

eCURRENTS

LITTLE RIVER UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Editor: H.E. Beckwith

Lifted Up in Prayer

As I call to mind the many images, sounds, words, and emotions generated by the recent presidential inauguration, I am moved to reflect upon one scene that many would regard as a minor necessity: the ceremonial benediction as written and offered by the 87-year-old veteran of the civil rights movement, the Rev. Joseph Lowrey. As this close colleague of Martin Luther King, Jr. shuffled to the podium, he embodied the kind of dignity that comes only from many years of faithful struggle.

Then he began to speak. Weaving scripture and hymnody with a frank recognition of this low moment in our national and global climate, this modern-day prophet alternately blessed, challenged, chastened, encouraged, and amused as he brought to a close a seminal event in American history while acknowledging the presence of God's "hands of power" and "heart of love."

For many, Joseph Lowrey's benediction was but a respectful footnote on a memorable occasion, but for me it was the kind of mountaintop moment that puts everything which came before into perspective, and it reminds me why my I am a person of faith.

Verne

Annual Meeting News

At the annual meeting January 25, the congregation received the 2008 annual report of the church, elected a slate of officers and board and committee members, and thanked those who served Little River in 2008.

The budget of \$714,117, approved as proposed by the Trustees, was achieved through the commitment and generosity of our members and friends, trimming of budget requests by all boards and committees, and holding of staff compensation to last year's levels (except for health expense increases). The Community Relations staff position will be funded only through August, and benevolences are reduced from 20 percent (in 2008) to 16 percent of the budget. After extensive discussion of the options, the congregation agreed to this approach—with strong consensus that if the year ends in the black, any surplus should be added to 2009 compensation and benevolences.

The congregation voted to join the National Religious Campaign Against Torture and its Washington Region affiliate. Despite President Obama's recent order against torture, the congregation endorsed the Campaign's Declaration of Principles for a Presidential Executive Order against torture. It goes farther than the present order, and adopting it adds to a show of public support in the face of any resistance to carrying it out.

A roster of officers, board and committee members, and other leaders for 2009 is posted at lrucc.org—follow the Fast Link for Boards and Committees and click on Roster of Congregational Leaders.

Minutes of the annual meeting will be available after their approval at the next Church Council meeting.

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Next deadline: Thu. February 5, 4:30
lrucc.org/Currents/Currents_Schedule.html

Installation of Church Leaders

At each worship service on **February 1** we will install our newly elected officers and board and committee members, and we will ordain our new deacons. Everyone to be installed is asked to attend worship that day, either at 9:30 or 11:00.

Modern Feminist Theology

Little River Women's Ministry announces a Wednesday evening series on Theology According to Women of Our Time. Participants are exploring three contemporary feminist theologians, emphasizing one each week.

- **January 28:** Rita Nakashima Brock, author of *Setting the Table: Women in Theological Conversation* and *Proverbs and Ashes*
- **February 4:** Katie Cannon, author of *Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community*
- **February 11:** Chung Hyum Kyung, author of *Struggle to be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology*

Reading in advance is not required; participants will receive excerpts in class. Please call the church office to register. The sessions meet 7:30-8:30 p.m., led by Ginna Minasian Dalton. You are welcome to attend any or all of them.

Souper Bowl of Caring

Please help the Junior Pilgrim Fellowship the **first two Sundays of February** during the Souper Bowl of Caring, a program that builds on the excitement surrounding the Super Bowl season to mobilize youth to fight hunger and poverty in their local communities. On February 1 and 8, empty your pockets of change (or your billfold of bills) into the large soup pots in the narthex. All we collect will be donated directly to Food for Others in Fairfax.

Twenty years ago a single youth group in South Carolina, inspired by the prayer "Lord, as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us to be mindful of those without even a bowl of soup to eat," started the Souper Bowl of Caring. Since then, ordinary young people have generated an extraordinary \$50 million for soup kitchens, food banks and other charities in communities across the country. In addition, hundreds of thousands of youth have experienced for themselves the joy and satisfaction of giving and serving, inspiring people of all ages to follow their generous example.

Please contact Eric Pankey ([epankey \[at\] gmu \[dot\] edu](mailto:epankey[at]gmu[dot]edu)) if you have any questions.

Public Policy: A Talk on Race

During the **first three Sundays of February**, the Rev. Dr. Jacqueline Moncrief will lead the adult education class in discovering and exploring conscious and unconscious ways in which racism has affected our lives. Through special materials, film, and structured discussions, Rev. Moncrief will open us to whole new understandings of racism and ethnicity.

Jacque most recently served as a senior pastor of a United Church of Christ church in Northern California,

She will draw upon her training in antiracism, social justice activism, and knowledge of liberation theology to facilitate the talk on race. Jacque currently serves as a Companion of the Community for Reconciliation at Washington National Cathedral.

This discussion series allows people to come together and speak openly and honestly about issues of race. The intent is that each person walks away from the discussion feeling challenged, enlightened, refreshed, reassured, and hopefully inspired to action!

The series will focus on the following topics:

- Feb. 1** Racism: Exploring Our Beliefs About Race
- Feb. 8** White Privilege: What It Is and How It Affects Us
- Feb. 15** Multiracialism

The first two experientially based sessions are designed to foster a deeper appreciation of our differences and to help us share deep feelings about race and culture. The second session will focus specifically on the unearned advantages and disadvantages of white privilege.

For the third session, Elliott Lewis, a Washington area journalist and public speaker on multiracial identity and related issues, has been invited to discuss his latest book, *Fade: My Journeys in Multiracial America*.

If you are interested in attending one or more sessions of A Talk on Race, please pick up the series packet in the narthex. It contains a glossary of terms, questions for individual reflection, and guidelines for participation.

First Friday: 100% Chance of Fun!

Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor dark of night shall stay your young weather bugs on **February 6!** Register your apprentice tornado chaser, meteorologist, or snow-day lover for an evening of brisk weather. They'll enjoy hands-on experiments, food, and weather-related games. The fun lasts from 6:30 to 9:30.

As always, First Friday provides a good time and a caring environment for children six months through sixth grade while parents get time to themselves. First Friday is open to all, both in and outside our church family.

Register online at www.lrucc.org: click on Our Life Together > Fellowship > First Friday and follow the Registration link. Or contact Lorri ([firstfriday \[at\] lrucc \[dot\] org](mailto:firstfriday[at]lrucc[dot]org)) for more information or to register.

Early Orders for Easter Flowers

The greenhouse that supplies our flowers is growing fewer spring flowers this year, so we should have tentative orders for Easter flowers by **Monday, February 9**. Please let the office know how many of which flowers—Easter lilies, purple tulips, red geraniums, and yellow daffodils—you may decide to order.

Worship Planning Series

Have you ever sat at worship and wondered how the leaders put all the pieces together? On **February 8, 15, and 22** the Worship Committee and the pastors will present a series of Sunday noon sessions, both classes and experience, designed to address this question and to invite everyone in the Little River community to take part in worship preparation.

Come if you are interested in planning worship, or if you are just curious. Come if you wish to deepen your understanding from the pew, or if you want to be more involved in the chancel. Come to all three sessions, or just one or two.

- **February 8:** How does a worship service happen? What are the steps in developing an hour-long liturgy? What is the starting point, and how do you know when you've arrived? These are the kinds of questions we will be addressing at the first session of this series. Verne will help participants gain insight into the worship planning process and encourage members of the congregation to consider becoming part of it. After all, that's what liturgy means: it is the work of the people, and who knows what richness we can add to our worship at Little River when more members of the congregation participate in the planning.
- **February 15:** Why is it that Frank loves choral responses but Francis doesn't? Why does Jane get so much out of silent prayer, while Jose looks forward to creative movement opportunities instead? Why should our worship include so many varied ways of knowing God? Ginna will take us on an exploration of Multiple Intelligence Theory and discuss how our aim to affirm diversity can come alive in the worship experience.
- **February 22:** The people continue learning in an experiential manner as we begin planning worship for Sunday, April 19. Pastors and Worship Committee members will be there to help. If you plan to attend this session, be sure to pick up a copy of the scriptures for April 19 at a prior sessions, or visit lrucc.org > *Worship and Spirituality* > *Lectionary*.

Lunch will begin at noon, and the sessions will run until approximately 1:30. Please register in advance: sign up in the atrium or contact Julie Holm ([jholm \[at\] dragonsholm \[dot\] org](mailto:jholm@dragonsholm.org)). Child care is available if requested in advance.

Tax Help for Low-Income People

Volunteer Fairfax needs your help spreading the word about Community Tax Assistance Day on **Saturday, February 7**. Tax professionals will donate their services 8:00-3:00 at Bryant Alternative High School (2709 Popkins Lane, Alexandria 22306) to help

Northern Virginians with less than \$42,000 family income to file their returns or apply for earned-income tax credit. Child care will be available at this walk-in event.

Can you post flyers in your community or work-place, or send or hand out postcards to people you know who may be eligible? To find out more about the program and eligibility, visit fairfaxcounty.gov/dfs/ or contact Emily Swenson ([eswenson \[at\] volunteerfairfax \[dot\] org](mailto:eswenson@volunteerfairfax.org)), who can e-mail you postcard forms to print and send.

Open Mike Night

Club Little River opens its doors again on **Saturday evening, February 7** at 7:30 for Open Mike Night. This year we have a larger band, a talented and diverse group of performers, and emcee extraordinaire Sam Dalton once again at the helm.

Catch this great evening of free entertainment and refreshments for all ages and tastes—before Club Little River fades back into the mists for another year!

Coffee Hosts Needed

The Deacons invite you to host a coffee hour after either 9:30 or 11:00 worship. You have almost forty opportunities to participate between now and June!

For ordinary Sundays, you will simply serve coffee, tea and punch. Those who volunteer for Communion Sundays (the first Sunday of the month) are also asked to provide cookies and such for a special coffee hour.

Contact Deacon Kay Hart ([kahart123 \[at\] aol \[dot\] com](mailto:kahart123@aol.com)) to offer your help. Instructions will be provided for new volunteers. This is an easy way to meet and greet fellow members!

The Art of Baptism

The 11-, 12-, and 13-year-old church school class wrote two Haiku poems in response to the lesson about Jesus' baptism on January 11.

THE Baptism

Washed at the Jordan,
"You are my beloved son,"
Jesus heard God's voice.

Baptism Tradition

Verne at the altar
Sacred water brushed child's head
God promises love.

Due to the constraints of Haiku and time, we used "altar" rather than "fount." And we weren't able to work "Ginna" in with "Verne." Sorry, Ginna!

Jean Wheelock





Stewardship Campaign Wrap-Up

In early January, the Stewardship Committee sent a letter to members and friends to inform our community of the results of pledging to date and the expected difficulty in achieving a balanced operating budget for 2009. At this writing, 25 families and individuals have responded with new or increased pledges. Thank you.

All told, members and friends have pledged \$672,918 via 198 pledges, representing 313 people. The average pledge is \$3,399, and the median is \$2,400. (Both values are increased over 2008.) And despite the economic uncertainty of these times, the amount pledged for 2009 is only 2.2% less than 2008. We have much for which to be thankful!

Although the 13 new pledges do not fully replace the 22 lost, 47% of all pledges are increased over last year, and 34% are unchanged. Forty-five families and individuals fulfill their pledges by electronic transfer (23% of all pledges). We are concerned that among our resident members, 76 families and individuals have not made a pledge for 2009.

Going forward, our challenge is to inspire more of our members to participate in this aspect of the Christian life while continuing to increase giving among our pledgers. On behalf of the whole congregation, we thank you for *doing* stewardship!

Jan Curtis, Chair

Annandale Co-Op Intro Class

Annandale Co-Op Preschool, which meets in our building, is offering a new program for two-year-olds and their parents. Step into Preschool is offered as a "gentle" transition to preschool where child and parent explore together such themes as friendship, weather, and plants through stories and music and other activities that can be repeated at home.

Step into Preschool will meet Mondays at 9:15-11:15 from February through May in the preschool's space at Little River. A few places are still open. If you or someone you know would like to sign up or find out more, please call Anne Foster at Annandale Co-Op (703-978-6127).





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

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& 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.