

The CONGREGATIONAL CHRONICLE

Volume 42, No. 3

United Church of Christ

April 2018

Moderator's View

A Matter of Perspective

It's all a matter of perspective, isn't it? Shall we take the long-range view, or look really close-up? Is one point of view more valid, or more helpful, than another? And how about those occasions when our perspective suddenly changes? That's how I find myself these days, looking at life from a suddenly changed perspective, and wondering how to make meaning of it all.

A few days ago, one of my friends, home by himself, choked on a vitamin pill and nearly died, would have died if he hadn't managed to dislodge the pill at the last second. Aside from the irony of almost killing yourself while trying to do something healthy, how do you put into perspective such a "here one moment, gone the next" event? And other than adopting a philosophical position, real or imagined, of fatalistic nonchalance towards life's vagaries of fortune, how do we, how can we, prepare ourselves for life's surprises, especially for the those we regard as unfortunate?

Most of us live as if the unexpected won't happen, yet as we accumulate life experience we encounter repeated instances of the unexpected happening--- a high school friend dying in a car crash, a classmate dying in Vietnam, an uncle dying of an early heart attack, a younger sibling dying out of birth order, a child or grandchild dying without warning, maybe even by homicide or suicide. Often we call these unanticipated events tragedies. Certainly they can cause us grief, and they may call into doubt our

Continued next page

faith in the fundamental fairness of life itself, or even of our belief systems, but should they?

What guarantees are there, after all, about what will happen next, or should happen? What are we reasonably entitled to expect? Gosh, come to think about it, these are the kinds of questions we used to ask ourselves during late-night discussions in college, discussions inspired by philosophy and psychology courses. Does anyone remember what we concluded?

I remember concluding that there really isn't very much that we can count on, only that if we're reasonably lucky things will work out okay, but if we're smart we'll live every day as fully as possible in the moment, grateful for all that goes well, thankful for every sunrise, for every smile that comes our way, for every moment of happiness. There's a whole sub-genre of poetry-- *carpe diem*--defined by that outlook, which has always resonated with me.

And that's the outlook to which I find myself returning these days as I contemplate my recent diagnosis of terminal cancer and begin my immunology treatment.

No, this is certainly not the 74th birthday I expected, but I nevertheless think of myself as lucky, as having lived a fortunate life, of having much to be grateful for. I've been blessed; I am blessed. And I mean that sincerely. I'm surrounded by people who repeatedly express their love for me, who pray for me and wish me well, who work to make my life as comfortable as possible. It's astonishingly wonderful to feel myself in a community of love. Everyone should be so lucky.

This doesn't mean, of course, that I feel no sadness, no regret. I regret not always having lived as fully as I could have. I regret not always feeling fully appreciative of my opportunities, of sometimes failing to recognize how lucky I've had it, yes, even sometimes of losing perspective, of thinking too much and not just letting life be. But as I try to gain perspective on what it all means, I am convinced that it isn't about feeling grief for what I might be missing, but rather about feeling gratitude for all that I've glimpsed.

~ Roger Smith, Moderator

CHURCH COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

March 14



- Guest speaker Melissa Melum presented plans for a church “tag sale” to be conducted in April. Further details for the congregation are coming from Melissa.
- Guest speaker Bob Miles presented a Resolution on Gun Violence for the church to adopt, which passed unanimously. Bob also shared plans for an upcoming ad.
- Mark Acker reported that the organ refurbishment is almost complete and will debut at our Easter Sunday service, April 1. The final process, called “tonal finishing” will begin April 6.
- The Transition Team announced that it has selected an interim pastor, Michael Cleland, who will join us on April 10. More information via the Chronicle, bulletin, lectern and bulletin board is forthcoming.
- The celebration dinner for Richard is proceeding nicely.
- Ron Miller reported that our finances are in excellent shape.
- The Ministry of Worship is updating its bulletin board. Please check it out!
- The Ministry of Physical Resources announced new lines painted in the parking lots, refreshed handicap signs, and repaired lighting throughout the church.
- A reception for Linda Welch will be held April 22 during Coffee Hour. If you’d like to help, please contact Jeannie Stewart.
- Mark Acker’s job description is being expanded to include being the primary staff person in worship planning, coordination of bulletin production, and other worship-related responsibilities. We all thank Mark for his leadership during this time of transition.
- Progress is being made on hiring a new Sunday School teacher, with a candidate visiting the church on March 18.
- We continue to hold Roger Smith and Maralee McMillan in our prayers. Likewise, Nancy Kaczor.
- The labyrinth dedication will take place Sunday March 18 after the worship service.
- John Walters has created a booklet, “Why I Love Our Church,” from responses to the stewardship campaign. Hard copies will be made available.

SERVICE OF DEDICATION FOR OUR NEWLY RENOVATED ORGAN
Sunday, April 29, at our 10:30 Worship Service

The worship service will include a liturgy of dedication for our new organ, special music by our choir, music played on the new organ, and a sermon by our new interim minister, Mike Cleland. Please join us for this special day!

ORGAN CELEBRATION WEEKEND
May 5 and 6

Our church will be hosting Tom Trenney, one of our country's finest and most popular concert organists, for a special weekend celebrating our newly renovated organ. This is a world-class event. All events are free and open to the public.

In addition to his concert career, Tom Trenney is Minister of Music at First-Plymouth UCC in Lincoln, Nebraska. Tom is an amazing organist, but he is, most importantly, a passionate church musician. Tom has played concerts in major venues across America, and he has taught at numerous church, choral and organ conferences across the country.



SATURDAY, MAY 5- 10 a.m. to 12:15, Workshop: "And May God Give Us Faith to Sing Always"

Tom will talk about vocation and the purpose and message of music in the church. Tom will share stories, and we will join in singing together. This workshop will be engaging to everyone - church musicians, choir members, and anyone who is interested in church or music in any way.

SUNDAY, MAY 6 - 10:30 Worship Service

Tom Trenney will play the hymns, and will preach the sermon. The FCUCC Choir will sing, and communion will be celebrated.

SUNDAY, MAY 6 - 3:00 Celebration Concert

Tom Trenney will play an incredible concert on our newly renovated organ. Tom will play music by Ives, Sweelinck, Schumann, Vierne, Conte, Bach, and an original composition by Tom Trenney. Tom will also perform an improvisation on submitted themes, and an accompaniment to the silent film "One Week" starring Buster Keaton.

For more information, please contact Mark Acker, Minister of Music, at 615-430-3506, or at markackerhendersonville@gmail.com.

NEWS FROM THE TLT...

The Transition Leadership Team completed its three highest priority tasks in the month of March. The first was the planning and conducting of the farewell dinner for Richard. Judith Nourse and Joady Perrett took the lead for this event with plenty of assistance from other church members. Even though this is being written before the actual dinner and program, I predict it was a huge success with good food, fond memories and a little bit of roasting.

The second task was to find and hire an interim minister who would identify with us and continue our development in accordance with our core values. We located such a person in Rev. Michael Cleland. For those of you who were not in church on March 18 and did not see the bulletin announcement, Michael has been involved in Interim Ministry for the last eight years after serving congregations in California for the previous thirty years. Currently residing in Athens, Ga., Michael has been evolving in his theology as have we as a congregation. In Michael's own words, "It is my passion to bring leadership and vision to the church through an engagement with the community and culture in order to develop an inclusive church where all are welcome and engage in efforts for justice where inequity in all its forms is addressed and minimized. I am also deeply passionate about engaging people on a personal level, mentoring them, and encouraging them in their spiritual growth and development." Michael will be joining us on April 10 and the first service he will lead will be April 15.

The third task was to expand the role and responsibility of Mark Acker in planning and preparing for our worship service. This proposal was walked through the Ministry of Worship, the Ministry of Finance and ultimately the Church Council. All contributed thoughts and suggestions to the ultimate structure. This change will provide us continuity for the worship services as Mark works with the interim minister to continue the quality and spirituality of the Sunday service that we all have come to relish. With the added responsibility, Mark will now be at the church four days a week rather than the three for which he was originally hired. His salary has been adjusted to recognize the added responsibility.

Now we turn our attention to the other tasks that are before us. Chief among those are supporting Michael in getting established in our community and reviewing the proposed changes to bylaws and personnel policies that have been proposed. As always, we welcome your comments and questions.

The Transition Leadership Team

Ed Argue, Mark Fagerlin, co-chairs, Mark Acker, Nancy Irving, Dawn Kucera, Judith Nourse, Joady Perrett, Roger Smith

Focus on Forum

April 2018



April 1 – EASTER : NO FORUM

April 8 - SUBTLE ACTIVISM

JAMES NOURSE AND ED O’KEEFE

This Forum is based on a 2015 book by David Nicol, a Consciousness scholar and founder of the Gaiafield Project (See www.Gaiafield Project). Subtle Activism is defined as “spiritual or consciousness-based practices intended to support collective transformation”. The book offers information and many examples throughout history of how deliberate group consciousness can effect and affect social and political change. Nicol provides the first comprehensive treatment of the subject.

The Forum will combine the latest science on Consciousness and the power of communal intention, otherwise known as group prayer. We will be reminded of Jesus’ words: “If two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” (Matt 18: 19,20)

Jim Nourse recently joined our church. He is a psychologist and acupuncturist working out of Brevard. He has written several books on Spirituality and is a specialist in Native Hawaiian spiritual practice. Ed O’Keefe coordinates the Forum with his wife Romella. Ed is a retired college teacher and administrator. He is the author of a book on Peak Experiences.

April 15 - WRITERS’ FORUM

RAND BISHOP

Four times a year the Forum hosts the writers’ group composed of church members and community folks who meet monthly to share their writing. Members - or not - who would like to read from their work (any genre)-are invited to register with Rand Bishop (697-0090 or randsemil@yahoo.com) This month’s Forum coincides with a Church Art Display whose theme is “Love Heals, Music Heals, Beauty Heals.” Writers are invited, not required, to select readings related to this theme.

Rand Bishop, a retired university professor of English, coordinates our Writers’ Group.

April 22 –INDIVIDUAL PRACTICES for SPIRITUAL GROWTH-2 JOAN MCKINNEY

In January Joan presented Part One of this subject. She discussed and demonstrated several different practices used by various spiritual traditions including Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam as well as several common to all traditions. She now continues to draw from this rich lode by demonstrating other spiritual practices.

Joan has been active in this field for over 40 years. She has experienced many practices and has been taught by distinguished leaders such as Pir Vilayet (Sufi) and Sogyal Rimpoche (Tibetan Buddhist) and Arthur Young, founder of the first Institute of Consciousness in America.

April 29 –ANXIETY IN THE OLDER ADULT REBECCA SHARP-CASSANEGO

Anxiety Disorders involve more than temporary worry or fear. Developing an anxiety disorder late in life, while common, is not a normal part of aging. In this discussion, we will look at current theories surrounding anxiety, the different types of anxiety disorders, evidence-based treatments and tips on how to manage symptoms of anxiety.

Rebecca Sharp-Cassanego is the team Lead for the Vaya Health Geriatric and Adult Mental Health Specialty Team. Over the past 36 years, Rebecca has worked in multiple settings, including mental health and substance abuse. She has a passion for education and especially likes working with older adults around mental health issues such as dementia. Says Rebecca, “Understanding the disease process no matter what the diagnosis is, positively impacts the well-being of both the individual and their loved ones.”

Note: This Forum was originally scheduled for February 4 when the church was closed due to inclement weather.



SAVE THE DATE

The Walter E. Ashley Memorial Lecture Series

June 8 & 9, 2018

presents

The Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III

Dr. Moss is part of a new generation of ministers committed to preaching a prophetic message of love and justice, which he believes are inseparable companions that form the foundation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Senior Pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, Dr. Moss has built his ministry on community advancement and social justice activism, preaching a theology that unapologetically calls attention to the problems of mass incarceration, environmental injustice, and economic inequality.



FCUCC Book Group

Love to read? Join us!

The FCUCC Book Group will meet in the church library on April 10th at 2:00. The book for discussion is *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Frye* by Rachel Joyce. The story begins on the day Harold Fry receives a letter from a former colleague, Queenie Hennessy telling him she is dying of cancer and wants to say goodbye. The letter dredges up memories from years earlier and Harold wants to say something profound to let her know she was important to him. Passing postal boxes with his brief note he chooses to start walking instead to the distant town where she is in a hospice. The story tells of his journey and the people he encounters along the way as well his reflections on his marriage and his son.

This interesting book discussion will be led by Janice Walters. All are welcome - please join us!

THE WRITERS' ROUNDTABLE

The Writers' Roundtable will meet on Thursday, April 26 at 11:30 AM, in the Church Parlor. All writers (poetry, fiction, drama, non-fiction) are welcome. Listeners are also welcome. Writers are encouraged to bring multiple copies of their writing to distribute to help facilitate discussion.

Join us!

Queries? Contact Rand Bishop.



Prayer Shawl Ministry

Meets the first
Tuesday of the
month at 10:00
am in the Parlor.
Grab some yarn
and your needles
and join us!



Fellowship Supper Tuesday, April 17



Plan to be at this Supper to meet and greet our new Interim Pastor, Michael Cleland.

Bring a potluck dish to share and your own table setting.

And please remember to bring an item for IAM...

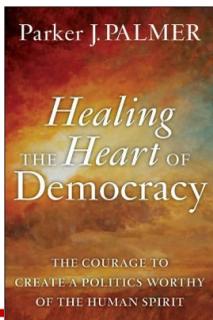
Fellowship Time begins at 5:30pm.; dinner promptly at 6 pm.

WANTED: 16 PERSONS TO JOIN EITHER OF TWO BOOK GROUPS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE “HEART OF HENDERSONVILLE”

The next step in the “Heart of Hendersonville” project involves our church – one of the sponsors - hosting two study groups about the same book, HEALING THE HEART OF DEMOCRACY by Parker J. Palmer. Dr. Palmer is a Quaker activist whose books have sold over a million copies. He was recently named by Utne Reader as one of “The 25 people Who Are Changing Our World”.

Group One will meet on four Monday afternoons (2-4PM). Group Two on four Saturday mornings (10am to noon) beginning Saturday, April 14 or Monday, April 16. Each group will meet for four weeks. There is no fee; however, each participant must buy a book – about \$18.00.

Members of these groups will join other book group members from all over the city on July 14 for the next city-wide meeting to decide on common actions that will be taken to further political (non-partisan) democracy.



**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO JOIN EITHER GROUP, PLEASE USE
SIGN-UP SHEETS ON THE DESK NEAR THE FELLOWSHIP HALL.**

If you have questions, contact Diane Rhoades (696-9969) or Ed O’Keefe (890-4889).

Dear Friends,

Never has a pastor had such a glorious and memorable “send off into retirement” as I received Saturday night. It was the BEST, and YOU are the BEST! Thank you to the Transition Leadership Team who coordinated the celebration, and to Judith Nourse and her team for the many hours of careful and diligent planning; to Diane Rhoades and Howard Carl for co-MC-ing the evening; to the choir and Mark for the special rendition of “Oklahoma” creatively adapted to “O Richard;” to the thoughtful and heartfelt “Perspectives” of David Kelly, Mark Acker, and Jimmie Harris; for the creative slide show covering 10 years put together by Stephanie Lowder, Nancy Keswani, and Pat Argue; for the Memories and Gifts of Zachary Cone, Judith Nourse, and the lovely Bowl of Light presented by Romella Hart-O’Keefe, as well as the lovely painting by Anna Helfand, and for the pastel of Mishka by Alice Johannsen; for the fishing rod and reel from Bob McLendon; and for the knitted Lap Blanket done by Dawn that will forever remind me of the Church Retreat; for the Money Purse given by all of you and presented by Nancy Irving; and for the Memory Book created by artists Sammye, Joady, Judith, and Anna.

My friends, that room at the Mountain Lodge was a very “thin place” on Saturday night. The room was filled with love and light and joy and emotion and the presence of the Divine was palpable!

Thank you, thank you, thank you for giving this pastor not only the greatest send-off ever, but also for the greatest gift of all: your love! I shall carry that precious gift into retirement and beyond.

Bidding you farewell for now.

Your grateful pastor and friend,

Richard

BE THE CHURCH

*Protect the environment. Care for the poor.
Forgive often. **Reject racism.**
Fight for the powerless.
Share earthly and spiritual resources.
Embrace diversity. Love God. Enjoy this life.*

FCUCC's Missions & Service team directs the allocation of funds earmarked in our generous congregation's annual budget. We carefully research and evaluate local, national and international organizations to ensure that our church's core values and mission are reflected in the work we support.

At the meeting on March 8th, we voted to allocate:

\$750 to the International Rescue Committee www.rescue.org

(Earmarked for the current Syrian conflict relief)

\$750 to Blue Ridge Literacy Council www.litcouncil.org

\$1,000 to Doctors Without Borders www.doctorswithoutborders.org

\$1,000 to Pisgah Legal Services www.pisgahlegal.org

(\$500 to sponsor their April 1 fundraiser; \$500 to Hendersonville office operating funds)

\$500 to Henderson County Boys' & Girls' Club www.bgchendersonco.org

(Earmarked for 2018 scholarship. Last year our scholarship was awarded to Hendersonville HS graduate Blaine Sharpe, who is currently in his second semester at Mars Hill University.)

Look for further information about organizations we fund – more than 40 in 2017! – as well as for personal service opportunities on the Missions & Service bulletin board in the hallway as you make your way to coffee hour. Better yet, join us! Our meetings are held the second Thursday of the month, at 10 a.m. in Fellowship Hall.

COME TO THE WELL
...GOD IS STILL SPEAKING

Recently a close friend with advanced COPD had a terrifying episode where he simply couldn't breathe. A deeply spiritual man, he silently called out "Father, what should I do?" Instantly the word LAUGH appeared in block letters and he remembered Abbott and Costello's "Who's on First", and started laughing hysterically -- and the spasms released and he was breathing!

Another way God speaks is through *synchronicities* –two events that are commonly passed off as "just coincidence", but for those who are paying attention, they are *meaningful* coincidences. Here is one that happened recently involving the Transition Leadership Team.



We all were immediately attracted to our third interviewee, Rev. Michael Cleland, whose home church is Virginia Highlands Church-UCC in Atlanta. But excitement turned to anxiety in our follow-up discussion as a few questions arose. We all felt the weight of responsibility to choose well for the entire church family, and we felt we needed additional clarification.

In his note to the Rev. Cleland asking our post-interview questions, our chair, Mark Fagerlin, wrote, "We are looking for the Holy Spirit to guide us to make the right decision." Actually, Mark had opened each of our meetings with this same prayer request. The next day, Team member, Dawn Kucera noticed a synchronicity. She receives the UCC Daily Devotional and noticed the new one written by Matthew Lancy, the senior pastor at Virginia Highlands Church-UCC in Atlanta. She emailed the rest of the team: "I like the message Matthew puts forth in this devotional -- and it speaks to the spiritual guidance Michael Cleland gets from his home church. I do not generally think God answers prayers or sends signs overtly. I believe it takes discernment. So it could be that this is just a great big coincidence. On the other hand, maybe just occasionally..."

With follow-up questions answered openly and to our satisfaction, we unanimously agreed to call Michael as our new interim pastor, and he accepted.

There is an Eastern Proverb: "God writes straight with crooked lines." Whether God uses laughter or synchronicities, we are assured that God hears and answers us. Whether the choice of the Rev. Michael Cleland was the result of prayer by an individual, Mark Fagerlin, a small group, the Transition Team, or the whole congregation's coming together in intentional prayer, surely God is still answering prayer-- God is still speaking!

~ Prayer Chaplains Judith Nourse & Ed O'Keefe



SPOTLIGHT ON IMMIGRATION

As FCUCC moves toward becoming an “Immigrant Welcoming Congregation” within the United Church of Christ, we occasionally take a bit of space here to mention some of our efforts. We hope you will see something in which you’d like to be involved, or at least be informed on immigration issues. Our focus this month is on La Capilla de Santa Maria, with whom we’ve had a relationship (“Friends of LaCapilla” along with other churches) for several years. La Capilla is an Episcopal mission, located on US64 east of town. Its congregation is exclusively Latino, and many of the congregants are undocumented. Over the years, we have helped out with emergency repairs, participated briefly in the bi-lingual Eucharist program (some of us still attend, since it gives us a way to break bread with both our black and Latino friends), did Las Posadas (A Christmas tradition in Mexico) for a few years, and also provided minor assistance in readying Folwell House on the La Capilla grounds for possible use as emergency housing by a family left behind should a breadwinner be deported. We continue to support a wonderful summer tutoring program in reading, math, and computers for the young people of La Capilla. It’s the summer program we’d like to highlight here. It will run Mondays and Wednesdays from mid-June to mid-July, with reading early in the day and math/computers later in the morning. FCC has provided tutors who have done so well that they’re asked for by name! We’ve also provided simple lunches, so no matter what your talents, see Pat or Ed Argue – we could use you!

Other upcoming items:

Bi-Lingual Eucharist, at St. James, April 18 at 6:00 p.m.

Immigrant Rights Sunday at FCC, May 20

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays - April 2018

- 2: Jean Gower
- 3: John Bodamer
- 3: Ann Puryear
- 4: Joel Helfand
- 5: Nancy Irving
- 8: Fran Gullyes
- 8: Jim Jolly
- 11: Mark Fagerlin
- 13: Jon Nobling
- 14: Jen McKinley
- 14: Charlotte Shipley
- 14: Rachel Stone
- 15: John Towle
- 16: Joan Diaz
- 16: Hilarie Glasgow-Hawkins
- 17: Jean Glasgow-Hawkins
- 21: Bill Green
- 23: Glenn Gross
- 27: Sheryl Mendenhall

Anniversaries - April 2018

- 3: Jean & Hilarie Glasgow-Hawkins
- 7: Alan & Carolyn Schmalz
- 14: Kevin & Joyce Tierney
- 27: John & Karel Bodamer

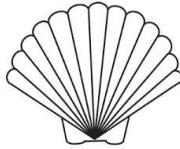
MEMORIAL GIFTS

First Quarter 2018

In Memory of Helen Joyce
Burton Joyce

In Memory of Harris Dake
Holly Dake

April Lectionary



Easter

April 1

Acts 10:34-43 or Isa 25:6-9

Ps 118:1-2, 14-24

I Cor 15:1-11 or Acts 10:34-43

John 20:1-18 or Mk 16:1-8

Now What?

Second Sunday of Easter

April 8

Acts 4:32-35

Ps 133

I Jn 1:1-2:2

John 20:19-31

Marks of Faith

Third Sunday of Easter

April 15

Acts 3:12-19

Ps 4

I Jn 3:1-7

Luke 24:36b-48

Christ Among Us

Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 22

Acts 4:5-12

Ps 23

I Jn 3:16-24

John 10:11-18

Enfolded by Love

Fifth Sunday of Easter

April 29

Acts 8:26-40

Ps 22:25-31

I Jn 4:7-21

John 15:1-8

Abiding in Love

ATTENDANCE

March 4: 127

11: 128

18: 138

25: 154

Average Weekly Attendance:

137

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1735 Fifth Ave. West

Hendersonville NC 28739-4013

Phone: 828.692.8630

Fax: 828.682.8658

E-mail: fccucc2@bellsouth.net

Website: www.fcchendersonville.org

The Rev. Dr. E. Richard Weidler, Pastor

Linda Welch, Administrator

Mark Acker, Minister of Music

Charles & Dora Littleton, Custodians

The Rev. David G. Kelly, Jr., Pastor Emeritus

Next Chronicle deadline is April 20

First Congregational Church (UCC)
1735 Fifth Avenue West
Hendersonville NC 28739-4013



An Open and Affirming Congregation



Church Office Hours
Closed on Monday
Tues thru Fri 9-3:30