



FIRST
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

A NEW Focus

April, 2022 | Issue 7

CLIMATE CHANGE

by Cindy Remington

We live in a most remarkable part of Virginia. Blue-hued mountains line our western view, and rolling hills and plains greet us from the east. Cascading streams and rivers offer relaxing opportunities for fishing, boating, and swimming. What a great place to live!

And yet... our beautiful state suffers from warming temperatures and pollution, and our nonchalance about how human behavior affects our environment is exacting a price. This land belongs to Creator God, who tasks people of faith to care for creation.

A round table discussion presented by Albemarle County and the City of Charlottesville disclosed the three primary threats to our local climate:

1) Significant increase in the frequency, duration, and intensity of extreme heat.

By 2050, Charlottesville may experience more than twice as many extreme heat events (when the daily maximum temperature reaches dangerous levels) annually as there were in 2020. Heat waves will be hotter and last longer.

2) Changing seasonal patterns.

Increasing average low temperatures and cooling degree days, along with fewer frost and extreme cold

days mean that some plants are dying out. Winters may become more mild overall, and the growing season may shift or become more unpredictable. This can also mean that pests and insects will be a problem earlier than normal.

3) Increasingly intense storms and flooding in Charlottesville.

There may be a moderate increase in occurrences of heavy (>2 inches) and extreme (> 95th percentile) precipitation.

Increasing heat patterns affect our health as well. Our bodies need to cool at night but with nighttime temperatures also increasing, this won't happen. Vulnerable populations suffer when

heat indices rise: agricultural workers, the elderly and very young, and the homeless.

Maybe 2050 seems so far in the future that caring for creation doesn't feel urgent. But it is urgent and it is scriptural: we are already in crisis. There are things we can do to mitigate it and make sure that our children and grandchildren are able to enjoy the beauty around us.

Watch this space for more information on how we can all work to care for creation.

**THIS LAND BELONGS
TO CREATOR GOD,
WHO TASKS PEOPLE
OF FAITH TO CARE
FOR CREATION.**



LENTEN OPPORTUNITIES

PALM SUNDAY SERVICE

April 10, 10am

Worship begins in the Sanctuary ending in the park with our palms!

MAUNDY THURSDAY

April 14, 7pm

A Living Picture of "The Last Supper" by Ernest Emurian

It is no accident that Jesus called everyday fishermen, a tax collector, two 'sons of thunder' (who must have been a bit manic to receive such a title,) and a zealot to be a part of his band of disciples. He also welcomed as his followers a woman who had been possessed by demon, a Pharisee,

Samaritans, lepers, and the poor. There was always room at his table for one more. This year during lent, we will relive that moment in Jesus' ministry when he gathered his disciples together for one last meal before he was betrayed, arrested, and crucified. This drama will come alive in our church's Sanctuary on Maundy Thursday, April 14 at 7:00pm. Based on Leonardo da Vinci's iconic painting of this critical event in the life of Jesus, the drama will present the twelve disciples around a table, each one in turn attempting to answer the question, "Is it I?" in response to Jesus' telling them that one among them will betray him. The event will be followed by Holy Communion. All are welcome!

TENEBRAE/GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE

April 15, 7pm

Come relive the final hours of Jesus' life, from the upper room to Golgotha, as the story of his sacrifice is told in music and Scripture. This reflective service will be held in the Sanctuary and offers an opportunity for those who participate to prayerfully consider the depth of God's love for the world.

EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE

April 17, 6:15 – 6:30 am

Let's join together in the park to offer a special welcome to the rising Son! Come experience the joy of the Resurrection all over again!

EASTER SERVICE

April 17, 10am

What better way to celebrate God's gift of life than to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ with your friends and family at FUMC! This triumphant time of worship will take place in the Sanctuary.



FLOWERS FOR EASTER

Would you like to honor or remember a special someone? Consider purchasing a spring tulip or hyacinth for the altar on Easter morning. Please just notate - Name - In Memory of - In Honor of - and acknowledgement of giver with message if desired. Contact carolynmcgee@cvillefirstumc.org or fill out a form and place in the offering basket.

Cost is \$15 per pot.

Deadline for ordering is April 8th.

You may pick them up for planting after the Easter Service.



BREAD AND BLESSINGS

Every Monday we are blessed to offer on average about 80 folks from our downtown community a hearty lunch. With the onset of spring weather we dined outside!



BIBLES FOR CHILDREN

On April 24 in the 10am worship service our elementary aged children will receive a Bible from FUMC. This is a tangible way to show our young members that we are excited to partner with them on their faith journey. See you in worship that day! Come be a part of this very special occasion!

(If you know of a child third through fifth grade that has not yet received a Bible, please let us know! carolynmcgee@cvillefirstumc.org).



COMING THIS FALL TO FIRST UNITED METHODIST PRESCHOOL: TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN!

Welcome to Erica Reitsma who will be joining the (FUMP) First United Methodist Preschool staff next fall as the Transitional Kindergarten

teacher! She is a Charlottesville native and actually went to FUMP herself when Marilyn Comfort was running the program! Erica and her husband, Jason, have four children. Her daughter will be joining our FUMP community this fall as a member of our 4-year-old classroom. Erica has a Bachelor's of Music Education from Indiana University and a Master's of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Virginia. Over the years, she has taught a variety of subjects, including Choir, Band, English, and Reading, as well as tutoring and teaching horseback riding and dance. She is so excited to be joining our FUMP program to get our new Transitional Kindergarten program off to a fantastic start!



FUMP OPPORTUNITY



Kristen Breslin, Director of FUMP, is looking for an energetic, creative person interested in applying as a preschool teacher aide for the 2022-23 academic year. For more info contact kristenbreslin@cvillefirstumc.org.

(yes...we teach laundry skills at FUMP!)



YOUTH GROUP UPDATE

by Dave Breslin



The FUMC youth group (grades 6-12) is looking forward to a busy and exciting spring! Youth group meets three Sundays per month in the youth room at 10:00. The group is presently studying the book of John.

Our 2022 Confirmation Class is up and running! Eight youth have been matched with mentors from the church and together, they are working through William Willimon's Making Disciples program, which includes a 12 week spiritual development study and three field trips. The 2022 class will be confirmed at Confirmation Sunday, which is scheduled for June 5th. Field trips include the National Cathedral in our Nation's Capitol, Hill and Wood Funeral Home, and Congregation Beth Israel.



White elephant party shenanigans!

Spring youth group activities will include a return to our monthly Pen Park Fellowship nights starting on April 24th as well as our monthly youth group Tailgate gatherings in the church parking

lot (start date TBD). Dave and the youth pastor at Aldersgate United Methodist Church on Rio Road have been working together all winter to plan combined activities between both youth groups. Plans for the spring include a scavenger hunt throughout Charlottesville, a youth night of praise and worship in May, and a trip to Kings Dominion. Our youth group will wrap up the year with a possible trip to Watermarks Camp in May and our annual end-of-the-year pool party in mid-June.

As our program grows, we are seeking adults that would like to help with youth group! Contact Dave (davebreslin@cvillefirstumc.org) for more information.



**NOT RECEIVING THE WEDNESDAY BLAST EMAIL?
CHECK YOUR SPAM, PROMOTIONS, OR TRASH!**



**IF YOU PREFER TO NOT RECEIVE
THE NEW FOCUS NEWSLETTER,
PLEASE CONTACT
CAROLYNMCGEE@CVILLEFIRSTUMC.ORG
TO CANCEL YOUR SUBSCRIPTION**

ONE THING MINISTRY

Thank you to all for your donations for the UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) personal hygiene kits. We will not be sending them off until June, so donations will be open until June 1.

For April, our ONE THING MINISTRY will benefit The Ronald McDonald House. In addition to the metal soda tabs we have been collecting, they are in need of sectioned/portioned/clamshell (lid attached) food containers in which to serve meals. Soup containers with lids are also needed. These can be ordered on Amazon or purchased easily at Costco or Sam's. They do not serve family/buffet style anymore because of COVID and go through these items very quickly. As an alternate donation, they asked for small individual liquid hand soaps. For more info carolynmcgee@cvillefirstumc.org.



CHARLOTTESVILLE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

by Vicky Sykes

By mid-December 2021 there were 331 refugees living in hotels in Charlottesville, VA. This approximates 70 families, many of them multi-generational. Most are from Afghanistan, coming from Northern Virginia as a result of the August airlift from Kabul. Their connection to our area is the International Relief Committee (IRC) that is very active in helping resettle refugees in our community. In addition, the IRC continues to receive their flow of refugees that come to the area under more normal circumstances.

First United Methodist Church is generously sponsoring two refugee families – one Iranian and one Afghan. A team of church members supports each family for a minimum of six months as they become acclimated to life in the United States. The HOME program – Housing, Outreach, Mentoring, and Education - provides a structure for the volunteers, with strong support from the IRC.

After training from the IRC, our teams have helped secure and furnish an apartment for each family. After they move in, the family has a need for assistance in many areas: grocery shopping, obtaining Social Security cards, learning bus routes, and, of course, learning English! The goal of resettlement is self-sufficiency and our teams are helping them reach that goal!

We are grateful for the financial support of the church and also the generous donations that members have provided. The families are very thankful for all that is being done to help them begin their new lives! Stay tuned for more information and ways to help!



GREETING VISITORS (WE ARE ALL PART OF THE WELCOME MINISTRY!)



We would love to think that FUMC is a warm and welcoming place for all to worship, but creating a comfortable, welcoming environment takes a bit of planning and preparation, a touch of creativity, and a commitment to maintaining a peaceful, inviting atmosphere. Here are just a few ways we can all hone our skills at being ambassadors of hospitality!

Next time you come to worship take a moment and look at the church through the eyes of a newcomer. Was parking available? Are you able to walk a block or two to get to the building, leaving open the parking lot for visitors? Have you ever arrived at the same time as someone you do not recognize? Consider asking if you could walk in with them, showing them where the sanctuary is or maybe even the restrooms! We all know what it feels like to look like an outsider, it's not a comfortable feeling and we don't want this to deter visitors from returning to a service or small group study the following week. Be there for our guests. Welcome our visitors with a smile, a handshake, and a sincere, "Good morning, how are you? Let me show you where to go!" Wear your nametag and show them where to make a temporary nametag. Express appreciation for them being in attendance! Before or after the service offer them our FUMC coffee mug as a gift! (the mugs can be found near the front entrance to the church)

In your conversation with your "new" friend, mention some additional ways to become involved outside of the worship service. We want our new attendees to stay involved with our community, so in the near future we will be putting together a brochure that details small group studies, Sunday Schools, outreach projects, future activities, and events. In short, it will be an open invitation to GET INVOLVED!

Creating a warm, friendly environment that welcomes our visitors and encourages their return requires us to step out of our comfort zone occasionally, but this effort will have a lasting, positive impact on our church community.



WORSHIP ARTS GALLERY

DONNA BRIDGES HARRIS - RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

ARTIST IN OILS

Upon moving to Henrico County in 2020, Donna returned to her love of painting after serving the last thirty-three years as a private school administrator in Charlottesville, Virginia. Donna comes from a family of artist and took lessons from her mother, Helen Bridges, a well-known artist and instructor from Northern Virginia and Washington, Virginia.



Although she has experienced different mediums, Donna's passion is painting with oils because of the flexibility and depth of colors they offer. Her early artwork was focused on painting florals

with a pallet knife. However, having lived in Charlottesville amid the rolling Virginia countryside, Donna was inspired by the natural beauty of the serene landscapes. She captures with brush and canvas, the early morning and evening skies and the majestic Virginia mountains of all seasons. She also loves painting low-land scenery of other southeast regions of our beautiful country.



WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE MUSIC MINISTRY?

- ◊ We were excited to lift our praises with CHoosE (Christian Hoos Exalt) a talented a capella choir from UVA that joined our worship this past February
- ◊ The FUMC Choir meets every Tuesday at 6:15pm in the Sanctuary and offers musical praises in worship
- ◊ Church members Linde Tassel, Beryl Wilkes, and Karen Young have all shared their vocal talents in the past few weeks
- ◊ Members of the Indie Band "Midnite Taxi" joined us during Lent
- ◊ The Handbell Choir rehearses on Sundays at 11:15am and will ring out their praises several times during Lent and beyond
- ◊ Bagpiping - yes, you read that right - coming in April!

Do you have a special musical talent (instrumental, vocal) or unique way to add to our worship? Reach out to kevinwhite@cvillefirstumc.org.



EGG DECORATING TO BENEFIT UKRAINIAN RELIEF PROJECTS

FUMC women gathered in the Fellowship Hall to create beautiful eggs as a way to raise \$300+ for Ukrainian relief. Thank you to Valerie Goodman for guiding us through this project!



NEW MEMBER INTRODUCTION



Please welcome Mary Hoggard who recently joined FUMC on transfer of membership from Zia UMC in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Mary is a native Virginian come home to roost". Born and raised in Portsmouth, she comes from a large family that vacationed camping in southern national and state parks and spending time on family property near Syria, Virginia in the Shenandoah.



With a Bachelor of Science degree from Ferrum College in southwest Virginia, Mary had a 15 year career in the NC Forest Service. She worked on the county level with private forest landowners, is close friends with Smokey Bear, and always aspired to visit his "home" in southeast New Mexico. So she did.

Mary is self-employed as a Domestic Technician and Pet Sitter. As a two-time cancer survivor, Mary values her faith, free time, and relationships with family and friends. She likes flying her kite; exploring the outdoors; live theatre and music; visiting the family property in the Virginia mountains; snacks and a great dessert with a nice cup of coffee.

Relocating to Charlottesville in 2018 for act three, Mary chose First UMC for its location downtown; friendly, inviting people; dynamic worship and commitment to being a vibrant, ministry-based downtown church.



NOTES FROM THE PASTOR

DON'T FEED THE FUNK: THERE'S A NEW DAY COMING

How do we look to the future with hope? That's a question that the Lent and Easter season helps us to answer each year. Our concerns may be different this year than last (Ukrainian war, inflation, don't give me another Greek letter to learn!) but the itch really never goes away. We want to hear what God has to say to a tired old world that is dying for good news.

Recently I was having a conversation with another pastor and I felt a tweak as he talked about what his church was up to and how discouraged he was that people hadn't 'come back' in the way he had hoped. What I felt was a tweak of recognition. The language was so familiar because I had heard it before...had spoken the words myself.

It was pre-pandemic talk—the way we used to lament the church's institutional decline and cultural presence even before we had excuses like masks and social distancing. We've been wondering about who hasn't come back for decades now. And Lord knows we've tried enough prepackaged programs to help reverse the trend.

Well, I have decided that, like all those missing people, I am not going back there either. I don't have energy for the herculean programming or the interest in being culturally respectable.

What I do have energy for is a church that recognizes that this can be a new day. That the way we measure church life can be different. That the place we 'do' church doesn't have to be confined to one building.

Our current emphasis on "Loving the whole city & loving the city whole, starting right here," is a blessing if we allow it to show us where our real mission field is and what the form of our work should be.

I am celebrating FUMC's mission work that is helping us get refugees and low-income people into homes. I am inspired by the conversations that are taking place in and around Market St. Park as we meet new community partners and develop relationships in this vibrant, diverse place we call home. I am energized by the worship life of our church that brings together such incredible gifts in music and more. I'm thankful for the confirmation process that is bringing together youth and adult mentors. And I'm learning, along with the Creation Justice team, how to advocate for creation care.

How do we look to the future with hope? By looking back—not to our former laments, but to the story of life overcoming death that is at the heart of our faith. And by looking ahead to where God is leading us. God will bring the increase. IS bringing the increase.

I look forward to seeing you around the church and around town sometime real soon.

Stand firm,

Alex



MEMBER DEVOTIONAL

DO APPEARANCES MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

by Tom Ashley

Last Tuesday, after heading into town early, I had a few hours on my hands before picking the grandkids up from school. I walked the Downtown Mall for an hour or so and then found myself in the park in front of the church. There were two benches occupied by men sleeping, but there was a third bench vacant, so I sat. As it turned out, it was a good location because as people cut through the park to get to their cars or other destinations, they had to pass my bench. People that know me, know that I seldom would let a person pass by without some sort of greeting and this occasion was no different. The difference was the responses I got. I either got no response whatsoever and if I did, it was a look of distrust or disdain. It didn't take long before I realized I was being "lumped" into a certain category, one that we are confronted with quite often. I was dressed casually in jeans and short sleeve jersey, similar to my sleeping neighbors next to me and it soon became obvious as to how that might happen. I'm sure the recipients of my greeting were waiting for me to follow up with a request for some form of handout. What became obvious to me was what the homeless must face from day to day. They not only have very little, but also receive very little, and I'm not talking about money or material things, but the simple courtesy of respect from people around them. I'm not sure how this brief experience will change me, but it certainly caused me to reflect and think about the homeless.

