

CALL *and* RESPONSE

VOLUME 1.8, DECEMBER 2018

ANOTHER STORY...

I remember the pastor of my childhood church talking frequently about his son, who served long tours of duty in the Iraq war. His parents lit a candle every evening and placed it carefully in the widow of their front room facing the street. If you left church late in the evening and passed by the parsonage, you could see the candle from the sidewalk. Through horrifying media accounts of the occupation, that small candle was a symbol of one family's great hope. Hope that a son be kept safe and that he would return home soon.

There have been times in my life when my deep soul searching has come up empty and I have felt that I was entirely without hope. On some of those dark nights of the soul, I have found that a candle prayerfully placed in the window gently suggests otherwise. So at some of the most difficult moments in my own life, I've turned to the simple light of a candle. The flame is a visible sign of hope that dwells deep within myself. The light stands vigil, shining bright, never overcome by the darkness. I can go about my evening—cooking dinner, reading a book, walking the dog—and forget all about the candle. And then I notice it, still burning softly, a faithful testimony to the hope I carry in my heart. "It's still there," I think. "I know it's there because I can see it."

Advent is a season of holding our hope close so that we can endure the waiting. "The days are surely coming," says the prophet Jeremiah. This is our Advent theme this year. Throughout these weeks of preparation for Christmas, we'll be waiting in hope for a new birth of Christ. Join us for all our Advent programs—opportunities that remind us that we are not alone in our waiting, and we do not have to wait alone. The Hanging of the Greens and Advent Wreathmaking; our church-wide Christmas Dinner; Lessons and Carols. In Advent we remember together the faithfulness of God. We wait in hopeful anticipation because the days are surely coming.

In her submission to our annual book of Advent Devotions, which you can find outside the church library, Debbi Carter writes about how hope has stayed close to her in long days of waiting. "I looked toward a neighbor's house, and there was one candle burning in the window," she recalls, "and it was enough to remind me that there are other people in our world who are raising up the light of God in the midst of our dreary world."

Let's try not to get lost in what Debbi calls the "glitter and bling of Christmas." Instead at United Church we'll be waiting together, and watching for the small lights of hope that point us toward God's forthcoming grace. I want to invite you to join me in an Advent practice this year. Light a candle and place it in your front window. Notice it every evening. May God bless it as a gentle reminder of the hope you have in you.

~Reverend Cameron Barr



REV. CAMERON BARR

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“ONE OF THE BEST TRIPS SO FAR”

THE UCCH LGBTQ+ GUATEMALA MISSION TRIP EXPERIENCE

By **REVEREND DAVID MATEO**, ASSOCIATE PASTOR

According to a report about Human Rights in Guatemala prepared by <https://tbinternet.ohchr.org>, “Guatemala fails to adequately prevent, investigate and prosecute incidents of gender-based violence and killings against transgender women. Transgender women are constantly targeted for abuse. They suffer cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, including a constant threat of violence that amounts to torture, forced disappearances and sexual violence.”

Since 2014, United Church of Chapel Hill and a group of collaborators have established a coalition that supports the LGBTQI community in Central America, helping them to endure their human rights struggles, obstructed spirituality and their surviving in substandard conditions. This year, a group of thirteen (13) committed volunteers went to remodel a LGBTQ+ center and an HIV clinic that serves the transgender community in Guatemala City.



Due to the importance of having a more adequate space for the attention of the users of the clinic, walls were built, doors were installed, and a new light system was placed, new spaces were opened for a better transit within the office, most of the walls were painted, lamps were installed in the kitchen, and a special warehouse was built for hazardous materials and filing. But the most important element was the camaraderie created between the travelers and the people who welcomed us with open arms.

Hugs, smiles, and many cups of coffee transformed our vision of life and faith. Their stories, resilience, faith, and sincere love sent us home with nostalgia, even more, with the commitment to continue doing what is right.

We thank the OTRANS community, “Queens of the Night,” for opening their doors and hearts to let us come into their space to share just...love. We also give a special thanks to United Church of Chapel Hill for its generosity and commitment to help the most needy, carrying the message of inclusion, affirmation, and solidarity for those communities. UCCH member and traveler, Gary Boorman, gave the best summary of this experience, “One of the best trips so far.”

*Reverend David Mateo will be speaking on his experience with the Guatemala Mission Trip at the 10am Adult Forum on December 9.

Save the Date:

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1

10 am: Hanging of the Greens and Advent Wreath-making!

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2

10 am: Reception for Rev. Susan Steinberg

“A QUICK GLANCE AT THE MINISTRY ARCHITECTS REPORT”

By **IAN** MCPHERSON, MINISTER OF YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT INITIATIVES

Throughout the first weekend of November, 65 members of United Church (both youth and adults) met with consultants from Ministry Architects to begin an 18-month renovation of our ministries of faith formation. These “Listening Sessions” concluded Sunday afternoon with a presentation from Anthony Prince and John McNeill, two of our lead consultants, and the publication of their findings within a “Youth Ministry and Faith Formation Assessment Report.” This report outlined the assets and growing edges of our faith formation programming at United Church and provided a detailed 18-month schedule for a “renovation” that will ensure the long-term sustainability of these ministries.

This report (which is currently undergoing some final edits) will soon be available on our website, and a tentative draft is currently available (email me for a digital copy at imcpherson@unitedchurch.org). It is worth highlighting here some of the report’s major takeaways. Firstly, in youth ministry, there are three major “rents” that any church must pay to guarantee success: consistent youth participation, quality youth programming, and high group enthusiasm. Thankfully, with 42 active and passionate youth (as well as 12 faithful adult volunteers), United Church has “paid” all three of these rents! As additional affirmation of UCCH’s strengths, Ministry Architects lifted up many significant assets already existing within our ministries of faith formation, including our social justice mission, strong children’s ministries, enthusiastic pool of parents and other adult volunteers, quality choir and Confirmation programs, and incredible physical space dedicated to faith formation ministries.

Several challenges also surfaced throughout the Listening Sessions. These included anxiety related to recent staffing changes, our busy Sunday schedule, communication among various committees, long-term volunteer recruitment, methods of attendance tracking, and the faith formation and spiritual nurturing of our congregation’s adults. Holding these strengths and growing edges together, the report ends with three “pressure points” Ministry Architects hopes to address over the next 18 months: clearly establishing communication rhythm and norms, developing a sustainable staffing plan, and creating a “Christian Formation Pathway” with clear learning objectives throughout the lifespan. After we move through the Advent and Christmas seasons into the new year, we will host our Ministry Architects consultants again for a “Quick Start Summit” to commission a three-member “Renovation Team” to lead this 18-month process and address these pressure points head-on.

I am so grateful for all of you who participated in this extraordinary process. I am also heartened by the vision set forth in this report and look forward to building on our existing strengths and shoring up these areas of growth. Please continue to hold our ministries of faith formation in prayer, particularly during this season of strategic planning and renovation. Heeding God’s instruction to the prophet Habbakuk, we have “written the vision” and “made it plain.” Now it’s time to get to work! Thanks be to God for your continued faithfulness.

STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

Thank you to everyone who has pledged. We appreciate all the support from our congregation. Our challenge is that there are over 100 families we haven’t heard from yet. That’s why we need your help. If you have not pledged, remember all gifts to United Church make a transformational difference to our ministry, but we can maximize the impact of our giving by making a pledge. Pledges to the Ministry Fund enable us to make plans for our staff, programs, and social outreach. No gift is too small.

“MAKING CONNECTIONS”

By **RINNIE** ORR, DIRECTOR OF HOSPITALITY MINISTRIES

The Christmas season has always been for me an extension of giving gratitude to God for the gifts of family and friendship that have shaped and formed my life. On a regular basis, I am always saying to myself that “I know all the best people in the world.” During the past 12 1/2 years at United Church I have come to appreciate so many of you as we’ve shared in the various ministries of the church. I am always in awe of your dedication to UCCH’s social justice programs and your welcoming spirit to those finding their way to United Church for connection, mission and ministry. As this holiday season progresses and we move into the new year, my new year’s resolution will be to dedicate myself to helping all at United Church “seeking connection” to find a place here where you belong. You will see me on Sunday mornings at 10 am extending a welcome to visitors to the church and discussing activities and events where all can find connections at United Church.

Some of the information you will see will include such events as:

Friday Nite Social Club (2nd Fridays of every month):

This month, “Soup, Song and Storytelling” on Friday, December 14 at 6 pm. I will make a couple pots of soup, you bring bread, cheese & crackers, salad or dessert to share. Bring your instruments and your favorite winter/holiday/Christmas stories to share (embellishing into Tall Tales are more than welcome). For more information contact me at rorr@united church.org.

Neighborhood Clusters: Dinner and Fellowship (coming January 2019):

Ever wonder who you’re sitting next to in church or who from United Church lives in your neighborhood? In 2019, we will assist United Church members and friends in answering this question by the formation of neighborhood cluster groups to bring people together to enjoy simple meals, social bonding and more. For more information, please see me at the welcome table in the church narthex. We hope to match members of various UCCH neighborhoods by mid to late early January, so UCCH neighborhoods can begin making plans to meet and greet one another after the new year.

Many blessings this Christmas Season!

SPANISH CONVERSATIONS

Sundays at 10 am (Room 235) & Mondays at 6pm (Youth Lounge)
Informal Spanish and English conversations to build community and language skills.

CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES

DECEMBER SCHEDULE

DECEMBER 1

10:30am-12:30pm Hanging of the Greens with Advent Wreath-Making (Lunch Provided)
12:30pm-2pm Practice for Dec. 2 Service

DECEMBER 2

8:45am Service of Celebration for Pastor Susan
10am Reception for Pastor Susan
No Youth Group
5pm Confirmation Session #9

DECEMBER 9

Deadline for Winter Youth Retreat Sign Up
10am Giving Tree Collection (No Sunday school)
11am Youth Group
5pm Confirmation Session #10

DECEMBER 12

5:30pm- 6:30pm Dinner with St. Nick

DECEMBER 16

10am Pick-Up Orchestra
11am Youth Group Christmas Party!
4:30pm Lessons and Carols
No Confirmation

DECEMBER 21

6pm- 8:30pm Youth Choir Caroling Party

DECEMBER 23

No programs

DECEMBER 24

4pm Family Christmas Eve with Children’s Choir
7pm Candlelight Service with Youth Choir

DECEMBER 30

No programs

PHOTO of THE MONTH



THANKSGIVING AT IFC

United Church youth members serving lunch on Thanksgiving at the IFC Community Kitchen.

“GO IN HEART AND MIND: Music to Prepare for Christmas”

By **JENNY** ANDERSON, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Each year during the season of Advent we prepare in many ways to celebrate the birth of our Savior: decorating, cooking, shopping, gift wrapping, card writing, and so on. Our preparation for Christmas is not complete without the spiritual preparation of worship, prayer, hearing God's word....and music. As has become our tradition, the third Sunday of Advent (December 16) offers two local opportunities to attend to our spiritual preparation for Christ's birth through music: the Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols at United Church at 4:30 pm and the United Voices of Praise Christmas Concert at Fisher Memorial at 6:30 pm.

The Service of Lessons and Carols was made famous by the choir of Kings College, Cambridge, which first celebrated it on Christmas Eve 100 years ago, just after the end of World War I. Since then the service has been adapted and presented across the globe, but each iteration has retained its strength because of its theme of “revealing the loving purposes of God” through readings from the prophets and the Gospels. Carols old and new, sung by choir and congregation, illuminate each part of the story, and serve to write the narrative on our hearts. Our version of this timeless service will be presented by the Children's, Youth and Chancel Choirs, with organ, piano, recorder, clarinet and drums.

Following this service you are invited to continue your musical preparation for Christmas by hopping in your car and heading over to Fisher Memorial (420 E Piedmont Ave, Durham, 27707) for the United Voices of Praise Christmas concert! UVoP, other choirs from Fisher Memorial, and soloists will present Christmas gospel favorites and jazzy versions of familiar Christmas carols. The Bradshaw Quartet will accompany the concert.

We hope that the music presented on the afternoon of the third Sunday of Advent will help you to “go in heart and mind to Bethlehem” to celebrate once again the gift of God's presence among us.



UNITED CHURCH *of* CHAPEL HILL

ADVENT CALENDAR

DECEMBER 9

Taizé Advent Worship Service (7pm): Taizé is a style of Christian worship that originated in Taizé, France, some 75 years ago. It is woven with Christian song and chants, interspersed with prayerful silence, scripture reading, more song, more prayer, and more silence. The effect is profound and takes one deeper, beyond intellect, into the very heart of worship. Be prepared to walk away from the experience refreshed, renewed, and at peace. You will find that Taizé worship will satisfy the longing of your heart to be filled with God's presence.

DECEMBER 12

Christmas Party with St. Nick (5:30pm): Come and enjoy a Christmas Party with friends and family. Heavy *hors d'oeuvres* served at 5:30 pm. Carol singing and Santa beginning at 6 pm. Please bring desserts to share – preferably cookies and “finger friendly” desserts. Music provided by UCCH Brass Ensemble! And...we have a very special guest coming from far away.

DECEMBER 16

Lessons & Carols (4:30pm): In this candlelight service the Christmas narrative is read from scripture, and the Children's, Youth and Chancel Choirs, along with organ, piano, wind instruments and drums, present carols old and new that illuminate the message.

DECEMBER 19

Longest Night Worship Service (7pm): Long, dark winter nights, even during the Christmas season, can be overwhelming for those who are in mourning or in pain of any kind. For some, this time of year can be the loneliest of all times. We invite those who long for community and quiet worship to join us for this service of gentle music, candle-lit prayer, scriptural reflection and the spiritual food of communion.

DECEMBER 24

Family Christmas Eve Service (4pm): This lively service includes carols, an interactive reading of the nativity story and communion. We'll provide nativity costumes for angels, shepherds, Mary, Joseph and the magi (wise boys and girls). If your child would enjoy being one of the animals at the manger, he or she may wear their own costume. Donkeys, sheep and cows or your child's animal of choice are welcome! Children are invited to bring an inexpensive baby gift for Jesus (bibs, spoons, lotions, diapers), which will be given to families of newborns in need. Following the service, we'll move to the Assembly Hall for a birthday party for Jesus. Cake and punch will be served.

Candlelight Service (7pm): Reverend Cameron Barr will preach and the Youth Choir will lead the music.

Candlelight Service with Communion (9pm): Reverend Cameron Barr will preach and the Chancel Choir and Chamber Singers will lead the music.

Servicio de Nochebuena/Christmas Eve Service (9pm): Rev. David Mateo will be preaching.

Fiesta de Navidad (10 pm): After the 9pm services join us for a Christmas Eve potluck with food and music. Everyone is welcome. Come and enjoy the spirit of Christmas.

DECEMBER 31

New Years Eve Concert (7pm): Celebrate New Year's Eve at United Church. The Bradshaw Quartet and friends will once again present an evening of jazz standards and originals at 7 pm on New Year's Eve. An offering will be taken for the Interfaith Council for Social Service (IFC). Make this your celebration of the new year - or just start your evening here before continuing your your celebrations elsewhere!

THIS MONTH *at* UNITED CHURCH

DECEMBER CALENDAR

SATURDAY DECEMBER 1

10 am Hanging of the Greens & Advent Wreath Making
11 am Children's Choir Rehearsal

SUNDAY DECEMBER 2

8:45 am Festival Worship
10 am Reception for Rev. Susan Steinberg
10 am Spanish Conversation
11 am Children's Ministry
11 am La Mesa Worship
11 am Worship & the Word
12:15 am La Mesa Committee
12:30 pm Youth Choir
2 pm Ambassadors Rehearsal
5 pm Confirmation Class

SUNDAY DECEMBER 9

8:45 am Festival Worship
9:05 am Children's Choir
10 am Sunday School
10 am Adult Programs
10 am Spanish Conversation
10 am ONA LGBTQ+ Ministries
11 am La Mesa Worship
11 am Worship & the Word
12:30 pm Youth Choir
5 pm Confirmation Class
7 pm Taize Worship Service

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 12

5:30 pm Christmas Party with St. Nick

FRIDAY DECEMBER 14

6:30 pm Friday Nite Social Club

SUNDAY DECEMBER 16

8:45 am Festival Worship
9:05 am Children's Choir
10 am Pop-Up Orchestra
10 am Adult Programs
10 am Spanish Conversation
11 am La Mesa Worship
11 am Worship & the Word
12:15 pm Third Sunday Potluck
2 pm Ambassadors Rehearsal
3 pm Choirs Rehearse
4:30 pm Lessons & Carols

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 19

6 pm Longest Night Service

SUNDAY DECEMBER 23

8:45 am Festival Worship
10 am Spanish Conversation
11 am La Mesa Worship
11 am Worship & the Word
12:30 pm Youth Choir

MONDAY DECEMBER 24

4pm Family Service
7pm Candlelight Service
9pm Candlelight Service
9pm Fiesta de Navidad

***SUNDAY** DECEMBER 30

9:30 am Festival Worship
10 am Spanish Conversation
11 am La Mesa Worship

MONDAY DECEMBER 31

7 pm New Year's Eve Concert

***Please note service times**

UNITED CHURCH *of* CHAPEL HILL

WORSHIP HOURS
Festival Worship 8:45am
Worship & the Word 11am
*La Mesa Worship 11am
*en español e ingles

SERVICE

919-942-3540



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A PLACE *of* BELONGING FOR ALL GOD'S CHILDREN