

# eCURRENTS

LITTLE RIVER UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Volume 55 Number 21

December 1, 2008

Editor: H.E. Beckwith

## Thanksgiving and Simply Giving

Something rather powerful happened at the 9:30 Everyone In Worship service November 23. Preacher Bonnie Hardy asked us to name—within the period of a minute—one favorite food we associate with Thanksgiving. Young and old alike eagerly named their favorites. Then, like a splash of cold water, Bonnie informed us that in the minute we took to name our favorite foods, somewhere in the world seventeen people died of hunger. It was our response to her next question which came as an epiphany for me, however. She asked us to raise our hand if we had known someone who died of hunger. No one did.

For the most part we in Fairfax County are isolated from those who are most vulnerable to hunger, disease, homelessness, and all the other consequences of severe poverty. Yes, you and I can be mightily challenged by a lack of resources and few opportunities. At some point many of us have had to do without a meal, a doctor visit, something we really needed (vs. wanted), but unlike so many others around the world, our lives or those of our loved ones have not been in jeopardy. How do we respond to such inequality? Not by

thanking God that we are so fortunate, but by praying, working, and sharing so there's enough for all. Actually, there already is enough for all; we must only make sure it gets to everyone and not just a privileged few.

*Verne*

## Advent-Christmastime Events

### December 7 *Second Sunday of Advent*

**Communion and Food Collection** accepting non-perishable items for the pantry of Fairfax FISH, serving those in our area in urgent need.

**SERRV "Greater Gift" Sale** continues after both services. Support fair-trade artisans by buying handcrafted gifts and sustainably raised edibles.

### December 14 *Third Sunday of Advent*

**Advent Choral Music** during worship (9:30 & 11:00):  
Bach's *Magnificat* with soloists and instruments.

**"Greater Gift" Sale** continues if items remain.

**White Gift Service** (5:00) Children and adults experience the meaning of the Christmas season through our enactment of the Magi bringing their gifts to Jesus. Worshipers follow the procession, offering gifts wrapped in plain white for low-income children. (See "White Gift Christmas Tree" below.) A reception will follow.

### December 21 *Fourth Sunday of Advent*

**Worship with Carols** (9:30 & 11:00) Joyous worship to anticipate the Nativity!

### December 24 (Wednesday) *Christmas Eve*

**Family Pageant** (5:00) A warmhearted look at the Bible's different Christmas stories, "Matt and Lucy's Version Births" features the talents of Little River's most enthusiastic actors and singers!

**Candlelight Worship** (9:00) A mood of joyful wonder on Christmas Eve with lessons, carols, and reflection.

**The Christmas Offering** will be received at both services. Half will benefit the Christmas Fund (for retired UCC clergy in need) and half will be split between Food for Others and the Dinner Program for Homeless Women. Make checks payable to Little River UCC and noted Christmas Offering.

### December 28 *First Sunday after Christmas*

**Worship at 11:00 only:** Joyous worship for all ages rings in the new year. Care will be available for infants and toddlers; church school will not meet.

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**Next deadline: Thu. December 11, 4:30**  
[lruc.org/Currents/Currents\\_Schedule.html](http://lruc.org/Currents/Currents_Schedule.html)

## Enhancing Worship in Advent

**Home worship booklets:** Little River's Advent booklet is now available in the narthex. Please take one home to help you move more gently into the season and focus on the spiritual journey the season offers.

**Advent wreath helpers:** Singles, couples, friends, and families are invited to lead the call to worship and light the Advent wreath candles at any Sunday service before Christmas. Please contact Verne immediately.

**White Gift Christmas tree:** The tree in the atrium holds tags expressing the Christmas hopes of young children from several programs for needy children. Please take one or more tags and buy *one* of the gifts on *every* tag you take, or something similar, in the \$25-\$50 range. Bring the gifts, wrapped in plain white paper, to the White Gift service December 14 (or prior).

**Nativity Scenes Hall Display:** Hang your pictures, photos, paintings, or 3-D Nativity scenes in the hallway, or display and talk about your special Nativity scene in the Fellowship Hall at 10:30 Sunday, December 21. Place items or notice in the Arts Committee mailbox through **Sunday, December 7**. Questions? Contact Irina Melusky (*irinak [at] mindspring [dot] com*).

## Sanctuary Flowers, Poinsettias

The 2009 flower chart will be posted in the social hall on **Sunday, December 7**. Please sign up to sponsor flowers on any Sunday not already taken.

You are also invited to provide 6½-inch red or white or 2½-inch white mini-poinsettias in the sanctuary starting Sunday, December 21, in honor or memory of a loved one. The deadline for ordering is **Sunday, December 14**. The cost is \$12 per 6½-inch pot or \$3.50 per 2½-inch pot. Please make your check payable to Little River UCC, noting "Flower Fund" on the check and envelope. Place your order with payment in the offering plate or leave it in the church office.

### Christmas Poinsettias

Number of 6½-inch red: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$12.00

Number of 6½-inch white: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$12.00

Number of 2½-inch white: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$3.50

Total cost: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Your name:

Phone:

In **honor** / **memory** (*mark one*) of:

I **will** / **will not** (*mark one*) take my poinsettia(s) home after the late Christmas Eve service.

## Gifts of Warmth Through FISH

Fairfax FISH urgently seeks donations of gently used blankets, sleeping bags, jackets, hats, and mittens for adults and children. A collection box at church will receive your outgrown or no-longer-favorite wraps and extra blankets. Or may take donations to the FISH Clothing Closet at Fairfax Presbyterian Church, 10723 Main Street (703-273-5300, [www.fairfaxpresby.com](http://www.fairfaxpresby.com)) on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and the first Saturday of each month, 9:30-noon. Thank you.

## A Welcoming Cake

On **Sunday, December 21** during the 10:30 coffee hour, please enjoy the "we are happy for you" cake in honor of our organist-choir director and church school teacher and their soon-to-be-born baby girl.

*Shirley and Denny Bloomquist*

## Calling Actors and Singers

**Pageant Roles for Children:** Non-speaking humans and animal roles are available in the Christmas Eve 5:00 family pageant. There one rehearsal is on **Sunday, December 21**, 3:00-5:00. Simple costumes will be provided. Contact Virginia Million (*va1026 [at] msn [dot] com*).

**Sing Music of the Americas:** On **Sunday, December 28** we will continue our Christmas celebration with music from Central and South America. Singers of all ages and all voices are needed. Contact Julie Holm (*julie [at] lrucc [dot] org*).

## Holiday Hosts for Students

For international students at NOVA without cars, feeling at home in our area is a challenge. Consider inviting Welcome Center students to your home for a meal or a holiday celebration, or ask them along on a weekend outing. We expect that you will enjoy your time with them as much as we Welcome Center hosts do on Thursday afternoons. Whether you plan to go hiking or skiing, to natural areas or holiday light displays, an arts center, historical site, or regional town, students would love the ride and the knowledge you could share. And you would meet these delightful students.

Please take a form from the narthex, briefly write down your activity and contact information, and slip it into the Welcome Center box in the office. Or call the church office by any Thursday noon and students will see your form that afternoon.

*Lois Wyatt*

## Being There for Wellspring

Most of you are aware that Wellspring UCC in Centreville grew out of Little River's western neighborhood. Folks in the Centreville area bemoaned the long drive to church (especially on weeknights!) and recognized the need for a progressive church in their community. That vision was fulfilled in 2000 when Wellspring formally became a UCC congregation, although the road has not been easy. Their core group now numbers about 20, and their part-time interim pastor is our own Al Fuentes.

The good folks at this small but dynamic congregation are requesting our help. They are asking if a handful of our people would worship with them at least two Sundays a month for the next six to twelve months. They sense that their small size may deter visitors from joining a group where they would be too visible.

This could be a rewarding ministry if you are interested in church growth and enjoy different forms of worship and congregational life. If you're willing to consider this possibility, please speak to Verne or Ginna

## Year-End Business

**Financial contributions** for which you wish to receive tax credit for 2008 must be placed in the offering plates or church office by Sunday, December 28.

**Bills and vouchers** for 2008 disbursements must be given to comptroller Mark Holm before the year's end.

**Annual reports** should reach the church office, preferably electronically, by Sunday, December 28. Church groups use annual reports to list all who served in 2008, summarize the year's business for the record, suggest future directions, give financial reports on any separate accounts or funds, and make the congregation aware of the group and its activities.

**Currents** will go on a tri-weekly schedule from mid-December until late January. (See the 2009 schedule below.) The next deadlines are December 11 and January 1 for publication January 6. The normal schedule resumes with the January 22 deadline.

Please note that any items intended to be read before the annual meeting must be submitted by **Thursday, January 1**.

## Little River Members in Print

Two Little River members who are also faculty members at George Mason University have new books appearing in print.

*Drift Ice* (Etruscan, 2008) is poet Jennifer Atkinson's latest collection, a volume of spiritual and ecological reflections focusing especially on the site of the Exxon-Valdez oil spill in Alaska, the Connecticut River at Long Island Sound, and the pre-tsunami shores of Sri Lanka.

Al Fuentes, assistant professor in conflict resolution, has published *Community-based Warviews, Resiliency*

*and Healing*, based on his doctoral study of internally displaced persons in Mindanao, Philippines and Karen refugees on the Thai-Burmese border, and how their conceptions of their war experiences affect their resiliency and ability to rebuild health and community. It will be published in October by Verlag Dr. Mueller.

## Young Adults: "Saving Jesus"

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. Video and written material from leading voices in Christian thought encourages thoughtful group discussion, which Chris Weakley will lead at his home. Please sign up in the atrium by **Tuesday, December 30**.

## Women's Covenant Group

Little River Women's Ministry announces the formation of a Women's Covenant Group. Through regular meetings and candid conversation, this confidential gathering will foster deep committed relationships among women at church. Members of a Covenant Group agree that all who participate will:

- Hold all shared experiences in total confidence.
- Make every effort to attend all gatherings unless an emergency interrupts or one's absence has been shared with the group ahead of time.
- Support others in the group in each person's spiritual journey through the issues raised.

You are invited to express your interest by contacting Ginna by Tuesday, January 20. The first eight women who sign up will form the first Covenant Group. Any others who sign up will form a second group—for women or both genders, as desired. The first group will meet 1:00-2:30 every Thursday beginning January 22. Other groups and leaders will choose their own meeting times.

## Thanks for Baptismal Blankets

Thank you to all who so generously donated lovely baptismal blankets. We have enough to last some time now and are grateful for your kindness.

## Afternoon Agape Group

Beginning in January, the afternoon women's Agape group will meet only once a month—on the fourth Tuesday. The time remains 1:30-3:00. The Agape group offers women a time to drop in for sharing and discussion around topics that require no preparation.



## Youth Summer Travel

Save the dates and plan your preparations for these proposed Y-GELI and PF trips! Watch for registration deadlines and possible rescheduling or other changes.

**Y-GELI Phase 2 (ages 14-18): Costa Rica.** Depart Dulles Airport the morning of Saturday June 27; return late night on Thursday, July 2. Registration fee: \$250. A passport is required; apply soon.

**Y-GELI Phase 1 (ages 11-13): Civil Rights Immersion Experience, Memphis.** Depart from National Airport the morning of Thursday, July 9; return the night of Sunday, July 12. Registration fee: \$150.

**Y-GELI Phases 1 & 2: Lead worship.** Planning meeting with lunch Monday, July 13, 10:00-1:00; lead worship Sunday July 19, 9:30. All Y-GELI travelers in Phases 1 & 2 must participate.

**Senior PF (ages 14-18): Central Atlantic Conference Youth Event, Stevenson University, Stevenson, MD.** Depart church at noon Friday, July 24; return Sunday morning, Sunday July 26 for Verne's last Sunday! Registration fee: approximately \$225.

## New Director for Shaw Ministry

Ann Troy is the new executive director of Shaw Community Ministry, the UCC joint initiative in a depressed area of northwest Washington. A former military and government attorney and ordained minister, Ann started a youth mentoring program at Faith UCC and community outreach at Bethesda Presbyterian.

"As an immigrant's daughter whose first language is Chinese," writes Ann, "I grew up with economic challenges and saw first-hand how growing up in America as a female of color creates great obstacles in learning, self-esteem and confidence." Her way out of this cycle was through mentors and education. "My deep gladness is to serve the people of Shaw with hope, deep respect and love; moving and changing one heart at a time."

## Stewardship: What We *Still* Do!

Are you among the 245 members and friends who comprise the 156 pledges of financial support offered for Little River's work next year? If so, pat yourself on the back! If not, get on board today, please. Stewardship brochures (with pledge cards) are in the literature racks and in the church office. We need everyone's participation in order to plan for the coming year with enthusiasm and conviction.

## Currents Schedule

After the next issue, *Currents* will go on a three-week schedule until the middle of January. Here are the deadlines and mailing dates through June 2009. An asterisk (\*) indicates an interval of more than two weeks from the previous deadline.

| <i>Deadline (Thu.)</i> | <i>Mailing (Tue.)</i> |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| December 11            | December 16           |
| January 1*             | January 6             |
| January 22*            | January 27            |
| February 5             | February 10           |
| February 19            | February 24           |
| March 5                | March 10              |
| March 19               | March 24              |
| April 2                | April 7               |
| April 16               | April 21              |
| April 30               | May 5                 |
| May 14                 | May 19                |
| May 28                 | June 2                |
| June 11                | June 16               |





## 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 \[at\] lrucc.org](mailto:webteam@lrucc.org).

### LITTLE RIVER UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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& faithful action*

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