

eCURRENTS

LITTLE RIVER UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Volume 56 Number 15

September 14, 2009

Editor: H.E. Beckwith

Welcome, Amanda Tomkins!

On September 9 the Youth Pastor Search Committee enthusiastically and unanimously recommended, and Church Council unanimously agreed, that we hire Amanda Tomkins as our Pastor for Youth Ministry, starting immediately upon resolution of some administrative details.

Amanda graduated in May 2008 as a Master of Divinity *summa cum laude* from the Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington. Upon graduation she was recognized with an award for "Commitment to Excellence in the Teaching Ministry of the Church."

She was raised in the United Church of Christ in Ohio and is a candidate for ordained ministry in the East Ohio Association of the Ohio Conference, pending a pastoral position with a UCC church and completion of a brief polity course. Her undergraduate degree is a

B.A. with high distinction from Ohio Northern University, where she majored in philosophy and religion.

Amanda has considerable experience working with youth as well as a solid grounding in other types of ministry. For the last year she has been Director of Youth Ministry at Lewinsville Presbyterian Church in McLean. While in seminary, she worked a year as the youth leader at Rockville United Church and two summers as a leader in the West River Bike Camp, in which junior and senior high youth ride from Georgetown to Pittsburgh. During seminary she interned at Sibley Memorial Hospital as a chaplain, at Westmoreland UCC, with the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society, and with Interfaith Worker Justice.

She also brings to Little River interesting experience with other cultures. While in college she spent an exchange year at the University of Wales, Lampeter, UK, and after graduating she taught for two years in China.

Amanda's interests include a variety of sports, outdoor activities, travel, and nature. She is eager to return to a UCC church, to work with our youth, and to be a member of the team with Verne and Ginna.

Amanda will be formally introduced and will participate in leading both worship services on September 13.

Welcome, Amanda!

Youth Pastor Search Committee

Dave Curtis, chair; Noreen Bania, Bruce Douglas, Ron Griesse, Robin Petrusak; Verne Arens, ex officio

What's Current...

Queer Theology?	2
Public Policy: Now Faith & World	2
Our Mission, Our Future	2
Elder Care Support Group	2
Confirmation Class	2
Art with Spirit	2
Women's Book Group: New Date	2
First Friday	2
Young Adult Happenings	3
Neighbors in Need Offering	3
New Plan for Caring Hands	3
Blessing of the Animals	3
Creative Writing Group	3
Called to Care	3
New Directory: Addresses Please	4
Estate Gifts Workshop	4
Shaw Ministry Gala	4
Criminal Justice: Troubled Legacy	4
Ushering Opportunities	4
Salt of the Earth Update	4
"Godly Play" Preschool Class	4
Church School News, Openings	5
Little River UCC Matters!	5
Honors for Co-Op Preschool	5
Links: Events, People, News	<i>back page</i>
Calendar	<i>lrucc.org > fast links</i>

Next deadline: Thu. Sept. 24, 4:30

lrucc.org/Currents/Currents_Schedule.html

Footsteps to Mexico

Registration for church members begins **Monday, September 14** at 9:00 a.m. for the Footsteps trip to central Mexico on April 7-21, 2010. Deliver or mail your check for \$100, payable to Little River UCC and designated "Footsteps VIII," to the church office. Non-members may sign up for any remaining openings starting **Tuesday, October 13**. See the colorful travel brochure in the atrium for details.

The companion Footsteps Sunday education series begins **September 27** at 11:00 with a talk by Kent Rogers on what was happening in Europe around 1500 that made exploration of America possible and desirable. On **October 11** Mary Weaver will discuss Aztec, Mayan and Toltec civilizations; mutual influences between their religions and Catholicism; and the archeological sites our group will visit. Later sessions trace Mexican history into the twentieth century.

You are welcome at these sessions whether you plan to join the trip to Mexico or not.

Queer Theology?

WHAT???

"What goes around comes around" comes to mind. Oh how I hate to think of reducing my responses to clichés. So why would I ever title a clergy column using a word we have been conditioned and inspired to erase from our vocabulary?

On Saturday and Sunday, **October 24 and 25**, Little River's Open and Affirming group will host a weekend of thought-provoking conversation around the topic "Beyond Affirming" with Dr. David Mellott, Assistant Professor of Practical Theology and Director of Ministerial Formation at Lancaster Theological Seminary. We engaged Dr. Mellott after weeks of reviewing our congregation's history and wondering where to go next. His gentle and compelling inquiry into life in congregational settings where ONA is part of the fabric has led him to ask: "What comes after the decision to become an Open and Affirming congregation?"

This was our question too. Little did we know that he would then take us to a discussion that unraveled our carefully crafted inclusive language only to return us to what felt like a painful past. A portion of Dr. Mellott's work explores reclaiming words like "queer." Why?

While I am one who believes language is a living (and therefore changing) dynamic of the human experience, I must admit I wonder about this one. Will his explorations with us really take us to a healing place? Will we dredge up irresolvable tensions? Do we have the capacity to journey deeply enough into queer language that we can translate that to theology and a working ministry alive and reconciling in the world?

That remains to be seen, with the help of God's grace.

Peace,
Ginna

Public Policy: Now Faith & World

Our Sunday morning adult education series has a new name! Public Policy and Faith has become Our Faith and the World to reflect the broader scope of its offerings. Our Faith and the World continues to meet most Sundays at 11:00, and all are still welcome.

Our Mission, Our Future

Share your ideas about "Who is our neighbor?" at 11:00 on **Sunday, September 20** at an Our Faith and the World class presented by our Planning Committee. Who do we as a congregation define as our neighbors? What is our responsibility to our neighbors down the street? To neighbors in need around the world?

And continue the conversation on **Sunday, September 27** at a noon lunch hosted by the committee, where the topics are why Little River is important to you and where you see us going in the future.

Elder Care Support Group

The dynamic, resourceful, and caring Elder Care Support Group will hold its final two meetings **Sunday, September 20** and Sunday, October 18 from 12:15-1:30. If you haven't been yet, now is your chance! Feel free to bring a snack. Contact leader Teresa C. Dunbar, MS ([tlcd3\[at\]cox\[dot\]net](mailto:tlcd3[at]cox[dot]net)) with any questions.

Confirmation Class

An introductory session to the 2009-10 Confirmation Class will be held **Sunday, October 4** from 5:00-6:00 in the conference room. If you are in the ninth grade or above, or at least fourteen years old and have not received a letter of invitation, please contact the church office or speak to Verne. An orientation for parents will be held at 5:00 **Sunday, September 27**. The complete schedule of classes is posted at www.lrucc.org > *Educational Ministries* > *Youth...* > *Confirmation*.

Art with Spirit

During October, we will celebrate the vision of our young people with a hall display of art by our children and youth. Submit paintings, drawings, and other ready-to-hang creations to enliven and enrich the approach to our worship space. Pieces must be mounted (in a frame or on a stiff surface like foam board or matte board) and have hardware to accept a picture hook. Please bring artwork, with the artist's name, to the church office by **Sunday, September 27**.

Women's Book Group: New Date

Join the Women's Book Group **Sunday, October 4** at 12:15 for a lively discussion of Wally Lamb's *The Hour I First Believed*, in which both fictional and historical characters grapple with matters of fate and free will in a saga worthy of Dostoevsky.

First Friday: Luau Time!

Head for Hawaii on **October 2** at 6:30 as First Friday starts its new season. Young islanders will learn Hawaiian dances and enjoy a feast while parents bid them *aloha* for the evening. All children age six months through sixth grade are welcome: bring a neighbor!

Registration is the same as last year; sign up Sunday-Wednesday, September 20-30. For the new school year, each child must have new forms. Find them and all the details at church or at www.lrucc.org: click on Our Life Together > Fellowship > First Friday.

Want to join the fun by helping at First Friday? Contact Mike or Lorri at [frstfriday\[at\]lrucc\[dot\]org](mailto:frstfriday[at]lrucc[dot]org).

Young Adult Happenings

Supper and Bible study: Join young adults from several churches the **second and fourth Tuesdays** of each month at the home of Tom and Mary Johnson, 2419 Little Fox Lane, Vienna. Supper begins at 7:00; food is provided, just bring your appetite. We begin Bible study around 7:45 and finish up around 8:30 to have a time for announcements and prayer requests. This year we will study Acts, led by Bill Sykes. The group is growing as young adults from our several churches have joined together. Welcome to all new and returning members! Questions? Contact Ginna.

Retreat: The same young adult group will spend Friday-Sunday, **October 2-4** at Lost River Retreat Center in West Virginia (www.vbc-va.org/lrrc). Dr. Marjory Bankson, an inspirational retreat leader and author, will lead discussion focusing on her *Call to the Soul*, a book for all those who seek God's call to ministry in daily life. The cost is \$100 for single occupancy, \$95 each for double occupancy, and \$90 each for three or more in a room. Please reply to Ben Wagener ([bwagener \[at\] vbc-va \[dot\] org](mailto:bwagener@vbc-va.org)).

Neighbors in Need Offering

On World Communion Sunday, **October 4**, Little River will join congregations across the UCC in receiving the Neighbors in Need offering. This year's theme is "Imagine Another World is Possible."

The Board of Missions recently received a very nice letter from Rev. A. Rebecca West, associate pastor at Plymouth Congregational Church in Washington and the Justice and Witness Ministries Board member representing the Central Atlantic Conference. She wrote, "Thank you so much for your generous gift of \$5,580 to Neighbors in Need in 2008! Two-thirds of your NIN offering goes to support Justice and Witness Ministries and one-third to support the Council of American Indian Ministry . . . Please do what you can to promote this important ministry of justice and peace for all of God's people."

Thank you in advance for your generous contribution to this worthwhile all-church offering.

New Plan for Caring Hands

Caring Hands is a group of Little River knitters and crocheters who enjoy making items for charities as well as for friends. Instead of meeting monthly, Caring Hands will hold one formal gathering this fall, on **Sunday, October 4** from noon to 2:00. Otherwise, we will keep in touch by email and telephone regarding project ideas and charities. We always welcome new participants. Please contact Carrie Douglas ([bdouglas \[at\] cox \[dot\] net](mailto:bdouglas@cox.net)) with any questions.

Blessing of the Animals

Little River once again will offer a Blessing of the Animals **Sunday, October 4** at 12:30 in the grove to the east of the church (or in the social hall if weather is inclement). Plan to bring your favorite pet(s) to this brief, celebrative service of word and song.

Creative Writing Group

Little River's creative-writing group is resuming for the new season. With the aim of increasing participation, it will meet twice each month, once in the afternoon of the third Friday of each month, and once in the evening on first Wednesdays. The first meetings are **September 18** at 1:00 and **October 7** at 7:30.

The purpose of Creative Writing is to offer you the opportunity to write. It is not a class, but rather a community of people who want to write. It is not about grammar or spelling. It is about creativity in which you can write in whatever style you prefer. At each meeting, we have a suggested topic for those who need an idea, but you may write about any topic.

Curious? Contact Ron Griesse ([r_j_griesse \[at\] me \[dot\] com](mailto:r_j_griesse@me.com)).

Called to Care

One of the less well-known programs at Little River is Called to Care, a UCC ministry in which trained members of the congregation extend Christian caring among the congregation through one-on-one relationships. Currently Little River has six trained caregivers who meet periodically with Verne for continuing education and supervision. Their ministry does not supplant the care-giving of our pastors, but extends it.

This is how Called to Care works: If the pastors identify someone who could use additional support in their lives, perhaps after a death or during an extended illness, they will ask that individual if having a Called to Care caregiver would be welcome. If the answer is yes, a caregiver is assigned. Confidentiality is a hallmark of this program; caregivers must not discuss details of their care-giving outside of supervision, and may only use the name of their care receiver with the pastors.

If you have questions about the Called to Care program or might consider attending a training session, please speak to a pastor or one of our caregivers: Roy Brooks, Ron Griesse, Kay Hart, Julie Holm, Almuth Payne, or Dorothy Ogilvy-Lee.



New Directory: Addresses Please

A new directory will be available **Monday, September 21**. Does the church office have current addresses, phone numbers, and e-mails for your household, including *new* and *returning* college students? Please send information to the office while it is still fresh in your mind. Forms can be found in the narthex. Please contact the office for a copy of the new directory.

Estate Gift Workshop & Lunch

On Sunday, **October 11**, Donaldson Hill, Minister and Team Leader of the Financial Development Ministry of the United Church of Christ, will present a workshop about ways to plan estate gifts that can benefit both the church and one's heirs. The event will begin with a light lunch at 12:30. The workshop will begin at 1:00 and conclude at 2:30.

An important element of the workshop will be a discussion of gifts from unused portions of retirement assets that might otherwise be subject to significant taxes. The program, sponsored by Little River's Endowment Fund Committee, will include a presentation and an opportunity for questions. In addition to leading the workshop, Mr. Hill will preach at both services.

Please make lunch reservations with the office.

Shaw Ministry Gala

Shaw Community Ministry will host a gala celebration to mark the reopening of its newly renovated space on **Saturday, October 17**, from 1:00 to 4:00. Please come see the new space, meet new Executive Director Anne Troy, and learn more about SCM's new, exciting and active programs! There will be food, music and entertainment for the whole family. SCM is located at 1726 7th St. NW, Washington, one block from the Shaw-Howard University station on the Red Line. Limited street parking is also available.

Criminal Justice: Troubled Legacy

Is Virginia's criminal justice system broken? Is prison the best way to "punish" every offender? Can we afford more prisons, either financially or morally? How can former inmates be helped to re-enter their communities? These and other questions will be addressed in a two-Sunday Our Faith and the World class sponsored by the Christian Social Action Committee:

October 18: Koquice Spencer, Shaw Community Ministry's program director, grew up without a mother, who was wrongfully incarcerated. Come hear her story and its positive outcome. And hear social worker and family therapist Sharon Farrar's powerful stories of men in a model correctional facility who volunteer to grow, learn, and conquer their addictions.

October 25: Virginia Delegate Dave Marsden will speak about his experience in juvenile justice. Formerly president of the Virginia Juvenile Justice Association, he now serves on the legislature's Courts of Justice Committee. Joining him will be John Horejsi, founder and coordinator of Social Action Linking Together, who will discuss his organization's support of prisoner re-entry programs and its opposition to new prisons in Virginia.

Plan to be there at 11:00 for stimulating and thought-provoking discussions of these timely topics.

Ushering Opportunities

Some of our ushers are pursuing new opportunities this year, leaving the ranks depleted, particularly at 11:00. If you think you'd be interested in serving Little River in a fun way, either as a regular usher (every third month, serving at one service two or three Sundays a month) or as an alternate, contact Julie Holm (*jholm[at]dragonholm[dot]org*). We particularly need ushers at 11:00 services in September and November.

Salt of the Earth Update

Salt of the Earth is our choir for children in grades 1-5. It gives them opportunities to sing, play instruments, dance, learn sign language, laugh, and help lead worship. They rehearse Sundays from 11:00 to noon and sing in worship once each month—usually at the 9:30 service, occasionally for the beginning of the 11:00 service. Contact director Kenyon Erickson (*keeperken[at]aol[dot]com*).

"Godly Play" Preschool Class

To help nurture your child's spiritual life, Little River is offering "Godly Play" as its church school program for ages 3-5. In this imaginative approach to encountering God, based on Montessori education and more like spiritual direction than traditional teaching, children will:

- be greeted warmly when entering the room
- enter a calm and orderly environment that will nurture and support spiritual exploration
- share in a presentation based on a parable or sacred story
- be encouraged to explore the presentation through imaginative wondering rather than specific factual questions
- choose among ways to respond to the story and to share work with classmates.

Godly Play seeks to nurture a child's already-present inner wisdom and connection to God through play and storytelling in a safe and loving environment. To find out more, contact Ginna or leaders Natalie Stapert, Carolyn Yocum, or Jane Wallace.

Church School News, Openings

Thank you to the many people who volunteered their time to make summer church school very successful.

Now the Board of Christian Education is back to ask for volunteers for fall and beyond.

- The multi-age class (6-10) seeks leaders to assist with topics ranging from erosion to the resurrection. Commitments are generally for three weeks. Lesson plans and craft supplies will be provided. To learn more, see the sign-up board in the narthex or contact Mike Craven or Jane Wallace.
- Our nursery is bursting with joy—and babies! Can you help Yris some Sundays at 9:30? Relive your youth and crawl the carpet with our very youngest. Look for the sign-up sheet outside the nursery.

Thanks in advance for your support.

Honors for Co-Op Preschool

Annandale Cooperative Preschool is Nickelodeon's 2009 Parents' Pick for best Washington area preschool! This distinction comes on the heels of their earning re-accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children. ACPS is grateful for such a strong, warm community of current families, alumni families, and friends. Visit their website (www.annandalecoop.org) and Facebook page. See the Parents' Picks award at gocitykids.parentsconnect.com > *Parents' Picks*.

Little River UCC Matters!

Little River United Church of Christ matters! To me, my family, my community, and the world!

Our church has a rich history of mattering in the community, supporting social justice. Before and during the civil-rights era, many churches and individuals sat quietly on the sidelines. However, our church engaged head-on the injustice and humiliation of segregation and, in doing so, helped effect positive change.

In its early and fragile years, our congregation held its services at the former Annandale Elementary School. Its then few minority congregants were welcomed. However, segregation was then the long-standing law in Virginia, and certainly in its public education. Upon complaint, the chief law enforcement officer for Fairfax County demanded that we immediately cease integrated church services on public school property.

The late Reverend Hubert S. Beckwith and other church leaders courageously acted against the moral injustice of the law. Our church could have canceled services or, worse, submitted to the separate-but-equal doctrine. Instead we invited those few minority members forward to the front seats of the auditorium. They were then surrounded with the remaining members of the congregation in an act of inclusiveness.

The church has continued its active support of equal opportunity in schools, housing and employment. Our church chooses to matter to the community.

Little River United Church of Christ matters to me, my family, and community in part because of its rich history. Its past actions give me the confidence to state unequivocally that it will continue to matter to the community in the future. I am proud to be a member of this church and to support its ministries.

Brett Kassabian





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, and faithful action ~

Phone: 703 - 978 - 3060
Fax: 703 - 978 - 3372
E-mail: office [at] lrucc [dot] org

www.lrucc.org

Senior Pastor
The Rev. Verne E. Arens
Verne [at] lrucc [dot] org

Pastor for Congregational Life
The Rev. Ginna Minasian Dalton
ginna [at] lrucc [dot] org



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 to subscribe). A public version, *eCurrents*, is posted at 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.