

# eCURRENTS

LITTLE RIVER UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Volume 56 Number 5

March 9, 2009

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## Too Powerful for Mere Words

I recently saw a documentary about a church camp for marginalized youth. One of the days the young people were asked to carry a rock and to think of the mistreatments they suffered and the burdens they felt. They were encouraged to consider their rock as the burdens they carried. That night, at closing vespers, each person came forward to the outdoor cross and placed his or her rock before the cross as a counselor talked about ways to lay our burdens down.

A few days after seeing the documentary, I attended the first evening of our Lenten series where music therapist Mary Morreale led us, through instrumental music, singing and speaking, to think about Music and Spirituality. Reflecting on the hymn "Spirit of the Living God," she pointed out the transformative power of music—"melt me, mold me, fill me, use me"—when the Spirit of a living God falls afresh in the deserts of our lives.

Sometimes our innermost beings are best touched through symbols or through the power of music. I have always felt that power at the Lord's Table when we sing,

"Here would we touch and handle things unseen." In breaking the bread and drinking from the cup, things we touch and handle, we are aware deep in our spirits that we are actually touching and handling something so sacred that only symbols will capture essential meaning.

I watched youth lay down burdens (rocks) and I listened and sang as music washed over us with an assurance that God is still present even when God seems absent. The season of Lent offers us an invitation to spend time reflecting, contemplating, and allowing ourselves to lay burdens down and let the refreshing love of God wash over us.

The psalmist reminds us: "You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, 'my refuge and my fortress; my God in whom I trust.'" (Ps 91:1) God responds: "When they call to me, I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them and honor them." (vs. 15).

*Jim*

## One Great Hour of Sharing

Little River will receive the UCC's churchwide One Great Hour of Sharing offering **Sunday, March 22**.

Please prayerfully consider giving in this time of need.

The church school children are participating in One Great Hour of Sharing by supporting Little River's Feed and Seed Store. on **Sundays March 8 and 15**. All are welcome to stop by the store in the social hall, see what the children are doing, and pick up a descriptive flyer. For \$15 they will start a farm that will feed ten African families through this Church World Service program.

## Lenten Series

The Lenten series *Songs in the Desert: When God Seems Absent* meets 7:30-8:45 p.m. **Tuesdays through March 24**. Little River's Mary Morreale, a music therapist and minister of music, explores times in our lives when God seems absent, while opening us to the transforming renewal of God's grace. A simple supper of homemade soup and bread precedes each session at 6:45. Come to any or all of the remaining sessions:

- **March 10:** Seeking Psalms and Songs
- **March 17:** Lenten Hymns
- **March 24:** Music & Creative Journey

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**Next deadline: Thu. March 19, 4:30**  
[lrucc.org/Currents/Currents\\_Schedule.html](http://lrucc.org/Currents/Currents_Schedule.html)

## More "Saving Jesus" for Everyone

All church members and friends are invited to a series of small-group sessions that will explore more of the questions raised by the *Living the Questions* series "Saving Jesus," which was begun here over the last two months. Video and written material from leading voices in Christian thought encourage thoughtful group discussion of topics central to understanding Jesus in today's world.

Each session stands on its own. The discussions are open to all: you need not attend every session, and you need not have participated in the first series.

Sessions will continue to be led by Chris Weakley at his home. Dates are **Sundays, March 15, 22, and 29; April 19 and 26; and May 3** at 2:00-4:00.

## *The Rising: Lenten Conversation*

*The Rising*, our new web-based Lenten reflection and conversation, convenes Mondays at 8:00-9:30 p.m. **now through June 1** to discuss Wendy M. Wright's book *The Rising*. Each session will focus on a short section of the book. Don't worry if you've never tried an Internet chat room before. All you need is internet access, a copy of the book, and an interest in exploring the spiritual richness of the season.

Interested? Contact Julie Holm ([jholm \[at\] dragonsholm \[dot\] org](mailto:jholm[at]dragonsholm[dot]org)) or [therising \[at\] lrucc \[dot\] org](mailto:therising[at]lrucc[dot]org).

## Public Policy & Faith: Safe Space

Public Policy and Faith continues to examine issues and proposed policy as our church prepares to adopt a Safe Church policy as stipulated by the UCC. You are invited Sundays at 11:00 to any or all remaining sessions:

- **March 15:** Safe Space draft policy and interim policy statement (Safe Space Committee and Dr. Martha Miller, communications consultant)
- **March 22:** Small-group discussions (Dr. Miller and the committee)
- **March 29:** Next steps

Please join in this important dialogue.

## Anti-Torture Events

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT), of which Little River UCC is now a member, invites you to participate in the following March events.

**Saturday, March 14:** workshop "Next Steps in Ending US-Sponsored Torture" at Ecumenical Advocacy Days, 4:30-6:00 in room Plaza-A of the Hilton Mark Center Hotel in Alexandria. Speakers include the founder of NRCAT, a legal-affairs journalist and

professor, and a former military interrogator. You need not register for the whole weekend to attend the workshop. For more information, see Gay Gardner or contact NRCAT (202-547-1920, [www.nrcat.org](http://www.nrcat.org)).

**Thursday, March 19:** conference "Torture, Conscience, and the Catholic Moral Tradition." It will take place 1:00-7:00 in the Moot Courtroom in the Columbus School of Law, Catholic University, 3600 McCormack Rd. NE, Washington. Speakers include the chief investigator of Abu Ghraib abuses, Catholic theologians, the director of a torture treatment facility, and a former US army interrogator. You may attend any or all of the conference sessions and may stay for dinner at 7:00 (\$20). Find out more at [www.nrcat.org](http://www.nrcat.org).

## Women's Book Group

Join the Women's Book Group on **Sunday, March 15** at 12:15 p.m. to discuss David Wroblewski's backwoods coming-of-age tale *The Story of Edgar Sawtelle*. Get copies at the library or stores like Costco.

## Lenten Ember Evening

All members and friends of Little River are invited to join in a Lenten "Ember Evening" contemplative experience **Wednesday, March 18**. From 7:30 to 8:30 a service of worship will offer quiet prayer, poetry, scripture, and sharing (if you desire) framed by soft music and candlelight. Please join us for an evening of spiritual renewal, presented by Women's Ministries.

## Fair Trade Sale March 22

Welcome spring with your favorite Fair Trade coffee, tea, or chocolate (or all three!) while supporting small producers in less developed countries. Our next Fair Trade sale will be held **Sunday, March 22**.

## Healing Service

The quarterly Healing Service for those who are seeking healing of body, mind, or spirit will take place at 4:00 **Sunday, March 29** in the sanctuary. This informal service includes the ancient rite of the laying on of hands as well as communion. Please speak with Verne for more information.

## Lenten Music Sunday

On **Sunday, March 29**, our choirs will sing special music for Lent at both services. Watch for details.

## Elder Caregivers Support Group

I am pleased to return to Little River to offer a new monthly support group for those handling the joys and challenges of providing care to older adults. These meetings will differ from those of last year's Supportive Group on Aging Issues in that information on specific topics will not be formally presented, but the participants will determine the direction of the discussion.

The Elder Caregivers Support Group will offer the opportunity for participants to share their concerns and feelings related to caregiving, learn from each other's experiences, and thereby gain support. I will provide practical information and resources on care giving and aging as needed.

The group will meet monthly on Sundays from 12:15 to 1:45. The first two meetings are scheduled for **March 29** and **April 26**. Feel free to bring a bag lunch. Please contact me (*tlcd3 [at] cox [dot] net*) if you are interested in attending, or if you want to find out more.

*Teresa C. Dunbar, M.S.*  
Gerontologist

## "Pillar of Faith" Award Luncheon

On **Saturday, April 4**, the ninth annual Pillar of Faith Award luncheon, sponsored by the UCC Friends of Howard University School of Divinity, will be held at Martin's Crosswinds in Greenbelt. UCC president Rev. Dr. John Thomas will be a special guest of honor, and two UCC lay people will be honored: Ms. Barbara Ferguson Kamara of Peoples Congregational UCC and Mrs. Marilyn Spivey, a member of United Christian Parish in Reston. The event raises funds for the School of Divinity. Tickets are \$75. See Rob Peters for more details or call Ms. Vivian Ortiz at the School of Divinity (202-806-0757).

## Caring Hands: Schedule Change

Caring Hands will not meet in April. Our monthly Sunday meetings will continue on **May 17** and **June 14** at 11:00-12:30; then we will break for the summer.

Caring Hands welcomes all knitters and crocheters. We make hats and blankets for premies and children at INOVA Fairfax Hospital as well as the Dinner Program for Homeless Women and other charities. For more information contact Carrie Douglas (*bdouglas1 [at] cox [dot] net*).

## Women in Theology Today

Discussion of the thinking of today's women theologians continues on the **first Wednesdays of April and May** at 7:30. Please contact Ginna if you wish to sign up for these sessions. No preparatory reading is

required, though you may find it enriching to read the books at your convenience.

- **April 1:** *Struggle to be the Sun Again* by Chung Hyun Kyung
- **May 6:** *Setting the Table: Women in Theological Conversation*

## Justice Award Nominations

United College Ministries in Northern Virginia is again seeking nominations for two separate awards honoring the late Emmett W. Cocke, Jr., a Virginia Methodist minister who was a denominational and ecumenical leader in social justice and campus ministry.

A \$500 scholarship will be awarded to a student in good standing at Northern Virginia Community College or George Mason University. The award is based on financial need and promise of service to social justice.

The Emmett W. Cocke Social Justice Award, a plaque of recognition, goes to an individual or organization whose life and work reflect extraordinary commitment to social justice.

To submit a nomination for either award, write a statement of no more than one page declaring why the nominee should receive the award. Print a form from [www.gmu.edu/org/ucm](http://www.gmu.edu/org/ucm). Previous nominees may be nominated again for the Social Justice Award. Send nominations to United College Ministries. The office downstairs is in our building, or mail to 8410 Little River Turnpike, Annandale VA 22031. The deadline is **Monday, March 30**.

Awards will be presented **Sunday, May 3** at 6:00 at a free dinner. Speakers will be the Rev. Edwin Andrade and the Rev. Rebecca Messman of Lunch for the Soul, the Hispanic outreach ministry at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Herndon. Please contact UCM (703-426-1939, *ucmnv [at] aol [dot] com*) if you plan to attend.

## New Directory: Paper, Electronic

Starting now, Little River will publish an updated church directory quarterly, shortly after each reception of new members. You may pick up a copy of the new March 3 edition from the church office at any time.

In our ongoing efforts to be a "greener" church, we will also offer the directory as an electronic text file. The current edition is now in preparation; request one by e-mail (*office [at] lrucc [dot] org*).

## Women's Cathedral Trip in May

On **Saturday, May 16**, Little River Women are invited to attend a day-long pilgrimage at historic Washington National Cathedral. Our leader will be our own Kathy Spaar, who is a pilgrimage leader there. Details will follow in a future *Currents*.



## Dinner and Silent Auction

Mark your calendars for a memorable evening **Saturday, May 2**, when Y-GELI presents an all-church dinner and silent auction! Plan on enjoying good food, entertainment with a 50s theme, and the opportunity to bid on a variety of goods and services. Bring your friends and neighbors!

This is your chance to support the Y-GELI (Youth Global Experiential Learning Initiative) 2009 summer programs. We have scaled back our plans this year, but funds are still needed to support these local experiences.

For the Silent Auction, all types of donations are welcome, from services to certificates to stuff (new items only, please). Use your imagination! If you have ideas or questions, please contact Carrie Douglas, Silent Auction co-chair (*bdouglas1 [at] cox [dot] net*).

## Note to Youth Summer Travelers

In response to many requests, the date has been changed for the Sunday worship to be led by Y-GELI summer travelers and PF participants in the Central Atlantic Conference summer Youth Event. The youth will lead both services on Sunday, September 20. Practice will be held 10:00-noon on Saturday, September 19.

Mark your calendar; these dates are now final!

## Nova DVD Available

"The Bible's Buried Secrets: Beyond Fact or Fiction" is a two-hour program from the acclaimed PBS series *Nova*. Thanks to Thelma & Tom Ebert, this DVD is now in our church library and available for home viewing. It presents the results of more than 100 years of archeological excavation and centuries of biblical scholarship.

## Senior PF Cell Phone Recycling

Thank you to everyone who has donated used cell phones to support organizations working to end the suffering in Darfur! The Senior PF has collected nearly 20 phones so far, but need about 15 more to meet the quota for free shipping. If you get a new phone and would like to recycle your old one, please place it in the ECO-Cell recycling box in the atrium. Questions? Contact Carrie Douglas (*bdouglas1 [at] cox [dot] net*).





## 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

*welcoming diversity, independent thought,  
& 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*.

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