



Merry Christmas!



We pause in the midst of our many preparations to share the hope you will experience all the blessings of this holy season, as the love of the new-born Christ grows in our hearts and world.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



<i>Craig Stapert</i>	<i>Yris Saenz</i>	AMANDA HOPKINS
<i>Jane Johnson</i>	<i>Darlene Lane</i>	<i>Verne Arens</i>
<i>Kenyon Erickson</i>	<i>Karen Wolfberg</i>	NANCY HUDDLESTON
	<i>Ginna Minasian Dalton</i>	

Christmastime Events

December 20 *Fourth Sunday of Advent*

Worship with Carols (9:30 & 11:00) Joyous worship to anticipate the Nativity!

December 24 (Thursday) *Christmas Eve*

Family Pageant (5:00) "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever" features the talents of Little River's most enthusiastic actors and singers!

Candlelight Worship (9:00) A mood of joyful wonder on Christmas Eve with lessons, carols, and reflection.

The Christmas Offering will be received at both evening services. See the article below.

December 27 *First Sunday after Christmas*

Worship at 11:00 only: Joyous worship for all ages rings in the new year. Care will be available for infants and toddlers; church school will not meet.

Christmas Offering

The Christmas Offering will be received at both evening services December 24. Half will benefit the Christmas Fund (a UCC-wide offering that assists UCC clergy, retired clergy, and lay people in need) and half will be split evenly between Food for Others and Shaw Community Ministry. Make checks out to Little River UCC with memo Christmas Offering. If you will be away, you may take or mail them to the church office.

Christmas Eve Family Play

At the center of our 5:00 Christmas Eve family worship, the children of the church will present an abridged version of Barbara Robinson's classic story *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*. Young and old alike are invited to come and worship together.

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Next deadline: Thu. December 31, 4:30
Schedule: lruc.org/lrnsched.htm

Meet Our Newest Members

On November 22, Little River welcomed five friends into membership. If you haven't yet met Andrea & Geoff Carpenter, Jeanne Fulford, or Jarek Tuszynski & Emily Tuszynska, pick up a printed copy of *Currents* for an introduction. Welcome!

End-of-Year Business

Christmas: December 25. Boxing Day: 26. Why is **Sunday, December 27** notable? Let us count the ways:

Financial contributions: To receive tax credit for 2009, please have contributions for this year in the offering plate or church office by Sunday, **December 27**.

Bills and vouchers: Please submit items for 2009 disbursements to comptroller Mark Holm by Sunday, **December 27**.

Annual reports should reach the church office, preferably electronically, by Sunday, **December 27**. Church groups use annual reports to list all who served in 2009, summarize the year's business for the record, suggest future directions, give financial reports on any separate accounts or funds, and make the congregation aware of the group and its activities.

Undeck the Halls!

As we start the new year with a clean slate, we invite you to join the work party **Sunday, January 3** at 2:00 as we take down the greens, pack up the White Gift tree, and lovingly put the Christmas figures to rest for another year. No reservations required; just show up!

Healing Service

The quarterly Healing Service for those who are seeking healing of body, mind, or spirit will take place at 4:00 **Sunday, January 3** in the sanctuary. This informal service includes the ancient rite of the laying on of hands as well as communion. Please speak with Ginna or Verne for more information.

Flower Donations for 2010

The flowers that grace our sanctuary are funded by members and friends to express thanks, love, and remembrance. You are invited to sign up to give flowers in the coming year on the Sunday of your choice on a first-come basis. The sign-up chart is posted in the social hall.



Safe Church Policy Hearing

Little River UCC's interim safe church policy will be presented for formal adoption by the congregation at the January 31 Annual Meeting. On Sunday, **January 10**, The Safe Church Committee will hold a question-and-answer session at 11:00 to ensure that all members have a chance to ask questions and get clarification on the policy before the congregational vote. You can read the interim policy on the church website (www.lrucc.org > Community and Fellowship > Caring for Each Other > Safe Church Policy).

Christianity in Mexico

The next talk in the series presented in preparation for the Footsteps VIII trip to Mexico will be on Sunday, **January 17** at 11:00. Kent Rogers will talk about "The Evolution of Christianity in Mexico" from the time of the first conquistadors up to more recent times when other Christian groups have tried to establish a presence in a country where Catholicism was once the state religion.

Other talks will follow on February 14, when Steve Rogers will speak on "Twentieth-Century U.S.-Mexican Relations: the Role of Oil," and February 21, when Barbara Lowrey will talk about "NAFTA and Its Impact."

All are welcome at these talks, whether or not they plan to go to on the Footsteps trip to Mexico.

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 3:00 to 4:30 on two consecutive Sundays: **January 24** (Session A) and **January 31** (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, **February 14**. For more information, please speak to Verne or Ginna. The next round of Conversations on Membership will be Wednesday evenings April 28 and May 5, with new members received May 16.

Currents for January

Currents will maintain its normal biweekly schedule in January. The next deadline is New Year's Eve. The last deadline before the January 31 Annual Meeting is **Thursday, January 14** for publication January 18.

Inclement Weather

Now that we've sighted our first snow, here are two timely notices for keeping on top of the cold stuff:

- **Weather related cancellations:** If worship or general activities are called off, we notify you:
 - **By e-mail.** The easiest and most timely way to stay informed is to sign up for Alerts by sending an e-mail to getalerts@lrucc.org. Watch for confirmation of your request and, of course, the Alert messages.
 - **On our web site,** lrucc.org.
 - **By phone,** when you call the church office.
 - **Over WTOP radio,** if it's a major church event such as worship. Listen (103.5 FM, 820 AM) or check their web site (WTOPnews.com).

Smaller church groups and committees generally have their own means of communicating a cancellation.

- **Clearing our entrance:** The Trustees have placed containers of ice-melt product and sand in the coat closet behind the atrium. Though a contractor plows the driveway and treats the sidewalks around the building, we will sometimes need to supplement this work. On Sunday mornings it will be done by our assistant custodian or whoever is responsible for opening the church. If you are holding a meeting at another time and are concerned about the front entrance, these supplies are available for your use. If possible, please use sand on the concrete surfaces (sidewalk) and avoid getting ice-melt on the grass or other vegetation. Thank you!

Staff Salary Supplement

At its December 9 meeting, Church Council voted to award stipends of one-and-one-half percent of annual salary to employees who have been on staff for the preceding twelve months, with payments to be made before the end of December. This decision was made pursuant to the sense of the 2009 congregational meeting that the lack of staff salary increases be recompensed if the budget situation improved during the year. Income is now projected to be about \$20,000 over expenses. The total cost of the stipends will be about \$4,000. The Council expressed its thanks to staff for their faithful service and recognized that a stipend of this size is a mere token of our grateful appreciation. The remainder of net income will be carried over to 2010. Thanks to all whose giving makes these stipends possible.

Stewardship Report

Now more than a month into our campaign to support Little River UCC's ministries in 2010, we have received 150 pledges totaling \$560,623. Thank you to all who have responded with pledges of financial support!

The flip side of this report is that more than 50 pledging units from last year have yet to let us know their intentions for 2010. The Stewardship Committee is making follow-up calls now, so, as much as we love talking with folks, please save us some time and get your pledges in to the church office!

If the outstanding 2009 pledges are renewed at levels similar to last year's, we can project pledge income of about \$664,000—or 97 percent of last year's total pledge income of \$684,238. Achieving this goal, in this economic climate, would surely be considered a success, although our proposed budget for 2010 seeks \$720,000 in pledge income.

We won't meet any goal without the full support of the congregation. If you haven't already, please take a stewardship brochure from a literature rack and drop your completed pledge form in the box in the church office. Or mail it to the church.

On another, related topic, many charities are seeking year-end gifts now. Surely your mailbox is as full as mine, every day. Have you considered adding Little River UCC to your list of year-end gifts? Perhaps your 2009 pledge has long been paid in full; perhaps your financial situation is advantageous; perhaps you wish to express how much Little River UCC matters to you. Your extra gift, made by December 31, may come in handy when you calculate your 2009 tax deductions and will certainly be warmly received at church as we prepare for next year.

Thank you for showing us that *Little River matters—to you, to your family, to the community, and to the world!*

Jan Curtis

Stewardship Committee

Charitable Gift Annuities

Are you looking for a special gift for a special person on a special occasion? Consider providing that person with lifelong income through a United Church of Christ Charitable Gift Annuity: The recipient receives income, you can receive a charitable tax deduction, and in the future, Little River (or another charitable beneficiary you choose) receives the remaining principal of the gift to support mission and ministry. For more information, contact a pastor or Brian Payne, Endowment Fund Committee chair ([brianrpayne\[at\]verizon\[dot\]net](mailto:brianrpayne[at]verizon[dot]net)).



M.L. King Prayer Breakfast . . .

United Black Christians of the UCC announces the twenty-third annual King Prayer Breakfast at Peoples Congregational UCC on Saturday, **January 9** at 9:00. Senior pastor Dr. Michael Murphy will speak on the theme "We Still Have Work to Do," and there will be greetings from regional UCC leaders, music, and a presentation on the Joseph Evans Scholarship.

Peoples Church is in Washington at 4704 13th St. NW. Tickets are \$25 (\$12 for children up to age 12). Contact Peoples Congregational for information on to buy them.

. . . And Family Volunteer Day

Give Together: A Family Volunteer Day, presented by Volunteer Fairfax, will be held on the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service, Monday, **January 18**. The event will take place 10:30-2:30 at George Mason University in Fairfax, in Dewberry Hall on the lower level of the Johnson Center. Families will be able to participate in volunteer projects to benefit people served by Fairfax 4-

H, FACETS, the Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia, and the Orphan Foundation of America. All projects are aimed towards elementary-age children.

Give Together is a perfect opportunity for families of all shapes and sizes to give back to their community at one central location. On King Day it is important to remember the words of Martin Luther King Jr. himself: "Everybody can be great because anybody can serve."

Register at the Volunteer Fairfax website (www.volunteerfairfax.org > Give Together: A Family Volunteer Day). Early registration is encouraged, though sign-ups will be accepted the day of the event.

Women's Book Discussion

Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* (Vintage, 2005) is the topic for **January 21** at 12:15. Set in Turkey, this New York Times Book Review "best book of the year" is sure to intrigue, puzzle, irritate and enthrall readers. The author also holds a Nobel Prize for literature. All women are welcome to join in this discussion.





Links: Events, People, News

- **Calendar:** Find out about church events at www.lrucc.org by clicking on 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.ucc.org.
- **Currents by e-mail:** See the *Currents* web page (www.lrucc.org, click on *Currents*) or write webteam@lrucc.org.

LITTLE RIVER UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

*~ welcoming diversity, independent
thought, and 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@lrucc.org), or on paper. Submit notices 3 weeks ahead of events if possible.