico?

On **Sunday, November 23** at 11:00, Ann Lutterman will discuss the work of the Center for Global Education

where she is Site Director for Mexico. The Center is nationally recognized for its work in experiential, intercultural, and educational travel opportunities. More than 9,000 people have participated in their international travel seminars, which expose travelers to a variety of points of view, especially the perspectives of those working for justice and human dignity.

Ann, a UCC minister, is the daughter of Jean Lutterman, whom many of you know. A visit to Mexico is among trips being considered for the next Footsteps journey, but this presentation should be of interest to travelers and stay-at-homes alike.

Find out more about the Center at its website (*www.centerforglobaleducation.org*).

Fall Cleanup Day

The Trustees have scheduled an outdoor work day for **Saturday, November 29** from 9:00 to noon. The primary activity will be raking leaves, so please bring rakes, tarps, blowers, and gloves. If you have family visiting for the Thanksgiving holiday, bring them along—all are welcome! Refreshments will be provided. A rain date has been set for Saturday, December 6.

Hanging of the Greens

November 30 is the first Sunday in Advent and time to decorate our church for Advent and Christmas. Everyone is welcome to join the Deacons from 12:15 to 1:30 to "deck the halls" with greenery, wreaths and other signs of the season. Cider and snacks will be provided.

FISH Seeks Computer

A family in the adopt-a-family program of Fairfax FISH has asked for a used computer for their two children to use for school work. If you know of someone who is getting rid of an older computer in good working condition, please contact our FISH representative, Susan Kennedy (*sjmail100 [at] verizon [dot] net*).

Brass Concert for Shaw

On **Saturday, December 6** at 7 p.m., our Westmoreland UCC church located at 1 Westmoreland Circle Bethesda, MD is hosting an enjoyable evening featuring the noted DC Chamber Brass group. A reception will follow and Christmas quilts will be on exhibit. An offering will be made to support the Shaw Community Ministry.

Out with the New, In with Old!

The Children's committee of the Board of Christian Education has decided to change the class for our 6- to 11-year-olds from the Workshop Rotation Model to a multi-age program for ages 6-10 and, starting in January, an expanded Junior High class that will include 11-year-olds. We will continue to use many Workshop Rotation techniques and curriculum, but we are adapting the program to fit the reality of our church school.

This is being done for a number of reasons. First, we will move the 11-year-olds to the traditional class with the 12-13 year olds to reflect the age groupings of Joyful Noise and the Junior Pilgrim Fellowship. It is easier for children to develop relationships with each other if they are with the same age ranges as often as possible. Second, attendance has fluctuated greatly, and we often have only one or two children in an age group. This does not allow the teachers to employ the full lesson, which therefore loses a lot of its impact. Last, we have had difficulty recruiting teachers and guides. This has forced us to adapt the lessons many times and in effect adopt a more multi-age approach, which has been positively received.

Our new multi-age program still teaches the lessons in a variety of styles, including stories, movement, drama, crafts, and academics. It includes only the 6- to 10-year-olds but allows for more age mixing than did the Workshop Rotation Model. We are continuing the Gathering Time, which has received positive feedback from everyone.

The multi-age model offers three classes each month, two per week in rotation (classes A and B the first week, B and C the second, and A and C the third). Children will choose which class to attend each week. They may go to all three classes or repeat a favorite if they like. Most classes meet in the big room, which should allow for better adult supervision, especially if some of the volunteers are absent.

Much of the program remains the same, but we are moving formally away from the Workshop Rotation Model toward the multi-age style, which is more like the one-room school approach of the past.

Questions and concerns can be voiced to Mike Craven, Jane Wallace, or Ginna.

Becoming a Faithful Advocate

Plan to attend Social Justice U, an educational training program on faithful advocacy and civic participation focused on social-justice issues coming before the 2009 Virginia General Assembly. Sponsored by the Northern Virginia chapter of the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, this program will be held on **Sunday, December 7** from 2:00 to 5:00 at the Addison Academic Center Auditorium, Virginia Theological Seminary, 3737 Seminary Road, Alexandria. Father Gerry Creedon of St. Charles Borromeo Catholic

Church will give the keynote address. Breakout sessions will be held on immigration, car title lending, and health care access.

Register at www.ga4.org/interfaithcenter/events/NoVASJU/ or, for more details, contact Ryan Rinn ([ryan \[at\] virginiainterfaithcenter \[dot\] org](mailto:ryan[at]virginiainterfaithcenter[dot]org)).

Pam Binninger

Christian Social Action Committee

Hall Display: Nativity Scenes

The Arts Committee is planning a display of Nativity scenes from around world in December. We are asking you to share your pictures, photos, paintings, or 3-D Nativity scenes that we can hang on the walls. Perhaps you would be interested in presenting and displaying special Nativity scenes on tables in the Fellowship Hall between services on Sunday, December 21 with personal stories or explanations of your presentation. Items will be collected in the Arts Committee Mail Box through **Sunday, December 7**. If are interested in having your photos or items hung in the hallways during the holiday season, or you have any questions, please contact Irina Melusky ([irinak \[at\] mindspring \[dot\] com](mailto:irinak[at]mindspring[dot]com)).

First Friday: Christmas Visitors

Parents: **Friday, December 5** is your big night! While you're out looking at the holiday decorations or whatever, your children and their friends will have dinner, activities, and even cookies with Santa and the Grinch. Mortimer the famous Christmas mouse will also be there to show us what he'll be doing this year. So register your naughty-or-nice children: put them on the First Friday list for Santa to check twice!

As always, First Friday provides parents with an evening alone while children six months through sixth grade spend 6:30-9:30 in a fun, safe, loving, age-appropriate environment. First Friday is for all children in the community, not just Little River members and friends. For information and to register, go to www.lrucc.org and click on Fast Links: Activities for All Ages > First Friday. Preregistration for this session ends Wednesday, December 3.

Calling all festive adults and teens: we need your help too! Be a part of the merriment and sign up for the fun. To volunteer or find out more, contact Lorri ([firstfriday \[at\] lrucc \[dot\] org](mailto:firstfriday[at]lrucc[dot]org)).

First Friday will take a holiday in January to give volunteers a much-needed rest. If you see a volunteer around the church, neighborhood, or school, give them a pat on the back, a hug, or just a big "Thanks!" for their time and talent. First Friday can't run without them!



A Cultural Tsunami

This year's election was like nothing I have ever experienced. I wish I could say that I knew all along it would turn out like this, but that would not be true. I was shocked. I still can't believe it. For those of us who date the early development of our social conscience with the civil rights movement, there is a realization that much of our lives are spent in the pursuit of a dream, in search of an ideal, in a goal driven society. We didn't think a lot about what we would do if we got what we wanted, because that seemed more remote than probable. After all, it would seem pretty safe to say that those customs and behaviors and patterns that have been in existence for centuries could be considered as cultural concrete. Then we have this culture shattering election. No matter what happens now, we have seen the promised land. It is there.

But my joy is tempered by a stark reality. On Tuesday November 11, not even a full week since the conclusion of the election, I saw this chilling quote from a Polish legislator in *The Washington Post*. "This marks the end of the white man's civilization. America will soon pay a high price for this quirk of democracy." When comments like this fall on already combustible constituencies, they become words of mass destruction. His is just one example of such sentiments in the same article. He and his government later apologized, but of course that is like trying to put the smoke back into the fire.

Little River UCC came into existence in conjunction with the civil rights movement. As hopeful as we have a right to be, realizing that hope will require a sequel to where we began. A multiracial and multicultural dialogue would be a good place to start.

Dorothy Ogilvy-Lee

Little River Multiracial Multicultural Initiative

Kitchen Tutorial

We have some heavy-duty equipment in our church kitchen, and in recent years we have been losing expertise in how to use and maintain it. One of our former experts, non-resident member and chef extraordinaire Klaus Alt, will spend several hours providing a kitchen tutorial for all interested church members starting around noon on **Sunday, December 7**. He will give instructions on how to use and maintain the equipment, and he has also indicated that he may provide some simple demonstrations of how to use it. "But the corollary is," says Klaus, "that I am counting on the participants to eat whatever we produce." Need we say more?

SERRV "Greater Gift" Sale

As Christmas approaches, with its invitation to engage in worship and celebration, let us remember God's challenge as spoken by Isaiah: "Is this not the fast I require: to loose the fetters of injustice, to untie the knots of the yoke, and set free those who are oppressed?" (Isaiah 58:6) Starting **Sunday, December 7**, the Christian Social Action Committee will hold "A Greater Gift" sale of items from SERRV, a nonprofit alternative trade organization that promotes justice and progress for people in developing countries. Sales take place after both services and will continue until December 21 if items remain. All money collected will go to SERRV, which returns about 40% of sales directly to producers. By purchasing SERRV partners' expertly crafted products, you can help promote living wages, women's and children's rights, humane working conditions, and environmentally friendly production.

There will be an abundance of items for sale again this year, including beautiful baskets, scented soaps, colorful candles, original ornaments, jazzy jewelry, mellifluous musical instruments, terrific toys, and much more. Many items are inexpensive, making them excellent choices for children to buy for family members.

Please celebrate Christmas with gifts that give twice: to the friends who receive them and to the artisans who create them. To learn more about SERRV, visit www.agreatergift.org.

Young Adults: "Saving Jesus"

Paul says in Philippians 1:18, "The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice." But who is the Christ being preached today? Is our only understanding of him coming from conservative and fundamentalist churches? Do we have the knowledge and understanding to show forth the Christ we believe in? How do we as third-millennium Christians see Christ?

You are invited Sundays **January 11, 18, 25** and **February 8, 15, and 22** at 2:00-4:00 to explore questions raised by "Saving Jesus," a part of the *Living the Questions* series. Using video and written material from leading voices in Christian thought such as Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan, the "Saving Jesus" curriculum encourages participants to engage in thoughtful group discussion, which Chris Weakley will lead. He and Chris Stevens will host the sessions in their home. Please sign up in the atrium now through **Tuesday, December 30**.



Calling All Junior Thespians

Little River needs children to play assorted animals, shepherds, angels, and wise men (and women) in the upcoming play, "Matt and Lucy's Version Birth," to be performed at the 5:00 family service on Christmas Eve. These non-speaking roles are perfect for the more timid among our budding stars. There will be only one rehearsal, on **Sunday, December 21**, 3:00-5:00. Simple costumes will be provided.

If you are interested or have questions, contact Virginia Million (*va1026 [at] msn [dot] com*).

Stewardship Campaign News

Thank you to the many, many members and friends who brought their 2009 financial pledges to worship on Consecration Sunday or returned them to the church prior to November 9. At this writing, the 120 pledges received total \$434,792 (more than half of the 2009 proposed expenses) and about half of all pledges to date are increased over last year. We have a good way to go, but we are off to a great start!

If you have not made your 2009 pledge yet, please return your pledge card to the church office, place it in the offering plate on Sunday, or give it to any member of the Stewardship Committee: Jan Curtis, Bruce Summers, Brett Kassabian, Michael Alt, Neil Carey, Gary Allen, Tracy Lee, or Bill Middleton. Additional pledge brochures are in the literature racks, or call the church office to receive a brochure by mail.

Remember, Stewardship is What You Do—and we need everyone's participation so that Little River can fulfill its many ministries.

Jan Curtis

Thanks from College Ministries

Dear Friends at Little River UCC,

As we mark the second anniversary of moving to Little River UCC we want you to know how grateful United College Ministries is for your hospitality. There is not a week that goes by that we do not thank God for your generosity. Being centrally located to the campuses we serve, having twice the space that we had before, and experiencing the friendliness of your members and staff means more than we can possible say. Many thanks and all God's blessings to Little River UCC.

Denise

The Rev. Denise Giacomozzi May
Minister Director
United College Ministries in Northern Virginia





Links: Events, People, News

- **Calendar:** Find out about church events at 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 > About Us > Our Links > The UCC
- **Currents by e-mail:** See the *Currents* web page at www.lrucc.org, > About Us > Newsletter: *Currents*, or write [webteam \[at\] lrucc.org](mailto:webteam@lrucc.org).

LITTLE RIVER UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

*welcoming diversity, independent thought,
& faithful action*

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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 \[at\] lrucc \[dot\] org](mailto:currents@lrucc.org)). Submit notices 3 weeks ahead of events if possible.