

COMMUNITY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Nurturing Spiritual Growth and Working For Social Justice

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Newsletter published monthly for Community United Church of Christ (CUCC) members and friends
Pastor: Steve Halsted Newsletter Editorial Board: Vandy Bradow, Carol Clark, and Susan Lane

A Word from the Pastor

Dear Friends,

As we all prepare our hearts to welcome the gift of the Christ into our lives and our faith community, we are reminded of the birth story in which Joseph and Mary could find no room at the inn for the birth of their eagerly-awaited child whom they would name Jesus. This phrase, "no room at the inn," has come to represent the plight of far too many people in our world who feel left out and unwelcomed in their quest for dignity and respect among their fellow human beings.

The UCC wants to play a part in extending an extravagant welcome to those feeling the burdens of this plight, that they might find comfort and meaning in our faith communities. Hence, the UCC launched a national campaign to advertise our denomination on television. It shouldn't surprise us that this campaign has generated some controversy among the "powers and principalities" of this world. It has been rejected by both CBS and NBC and much debate has followed. I want to share with you a letter that I sent to the *Raleigh News & Observer*. Unfortunately, it hasn't been chosen for publication. The letter follows:

"In reference to the recent debate concerning the United Church of Christ's advertisement which has been rejected by both CBS and NBC national offices: I wonder if they are reading too much into the meaning and purpose of the ad.

"I believe that the image of the bouncers standing outside the church very accurately makes use of a

common perception on the part of non-church attendees: that the church in general can often be a close-knit group of same-minded people who are unaware that they give off an aura of exclusivity. This aura is perceived as a cool indifference rather than a warm and open welcome to the stranger. Of course no church likes to think of itself this way. Thus, the advertisement is self-critical of any and all Christian churches that exhibit this aura of cool indifference to anyone who comes seeking spiritual aid. In this advertisement, I believe the United Church of Christ is acknowledging this common perception to the outsider and simply saying we are working to overcome this failing because 'Jesus turned no one away, so neither will we.' We in the UCC may not always meet that lofty goal, but that is what we aspire to, 'no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey of faith.' The advertisement offers an aura of extravagant welcome that directly invites people from across the spectrum of diversity in America today to come and check us out (at one of our local churches) if they are looking for a faith community to participate in fully."

I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Steve



Church Council

Annual reports are due. Please submit to the church office by **December 31, 2004. The FIRST**

annual Congregational Meeting in 2005 will be held on Sunday, **January 23**, after services.

We will present the annual reports, confirm the slate of officers and ministry/committee members for 2005, and present the annual budget for approval. While we would like everyone to attend, it is particularly important for those who have submitted a budget or an annual report. We need you there in case there are questions only you can answer!

- **Karen Haley**

Deacons

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Deacons who have served during the past year: **Marty Lamb, Mary Matthews, Robert Parrish, Geraldine Bryan, Marge Eckels, Pastor Nsumbu Puati, I.T. Littleton, Nancy Callaham, and Bill Lamb.** Bill will be serving as chair in 2005. Special thanks also are due **Helen Crisp, the Folk Choir, Maya Cobeland and her parents,** and most of all, to all our **wonderful children** for the Christmas pageant on December 12.

-**Peg Hulslander, Chair**

Epiphany Party

Please put **4-6 p.m., January 9**, the first Sunday in Epiphany, on your calendar! The Vaughan Fellowship Hall is the place to be – there will be song and poetry, games and activities, food (including a real New Orleans King Cake) and drink. We will hear about seasonal traditions in Puerto Rico and Louisiana, and wind up with a piñata (outside, weather permitting). All ages are welcome, and we will especially welcome and celebrate the babies who came into our world during 2004: **Ashley Milandu, Miles Ramee, Maya Cobeland, and Maxwell Mew (grandchild of Ted and Binks).**

Faith-To-Focus Ministry Series Offered

This faith-based process of vocational discernment for pre-retirement and retired persons will be sponsored by the Cedar Cross Retreat Center January 7-8 and February 19-19, 24-hour sessions. Contact **Mac Hulslander** for details.

Deacons' Profile Series

June Bolton continues the series of deacon profiles. NOTE: subjects of interviews are provided a draft to review, with an opportunity to edit the text.

Marge Eckels

She may be little and old, but there's much more to Deacon Marge Eckels than meets the eye. So while she's also most definitely a lady, stereotyping her just won't do at all.

This is a woman who raised four children while accompanying her adventurous husband around the world. Here in Raleigh, she promoted and participated in integrated gatherings at our downtown church. The church's activities incurred the wrath of Jesse Helms, who was a WRAL-TV commentator at the time. (She paid much more attention to a sermon recalling how Jesus warned believers to "beware" when all spoke well of them.)

During her childhood in Connecticut as the only child of a police officer and a traditional homemaker, Marge began to display an extraordinary ability to connect with people and form lasting relationships by developing a friendship with a girl who became like a sister to her. That friendship lasted until the woman died a few years ago. Marge is still in touch with her college classmates and many others, such as an Afghan family who shared her home for six months.

She also started a lifelong trend of being down-to-earth and practical. She took stenography and typing, thinking at the time that the highest a woman could aspire to was being a secretary. These skills have come in handy, from helping her get various jobs right up to entertaining one of her three grandsons by writing the names of his

classmates in shorthand. Her outstanding ability to transcend cultural barriers, another theme of Marge's life, emerged as she became a social worker and served for many years as a highly trained professional specializing in child welfare.

She met Art Eckels when she was a freshman at the college that later became the University of Connecticut. They were married in 1944, and when children didn't start coming along as soon as they intended, they adopted two sons. Soon, two daughters were born to them, so there were four children to raise in locations including Taiwan (1960) and Japan (1964) as well as Raleigh, where Marge remembers the "wild scramble" to get everyone ready in time for Sunday School at our church, then located on Hillsborough Street. (Once an Episcopalian, she's belonged to Congregational or UCC churches since 1946.)

By 1969, when a new challenge brought the family to Afghanistan for two years, the boys were out on their own, but Marge's daughters went from Broughton High School to a school in Kabul, where they graduated in 1970 and 1971. Living there seemed a little like "stepping back into the Bible" because of the clothing and other factors such as being surrounded by sheep and by camels, one of which Art rode there as a king in a living nativity. While the girls missed their Raleigh friends, Marge helped them come to appreciate gaining "a world view that not many young people have a chance to develop."

After returning to North Carolina, Marge spent 11 more years as a child welfare specialist. Soon after "retiring" in 1982 from the job with Durham County, her husband and she began operating a choose-and-cut Christmas tree farm on 10.6 acres in Connecticut. Marge rose to this challenge, too, commuting for spring planting, then for summer maintenance, and in the weeks after Thanksgiving, returning to Raleigh a couple of days before Christmas. Marge loved selling the trees, seeing the same people year after year, and developing her muscles placing the trees through a funnel to compact and net them for transport.

She continues to exercise her spiritual and emotional, as well as physical, muscles in so many ways that any list is bound to be incomplete. At 83 and several years widowed, she serves Meals on

Wheels, tutors disadvantaged children at Loaves and Fishes, raises money and marches for the Crop Walk, and participates in nearly everything that's going on at CUCC, including Tai Chi and the Monday Lunch and Women's Groups.

According to Steve, "Marge is sort of like the heart of the church as she leads the Caring Committee." Because of her ability to connect with people, she also helps him identify former members from years ago who may have occasion to contact the church. And as an activist, he notes, she continues to show her commitment to social justice issues in vigils, protests and walks for peace such as a monthly demonstration against the arms race that she's been involved with, along with **Cy and Carolyn King**, since the 1980's.

Marge is very committed to doing "the practical needed things" that help people directly. For instance, she's run our food ministry "for more years than I care to think about" and says, "I feel that's an expression of my Christian belief...trying to help 'the least of these' is very important." She's really grateful for her health and a financial position that enables her to do as she wishes, and to be a member of "this particular church" where she learns so much from other members and can be involved in things she can "touch and feel and see happen."

Marge says that while she admires people "who know exactly where they're going," her spiritual development has been "slow, unaware, not a deliberate journey...I really find that through people I find my connection to God." She identifies as two of her life's greatest satisfactions "such good friendships" and "so many interesting activities." Over and over, she's done things "that were important" and "seemed right." As we enter the new year, we can gladly anticipate ongoing inspiration and great benefits as this dynamic Deacon continues her amazing story here at CUCC.

Memorial Meditation Garden

After the memorial service for **Ginnie Howells** on December 21, 2004, ashes were interred in the Memorial Meditation Garden. The names of both Virginia and her late husband **David Howells** will be added to the garden plaque.

I would like to express my thanks to all those who have signed up for Memorial Meditation Garden

maintenance in 2005. **Sam Johnson** will be caretaker for January, **Joan Little** and **Lena Gallitano** for February.

– **Peg Hulslander**

Stewardship

As we begin 2005, this is a **reminder** for those who have not submitted their **pledge cards**, to bring them to church or mail them into the church office.

Social Justice

The Social Justice Ministry is seeking additional members. We advocate public policies that promote peace, justice, gender equality, human rights and ethical environmental stewardship. We also financially support groups and organizations that do the same. The pay is competitive with other committee assignments, the hours are for the most part flexible, and nearly all of the current members are easy to get along with. If you are interested, please contact any member: **John or Joan Little, Cy or Carolyn King, Howard Miller, Grady McCallie, Rhonda Zingraff, or Dawn Pickett.**

Following a recent presentation by Planned Parenthood at the Sunday Forum, the Social Justice Ministry chose to donate \$200 to this organization to support its educational mission and programs. If any parishioner has comments or questions, please contact John Little.

Coming activities of interest:

January 4 – **Prayer Service for Peace in the Middle East** will be held on the 4th of every month at 7:00. Location will rotate each month: there will be further announcements in the bulletin.

January 5 – **Peace Vigil** on the Fayetteville Street Mall at the Century Post Office, from 11:00 AM until Noon.

January 17– **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day** CUCC is one of the sponsors for the MLK Celebration that organizes the various activities honoring the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The Social Justice Ministry will coordinate rides from CUCC's parking lot to the starting point of the **annual march** (see below). All participants--

novices and veterans alike--are welcome. Please arrive at the church by **9:30** so everyone can be downtown when the march starts at 11:00 AM. There are many other opportunities during the day:

8:00 a.m. **24th Annual Martin Luther King Triangle Interfaith Prayer Breakfast**
Sheraton Imperial Hotel, off I-40, Page Road exit, Research Triangle Park

11:00 **The Annual Martin Luther King Memorial March**
Assembly starts at 10 a.m. at the State Capitol Building, Edenton Street Side, Raleigh

12:00N **Annual Martin Luther King Ecumenical Observance**
Meymandi Hall, BTI Center For The Performing Arts
2 East South Street, Raleigh

6:00 p.m. **The Martin Luther King Evening Musical Celebration**
Meymandi Hall, BTI Center For The Performing Arts
2 East South Street, Raleigh

- **John Little**

Religious Education

In January, our children will be learning about justice and righteousness at church and in the community. Our Sunday School offering will benefit the children at the Tammy Lynn Center. We will also be decorating snowflakes and snowpeople to present to the children at the Center. We hope they can decorate their windows with our artistic gifts!

Is your star on the Epiphany Party board?

Parties are more fun when your friends are there. Put a star with your name on the children's bulletin board in the hall. That way your friends will know you will be coming to the Epiphany Party and will want to come, too. (For more on the party, see page 2.) You can bring a friend from school or your neighborhood, too!

- **Jane Smith**

Wooden blocks still needed

The church school needs unpainted wooden blocks for our nativity sets. Each year the children decorate new blocks to add to their personal set. We used up our last blocks at our 2004 Advent party. We welcome second-hand blocks from your attic or a yard sale (we'll reimburse you) or blocks cut by a CUCC carpenter. See **Anne Bailey** to get a sample and budget limits.

Russian Tea Sales a Success

Thanks to the many people who bought our Russian Tea. We hope you enjoy it on cold days this winter. You have helped us meet our fund-raising goal for our justice mission trip to D.C. this summer.

- from **Abby, Angelina, Anna, Elena, Glodie, and Riyahn**

A Special Thank-You

What a wonderful gift our congregation received on December 12, 2004 from the children of our church! A special "Thank you!" to the children, parents and volunteers who made the Christmas Pageant possible. I can hardly wait for the pageant next year. How wonderful it was to see so many children participate. Our children's program has grown during the past year and we are all reaping the joy of our children. They are truly God's gifts to us! Many thanks for the special Christmas gift!

- **Anne Bailey Zschau**

Adult Forum

The Forum meets on Sundays at 9:15 a.m. in the Vaughan Fellowship Hall. Watch the Bulletin for upcoming topics.

Monday Lunch Group

For the month of January, the group will be reading *Bel Canto* by Ann Patchett and will have various activities related to the book. All are welcome to bring lunch and join us in the Hoffmann Room Mondays at 12:15 p.m. For more information, call **Geraldine Bryan**.

Wednesday Bible Study

This group meets at Pilgrim House at 6:30 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays to discuss the next week's Lectionary selections. For more

information, contact **Mike Schafale**, 567-1098. Bring a bag supper.

Sunday Bible Study

This group meets Sundays at 9:15 a.m. in the Bradow Room. In January the group will be studying I & II Corinthians. Call **Pat Spearman** for more information, 781-0041.

Welcoming, Fellowship, and Growth

Retirees Fellowship

The Retirees Fellowship will meet at 11 a.m. on Monday, January 10 in the Vaughan Fellowship Hall. This month, Everett Noland will talk about his trip to Morocco. As is our custom, dessert and drinks will be provided. We look forward to seeing you!

Saturday Men's Group

Join the group each Saturday morning at 9:00 in CUCC's Library. In January they will be discussing the book, *Freethinker: A History of American Secularism*, by Susan Jacoby. Men and women are warmly invited to our meeting January 8th.

Women's Support Group

The Women's Support Group will need a new leader starting in January 2005. After four years, **Sally Cook** is giving up the leadership. If you are interested in being the leader, please call Sally.

Our People

Nancy Keppel passed away December 12, 2004, surrounded by her family. A **memorial service will be held at CUCC on Friday, January 22, at 2 p.m.** Nancy's daughter's address: Jane Keppel Benson, 1902 Lindale Rd., Blacksburg, VA 24060.

During **Mark Denlinger's** recent (too-brief) visit to Raleigh, we found he's now into vintage tractors!

Lena Gallitano's back yard has become famous among birders as the home of a rufous hummingbird, rare in North Carolina, as well as orioles!

The night was clear and the show spectacular as **Scottie Bell and Vandy Bradow** took in the Geminid meteor shower on December 13.

We are glad to see both **Sue Cottle** and **Chris Schafale** back again, and “coming along.”

Banks, Jo Lemons, Audrey Leiser, Ted Mew, Chris Schafale, and Sue Cottle.

Congratulations to:

Ted and Binks Mew who welcomed their new grandchild **Maxwell Mew** (child of son Tyson) in December.

Shannon and Glen Core, celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary January 14. A get-together will be held in their honor on Sunday January 30, following the 10:30 service. All are welcome!

A NOTE OF APPRECIATION

We have been deeply moved by the love expressed by members of CUCC during the many weeks of Evelyn Littleton's illness and death. We greatly appreciate and thank the many CUCC members and the Caring Committee who have shared prayers, food, phone calls, cards and words of concern for all of us during this difficult time.

--Dot, I. T., Thomas, Laura, Amy, David and Sarah Littleton

Our Youth



Our Young People's Birthdays

- 1/6/98 – Caelan Eckard
- 1/17/94 – David Cookmeyer
- 2/5/92 – Abby Smith
- 2/6/93 – Elena Briere
- 2/15/00 – Gloria Difuidi

Prayers

The Monday Lunch Group offers prayers each week for those persons and needs of which they are aware. Please write requests on a slip of paper and place it in the offering plate or in one of the prayer jars (back of the sanctuary or in Pilgrim House.) Our prayers are especially solicited this month for our caretaker, **Willie Foggie**, who is recuperating from back surgery. Please continue to remember **Jo**

Loaves and Fishes CHILI

Let Loaves and Fishes provide some of the world's best chili for winter enjoyment and parties. Place your order by calling Shannon Core at 846-0902, or use the sign-up sheet on coming events bulletin board in the hallway, by January 20, 2005. Pick up your order from Hudson Presbyterian Church on Friday, January 28, 4:00-7:00 p.m. or Saturday January 29, 9:00 a.m. to Noon. Meat or vegetarian varieties are \$8.00 per quart and packaged in freezable containers. Thank you!

-- Shannon Core

Some of our tablecloths are A.W.O.L.!

Please check your linen closets for any of our church tablecloths. They may have been overlooked if you took them home to launder them.

Roster

Add:

Chris & Heather Burkhardt (and son Erik), 6401 Rushingbrook Dr., Raleigh, 27612, 846-8095.

George & Leigh Bolender, 107 Hidden Bluff Lane, Cary, NC 27513, 469-9439

Change:

Charles &, Dongo Pumbu - 2006 Swimming Hole Circle, Raleigh, NC 27610, 255-6708

Correction:

Nancy Newell and Betty Anne Ford's phone number is (252) 438-2483.

814 Dixie Trail
Raleigh, NC 27607
January 2005 Newsletter

Non-Profit
Organization
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The deadline for our February 2005 Newsletter is
January 17th.

The Newsletter can be found on our web page:
www.communityucc.org

A Month of Sundays

January 2, Second Sunday after Christmas. **9:00 – 9:30 Taizé; 9:15 Adult Forum & Bible Study; 10:30 Worship Service with Communion & Church School; Fellowship Time**

Lectionary: Jer.31:7-14 or Sir.24:1-12; Ps.147:12-20 or Wisd. Of Sol.10:15-21; Eph.1:3-14; John 1:(1-9), 10-18
Food Bags Due

January 9, First Sunday after the Epiphany. **9:00 – 9:30 Taizé; 9:15 Adult Forum & Bible Study; 10:30 Worship Service & Church School; Fellowship Time**

Lectionary: Isa.42:1-9; Ps. 29; Acts 10:34-43; Matt. 3:13-17

January 16, Second Sunday after the Epiphany. **9:00 – 9:30 Taizé with Communion; 9:15 Adult Forum & Bible Study; 10:30 Worship Service & Church School; Fellowship Time**

Lectionary: Isa.49:1-7; Ps.40:1-11; 1 Cor.1:1-9; John 1:29-42

January 23, Third Sunday after the Epiphany. **9:00-9:30 Taizé; 9:15 Adult Forum & Bible Study 10:30 Worship Service & Church School; Fellowship Time**

Lectionary: Isa.9:1-4; Ps.27:1, 4-9; 1 Cor.1:10-18; Matt.4:12-23

January 30, Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany. **9:00-9:30 9:15 Taizé; Adult Forum & Bible Study; 10:30 Worship Service and Church School; Fellowship Time (Core 50th anniversary celebration)**

Lectionary: Mic.6: 1-8, Mic Ps. 15; 1 Cor. 1:18-31; Matt. 5:1-12