



Little River United Church of Christ

## *CURRENT REFLECTIONS*

May 2024

### Shelli's Space

As the Strategic Planning Team has been doing our work, we have recently been analyzing our current situation in terms of our governance structure, our programming, our finances, our staffing situation, our operations, and our external landscape. As I type, we're finishing up our analysis of our operations, which will bring us to our last category in Phase 2. We plan to share the results with Church Council on May 8th, and with the entire congregation on June 2nd.

One of the things that has arisen as part of the analysis of our staffing situation is that "The senior pastor is currently able to provide for the congregation's most pressing pastoral care needs, but routine check-ins, extended pastoral care visits, and preventative pastoral care do not typically fit into the current limitations of the senior pastor's calendar." We could wait to address this need until the Strategic Planning process is concluded near the end of this calendar year. But is this something we might be able to address even now?

We are called by a God who cares for us and has expressed that care in the person of Jesus the Christ. The call to care is a call to each of us. In the past, we have had congregants who were trained in "Called to Care," a resource created by the UCC to help lay people become caregivers within our congregation. The dream is that "members of local churches around the country will seek to live out with renewed faithfulness Jesus' command to love one another."

Especially on the heels of our recent Mental Health Sunday, we know how important it is to reach out to those who might be isolated and those who are dealing with pain

and/or suffering of various kinds. Caregiving ministries occur in hospitals, hospice, retirement communities, homes, at our church building, in one-on-one conversations, and in group settings. I wonder whether any of you might hear the call to participate in a renewal of our caregiving ministry.

If you are interested in offering caregiving visits, sending cards, making phone calls, or even facilitating a caregiving group (e.g. for those with mental health challenges, those who are grieving, those who are dealing with cancer, etc.), please email me at [shelli@lrucc.org](mailto:shelli@lrucc.org). We already have a small group of three volunteer caregivers, and we're hoping to expand our numbers to about twelve people to serve in this way.

The deacons and I will provide training materials, opportunities to shadow pastoral visits, and spiritual support. Thank you for prayerfully considering whether this is something you might be called to do.



Shelli Poe

## Justice & Witness Action Network

Thank you to all who called and wrote postcards to Governor Youngkin in late February and early March. The issues which JWAN-VA worked on this year were the following:

- HB174 A bill to ensure that the right to marry for all Virginians is protected by law was approved by Governor Youngkin on March 8 and is effective on July 1, 2024.
- HB2/SB2 Banning future sales of assault weapons. This bill was vetoed with a statement by Governor Youngkin on March 26, and the House sustained the veto on April 17, 2024.

The Governor's veto statement:

Pursuant to Article V, Section 6, of the Constitution of Virginia, I veto House Bill 2, which creates new penalties for transferring and possessing certain firearms containing certain components.

The Constitution precludes the Commonwealth from prohibiting a broad category of firearms widely embraced for lawful purposes, such as self-defense. Despite this, certain members of the General Assembly have pursued legislation banning most contemporary semi-automatic firearms and specific ammunition-feeding devices.

Like all Virginians, I am profoundly troubled by the occurrences of mass shootings and crimes committed with firearms. The pain and sorrow inflicted by criminals with heinous intentions are truly heart-wrenching and should not be minimized for our communities, the victims, or their families.

Virginia has some of the strictest gun laws in the country. Unfortunately, the Commonwealth has reduced penalties for criminals, contributing to violent crime. Enhancing penalties for crimes committed with firearms will reverse this trend. Our most significant gap, however, has been in our behavioral health system, which is why substantial investments in behavioral health are necessary.

That twofold approach can provide a real solution without creating outcomes that would affect law-abiding citizens and violating our constitutional rights.

Accordingly, I veto this bill.

HB1244/SB719 The bill to restrict the use of solitary confinement in Virginia prisons was vetoed by the Governor on March 27, and the House sustained the Governor's veto on April 17, 2024.

The website <lis.virignia.gov> is the official site for the Virginia General Assembly legislative information.

## Passages

The church office has received the news of the passing of Paul Haas on April 29. Paul had been a member of Little River Church and resident of Greenspring Community. Please keep Paul's sister Lys Kennedy and Paul's family in your prayers. No service information has been planned at this time.

The church office has received the sad news of the passing of Judith (Judie) Hoover on April 4. Judie was a member of Little River Church and resident of Greenspring Community. Please keep Judie's husband Jerry and family in your prayers. No service information has been planned at this time.

Memorial Service for Edith Buckley will be held at Little River at noon on Thursday, May 30, 2024.

### Counting Our March 2024 Blessings

March Giving Report		Special Offerings (Year to Date)	
<b>Gifts (March)</b>		<b>UCC Offerings</b>	
Budget	\$46,316.66	One Great Hour of Sharing	\$3,446.24
Gifts Received	\$57,757.68	Strengthen the Church	\$100.00
	\$11,441.02	Neighbors in Need	\$200.00
<b>Gifts (Year to Date)</b>		<b>Special Offerings</b>	
Budget	\$138,949.98	Easter Offering	\$1,225.00
Gifts Received	\$192,802.15	Christmas Offering	\$150.00
	\$53,852.17	<b>Memorial Gifts</b>	
		Endowment Gifts	\$375.00

## Potomac Association Revival

**Love4: Love of God, Service, Church, and Neighbor  
Saturday, June 1**

Have you heard? The Potomac Association of the United Church of Christ is holding a Revival on Saturday, June 1, from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. at Peoples Congregational UCC (4704 13th Street, NW, Washington, DC). The day is a celebration of our covenant with other area UCC churches, and its theme is Love4: Love of God, Service, Church, and Neighbor.



The event includes a wonderful opportunity to hear from our new General Minister and President, Karen Georgia Thompson, who will preach during the Potomac Association's worship service. The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson is the first woman, and the first Black woman, to lead the denomination. She was elected by the General Synod at its July 2023 meeting. Rev. Thompson is the third

woman nominated for the post, after the Revs. Yvonne Delk (in 1989) and Barbara Brown Zikmund (in 1999), but the first to be elected.

A Jamaican immigrant, Thompson is the third person of African descent to serve as leader of the denomination.

Pastor Shelli will offer a workshop during the event, from 11 to 11:45 A.M. And there will be plenty of other workshops to choose from as well! More details are forthcoming.

The Potomac Association is requesting volunteers to be ushers to assist attendees throughout the day of the event from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. If you would like to volunteer to serve in this capacity for all or any part of the day, please

contact Minister Francis S. Smith at [atlarge-member2@potomacucc.org](mailto:atlarge-member2@potomacucc.org) or 202-905-6490.

Please mark your calendars for the Revival event.

We will share any additional details we receive from the Association.



## Guest Preacher: Carolyn C. Hart



**Sunday, May 26  
Trinity Sunday**

Carolyn is in the Master in Divinity (M.Div.) program at Virginia Theological Seminary, after a long and fulfilling career in global health, most recently as Vice President of the International Division and Director of the Washington office of John Snow, Inc. (JSI), a public health

consulting organization.

## Ecumenical Advocacy Days

**May 17-19**

Join us in person for the 2024 Ecumenical Advocacy Days Spring Summit, "Faith in Action: Advancing Human Rights and Peace for All," at the Crowne Plaza in Arlington. It will include advocacy training as well as education



on topics such as voting rights, Christian nationalism, immigration, climate, human rights, and others. The Rev. Terri Hord Owens (General Minister for the Disciples of Christ) will be an opening

speaker, and the Rev. Shari Prestemon (Associate General Minister) will be present at the UCC denominational time. Particularly during this election year, we need the training and connections this summit will provide to unify us and help us follow God's call for justice and peace. Plan to join and help spread the word! (Scholarships available.) For more information and to register, visit [advocacydays.org](http://advocacydays.org).

## Fair Trade

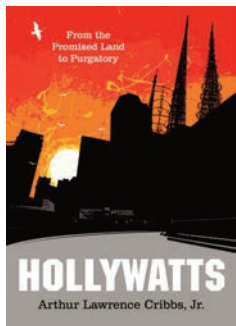
**Sunday, May 19**

Fair Trade items will be on sale Sunday, May 19, before and after the worship service. Look for the Fair Trade Sale at the table outside the Social Hall. Coffee and olive oil will be on sale along with delicious chocolate. Credit cards are now accepted!



## Book Group

Monday, May 20, 7 P.M.



LRUCC Book Group in May will be presented by the Women's Ministry and supported by our Antiracism Ministry. We will discuss *Hollywatts*, the memoir of our former interim pastor, the Rev. Dr. Arthur L. Cribbs, Jr. He describes the journey his family took from the segregated life in Memphis to a new life in Southern California, seeking a better life that

his parents wanted for the family. Seven years after graduating from high school the author returns to see a dramatically changed Watts. Guns, gangs, and drugs completely transformed his childhood home, a change that Pastor Art describes as orchestrated.

Our discussion will center on the life of the Cribbs family and the possible sources of the changes the author describes. As a very special guest, the author himself, Pastor Art, will be joining the Book Group discussion from the west coast!

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## 2024 Graduation Information

Please help LRUCC and the Board of Christian Education celebrate our 2024 graduates by sharing graduation information using this form: [bit.ly/LR-Grads2024](https://bit.ly/LR-Grads2024). Deadline for graduate information is May 17. We will recognize graduates and celebrate high school graduates during our June 9th service. Any questions, email [youthgroup@lrucc.org](mailto:youthgroup@lrucc.org).

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## Strategic Planning Process

### May 2024 Update

Strategic Planning for Little River's next five years is well underway with Phase II work now completed by the committee. The congregation is invited to a presentation of the Phase II work on Sunday, June 2, following worship; the materials will be emailed prior to the meeting. Meanwhile, please take a look at the process as posted in the social hall or review Phase I work on the website: [www.lrucc.org/strategic-plan](http://www.lrucc.org/strategic-plan)

# PRIDE!

## Knit & Crochet for Knit the Rainbow Sunday, May 26

The Chat & Craft group will hold a "pop up" event on Sunday, May 26, 9-10 A.M. and 11 A.M.-12 P.M. in the Conference Room for Knit the Rainbow, which distributes winter accessories to homeless LGBTQ+ youth in NYC and several other US cities. Please join us for any length of time to chat, craft, or receive a knitting or crochet lesson! Yarn, needles, and patterns will be available. All ages welcome! For questions, email [chatcraft@lrucc.org](mailto:chatcraft@lrucc.org).

## Fairfax City Pride Parade, Saturday, June 1

On Saturday, June 1, we have the opportunity to share our LGBTQ+ pride at the second annual Fairfax Pride in the Old Town Hall (3999 University Drive) from 5 to 7 P.M. Our Open and Affirming Ministry will be there to represent us. We'll be giving away crocheted hearts with affirming messages on them, created by our Chat and Craft Ministry. And we'll have activities for the kids. At 5:30 P.M. there will be speeches and a ceremony, where Mayor Reed and other dignitaries will share. Please drop by and show your LRUCC pride at this event!

## DC Pride Parade, Saturday, June 8

On Saturday, June 8, we will be marching in the DC Pride Parade! The parade will last from 3 to 7:30 P.M. in the Logan & Dupont Circle Neighborhoods in Washington, DC. The Rev. Jason Carson Wilson is planning the event for our Potomac Association, and more details are forthcoming as the event approaches. We are planning to have a truck and flatbed so that the event will be accessible to those who are not able to walk the route. Please let us know if you plan to join us!

## Chosen Family Brunch

Saturday, June 15, 10:30 A.M.

The Open and Affirming Ministry invites LGBTQ+ members, friends, and allies to a potluck brunch on Saturday, June 15, starting at 10:30 A.M. Join with chosen family members for food and community in the social hall. This is a purely social gathering. Bring a favorite brunch food to share and celebrate Pride Month!

## Blessing of the Banned Books

On Sunday, June 16, we will enjoy a blessing of the banned books! Our Open and Affirming Ministry and Antiracism Ministry invite you to bring in and donate a banned book for a blessing during the worship service. These books will be placed in our Antiracism and/or Open and Affirming Libraries in the atrium after worship.

## Exhibit: The Nature of it All

Little River has the privilege of hosting *The Nature of it All*, a traveling art exhibit featuring artists who are on death row. This collection of art was curated by Jessie Houff and Rachel Gross of the Death Row Support Project, a program of the Church of the Brethren that invites volunteers to correspond with death row inmates. Several Little River members have been a part of the ministry.

The exhibit lifts up the stories of incarcerated individuals and continues important

conversations about the prison industrial complex. The artists sent their works of art they created to express their thanks for pairing them with a pen pal.

So, if you are strolling down the hallway at church, please take a few minutes to view the beautiful artworks. A special thank you to Caroline Labbé for picking up the art pieces from Rock Spring UCC (who had previously displayed the art and

offered other UCC's an opportunity to borrow the art pieces) and David Roach for hanging the art in the hallway. The exhibit will be on display during the month of May.

The curators of this show remind us that the artists on death row live solitary lives and face unknown

future. They are often neglected and misunderstood, and people forget that they are children of God, and by nature, artists. The artists in this exhibit use a range of artistic mediums. The works of these children of God are inspired by God's creation. If you are interested in learning more about the Death Row Support Project or death row in general, take a look at these web-

sites: Death Row Support Project; Death Penalty Information Center; Art for Redemption; and The Innocence Project.

Current Reflections



## Seabury Award Honors Barbara Lowrey

Barbara was honored for her many years of service to Little River on April 30 at the National Cathedral in Washington. Barbara was accompanied by Pastor Shelli, Carrie and Bruce Douglas, and Kathy Hartzler. The Rev. Freeman L. Palmer was one of the officiants conducting the service. The Rev. Ellen Jennings, pastor of Cleveland Park Congregational shared a sermon reflecting on love and service. Past



honorees from Little River include Gail Perry and Robin Petrusak. A longtime member of Little

River, Barbara Lowrey has been a dedicated and tireless participant in the life of our church. She raised her family in the church and has served in a wide variety of roles, some multiple times. In addition to being a choir member for decades, she has chaired the music committee. Barbara's contributions include serving as a Deacon, as Treasurer, as Moderator for two terms, and on a senior pastor search committee. Barbara has not only been a dedicated servant of Little River but has been a valued advisor on many topics and an all-around source of good judgment.



Seabury Resources for Aging's mission is to provide personalized, affordable services and housing options to help older adults in the greater Washington, D.C., area live with independence and dignity. The Seabury Resources for Aging is celebrating its 100th year of service to seniors in the greater Washington area. Started by the donation of a single-family home by Cornella Jones the program has been guided by the Episcopal Seniors Ministries and partners with the Potomac Association of the UCC.

## Board of Trustees Update

### Invasive Vine Removal

On April 27, the Board of Trustees scheduled an Invasive Vine Removal work session. This was the first of several work sessions that will be scheduled over the next six months. There will be plenty of upcoming opportunities to get involved. Volunteer labor counts as \$29.95 per hour towards LRUCC's \$1,500 cost share for the Tree Planting and Preservation Fund (TPPF) 2024 mini-grant of \$3,000 for invasive vine removal.

The focus for April 27 was on the front entrance to the church driveway and around the church cross and sign on Little River Turnpike. Geoff Carpenter and Robin Petrusak dug out Japanese honeysuckle, English ivy and porce-

lain berry vines from around the church sign and the on the left side of the driveway entrance. We discovered that the left side of the driveway has at least four azaleas that are being smothered by invasive vines, but were nevertheless trying to bloom. We made some headway with uncovering the azaleas, but there remains plenty of work to be done along the top of the driveway.

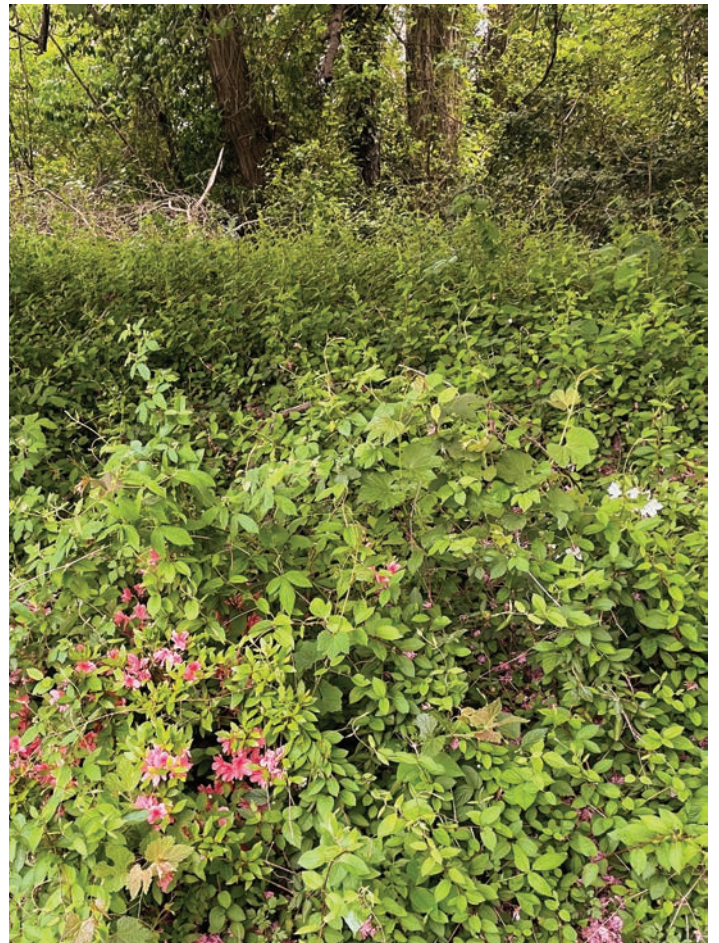
Please consider helping out at the next Invasive Vines Removal work session to be scheduled by the Board of Trustees. Fresh air, exercise, and no experience necessary, other than gardening and weeding in general. Someone will show you what plants to look for and you will quickly learn to identify the most common "invaders."

### Before and After



Left: Geoff Carpenter and a huge pile of Japanese honeysuckle.

Right: The final result!



Struggling Azaleas Before and After.  
More vines in the background remain to be pulled, but overall good progress!

## Building Ties with Germany

from Pastor Shelli

I want to thank each of you for your hospitality and extravagant welcome of Rev. Jonas Zanke while he was visiting from Germany. What a wonderful opportunity it was for us to learn from each other and build connection! I am so proud of the ways that Little River and our wider associa-



tion and conference were able to gather around him to support and encourage his work and build ties to our global church family.

I trust that this is the beginning of a wonderful relationship with the protestant church in central Germany, and that it will grow and blossom in the years to come. Jonas is already talking about coming back

and bringing his spouse, and I've been invited to stay with them when I will be in Germany in fall 2025. Let's keep this relationship alive!



A surprise guest on Pastor Jonas's last Sunday! Left to right: The Rev. Freeman L. Palmer, Conference Minister; the Rev. Jonas Zanke; the Rev. Dr. Shelli M. Poe.



Watch videos of Pastor Jonas at Little River:

- Presentation: "Being a Pastor in Central Germany" (Wednesday, April 17) <https://youtu.be/-oNJvhyY7nM>
- Presentation: "Church History of Central Germany from the Reformation to the Present Day" (Wednesday, April 24) [https://youtu.be/9XH-6JSBk\\_Ss](https://youtu.be/9XH-6JSBk_Ss)
- Sermon: "On Grapevines and Love" (Sunday, April 28) <https://youtu.be/TgM675TSsMk>



## Staff

The Rev. Dr. Shelli M. Poe <i>Senior Pastor</i>	<a href="mailto:shelli@lrucc.org">shelli@lrucc.org</a>
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# Lent and Holy Week 2024



## Digging Deep: How Our Moral Foundations Shape Our Views

On Sunday afternoon, April 14, Little River welcomed the Interfaith Communities for Dialogue (ICD) for a presentation by David Asher Tassell, adjunct faculty, Religious Studies, George Mason University. Following the presentation, the nearly 70 attendees formed breakout groups to discuss and practice the techniques outlined by Mr. Tassell.



### Yoga at LRUCC

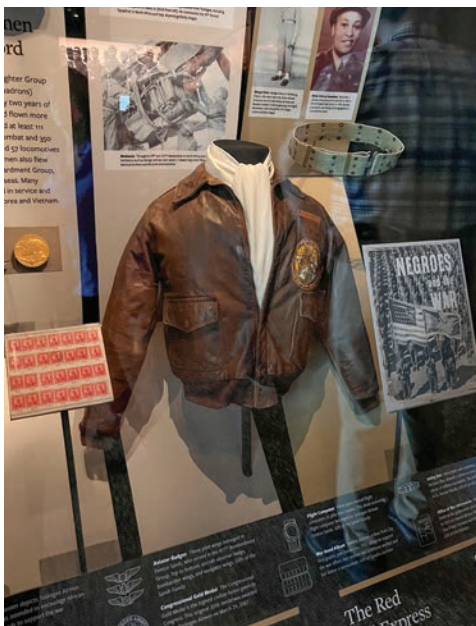
**First and Third Saturdays,  
8:30 A.M.**

Yoga classes led by Abigail Freeman are offered every first and third Saturday. Abigail is experienced in teaching many forms of yoga, including Prenatal Yoga, Mommy and Me, chair yoga, and everything in between. This is a time for fun and movement for congregants and friends of all ages!



## An Afternoon in the Museum

On Sunday, April 28,, about 25 folks from Little River, UCC of Fredericksburg, and other neighbor churches visited the National Museum of African American History and Culture. The Rev. Darryl! Moch led the tour.



One exhibit in the museum features the flight jacket of the late Woodrow (Woody) Crockett, a Little River member who flew as a Tuskegee Airman.

## Dates to Save

- May 19—Pentecost and Confirmation; Fair Trade
- May 20—Book Group
- May 26—Guest Preacher; Knit the Rainbow Project
- May 30—Memorial Service for Edith Buckley
- June 1—Fairfax City Pride Parade
- June 1—Potomac Association Revival
- June 2—Strategic Planning Update
- June 8—DC Pride Parade
- June 9—Graduates and Teacher Recognition
- June 9—Post-Pentecost Picnic
- June 15—Chosen Family Breakfast
- June 16—Blessing of the Banned Books

## Calls from Home

Little River members and friends gathered on Saturday, April 13, to screen a short film highlighting a longstanding radio program that enables family members of men incarcerated in SW Virginia, very far from home, to broadcast messages of support to their loved ones in the prison. A discussion with the filmmaker, Sylvia Ryerson, who was a DJ for the radio show, and Michelle Griffin, wife of William Griffin, whose story is presented in the film, followed the film. As a result of the presentation, Little River is helping explore restoring the carpool transportation for family members to visit their loved ones in prison.



Catch up or relive Little River services online:  
[www.youtube.com/@littleriverunitedchurchofc20](https://www.youtube.com/@littleriverunitedchurchofc20)

## Church Holidays

The church offices and building will be closed on Memorial Day, Monday, May 27, and on Juneteenth, Wednesday, June 19.



~celebrating diversity, independent thought, & faithful action~

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## Little River UCC's Vision Statement

Little River United Church of Christ is called by God to celebrate diversity, independent thought, and faithful action by doing the following in our congregation, neighborhood, and world:

- 1) Nurturing individual and congregational spirituality
- 2) Serving our community
- 3) Advocating for all God's creatures and creation

*Approved at Annual Meeting by Congregational Vote  
on February 7, 2016*

*Current Reflections* is our monthly newsletter to members and friends of Little River United Church of Christ. The latest news is published in our weekly email, *Current Tidings*. To subscribe to either publication, please email [office@lrucc.org](mailto:office@lrucc.org) or call (703) 978-3060. If you have "Passages" to add, please send them to [currents@lrucc.org](mailto:currents@lrucc.org).