

REFLECTIONS

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MAGAZINE

*Becoming living proof of God's love,
one person at a time.*



Christ Church
United Methodist





PASTOR'S MESSAGE

Dr. George Strunk, Senior Pastor

A group of kids was asked, "What is love?" Here is what they said:

- When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore, so my grandfather does it for her all the time even when his hands got arthritis. That is love.
- When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You know that your name is safe in their mouth.
- Love is when somebody hurts you and you get so mad, but you don't yell at them because you know it would only make matters worse.

In this issue of *Reflections*, we look at the question, "What is love?" Stories include those who are on opposing sides of church theology and politics, yet are still in relationship with each other; one of our women's groups serving ex-prostitutes; and a story about the problem of racism, which we plan to address in our winter *Loving Through Our Differences* Series (see page 19). In November, we cast a vision about what it means for us to love in 2017. That vision invited each of us to:

Follow Jesus - The invitation to follow Jesus is really not new to anyone, but we've been trying to produce Jesus's results without following Jesus's methods. Jesus's method was to gather a small group of friends around him and live life together. If we were following Jesus's methods then each of us would be in a small group where we asked others to help us make our walk match our talk. That kind of following Jesus changes everything.

Plant New Faith Communities - There is a whole movement of the spirit going on right now called "Fresh Expressions." Although it sounds like the name of a grocery store, it is not. These new expressions are a form of church for our changing culture established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church. They usually don't start with a worship service but rather they come into being through principles of listening, serving, a commitment to mission, and a desire to make disciples of Jesus. They are typically related to an existing church, but they are smaller and more intimate communities and happen in places other than on the campus of the mother church. They target groups of people who share something in common and out of those shared interests, experiences or relationships comes the opportunity to explore together how faith and life intersect.

Bless Children - We are a city divided geographically, socially, economically and racially and we can begin to heal those divides by meeting the basic needs of children. We can attack the problem of poverty as a faith community by meeting the needs for food, shelter, education, hope and love for all of Louisville's children. In so doing, God will raise up an entire new generation with hope and love. Imagine if we gave our time and talents in this gifted congregation to bless the children in our city and helped give them a future with hope.

What's Next? Support the Vision with your time and talents. We are already doing so many wonderful things, but I am excited to see the impact we will have by bringing a laser focus to these three areas. There will be an opportunity on Sunday, January 8 to commit to the Vision through existing and new ministries. Please continue your prayer for our work together as we pursue **becoming living proof of God's love, one person at a time** by healing divides in our community. Pray about how you see yourself supporting the Vision with your time, talent, energy and passion, and whether you are being called into leadership.

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BRIEFLY STATED

The church offices and building will close 6 pm on December 23; open at noon and close after the last service on December 24; open from 9 am to noon on December 25; and is closed all day December 26-27 in observance of Christmas.

The church offices and building will close at 6 pm on December 30; close at 2 pm on December 31; close at 2 pm on January 1; and is closed all day January 2 and 16.

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REFLECTIONS Magazine

Thank you to all of our contributors. Have you seen a group or individual *becoming living proof of God's love*? Have a story idea for *Reflections*? Contact communications@ccum.net.

On the cover: Wade Watkins and Brandon Aten, Christ Church members.



LEARNING TO LOVE

By Patty Groot, Director of Servant Ministries

I am a racist.

There I said it...I don't want to be, but I am.

I was raised in a small, sleepy little town in southern Indiana. We all seemed to be the same. Everybody worked, everybody went to church and everybody was white. I saw my first person of color when I was in middle school as we came into Louisville for an appointment with a doctor. I remember being amazed at seeing people different from me and for the first time wondering what they were like. What did they do? Where were they from? I wasn't raised in a racist home. In fact, we never talked about race. In the small town where I was grew up, there were no people of color to be found and no one to compare myself to. So how did I become racist?

I think the first time I could truly be considered a racist was when I was a freshman in high school. For the first time, I was in classes with people of color. I remember Anne, a young lady who was the hero of our girls' basketball team. I remember watching her as she played. She was fast, she was muscular and she had skills far above anyone else on the team. Her body was different from mine. The muscle definition in her arms and legs was like nothing I'd ever seen before. And then in my sophomore year, Anne was in my gym class. Anne was good at everything! I remember thinking, "She's good at sports because she's black." My opinion was confirmed as I grew older and began to watch college basketball and football. I remember specifically going to see the Harlem Globetrotters. I remember them playing a white college team in Louisville Gardens and shaming them with their skill, theatrics and teamwork.

As I got a little older, I got into the concert scene. I remember seeing John Mellencamp in 1983. He had this backup singer, Crystal Taliefero, who was absolutely amazing. I watched as she belted out songs on stage beside him. I began to notice other black musical talent and it

seemed to me that the black ladies could sing like no other. Again, I thought that was a talent that most black women had.

As I began college, I noticed that the smartest people in my classes seemed to be from India. As I grew a little older, I noticed that the list of doctors from which my insurance company endorsed had Indian names. I began to believe that people from India were smarter than most of their white colleagues. Somehow God had wired India's people to be smarter than me!

Now don't get me wrong. I wasn't a babe in the woods...well maybe I was. I did learn about slavery in high school. We studied about Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. I had heard about the issues when Louisville began their bussing program. I grew up singing that song, "Red and yellow black and white, they are precious in His sight. Jesus loves the little children of the world." But quite honestly, it didn't affect me, so I didn't really care about any of it.

It wasn't until I began working at Christ Church that I had real friendships and interactions with people of different skin color. I began having real conversations and forming real friendships with people, whom I still thought, were different from me.

I remember visiting the "west end" of Louisville for the very first time. I remember being the only white person there. I remember being uncomfortable. It confounded me that people lived that way. What was keeping them from getting an education? Why didn't they pull themselves out of this way of living? If I can support myself, so can anyone else. Were they just lazy? Were they taking advantage of the taxes I paid!?

Wow...as I look back now, I'm embarrassed.

I didn't know what I didn't know.

It wasn't until quite recently that I've been able to pop the bubble I've been living in. As I said, I didn't care before because it didn't affect me. But you see, that's the problem... It *does* affect me. It affects all of us. My opinions of people with skin color different from mine came about because of happenstance and formed through my desire to be uninvolved. Once I began to educate myself and learn about what God wants me to see and do, I began to understand my part in all this.

I still have a lot to learn and unlearn. I need to have deep and honest conversations with people who I see as different from myself. I need to learn more about our country's systems and history of racism. I need to study what the Bible says about what makes people different and the same.

The more I'm reflecting, the more I see it all comes down to love. How can I truly see people the way God sees people? He loves us all the equally, yet so uniquely personally because we are all so beautifully different. Love is something deeper than I can even comprehend, but I want to learn. I want Him to teach me as he brings new ideas and people into my life. I want to love like He loves us.

Our church will be studying the issue of racism this February and I hope you will join me (and help me) in undoing my racist points of view. I want to see our church grow in authentic love for our differences. I want to see a crowd of different colored faces, different bodies, and different backgrounds the same way that God sees them... in complete and perfect Love.

 Read more from Patty Groot at christchurchserves.wordpress.com

For details on our February series, *Loving Through Our Differences: Race*, see page 19.



KRISTY LOVE THE HOUSE ON DATE STREET

Pictured above: Lydia Service Group and Angela Renfro

A bridge is being built in Louisville and it's not the one you're thinking of. It's taking place in the California neighborhood on the west end of Louisville. Construction began on a sunny March afternoon when Melanie Anderson, Lou Watkins and several other members of the Lydia Service Group, knocked on the unnumbered door of a home on Date Street and were greeted by a smile and excited eyes.

Inside the home were about 10 women waiting to celebrate St. Patrick's Day. The Lydia Group brought a cake and some cards with a plan to simply sit down and converse. It was simple enough. Nothing too extravagant going on. But as the women began to let their guards down and conversations took place, a bridge was being built. As Melanie and the other ladies began to wrap-up their afternoon on Date Street, they handed out handmade cards to each woman. As the women prepared to leave, they turned to say their good-byes to the women they had served. They looked around to see that some of the women had tears welling up in their eyes. The women were so touched by such small acts of kindness; small acts of kindness they had really never received before.

That day began a relationship between Lydia Service Group, a small group of women at Christ Church, and Kristy Love, a home for women transitioning and recovering from human trafficking.

Angela Renfro is the founder and president of Kristy Love and when Melanie first read about her foundation in the *Courier Journal*, she immediately called other members of the Lydia Service Group, which she co-leads with Lou Watkins. She felt the group could serve the women of Kristy Love in some way. "I thought it was time for Lydia to find a new place to serve and spread God's love. Why not look into this opportunity?" said Melanie.

They began to speak with Angela on the phone and started to get some

ideas in mind of how they could serve and love the women of Date Street. They were especially moved by the humble beginnings of the foundation, four women starting out in a home with a hole in the ceiling and buckets to catch the water. They were also moved by Angela's story, which is a glimpse into the life that so many of the women living in the home are trying to escape.

Angela is bravely open and honest about her story and how God's love has changed her.

"I believed as a very little child that I was going to be protected and loved. But that wasn't always the case for me. My dreams and innocence were snatched from me. I never got the chance to play with baby dolls. I was only three-years-old when I was placed on a high bed where my feet couldn't touch the floor. Tears began to roll down my face. The man said, 'Shhh! Don't say a word.' I can still feel the breeze of my dress as it was pulled up and I was pushed back onto the bed. He put a pillow over my face. I screamed but no one heard me. I was gasping for air. I believe my soul was yelling, 'God!' When the pillow was removed from my face, I felt empty and couldn't walk. He had to help me down the steps. He gave me a sucker and kissed the top of my head and told me never to tell. And I never did.

"I thought he was supposed to love and protect me, so it seemed that the only logical way someone could love and protect me was if they were on top of me. This is when I began being passed around for years of rape. I was forced into prostitution at age nine. I was introduced to drugs to numb the pain of being with at least 30 men a night, 365 days a year for the next 20 years.

"At age 12, I became pregnant and lost the baby but didn't tell anyone. My pimp (human trafficker) gave

me the name, 'Kristy Love.' I would work the streets and he would supply me with drugs to feed the addiction that plagued me. He had a way of charming me then beating me until he knocked all my teeth out, kicked me or choked me. He would tie me up and do whatever else he felt like doing. One particular day he decided to take me to a factory where I was sexually assaulted by multiple men as I laid on a cold table. I was 13 years old. I told myself and the other girls that day that if I ever made it out I wanted to help somebody.

"I had five children by the age of 21. Five of them were 10 months apart, my five girls. Then came my one son, my sweet son. I brought him into this world with one arm and one leg shackled to a bed inside a prison. I had been incarcerated for prostitution. It was because of the prostitution and human trafficking that my son was born legally blind; I had an STD and didn't have proper medical care."

If Angela's story seems extreme, you can be assured that it is not. Unfortunately, there are many stories just like this, right here in Louisville. Stories of little girls' dreams being taken away and forced into a life they never wanted. But Angela's story doesn't end there. God had amazing plans for her life.

It was in jail that Angela found Christ. She was visited by a "church lady" who told her about God's love. "That moment changed my life," said Angela. "I don't want society to remember me as a ho or prostitute."

She left prison and began the Kristy Love foundation in 2011. Since then, the home has housed over 400 women. Kristy Love offers a real home. A home with a mission to meet women as they begin their journey and not at the end of their road. The home offers hope, faith, requires commitment, offers healing and encouragement. It is fighting modern day slavery, human trafficking, by giving women a voice they never knew they had. The story inspired the Lydia Group to want to be a part of the

journey.

They made plans to come back and serve the women again. This time they hosted a cooking class where they taught the women about cooking with vegetables and fruits and making healthy choices. "One of the women seemed a little hostile on this one occasion. But by the time we left she was smiling and participating. She could see we were there out of Christ's love. We wanted to help, not judge," said Melanie.

Recently they've also gone down to play Bingo with the ladies. "We weren't sure how it would go over, but it turned out to be a great idea. There was a prize table for them to take lotions or other small items. They really laughed. It really connected them all and connected us with them. It was a bridging moment between us. After we were through playing Bingo, we sat on the rockers together in the warm sun," said Lou Watkins.

Lydia Group wanted to share Angela's story and the story of Kristy Love with others. They invited Angela to speak to the Friendship Sunday school class at Christ Church. Angela told her story and was met with compassion and a desire to serve the women of Kristy Love. "Many people had tears in their eyes. I don't think people understand human trafficking until the face of a survivor is standing in front of them and they can hear the story," said Lou. Angela had made a wish list before the class of supplies they always need at the house: toilet paper, feminine products, food, clothes, shampoo, etc. The class was so moved they met the need by filling Angela's entire office with supplies.

Every day Angela makes it a point to drive up and down the streets looking for victims. She prays that God would be with her and admits sometimes it is very challenging. The women don't think they have enough value to leave and are often too afraid to leave their traffickers. Loving them is showing up and playing Bingo, filling their office with toiletries, or just sitting in the rockers and enjoying moments with them. That is *living proof* that they

do have value in Christ, that they are loved.

"They are special ladies and that's a special place," said Lou.

"Once you knock on the door at Kristy Love, you know you are no longer a victim. You are a survivor," said Angela. With over 400 women who've knocked on that door, there are many stories of hope coming from Kristy Love. Women who are getting clean from drugs, reuniting with their children, women finding their voice for the first time, or discovering they have a safe place to call home. When Lydia Group first knocked on the door on Date Street, they were building a bridge that others would soon want to be a part of. The house on Date Street is a bridge that can show each survivor a new life and a way to the Light of God's love.

To learn more about Kristy Love visit www.thekristylovefoundation.org

For more information on the Lydia Service Group, contact Melanie Anderson at 836-7150 or Lou Watkins at 608-4790.



We would go around and make sure all the women were involved in the class. Everyone participated and enjoyed learning more. Seeing their smiles at the end was a blessing.

Lou Watkins

When Brandon Aten and Wade Watkins were first asked to be interviewed for a *Reflections* article centered around being in relationship while holding opposing views, a very lively and humorous banter in which both men celebrated and poked fun at each other's differences went back and forth.

Wade said, "Ordinarily a righteous man of high caliber such as myself might be reluctant (justifiably) to work with such a left-wing, sandal-wearing, anti-establishment radical. However, in a supreme act of Christian charity I feel called to humble myself to do whatever I can to advance this cause."

To which Brandon replied, "I can't tell if you're describing me or Jesus."

But everything between them really does come from a place of love and usually a lot of jest. "In all honesty, what I love most about him is his sense of humor. I'm a consummate tease and have to be careful of what I say to people (Yes, it is incurable... but I am in a 12 step program!). Brandon can dish it out as well as take it. That's what I love about him," said Wade.

From only a few e-mails, you could already feel understanding shared between the two men despite their obvious differences. During a time that feels divided in the nation and within the Church, their friendship is a beautiful reminder that God's love is bigger than all of it.

Wade and Brandon first met when Wade was a volunteer youth counselor and Brandon was a young teen, both headed to a middle school event. "As I recall, he was entertaining the troops with some song he was making up on the fly and had everyone joining in on the chorus. Brandon was then and is now a delightful character... After youth group I lost track of him as he went to college and then Seminary. Years later, we were reunited through music when we were both in the Tenor Leaven vocal ensemble and Chancel Choir at Christ Church. It has been

primarily through music that we've gotten to know each other," said Wade.

"I remember singing with Wade when the youth choirs would sing with Chancel Choir. He would always welcome me into the tenor section where he would call me 'Brand-X' and I would call him 'Wadar.' His acceptance was one of the reasons I started singing as a member of the Chancel Choir, which led to an even deeper appreciation of music and pursuing a music degree," said Brandon.

Wade came back with a smile, "It has been a great joy to me to sing alongside him in Tenor Leaven." An obvious joke made its way out, as it often does in the conversations between these two, "But sadly, only one of us has any real musical talent..."

Their paths continued to cross as they served in the church as lay delegates to Kentucky Annual Conference representing Christ Church. The differences in their views came to light as they began to see that they varied sharply along social-political lines rather than theologically. Although they don't discuss politics explicitly they can each make a guess at each other's partisan leanings.

On a few issues, such as declining church membership, they seem to disagree on both the cause and the church's proper response. But after the last General Conference, they came together to discuss the schism facing the United Methodist Church without knowing where the other stood on the issue. Their differences of opinion on how the church should respond came up as they were presenting reports at Administrative Council meetings and to the Servant Leadership Team at Christ Church.

"I was not surprised to hear some of his more liberal Christian views. By 'liberal' I simply mean more liberal than mine. This is likely more attributable to our age difference than to any true disagreement in our theology or biblical world view. Most importantly, our differing views had



LOVING THROUGH THEIR DIFFERENCES

AN INTERVIEW WITH WADE WATKINS AND BRANDON ATEN, CHRIST CHURCH MEMBERS

no effect on my genuine love for and appreciation of Brandon. If anything, it may have brought us closer. What's important is that we maintain a relationship based on our mutual love of Christ and the church... and in our case, music," said Wade.

Brandon mentioned they had engaged in some pretty vibrant conversations lately, but says, "That view doesn't define him. We need to understand that we all have different skills and opinions that make us unique and beautiful in the eyes of the Creator. We should strive to see each other through that same lens. As far as working together and through differences, the fact that Wade and I are in relationship with one another and see each other at least once a week gives us the opportunity to seek the other out and discuss things in person, knowing that we can always agree to disagree."

Most of their opinions don't come into play though in their regular interactions. They get together, catch-up and love to joke around. Like Brandon said, they can agree to disagree, something he learned more about in his graduate studies when he was blessed by a friendship that challenged him.

"I was a staunch Republican and planted firmly on the right of the American political spectrum and she was questioning religion. Through many heated conversations over coffee at our campus coffee shop, we knew we were about as far apart on a wealth of issues, but Carolyn always ended the conversation with a firm hug and an, 'I love you, friend.' She would always go above and beyond in helping those in need and lifting others up. To this day, the example this young woman put forth of truly trying to understand where someone else was coming from, knowing that there were strong disagreements and still letting the other know they are loved, is the purest and most tangible example I have of someone being living proof of God's love."

God has a purpose in bringing people into our lives that are different from us.

Yet Wade admits that he wouldn't have initially imagined them being more than casual acquaintances, but he couldn't resist being drawn to Brandon's magnetic personality and the way he welcomes controversial conversations free of awkwardness.

"Brandon is hard to dislike (although heaven knows I've tried!) His lifestyle and mine are different. For instance, I always wear shoes to church, whereas for him they are optional (and on this point he always reminds me that Jesus wore sandals). Beyond lifestyle differences... there's the fact that he's a UofL fan... and to put it mildly, I am not. I love Brandon. He is simply misguided in his choice of sports allegiance." Their relationship reminds us that red and blue can be united in love. To remind us that it's not all about their friendly joking, Wade added a thoughtful quote from John Wesley.

"Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without a doubt, we may! Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences."

During this year especially, there have been lots of divisive language in the press, from our political parties, social media and from people representing churches in our conference. "Being able to see the other side and understand where they are coming from is important, as it allows us to empathize with the other. It's hard. It's really hard. Especially if the other person has views that may seem incomprehensible to ours... (like being a UK fan, right Wade?). But Jesus doesn't just tell us to love our neighbor, he tells us to love our

neighbor as ourselves. We have total understanding of our own opinions, and we should strive to understand and love our neighbors despite their differences and not give up as soon as it gets difficult," said Brandon.

"I am sometimes troubled by the term, 'open-minded,'" said Wade. I am suspicious of what is meant by that because it is used sometimes to invite us to compromise what we believe. It has a positive connotation where 'narrow-minded' has a negative connotation. But by definition, as Christians, we are narrow-minded. We believe that the Bible is the only true word of God. That's narrow! When Jesus says, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me,' that's not up for debate. Jesus does not ask us to be open-minded in the popular sense. Nor does he ask us to compromise the truths we've been given. Only God is able to make us truly open-minded. Luke 24:45 tells us that 'Jesus opened their minds so that they could understand the scriptures.'

"So let's change that term to the phrase 'open-hearted.' Jesus implores us to love. Love him. Love your neighbor. My prayer is that God will grant each of us an open-mind to understand his Word and then open our hearts to those we are sent here to love." Although this Sunday you may see one wearing sandals and one wearing shoes... on this issue, they can both agree.



*Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike?
May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one
opinion? Without a doubt, we may!
Herein all the children of God may unite,
notwithstanding these smaller differences.
John Wesley*



LOVING ALL GOD'S PEOPLE

By Rev. Melissa Head, Associate Pastor for Care Ministries

Pictured: Sensational Kids Room

What does it take for you to get to church in the morning? Many of us take for granted the fact that we can turn off the alarm and go through a fairly simple routine to get to church. But the reality for many families and people with unique needs is vastly different... listen to one church member's story.

"When my daughter was three, she still wasn't diagnosed. I had older children as well. She was non-verbal, not potty trained and couldn't feed herself. She couldn't dress herself. And she cried all the time. If she wasn't crying, she was asleep. It would usually take us a couple hours at least to get out the door to go anywhere.

"So, getting her to church (or getting anywhere for that matter), or having people over or anything was impossible because she was always crying. And if she was asleep, we couldn't have people over because it would disturb her. It was and still can be extremely isolating and exhausting.

"When you walk into some churches on Sunday morning, behavior,

dress, attitude... there are a lot of expectations from the world. Before we found a loving church home, we had to be dressed the right way and behave the right way because that was contingent on the love and acceptance we would receive. Upon arrival, I would drop my older children off at Sunday School and then take my youngest to her three year old class but she would cry the entire time. She was also having bowel and stomach issues and I was frequently called back to her class to help her, making it difficult to focus and concentrate while attending an adult Sunday school class or worship. She looked normal, so I felt like no one understood. It was such an isolating experience. So many isolating years.

"I blamed myself. I thought, 'Am I doing something wrong?' I ended up leaving that church because when I asked the church for an aid to be with her during the Sunday school and worship hour, they refused. I left that church and did not attend church at all for many, many years. I thought, 'No one will understand her. There won't be anyone at the church to help me. I don't want to go and attend with her because it

isn't a break for me. I would just rather stay at home by myself. It's easier than the unpredictability of what may happen while we're out.'"

It is stories like these that led the staff of Christ Church to re-engage the "Special Needs Committee." I put the word out in the bulletin and a group of people eagerly emerged who were very interested in helping our congregation in this area. As the group met, we realized right away that we needed to address our language first. Therefore, we changed "special" to "unique" needs in order to include all.

We immediately identified that there are a large variety of unique needs in our congregation. The long list of these needs includes things like people who cannot walk safely from the parking lot to the Sanctuary, people who need large print bulletins and hymnals, people who need access to bathrooms where they can navigate with a helper, and so on. The list of unique needs includes all ages, which reminded us that we needed to focus not in one but in all areas of ministry—children, youth and adults.

"Our son, Cole, has a rare and complex syndrome which impacts many aspects of his life. This has made it difficult for him to participate in traditional church activities. Our typical Sunday means having a lot of energy. So, a regular routine for others is just getting up and getting ready... but ours is pretty extensive.

"We go to 10:05 am worship because we need more time. We do a breathing treatment, medicines by mouth and g-tube, and then food by tube. It takes about an hour to an hour and half for us to get him ready. Plus the transitions are very hard. So we have to stay on a very particular schedule because otherwise it throws him off and he gets upset. I have lately needed to be with him during transitions. The past few weeks at church we get our schedule in advance and we go over that. He reads it all printed out and we go over it together.

"But we've found the Sensational Kids Room at Christ Church. This is a wonderful small class for kids who have unique needs and/or may benefit from a smaller class setting. The staff and volunteers were all very supportive and willing to learn how to best help Cole be successful and comfortable. This allowed my husband and I to attend worship together for the first time in many years.

"As time passed, we realized that the Sensational Kids Room was not just a room but an entire attitude of acceptance and inclusion. Slowly, we saw things that we never imagined for Cole. Cole participated and made friends in a small group, worship, Psalm Kids, and Vacation Bible School. The Sensational Kids Room was a starting point to so much more than we ever imagined.

"Even people we don't know at Christ Church may be curious, but in a positive way, they want to encourage us. All the kids are very accepting of him and us. We are so thankful for the inclusion and support we feel at Christ Church," said Shawn Herrick.

Her story is one that reminds us just how significant it is to show our love through striving to include everyone.

As we encounter people with unique needs, we simply treat them like we would anyone else—we love them.

We renamed the Special Needs Committee "ALL God's People" in order to recognize that the goal is for all people in our community to be welcomed and involved in Worship, Prepare, Serve and Bridge. When people visit, or as we are inviting them to join us at church, we must be ready to accept, include and serve everyone.

Therefore, we developed and distributed a survey. Many church goers participated in our survey this summer, and we have been using the results to guide our next steps. As we work toward providing ways to include everyone, we continue to ask our church goers to provide us with their suggestions/needs.

Betsy Gibbs, mother of Elizabeth Gibbs, said, "I want people to know that Elizabeth understands more than she can express. She senses when people are uneasy around her and treat her differently. She always appreciates a friendly hello or smile. Sometimes it is too much to process the unexpected greeting, seeing a new or slightly unfamiliar face and responding back immediately. What seems so casual for us can be a lot to process for someone with Autism.

"Elizabeth has thrived at Christ Church because everyone shows her genuine love and acceptance. Christ Church is her home and she truly enjoys every time we enter through the doors and every Sunday morning during her Sunday school class and worship where she is included and treated like everyone else. Her dietary needs are specially accommodated during Communion,

which helps her feel included. I am especially grateful for our church family. As a single mom, I am so grateful for how they love Elizabeth and therefore, love me."

Because we want to continue to learn more about unique needs and how to include all people, we invited a special speaker to come to our church. On January 8 at 10:05 am, we all have the opportunity to learn how to be more accepting, welcoming and loving. Taryn Skees, mother of four, founder of a non-profit, and a public speaker who works tirelessly to spread a message of kindness and inclusion for all persons, will lead us through an enlightening presentation. The ALL God's People Committee and Dig Deeper Team hope you will join us to hear her helpful instruction with regard to loving all church goers (see page 17).

Over the last eight months, my eyes have been opened. I didn't know what the staff was asking of me when they suggested this committee. But I do know now that I am so thankful they did. The people on this committee have been working hard to bring more accessibility and inclusion to our church. We have the love of Christ within us and that love drives us to include everyone in all aspects of the church's ministries.

*What is love?
Love is inclusive.*

CHURCH EVENTS

For a complete list of Christ Church events, visit www.ccum.net/calendar.

Christmas Concerts

A Great and Mighty Wonder

Sunday, December 11 at 5 pm

Sunday, December 18 at 9 and 11:15 am

Tuesday, December 20 at 7:30 pm

www.ccum.net/Christmas



Blue Christmas

Surprised by God's Fullness

December 18 at 5 pm, Chapel

The Blue Christmas service is designed as a gift to those who may have experienced suffering or loss over the past year and for whom Christmas may not be a joyful experience. Even in trying and painful times, God has the ability to surprise us with his fullness.

If you have lost a loved one, we invite you to bring a photo of him or her, 5x7 or smaller, to the service. Childcare is provided.



Holiday Hope Caroling Event

December 19 at 6:15 pm

We will meet in Room 005 to leave to sing at a retirement community. Will return to Christ Church at 8:30 pm for cookies, hot chocolate and cider. Registration encouraged.

www.ccum.net/children/events



Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Services

Saturday, December 24 at 3 pm

Service designed for children and families

Saturday, December 24 at 5, 8 and 10:45 pm

Childcare provided at all services for ages 2 and under, excluding 10:45 pm

Sunday, December 25 at 10 am

www.ccum.net/Christmas



CHURCH EVENTS

Church Building and Offices Holiday Schedule

Christmas

Friday, December 23 - Close at 6 pm

Saturday, December 24 - Open at noon and close after last service

Sunday, December 25 - Open 9 am to noon for one service at 10 am in Sanctuary

Monday, December 26 - Closed

Tuesday, December 27 - Closed

New Year

Friday, December 30 - Close at 6 pm

Saturday, December 31 - Close at 2 pm

Sunday, January 1 - Regular worship schedule; building closes at 2 pm

Monday, January 2 - Closed

Monday, January 16 - Closed for MLK Day

Understanding Differences and God's Call to Kindness featuring Taryn Skees

Sunday, January 8 at 10:05 am, Fellowship Hall

Taryn Skees will share how she helps communities/churches/schools learn how to demonstrate genuine kindness, empathy, compassion and inclusion to persons and families who have differences.

A follow-up discussion with Taryn will be held Sunday, January 15 at 10:05 am in the Parlor.



Sermon Series: What in the World is a Methodist?

January 22 through February 26

What does it mean to be a United Methodist? We will look at the importance of our catholic spirit, discipleship, faith, grace, mercy and perseverance.



Youth Missions Fundraiser

February 5 at 12:30 pm, Fellowship Hall

Youth Missions Fundraiser features a live cake auction, stories of youth transformation, bake sale, silent auction and more. All proceeds go toward Youth Missions. Contact Rusty Crimm to bake a cake or item for the sale by Sunday, January 22 at rusty@ccum.net.



See page 19 for details on our special winter event, *Loving Through Our Differences: Race*.

FROM THE STAFF

If you are not receiving our weekly eNews e-mail, visit www.ccum.net to sign-up.

Join us in welcoming these new staff members to our Christ Church family.



Amy Ernest, Administrative Assistant for Children's Ministries

Amy Ernest comes to Christ Church with a background of over eight years as a Facility Administrator overseeing dialysis facilities in the Kentucky/Indiana area, as well as working with mentally challenged young adults and serving in Frankfort in the Personnel Cabinet.

"My path in life has navigated me here to Christ Church. I have been welcomed with open arms and given the chance to help showcase God's love through his children." -Amy E.



Amy Roberts, Administrative Assistant for Music and Youth Ministries

Amy Roberts has grown to love Louisville after moving here in 2010 to complete her Masters degree at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Amy and her husband, Chris, love spending time exploring Louisville's excellent food scene.

"I'm so excited to be a part of the Christ Church staff family and I look forward to using my gifts to help provide support and encouragement to the music and youth departments." -Amy R.



Karen Larimore, Interim Coordinator for K-5th Grade

Karen has been a Christ Church member for almost 20 years. She has a background in education and is excited to come aboard the Christ Church staff to help grow our Children's Ministries.

"I've watched this church grow for years and it is exciting to know I'm a part of it as a staff member." -Karen



Alicia Lewis, Administrative Assistant to Care Ministries

Alicia and her family have been members of Christ Church for almost nine years. She and her husband, Riggs Lewis, are members of the Daily Walk Sunday School class and her two children are in middle school Youth Group. Alicia has served in many different capacities at Christ Church.

"I am honored to work with Melissa Head our Associate Pastor. It touches my heart every day to see our church help others. Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to serve." -Alicia

YOUR GENEROSITY Christmas Eve Offering



Each year the children of Christ Church vote on the recipient of our Christmas Eve offering. This year, our children have voted on feeding the Russell Neighborhood in Louisville by partnering with Dare to Care. Children in this neighborhood will receive food through Dare to Care's Backpack Buddies and Kid's Café.

"You need food to live. And you might want to do things in the future, but so what. If you don't have food now, then you won't have a future!" - Christ Church member, age 9

"Can we only give food to them in the summer? I want to give it to them all year! Can we do that?" - Christ Church member, age 8

LOVING THROUGH OUR DIFFERENCES Winter Series on RACE



Understanding Race: A Conversation About Faith and the Beloved Community

Three-week Church Event

Sundays February 12, 19 and 26, 6 pm

Christ Church has a vision of healing divides in our community. The issue of race continues to be a source of division in our society. Please plan to participate in this three-week congregational discussion as Rev. Alvin Herring leads us through thoughtful and courageous conversations about racism and how we might be instrumental in working to challenge it in the church and in the surrounding community.

We will create a safe place for people to talk frankly, explore racism, bias, stereotyping and prejudice and review Christ's call. We will then examine what it means to build a "beloved, anti-racist community of faith-filled believers." Each session will have time for reflection, conversation and prayer.

Watch for information on how youth and children will participate.

OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Christian Sympathy

Emily Gayhart on the death of her father, **John Behen**, who died August 31.

Lorie Hanscom on the death of her husband, **Donald Hanscom**, who died September 1.

Tim Matthews on the death of his mother, **Clara Matthews**, who died September 1.

Dottie Kennedy on the death of her husband, **Ralph**, who died September 4.

Mike Hubrich on the death of his mother, **Wanda Hubrich**, who died September 7.

Jennie Weeks on the death of her father, **Ray Batson**, who died September 3.

Sherry Baird and family on the death of her mother, **Betty Potts**, who died September 8.

Janet Carmichael on the death of her father, **Jerry L Cornelius**, who died September 9.

Suzanne Padgett on the death of her husband, **Bill Padgett**, who died September 10.

Carol Walton on the death of her mother, **Dorothy Johnson**, who died September 21.

Cynthia Yancey on the death of her husband, **Bill Yancey**, who died September 22.

Liz Curtis Higgs on the death of her brother, **Dave**, who died September 23.

Tim Conrad on the death of his brother, **Terry**, who died September 28.

Donna Edgar on death of husband, **John Edgar**, who died October 15.

Debra Rayman on the death of her mother, **Bernice Wise**, who died October 15.

David and Jeff DeBeer on the death of their brother, **Greg DeBeer**, who died October 17.

Ellen and Carolyn Johns on the death of Ellen's aunt and Carolyn's sister, **Barbara Campbell**, who died October 23.

Family and friends of **Lois Durst** who died October 30.

Hans and Kirk Fiedler on the death of their father, **Leon Fiedler**, who died October 30.

Family and friends of **Ruth Klosterman Murray** who died October 30.

Colleen Pittman on the death of her grandfather, **James Martin Mullaney**, who died November 3.

Liz Matney on the death of her father, **Hubert Lewis Matney**, who died November 3.

Laura Cook on the death of her mother, **Judith Peoples**, who died November 5.

Barbara Smoot on the death of her brother who died in November.

Pam Allen and daughters on the death of their husband and father, **David James Allen**, who died November 9.

Bobbie West on the death of her sister, **Helen**, who died November 10.

Kevin Biven on the death of his mother who died November 10.

Family and friends of **Christine Rose** who died November 12.

Family and friends of **Herbert Bradley, Jr.** who died November 15.

Carolyn Davis on the death of her sister, **Joyce Koch**, who died November 16.

Bill Higgs on the death of his father, **Harold Higgs**, who died November 19.

Carolyn Spanyer on the death of her brother, **Pat Zoll**, who died November 27.

Serving our Country

Maj. James E. Chapman, Jr., US Army (Son of Janice and Jim Chapman, brother of Jana Ladd)

Capt. Douglas Cummings, US Army Chaplain (Son of Sally and Jack Cummings)

2nd Lt. Danielle L. Cummings, US Army (Granddaughter of Sally and Jack Cummings)

William Felder, US Army Major; (Nephew of Frank and Ann Simms)

2nd Lt. Bailey Hawkins, US Army (Granddaughter of Marie and Richard Johnson)

Lt. Col. Brian Haysley, U.S. Air Force (Son of Marilyn Edington)

Lt. Zachary T. Huff, US Navy (Grandson of Allys and Bill Huff)

David Farc, Kentucky Air National Guard

Capt. Travis Johnson, US Army (Grandson of Marie and Richard Johnson)

Sgt. Jacob Longest, US Air Force (Grandson of Ruth Murray)

Airman First Class Michael Kluever, US Air Force (Son of Rev. Karen Kluever)

Stephanie Muir, US Army (Granddaughter of Ed and Bobbie Larkin)

Lt. Grant Parker Roberts, US Army (Son of Bill and Laurie Anne Roberts)

Lt. Cameron Kelley Roberts, US Army (Son of Bill and Laurie Anne Roberts)

Capt. Jordan Shontz, US Army (Grandson of Jane Shontz)

Ens. Jonathan Shontz, US Navy (Grandson of Jane Shontz)

Madeline Smith
NROTC program at Tulane University
Midshipman 3rd class

Capt. Noah J. Snyder, US Army (Grandson of Kathleen and John Snyder)

Capt. Christopher Wardlaw, US Army (Nephew of Russ Wardlaw)

Capt. Aaron Wellman, USMC (Son of Wayne and Carol Wellman)

Lt. Shelley Worth, Canadian Forces (Granddaughter of Colleen Berry)

Weddings

Mallory Fulkerson and Garrett Davis were married on October 14 in our Sanctuary by Rev. Loletuth Kalz. Mallory is the daughter of Tamara and David Fulkerson.

Sara Heyburn and Mark Morrison were married in our Sanctuary on October 22 by Rev. Loletuth Kalz. Sara is the daughter of John and Ginny Heyburn.

Julie Stevens and Josh Minnic were married in our Sanctuary on November 19 by Dr. George Strunk. Julie is the daughter of Gary and Patrice Stevens.

New Members

Adam and Leslie Small	Bill, Lisa, Audrey and Will Becker
Joshua, Tessa and JJ Sparks	Pat and Kay Lancaster
Susan and Madison Morreau	Paul Ayers
Dan, Susan, Drew and Ben Blosser	Susan Haynes
Walter and Sharon Calain	Marion Cooks

Baptisms

Nellie Ann Miles (2/23/2016), daughter of **Michelle and Nick Miles**, was baptized on September 25. Weston and Wyatt are Nellie's big brothers.

John Kirkpatrick Starks (10/9/2015), son of **Kelsey and Chris Starks**, was baptized on October 9. Riess and Avery are John's big sisters.

Jane Abigail Alexander (8/2/2016), daughter of **Katie and Craig Alexander**, was baptized on October 23. Sidney and Holt are Jane Abby's big brother and sister.

Brennan Noah Ferrell (5/8/2016), son of **Heather and Jeff Ferrell**, was baptized on November 13. His big sisters are Trinity and Kennedy. Brennan's grandmother is Patty Groot.

Mary McCauley Cox (4/26/2016), daughter of **Cary and Channing Cox**, was baptized on November 27.

For more information contact
Leigh Ray, Assistant to the Pastors
893-2201 x222 or lray@ccum.net

SENIOR ADULTS

For more information on Senior Adult Ministries visit www.ccum.net/SAM.

To reserve your spot at any of the events, call the SAM reservation line at 893-2201 x328 or visit www.ccum.net/SAM.



Coming Home to SAM

by Jeannette Nunnally, Christ Church Member

Christ Church can be intimidating! Even though I had been a member for over 40 years, there was a period of time in my spiritual life when I was alone in my faith as well as in my presence within a church community. When my children were young, I taught Sunday school, participated in activities for the youth, and attended church services regularly. There was also a bond among other young women who shared common concerns and challenges. A faith community had always been a part of life.

However, as my children grew up and left home, I found myself consumed with a career and care for aging parents. My appearance in any form at church dwindled to almost nothing. When I did manage to attend, the congregation

had grown tremendously and everyone seemed to know each other – except for me. Rarely did anyone speak to me and I avoided eye contact for fear of letting my awkwardness show. It can be very lonely in a church pew surrounded by folks who seem to not care about a stranger.

And then I retired and kept hearing a whisper from God that he was waiting for me to “come home.” Dr. Strunk presented a wonderful sermon on service and “radical hospitality” was taking hold of the congregation. I signed a commitment card to teach Sunday school thinking no one would really look at it, but they did! Jennie Weeks contacted me and helped me secure materials. A blessing was about to happen.

I taught my first lesson in the Pioneer’s class and found a welcoming group who cracked the door for me to come home. Sharon Hitch invited me to attend a SAM luncheon, which I did, along with a former neighbor, Leah Bennett. The door was opening a bit more. Next, I tagged along on one of their many outings and met others just like me. Eventually I joined the SAM Team. Now, I had people to speak to in church and they spoke back. Once again, there were those with whom I had common life experiences and spiritual encounters. As Galatians 6:10 tells us “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Because of SAM, I came home to the household of faith.

January Events

There are no SAM luncheons or outings for the month of January.

Outreach

Don’t forget the ongoing collection for the Clothing Closet at Backside Ministries. Bring items to be donated to our luncheons or drop-off in the Collection Closet in the Gathering Hall. Once a month a SAM team members will deliver the items to Backside Ministries at Churchill Downs.

February Events

Travel to China with Ed Triner Luncheon Monday, February 13

What: See beautiful photos and learn more about China.

Cost: Catered lunch is \$10, program is free.

When: 11:30 am in Fellowship Hall. Reservations by February 3.

Frazier History Museum Tuesday, February 21

What: Enjoy a tour of their Pearl Harbor Exhibit.

Cost: Outing is \$10, lunch is paid for on your own at the Bristol.

When: Bus leaves church at 9:30 am and returns by 3 pm. Reservations by February 14.

March Events

Blosser Music Program Luncheon Monday, March 13

What: Enjoy music from Dan Blosser, Director of Music Ministries, and his wife, Susan.

Cost: Catered lunch is \$10, program is free.

When: 11:30 am in Fellowship Hall. Reservations by March 6.

Filson Historical Society Tuesday, March 21

What: Enjoy a tour of the newly renovated Filson Historical Society.

Cost: Outing is \$5, lunch is paid for on your own at Buck’s.

When: Bus leaves church at 9:30 am and returns by 3 pm. Reservations by March 15.



LOVE AND CARE

by Rev. Melissa Head
Associate Pastor for Care Ministries

FINAL WORD

In the midst of Jesus predicting Peter’s denial in John 13:34-35 Jesus states, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

So often I get to see the very best in our congregation as you all care for and love one another. You are willing to pray for one another’s concerns, bring food to each other’s homes, take one another to the doctor for significant conversations, sit with one another during treatments, show up at the funeral home for support, listen as you share your burdens with one another, pick up someone who cannot drive to church, visit in nursing homes, and offer your encouragement through calls and cards. There are many caring ways you show your love.

I am so blessed to work with a group of Care Team members who make visits to our church members who are in the hospital or in rehab. As long as we know you are there, church goers will receive visits from lay members and clergy.

There is a fellow who serves in this role on Mondays. Every week he calls that morning to receive the list of who is in the hospital. Then later that afternoon he calls in to report about each person he visited. He has been serving in this role for 22 years. He told me that every prayer he offers with a person in the hospital feels like God’s love working through him and he hopes the person he visits may see God’s love through their prayer together. Even when he goes and sees some hard situations, he knows he is offering God’s love to the person in that hospital bed, by offering his smile, listening ear, and prayer.

There is a couple here who make visits to our homebound church members. They go to facilities and homes and visit with people who are frail, lonely, and sometimes don’t remember too much. As they go, I tell them to do this sacred work with boldness knowing that God goes with them.

One church member, who is 93 years old, told me that she cannot believe how much her church loves her. All the visits she receives help her to know she is still remembered and loved.

On the first Sunday of each month, there are people who go out to offer communion to those who are in facilities or homes and cannot get to church. Often when they are serving the elements, there is a friend, caregiver, hairdresser, or grandchild there. Whoever is in the room is invited to receive along with the person they are there to serve. What a holy experience to offer to others the expression of God’s love to us through this sacred meal!

When I think of what we as a congregation have received from God and what we can give with the strength of Christ working in us, I always remember “Love never fails.” 1 Corinthians 13:8a.

Rev. Melissa Head
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