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October ENews Notes



October 2011

The Installation of Pastor Matt Braddock

The CCC Community is cordially invited to attend the installation of Rev. Dr. Matthew Braddock as the fourth Senior Minister of Christ Congregational Church. The service is this Sunday, October 16, at 2 PM.

The Service of Installation is an act of commissioning and covenant renewal by the Potomac Association of the UCC. Participants will include John Deckenback, the Conference Minister of the Central Atlantic Conference; Kwame Osei Reed, Associate Conference Minister for the Potomac Association; our own Amy Lewis, Tom Gustafson, Tom Ault, Merlene Bagley and Gordon Forbes; Potomac Association leaders; Jim Todhunter, CCC's Sr. Minister Emeritus; and Anne Troy from Shaw Community Ministries. The CCC Chancel Choir will perform under the talented direction of Dr. Nae Pearson and Sam Brush. The preacher will be David Smock from the United States Institute for Peace.

There will be no childcare for this event. children are welcome to attend.

A reception will follow in the social hall. The Board for Church Life and the Transition Committee request food donations for the reception. If you are able to provide finger foods of any kind, please drop them off in the Social Hall kitchen on Sunday, October 16. The reception will be held from 4:00-5:30pm.

Many thanks to all who are working behind the scenes to make this a special event that only happens once a generation in the life of CCC!

Blessing of the Animals

On a recent brisk October afternoon, people and animals began to pour out of cars and walk up the streets of the Indian Spring Neighborhood to gather

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outside of Christ Congregational Church. The tradition marking the occasion was inspired by St. Francis of Assisi and others who love nature and long for peace on earth. In gratitude for the gifts that come from being in relationship with creation, bunnies, cats, dogs, a cockatiel, and several favorite stuffed animals came with their human companions for the Blessing of the Animals.

On a Musical Note
About the Retreat House

Pastors Matthew Braddock and Amy Lewis welcomed neighbors, congregants and pets and led a simple service of thankfulness, hope and peace. Dr. Nae Pearson led the congregation in singing All Things Bright and Beautiful and Thor Imsdahl graced the air with his flute. Dogs barked, cats meowed, the bird tweeted and the humans rejoiced.

Pastors Matt and Amy offered individual blessings to the animals and their families with the dew from flowers in the church garden. Under the portico, members of the Board for Outreach and Engagement extended hospitality to all with smiles of welcome, information about CCC, warm cider, cookies, animal treats, balloons, a bubble machine and sidewalk chalk, too. We were all sent forth with our Creator and our animal mentors, as peace makers- to sow love, offer forgiveness, be hope, and to plant joy.

-Pastor Amy Lewis

THANK YOU! From the Board of Stewardship

This spring, the Board of Stewardship used Psalm 119:133 - "Direct my steps according to thy promise", to ask the CCC congregation: "Can you increase your pledge by one or two steps?" (A "step" is \$500.)

You responded: 35 pledge units increased their pledge by at least one step, and 22 more pledge units increased their pledge by two steps or more. This represented 23%, or almost a quarter, of our pledge units who met our request. We are very grateful!

The Board of Stewardship

CCC'S BUILDING IS SPORTING A NEW ROOF

The roof on CCC's sixty-some-year-old building has been completely replaced! For two years the Board of Trustees looked for the most economical way to deal with increasing leaks and very dry, brittle shingles, and finally concluded that replacing the roof at this time was the responsible thing to do. D&M Roofing won the contract; the final, negotiated cost was \$44,000. The color of the new shingles on the roof is one of the most popular and thus should always be in good supply if repairs are needed. The new roof as a whole should last 35-40 years!

The roofing process also included a re-coating of the interior of the gutters which should extend the life of the gutters another eight to ten years. The gutters and downspouts will continue to be inspected and cleaned twice yearly; such frequency is required because the gutter/downspout system is in part an inside system that can leak into the attic if a blockage occurs.

Kudos to the Board of Trustees and to Dianne Abraham, Property Administrator, for the careful and prudent attention they gave to this project.

POTOMAC ASSOCIATION TO VOTE ON BECOMING OPEN AND AFFIRMING

Although the Central Atlantic Conference, of which CCC is a part, voted fifteen years ago to declare itself Open and Affirming. Despite the presence of many ONA congregations in the Potomac Association, of which CCC is also a part, the PA has never taken the same step. An attempt in the 1990's was unsuccessful. This fall, at its October 22 meeting, the Association will vote on a "Resolution Declaring the Potomac Association to be 'Open and Affirming'." The resolution is being offered by the PA's Social Action and Missions Committee.

A copy of the complete resolution is posted on the Board for Social Action bulletin board in the CCC lobby. Because of continuing opposition within certain individual congregations, the following paragraph is included in the resolution:

"BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, while this declaration is in no way binding on the local churches of the Potomac Association, which retain full autonomy, the Association encourages all local churches to prayerfully consider the full inclusion of persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions in their local churches, acknowledging that there are a variety of ways that churches may practice inclusion."

CCC's delegates to the PA are Tom Gustafson (moderator), Karen O'Steen, (moderator-elect), Mary Stone, Jeanne Young, and Anne Weissenborn (alternate), plus our ministers. Each delegate votes as an individual; however, each would welcome opinions from CCCers about issues before the Association.

Musical Note: The Value of Music for Our Children

Researchers are providing us with an unprecedented understanding of how we think and how we learn. Music, known to us as the universal language, is valuable to the growth and development of our children. Children can benefit greatly from making music.

There is a direct correlation between improved SAT scores and the length of time spent studying music. Profiles from the SAT and Achievement test takers showed that college-bound seniors who had exposure to music in school and the community scored 52 points higher on the verbal portion of the SATs and 37 points higher on the math (a combined increased score of

89 points) than those with no instruction in music. In addition to improved verbal and mathematical skills, the American Music Conference has linked enhanced social behavior, improvements in spatial-temporal reasoning, structure, self-discipline, and leadership qualities among children who study music. Music is one of the ways we make sense of our lives, one of the ways in which we express feelings when we have no words, and one of the ways for us to understand things with our hearts when we can't with our minds.

Why should we be thinking about the value of music for our children at church? It's simple. Whenever there is a cut to be made in schools, what are the first programs to often be eliminated? By law school districts can't cut language, math, science, history, etc. Therefore, the administration frequently looks first at the arts. Music, drama, and art classes are an easy target because they are not tested or measured on a national level.

Psalm 127 tells us that children are a heritage of the Lord. Children are a gift from God. Music is everywhere; there are no "silent places." Music is in church, the grocery store, McDonalds, our cars, homes, iPods, computers, elevators, dentist offices; it is ubiquitous. What we listen to indicates what we are and directs our spiritual paths.

As our youth choirs begin this month, the Music Committee wants to extend a warm personal invitation to each young person to join and find their voice as they experience the joy of making music with their friends.

As always the Music Committee and Nae Pearson are interested in hearing your comments about this and/or any aspect of CCC's music ministry.

Music Connects Us to God

RETREAT HOUSE FUTURE: Plan for Congregational Discernment

First meeting: Wednesday, October 19, at 7 PM, and on Sunday, October 23, after the 10:30 service (take your pick: these meetings will cover the same issues but on different days). These meetings, which will be for discussion and sharing but not for decisions, are aimed at considering fundamental questions relating to our vision for the future of the Retreat House. The overall plan for an organized process for discernment by the whole congregation is described in the following paragraphs.

THE RETREAT HOUSE

The CCC Retreat House has been an important part of the life of CCC since its purchase in 1965. It is an 1850s era brick building, initially a farmhouse, in a bucolic setting on 54 acres near Yellow Spring, West Virginia. For the last forty-five years, it has been a place where CCC members and friends of all ages have "retreated" to strengthen fellowship, deepen faith, and renew spirits.

At present, the Retreat House is only semi-useable because it does not meet the West Virginia fire safety code. The basic "bones" of the house are generally still sound, and it does not exhibit any major structural problems (as we feared at one time). However, we are no longer able to use the rooms on the second floor as bedrooms, and that has seriously curtailed the

number of people that can be accommodated at any one time and the functionality of the house. Summer camp programs have continued, using work-arounds; but the number of retreats using the house has been greatly reduced. Moreover, the building fails to meet contemporary standards of accessibility.

In the past, use was extensive. Typically the house was the setting for weekend retreats during spring and fall, including Family and All-Church Retreats, Women's and Men's Retreats as well as those for various Boards, Committees, and other small groups. During the summer, it housed camps for different age groups of CCC children and youth as well as camps devoted to experiencing music. When the house was not used by CCC groups, it was made available to other faith groups and CCC families. There was seldom a weekend between March and November when the house stood empty.

Since 2006, prompted by a break-in and a subsequent citation of fire safety code violations by the West Virginia authorities, we have been considering and planning what to do. The Executive Council appointed the Retreat House Visioning Committee and then the Retreat House Task Force to develop a concept and plan for a possible renovation. The congregation authorized the task force to hire an architect, who worked with interested members to develop a preliminary plan for a renovation that would bring the house up to code, renovate the kitchen, and make other improvements and additions that would significantly improve accessibility. If we were to pursue this plan as proposed, the resources required would likely be substantial.

We have now reached a time for the congregation, as a whole, to review systematically and with open minds the question of the future of the Retreat House and to discern what God is calling us to do. We need to consider whether to renovate the Retreat House and if so how, and on the other hand if we should sell the facility and focus our efforts elsewhere.

THREE DISCUSSION MEETINGS TO HELP WITH DISCERNMENT

During the Fall, the Moderator plans to convene three meetings (in October, November, and December) to give the whole congregation the chance to have in-depth discussions about the future of the Retreat House. These meetings will be for sharing and deliberation, not for decision. In each meeting we will focus on one specified issue area; the group of meetings will address all the issues, just not all at once. To facilitate widespread participation, we will attempt to hold sessions of each meeting at two different times of the week.

Meeting 1: The Future: What is our vision for the future in relation to the Retreat House? What is God calling us to do?

- How can the Retreat House fit within our missions and activities?
 - Role in developing and sustaining the community of CCC? In Christian education? Spiritual development? Social witness activities?
- Or would our mission be better served by focusing our efforts elsewhere and selling the Retreat House?

Schedule: Wednesday, October 19, 7 PM, and Sunday, October 23, after the 10:30 service

Meeting 2: The Building: What should we do? What menu of possibilities

should be on the table?

- What do we need to do to meet code and arrest deterioration?
- What do we need to do to improve accessibility?
- What do we need to do to improve functionality?

Tentative Schedule: Wednesday, November 16, 7 PM, and Sunday, November 20, after the 10:30 service

Meeting 3: The Means: How could we make something happen?

- Do we want to consider partnering possibilities?
- What fundraising possibilities do we foresee?
- What possibilities are there to do a renovation in stages?

Tentative Schedule: Sunday, December 4, after the 10:30 service, and Wednesday, December 7.

SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING FOR DECISIONS In January or February

Following the meetings described above, we will culminate this stage of our exploration with a special congregational meeting, probably just after the turn of the year. This meeting, informed by the foregoing discussions, will be intended to make the decisions that will guide and determine our next steps in connection with the Retreat House.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE RETREAT HOUSE

A description of the draft plan prepared by the Retreat House Task Force is on the CCC website, www.cccsilverspring.org, under the "Our Facilities" tab. To view the architect's report, which includes plans and photos of the existing structure, click on "Lisa Dell'Olio's Report." Additional information, including a set of "Frequently Asked Questions," will be available shortly.

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