



NewsNotes

Christ Congregational Church United Church of Christ
A Just Peace and Open and Affirming Church
Becoming an Anti-Racism Church

Volume 64 – Number 3

March 11, 2008

Executive Council Discusses Strategic and Interim Goals at February Retreat

Two major items engaged the Executive Council at its February 2 retreat: (1) an accounting of accomplishments and further work needed on our Strategic Goals and (2) a discussion about what needs to be dealt with during the interim period.

Among many things, we noted significant progress on many of our goals: a renewed Christian Education program; a needed review of our Retreat House ministry as a result of an inspection and research by a West Virginia architect; a growing music ministry in numbers, selections during worship, and additional programming; an improved sanctuary audio system; a personnel policy and staff choices reflecting our Anti-Racism commitment; willing youth ministry volunteers; an active Church Life board; and active community

partnerships. We felt we had made steady and satisfactory progress in dealing with the 3-5 year set of goals approved by the congregation in January 2007.

We also noted several areas open to further development. Among these are clarifying child-friendly worship; revising the Retreat House ministry; forming a music committee to support Nae Pearson and to advocate for music ministry; increasing our pace of technology improvements; revisiting our Anti-Racism Audit; coordinating our youth programs; holding an open discussion of what kind of church we want to be; and increasing volunteer activities. In addition to our stated goals, there are other needs to be met: building ministries to Senior Adults and Young Adults and establishing a plan for debt reduction. (*Cont. on p. 3*)

Faith-filled Giving: Response and Sharing

A Stewardship Message from the Rev. Susan A. Henderson

At a recent Executive Council Retreat, someone said, “We don’t pledge to a budget!” The statement caught me off guard and made me pause. It is not that I do not believe what was said, because I do. I know this fact in my bones! We pledge to the ministry and mission we are called to build and support. The statement made me stop and think as it caused me to think about how much I had been entrenched in numbers and charts trying to make sense of it all—stressed by the reality that we just might be able to meet all our needs. My mind soon returned to the importance of stewardship.

Stewardship is grounded in blessing and abundance. It is not about deciding what is needed, then wondering how best to meet that need. Stewardship is lodged in our knowing the abundance we enjoy. Faith-filled giving is a response to what we have already received in life—love, happiness, faith, friendship, forgiveness, fortitude, justice, community... It is sharing the joy of simply being alive! In gratitude for those things and as we envision the future, we seek ways of sharing our abundance throughout the world. The desire to be a thankful and loving presence in our communities and beyond moves us to share our abundance with the ministry of Christ’s Church. Knowing how much to give requires a process of discernment—prayerfully thinking and listening to God with the heart.

Yes, it is true, 2007-2008 pledges did not afford us the opportunity to sustain ongoing programming in the way we had become accustomed to in other years. However, what was pledged, and given thus far, has allowed us to continue essential and vital ministry. And yes, it is true we are called to give more. We are asked to give more (*Cont. on p. 3*)

Deadline for the next *News Notes* is Wednesday, April 2, 2008 at 5:00 PM.

Send copy to Jackie Walters at jjwalters.SilverSpring@verizon.net or place in *News Notes* box in the office.



**Spotlight On ~
New Webmaster!**

As you may be aware, I have decided to relinquish my duties as the CCC webmaster and have been looking for a replacement. I am very happy to inform you that Barry Johnson has graciously agreed to become our next webmaster.

Barry brings a lot of professional web design and development experience to the table. He also volunteers for other non-profit organizations to maintain their websites. He has a lot of new ideas and enthusiasm and will be a wonderful asset to the web administration team. Barry and I have met to begin the transition over to him. As a result, any website items that you would normally

send to (or copy to) me should now be sent to Barry. His email address is b_w_j@yahoo.com.

I would like to thank everyone for working so wonderfully with me to help bring about some changes to the site. I also want to thank you for your patience as I struggled to keep the website up-to-date. It has been a wonderful experience in which I have learned a lot. Thank you! *Dan Schumacher*

Editor's Note: For Barry Johnson's initial work as Webmaster, check out the Stewardship page (click on "2008-2009 Stewardship Campaign" at the bottom of the home page) at <http://www.christ-ucc.org>



CCC Concert Series Hosts Northfield (MN) High School Choir

The Northfield High School Concert Choir, comprised of 75 young singers, will present a concert in the sanctuary on Friday evening, April 11, at 7:30 p.m. Under the direction of Mr. Dwight Jilek, the choir will sing a program of both sacred (including spirituals and gospel selections) and secular pieces, including such favorites as *Lord of the Dance*, *Shenandoah*, *This Little Light*, *Give Me Jesus*.



The Northfield High School Concert Choir is recognized as one of the most professional high school choirs in the state of Minnesota, and has premiered works by composers from around the world. This concert will include music specifically chosen with families and youth in mind, and the evening promises to be another wonderful celebration of music for the entire congregation here at CCC. The emphasis is on enjoying a fun, relaxed, and intergenerational time of fellowship. The concert is free of charge. Come and join your CCC family and friends as we celebrate our gifts of hospitality in welcoming these outstanding young musicians from Minnesota!

The group is being sponsored by Music Celebrations International, a concert management company located in Tempe, Arizona, that Nae Pearson has been working with over the past few months in order to bring a variety of musical artists to CCC when they are touring in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

WORSHIP SERVICE RECORDINGS ~~ Each Sunday the Audio Visual Committee of CCC records the Sunday morning worship service at 10:30. The CDs are then available in the main office for those who wish to borrow them for two weeks. Just a gentle reminder: there are eight CD's from the last year that have been borrowed and not yet returned and a waiting list for the January 20, 2008 Martin Luther King Birthday dialog sermon. If you have one of the service CDs, kindly return it to the office. There is only one copy for each service, and others are waiting to borrow them. There is now a sign-out sheet on the inside of the cupboard door to make it easier to check them out. *Susan Gray*



On Sunday, March 30, 2008, the Red Cross is conducting a blood drive in the Social Hall from 8:30 AM to 1:30 PM. Please call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE (1-800-448-3542) or sign up on the Church Bulletin Board to schedule your donation. Walk-ins welcome. On January 13th, we had a successful drive when the Red Cross collected 25 units of blood. Of the 31 potential donors that signed in, 18 were Church members, a first that I can recall. Thank you. If March 30 is not a good date for you, please call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE and ask for the nearest location of another Red Cross donation site.

Dick Meyer -- 301-445-1866

Faith-filled Giving (*Cont. from p. 1*) so that we might engage in education and mission from the heart of abundance rather than the mind of deficit and scarcity. Between us, we have what is needed to support the hopes and dreams we envision for the unique ministry to which we have been called.

As you discern how to move towards giving 4% of your family income, know that what you contribute financially and what you give in time, talent and energy will be greatly appreciated. Your offering will allow abundance to flow in unimaginable ways.

So, prayerfully give what you can, not to budget, but to the ministry we continue to build. *Susan*

Executive Council (*Cont. from p. 1*) All in all, the morning session left us satisfied but not over-satisfied. There seemed to be consensus that we continue to need progress in achieving these very challenging goals.

The afternoon proved to be an evocative and challenging series of observations about needs in this interim time. Our interim minister, Rev. Susan Henderson, led us through a discussion of interim tasks that face us and which she will assist us in accomplishing. Chief among them were:

1. We have strategic goals but no commonly accepted vision statement
2. Our debt burdens us programmatically
3. Our structure is fractured programmatically
4. Our membership qualifies us as a large church, but we function as a small family church trusting a large pool of volunteers.
5. There is an “ongoing presence” of past staff members and pastors who need acknowledgement.

Tackling such items will challenge us during this interim time, and I am sure we are up to it.

The retreat was held at Manor Care Bethesda. It was a fascinating place to do church business: a lovely meeting room located in the middle of older people in various stages of aging. Sue Dollins, the originator of this proposed meeting place, made sure that all the arrangements were not only satisfactory but inviting. And all of us learned that in such facilities, it is important to have warmth -- in room temperature and in good feeling. It was a great privilege to conduct the business of the church in such a setting.

Gordon Forbes, Moderator

Stewardship Corner

CCC's Season of Giving ~~ by Marilyn Hall

Welcome to the Season of Giving. You may think that the season of giving was back in December, but here at CCC, the giving season begins in Lent, when we reflect on sacrifice and sharing with our faith community – or more precisely, “How much can we share?” Our Giving Season will culminate with Consecration Sunday on April 6, when we make our annual stewardship pledges to the unified budget. You will be hearing frequently from the Board of Stewardship between now and Consecration Sunday.

When my family started coming to CCC almost six years ago, we didn't come here looking to give money. We came because we had spiritual needs that we couldn't figure out how to fill. We came to find something helpful that we could take away with us. We weren't thinking about giving. And if someone had told me that in a few years I would be standing here talking to you about stewardship, I would have run away and never come back!

It's interesting that we attended for a couple of years, then joined this church, and no one ever talked with us about pledge giving, about how this church supports itself and pursues its mission. But we started giving anyway, and then began pledging modestly, always thinking about “How much can we afford?” It's an anxious thought, “How much?”

I have been reflecting on how I learned about Stewardship. My first lesson was as a child, watching the way that giving to his church transformed my father's mood and relationship with money. I remember each Sunday, watching my father place his folded check in the inside breast pocket of his jacket, readying himself to drop it into the plate at church. I remember that his mood surrounding this ritual was always happy, as if this was one of the pleasures of his week.

This was remarkable to me, because this was a man who had been deeply hurt by growing up a (*Cont. on p. 4*)

Season of Giving (*Cont. from p. 3*) poor farm boy during the Great Depression. His fear of deprivation after hard childhood experiences was expressed through constant anxiety about money throughout his adult life. Even when he had enough, he worried that it wasn't enough. But that worry never seemed to get in the way of the weekly check to his church, and it clearly made him feel good.

I have also come to understand that Stewardship is not really about money. For my father, it was about his commitment to his community, and how that commitment made him feel, the joy that this gave him. Stewardship is about our commitment to CCC and the value we place on faith and mission. Money is only a tangible expression of what we value. We earn money, and then it very quickly flows toward what we value – our homes, our food, education for our children, recreation, things we covet, future security, and also, our faith mission. How much for each?

We chose a stewardship Bible verse from the book of Matthew to remind us of the connection between our faith and our funds. “The place where your treasure is, is the place where you will most want to be, and end up being.”

And while Stewardship is less about money than faith, we use money to express our goals. The Board of Stewardship has been working with the Trustees to identify the total amount that CCC needs for next year to match the values and goals adopted in last year's

visioning process. This year we pledged \$641,000 to the unified budget, and as a congregation we hurt when we came up short and had to make program cuts. We are not able to do some of the things that we have done in the past and want to do. We know that next year we need about \$800,000 for CCC to begin to move toward our vision and goals. It sounds like a lot. Can we do this? We believe we can.

We are inviting you to consider whether you are able to increase your pledge this year. To help you think about this, we encourage you to focus on a specific figure. Focus on 4% of your income. Could you give that much? And if you already give more than that amount, could you increase your pledge next year? We need a total increase of 25% for next year. This is a challenge for our congregation. We are CCC in transition, building on our hope and strength.

I have a special invitation to those of you who give to this church, but do not pledge. We love you. You are a welcome part of this congregation. Thank you for your faithful giving. The money you share with us each week is like the flour used to make bread. It is the essential ingredient. But a pledge is like the yeast added to the flour to make the bread. It is almost magical. The pledge turns your money into CCC's vision and goals. Will you pledge with us this year? That affirmation of your commitment turns what you share into much more than money. Your pledge is the leavening that turns your sharing into our community's mission. Thank you.

Opportunities

Adorning the Church for Easter ~~ Join the Sanctuary Committee on Saturday, March 22, at 10:30 a.m. to decorate the Sanctuary and the church with Easter lilies. This is a great opportunity for those who want to help – and have fun -- with a short-term project – no long-term commitments required! Contacts: Ruth Prindle (301-649-4698; RPrindle49@msn.com) or Jackie Walters (301-565-3197; jjwalters.silverspring@verizon.net), Sanctuary Committee co-chairs.

Easter Memorial Flowers ~~ Members and friends may order Easter lilies in memory or in celebration of people or events. The lilies decorate the altar on Easter Sunday and then are delivered by members of the Board of Deacons to those confined to home, hospital or nursing homes. Plants are \$12. Use the form on p. 5 and mail the completed form and your check (payable to “Christ Congregational Church” with “Easter plant” on the memo line) to the church office **to be received by Monday, March 17**. Memorial flower donations are listed in the bulletin on Easter Sunday.

“Sunday in the Park with George” ~~ John Touchton is the Music Director for Sidwell Friends musical, March 14-16. Visit <http://www.sidwell.edu> for performance information, reservations, and directions, or call 202-537-8141, ext. 2.

Senior Adult Retreat ~~ Spaces are still available for the Senior Adult overnight retreat, April 29-30, at Bon Secours in Marriottsville, MD. Contact Sarah Anders at 301-424-3339 or sarahanders@atlantech.net for more information or to make your reservation. Brochures are available in the church lobby.

CCC Book Group will discuss *Restless* by William Boyd on Sunday, March 30. This exciting mother-daughter espionage novel spans the years 1939-1976. Set in Europe, North America and England, it won the Costa Novel Award.

Holy Week at CCC

March 16 ~~ Palm Sunday Services

- 9:00 a.m. Service of Community and Sacrament – Meeting Room
- 9:00 a.m. Adult Education *Contemporary Theology*— Conference Room
- 10:30 a.m. Service of Worship – This traditional service will include a parade of the Palms (celebrating Jesus’ entry in to Jerusalem) and the Passion (the beginning of Jesus’ journey to the Cross)



March 19 ~~ 7:30 pm ~~ Foot Washing Service

Washing one another’s feet is Christ’s invitation to serve and to love without distinction. Through song, meditation and the ritual of washing feet, we seek to walk more humbly with God.



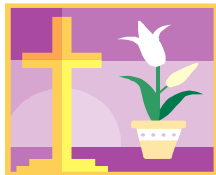
March 20 ~~ 7:30 p.m. ~~ Maundy Thursday/Tenebrae Service



In this service we remember Jesus’ Last Supper and honor the initiation of communion. The passion story will be told as lights are extinguished. This service begins a time of reflection and vigil that continues until Easter Morning. Music for Holy Week by the Chancel Choir and CCC String Ensemble.

March 21 ~~ 12 Noon – 3 p.m. ~~ Good Friday Prayer Vigil

This meditative time of prayer and scripture reading centers on the Crucifixion of Jesus. You are welcome to come for all or part of the three hours. Deacons will lead this vigil.



March 23 ~~ 9 a.m. AND 11 a.m. ~~ Easter Services

Join us for a joyful celebration of Jesus Resurrection! Music by the Chancel Choir and Youth Ensemble with The Neil Brown Brass Quintet, organ and tympani.

COFFEE HOUR AND PARKING ON EASTER SUNDAY ~~ There will **not** be a coffee hour between the two services in order to alleviate the problem with the flow of people between the services. At Christmas, several elderly members gave up and went home when they arrived for the second service and couldn’t find parking because attendees of the first service were at coffee hour. The staff will keep each service to one hour. We ask that all choir, staff, board members and able-bodied members of the church park on the street to free the parking lot for the elderly.

E aster Memorial F lowers

In celebration of _____

OR

In memory of _____

Given by _____

Number of plants _____ Check for _____

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9525 Colesville Road
Silver Spring, MD 20901

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Mailed March 11, 2008

HAPPENINGS IN MARCH & APRIL

For the Holy Week Schedule (March 16-23), see p. 5 for a complete listing of services.

Sun., March 16 ~~ Sisters for Sisters (a support group for single women – all ages welcome!) ~ 12 Noon – Conference Room (Bring a lunch; beverages provided)

Sun., March 16 ~ 6:30 p.m. ~ Anti-Racism Discussion Series

Wed., March 19 ~ Days of Simplicity Concert ~ Noon ~ Sanctuary
Nae Pearson, Organ and Steve Young, Trumpet

Fri., March 21 ~ 6:30 – 10 p.m. ~ Parents' Night Out (Contact: Glenda Neal)

Sun., March 30 – Red Cross Blood Drive ~ 8 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. ~ Social Hall

Sun., March 30 ~ Social Witness Film Series: *Mirrors of Privilege: Making Whiteness Visible* – following the 10:30 service. Brochures are in the lobby kiosk.

Sun., March 30 ~ CCC Book Group ~ 7 p.m. – Home of Valerie Freeland.

Tues., April 1 ~ Senior Adults' April Fool's Day Brunch ~ 11:30 a.m. ~ Social Hall

Fri., April 4 – Sun., April 6 ~ Opening Work Retreat ~ Retreat House, WV

Sunday, April 6 – Stewardship Consecration Sunday

Wed., April 9 – CCC Volunteers at Shepherd's Table

CHRIST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UCC

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Rev. Susan A. Henderson,
Interim Senior Minister;
Rev. Sandra K. Dodson,
Associate Minister; Nae
Pearson, Director of Music;
Sarah Anders, Director of
Senior Adult Programming;
Dianne Abraham, Church
Administrator

At CCC, we honor and celebrate
people of all races, cultures,
ages, abilities, sexual orientation,
and gender identity.

www.christ-ucc.org