

CALL *and* RESPONSE

MAY 2020

SPREADING JUSTICE

With your help, our church has continued responding to COVID-19 by "reaching in and reaching out." As a congregation, we have already made a significant contribution to food security in our community by giving money to the school system for supplemental nutrition and sending our volunteers out to distribute food. We also supported an initiative to distribute face masks to those in Chapel Hill and Durham who may not have them.

In late April, the Church Council took another step in our commitment to both keeping the church connected and reaching out to serve the community. With the Spreading Justice Initiative, we have an opportunity to make contributions over and above our pledges to the church to care for people who are in financial distress and to extend our love institutionally with attention to racial justice and equity. We know that these two things are true at the same time: 1) There are people in our worshipping community who are experiencing financial distress in these days because of illness or joblessness or other economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis 2) This crisis is like every other occasion in American history in that the worst consequences will fall on African American, immigrant, and other nonwhite communities. We have already seen both of these things to be true in just the first six or eight weeks. We know there are folks in our own congregation who could use some financial assistance. And sadly, we are aware that health outcomes from this disease are disproportionately bad for African Americans. The political pressure to reopen the economy, furthermore, will undoubtedly shift the burden of this crisis onto those least equipped to survive it—service workers, those without access to healthcare, and immigrants and refugees.

So some members of our congregation, led by council member Ingrid Schmit, worked through the Racial Justice Ministries committee to ask how we could share our resources with one another with attention to both of these realities. Gifts to this new fund will be apportioned in two ways. 80% of funds contributed will go to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund. The four pastors (myself, David, Ian, and Mary Elizabeth) will establish a monthly budget from available funds to distribute to those in our community who need assistance with things like rent, food, unpaid bills, etc. We will also continue to distribute food from our food pantry and to share the gift cards that the congregation so generously entrusts to us as a way of supporting those in our midst who are in need. 20% of gifts to the Spreading Justice fund will be given to a church or organization in our community that is historically black or led by people who have been marginalized by their racial identities. The institution that receives these funds will be determined by the Racial Justice Ministries committee.

Even through the difficulties of staying at home, our church has been energized by a shared commitment to care for one another and act on our values for equity and justice. We don't know how long COVID-19 closures will affect our life together, but whatever the future holds, United Church continues to show that we will be reaching in and reaching out.



UNITED CHURCH *of* **CHAPEL HILL**



PASTOR CAMERON BARR

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WHERE EVERYBODY KNOWS YOUR NAME

This is a difficult time to be a church choir / praise band / handbell choir / instrumental group member. We are all grieving the loss of connection and deeply missing being in each other's presence and joining our voices or instruments in one sound. This act of making music together fills the soul in so many ways, and although our weekly Zoom meetings at our usual rehearsal times are helping, they are certainly no substitute.

It's been really disheartening to read recent reports that singing together in a closed space is currently dangerous. As a singer and choral musician, I am used to hearing and reading about all the positive health benefits of corporate music-making, and specifically choral singing: among many other positive outcomes, it is known to relieve stress, improve mental health, improve mood, create a strong social bond, regulate and slow our breathing and even promote brain plasticity. I've always read the numerous studies about the health benefits of singing with relish, and reveled in the knowledge that my chosen profession promotes health and well-being. But now we're being told that singing projects those possibly virus-laden micro-droplets into the air with as much momentum as a sneeze. What? Singing can be bad for our health? This is terrible news indeed.

On last night's Chancel Choir Zoom our chat theme was "Favorite Songs and Hymns." I had suggested we share hymns that we're missing or songs that make up our COVID-19 soundtrack. There were several interesting threads that ran through the conversation, as one person's suggestion sparked memories, and not a few old hymnals were pulled off shelves or piano racks and shown on camera! Many people mentioned favorite hymns from childhood that spoke deeply to them (a reminder of how important it is to make sure our youngest are exposed to a wide range of inspiring music), and others mentioned hymns that were special because they were sung at a wedding or other special occasion. Some of the many that were mentioned were "It Is Well With My Soul," "Just a Closer Walk with Thee," "Be Thou My Vision," and "Fairest Lord Jesus." There was much enthusiasm for scheduling an old-fashioned hymn sing at such time when we're able to share our projectile saliva in a closed space again.

Another thread was songs that are covers of, or based on, hymns, like Paul Simon's "An American Tune," Van Morrison's "Be Thou My Vision," and Cat Stevens' "Morning Has Broken". And our collective COVID-19 Soundtrack included songs that speak directly to our feeling of disconnection these days, such as Carrie Newcomer's "A Place at the Table," Alison Krauss's "I Know Who Holds Tomorrow" and Evelyn Carter's "Where No One Stands Alone." I envision a second all-church song session with these songs on the list!

One person told us that it is the theme song from "Cheers" that best expressed for her what church represents, and this was received with much enthusiasm by just about everyone on the call! This is where I have to own up to the very uncool fact that I have seen a possible total of two episodes of "Cheers" and that was probably 30 years ago, so I couldn't readily recall its theme song! After our meeting was over I rushed to YouTube to see what everybody was so enthusiastic about. I'm adding this to my COVID-19 playlist and to our song list for one of our future hymn sings. May church ever be so!

*Be glad there's one place in the world
Where everybody knows your name,
And they're always glad you came;
You want to go where people know,
People are all the same:*

You want to go where everybody knows your name.

RENOVATION TEAM REPORT TO CHURCH COUNCIL

Prior to Pastor Ian's arrival at United Church, Acting Youth Director Katherine Henderson reached out to the consulting firm Ministry Architects for an initial assessment of the youth ministry's sustainability. Katherine wisely knew that in the face of so many leadership transitions within our church, Ministry Architects could resource the incoming staff leader for greater success. After Ian's arrival in June 2018, he picked up this conversation with Ministry Architects, and thanks to a generous gift to the congregation, United Church contracted with Ministry Architects for a 12-month consulting process beginning November 2018.

This engagement included ongoing training for Ian and 3 site visits from consultants Anthony Prince and John McNeill. The first visit included several congregational listening sessions, which were reflected within an Assessment Report presented to the congregation. The report outlined three "pressure points" to address: communication norms, sustainable staffing, and the congregation's overall vision of Christian Formation. Following this visit, a prayer team was assembled to support the process and a "Renovation Team" was recruited to execute the sequenced tasks outlined in the Report. This Team included chairs from all three Boards of faith formation: Jeff Hall (Adult Ed), Millie Brobston (BYYAM), and Christine Harding (Children's Board) as well as their staff liaisons, Ian McPherson and Anitra Grove.

While contracted to assess faith formation as a whole, Ministry Architects focused initially on youth ministry as a laboratory of innovation. Changes within this ministry area, these consultants argued, would become a model for other parts of the system to follow. With this in mind, youth, parents, ministry leaders, and other stakeholders gathered for a Visioning Summit to articulate the mission, values, and goals of youth ministry, which has become the lodestar for the work of the BYYAM and other youth ministry leaders. A later Christian Formation Summit gathered participants from throughout the congregation to articulate our approach to faith formation as a whole. This gathering produced the raw material for a scope and sequence of (congregationally-sourced) learning objectives, which will create a coherent faith formation pathway throughout the lifespan. (Special thanks to Barbara Hall for taking on the first part of this gargantuan task!)

[Continue reading the full report](#)

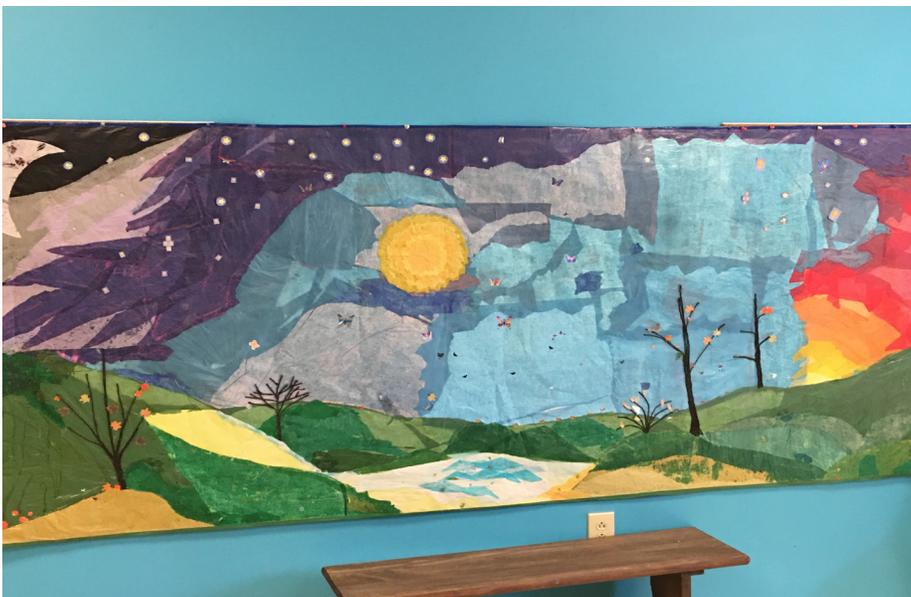
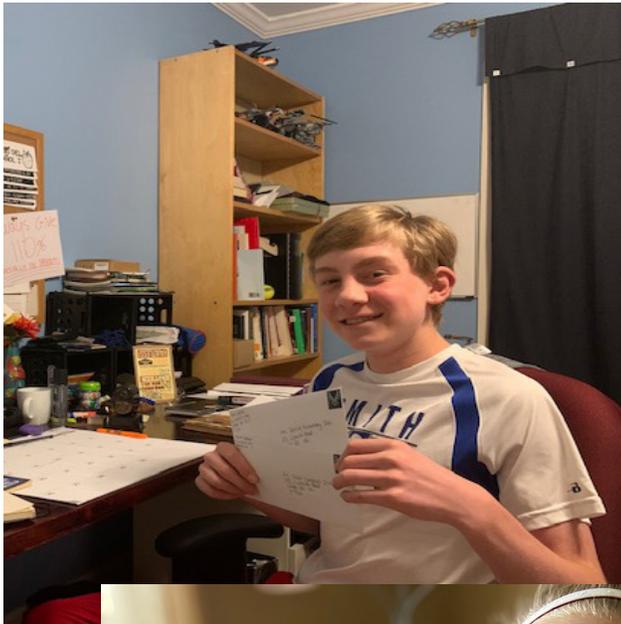


PHOTO *of*
THE MONTH

YOUTH GROUP NEWS

Our youth have been eager to reach in and reach out during these difficult times. They have gathered weekly to test out new Zoom games for "Youth Group Goes Virtual," and many have participated in a new pen pal program with the residents of Covenant Place. Their ministry of community-building has been warmly received and much appreciated!



CONGREGATIONAL CARE

DID YOU KNOW?

UCCH sends out emails with prayer concerns and celebrations AND Pastoral Care Announcements.

prayers of the community

JOIN US!

Please click on the link below to be added to the list!

[Sign up to receive Pastoral Care information](#)

A SPECIAL "THANK YOU" TO COMMUNITY GROUP TEAM LEADERS

As we come to the end of our church program year, I would like to especially thank these members of our church community who participated as Team Leaders in our first year of the Community Group Ministries program. It was a pleasure working with y'all as we came together in fellowship, experimentation, curiosity, service and fun. With much gratitude.

Lucy Austin, Barbara Wildemuth, Suzan Bumby, Julie Wagner, Lori Carter, Sarah Stokes, Bill & Cely Chicurel, Karen Demby, Janet Flowers, Gates Vrooman, Shirley Gessinger, Barb & Jeff Hall, Suzanne Hallquist, Jody Forehand, Melanie Joiner, Linden Thayer, Glenna Batson, Doug Zabor, Midge Coward, Cindy Johnson, Sandy & Skip Polson, Lisa Gabel, and Jeanette Benjey

Y'all rock!

Rinnie Orr, Director of Hospitality Ministries

VIRTUAL GATHERINGS IN MAY

MONDAYS

- 12 p.m. Monday Noon Book Group, Contact: Nancy Duffner
- 2 p.m. Bible Study via Zoom with Pastor Cameron
- 7:30 p.m. Women's Group, Contact: Cindy Johnson

WEDNESDAYS

- 8 a.m. Wednesday Morning Bible Study, Contact: Barbara Wildemuth
- 5 p.m. Evening Prayer via Facebook Live with Pastor Cameron
- 5 p.m. Grace Notes and Junior Choir, Contact: Jenny Anderson
- 7 p.m., 2nd Wed. of each month, Racial Justice Ministries, Contact: Ingrid Schmidt

THURSDAYS

- 7 p.m. Chancel Choir, Contact: Jenny Anderson
- 7 p.m. United Voices of Praise, Contact: Rachael Clemens

FRIDAYS

- 4 p.m. Community Groups Chit Chat, Contact: Rinnie Orr
- 9am Yoga, Contact: Katherine Shea

SATURDAYS

- 7:30 p.m. Sacred Conversations on Race, Contact: Ingrid Schmidt

SUNDAYS

- 10 a.m. Spiritual Growth, Contact: Cely Chicurel
- 12:30 p.m. Youth Choir Chat, Contact: Jenny Anderson
- 5 p.m. Youth Check-In Meeting, Contact: Ian McPherson

PASTORS' ONLINE OFFICE HOURS

Cameron Barr: Tuesdays, 10 a.m. -12 p.m., <https://zoom.us/j/5869352494>
David Mateo, Ian McPherson, and Mary Elizabeth Hanchey: By appointment

PLEASE CONTINUE GIVING TO UNITED CHURCH

We would be grateful for your continued financial stewardship of the church's mission. It will help us meet our financial commitments to all staff and provide ongoing worship and ministry together. Gifts may be made on [the church website](#). You do not have to create an account to make a gift, but may do so by choosing to create a password. You can also contact our Business Manager, [Duane Gilbert](#), to set up a bank autodraft.

WORSHIP WITH US IN MAY

Worship of the Living God SUNDAYS

9:30 a.m. Live event on the [UCCH Facebook page](#)

La Mesa SUNDAYS

11:00 a.m. Bilingual live event on the [UCCH Facebook page](#)

We hope you are able to join us for Sunday's "live" services online. The services are streamed on Facebook and please comment to let everyone know your thoughts in real time. We will continue using this format while we're worshipping in our own spaces.

You do NOT need to have a Facebook account to worship with us. Our Facebook page is public, so if you have internet access, you can watch the video. If you don't have a Facebook account and are asked to create one when you click the link above, feel free to decline -- you'll still be able to access our page and the worship service!

If you miss one of our services, go to our Facebook page and our YouTube Channel any time to watch them.



UNITED CHURCH
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STAY CONNECTED

ONLINE

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FACEBOOK: [/UNITEDCHURCHOFCHAPELHILL](https://www.facebook.com/UNITEDCHURCHOFCHAPELHILL)



919-942-3540

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