

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,

Plans are underway for this summer's Vacation Bible School (VBS) program. You may recall that last year we offered an intergenerational VBS based upon the mission organization Heifer Project International. Children and adults learned about how Third World families benefited from "the gift of animals that goes on giving," through the animal husbandry skills that allows them to breed animals so that they can then keep some for themselves and share others with other needy people. Our program was a great success as we exceeded our goal of fundraising for a Heifer cow. We actually sent two cows and assorted other animals overseas.

This year we have chosen a new topic for VBS, but we will continue the intergenerational format. Everybody is invited! Please mark your calendars on the "lucky 13's" of June, July and August. Our main topic will be Stewardship of the Environment. Our goal is to learn about current environmental issues and legislation and voice our pro-environmental religious values!

On June 13 (Monday) and July 13 (Wednesday) we will begin at 6:30 pm with dinner together. We hope to have a legislator with us as a guest speaker. We will play some games, do letter writing and art projects, probably see some environmental videos geared to different age levels.

On August 13, which is a Saturday, we will make a field trip to the Museum of Natural Science to learn about how climate change affects North Carolina.

We then will end VBS with a picnic at a nearby park.

The VBS planning committee is composed of Joan Little and Grady McCallie of the Social Justice Ministry, Sue Cottle of the Education Ministry, Adrienne Talbot and Geri Bowen of the Community Outreach Ministry and myself. We welcome your thoughts, help and participation!

Blessings and Peace,

Steve

Church Council

The Church Council met April 18, heard reports from the several ministries and officers, and prepared for the congregational meeting on May 1. Highlights:

- Community Outreach reported a highly visible and successful One Great Hour of Sharing Campaign. Thanks to Geri Bowen's guidance, CUCC raised over \$2100 for projects around the world.
- The Deacons are planning for Pentecost. On May 15 several members of the congregation will take the pulpit to share their faith journeys.
- Pastor Steve announced that the resolution to be discussed during the Congregational Meeting has been posted on CUCC's website under "activities."
- UCC happenings: Vertie Powers will be installed as ENCA Association Minister May 21. The Southern Conference Annual

Meeting will be June 3-5 in VA Beach. Steve will attend these and a clergy retreat at BRAG May 9-11.

- The youth will present plans for their DC trip at Forum on May 22. Their focus issue is puppy mills, which they will discuss with Rep. Brad Miller. **Roger and Toni James-Manus, Steve and Marcy Halsted** will be chaperones for the trip.
- **Allan Beidler** will be working with **Jim Smith** and others on a sanctuary lighting plan. He is also busy getting the new office PC, printer, and copier to cooperate.
- Social Justice met April 17 and established priority themes for the year: (1) eco-justice, (2) war and peace, and (3) human rights.
- Stewardship is identifying nominees for the congregational meeting May 1.
- Assistant Treasurer Carol Kepler announced that the church is on solid financial footing.

Christ, as well as the structure, mission, and ministries of CUCC. Newcomers had the opportunity to ask questions and to share a bit about themselves and their own faith journeys, helping us all to become better acquainted. Conversation continued to flow as we hurried down the hall to worship! Many thanks to **Jessica Alcorn, Nancy Callaham, Shannon Core, Peg & Mac Hulslander, Marty & Bill Lamb, Dot Littleton, Mary Matthews, Ann McLaughlin,** and **Anne Pope** who all helped in making this event so special.

Memorial/Meditation Garden

Be sure to take time to soon walk through our garden. It is aglow with beautiful gifts from nature. Our thanks to **Karen Haley** who gave her time and efforts to the upkeep in March, and to **Marge Eckels** and others who pampered the garden in April.

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.

Meet Robert Parrish, the Deacons

Once at age four or five, growing up in a poor neighborhood in western North Carolina, Robert Parrish asked someone to walk him to the nearby church. That Baptist church was the center of community life, and though legally blind, the little boy wanted to be there. Robert is still spontaneous and naturally extroverted, but for a long time he has been the one leading the way.

It started long before he was chosen to be a member of the CUCC Board of Deacons. In fact, Robert first felt God calling him to step into a role of spiritual leadership when he was in his mid-teens and a student at the Governor Morehead School (GMS) here in Raleigh. (Robert is now a full-fledged Special Education Teacher at his alma mater.)

NOTICE OF CALLED CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

May 1

In accordance with Article VI, Section 4 of CUCC's bylaws, notice is hereby given of a Special Meeting called by Church Council. The meeting will be held after service May 1 for the purpose of transacting two items of business:

- (1) Stewardship Ministry - Nomination and election to fill currently vacant positions**
- (2) Pastor Steve and Church Council – UCC proposed gay marriage rights resolution to be introduced at UCC's General Synod in July, 2005.**

Deacons

Newcomers Breakfast

On Sunday, April 24th, the Board of Deacons sponsored a delightful gathering for newcomers and newer members, attended by 35 people. As folks breakfasted, **Marge Eckels, Karen Haley, Marty Lamb,** and **Bill Bryan** offered brief comments on the importance of CUCC in their lives, including parts of the church's history. Then, Steve Halsted shared information about the United Church of

Robert had come 320 miles to live and study at GMS at the age of six. Mainstreaming of partially-blind children was not the practice then, so he had to leave behind his brothers and a mother who worked several jobs to afford presents at Christmas. He also left behind a life with no telephone or indoor toilet at home.

At that time, Christian teaching was part of the cottage life that provided a family environment for Robert and other GMS students for most of the year. One spiritual mentor, named Jimmy, conducted Sunday School classes that helped Robert grow in faith. One day, Robert says, “I understood I needed Christ in my life...I just felt a tug toward God, but it was special.”

On his 12th birthday, Robert was baptized back in Bryson City. He recalls that his mother was somehow able to provide white linen suits for the Parrish brothers to wear in the ceremony, and he remembers his aunt singing spirituals on the banks of Deep Creek. Soon after, Robert began to take the lead in the spiritual activities at GMS, helping with cottage devotions even when other students asked, “Robert, can’t we watch TV longer?” He also learned how to hold an audience’s attention with stories and a Bible-Bingo style game called Faith.

About age 14, Robert received his call to the ministry. Another important influence, Ronald, who was totally blind, had been leading the spiritual aspects of life on campus. When Ronald left, Robert and others wondered who would continue the various Christian activities. Robert felt God telling him that he was the one. “There were no dreams, no lighting bolts,” Robert recalls. “It was like an inward voice,” confirmed by the views of “everyone else” who realized Robert was the natural leader.

While still at GMS, Robert led in the formation of a club called United Christians of America, which was instrumental in bringing the evangelical influence of Young Life to the students. As Robert continued his studies at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC, he maintained an affiliation with Campus Crusade for Christ while serving on a committee, which ministered in the fundamentalist tradition to the inner city. He graduated in 1985 with a B.S. in Speech

Communications (minor in Psychology) and soon entered Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) in Wake Forest

There, Robert remembers feeling for the first time that he was really being accepted for exactly who he was (not as “the black guy” or “the blind guy”) in an atmosphere of Christian love. He received good training for professional ministry, which included not only the courses he took on campus but also an 11-day study tour to Israel which gave him more of “a feel for Scripture” as well as “a deeper connectedness with actual history, Biblical and otherwise.” He was involved with student government, led “Spirit Week” and tried to make the Black Student Forum more diverse by supporting changing the name so that other races could be included.

Theologically, however, Robert was moving away from a literal interpretation of Scripture just as SEBTS was undergoing a right-wing takeover by the fundamentalist wing of the Southern Baptist Church. So while he enjoyed his years of affiliation with Friendship Baptist Church in Wake Forest from 1986-97, was awarded a Master of Divinity degree by SEBTS in December of 1989 and was ordained as a Baptist minister in 1993, one day in 1996 he called a taxi and came to visit CUCC.

Impressed with the theology, the warmth of the congregation and the feeling of inclusion, as evidenced especially by the large-print bulletins and hymns provided, Robert made the decision to join within just a couple months. In 1998, his ordination was transferred to the Eastern North Carolina Association of the United Church of Christ, and he’s been with us ever since. He has taken leadership roles not only by becoming a deacon and a member of the Caring Committee, but in preaching, teaching Sunday School, telling the children’s story, representing our church as we support and volunteer with Habitat for Humanity – even as an enthusiastic egg-tosser last summer in our Vacation Bible School.

Along the way, Robert found his life partner right here at CUCC. It’s been several years since he noticed long-time church member Linda Hebert and began to sit with her. Both recall an early time when he said simply, “I enjoyed worshipping with you” as marking the beginning of a friendship

which grew and deepened. When Robert and Linda married, Robert found real inclusiveness in his personal life as well, as Caucasian, African-American and Native American lineage are all represented in their extended family. (“I felt blessed to officiate,” Steve says. “They make a wonderful couple!”) Robert and Linda Parrish will celebrate their third wedding anniversary on June 22.

During the course of his journey of faith, ministry and leadership, Robert has done many other things like being a chaplain (“where the rubber meets the road” as far as facing life’s utmost challenges from a faith perspective) and counseling HIV-positive individuals. He has been active in the National Federation of the Blind and is currently president of the Wake Federation of the Blind, which works for “equality, opportunity and security for the blind” as first-class citizens in society. He’s involved in special courses and study groups either as a student or a leader, and has worked full-time at GMS since 1996. At home, Robert enjoys reading, gardening, cooking and watching the Demon Deacons of Wake Forest play basketball.

Steve says he appreciates Robert’s open-minded approach to his faith and how “he is always striving to deepen himself spiritually, as evidenced by his new-found enthusiasm for meditation. He continues to help the congregation become more aware of our need to minister effectively to ‘differently-abled’ people. He is a very wise and committed deacon who sets a good example of Christian compassion for the whole congregation.”

In turn, Robert notes, “I like the spiritual challenges Steve gives us, the way CUCC continues to reach out to people, and the way we’re taking the lead in social concerns.” The larger community and we can surely look forward to continuing to benefit from Deacon Robert Parrish’s leadership and service in the years to come.

Religious Education

Church School

What's up in May?

“Getting to Know Jesus” is our topic for church school. The children will hear stories about Jesus so they can imagine what Jesus would have been

like if they had met him. They will get to know Jesus as storyteller, radical, friend to children, healer, and one who does miracles. During this rotation, children will be collecting money for people with AIDS. This collection will be added to the money they raise on May 15 when they serve the Lunch with Friends after worship. May 15 is also a day they will help lead the opening parts of worship and see the CUCC teens be commissioned for missions in Washington, DC, and through the Appalachia Service Project.

Calendar

- May 1st – Jesus was a friend; the story of Mary and Martha
- May 8th – Jesus loved children
- May 15th – Children sing in worship and help with AIDS benefit lunch
- May 22nd – Jesus was a radical; the stoning of the woman
- May 29th – Jesus did miracles; part 2, turning water into wine.

Wine Makers Needed

Have you ever made homemade wine? **Jane Smith** needs your expertise to help her write a church school lesson. Call her if you can provide information and, even better, a funny anecdote or two.

Youth

Middle School Youth Mission Trip to DC

Pastor Steve Halsted, Marcy Halsted, Toni James-Manus, and Roger Manus will be the chaperones for the June youth trip to Washington DC. The youth group will make a Forum presentation May 22, explaining their mission focus, which is puppy mill legislation. . They’ll be hard put to cover this topic plus everything on their ambitious schedule, including a meeting with Congressman Brad Miller.

Appalachia Service Project High School Youth

Jessica Alcorn, Jack Alcorn, Sam Alcorn and Austin Osborne-Newman will join other youth and adults from the Prince of Peace Episcopal Church in Apex for a week with ASP. The group will travel to Floyd County, Kentucky, the week of June 26-July 2. ASP is a Christian home-repair ministry serving the rural poor of the Appalachia region. During June 2005, 4 CUCC High School youth will participate again in the Appalachian Service Project, a ministry of building and home repair in the Appalachian Mountains. The four CUCC High School youth who will participate in ASP have been selling ASP stock to support the expenses of the trip. The CUCC Church Council has agreed to match the ASP stock sales with up to \$500.00 from the Church Council funds. So if you haven't already contributed to this trip, please do so as your contributions will multiplied!

Jessica has participated in ASP for five summers; this will be the second summer for Jack, Sam and Austin. Please consider helping these young people participate in a week of Christian service.

Calendar

May 14th – begin work on basement/new youth room renovations
May 15th – Youth study with Grady and Fawn during service
May 28th – Adventure Landing
June 4th – 5th – Lock-in at Pilgrim House 8:00 p.m. - 9:00 a.m. Parents are asked to volunteer for shifts. Work continues on new youth room renovation.

Adult Forum

The Forum meets on Sundays at 9:15 a.m. in the Vaughan Fellowship Hall. Come and join us. Scott and Shelia Langley will be speaking on Sunday May 1 about their experiences in running a Catholic Worker House for the families of those on Death Row.

Sunday Bible Study

This group meets Sundays at 9:15 a.m. in the Bradow Room. Call **Pat Spearman** for more information, 781-0041.

Monday Lunch Group

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.

Retirees Fellowship

CUCC Retirees will meet May 9 at 11 AM to "talk about China" with **Ruth and Ed Klemmer**, following their recent visit there. Come, bring a sandwich, and share in their experiences. Dessert and drinks will be provided

Women's Support Group

Under Vandy Bradow's inspiring leadership, the Women's Support Group celebrated Earth Day by talking about the "roots" from which they came and the "soil" where they lived. They considered all the beauties of nature which surround us and how we can incorporate them into our lives. They wanted to share this poem*

Be a gardener,
Dig a ditch,
Toil and sweat,
And turn the earth upside down
And seek the deepness
And water the plants in time.
Continue this labor
And make sweet floods to run
And noble and abundant fruits
To spring.
Take this food and drink
And carry it to God
As your true worship.

Julian of Norwich
English Mystic (1342-1416)

*Excerpted from "The Carol Woods News"

Social Justice

The Bush Administration and the Congress have provided enough work for social justice advocates to keep us busy for a long time to come. A partial list of issues includes:

- the state of public health and the failure to address this critically important matter;
- the effort to make major changes in the Social Security system that have little to do with solving its financial problems;
- the continuing war in Iraq and the financial (not to mention the moral, and human) costs of that conflict;
- a program of favoritism to corporations;
- a budget that would cut the benefits to veterans, while continuing the war in Iraq;
- the issue of poverty in America and the growing gap between the rich and poor in part brought on by tax policies that clearly favor those with the least need;
- the proposed cuts in Medicare and Medicaid that would exacerbate the needs of the elderly and the poor;
- a record-setting budget deficit and exploding national debt that threatens virtually all government programs in the future;
- global warming and the absence of a national energy policy that promotes conservation through more efficient cars and trucks, and research and development of renewal energy sources;
- the persistent push to allow petroleum exploration and drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, one of the truly unique wilderness areas left on the planet, and other environmental atrocities too numerous to list here;
- judicial and other nominees whose primary qualification is ideological;
- the call for a Constitutional Amendment decreeing that marriage must be between a man and woman; and,
- the effort to blend church and state through "faith based" social programs;
- failure to address the gross problems that exist in Africa including HIV-AIDS, mass murder in Sudan, and political breakdown in the Congo.

While all of the world's and even the nation's ills are not the consequence of this administration, it is clear from our perspective, at least, that it has made

a significant contribution through its actions and inactions. If you are interested in doing something concrete to change the direction of the country in terms of public policies, the Social Justice Ministry encourages all members of the congregation to consider joining us. There is much to do and we can use all the help we can get.

-- submitted by **John Little**

Roster

Add:

Ann & Joe Retzer, 933 Tanworth Dr., Raleigh,
27615, 847-1080

Our People

Please write **prayer requests** on a slip of paper and place it in the offering plate or in one of the prayer jars (Narthex or in Pilgrim House.) Our prayers continue to remember **Jo Lemons, Jo Banks, Carolyn King, Blake Matthews (Al's grandson)**, who is serving as a Ranger in Iraq, **Ruby Lamb, John Little, Ed Zschau, and Anne Scott.**



Our Young People's Birthdays

- 5/2/02 – Elsa Mambueni
- 5/2/04 – Miles Ramee
- 5/11/90 – Jospin Milandu
- 5/18/89 – Carina Saavedra
- 5/19/88 – Christrian Binganisi-Matuzola
- 5/21/97 – Hannah Klaus
- 6/1/00 – Cammy Riemann
- 6/4/97 – Isaac Milandu
- 6/12/93 – Angelina DeVito
- 6/13/95 – Carson Roach-Howell
- 6/21/00 – Henry Goering
- 6/24/95 – Jonny Cookmeyer
- 6/27/97 – Colleen Barrick
- 6/30/97 – Ernesto Rivera-Saavedra

Community Outreach

Congratulations and Thanks
to all who gave to our
One Great Hour of Sharing.

A preliminary count of CUCC offerings collected for One Great Hour of Sharing topped \$2400 to share with strangers in need around the world. It was an abundance of fish banks, bills, checks, and coins overflowing the several baskets and weighing down the ushers! Here are some of the ways the money may be used:

\$20 – carpentry tool set for home construction
\$50 – 500 small fish for fish farming
\$84 – basic equipment kit for a village midwife
\$200 – water purification tablets to treat 1,000
gallons of drinking water

For more information on how our money will be used, visit <http://www.ucc.org/oghs/pdf/what04.pdf>

The Vaughan Fellowship Hall was packed for the international theme potluck celebrating work done by Church World Services around the globe. Everyone gave a big hand and a big THANKS to **Geri Bowen**, who put in more than one great hour of preparation for the project. Thanks again to Geri, and to all who helped her put together mission moments, materials to distribute, the feast, and the funds!



Food Bags will be collected on **Sunday, May 1**, and every **first Sunday** of the month.

24 food bags were collected in April. Thanks to those who continue their devotion to this needed service. Remember next Sunday is collection day. Urban Ministries will welcome our contribution!

LUNCH WITH FRIENDS

The church school children and the AIDS Care Team will be serving a simple lunch **after worship on May 15** as an Evening with Friends fundraising event. All money received will be given to AIDS Alliance Services – Carolina to provide counseling, food, and transportation for local people with AIDS. AAS-C provides care teams, who in turn provide friendship, support, and recreation for persons living with AIDS. CUCC's care team has been together for over a decade and continues to provide opportunities for spiritual growth and fulfillment. The care team welcomes new members. (Please call **Linda Baker 782-7336**). Other team members include Etta Barksdale, Sue Cottle, Diana Koenning and Linda Parrish.

Wider Community

OH, DO I NEED HELP!

-- by **Robert Parrish**

The National Federation of the Blind is an organization that seeks to educate the general public about blindness; what it is and what it is not. It also works for full inclusion of the blind in all aspects of society.

Currently, I am the president of the local chapter, which is called the Wake Federation of the Blind. This coming September our chapter will be hosting the North Carolina State convention. The dates are September 9-11. The location will be the Holiday Inn At Crabtree. Your help is needed on several fronts to make this convention as successful as possible.

*** One way in which your support is needed is through providing door prizes for the convention. Perhaps **you or some friends that you know have items that could be donated**. A common question is what should be given. My answer to you is anything that you would appreciate receiving yourself. However, among the prizes that I have received from the state convention are items ranging from stereo headphones to

candy. Along with this, as one of the national leaders was often heard to say, "cash is always welcomed". If you wish, please feel free to make the donations male or female specific.

***To help educate my chapter members as well as prepare them for the convention, I'm planning to lead a trip to Baltimore, Maryland in June. It is in Baltimore that chapter members will have a chance to tour the headquarters of the National Federation of the Blind as well as do some touring in the city. Now, the last time I checked my ID card it said that I could not drive, ha, ha... 😊

What this means is that **I am looking for a person to drive me and members of the chapter to Baltimore.** Although this is a volunteer opportunity, there will be some compensation given to you for your time and effort. In fact, it would be wonderful if two people could drive. Some help in assisting blind persons may be needed. I will be glad to provide you with training for this possibility. The specific dates for the trip are June 3-5. Money for a hotel will not be needed, as everyone will be staying at the national center. Meals will also be provided.

*** Finally, on the morning of July 16th our chapter will be sponsoring a fundraising pancake breakfast. The event will be held in the Vaughan fellowship hall of our church. **Help is needed in cooking, serving, and cleaning. Along with this, everyone is invited to purchase a breakfast for \$5.00 to help raise funds for the Wake Federation of the Blind.**

If any of the above opportunities appeal to you please call me at 832-1226. Please receive my heartfelt thanks in advance.

Labyrinth On the Second Saturday of every month, from 9:00 to 1:00, the Canvas Labyrinth at Pullen Memorial Baptist Church will be available for walking. You may enter through the parking lot.

Wider Church



The Eastern North Carolina Association
Invites You to the Installation Celebration For
The Reverend Vertie Powers, the new
Association Minister for the Eastern North Carolina
Association (ENCA) of the Southern Conference,
UCC

Saturday, May 21, at 2:00 PM
Hanks Chapel UCC
190 Hanks Loop Road
Pittsboro, NC

This is an opportunity to get to know our ENCA
neighbors while joining the celebrating our new
Association Minister.

RSVP

Association Office – (336) 343-4066



The Southern Conference's annual meeting will be held June 3-5 in Virginia Beach. Pastor Steve Halsted is going; we can have another delegate, and all are welcome to attend. If you are interested, call the office for more information.

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May 2005 Newsletter

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The deadline for our June 2005 Newsletter is
May 23rd.

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

A Month of Sundays

May 1, Sixth Sunday of Easter – **9:00 – 9:30 Taizé; 9:15 Adult Forum & Bible Study; 10:30 Worship Service with Communion & Church School; Fellowship Time**

Lectionary: Acts 17:22-31; Ps. 66:8-20 (from 66:8-18); 1 Pet. 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

May 8, Seventh Sunday of Easter – **9:00 – 9:30 Taizé; 9:15 Adult Forum & Bible Study; 10:30 Worship Service & Church School; Fellowship Time**

Lectionary:

Acts 1:6-14; Ps. 68:1-10, 32-35; 1 Pet. 4:12-14; 5:6-11; John 17:1-11

May 15, Pentecost Sunday – **9:00 – 9:30 Taizé with Communion; 9:15 Adult Forum & Bible Study; 10:30 Worship Service & Church School**

Lectionary:

Acts 2:1-21 or Num. 11:24-30; Ps. 104:24-34, 35b; 1 Cor. 12:3b-13 or Acts 2:1-21; John 20:19-23 or John 7:37-39

May 22, First Sunday after Pentecost – **9:00-9:30 Taizé; 9:15 Adult Forum & Bible Study; 10:30 Worship Service & Church School; Fellowship Time**

Lectionary:

Gen. 1:1-2:4a; Ps 8; 2 Cor. 13:11-13; Matt. 38:16-20

May 29, Second Sunday after Pentecost – **9:00-9:30 Taizé; 9:15 Adult Forum & Bible Study; 10:30 Worship Service & Church School; Fellowship Time**

Lectionary:

Gen. 6:9-22; 7:24; 8:14-19; Ps. 46 OR Deut. 11:18-21, 26-28; Ps. 31:1-5, 19-24; Rom. 1:16-17; 3:22b-28, 29-31;
Matt. 7:21-29