
OCTOBER 2021
VOLUME 34.10

The Messenger

St. John's United Church of Christ



Message from the Pastor

My friends,

Here's a song that came to mind recently:

*Step right up, hurry, hurry before the show begins, my friends
Stand in line, get your tickets, I hope you will attend
It'll only cost you fifty cents to see
What life has done to those like you and me*

It's a pretty, if sad little song from the '70's, called "Let the Sideshow Begin" by The Stylistics. I liked it then for the tune, but the words are what get to me now: "What life has done to those like you and me."

There are lots of things that happen to us over the course of a lifetime. Some are happy, good things; we're all for happy, good things, right? But some are less so: sad, even tragic events in life that make as deep a mark on our souls as any happy memory. In our lifetimes we tend to gather in community, too. Some we join without much thought, perhaps even accidentally; others we are quite intentional about, with due consideration and aforethought.

A church faith community is the latter in most cases. And yet even if we have elected to join and become part of a church community, it's not always fun and games within and there are no guaranteed outcomes. What life has done to those like you and me continues unabated in the church community. So, what then is the appeal to join, to become part of a community of faith?

For someone with a pessimistic mindset, the story found at Mark 10:17-31 should be enough to dissuade any thought of joining a church. Here's a man who has apparently done well in whatever community he's already part of when measured in terms of possessions. It also appears that he is at least knowledgeable of if not involved in a Jewish congregation, based on his familiarity with the Decalogue (Ten Commandments). And yet he senses that something is missing, something is yet to be acquired, so he steps up to Jesus and submits his question: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Perhaps if we avoid asking the question, we can also avoid the reckoning. But the thing is, the ministry of Jesus was no sideshow. And whether you're part of a church or not, keep the faith or not, live your life reconciled to one another or not... the living of it is no sideshow, either. The gift of life is the main event. Acquiring possessions, personal or communal, are really not compatible with living a life of faith. Giving what has been acquired to others who have not... this is what leads to more abundant life.

Even as I write this, I grieve the role acquisition has played (plays still) in my own life. But I greatly value the role that communities of faith have played in my awareness of my need to grow further in faith myself. And now, I am valuing the opportunity to explore how a whole community of faithful people can meet the mystery of eternal life and all that "treasure in heaven" can mean for us.

The song closes:

*“Let the sideshow begin, hurry, hurry!
Step right on in.
Can’t afford to pass it by,
guaranteed to make you cry.”*

Here is my response: our faith community is not a sideshow, and we expect great joy in living the faith. This includes the happy and good things, along with the sad and tragic things. But we can afford everything – all possessions, all money, all earthly treasures, and all the events and memories of our lives, too – give it all away and save nothing, for the promise Jesus offered when asked, “Then who can be saved?” He said, “For mortals, it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

This is the good news of Jesus Christ. So let it be so.

From the Church Council President

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

Ecclesiastes 3:1

To everything (turn, turn, turn)

There is a season (turn, turn, turn)

And a time to every purpose, under heaven.

Song by The Byrds, written by Peter Seeger

From ancient cultures to more contemporary ones, people have observed and celebrated the changing of the seasons as part of the cycle of nature, while also noting that life makes room for all sorts of activities and changes. We all have seasons of despair, seasons of anxiety, seasons of joy, seasons of hope, and seasons of love. As Fall gets underway, we mark the change of season in many ways. Many of us associate it with children's return to classes, the beginning of a new school year, and look forward to new experiences ahead. But it may also be seen as a diminishment of the vitality of Spring and Summer. While the harvest begins and the grains are gathered, one can't help but feel that the preparation for colder and bleaker weather has already begun. The common refrain – and warning – in “Game of Thrones” was “Winter is Coming.”

My former Pastor, David Gatton, at the Universalist National Memorial Church in Washington, DC, recently wrote that “the Fall season can teach so much about our souls, that there is a time for change, a time to sing without singing, a time to let our individuality melt into community.... The seasons teach us not to panic but to endure and be part of creation; Nature tells us we are part of a much larger humanity and a vast scheme of things. In other words, we are not alone, and humanity is universal.”

This Fall, at St. John's we celebrate our community of faith, and take comfort in our mutual support. We enjoyed the company of about 30 of our congregation at our church picnic in September, and thank everyone who helped to make it a fun and successful event. Although the ongoing pandemic prevents us from hosting a German Dinner this fall, we look forward to a special event, including a bratwurst picnic, after worship on October 24th – more information on that is elsewhere in this newsletter. This month we will be initiating a food mini-pantry at St. John's, to help the food-insecure members of our community. And then Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas are coming, to be followed in turn by the new calendar year and another Spring and Summer. We can take comfort in the changing seasons.

As we take part in familiar observances and rituals, let's make room for new ones. Let's be open to the discoveries that our Interim Ministry time at St. John's makes available to us, as we look forward to calling a new settled Pastor sometime next year. As Paul wrote in his Letter to the Romans, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect." Let's take advantage of this changing of the seasons to be open to God's call to change our community, our church and ourselves, in order to further God's kingdom on earth.

Jeff Jacobs
jwjacobs9@gmail.com
(202) 361-9887

October Mission of the Month: Circle Center Adult Day Services

In 1976, four Richmond Fan District churches - Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, First English Lutheran Church, Grace Covenant Presbyterian, and St. James's Episcopal- joined with St. John's United Church of Christ in creating the first adult day care service in Virginia. Since that time Circle Center has become a template for many other Adult Day centers throughout the United States. Starting in Stuart Center, at first there were only five participants and two employees, while today Circle Center occupies 31,000 square feet of space including an art room, library, music room, activity room, additional office space for staff and plenty of handicapped-accessible rest rooms near Willow Lawn. They now serve over 120 participants per day and are always interested in having you visit their facility.

Circle Center has always been at the heart of what we do here at St. John's, and in October we are once again celebrating our commitment to this worthy cause by having them as our Mission of the Month.

Please help us continue to support this wonderful outreach and give generously.



Micro-pantry at St. John's

St John's is launching a micro-pantry and we are in need of volunteers! Our goal is to provide an accessible, nutritional and free alternative food source for the food-insecure residents of downtown Richmond.

The operation will function through our website, where patrons order the food they want, and choose a time slot on Sunday afternoon for pickup. The micro-pantry will be operational biweekly, and we hope to start operations in early October.

Volunteers are needed to buy non-perishable items for the pantry, using funds from the church's Stille Fund grant. On Sundays two sets of volunteers are needed to bag orders and drop them off curbside to patrons. Any time and effort you can put towards this pantry service for the community is greatly appreciated! If you would like to volunteer, please fill out the Google form linked below. In the meantime, if you have any questions or would like more information please contact Winston at aiwinston88@gmail.com.

Volunteer Google form: <https://bit.ly/minipantry>



October Announcements

Communion on October 3rd

As is our custom, we will be celebrating Communion on October 3rd, the first Sunday of the month. In order to protect the health and safety of our congregation, instead of passing the communion elements in the pews we will be using individual self-contained communion kits. These kits, which resemble coffee creamers, contain a gluten-free communion wafer on top of a small serving of grape juice. They will be available as you enter the Sanctuary, to be used during the Communion portion of the worship service.

Guest Preacher - Sunday, October 10th

Pastor Stephen Poore will be the guest preacher on October 10th. He is a Richmond, Virginia native and blessed with the camaraderie of his wife, Devin, and two children, Howdy and Jed. Stephen is also a licensed pastor with the Evangelical Covenant Church.

Stephen and Devin have partaken in adventures spanning from Sao Paulo's favelas to Rome's pasta. Stephen received his Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Virginia Commonwealth University. Before finishing his undergraduate degree, Stephen trekked the United States from coast to coast in his punk rock band, Ten 33.

Stephen holds an advanced degree with his Masters of Divinity from North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago, IL. While in Chicago, Stephen worked with Soul City Church as the College-Connections Director. Devin and Stephen eventually made their way back to Richmond, Virginia, in August of 2014 to start a church, intentionally in the heart of the city called Center Church.

Special Forum and Bratwurst Picnic - Sunday, October 24th

On Sunday, October 24th we will have two special guests, Rev. Daryl! Moch and Rev. Katja Albrecht, at-large members of the UCC's Potomac Association Board of Directors, as our Guest Preacher and Liturgist, respectively. Rev. Moch is the Senior Associate Minister at Inner Light Ministries, UCC and Rev. Albrecht is the Pastor for German Ministries at The United Church + Die Vereinigte Kirche, both in Washington, DC. Immediately after worship we will stay in the Sanctuary for a brief forum to discuss Potomac Association initiatives and then have a bratwurst picnic in the side yard. We hope that all will be able to join us for this special event.

October Announcements

Guest Bios

Guest Liturgist October 24th – Rev. Katja Albrecht

Rev. Katja Albrecht was called as the Pastor for German Ministries by The United Church+Die Vereinigte Kirche in Washington, D.C. in August of 2018. Dual Ministerial Standing was granted to her by the Potomac Association of the UCC in October of 2019, and she recently joined the Board of Directors of the Association as a Member at Large. Ordained in Germany in 2003, Katja has served as a Youth Minister, as a Deputy for Gender Equality, as Theological Assistant to the Regional Bishop of Halle/Germany, and as Senior Pastor for various churches. Her passion is facilitating the resources of faith for each Christian individually as well as the church as a whole.

Guest Preacher October 24th – Rev. Darryl Moch

Rev. Darryl LC Moch serves as a Sr. Associate Minister at Inner Light Ministries, UCC (in Washington, DC) and as the Dean of Communities of Practice for the Central Atlantic Conference (CAC) of the United Church of Christ. He is also the Convenor/Director of the CAC Mass Choir and a Member At Large of the Potomac Association Board of Directors.

Rev. Moch provides consulting services and training in Mental Health in DC and MD and for nonprofit organizations and is the co-founder and President/CEO of Inner Light Inc., a faith-based community empowerment organization in partnership with the UCC. His work centers on social change, social justice, and equality for all people without distinction in order to ensure a good quality of life for all people. He shares the Gospel, speaking from the heart, with focus on the practical application of scripture, spiritual insights, and progressive, liberation and metaphysical theology. His passion and work include using arts and culture to create opportunities that will empower, expose, and enlighten individuals and our collective communities. His art, activist and advocacy work is rooted in social justice, equality, and quality of life issues for African American/People of Color and minority communities, children, youth, families, LGBTQ constituencies, people living with mental and physical challenges, and the homeless, as well as HIV/AIDS and other issues facing communities most disenfranchised by local, regional, and national political policies and laws.

Rev. Moch also serves on several other local and national boards and committees, including the DC Department of Health Places of Worship Advisory Board and Project Healthy Living (The ManDate), an advisory board and group working to elevate the holistic health and wellness of Black Gay/Bi/Same Gender-Loving men. He is completing his doctorate in Organizational Leadership with a concentration in Transformational Leadership. Rev. Darryl has a BA in Performing Arts (Theatre and Dance) and Psychology (Clinical Counseling), a Master of Education in Counseling, and a Master of Fine Arts in Theatre: Directing. He was independently ordained in Atlanta, GA and is currently a Member in Discernment pursuing ordination in the UCC through the Potomac Association.

October Announcements

CROP WALK FOR HUNGER 2021

CROP Hunger Walkers walk in solidarity with girls who walk miles every day to collect water. We walk in solidarity with mothers who travel long distances to find work to feed their families. We walk alongside students who trek miles each way to attend school. This fall, we also take steps alongside Afghan families who have made the treacherous journey to find safety in America. We walk, because they walk.

Please join us for the 51st Annual Richmond CROP Hunger Walk on Sunday, November 7, 2021.

We will have an in-person walk, starting and ending at the Shalom Farms Northside Farm site, 1313 Westwood Avenue, Richmond, VA 23227. Our kickoff rally will start at 1:30, with the walk at 2 PM. We are asking everyone who joins the walk to wear a mask, in the interests of safety.

There is also the option to walk virtually, any time during the week of Nov 7 – Nov 14. If you choose that option, we also invite you to share your walk with our community via Facebook or Instagram – post a selfie, a video, a map of your walk route, etc.

As COVID-19 continues to disrupt our lives and food insecurity continues to rise, the need is greater than ever. We hope you will walk with the St. John's Team this year.

You can register online with the St. John's team at:

<https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2021/team/st-johns-ucc-2>

or as an individual or other group at:

<https://events.crophungerwalk.org/2021/event/richmondva>

and you can find instructions for how to do that here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ene_XvjeY_I

Follow us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/RichmondCROPWalk>

If you have questions about the walk and its mission or how to register, please contact Rev. Beverly Lindsey at revbevlinsey@gmail.com or 804-275-7165.

October Announcements

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE – 75 Years of service

Church World Service was born in 1946, in the aftermath of World War II. Seventeen denominations came together to form an agency "to do in partnership what none of us could hope to do as well alone." The mission: Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, comfort the aged, shelter the homeless.

Now 75 years later the mission remains, though where and how we accomplish it has changed dramatically.

In 1946-47, U.S. churches opened their hearts and provided more than 11 million pounds of food, clothing, and medical supplies to war-torn Europe and Asia. Protestants and Catholics pooled talent and resources to meet a staggering refugee crisis. Today the Immigration and Refugee Program of CWS is a vital, internationally-recognized operation, having resettled nearly half a million refugees since its inception.

Also in 1947, CWS, Lutheran World Relief, and the National Catholic Welfare Program created a joint community hunger appeal, the Christian Rural Overseas Program, also known as **CROP**. The acronym is gone but the name and life-saving work remains as CROP Hunger Walks in some 800+ communities across the United States.

The story of the CROP Hunger Walk goes back to 1969. Teens in Bismarck, North Dakota and York County, Pennsylvania decided it was time to do something for families who had to walk miles for food and clean water. So they walked...and, because they took that first step, hunger has forever been changed. Today, millions of people across nearly every state have participated.

Let's keep the mission and ministry of Church World Service alive and well.

October Announcements

Sunday Parking

Although Sunday parking is still permitted along the Monument Avenue median strip, there are parking spots marked "CH" and reserved for St. John's along the alley just north of the church off of Lombardy Street and inside the adjacent apartment building parking garage.

Sunday Volunteers Needed!

With our return to in-person worship, we once again need volunteers to prepare simple refreshments for post-worship fellowship time and greeters to distribute bulletins and welcome members and visitors. Please contact Richard Bighinatti (at grandude42@aol.com or (804) 502-1005) if you'd like to be a greeter, and Betsy Bighinatti (at grandude42@aol.com or (804) 502-1007) to sign up to provide refreshments.

Pastoral Care

Our Interim Pastor, The Rev. Tom Gerstenlauer, is available to provide spiritual support and pastoral care to our congregation. He can be reached at revtgerst@gmail.com or (413) 378-0828. As you may know, Pastor Tom is serving on a three-quarters time basis, and this month will be unavailable from October 4-10 and October 18-24; during that time please contact the church office at (804) 358-9291 with any pastoral emergencies.

October Welcome Teams

10/3 Johanna, Kristina, and Matthew Gilbert
10/10 Richard and Betsy Bighinatti
10/17 Charlie and Terry Weaver
10/24 Charlie and Terry Weaver
10/31 Richard and Betsy Bighinatti

October Teller Teams

10/03 Rob and Betsy
10/10 Terry and Betsy
10/17 Beverly and Betsy
10/24 Mark and Betsy
10/31 Tony and Beverly

October 2021 Calendar

Sunday, October 3rd, 10 a.m. - Worship Service with Communion in person and by Zoom

Wednesday, October 6th, 7 p.m. - Bible Study by Zoom

Thursday, October 7th, 10 a.m. - Renovations Committee meeting by Zoom

Sunday, October 10th, 10 a.m. - Worship Service in person and by Zoom

Monday, October 11th, 6:30 p.m. - Church Council by Zoom

Wednesday, October 13th, 7 p.m. - Bible Study by Zoom

Thursday, October 14th, 10 a.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting by Zoom

Sunday, October 17th, 10 a.m. - Worship Service in person and by Zoom

Sunday, October 17th, after service - Congregational Life and Care meeting at the church

Wednesday, October 20th, 7 p.m. - Bible Study by Zoom

Thursday, October 21st, 10 a.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting by Zoom

Sunday, October 24th, 10 a.m. - Worship with Guest Preacher Rev. Daryl! Moch and Guest Liturgist Rev. Katja Albrecht, followed by Forum on Potomac Association initiatives and Bratwurst Picnic

Wednesday, October 27th, 7 p.m. - Bible Study by Zoom

Thursday, October 28th, 10 a.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting by Zoom

October Birthdays

October 1 Chris Wing
October 3 JoAnn Jellison
October 6 Martha Cook
October 7 Mary Will
October 9 Rob Osborn
October 11 Anna Oxenham
October 18 Anne Dunnsbury
October 19 Dorothy Cook
October 21 Donovan Martin
October 22 Sarah Allen
October 23 Andy Trent
October 24 Brittany Totty
October 26 Daniel Martin
October 30 Billy Poarch



St. John's United Church of Christ

St. John's United Church of Christ is a diverse community forming a united congregation, seeking to grow our faith, share it with others, and serve God's people wherever the need is present. We are living God's love and all are invited!!!

An Open and Affirming Congregation

503 Stuart Circle
Richmond, Virginia 23220

Telephone: 804-358-9291

Email: office@stjohnsrichmond.org
Web Site: www.stjohnsrichmond.org

© 2021 St John's UCC