

The CONGREGATIONAL CHRONICLE

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United Church of Christ

August 2018

Moderator's View

On Empathy

“There’s something wrong with you and you have to fix it.” Never will I forget those words, delivered by the new boss. My scrappy, Boston-based startup had recently been acquired by a warm and fuzzy West Coast behemoth, a company so flush with cash that people didn’t have to do much and could afford the luxury of being nice to one another.

His words hit me hard. Not because they were unexpected but because I knew he was right. I’d known it for a long time. Over the years, working at several hard-nosed tech pioneers, I’d cultivated a tough exterior, with an interior to match.

So I was devastated when someone called me on it. It meant the end of my identity and the only way I knew how to function in the workplace. It meant creating not only a new image but a new personality. It meant a lot of work that I had no idea how to do.

I needed to learn empathy.

According to Psychology Today, empathy is the experience of understanding another person’s thoughts, feelings, and condition from their point of view rather than from your own. You try to imagine yourself in their place in order to understand what they are feeling or experiencing.

Continued on next page

I'd never given any thought to the negative effects my words or demeanor could have on another person. Never thought, "How would I feel if someone spoke to me that way?" When I looked at myself from this perspective, I could see how I was hurting people and alienating them. Yes, I was good at my job, but no one wanted to work with me.

It was a revelation: people are more important than the work to be done.

I know I'm not entirely there yet. I still get wound up when I think that my way of doing something is better than someone else's. When it's so clear to me that I'm "right" and they're "wrong." But I have more self-awareness now and can (hopefully!) make a course correction before I damage someone's feelings or make them angry.

I have learned that working with others has to start from a place of patience and kindness. That encouraging people is much more rewarding than overpowering them. That I don't always have the best ideas. And that I am an imperfect human being too.

May we all treat one another with empathy in all we do.

Nancy Keswani
Moderator

Church Council Highlights

Church Council did not meet in July.

MUSINGS FROM PASTOR MIKE

Recently, I discussed the importance of rest and restoration for all of us so we can recognize the dangers of burnout and how to prevent it from occurring. Not only is this good information but it also reflects Recommendation #12 from our Transition Plan: “That the Transition Leadership Team assess the possible need for member development and support ministry to insure that members are appropriately utilized and protected from burn-out...” Here are some questions we can ask ourselves in order to practice prevention and healing:

Is my overall motivation fading? Do the things that used to excite me and “fill my tank” now leave me empty?

Do I prefer to be alone more than usual? Do people drain me instead of energize?

Do I become angered more easily? Do I find myself becoming short-tempered and irritated from my normal temperament?

Do I find a temptation to self-medicate? Instead of using healthy coping mechanisms to deal with your everyday stress, am I overeating, overworking, overspending, or do I notice an over-reliance on alcohol and prescribed drugs?

Am I finding it hard to laugh? Have things in life lost their humor and I tend to see the glass as half-empty more often?

Am I losing sleep? Even with a good night’s sleep do I wake to find myself exhausted? Do I wake often in the night, sometimes finding it hard to go back to sleep? Is it difficult to go to sleep?

Here are some ideas for how we can help ourselves:

Find someone to talk to and share my feelings. This might be a friend, a spouse/partner, a spiritual director, or professional counselor.

Develop new or existing friends. Have a plan for finding new acquaintances and friends as well as ways to enrich existing ones.

Allow myself the time to rest. Our bodies will tell us when to do so. May we listen to them.

Keep turning to God. While you may not be hearing God, it does not mean God is absent. Continue in the spiritual practices you know and love best.

The presence of a vital community provides a healing context for reaching out for help and growing in our selfhood. We have a wonderful community at FCC, let us embrace this community as we rest and refresh together!

THE POWER OF AN INVITATION

At the beginning of the summer about six years ago, my friend Diane said “Since I work at the YMCA, they are strongly suggesting that I run in a YMCA sponsored 5K (3 miles) race in late August called the Tomato Festival 5K.” “And,” she said to me, “I want you to do it with me!” I had not run in 20 or more years, but Diane explained that I *needed* to do this, and that we would be a part of a training group that met three times a week. And by going through that training, we would be ready to run the three mile race in August.

It was hard work, but I did it, and I completed my first 5K race that summer. And I went on to run in over 30 more 5K’s, as well as a half marathon. But most importantly, I met some of the finest people I’ve ever known, and I developed some of the most supportive friendships of my life. Running, and my running group, became a life changing aspect of my life during my last three and a half years in Nashville.

I’ve always been grateful for that invitation from Diane to train for, and to run the “Tomato Festival 5K.” I don’t run as much these days, but Diane’s invitation to join her planted a seed that I think will last my entire life. I would have never considered beginning that journey had she not invited me.

I’ve been thinking about the power of invitations lately. Is there a neighbor or friend who might be impacted by our invitation “Come visit my church”? Is there a lonely or hurting person who might feel supported by our invitation “Come join me at lunch”? Is there a person who might feel love and acceptance by our invitation “Will you share your story with me”?

Jesus understood the power of invitations, and was always inviting people to eat with him, to follow him, and to join with him in living a better life.

Invitations are sacred. Invitations can be life changing. To whom can you and I extend the power of an invitation today?

Mark Acker



The Walter E. Ashley Lecture Series is excited to introduce Dr. Tod Linafelt as our latest esteemed lecturer. We hope you will join us October 19-21, 2018 as we explore the Old Testament (or Jewish Bible) as literature.

Narrative and Poetry in the Bible: Exploring the Human Condition through Literary Forms.

What does it mean to be human? What is the nature of the world in which we find ourselves? While the Greeks and Romans developed a tradition of philosophical language to explore these sorts of existential questions, ancient Israel did so through the literary forms of narrative and poetry. These lectures will explore the nuanced literary artfulness of the Hebrew Bible (or Christian Old Testament), focusing on the distinctive workings of biblical narrative and biblical poetry. By becoming better, more attentive readers of the bible-as-literature, not only can we derive more pleasure in our reading, but we can also come to a greater understanding of its perspective on the human condition.

Lecture titles:

- I. Biblical Narrative: Representing the Ambiguities of Human Existence.
- II. Biblical Poetry: The Artful Expression of Passion.
- III. Narrative and Poetry Working Together in the Book of Ruth.

Tod Linafelt is professor of biblical literature at Georgetown University in Washington DC. He has also served as the Cardin Family Chair in the Humanities at Loyola College in Baltimore (housed in the English Department) and as the Alexander Robertson Fellow at the University of Glasgow. He is author or editor of nine books, most recently *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (co-authored with Walter Brueggemann; Westminster John Knox, 2012) and *A Very Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible as Literature* (Oxford, 2016). He has published some three dozen scholarly articles and essays. Several of these have been reprinted or anthologized, including two chapters from his book *Surviving Lamentations* (Chicago, 2000) in the annual reference work *Poetry Criticism* (vol. 44, 2003). His primary scholarly interests revolve around the distinctive literary resources of biblical narrative and poetry.

Focus on Forum

August 2018



August 5 - Attributes of God

Larry Anderson

Jesus has been the subject of endless lies, fabrications, vilifications and venerations. We all have our favorites. Bring some of them with you to Forum with Larry Anderson. Savior and Lord are problematic for some. We'll check in again with Marcus Borg's perspective and explore our questions.

Larry Anderson, our most prolific Forum presenter, is a former minister and psychologist. He has also been seen as guitarist for our Communion Sundays.

August 12 - Missionary Child

Phyllis "Sammye" Whitney

This Forum will be centered around my/our experiences in Thailand. I will focus on the life of missionary families as they adjust and assimilate into a new culture. I will be reading two short pieces from the book I am writing about my parents and our family.

I am the daughter of Rev. John Sams, retired missionary and long-time member of our church. After growing up on the mission field, I returned to the United States to study at Chapman University in California. I married Ken, who also attended Chapman and then went on to teaching for 37 years, attending graduate school and raising a large adopted family of ethnic and racially diverse children.

Today I am a retired educator who writes, makes art, and loves music. I live with my husband of fifty years and a large fuzzy dog in a tiny log cabin.

August 19 - Exploring the Inter-Dimensional Quality of Singing Bowls

Kathleen Calby

Relax with a "musical massage" produced by a combination of gem crystal singing bowls and ancient Tibetan bowls. Before this "sound bath", Kathleen will present a short, informative program about singing bowls, in which you will: *Discover why antique Tibetan bowls can be composed of as many as 14, not just 7, metals.

*Learn how new gem crystal bowls bend rose quartz, citrine and diamond with quartz to produce amazing tonal qualities.

*Experience how your whole body can "hear" not just your ears.

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Sound has a profound effect on the brain's activity and certain patterns let you move from our obligation-driven beta wave state into the creative alpha wave state, or meditative theta state, or even deeper delta state of detached awareness.

Kathleen Calby, who has recently moved to Mills River, is the founder of Re-Sounding Joy, kcalby@sbcglobal.net. She has worked with singing bowls since 1999. She invites you to make some new discoveries with this program. Her professionally recorded CDs *Relax Into Harmony* and *Delta Waves* will be available for purchase.

August 26 - Dancing Our Prayers

Diane Rhoades

Our bodies hold our personal history and our deepest reserves of tenderness, joy and grief. In embodied worship, we find our rhythm, our hurt, and an opportunity for cellular celebration.

Praying with your whole self might surprise you. You might discover how fluent your body is in expressing your pain and joy. It might be a perfect trust-building challenge. It might be the most fun you've had in a spiritual setting in a while. Diane offers an oddly freeing prescription for health and spiritual buffness through dancing your prayers.

Diane Rhoades' 27 year practice of massage therapy and facilitated guided autobiography classes have prepared her for understanding that the body is a brilliant archive of all that is flowing and all that is stuck. It is also a shiny vehicle of healing and joy.

September 2- Forum Cancelled because of Labor Day, Apple Festival.

The Forum, an informal adult education feature of our church, is held from 9:00 to 10:15 on Sunday mornings in the Fellowship Hall (before the 10:30 service). All are welcome to attend. Contact the coordinators, Romella or Ed O'Keefe, (edrookeefe@att.net) if you would like to present a topic or recommend a speaker. Remember: all points of view are welcome...No correct doctrine required!



Fellowship Supper
Tuesday, August 21
5:30 pm

On August 21st, Pastor Mike will be presenting information about the transition process. This will include:

- ◇ The Value of the Transition Period as a time of renewal and growth.
- ◇ Translating the differences and similarities between Transition and Settled pastors.
- ◇ Sensitivity to member burnout and offering opportunities for “rest”, “recharge” and new member “onboarding”.
- ◇ Church growth at FCC. A good guess at what it will look like and how we can prepare for it.

Social time begins at 5:30 followed by a potluck supper at 6:00 and the program at 6:45. **Bring a dish to share plus your own place setting, including plate, utensils and a cup for coffee or tea.**

For more information, please contact either Jeannie Stewart greenbriar13@gmail.com or Claudia Schopper cschopper1@gmail.com.

FELLOWSHIP SUPPER COORDINATOR NEEDED

Beginning in January of 2019, someone is needed to assume the duties of the Coordinator for the Fellowship Suppers. This would include:

- ◇ Submitting a monthly article for the Chronicle, which outlines the upcoming supper.
- ◇ Submitting articles for the Sunday bulletin for each of the two Sunday's before the supper.
- ◇ Arranging programs for the 11 suppers (no meeting in December) Missions and Service usually plans for the speaker every other month.
- ◇ Getting volunteers to be Kitchen Angels.
- ◇ Sending out reminder letters and Kitchen Angel Guidelines at the first of each month to those who volunteered to be Kitchen Angels.
- ◇ Providing sign-up sheets for the suppers.
- ◇ Collecting the money from the suppers to give to the Church Treasurer.

A Coordinator is needed so the suppers can continue. Please contact Jeannie Stewart greenbriar13@gmail.com or Ann Allen aabittersweet@bellsouth.net if you have an interest in this opportunity.

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.

By Sheila Clendenning & Robert Miles

When you think of the Missions and Service team, what image comes to mind? “Well,” you might be thinking, “I’m not really sure what Missions and Service Team DOES, or exactly what its outreach encompasses.” Aha! YOU (yes YOU!) are therefore invited to the next Missions and Service meeting **10 a.m., Thursday, August 9** in the Fellowship Hall, where you can begin to learn more. We invite you to share the joy of developing deeper relationships within and outside the congregation as we direct FCUCC’s commitment to love and serve our neighbor, as Jesus teaches, and to effectively steward the resources entrusted to our care.

Besides directing the allocation of 10 percent of the church budget to charitable organizations, we also encourage in-kind contributions and hands-on work from the congregation. We emphasize assisting those in need from our community by allocating at least 75 percent of our budget to local charitable organizations. You can have a voice in deciding how to allocate our budget of \$35,500 by attending our meetings. When you come to a Missions meeting, you will learn about and can vote on donations to organizations receiving church funds. Team members contact each agency, report on their findings, and recommend a donation. At the May meeting we learned about organizations assisting the homeless in our community. At the August meeting we will consider allocations to the Children & Family Resource Center, the Boys & Girls Club, the Southern Poverty Law Center, and others. We encourage team members to propose new agencies. Also of note is our need for congregants to represent Feed the Kids Coalition and other agencies.

Claudia Schopper will now serve as facilitator for the remainder of the year; Phil Taylor and Bob Miles will assist her. Contact any of us during coffee hour with your questions. We hope you are motivated to offer your insights at an upcoming meeting and will consider joining this vital part of the church.



The FCUCC Book Club will meet on Tuesday, August 14, at 2:00 in the church library for a discussion on Richard Grant's book "Dispatches from Pluto: Lost and Found in the Mississippi Delta". Adventure writer Grant takes on the "most American place on Earth"-the enigmatic, beautiful, often derided Mississippi Delta. Grant succeeds and with flair. His empathic manner, reportorial talent and eye for the unexpected detail make this a chigger-bitten trip that entertains as much as it informs. The review will be led by Art Willey. All are invited.

*Prayer Shawl
Ministry*

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



PRAYER CHAPLAINS RETREAT

Last month, the Prayer Chaplains Retreat was announced in the Chronicle. Originally scheduled to be held at Blowing Rock Conference Center from September 7-9, we have decided to have the retreat here, “on campus” to allow for more flexibility regarding time and cost.

The retreat is open to anyone interested in learning about the different kinds of prayer, investigating how we pray, deepening our prayer life, finding new ways to pray and more.

At the end of the retreat those who wish to become or continue being Prayer Chaplains will have the opportunity to commit to four Saturdays of additional training.

The retreat will be held at the church beginning on Friday, September 7 from 1 PM to 9 PM with dinner provided and Saturday, September 8 from 9 AM to 9 PM with lunch and dinner provided. The Retreat cost is \$50. for meals and materials (check made payable to FCUCC and “Chaplain Retreat” on the note line). Please sign up for the retreat at the sign-up sheet located at the Reception desk or call Ed and Romella O’Keefe at 828-890-4889. Registration and fees are due by Sunday, September 2nd.

We hope that you will join us for an exciting and fulfilling retreat!



COME TO THE WELL

When the going gets tough, go to the well. That's just what Ed and I have been doing through our recent challenges. When our resources felt depleted, we found that "the well" was filled to the brim with God's love-direct from Source and delivered in "people form" by you in positive and uplifting



thoughts, prayers, deeds of caring and kindness infused with love. We didn't have to "go it alone" for that loving Presence lifted us up and carried us through.

So, for each one of you, we give this prayer treatment when you are in need of an oasis and a "drink" from the well of Living Water.

"I am _____ (your name), a beloved child of God, right now, just as I am. I am created in the Divine Image of the Most Holy. Even though I may not always know or feel this Divine Light and Love inside me, I am supported by it, wrapped round in it. That loving Presence and the love and prayers of family, friends, acquaintances, helpers, caregivers and healers, pour into a mighty current of love that upholds, renews and encourages me as I move through this challenge. I am buoyed up and cushioned by this love and it supports me on my journey. I breathe deeply into this loving space and know that I am not alone."

Come, drink from this well of Living Water. Beloved, you are never alone.

Blessings,

Romella Hart-O'Keefe

(This column written by the Prayer Chaplains covers one or more aspects of prayer.)

IMMIGRATION/ COMPASSIONATE ACTION NOTES



Critical immigration activities are occurring thick and fast during these tumultuous times. Here's a quick summary. Thanks to all who participated in and attended the powerful "Families Belong Together" rally last month.

El Centro, the Latino-American Coalition on Grove St., is forming a **Rapid Response Team** to provide compassionate support to affected community members during an immigration crisis. On July 18 Bal Goleman, Nolleen Kelly and Pastor Mike attended the organizational meeting, along with about 60 others. The group will focus on advocacy, mental health needs, transportation, ICE alerts, etc. There was excellent leadership and great enthusiasm. More help is always welcome. If interested, please let any of our attendees know and/or email Evelyn Alarcon, co-director of El Centro, at Evelyn.lac@gmail.com.

The eighth annual summer program at La Capilla was successful for the fourth straight year that FCC has participated. **MANY THANKS** to those FCCers who tutored reading, computers, math, made sandwiches, or did anything else to help out!

Thanks to donors of much-needed long-sleeved shirts, socks, hats, etc. for use by migrant workers. Our collection is on-going.

The Immigration Network's **Path to College Mentoring** program is heading into its fourth year, and we can always use additional mentors. If you'd like to help these teens navigate the journey to higher education, let Pat or Ed Argue know. We provide all the training, workbooks, and the like. You don't have to speak Spanish.

Please see the flyer elsewhere in this issue and/or the bulletin board for the **August 6, Stranger to Neighbor Training** at Grace Lutheran Church from 12-2. RSVP required. At the next **Compassionate Action meeting on August 1 at 2pm** more immigration actions will be discussed. All are welcome.

INTRODUCTION TO CENTERING PRAYER FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS (open to the public)

Saturday, August 18, 9:30 to 3:30 in Fellowship Hall

"Centering Prayer is like being with a very close friend or lover, where words are not required. Centering Prayer brings your relationship with God to a level deeper than conversation, to pure communion." - Fr. Richard Rohr

Centering Prayer is a silent, contemplative practice that brings us into stillness where we experience God's presence within us. We repeatedly disregard arising thoughts, words, memories, images and emotions to simply rest in God's loving presence. For many, a daily practice leads to deepening compassion for self and others and experiencing the peace we so need and yearn for today. This creates a peaceful foundation from which effective action in the world can be launched.

Sponsors are Jim and Judith Nourse. Instructor is Rev. Rob Field, director of the Center for Spiritual Wisdom, a nonprofit organization providing instruction in transformational spiritual practices in western NC. Rob is certified in Centering Prayer instruction through Fr. Thomas Keating's Contemplative Outreach International.

Please plan to arrive at 9 so we can begin at 9:30. To maintain a retreat atmosphere, please bring a light lunch so there is no need to leave. Beverages and snacks will be provided. Suggested love offering, \$40, payable to Center for Spiritual Wisdom. To support the practice, six 90-minute follow-up sessions will be offered on Saturday mornings, dates and times to be announced.

Please pre-register! Flyers are on the counter in the reception area. Please tear off and fill out the form at the bottom of the flyer and leave it in the folder on the counter or call Jim or Judith Nourse, 698-8036.

Joanna Coonrod, Prayer Chaplain: "Rob is a passionate yet gentle teacher. His classes in Centering Prayer and the Enneagram have been sources of spiritual deepening for me."

Jim and Judith Nourse: "We recently completed a 16-week study of the Gospel of Thomas in the lectio divina tradition in a group of 12 led by Rob. We have been profoundly affected by this practice, and have great respect for Rob as a humble, skillful and deeply spiritual facilitator."



SAVE THE DATE: This year's 36th Annual Hunger Walk is scheduled for Saturday, September 22, 2018. Please mark your calendars for this very important fundraiser for those in our community who need assistance.

Walkers are needed. It doesn't matter if you've walked in the past or if you are new – all are needed and welcomed. It's a fun experience and so very important to community!

Those who cannot walk, please know how important your sponsorship is. Find a walker (or two or more) and offer to sponsor them. You will be assisting our neighbors who are going through a rough patch and need some help.

And don't forget that prayers and moral support are always welcome.

“Happy are those who give food to the hungry.”

~Psalm 146:7

A brief organizational meeting has been scheduled for Sunday, August 5th in the sanctuary after the service. This will be the time for walkers to sign up and receive their donation envelopes. We'll be there to answer any questions you might have about the logistics of the walk. Please make every effort to attend!

If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact ericka_fagerlin@yahoo.com.

TIME TO REFLECT AND WRITE YOUR LIFE STORIES?

Guided Autobiography 101

Wednesdays, August 29 – Oct. 17, 11- 12:30pm

A curiously therapeutic way to enjoy, define and heal

Diane Rhoades, the tall tenor in our choir, has been facilitating these classes for 9 years. She is a writer, published author. This way of writing and sharing our truth is a brilliant playground, workout and sometimes whitewater adventure into your whole life.

The cost of Guided Autobiography 101 is \$150 for all 8 classes. We meet in the parlor at FCUCC. Class is complete at 8 people. Visit her website at www.freerangestories.com for a peek at the process. To register, email dianerhoades8@bellsouth.net.

You can call her at 828 696-9969. She will be on walkabout from Aug. 8 – 22 so don't call her then. Email her then...



Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays - August 2018

- 1 - Lois Collins
- 5 - Elizabeth Kamis
- 5 - Linda French
- 5 - Steve Byerly
- 7 - Suzie Edell
- 9 - Diane Harrison
- 10 - Steve Hogenboom
- 12 - Lester Vier
- 14 - Joyce Tierney
- 14 - Sandy Westin
- 16 - Kevin Tierney
- 16 - Carl Schoendorfer
- 17 - Elaine Wigger
- 22 - Janice Walters
- 27 - Milton Stewart
- 31 - Wyatt Jackson Henderly

Anniversaries - August 2018

- 16 - Paul & Sandy Westin
- 24 - Mark & Jean Raymond
- 30 - Powell & Beth Cotter

August Lectionary



Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

August 5

2 Sam 11:26-12:13a • Ps 51:1-2 or

Ex 16:2-4, 9-15 • Ps 78:23-29

Eph 4:1-16

Jn 6:24-35

Bread of Life

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

August 12

2 Sam 18:5-9, 15, 31-33 • Ps 130 or

1 Kings 19:4-8 • Ps 34:1-8

Eph 4:25-5:2

Jn 6:35, 41-51

Shaping Community

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

August 19

1 Kings 2:10-12, 3:3-14 • Ps 111 or

Prov 9:1-6 • Ps 34:9-14

Eph 5:15-20

Jn 6:51-58

Wisdom Quest

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

August 26

1 Kings 8:(1, 6, 10-11), 22-30, 41-43 • Ps 84 or

Josh 24:1-2a, 14-18 • Ps 34:15-22

Eph 6:10-20

Jn 6:56-69

At Home with God

God's Abundant Presence

ATTENDANCE

July 1: 166

8: 165

15: 151

22: 155

29: 146

Average Sunday Attendance:

157

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An Open and Affirming Congregation