

eCURRENTS

LITTLE RIVER UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Volume 57 Number 1

January 4, 2010

Editor: H.E. Beckwith

Good News from Geoffrey Black

Good News is incarnate in many forms. For us in the United Church of Christ it comes in the personhood of Geoffrey Black, our new President and General Minister. He has been called to lead us into the next very uncertain, very tenuous time with a gentle way, a listening ear, and a keen mind. Having said that, we've always been blessed with leadership who embodied those qualities since our birth.

For the moment, the critical questions are: What will leadership need to look like? Where will it come from? How do we nurture leadership? Why are we as a church confronted with this question? The "why" needs more unpacking than a clergy column allows, but Dr. Black laid out several challenges and affirmations for us to consider when he met with Potomac Association lay leaders and clergy in November.

The challenges he mentioned were: the loss of three UCC churches per week; the planting of 1.5 churches per week, and the intensifying financial crunch which caused another layoff of national staff this fall. The Good News is that we are engaged in an intentional, aggressive conversation around re-envisioning how we do ministry in every realm of the church by asking the quintessential question: How will we seek out God's will

for us to reshape the United Church of Christ?

For the most part Geoffrey Black's comments and those of others gathered reflected a shared concern and urgency to empower young adults not only for leadership but for the sake of their spiritual lives. We must ask: how can we nurture young adults in an era of which most of us in leadership have little grasp? The average age of people in the UCC is 65 years old. We are collectively the oldest community among mainline churches.

My question is: how can we invite and empower older adults and leaders to share their journey with young adults and make room for the dialog that will indeed change and gift us all?

Peace to you in your preparations to welcome a new year and a new generation as we receive the new baby who carries Good News for us all . . .

Ginna

From the Senior Pastor

Since the last issue of *Currents* my colleague, the Rev. Ginna Minasian Dalton, has submitted her resignation effective June 30, 2010. That represents a very significant loss in our life together: I will be losing a valued colleague; you will be losing a valued pastor. Ginna has been our pastor for eight years sharing many, many extraordinary gifts which we will continue to enjoy for years to come. As I had hoped to say Sunday morning, December 20 (when we were snowed out), sometimes when our plans go awry and the status quo is interrupted, and we find ourselves in places we didn't want to go, we realize God has something new and wonderful—maybe even joyful—awaiting us. I pray this is so for Little River UCC, and for Ginna, and I urge you to join me in this prayer today and in the days to come.

Verne

Fair Trade Sale

On **Sunday, January 10** the Prells will once again be setting up the fair trade table of coffees, teas, chocolates, dried fruits, and nuts by the social hall at 10:30 and noon. Plan to replenish those items you love!

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Next deadline: Thu. January 14, 4:30
lrucc.org/Currents/Currents_Schedule.html

Safe Church Policy Q & A

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** at 11:00 the Safe Church Committee will hold a 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 at www.lrucc.org > Community and Fellowship > Caring for Each Other > Safe Church Policy.

Coal Country Screening

Last summer our youth traveled to coal country to get to know the people and the problems they face. Now, we all can learn more about modern coal mining and its effects as four Alexandria congregations present a screening of the new film *Coal Country*, on **Friday, January 8**.

Through this film, we'll get to know working miners along with activists who are battling coal companies in Appalachia. We hear from miners and coal company officials, who are concerned about jobs and the economy and believe they are acting responsibly in bringing power to the American people. Families have lived in the region for generations, and most have ancestors who worked in the mines. Everyone shares a deep love for the land, but mountain-top removal mining—which has leveled over 500 Appalachian mountains—is tearing them apart.

We need to understand the meaning behind promises of "cheap energy" and "clean coal." Are there alternatives for our energy future? Greater Washington Interfaith Power & Light and the Wise Energy for Virginia coalition will make the connection between local coal mining and responding as people of faith to the threat of climate change.

The film will be shown at Heritage Hall in Old Presbyterian Meeting House, 321 South Fairfax Street (between Duke and Wolfe Streets). Parking is available at 413 South Royal St. (between Wolfe and Wilkes Streets). Refreshments will be served at 6:30, and the film starts at 7:00. Admission is free, though a \$10 donation is suggested.

Learn more about the movie at www.coalcountrythefilm.com.

Christianity in Mexico

The next talk in the Footsteps series on Mexico will take place **Sunday, January 17** at 11:00. Kent Rogers will talk about the evolution of Christianity in Mexico from the time of the first Spanish conquistadors up until more recent times when other Christian groups have

attempted to establish a presence in a country where Catholicism was once the state religion. While this talk is part of a series in preparation for the Footsteps VIII trip to Mexico in April, all interested people are invited.

Guantanamo Update

Doug Spaulding and Allison Lefrak of the Washington law firm Reed Smith will return to Little River on **Sunday, January 24** at 11:00 to provide an update on cases of Guantanamo detainees they have represented. Doug and Allison came to Little River in 2007 to share with us the stories of three very different Guantanamo clients and slides they had taken at the detention center. One of their clients, Ghanim Abdulrahman Al-Harbi, a Saudi national, was transferred to Saudi custody in the summer of 2007 along with 15 others and was sent to a "deradicalization" center. A second client, Zainulabidin Merozhev, was returned to his native Uzbekistan in November 2008. The third client, Ravil Mingazov, is a former ballet dancer and the only Russian remaining at Guantanamo. The town council of Amherst, Massachusetts recently passed a resolution asking Congress to repeal legislation blocking the resettlement of Guantanamo detainees in the United States and offering to accept Mingazov for settlement in Amherst.

In addition to learning more about what has happened to these individuals since Doug and Allison's previous visit, we hope to gain some insight into how conditions at Guantanamo have changed, the impact of their Guantanamo experience on the detainees and their families, recent progress in resettling or transferring other detainees, and remaining obstacles to the closure of the Guantanamo detention facility. The discussion should also help us place these matters in the larger context of the moral challenges posed by our continuing confrontation with terrorism.

The Christian Social Action Committee invites you to this Our Faith and the World seminar.

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.



Women's Book Discussion

Orhan Pamuk's *Snow* (Vintage, 2005) is the book we'll discuss on **Sunday, January 24** 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.

Open Mike Night: Sign Up!

It's time once again to begin thinking about Open Mike Night, Little River's fabulous intergenerational performance event. On the evening of **Saturday, February 6**, the social hall will vanish and Club Little River will appear—with our fabulous band, wonderful food, and plenty of local talent. Are you interested in being part of the show? If so, talk to Julie Holm or Dave Shepherd. If you want the band to back you up, you need to get sheet music to Dave or Julie by **Sunday, January 24**. If you're having trouble finding music, or finding it in your key, talk to Julie, who has an online source and may be able to help! For more info contact [openmikenight \[at\] lrucc \[dot\] org](mailto:openmikenight@lrucc.org).

Mosaic Harmony Concert

Are you looking for a lift from the post-holiday letdown? Mosaic Harmony has just the thing!

On **Saturday, February 6** the multicultural interfaith chorus, along with the House of Jam Band, will present "The Many Moods of Love," a pre-Valentine concert at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fairfax (in Oakton). The program, which starts at 7:30, will include pop, top-40, R&B, jazz and rock & roll music.

Tickets are \$27 or two for \$47. A limited number of "Sweetheart Tables" will offer Valentine's Day amenities (\$62, including admission for two people). Also available through Sunday, January 31 are "Love Notes" to be printed in the evening's program (starting at \$50).

All proceeds from the concert will benefit Mosaic Harmony. Seating is limited! Purchase your tickets at www.mosaicharmony.org or contact Linda at [tickets \[at\] mosaicharmony \[dot\] org](mailto:tickets@mosaicharmony.org).

Sign Up for Place Setters

Place Setters provides opportunities for small groups to get to know one another better over a series of meals. The meals may be held in homes, restaurants, parks, or wherever each group decides. Groups typically meet once a month for four months, with members taking

turns hosting as they are able and all contributing parts of the meal. Groups are now being formed for the coming season. Stop by the Place Setters table in the narthex during January to sign up.

Pageant Was Truly the Best!

A manger full of thank-yous to all who made Christmas Eve's "The Best Christmas Pageant Ever"—Little River style—a meaningful evening. There were as many people in the background as there were in the foreground. Such is the nature of the faith journey: it takes all of us, using our gifts in whatever corner of the church community, to bring faith alive. Thanks, everyone!

And to the Government I Leave ...

If you don't have a will, this may be your will! In the absence of a will, the state in which you reside has a formula by which it determines who inherits your estate. Most of us would choose to leave the bulk of our estate elsewhere: to loved ones, our church, and our favorite charity. But have we done the necessary planning to make it happen? Make a list of all your property and assets, think of whom you would like to benefit, and take this information to a legal advisor. (Your will is best written by a legal professional familiar with the laws of your state.) For more information, contact a pastor or Brian Payne, Endowment Fund Committee chair ([brianpayne \[at\] verizon \[dot\] net](mailto:brianpayne@verizon.net)).

Emergency Volunteer Chaplain

I have been accepted into the new Fairfax County Emergency Volunteer Chaplaincy Program. There will be a series of training events followed by exams for certification. I look forward to this opportunity for voluntary service to our civil life together than blends much of who I am. The commitment is for one week on call every quarter, which should not interfere with my responsibilities to you here at Little River UCC.

Often we think of pastors as serving the community anyway. But I have come to realize that, while that is true, there is an element that is left undone. Just as all members of the church are expected to serve the church community in some way as well as the wider community, I believe I am called to do the same.

Peace,
Ginna



Worship in the Time of Flu

To help prevent the spread of the H1N1 and other viruses, the pastors and deacons are temporarily changing how we administer communion. Read more about it in the bulletin on communion Sundays.

Also, when passing the peace, or when greeters or pastors offer their hands in friendship, feel free to offer your hand, nod, or otherwise greet them as you feel comfortable.

Editor's note: Little River has not yet invested in giant "Peace of the Lord" mitts, or, for extra protection, foam "POTL" Frisbees, as seen on the Internet.

Currents and Annual Meeting

The next Currents will be the last issue to appear before the January 31 annual meeting. Please submit any material you wish the congregation to read before the meeting by 4:30 on **Thursday, January 14.**

Update on Pledging for 2010

Thanks to the 183 pledging units who have responded with faith and generosity to our stewardship campaign, Little River UCC can plan on pledge income of around \$635,000 in 2010. We give thanks for the new pledging units—including youth members—and recognize that for some today's economy is uncertain.

However, this total is considerably less than the total pledged in 2009 (\$684,238), and the Stewardship Committee remains hopeful that additional pledges will be submitted. Please prayerfully consider how Little River UCC matters to you and provide your pledge of support, proportional to God's gifts in your life, today.





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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thought, and 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; 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.