

COMMUNITY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Nurturing Spiritual Growth and Working for Social Justice

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December 2011

NEXT CONGREGATIONAL MEETING JANUARY 22, 2012

Newsletter published monthly for Community United Church of Christ (CUCC) members and friends

A Word from our Pastor

Dear Friends,

The first Sunday in Advent marks the beginning of a whole new liturgical year on the Christian calendar. Like Ash Wednesday, which begins Lent, Advent begins a time of preparation for a penitential season that culminates in a great celebration. On Sunday, November 27, we began the journey toward Christmas by lighting the 1st candle on our Advent wreath as we mark down the four weeks until Christmas Sunday on December 25th.

In the Protestant tradition the penitential seasons are a time for quiet, meditative introspection and self-reflection as we prepare our hearts and minds and spirits to receive the spiritual fruits of the Christmas celebration. On Sunday, November 27, I offered the following prayer to lead us toward our goal (several of you asked for it to use during Advent so here it is for ALL):

Toward the One God, the perfection of love, harmony, beauty, compassion, justice, peace and unity:
the only God, in whom we live and move, and have our being; united with all the illuminated and
saintly souls who form the embodiment of the Master, the Messiah, the Spirit of Divine Guidance.

Guide us throughout this Advent season along the pilgrim path of preparation as we seek the inner light of the Cosmic Christ whose incarnation in the newborn child, Jesus, our Emmanuel, becomes the guiding light of our lives and which offers us the gifts of sanctification and salvation. To God's greater glory we pray. Amen

Blessings and Peace

Steve

Deacons

Advent Meditation Event

Please join us for a special Advent gathering on Wednesday evening, December 7, at 7:00pm in the Vaughan fellowship hall. We will do some silent (centering prayer) meditation, and a cleansing water ritual done in candlelight. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to engage the “spirit” of the Advent season and enhance the build-up toward celebrating Christmas Day!

Church Council

Note: Ministry Annual Reports due to Carol by December. 15

Stewardship

PLEDGE CARDS

November 13th was Stewardship Sunday. If you have not returned your 2012 pledge cards, please mail them into the office, or put them in Sunday’s offering plate. Having all pledge cards soon enables us to finalize our budget for 2012.

PLEASE SEE THE END OF THE NEWSLETTER FOR A PLEDGE FORM YOU CAN FILL IN AND SEND TO THE CHURCH OFFICE: 814 Dixie Tr., Raleigh, NC 27607

Property

Sanctuary windows: The congregation has voted on and selected the window from the samples that were on display. Sample #3 (looks like ice crystals) was selected with 40 affirmative votes (10 votes for #2 and 4 votes for #1) and the decision was announced at the congregational meeting on November 20. The samples have now been moved to Pilgrim House. We are moving forward to work with the company on installation plans.

Insulation: The insulation project in the Vaughan Fellowship Hall and the sanctuary attic has been completed. We anticipate the insulation will reduce some of our heating and air conditioning costs and

make the fellowship hall much more comfortable for church activities.

Garden: The children had a very successful summer garden and have now planted a winter garden along with a scarecrow. We look forward to another successful harvest.

Sign on the corner of Wade & Dixie: We anticipate the new CUCC sign will be installed in December.

The Property Ministry would like to thank everyone for all the help with workdays and special projects in 2011. It’s been a busy, productive year thanks to all the extra hands who donated their time, labor and talents. We hope you have a Christmas filled with blessings and peace and a very happy New Year.

– submitted by **Lena Gallitano**

Religious Education

Adult Forum – meets Sundays at 9:15-10:15 in the Vaughan fellowship hall. For the month of December the theme will be: “What Does it Mean to be a Just Peace Church?”

December 4 – Spiritual Grounding and Just Peace Education

December 11 – Political Advocacy for a Just Peace
December 18 – Community Witness, Dennis Boos will lead the discussion

December 25 – No Forum

Sunday Morning Forum Meeting to plan spring programs will meet December 4th after church.

Please come to a meeting in the Hoffmann room after church to help plan the program for the Forum starting in January 2012. What topics interest you? Immigration? Economic justice? Same sex marriage or civil unions (what is the Christian definition marriage)?

Sharing the stories of our congregation? Do you know some good presenters to invite on these or other topics? Please come and make your suggestions. **All are welcome.** If you have ideas, but are unable to attend, please give your suggestions to someone who will be attending (**Edith Sylla**, convenor).

Sunday Morning Bible Study Advent Topic

During Advent (Nov. 27 through Dec. 18) we'll be reading The First Christmas: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Birth by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan,
<http://www.quailridgebooks.com/book/9780061430718>

In the new year we'll return to our study of Deuteronomy,
<http://cuccinfo.blogspot.com/2011/11/what-is-sunday-morning-bible-study.html>.

Youth News

The recent past:

- An amazing and delicious turkey dinner was enjoyed and followed by the 3rd Annual Youth-Led Variety Show on November 12. This year's theme *Sharing the Fruits of our Generosity* was expressed in many wonderful ways. We had a guest banana, jokes and stories about fruit and generosity, apple contests, yoga, beautiful music, and much more. Thank you to all who helped make it an evening of God's love and abundance. For those who have been holding back, perhaps next year you too will sign up to participate in the show and make it even better!

The near future

- Sunday, November 27, youth help CUCC children make Christmas ornaments in Church School, and then go to lunch and pick out our Christmas Tree!
- Sunday, December 4: First Sunday of the Month: 6th –12th graders invited to join Children's Church School for Christmas Pageant preparation. No Youth Group activity after church. Family Advent Event 5:00 p.m.
- Sunday, December 11 youth participate in Christmas Pageant Worship, No Youth Group activity after church
- Sunday, December 18 Church School and Youth Group lunch and beyond to complete planning and to rehearse Christmas Eve Service (pick up at 2:00 p.m.)
- Saturday, December 24 Christmas Eve Service at 5:00 (gather at 4:30)

For information about CUCC youth events or programming, contact Śānti at forsanti@aol.com or call 961-8814.

– submitted by Śānti Matthews

Sunday School News

Merry Christmas!!!!!!!!!!!!

The children selected the Salvation Army Christmas stocking project again this year as their Christmas charity. Last year we pledged 25 stockings which we filled with YOUR help. This year the children have ambitiously pledged 40 stockings so we are once again asking for your help. Requests for help are up 40% this year from last year. A donation box wrapped in Christmas paper is in our classroom.

Pageant practice and distribution of costumes is December 4 during Sunday School. Our family advent workshop is December 4 at 5pm in the fellowship hall. We will stuff the Salvation Army stockings, make Christmas crafts, sing carols, eat pizza and cookies. Everyone is invited to attend!!! Please bring a plate of cookies to share.

The Christmas pageant will be December 11th. Remember that all children are welcome to participate. If you have visiting children on the day of the pageant and they would like to participate please just let Anne Bailey know. We have room for everyone!

Please see the important dates below!!!

December 4

Christmas Pageant practice and costume distribution during Sunday school
5pm Family Advent Workshop, pizza dinner and cookie exchange

December 11 Christmas Pageant

December 18 Combined class with Anne Bailey

December 25 Christmas Day, **no Sunday School**

January 1 New Years Day, **no Sunday School**

January 8 Class resumes

– submitted by Anne Bailey Zschau

**Salvation Army Christmas
stocking project
see list on the next page**

Stocking Stuffers for boys and girls

Infant-2 years

sippy cups/bottles
hats
toys
blankets
wipes
books
pacifiers

3-6 years

coloring book/crayons
toothbrush/toothpaste
hats and gloves
bubbles, play-doh, stuffed animals
dolls, cars, balls, books
dress up accessories, jewelry
card games

7-8 years

jump ropes
jacks, cards
toothbrush, toothpaste
hats and gloves
markers, pens, pencils
stuffed animals, dolls
bouncy balls
pocketbooks, jewelry
model cars, flashlights

10-12 years

cards, games
hats and gloves
toothbrush, toothpaste
hats and gloves
watches, flashlights, radios
pens, pencils, markers
jewelry and hair accessories
nail polish, lip balm
perfume, cologne, lotion

Social Justice

Justice in a Changing Climate

4th preweatherization job completed

On November 19, Tim, Cathy, Dave, Lyle, and I finished our preweatherization work for a woman in Raleigh. Over three Saturdays, the crew, which also included Carrie, Dwayne and Patrick, repaired walls, a ceiling and replaced the floor in her laundry room!! God blessed us to be able to help. Lyle will phone Garmin Troup of Resources for Seniors on Monday to tell him we are done and ask him to get the weatherization started.

-submitted for **Gary Smith**

[Background: CUCC, Raleigh Friends, and NCIPL have been doing clean outs and repairs of homes in our area so that the homes can then be weatherized for free. If you are interested in being notified about future Saturday workdays, contact Gary Smith.]

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MONEY TALKS:

YOUR MONEY AND YOUR VALUES

Join us for another discussion of how, where and why we use our money and resources as we explore the relationship between our decisions and our values. An opportunity to share questions, concerns and resources.

When: Sunday, December 11

Time: 12:30

(to allow members of the Caring Com. to participate after their meeting.)

Where: Hoffmann Room

Bring: A bag lunch or snack if you like

(A Gathering of Friends and Economic Justice Task Force event.)

– submitted by **Shirley Birt**

Welcoming Growth & Fellowship



Make your reservation for the Adult Christmas Party

Imagine: twinkling lights; holiday greenery, animated conversation with an overlay of laughter; enjoying friendships new and longheld; a break from shopping and Santa, traffic and cooking

Saturday, December 10

Beginning with wine at 6:30 PM
followed by Heavy hors d'oeuvres
& entertainment

RSVP to the office by Dec. 5.

Let us know if you need child care.

You are invited to join us for food,
fellowship, a Christmas reading, and carols.

Don't fold your napkin - really

To get our **green cloth napkins** clean, Jane has to unfold each one before laundering. So the next time you put your napkin in the flowered pillowcase, please do not fold it. Thank you.

CUCC Stories

Jane Smith is collecting stories of CUCC events and activities over the years which have helped us grow spiritually. Please contact Jane with your remembrance.

Emergency Contact Information Update

Have you given Jane Smith (smithjeg@mindspring.com or 919-787-6539) your emergency contact information? We'll use this information to make sure you are okay in the unlikely event of a regional emergency (hurricane, evacuation, flu quarantine). If you consider yourself part of the CUCC family (whether or not you are a member), we'll want to know you're okay. Needed:

- Names of people in your household (even if they aren't associated with CUCC)
- Phone # to reach you in an emergency
- Email to reach you in an emergency (the one you will check frequently)
- Contact person who is likely to know where you are & phone # (Please let this person know you have our permission to contact them about you)
- Did you have any changes in your everyday contact info during 2010? (address, phones, email)

A Gathering of Friends

\$\$\$ Money Talks (see Social Justice)

Christmas Day dinner and a movie? Call Gray Woodard if you'd like to join a group going to a Chinese restaurant and a movie on Christmas day. Out-of-town family members are welcome.

Movie Night

Frozen River - Movie Night for December 2
Show Time: 7:30 PM
CUCC Fellowship Hall

This is another "dark" movie, but it's one where I see the darkness as necessary to set up the redemptive ending to the movie. (And there's an underlying Christmas theme.) Frozen River is a low-budget independent film. Such films are often more creative than the big studio productions. Here's the Netflix spin on the movie ...

On a Mohawk reservation on the Canadian border, Ray Eddy (Melissa Leo, in an Oscar-nominated turn) teams with widowed tribe member

Lila Littlewolf (Misty Upham) to smuggle illegal immigrants into the United States. Though the work provides the women with much-needed money, each trip puts them in peril. Charlie McDermott and Michael O'Keefe also star in this riveting drama nominated for multiple Independent Spirit Awards, including Best Feature.

– submitted by **Lavon Page**

Retirees Group

The Retirees will be wrapping your gifts on Monday, December 12, from 10:00am to 12 Noon. Anyone who is available at that time to help wrap would be warmly welcomed! Bring a sandwich and join us for lunch; dessert will be provided.

Meals on Wheels Wish List for Christmas

All gifts are requested to be new. Any monetary contribution will be used by the Retirees to purchase gift cards, which are really appreciated.

Small denomination gift cards (Target, Walmart, fast foods)

Gloves, hats, scarves

NO SOCKS this year

Stamps and note cards

Christmas chocolates/candy

Any gift appropriate for an older person

Boxes will be around the church the next two Sundays.

Please help make this annual drive a success.

Sisters in Spirit (SIS)

There will be no SIS meeting in December.

Our People

Prayer Requests

Please write your prayer request on a slip of paper and place it in the offering plate or one of the prayer jars (Narthex and office). Prayers are solicited for: **Al Matthews; Carolyn King; Lisa Marsh; Kerma & Bob Hazel; Nancy Callahan; Betty Watson; Fidele Binganisi; Phil Lamm, Steve & Marcy's neighbor with lung cancer; a 3-year old friend of Stephanie's, Ravi Lambiese-Stein, who is suffering from encephalitis; Lee Samuel Ciciarelli, son of Mary Ann and grandson of**

Cally Rogers-Witte; Pastor Puati's wife; Frank Gailor; Lina Milandu's father, Pastor Benoit; Dorothy Spillman, Don Lane's aunt who has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer; Julia Robertson's mother, Emily Christopherson; Bertie Retzer who is recovering from recent surgery; and the people of the DRC, and other victims of war and natural disaster across the globe.

CUCC welcomes NINE from the Congo.

On Sunday, November 20, we were introduced to our new friends from the Congo who arrived as recipients of the U.S. Visa Lottery program. They are a family of nine with the mother being the daughter of our members **Charles and Dongo Pumbu**. In the family are Chantal and Joseph (mother & father) and children Rodrique (20), Divine (18), Jonathan (17), Charles (15) Charles Ibanda (14), Caroline (5) and Joyce (not quite 1).

As they get settled in their home here in Raleigh, we are forming a welcoming committee headed by **Margaret Osborne** to help them adjust to a new homeland which speaks an unfamiliar language. Their language is French and we are looking for a few French speaking helpers to join the committee as well as others who could help with other practical tasks of everyday living in the U.S. Please call the church office if you feel called to help.

Thanks to all of you who have already made a monetary donation to help make it possible to cover the expense of getting this family safely to their new home here in Raleigh.

Parlez-vous français?

Whether you have a little French or are fluent, you could help the newly-arrived members of the Pumbu family feel more comfortable in their new land.

Community Outreach

Crop Walk

The 2012 CROP Walk was a wonderful success. We had more CUCC walkers than I can remember ever seeing in my years of walking. 28 of our people turned out to walk on that beautiful Fall day, some in Halloween costumes and all with a will to do some good for others. And so many more contributed by sponsoring walkers. We raised a total of \$2333 from our church alone. We don't

know the total for the walk, but I was told turnout was up over last year. The funds raised are divided between Church World Service for international disaster relief and longer-term development missions, and local hunger ministries such as the Urban Ministries Center and the Food Bank. Thank you to all of you who participated by walking or contributing.

– submitted by **Mike Schafale**

Wright Center

In November Joan McAllister, Vivian Hunter, Bill Bryan & Stephanie Welsh, and Jeanne Ledbetter prepared and cooked the meal and the servers were Margaret Osborne and Mary Pruneau.

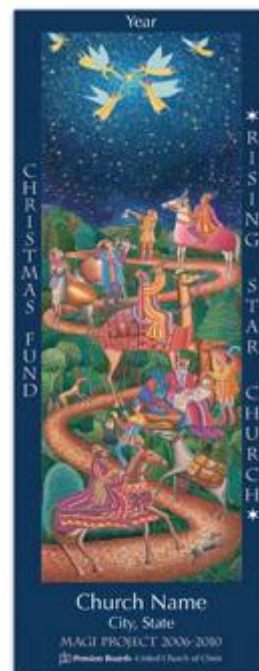
If you are interested in preparing or serving a meal at the Wright Center on the third Sunday evening of the month, contact Jeanne Ledbetter, 851-8824.

Wider Outreach

Loaves and Fishes Chili Fundraiser is scheduled for January 27, 2011. Quarts of chili (meat or veggie) will be available at \$10.00 each. Further details will be available at a later date. Questions? Contact Shannon Core at 846-0902.

Wider Church

The Pension Boards UCC sent us a banner and a letter to let us know that CUCC has attained the status of **Rising Star Congregation** for the Christmas Fund of the United Church of Christ. We are one of only 51 congregations in the UCC who have attained this status in 2010. We tripled our giving to the Christmas Fund in 2010 (the final year during which congregations could achieve the status of Rising Star Church as part of the five-year Magi Project.



Pledge Card for 2012

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

I plan to give beginning _____ \$ _____ each _____ week
(date & year) _____ month

for an annual total of \$ _____

I understand that this commitment can be changed at any time by giving notice to the appropriate church officer

Signed _____

A Month of Sundays

December 4 | Second Sunday of Advent | 9:00-9:30 Taizé led by the Browns; 9:15 Adult Forum; 9:15 Bible Study; 10:30 Worship Service with Communion & Church School; Fellowship Time
Lectionary: Isa 40:1-11; Ps 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Pet 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

December 11 | Third Sunday of Advent | 9:00-9:30 Taizé led by Lavon Page; 9:15 Adult Forum; 9:15 Bible Study; 10:30 Worship Service; Fellowship Time
Lectionary: Isa 61:1-4, 8-11; Ps 126 or Luke 1:46b-55; 1 Thess 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

December 18 | Fourth Sunday of Advent | 9:00-9:30 Taizé led by Mike Schafale (with Communion); 9:15 Adult Forum; 9:15 Bible Study; 10:30 Worship Service; 10:45 Church School; Fellowship Time.
Lectionary: 2 Sam 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:47-55 or Ps 89:1-4, 19-26; Rom 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

December 25 | Christmas Day | 9:00-9:30 Taizé; 9:15 Adult Forum; 9:15 Bible Study; 10:30 Worship Service; NO Church School; Fellowship Time.
Lectionary: Isa 52:7-10; Ps 98; Heb 1:1-4 (5-12); John 1:1-14