



Too Many Answers?

William P. Young's *The Shack* is causing quite stir among Christians. From evangelical fundamentalists to progressive Christians there is chatter about its helpfulness and its shallowness, its cliché and its profundity, its hospitality to seekers and its yawn quality for those who find it too simplistic, its celebration of diversity and its stereotypical view of humanity's reflection in God.

Whatever the aim of the author, I heard the voices I just mentioned in every line of the book. I read out of curiosity more than anything else—what was all the stir about? Admittedly that's all that kept me reading it at first, struggling to understand the issues the book raised for the readers. I gasped. I cried and laughed. In spite of the critique I was touched. Then something began to dawn. The book was just too pat. All the answers were figured out.

While the author makes a huge shift from a God of judgment and law so common among those with a more orthodox view to a God of relationship and compassion (which I was delighted to see), he also tries to answer

most of the ultimate questions about God. Ultimately this pushes God from infinite to finite with the experience of wonder and mystery gone. That may be comforting at first, but over time that logic often fails.

Again, I'm drawn to wonder: if God could so easily be explained, deconstructed and reconstructed in our minds, would that be God at all? What do you think?

Peace for your Lenten journey,
Ginna

Lent, Holy Week, Easter

Every Sunday: Communion is celebrated at 11:00 throughout Lent and at both services on Palm Sunday.

Every Monday, 8:00-9:30 p.m.: Online discussion of Wendy Wright's *The Rising*. E-mail [therising \[at\] lruc \[dot\] org](mailto:therising[at]lruc[dot]org).

Choral Sunday, March 29: Special music will be offered at both services by our choirs.

Palm-Passion Sunday, April 5: The 9:30 and 11:00 services begin on a high note as the children of the church process into the sanctuary. The mood shifts as we read the Holy Week Passion narrative. Church school will meet as usual after the processional.

Maudy Thursday, April 9: We commemorate Jesus' last supper with the disciples with an 8:00 p.m. communion service. Some of our children will have their "first communion" experience as part of this service. Care is available for children age two and under.

Good Friday, April 10: We recall Christ's passion during a 40-minute service at 6:00 p.m.

Easter Sunday, April 12: Joyous worship in the sanctuary will be at 9:30 and 11:00 features a brass quartet. There is no church school, but care is available during each service for children age two and under.

What's Current...

Healing Service	2
Join the Green Team!	2
Elder Caregivers Support Group	2
Rescheduling Worship?	2
First Friday: Carnival!	2
Youth Summer Events Deadline	2
Women in Theology Today	3
Creative Writing at Little River	3
"Torturing Democracy"	3
Justice for Workers	3
Palm Sunday Procession	3
First Communion	3
Extravagant Welcome to Students	3
Pentecost Puppet People!	3
Support for Lancaster Seminary	3
United College Ministries	4
Summer Book Discussion	4
Footsteps to Mexico 2010	4
Links: Events, People, News	<i>back page</i>
Calendar	<i>lruc.org > fast links</i>

Next deadline: Thu. April 2, 4:30

lruc.org/Currents/Currents_Schedule.html

One Great Hour of Sharing

Little River UCC received the One Great Hour of Sharing special offering on March 22. Funds from this Lenten special missions offering are used to build sustainable communities, respond to natural disasters, and help refugees rebuild their lives in over 80 nations worldwide, including the U.S. If you were not able to participate on March 22, it's not too late to offer a gift now. Make your check payable to Little River UCC, be sure to include "OGHS" on the memo line, and drop it in the offering plate or mail it to the church office.

Healing Service

The quarterly Healing Service for those who seek healing of body, mind, or spirit will take place **Sunday, March 29** at 4:00 in the sanctuary. This informal service includes communion and the ancient rite of laying on of hands. To find out more, speak with Verne or Ginna.

Join the Green Team!

In keeping with our commitment towards environmental stewardship, the Board of Trustees is seeking to start an ad-hoc committee to address our Going Green initiative. The aim is to get together people from a broad spectrum of the church to meet one evening every quarter.

You don't have to be a Trustee to get involved! Are you interested? Want to find out more? Please contact Doug Williams (703-497-3154, dwwms@mac.com).

Elder Caregivers Support Group

The first monthly meeting of the Elder Caregivers Support Group will be **Sunday, March 29** at 12:15. All who provide care to older adults in some capacity are welcome to share concerns and feelings related to caregiving and discuss information and resources. Feel free to bring a bag lunch; light snacks will be provided.

The group will be led by Teresa C. Dunbar, M.S., gerontologist. Please contact the group leader, gerontologist Teresa Dunbar (tlcd3@cox.net) if you have questions or plan to attend.

Rescheduling Worship?

The Board of Christian Education, on behalf of the Church Council, is offering two opportunities to discuss possible worship schedule changes which may include a Christian Education hour between services. Anyone wishing to hear more about this idea, or with concerns to raise, please come to either session on **Sunday, March 29** at 10:30 or **Monday, March 30** at 7:00 p.m.

First Friday: Carnival!

Come one, come all! Enjoy games, moonbounce, refreshments, surprises and prizes. There will be fun, fun, fun for all ages—six months through sixth grade! Don't be left out when the carnival comes to First Friday **April 3** at 6:30 for three hours of excitement! Register online by **Tuesday, March 31** (lrucc.org > Fast Links: Activities > First Friday) or contact Lorri (frstfriday@lrucc.org) for more information.

Youth Summer Events Deadline

Wednesday, April 1 is deadline day for three exciting summer youth events:

- **Senior PF:** sign up at Little River for the Central Atlantic Conference Youth Event July 24-26 in Baltimore. The fee of \$225 is due by May 1.
- **Y-GELI Phase 1:** sign up and pay the \$150 fee for Summer in the City road trip to Washington and Richmond July 16-19.
- **Y-GELI Phase 2:** sign up and pay the \$250 fee for the road trip through "invisible" Virginia June 27-July 2.

Creative Writing at Little River

Little River's Creative Writing group invites all who are interested in the opportunity to write—no experience required! The group meets the first and third Fridays of each month at 1:00. Bring your writing to our meetings on **April 2**, when the suggested topic is "When I Was Ten . . ." or on **April 17**, when the topic is "Random Acts of Kindness." Write on the given topic or choose your own. You may write poetry, prose, essay, memoir, litany or anything you wish. Come read your paper and share your thoughts with us. Feel free to contact Ron Griesse (R_J_Griesse@me.com).

"Torturing Democracy"

The Washington Region Religious Campaign Against Torture invites you to a screening and discussion of the acclaimed documentary *Torturing Democracy* on **Thursday evening, April 2** at 7:00 at George Mason University, 3401 North Fairfax Drive (Original Building, Room 329). The film, shown on PBS, examines abusive US detention and interrogation practices since 2001. It includes interviews with senior officials and former Guantanamo detainees. Discussion with the producer will follow, as well as a presentation on the activities of several area and international humanitarian groups. Light refreshments will be served beginning at 6:45.

The Campaign also encourages people of faith to sign an online petition calling for an independent commission to investigate US detention and interrogation policies. You can review the Campaign's statement and sign the petition at www.nrccat.org > "Call for a Commission of Inquiry."

Find directions to the film event at www.wrrcat.org/torturingdem.html or contact Gay Gardner gaygardner@msn.com about either initiative.

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.

Justice for Workers

Verne has agreed to serve on a Community Commission that will hear the testimony of Northern Virginia hotel workers **Saturday evening, April 4** from 6:00-8:00 at the Doubletree Crystal City Hotel in Arlington. Tracy Lingo of our congregation works for the union that is sponsoring this event, Hotel Workers Rising. You are welcome to attend on your own or catch a ride with Verne.

Palm Sunday Procession

All Little River children and youth are invited to be a part of a processional at the beginning of both services on **Palm Sunday, April 5**. If you wish to take part, meet in the choir room at 8:45 and remain in church until after the introit of the second service, around 11:10. Small children who are more comfortable processing with a parent may invite parents to join the fun.

First Communion

At Little River, children are welcome to participate in communion when their parents feel they are ready. This year, children who desire to come to the table, with the support of their parents, are invited to a first-communion experience which will be held as part of our Holy (or Maundy) Thursday communion service April 9 at 8:00 p.m. Communion at this service is held in the round, with the table in the middle of the sanctuary, and we will ask those families having a first-time communicant to come to the table first, with a special introduction.

In preparation for this there will be a potluck lunch on **Sunday, April 5** after the second service. The children and adults there will make the bread we will use for communion on Thursday.

Extravagant Welcome to Students

How do you celebrate Easter? Do you enjoy a feast and time with family and friends? Do you visit a scenic area to savor the arrival of spring?

How about inviting NOVA international students to share **Easter afternoon** with you? It would be wonderful to offer some of our regular Welcome Center guests this additional hospitality—if not for Easter, then on any

other weekend. To extend an invitation, pick up a green flyer from the rack in the narthex, fill out an invitation, and leave it in the office, or e-mail or phone in your invitation, before Thursday of that week.

And if possible, please join us occasionally in the Welceom Center on a Thursday any time between 3:30 and 7:00 to chat with these eager young people.

Another friendly gesture: how about lending sports equipment you don't use often? Koreans like golf, but the sport is prohibitively expensive at home. They would love to play on our inexpensive public courses, but they don't have clubs. Little River could keep a list of golf clubs and other equipment to lend each semester. Please contact Lois Wyatt (*loisESL [at] verizon [dot] net*) if you have clubs, a bike, or other stuff to share.

Pentecost Puppet People!

If you enjoy the story of Pentecost, think puppets are fun, and love to imagine things in a big way, have we got a worship thrill for you! We are looking for six adults and twelve young people to help with some giant puppets—up to ten feet tall! Rich Dodenhoff is making these puppets to tell the Pentecost story on **Sunday, May 31** at both services. Practice is **Saturday, May 30** from 10:00 to noon. Adults will hold the puppets aloft while the young people manipulate their arms.

Are you interested in sharing in this unique experience? Please contact Patrice Redmiles (*paredmiles [at] comcast [dot] net*) or Ginna at church (*ginna [at] lrucc [dot] org*).

Support for Lancaster Seminary

One of the organizations our church supports through its Missions budget is Lancaster Theological Seminary, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. It began in 1825 as the seminary of the Reformed Church in the United States (German Reformed). Originally, the seminary was a part of Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. The seminary moved to Lancaster in 1871 to be near Franklin and Marshall College, which had been established in 1853 by president-to-be James Buchanan. Today, Lancaster Seminary has grown to a population of 175 students enrolled in three graduate degree programs.

The Reformed tradition, one of the roots of the United Church of Christ, has always encouraged broadly diverse ecumenical relationships. The seminary reflects this: its student body includes more than twenty protestant denominations as well as Jewish and Roman Catholic students.

Because the vitality of the local church depends so much on the vitality and independence of our seminaries, Little River has supported this, our closest seminary, for many years.



United College Ministries

United College Ministries in Northern Virginia seeks to change lives and foster connections with God and among people through its work with students at Northern Virginia Community College and George Mason University. This ecumenical ministry serves students by:

- providing a listening presence on all campuses;
- offering fellowship during Table Talk, a hot meal and open discussion at a church near George Mason University MU, and during weekly worship;
- furnishing spiritual training in regular Bible study and in service trips like Gulf Coast reconstruction;
- encouraging student involvement by publicizing internships, Christian advocacy opportunities, rallies for peace and justice, and volunteering.

Little River supports this ministry through our mission budget, by providing office space for the Minister Director Denise Giacomozzi May, through our volunteer presence, and in the prayers of our members. Individuals can be involved by volunteering for Table Talk and listening posts, by coordinating hospitality for international students at Easter and Thanksgiving, and through financial contributions, including bequests.

For more information contact United College Ministries (703-426-1939, www.gmu.edu/org/ucm).

Summer Book Discussion

Covenant is a central, and often ignored, tenet of the United Church of Christ. This summer's two-Sunday book discussion with Verne will explore its importance to us as the congregation of Little River UCC as well as in our relationship with the UCC.

Jane Fidler Hoffman's *Covenant: A Study for the United Church of Christ* (United Church Press, 2008) is a small 58-page volume on this central topic written by a UCC conference minister. The discussion will take place **Sunday June 21 and 28**. *Covenant* may be ordered from Amazon for \$8 plus shipping.

Footsteps to Mexico 2010

Picking up where we left off in Footsteps VII, the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella had just expelled the Jews and Muslims from Spain in 1492. Twenty-nine years later, after a long boat ride, Cortés and his Conquistadors brought their swords to bear on the Aztecs. They were followed by the Franciscans, who brought the cross in 1523, becoming the first Christians to evangelize in North America.

Departing in mid-April 2010, Little River members and friends will travel to Mexico City, Cuernavaca, Taxco, and Puebla to visit historic monuments and natural and cultural treasures, and to explore current religious, social, and economic issues with the help of local citizens, church representatives, and the US Embassy.

Safety is a primary concern of our organizer, the Center for Global Education in Minneapolis. They have assured us that we will avoid any areas of conflict and will be well taken care of by in-country guides. These may include our friend Ann Lutterman, director of the Center's office in Cuernavaca, who has spoken about Mexico at Little River.

We do not yet have a final itinerary or brochure, but we expect this trip to cost less than \$3,000 per person, including air fare, for 12 or 13 nights in Mexico.

Registration will take place in mid-September. A fall-winter series will help educate the whole Little River community about our fascinating neighbor to the south. Watch for more information or speak to Barbara or Gary Allen, Verne Arens, Denny Bloomquist, Bob Lingo, Barbara Lowrey, Brian Payne, or Kent or Steve Rogers: your Footsteps committee.



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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