



The Newsletter

First Congregational UCC

March 2005

A Journey to Easter

A few years ago I wrote a little song for young children entitled "Going to Jerusalem." It was intended to help children understand that during Lent, we journey with Jesus and his friends towards Easter. Along the way, we feed the poor, we care for the sick, we tell stories of hope, we learn from Jesus and each other, and we have fun. It was just a little song to help carry us through a season of reflection and meditation.

I thought of that song this week as I began to anticipate Holy Week and Easter. We are on our way toward Easter - which is not so much a destination as a way of living. I hope we are doing what the words of the song say - caring for each other, attending to the needs of the poor and the vulnerable, laughing and singing together, praying and reflecting. In our community life, we will continue to have the Lenten Dinners with different speakers talking about how we can better care and advocate for those who need our help. Our worship will include the voices of Russell Siler Jones, Cindy, and myself as we attempt to lift up old stories that still ground us in the power of God's vision for the world. The worship class will focus for three weeks on the power of language - and why we use inclusive language. These are ways that we journey together.

There will also be times to advocate for change with the state government around issues of concern for many in our congregation. On March 15 the NC Coalition for Marriage Equality will have a lobby day for marriage equality in Raleigh, and on March 30 - also in Raleigh - People of Faith Against the Death Penalty will sponsor a rally asking legislators to create a moratorium on the death penalty. This is important work as we journey toward Easter life. And there will be times of fun too. The 7th Annual Easter Egg Hunt and Picnic at the Hester farm on Palm Sunday is always a good time for all ages. I hope all of you can join us. And on Easter morning, after our worship, we will have our traditional Easter Breakfast in the Fellowship Hall. Bring some favorite breakfast foods and enjoy the time of friendship as well as the good food.

We're going to Jerusalem, and the pathway will be hard sometimes. We will find ourselves lost and afraid, confused and lonely. Sometimes we will want to turn back. Something inside of us will begin to say - what's really going on here? We will look ahead and see the cross, and we will ask - what does the cross have to do with me? Sally Purvis is a friend of mine in Atlanta and the author of a book entitled The Power of the Cross. The journey of this season reminds us that love and violence are partners in a dance of life. Sally reminds us that this journey is one of remembering that God is the power of life and love, but that God does not control events or manipulate outcomes. And yet, the power of the cross is love. The power of the cross is not crucifixion, but resurrection. The power of the cross is life.

The story is rich with love and struggle. So are our lives. I invite you to be with us for our Sunday worship and for the Maundy Thursday and Good Friday worship services during Holy Week as we tell the story again, as we feel it in our bones, as we seek to find life amidst struggle and violence. On Easter Sunday, we will celebrate that even when violence does its worst, love and life go on. We embody that love. The journey is our life. Easter is our day to remember and celebrate that God is with us. Always. In life. In death. In life beyond death. I hope you will be with us too.

Rev. Joe Hoffman

Christian Education News

Youth Event: Dinner and a Movie

The youth will meet at the church at 5:00pm on Sunday, March 6, for pizza and a movie. We will watch the movie "Saved" and discuss its religious themes.

Adult Education

Our adult class, "Sacraments, Symbols, and Spirit: The Theology and Politics of Worship," continues to meet each Sunday this month (except Easter). We will be discussing issues of language in the coming weeks so please join us. Meanwhile, those who desire movement rather than conversation can meet together outside the Loving Foods Resources space.

The **Praying Hands Project** meets every other Tuesday from 11:45-1:15 in the parlor. We meet to knit or crochet together and to pray. Some of us make prayer shawls or hats and scarves for the homeless, while others of us simply make gifts for someone we love. Together we pray for the recipients of our gifts, and for other needs within our community. (We also just visit and share patterns and learn from one another.) Bring your lunch and your current project, and come join us in the parlor. The meetings in March are the 1st, 15th, and 29th.

Book Sale April 3

You know that stack of books on the floor by your bed? Or those books that are falling out of your over-stocked bookcases? Well, here is your chance to pass them along to someone else . . . and buy some more! Our youth are sponsoring a Book Sale on April 3 to help fund their mission trip this summer. We will collect books during the preceding week and will have tables in the friendshall hall all day Sunday. Please help us by donating and purchasing. Watch the bulletin for details as the date approaches.

One Enchanted Evening

As they say on the commercials, when you're a big star, you get special treatment. And you will be treated like a star when you attend this year's "One Enchanted Evening" dinner on April 9. Guests will arrive in their glittery best for an evening of excellent food, quality service, and outstanding entertainment, sponsored and hosted by our youth.

After dinner and entertainment, we will auction off valuable services from our members. If you have a service you are willing to donate (a massage, a lesson in some skill you've mastered, a dinner for two, etc.) please talk to Cindy. Tickets will go on sale soon, and proceeds will support the youth mission trip this summer.

Plan to join us on April 9 in the friendship hall and be treated like the star you are!

Novel Approaches to God

We had a great turn-out at the book group last month to discuss *The Sparrow* by Mary Doria Russell, and we agreed to continue in March with the sequel, *Children of God*. You do not need to have attended last month's group to come this month, but you will want to read the first book before reading the sequel. Both books are well worth your time. Please join us on March 17 at 7pm in the parlor to discuss this important novel. (We always meet the third Thursday of each month.)

Adventures to meet

All older elementary youth in grades 3rd - 5th are invited to join us for a gathering on Sunday, March 6. We will meet after Sunday School in the fellowship hall and go to Tara Mele's - which is about 30 minutes away. Bring a bag lunch with a drink! Tara is a potter, and will lead us in some work with clay and pottery, then on some fun activities on their 15 acres of land. We will return to the church by 3pm. For more information, call Rev. Joe Hoffman or Dianne Harper.

March Birthdays

1 - Mary Cowal	12 - James Langrall
2 - Jennifer Lebold	15 - Lynda Hodson
3 - Marcie Bangonan, Maya Dotson-Smith	18 - Karyn Helms
7 - Blake Esselstyn	22 - Tisa Lewis
8 - Cathy Foister	23 - Elva Hunt
9 - Darilyn Dealy	24 - Willie Burke
11 - Penny Stokes, Robert Wells	26 - Cindy Esselstyn
	30 - Suzanne Brooks
	31 - Liz Langrall

Change of address

Chris Wills: 100 Beale Road, #2, Arden, NC 28704

All Church Picnic and Easter Egg Hunt

For the young in heart, the young in spirit and the young in years... the Seventh Annual Easter Egg Hunt at Sabbath Rest Farm will be held Sunday, March 20th after Sunday School at 12 pm. Bring a covered dish, lawn chairs, hiking boots, Easter eggs and lets have a party. Jackets may be needed if the weather is cool. Maps will be provided at worship that Sunday. I wonder if anyone will catch a fish, pet Ferdinand the Bull, ride on the hay wagon, wade in the creek without falling in, or see the barn kitties Peggy and Michael Hester invite you to share the smells and sights and sounds of spring at the farm they share with their friends Tim and Jeannie Deering.

DEACONS OF THE MONTH

For March Sandy Clark will serve as Deacon of the Month. Elva Hunt will serve as Alternate. The deacons are charged to "cooperate with the minister in the care of the spiritual needs of the church and the community". In this year of transition, the deacons will be working especially hard at keeping our people connected. Please contact one of the Deacons of the Month, or any other Deacon should you have a need.

Sandy Clark: Sandy Clark has enjoyed sharing stories with long time members and meeting new members over the 12 years she has been a member of 1st Congregational UCC. She feels blessed to serve this year as a Deacon, after enjoying several years on the fellowship and property committees, as well as the past year on the cleaning crew. If you like to walk, join her

Worship Highlights

March 6 *4th Sunday in Lent*

Russell Siler Jones, worship leader
Communion
Focus Text: John 9:1-41

March 13 *5th Sunday in Lent*

Rev. Joe Hoffman, worship leader
Focus Texts: Ezek. 37:1-14, John 11:1-45

March 20 *Palm Sunday*

Rev. Cindy Maddox, worship leader
Texts: Isaiah 50:4-9; Psalm 31:9-16; Phil. 2:5-11;
Matthew 26:14-27:66

Thursday, March 24 *Maundy Thursday*

7pm, in the sanctuary
Join us for this service of remembering Jesus and the last supper, and Jesus betrayal in the garden. We will have communion.

Friday, March 25 *Good Friday Service*

7pm, A guided meditation and time to sit in the silence and reflect on the story of Christ's crucifixion and death.

March 27 *Easter Sunday*

Rev. Joe Hoffman, worship leader
Texts: Acts:10:34-43; Ps. 118:14-24 Col 3:1-4;
John 20:1-18 Join us after the service for an Easter Breakfast in the Fellowship Hall. Please bring some favorite breakfast foods - hot or cold - to add to the table.

one Sunday walking after church in the pleasant Kenilworth neighborhood, her substitute for walking to our old church on Merriman in her neighborhood, an important part of her Sunday worship for the past several years. (252-6851)

Elva Hunt: Elva is serving her second term as deacon at First Congregational. She enjoys College for seniors, going to the "Y" and working in her garden. However, her two grandchildren come first. Unfortunately, they live farther away for Asheville than she would like. (299-0582)

Deacons for 2005 are: Sandy Clark, Diane Harper, Peggy Hester, Elva Hunt, Liz Langrall, Jim Lowder, Tara Mele, Al Mojonier (chair), Rusty Murray, David Nash, John Whitener, and Chris Wills.

Choir Rehearsal Schedule

Wed., March 2nd, 9th & 16th- 7:15 pm rehearsal
Wed., March 23rd & 30th - 7:00 pm rehearsal

Also, the choir typically rehearses on Sunday mornings at 8:25 prior to the 9:00 service. Child care is available when needed for both Sunday morning and Wednesday night. On Wednesday nights singers are asked to park in the lot behind the church (off of Chiles) and enter the sanctuary building by the door nearest the sanctuary piano. Any questions, please contact Anita Freeman at 254-2079 and leave a message.

Holy Ground

Women's Labyrinth Walk and Potluck dinner on Thursday March 3 at Groce United Methodist Church. Walking times are: 4-5:30 and 6:45-8:30 with dinner at 5:45. Cost is \$15.00 Call Holy Ground to sign up by March 1. 236-0222.

Women's Interfaith Freedom Seder on Wednesday, April 20 at the YWCA. Times: 6:30-8:30 cost: \$15.00 This event fills up quickly as there is only room for 40 women. Call Holy Ground to register. 236-0222

As always, folks can also call me if they have questions.
Dianne Harper 255-8843

A Work in Progress

The Task Force working on a Children and Adult Arts Program will be conducting a survey for adults in addition to the survey for children. We will be looking for persons who have gifts, skills and interest in the visual, written, musical, dramatic and dance fields. Already we are seeing connections being made between our children and adults who share common gifts... flutes and poetry to mention two. Hopefully these gifts will soon be shared in worship so you too can begin to experience how much we have to give to one another. We need persons who are passionate about music, the arts and children.... but we will also take the bored and the blah. Just give us and our children a chance to be our whole selves in church, not just talking heads. Please fill out the survey and help us as a congregation expand our vision by participating in the gift of creation.



Financial Report For January 2005

Operating Income Contributions	\$ 15,218
Operating Expenses	\$ 14,842
Net	\$ 376

Pass – Through Contributions (Building Fund, OGHS, etc.)	\$ 19,317
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Building Committee Update March 2005

At the Congregational Meeting on February 27, the Building Committee had the pleasure of sharing stories and updated images of the proposed church building and grounds. David Bair detailed the “green” features of the building, the most notable being a geothermal heat system that will make our church unique among those in Asheville. Mary Weber showed drawings of the playgrounds, gathering plaza and memorial/meditation garden. The latter area is two circular areas connected by a bridge, one circle being a labyrinth and the other being a memorial garden. If you missed the meeting, we hope to have these drawings posted at our table in the narthex by next Sunday. Other building committee members also shared stories about their experiences and excitement about our plans.

On March 4, the Building Committee will meet with John Yurko and roll up our sleeves to begin work on a detailed budget. Rick Fleming will bring us actual bids and estimates on the 75% complete construction drawings. When we have these numbers, our Trustees can finalize their work on a proposed financial plan to bring to the congregation for vote. We appreciate your thoughts and prayers as we enter the toughest part of our jobs!

Our greatest joy of all is imagining ourselves in a new place where we can carry on our unique ministries—with a kitchen to feed the hungry, a functional area for Room In The Inn that allows for showers and privacy for our guests; plenty of space for our children (and adults!) to learn and grow; and, at last, a sanctuary where we can all see one another’s faces again as we worship together, a flexible space where we can be church in the many ways that we love—in worship, learning, play and meals. We expect our advocacy work for peace and social justice, and all of our ministries, to expand. To us, this building is not the destination, but a place to help us continue and expand our journey to be a “progressive, passionate and compassionate” Christian presence in Asheville and the world.

Janet Stephens and Michael Hester

New Members

The following people became members on February 13, 2005:

Brenda K. Lewis continues to hold membership as an elder in the United Methodist Church, but became an associate member in our church. She has attended our church since 2002 and has loved the worship, emphasis on social justice and has taught adult Sunday school classes. She grows vegetables in a big garden. She works as a chaplain at Mountain Area Hospice and spends weekends visiting in homes and nursing homes.

Kristi J. Schleder grew up in a small rural Presbyterian church in Illinois and has been seeking a loving and welcoming church that values children. She loves the outdoors, cycling, kayaking, dancing and being a mom to two sons, Neil and Erin. She works as a family physician for a nonprofit organization.

Gregory Martin Rogers lived in Memphis, TN, before moving to Asheville in 1982. He was raised Catholic and was named after the many Pope's named Gregory. He worked as a carpenter and builder for 15 years. He turned his hobby of beekeeping into a full time business. His wife is Kristi Schleder.

The Storrow family consists of Donna, Joel, Lee, Emily and Bisuit, their dog. Donna is a long time resident of Asheville and is currently enjoying time with her children while biking and walking. She worked as a Public Health Educator for the Buncombe County Health Center and more recently was a preschool teacher for 9 years.

Joel Leslie Storrow grew up in Lexington, KY, in the Methodist Church. He met Donna while at UNC-Chapel Hill, where they fell in love and married in 1983. He enjoys the outdoors, reading and is an avid Tar Heel fan. He is a civil/environmental engineer and employed by a private engineering consulting firm.

Lee Walkup Storrow is a 10th grader at Asheville High School, where he is a member of the International Thespian Society and the National Forensic League. He has worked in many aspects of theatre in WNC. He is also an avid film watcher.

Emily Maggard Storrow is a 7th grader at Asheville Middle School, where she is on the snowboarding team. She also plays the flute in the school concert band and the bass in the stage band. She enjoys art (mainly painting) and writing.



News from the ONA

The ONA Committee has had our first meeting of 2005 and has some exciting ideas for incorporating diversity themes into our worship services and church events, as well as opportunities to share our message of welcome within the community at large. We will keep you updated via the newsletter and announcements during worship about upcoming ONA-sponsored activities as we plan them!

Rev. Joe Hoffman has helped to organize a group of clergy and laity in Asheville working on the issue of marriage equality. This group has met once a month since early in the fall, working in coordination with a larger group called the North Carolina Religious Coalition for Marriage Equality. The purpose of this group is to advocate for and support equality and justice for members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. The North Carolina Coalition has written a Declaration for Marriage Equality that can be picked up from the church office or in the narthex. That statement says in part:

"As religious people, clergy and lay leaders, we are mandated by faith to stand for justice in our common

civic life. We oppose the use of sacred texts and religious traditions to deny legal equity to same-gender couples. ... We affirm the liberty of adults of the same gender to love and marry. ... We are resolved that the State should not interfere with same-gender couples who choose to marry and share fully and equally in the rights, responsibilities, and commitments of civil marriage."

On March 15, there will be a **1st Annual Lobby Day and Gathering** in Raleigh. The theme of this day will be: *Defending All Our Families - Protecting Our Constitution*. Joe and others from our congregation and local community will be attending this event. Anyone who is interested is invited to join us. The day begins very early - 8am - in Raleigh, so we recommend that you go down on the evening of the 14th and spend the night. The morning will be a time of learning and worship. At noon there will be a rally at the General Assembly Building, followed by opportunities to talk with elected officials in the afternoon. If you are interested in attending, please contact Joe at 252-8729 or by email at revjoehof@uccasheville.org

Selena Coffee ONA Chair

Lenten Dinner and Programs

March 2 *Kristy Carter*, Executive Director of Hospitality House, and a member of our church, will talk with us about homelessness in Asheville, including information about the 10 year plan to end homelessness.

March 9 *Doug Wingeier*, co-chair of the Christian Action Committee, and former seminary professor, will talk about Christian Peacemakers and Voices in the Wilderness, organizations supporting nonviolent action and witnessing the impacts of US policies in Iraq and the Middle East.

March 16 *Mark Siler* will talk to us about Christians for a United Community, a local group working to dismantle the root causes of racism and disparity. Mark is a friend of our congregation and brother to Jeanine Siler Jones. He is a co - leader of this organization.

The meals begin at 5:30 - or as soon as you can arrive - and the program at 6:15. Please make a reservation for the meal by Tuesday afternoon if possible so we will know how much food to provide. You may do so by calling the church office or dropping the rsvp form from the bulletin in the offering plate. Childcare is provided, no reservation is needed for this.

News From the Worship Committee

The members of the Worship Committee are exploring ways to make our worship creative, meaningful, and reflective of the diversity of our congregation. While we are in temporary space, we are experimenting with new formats for worship time. We are trying out different ideas because of space constraints, time constraints (both needing to start at an early hour and having an inflexible end time), people saying they can't hear well, and our desire to see what new customs we may want to bring into our new space. We welcome feedback on these changes.

One change, which we started during Advent, was to eliminate most spoken announcements during the service. Our goal is to allow more time for worship, as our time is limited to one hour. However, since we don't want to miss important news, we encourage you to submit announcements to the church office during the week prior to the service so that they can be printed in the Sunday bulletin.

During Lent, deacons are asking you as you enter worship to write out your prayer requests so that our pastors can read them aloud during the service. We are trying this during this Lenten season to address hearing

Dances of Universal Peace

Darilyn Dealy, with musician Susan Warren, will delight us with another evening of the Dances of Universal Peace on Friday, March 18th, 7-9 pm, in the fellowship hall. These dances are similar to folk dances, but because the words we sing/chant are sacred phrases from many different religious traditions, they are to some a spiritual practice. All are welcome to come and experience the joy and inner peace that come from singing and dancing. No experience (and no talent) required--we form the circle together. This evening is specifically for our congregation and friends, and for the Kenilworth Presbyterian Church community. For childcare, call the church office by March 14th. For questions, call Darilyn at 628-9789



concerns brought up by a number of people in our congregation who have trouble hearing people speak from the pews.

Beginning in February, we are planning monthly evening services. For the most part, they will be the last Sunday of the month at 4:00 pm and will take place in the church hall. They will be held in addition to, not in the place of, Sunday morning services. We plan to end each of these services with a potluck dinner.

We are also beginning to dream and plan visual art for our new space. Let us know if you are interested in participating in working on banners, wall hangings, chrismsons, and other art projects for the new building. We have been pleased with the turnout and the energetic participation of the congregation in the worship classes. We plan to include your input in our plans for worship both in our current location and in the new building. The classes continue through Easter.

If you have any suggestions or feedback on worship in our current space or ideas for how we can prepare for our future space, or if you are interested in creating art for our new building, please contact Worship Committee chair Jerene Broadway, fogdwellers@earthlink.net



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An Open and Affirming Congregation

Staff	
Pastor...	Rev. Joe Hoffman
Associate Pastor...	Rev. Cindy Maddox
Music Director...	Anita Freeman
Church Secretary ...	Jo Larsen

Dear UCC friends,

I want to invite you to a workshop I am leading the end of April here in Asheville. It is an INTERPLAY event, playing with the 9 personality types around the ENNEAGRAM circle. We will use movement and stories to gain a deeper understanding of ourselves and others. For many, the enneagram is a spiritual tool for transformation.

The workshop will be held the 5th week-end in April: April 29th and 30th. Friday evening 6:45-9:30. Saturday 9:45 to 4:30. Location is the Asheville Arts Center (which used to be our old church!) at 308 Merrimon Ave.

Cost is \$65 if registered before April 18 \$80 after April 18
 \$55 for Interplay leadership graduates

Registration will be limited to 20, and it's already 1/4 filled, so if you want to attend, I suggest you register now! For registration information, contact me at annaaminawe@yahoo.com (that's Anna I am inawe), or at 828:684-7359. Or you can simply send me a check, along with your enneagram type (if you know it), your email, phone, and mailing address. Make the check out to me: ANNA MATHESON 3850 Sweeten Creek Road Arden, NC 28704

Upon receipt of your registration or interest, I will send you further details.

In gratitude- Anna

From Crisis to Community

Make plans now to participate in this all day event of caring for creation. Although we are not an official sponsoring congregation, we have had some input into the early planning of this event and it looks very good. This group is a project of the Climate Connection: NC Interfaith Eco-Justice Network of the NC Council of Churches. The program is held on Earth Day, April 22, from 8:30 - 4pm at First Baptist church. Be watching for more information.

World Day of Prayer Celebration

SATURDAY, March 5, 9:30 a.m.
 Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church
 789 Merrimon Avenue

LET OUR LIGHT SHINE
WRITTEN BY WOMEN OF POLAND
 Child care will be provided, call Nancy Getty's at 645-7140 by Friday 25

MARCH 2005

<i>Sun</i>	<i>Mon</i>	<i>Tue</i>	<i>Wed</i>	<i>Thu</i>	<i>Fri</i>	<i>Sat</i>
		1 10:30 am Staff Meeting 11:45-1:15 Praying Hands Project	2 5:30 Lenten Series 7:15 Choir Rehearsal	3	4	5
6 <i>Adventurers will meet after church</i> 5 pm Youth movie and pizza	7 6 pm Worship Committee	8	9 5:30 Lenten Series 7:15 Choir Rehearsal	10	11	12
13 11:30 Executive Board	14	15 <i>1st Annual Lobby Day and Gathering</i> 11:45-1:15 Praying Hands Project	16 5:30 Lenten Series 7:15 Choir Rehearsal	17 7 pm Book Group	18 7-9 pm Universal Dances of Peace	19
20 Palm Sunday <i>12 noon Easter Egg Hunt & Picnic</i>	21 9 am Newsletter Deadline	22 Marriage Equality Meeting	23 6 pm Personnel Committee 7 pm Choir Rehearsal	24 7 pm Maundy Thursday Service	25 7 pm Good Friday Service	26
27 <i>Breakfast after church 10am</i> Easter Service	28	29 11:45-1:15 Praying Hands Project	30 7 pm Choir Rehearsal	31		<i>Mark your calendars for the Book Sale April 3 & One Enchanted Evening April 9</i>