

eCURRENTS

LITTLE RIVER UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Autumn Seasons

I think it is a great irony that our new school year begins at the end of the growing season. Fall heralds the frigidty of winter. Rainer Maria Rilke's poem "Autumn Day" puts it like this:

Lord: it is time. The summer was immense.
Lay your shadow on the sundials
and let loose the wind in the fields.

Bid the last fruits to be full...

Would it not seem more fitting that the new school year be marked by the fragrance of springtime? Wouldn't spring's freshness serve as a clearer marker for the new experiences, challenges, and realizations of the coming school year? Over the next nine months, the academic year will bring the excitement of learning about world and self quite in contrast with the dead season of winter.

Jesus would see this as a paradox that exists at the heart of the gospel. He calls us to live against the reality of decline that is a natural part of human existence. However, it takes courage to live into the reality of rebirth. This is where the promises of God and the strength of a community become so important. The love and care shown to both young and old support our passions for new life.

For our youth, this means we must take the time to listen and be present for them. The school year starts with passion and hope but soon the pressure of exams begins, the need to get those top percentile test scores is felt, and the quest for one's true self is made known in the friendships that are forged.

For these youth, we stand as a community of care. We offer the gifts of time, wisdom and compassion. The passion, energy, creativity, and hope of the youth bless us as adults. Together, we are the body of Christ and live fully as a community of new life defying the declining forces of the winter tide.

Amanda

Elder Care Group: Last Meeting

The Eldercare Support group is winding up for the year. The last meeting will be Sunday, **October 18** from 12:15 to 1:30. Plan to attend if you are caring for an older loved one either locally or at a distance. The group provides a way to learn about community resources while gaining emotional support from other caregivers. Gerontologist Teresa C. Dunbar, MS leads the group. Please contact her ([tlcd3\[at\]cox\[dot\]net](mailto:tlcd3[at]cox[dot]net)) with any questions.

Footsteps to Mexico Signup

Members and non-members of Little River alike are invited to register **now** for the April 7-21, 2010 Footsteps trip to central Mexico, where Christianity first came to North America. The cost is a very reasonable \$1,890 per person, plus airfare to Mexico City (\$400-500). Mail your registration fee of \$100 to the church office (make your check payable to Little River UCC and designate it for Footsteps VIII).

Our organizer, the Center for Global Education at Augsburg College in Minneapolis, assures us that maintaining our personal safety is a primary concern. All fees will be refunded if the trip is cancelled. See the colorful brochure in the atrium or narthex for details.

Mortgage-Free!

On **Sunday October 18** we will celebrate the retirement of our Building with Faith mortgage, which financed renovation of our entry, office, main hall, and kitchen, plus the addition of the Jubilee Room wing.

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Next deadline: Thu. Oct. 22, 4:30
lruc.org/Currents/Currents_Schedule.html

Program and Budget Hearing

This fall, Stewardship and Trustees will hold their annual forum on next year's programs and proposed budget on Sunday, **October 18**, before we make our individual financial commitments for 2010. The aim is to balance the core premise of "giving in gratitude for God's blessings" with the need to understand next year's financial needs before we make our pledges.

So—come, learn, ask questions at 12:15 on October 18. Chairs of boards and committees will be present to describe their plans for the coming year and answer questions. Child care will be provided.

Criminal Justice: Troubled Legacy

The Christian Social Action Committee presents a two-Sunday Our Faith and the World series devoted to examining the problems and promises in Virginia's troubled criminal justice system.

October 18: Powerful stories of injustice and hope, addiction and redemption from the wrongly imprisoned Joyce Ann Brown, her daughter Koquice Spencer of Shaw Community Ministry, and social worker and family therapist Sharon Farrar.

October 25: Experts discuss juvenile justice and ex-offender programs: Virginia Delegate Dave Marsden and John Horejsi of Social Action Linking Together.

Shaw Ministry Gala

Don't miss the Shaw Community Ministry center's gala reopening **Saturday, October 17**, from 1:00 to 4:00. There will be food, family music and entertainment, and introductions to SCM's staff and programs. The center is located at 1726 7th St. NW, Washington, one block from the Metro Red Line. Limited street parking is also available.

New Support for the Homeless

Thrive DC (formerly the Dinner Program for Homeless Women) will soon have a new permanent home. Starting November 1 it will operate at St. Stephens and the Incarnation Episcopal Church in Washington's Columbia Heights neighborhood. Following renovations at their longtime home at First Congregational Church, it was determined that the space there can no longer adequately accommodate Thrive DC's needs.

However, Thrive DC's mission remains the same: to serve the city's homeless men, women and children by providing, meals, job training, and access to important social services to dislocated individuals and families.

The number of people turning to Thrive DC for assistance has increased markedly in light of the economic downturn. More than ever, Thrive DC welcomes

donations of toiletries and new or used winter coats, scarves, gloves, and hats for its clients. Donations would be particularly welcome on or before **Sunday, October 25**, as we will have Thrive DC representatives with us that day at our Missions Fair.

Clothing brought prior to October 25 can be left on the coat rack across from the kitchen. Toiletries can be left in the Thrive boxes on the shelf above it.

Thank you for caring and sharing! Please contact Jill Cetina of the Board of Missions (*cetina [at] verizon [dot] net*) with any questions.

Conversation with David Mellott

As part of our Open and Affirming mission, Little River UCC has invited Dr. David Mellott of Lancaster Theological Seminary to preach next Sunday, **October 25**. Dr. Mellott, a noted theologian, teacher, and spiritual director, has written and lectured extensively on gay issues. He will be asking us what comes after a congregation declares itself Open and Affirming. Does becoming ONA put the issue to rest, or does it open a congregation to deeper conversations and explorations about what it means to be Christian? Everyone is invited to stay for lunch at 12:30-2:00, when Dr. Mellott will lead discussion on his sermon topic.

In order that the hosts can have a general count for the brunch, please notify Nathan Groff (*nathangroff [at] verizon [dot] net*) if you plan to attend.

Wellspring Pastor Emeritus

Wellspring UCC in Centreville and Pastor Dr. Al Fuertes invite you to a special celebration recognizing Dr. Jerrold L. Foltz as our pastor emeritus, on Sunday, **October 25**, at 11:00.

Dr. Foltz, Wellspring's founding pastor, was called in 1996 by a small group that had gathered to begin a United Church of Christ in western Fairfax County, under the care of Little River. Since that time, Wellspring has grown in numbers and in mission, with some "ups and downs," but remaining true to our original goals of being multiracial, multicultural, open and affirming, and accessible to all. The recognition of Dr. Foltz will celebrate these founding goals as well as look toward the future of Wellspring.

The preacher on October 25 will be the Rev. Dr. Mari Castellanos of the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries in Washington. The service will be held in English and Spanish, with participation by some of the day laborers who are part of Wellspring's outreach in Centreville. Connie Rojas, the coordinator of our outreach program, will translate, and Pastor Richard Thayer will lead liturgy and prayers. A lunch will follow with a variety of dishes and special treats.

Directions and more information can be found at www.wellspringucc.org, or call 703 ~ 257 ~ 4111.

Conversations on Membership

If you are considering membership in the congregation of Little River UCC, you are invited to attend the Conversations on Membership to be held from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. on two consecutive Wednesdays: **October 28** (Session A) and **November 4** (Session B). Session A deals primarily with Little River while Session B deals primarily with the United Church of Christ. Prospective members are encouraged to attend both sessions A and B (in any order or time of their choosing) before joining.

Those ready to covenant with us will do so Sunday, **November 15**. For more information, please speak to Verne or Ginna. The next round of Conversations on Membership will be Sunday afternoons January 24 and 31, with new members received February 15.

New Children's Books

When Dinosaurs Die: A Guide to Understanding Death, by Laurie Krasny Brown and Marc Brown, addresses children's questions, fears, and curiosity. The brightly illustrated book, featuring the Browns' familiar Dinosaur characters, is recommended for ages 4-8.

Incredibly Lonely, That's Me, by Ben Keckler, tells the story of a young woman who lost her big sister when she was nine. From the inside cover: ". . . take a journey into the land of Incredibly Lonely. You too can find rainbows of hope while working through loneliness." The suggested reading level is ages 9-12.

Though both books are intended for children, they may be treasured by all ages. Find them in Room 7.

Neighbors in Need Offering

On October 4 we received the Neighbors in Need offering. Thank you to everyone for your generous gifts. It's not too late to participate by placing a gift in the offering plate or sending it to the church office.

Missing Your Church E-Mail?

A change made by our website host disrupted some of Little River's e-mail lists. People were dropped from some of them. If you think you are not receiving e-mails from Alerts, committees, or other church mailing lists, please contact Julie Holm ([jholm \[at\] dragonsholm \[dot\] org](mailto:jholm@dragonsholm.org)) or the office ([office \[at\] lrucc \[dot\] org](mailto:office@lrucc.org)). In particular, let us know if you subscribe to *Currents* via email, but didn't get notice of the September 28 issue.

Cook-In for Young Families

Let's celebrate the bountiful harvest with a family cook-in at church! Bring your family and the ingredients for a dish to share, and we'll cook together while our kids play and then share a feast of food and fellowship.

The date is Saturday, **November 21** at 5:00. Questions? Contact Jen Beckman ([jen \[at\] angryox \[dot\] com](mailto:jen[at]angryox[dot]com)).

Little River UCC Matters!

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

Recently I celebrated a milestone birthday. With the date fast approaching, I was dreading the actual day—something about the finality of turning an age I couldn't believe I had attained. Where did the time go? Where were all my many accomplishments that I had been so sure I would achieve by this time? Why hadn't I yet written the great American novel, or even the great American short story?

As all of these thoughts were whirling through my brain, I suddenly had another radical thought. Maybe, just maybe, in its own quiet way, my life was rich and full just as it was. I remembered an essay a friend of mine in Seattle had written titled *Ordinary Happiness*. The premise was that during the holidays or other special times, our lives become somehow "more"—more parties, more activities, more responsibilities, more stuff. And she relished the thought of returning to *ordinary happiness*—the happiness of the routine and the day-to-day. I began to see that my life—with its daily work, soccer games, scout events, dance classes, band concerts, friends, family, and fun—may be an ordinary life, but it is rich and full and wonderful in its simplicity (or complexity) and in its constancy.

I started thinking about the constants in my life—one of which is faith—and the church I have chosen to be a part of. Little River is not a fancy place, but it is an important place. It's important because of the work it does and the opportunities it offers to everyone to participate in the life of a community of faith. Little River is a place of justice, acceptance, discussion, exploration, worship, compassion, joy—you name it, and we have it. In every sense, Little River UCC matters. It's part of the fabric of our lives. It's one of the constants in our lives.

So let's be grateful for *ordinary happiness*. Let's together consider during this stewardship campaign *how we can support Little River UCC and all that it represents in our lives*. And, under no circumstances, is anyone to ask me which milestone birthday I celebrated, because I'll simply say 30.

Tracy Lee
Stewardship Committee



Women's Book Group

Join the Book Group **Sunday, November 15** at 12:15 to discuss *Olive Kitteridge*, Elizabeth Strout's Pulitzer-Prize-winning series of interlinking stories about life in a small coastal town in Maine. Olive, a retired teacher, deplors the changes in her town and the world at large, but she doesn't always recognize the changes in those around her. As the townspeople grapple with their problems, Olive is brought to a deeper understanding of herself and her own life—sometimes painfully but always with ruthless honesty.

Homestretch

Homestretch is a comprehensive program that helps homeless in our area reach the goal of independent living. Services include transitional housing, case management, child care, employment counseling, skills training, English instruction, and counseling for legal, financial, domestic-abuse, and substance-abuse needs. They strive to break the cycle of poverty by helping homeless children.

Homestretch is one of the benevolences our congregation supports. For more information, see the social hall bulletin board or www.homestretch-inc.org.





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 ~

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