

Religious Education 2008 Annual Report

Children and youth education have proceeded this year with Ms. Anne Bailey providing leadership for the children's program and Šánti Matthews, leadership for the youth program. One of the highlights of the year was the summer God's Green Earth Weekend arranged under the leadership of Heather Burkhardt. It included many ways in which we can better care for God's Green Earth. The number of children involved in the children's program has been growing, and who can forget the Christmas pageant!! Opportunities to grow in the faith for our young people abound.

In adult education Bible study continues on Sunday mornings at 9:15 and a series of yoga on Sunday afternoons was led for a time by Ellen Beidler. Some of representatives to adult education participated in the God's Green Earth Event bringing Bianca Howard from the city of Raleigh to help persons learn from their garbage what is recyclable and what is not. Marty Lamb led a "Thinking 'Green' in the Bleak Midwinter" group in January and February to explore ways in which we can decrease the size of our carbon footprint at home. There were Lenten offerings as well. More possibilities are to be explored in 2009.

The adult forum continued for yet another season under the leadership of Cynthia Ball.

COMMUNITY UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST 2008 SUNDAY FORUM

In 2008, CUCC Sunday Forum continued its tradition of exploring issues of economic and social justice, peace and public policy. Serving on the Forum Committee and contributing to the planning and implementation of Forum programs were Committee Chair Cynthia Ball, Kurk Brewington, Lena Gallitano, Cy King, Ed Klemmer, Ruth Klemmer, and Diana Koenning.

Attendance averaged 20-25 participants each Sunday and included CUCC members, friends and guests. Of note were significant increases on several Sunday's. Rev. Nelson Johnson from the Beloved Community Center of Greensboro spoke to Forum and worship as we honored the memory of Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the Sunday prior to the MLK Holiday. In spite of the ice and sleet conditions, Rev. Johnson's presentation attracted about 75 members and guests. Also, as requested by the United Church of Christ, we conducted several "Conversations on Race" which were very well attended (sometimes with as many as 85 in attendance), both by regular members and friends as well as numerous guests from the community.

The topics covered ranged from international ones such as the crises in Darfur, Rwanda and the Congo to more local ones dealing with the updating of Raleigh's Comprehensive Plan and the Special Advisory Transit Commission (STAC) Report. We heard from activists involved in addressing the mental health crisis in NC, affordable housing

availability, and issues facing the elderly. We heard from elected legislators on public policy issues facing NC and the US. And in recognition of the importance of the earth and our stewardship of it, several programs focused on the environment, sustainable living and conservation.

The “Conversations on Race” probably attracted the liveliest discussions and generated a desire among many for continued discussions into the coming year of 2009. With the national and international focus on the presidential election and the subsequent election of Barack Obama, the first African American to hold the office, we assembled panels of African American community leaders to lead the “conversations”. On four separate Sunday’s from May to December, including an unusual session in June when Forum is typically in recess for the summer, we discussed past experiences, current challenges and future objectives in our efforts to achieve a more healthy and just society for all races. Also, though not specifically planned as “Conversations on Race”, several other programs dealt with topics central to the issues of race and equality.

We continued to promote the Forum to regular CUCC members and friends through the newsletter and phone invitations and reminders. In addition, we reached out to the community beyond the CUCC congregation through various communication vehicles. We developed an email list of over 750 individuals who received announcements of those Forum programs of more general community interest. A smaller email list of about 200 received weekly announcements of upcoming programs. We posted announcements of Forum programs and related events and information on the CUCC News and Chat Blog and we created a Facebook group (Community UCC Forum) to communicate about Forum programs and to allow an online “forum” for discussions of topics we address. The Facebook group has been joined by 16 individuals and we continue efforts to expand the group.

The Forum Schedule for 2008 is listed below:

January 6 - Andrew Silver, "Living Under Enemy Occupation"
January 13 - Daniel Coleman, President of *Raleigh /Wake Citizens Association*
January 20 - Rev. Nelson Johnson, *Beloved Community Center of Greensboro*
January 27 - Flo Singer, *The Save Darfur Coalition*
February 3 - Rob Schofield of *N.C. Policy Watch*
February 10 - Christina Cowger, *Stop Torture Now*
February 17 - Grady McCallie, “Updating Raleigh’s Comprehensive Plan”
February 24 - Steve Jurovics “The Environment and the Hebrew Bible.”
March 2 - Ann Akland, past President of *NAMI*, “Mental Health Crisis in NC”
March 9 - Aging Issues (N&O Reporter Thomas Goldsmith and Bill Lamb)
March 16 – Chris Estes, Exec. Dir. Of *NC Housing Coalition*, “Affordable Housing”
March 23 - Easter (no Forum)
March 30 - Dean Naujoks, *Upper Neuse River Keeper*
April 6 - Greg Flynn, “Special Transit Advisory Commission (STAC) Report”
April 13 - Sister Patricia Mukanyonda, *Bridge to Rwanda, Inc.*
April 20 - Steven Waters “Making Walkable Urban Cities, Good for the Earth”

April 27 – NC Rep. Jennifer Weiss, “The Legislature, Interim Study Commissions, and Upcoming Issues”
May 4 – U.S. Congressman Brad Miller, “Faith and Politics”
May 11 - Celebrating Mother’s Day; “Lessons and Blessings from Mother”
May 18 - “Conversation on Race” begins.
May 25 - Will Hooker, Sustainable Living
June 22 - “Conversation on Race” continues.
August 31 - Rev. Rollin Russell, UCC leader and activist in various organizations
Sept. 7 - Mary Rider, “Why I Went to Jail”
Sept. 14 - “Conversation on Race” continues.
Sept. 21 - Karen Rindge, Executive Director of WakeUp Wake County, “Planning for growth in rapidly growing Wake County: What WakeUP Wake County is doing.”
Sept. 28 - Bridget Burge, *The Heirs Project*, “Heirs to a Fighting Tradition”
Oct. 5 - Maria Riemann, “Just War Theory” and America’s Wars
Oct. 12 - Maria Riemann, “Just War Theory” and America’s Wars, part 2
Oct. 19 - Kambale Musavuli, Campus Coordinator of *Friends of the Congo*, “Congo Week, October 19-26”
Oct. 26 - Gary Smith, “CUCC *Justice in a Changing Climate* update”
Nov. 2 - Chris Liu Beers, *NC Council of Churches*, “Immigration Injustices”
Nov. 9 - Irene Godinez, *El Puelbo*, “Immigration Injustices” continued.
Nov. 16 - Keith Otterbein, professor emeritus of anthropology, University at Buffalo, New York, “The Termination and Prevention of War”
Nov. 23 - Marty Lamb, “Thankfulness & Action: Conservation/Recycling”
Nov. 30 - Rev. Herbert Schafale, retired UCC minister, “Experiences as the only white student at Fisk University in the mid-1950's” and the “Conversation on Race” continues.
Dec. 7 - Brad Thompson, “How NC Turned Blue” and the “Conversation on Race” continues.
Dec. 14 - Dr. Slater Newman, “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights: 1948-2008”
Dec. 21 - Christmas Stories, read by Maria Riemann
Dec. 28 - Story Circle: “Review of 2008 Forum and Resolutions for 2009”, led by Cynthia Ball

The Forum Committee sought and continues to encourage input about programs and topics of interest to be scheduled for 2009. We invite all suggestions and critiques.

Respectfully submitted, Cynthia Ball, Chair, Forum Committee