Everything changes…

Grace and Peace to North Raleigh UMC Family & Friends,

Back in the 1990’s I discovered Country Music. The storytelling, simple chords, and southern twang somehow spoke to my soul. I guess going through the “mid-life crisis” helped me to connect with pain that is often associated with good storytelling (that is the heart of country music, is it not?)

So when Tracy Lawrence released Time Marches On in 1996, these words were embedded in my mind: “The South moves north, the North moves south. A star is born, a star burns out. The only thing that stays the same is everything changes, everything changes.”

Everything Changes! No matter how hard we fight to keep things the same, to stay in control, or have things work out in a certain way—everything still changes!

This issue of the Compass looks at change from several different perspectives. New ministries start and existing ministries run their course. Our course for our youth and ourselves is that we change, we mature, we experience transformation and new life.

Our first article, “Commission on A Way Forward,” focuses on how the United Methodist Bishops are guiding the denomination given the differing opinions on the ordination and marriage of LGBTQ persons. On page 7, Melissa Auten celebrates the conclusion of a successful Micro Loan ministry in Kenya. She then discusses the Spirituality of Change as a part of “The Contemplative Corner.” Our youth discovered the value of being named by God during their Big Idea weekend, “NameChanger” in Jason Darden’s article “Name Changer: Big Idea 2018.”

We are being invited to live into changes in how our mission money is determined and how we now have funds to initiate new ministries with Sue Haney and Ashley Will’s article “Generosity Beyond Ourselves.” Cassidy Plunkett celebrates the change in location of the Nursery in her article “Change of (S)Pace” on page 20, and we are given an intimate look at how change occurred for Patricia Emerick as she moved “From Volunteer to Vested” in her interview with Lawrence Stewart.

Three significant changes to our staff are reported by our Staff-Parish Relations Committee chairperson, Alan Morgan in “New Faces,” and finally, you are invited to spend the Easter Season reading the Gospel of John and Adam Hamilton’s book, John: The Gospel of Light and Life, because we build our lives on the solid foundation of the resurrected Jesus Christ.

Blessings,

Senior Pastor

ENCOURAGING PEOPLE ON THEIR JOURNEY TO DISCOVER EXTRAORDINARY LIFE IN CHRIST

COMPASS is in the magazine of North Raleigh United Methodist Church.

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ON THE COVER: Back in 2017, NRUMC needed a change! We found a way to introduce Fellowship dinners back into the life of the church. They’ve proven to be a great way for us to fellowship together and with the mission component, contribute to the call to “love thy neighbor.” During February’s Shrove Tuesday “First Wednesday” Fellowship Dinner, families put together Lenten boxes for distribution use during the season leading up to Easter. Photo by Lawrence Stewart

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NORTH RALEIGH FAMILY,

As you may or may not be aware, there is a significant discussion going on in United Methodism concerning human sexuality, particularly around our denomination’s stance on same-sex marriage and the ordination of LGBTQ clergy.

Below you will find more detailed information about “A Way Forward,” a task force established by the Council of Bishops during the 2016 General Conference. “A Way Forward”’s purpose is to provide leadership and guidance as our denomination continues to discern God’s future for us.

“A Way Forward” is presenting options for our future that will be voted upon at a special session of General Conference in 2019.

We at North Raleigh had our District Superintendent, Reverend Gray Southern, lead us in a discussion about the different options for our denomination on Thursday, April 19.

More information about “A Way Forward” can be found at the following link: umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward.

My prayer is that we will enter this discussion with hearts open to the Holy Spirit, Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience as we discern God’s next best step for the United Methodist Church.

It is my prayer and hope that as a denomination we may find ways to stay united in spite of the divisiveness of these issues. I invite you to learn more about the “Uniting Methodists” at: unitingmethodists.com to see one pathway forward to remain unified while respecting the views of those with whom we disagree.

We also encourage you to read reflections written by various United Methodist bishops in “Finding Our Way: Love and Law in The United Methodist Church” as a part of our summer reading program.

Let us commit ourselves to prayer and support for one another as we move forward into God’s preferred future.

Grace and Peace,

[signature]
5. WHO DECIDES?
After receiving the final report of the Commission on a Way Forward, the Council of Bishops will present a report to a special session of General Conference to be held in St. Louis, Missouri, February 23-26, 2019. This worldwide gathering of United Methodists will only act on the bishops’ report around our deep divide over homosexuality. Most of the delegates for the 2019 General Conference will be those who attended the 2018 General Conference, though The Book of Discipline allows annual conferences to elect new delegates if they so choose. As with every General Conference the number of clergy and lay (non-clergy) delegates will be equal. Bishops preside, but do not vote. More about General Conferences here. Our next regular General Conference will be held May 5-15, 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Joe Iovino works for UMC.org at United Methodist Communications. To keep up with the progress, be sure to visit umc.org/wayforward.
In the summer of 2011, a group of our youth and several adult leaders from NRUMC traveled to Uganda for a 10 day mission trip. It would be a time of service, of building relationships, and an experience of encountering poverty on a scale that many in the group had never seen before. Part of what made the trip unique was the opportunity to be encamped with other youth and young adults from a church in nearby Kenya along with a local congregation in Uganda. We lived together, ate together, slept together in tents, and worked side by side during our visit with these new friends. We also talked for many hours into the night around a campfire and heard each other’s stories. Some of us heard stories that would stay with us long after we headed back home.

One such story for me, along with a chance encounter along a dirt road, would result in a growing determination to be a part of the program. We were becoming a community, loan applicants from the Zion group would report that their fellow church members were upset at being excluded from the loan program because they did not meet the eligibility criteria. So many so that the Kenyan government was now brokering partnership arrangements between banks and local communities to offer secure, bank-backed small loans to groups who would register together as an entity.

Zion Church could register as such an entity, and once they had reached a contribution threshold of $10,000 as a community, loan applicants from the Zion group would qualify for both supervision and training with each loan applicant. The crux of the issue was that the Kenyan government was not always able to locate the ideal group for an application. Application for a loan to the Zion group was a way to help widows and orphans specifically, some congregants were upset at being excluded from the loan program because they did not meet the eligibility criteria. Fortunately, a solution to this issue would soon present itself.

In October of 2015, Walter approached me with an idea of how to expanded our small joint venture. Micro lending by this time had become quite popular in Kenya. So much so that the Kenyan government was now brokering partnership arrangements between banks and local communities to offer secure, bank-backed small loans to groups who would register together as an entity.

From high school, Pastor Walter Odayo served as an account manager and credit controller for fifteen years before pursuing theological studies. He is currently serving as a founding pastor, conference convener, and peace builder (conflict and reconciliation trainer). He is married to Rose Auma, with whom he has two sons and two daughters. He also has adopted his deceased brothers’ six children.

In 2014, for the first time, I submitted a request for annual funding of $2000 from our missions budget to be allocated to this ministry. By that time the micro lending program had been running on private donations for over 2 years and was a proven quantity. The allocation of an annual lump sum donation would give Zion Church a guaranteed loan amount each year and allow them to plan accordingly. By this time the loan program had become quite popular and the other churches under Walter’s supervision began asking to become a part of the program. We were becoming a victim of our own success, and like all new ventures, some cracks were beginning to appear. One unanticipated issue that began to surface was some grumbling amongst Kenyan church members regarding eligibility. Set up initially as a way to help widows and orphans specifically, some congregants were upset at being excluded from the loan program because they did not meet the eligibility criteria. Fortunately, a solution to this issue would soon present itself.

In 2011, Rachel Bass (then Children’s Minister) and Melissa Auten traveled with the youth to Uganda on a mission trip.

...I began to wonder if offering small business loans to the women and orphans might be a way of providing them with an opportunity to better their circumstances in the long term.

In 2014, the Kenyan Microloans program was underway! Initially all funds raised for this venture were acquired through private donations by church members into an account that was established by our finance administrator. A typical loan to a woman applying for a micro loan was in the amount of $200. This meant that every time the account grew to at least $1200 we could make loans to a circle of 6 women who would each receive a loan and be accountable to each other. Church elders in Kenya reviewed the applications submitted by the women and rank ordered them based on the most compelling need, with the most vulnerable applicants receiving preference. Applications were received for a variety of business proposals—everything from fish mongering to selling refurbished cook stoves. Some women petitioned for a loan to grow sugar cane, a profitable cash crop. One woman wanted to sell cell phone accessories. Still others began businesses buying and selling used clothing. The women's ideas for supporting themselves were quite varied and well thought through. Working slowly with small groups of 6-8 women, loans were distributed throughout 2012 and 2013, and by 2014, over 24 small loans of $200 each had been distributed.

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What began as a small operation to send funds for the purchase of rice and beans has grown into a community-based loan initiative that will be able to make hundreds of small business loans to people in need of an economic opportunity.

I am reminded as I write this article about a boy with two loaves and five fishes so long ago. That small boy didn’t have much, but he offered what he did have. So often we fear doing something because we feel unqualified. We don’t know all the possible complications. We might mess up or make mistakes. I felt exactly this way when I began to think that perhaps God was calling me to do something about a need I had heard of around a campfire in Uganda. What did I possibly know about raising money to help people half way around the world? Who did I think I was to take on such a task with little to no skill in such matters? Surely I was completely crazy. Well, yes. And frankly, that helps a bit. It helps a bit to be so naïve that you have no idea what you are getting yourself into to because if you had more sense you would walk away in an instant. I always jokingly say that God looks out for babies and fools, and this certainly proved to be true in this case. What I learned from my work in Kenya is that sometimes the best thing is just to take a deep breath and roll up your sleeves, hand over your loaves and fish, and trust that Jesus can do more with our small offerings than we ever dared to dream possible. Together we have brought hope. We have sent dozens of children to school by empowering their mothers to earn a living. We have enabled a church community to strive to support itself and its members for years to come. We did this—the members of this church, the missions committee, my friend and co-worker, Pastor Walter, his church elders, and me—all of us working together, trusting in God, and believing in the work of his kingdom. From the bottom of my heart, to every person who supported this ministry in any way, I say thank you!

Shalom!

Starting as just the germ of an idea in 2011, the Kenyan Microloans program was begun in early 2012, and has now become a prime example of “teaching someone how to fish.”

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distributed. By converting our small church-to-church initiative to a church-to-local government joint venture on the ground in Kenya, the elders at Zion would be relieved of all supervisory roles, Walter could focus more on ministry rather than on overseeing these business loans, and all members of Zion would be eligible to participate in the expanded initiative. This seemed like a reasonable proposal, and so once again, I found myself standing before our Missions committee, asking for support and a commitment to Zion: would they pledge $10,000 over the course of the next 5 years to allow the church to become self sustaining with these microloans?

What began as a small operation to send funds for the purchase of rice and beans has grown into a community-based loan initiative that will be able to make hundreds of small business loans to people in need of an economic opportunity.

From those with means, to those in need.
NRUMC has partnered with Zion People of God Church in Kenya to create a microloans initiative in order to help women in need.

Small loans (usually $200-$2000) are given to women who lack collateral, steady employment, and a verifiable credit history. These women then use their loans to start entrepreneurship, increase incomes, and support their children.

What began as a small operation to send funds for the purchase of rice and beans has grown into a community-based loan initiative that will be able to make hundreds of small business loans to people in need of an economic opportunity.

starting in the spring of 2018, Zion has now met their $10,000 buy in threshold. And better yet, we have been able to hand this program off to our friends in Kenya permanently.

From those with means, to those in need.

How can you help?

• Make a tax deductible donation to the microloans ministry by writing a check to NRUMC with “Kenyan Microloans” on the memo line.
• Sponsor one of the women or orphans personally.
• Pray for the church in Kenya and the loan recipients.
• Tell everyone you know about this program.

Alice Adhiambo received a $150 microloan and started a shop, stocking mobile phone accessories and new clothes. She takes care of her daughter and three grandchildren after being chased away from her late husband’s farm by a brother-in-law who killed her husband.

Starting as just the germ of an idea in 2011, the Kenyan Microloans program was begun in early 2012, and has now become a prime example of “teaching someone how to fish.”

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In case you haven’t noticed, there has been quite a bit of change happening around our church recently. Nine months ago we welcomed not one, but two new pastors. We have hired a new associate minister of music and a part-time associate minister of music. We have hired a program assistant for Care & Connections and an assistant for our Children & Family minister. Our staff composition is changing and growing. Many of our programs are changing and being improved upon. In short, our MAP 2.0 vision is coming to life!

This is all good, right? Well, yes! But I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that change is a difficult experience for many of us. “Change is the only constant” is certainly true, but human beings often have a deep-seated sense of resistance to it. Change may demand that we look at things differently, it guarantees that our usual experiences will be altered, and it may interfere with a sense of well-loved familiarity that we have come to rely on in a relentlessly chaotic world. Nowhere is this more true than when we are speaking of the community we call “church.”

So why should we be invigorated by change rather than becoming upset by it? Because change is a significant factor in the spiritual journey. “Metanoia,” Jesus’ first message upon beginning his ministry (Mark 1:15, Matthew 4:17), is unfortunately translated with the moralistic word repent. Metanoia literally means change or even more precisely “Change your mind!” So it is strange that people rooted in a religion founded in Jesus’ name have historically been resistant to change and have often tended to protect the past and the status quo more than the positive and hopeful future that can be brought about when we are open to change. Episcopal priest, writer, retreat leader, and modern day mystic, Cynthia Bourgeault describes the process of change and transformation this way:

“IT IS THE FULL EMERGENCE OF THE GLORY OF THE MIND OF CHRIST. WE BEGIN WITH A VIEW THAT GOD IS NOT OPPOSED TO US; GOD IS FOR US. HOW IS GOD SERVED BY PEOPLE WHO FAIL TO GERMINATE? GOD IS RAPTURously DELIGHTED IN EVERY HUMAN BEING WHOSE HEART BREAKS OPEN AND BLOOMS. THEN, AS HUMAN BEINGS COME TO THEIR GLORY, THE WORLD COMES TO ITS GLORY. IT’S A VIEW WHICH IS INCLUSIVE, RECOGNIZING THAT HUMAN BEINGS ON ALL PATHS ARE CALLED TO GLORIFICATION, TO THE FULL EMERGENCE OF THE HUMAN BEING. IT’S EVOLUTIONARY IN THAT WE ARE A WORK IN PROGRESS, BOTH INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY. CREATION ITSELF IS NOT STATIC BUT DYNAMIC.”

In our own tradition, John Wesley would refer to the process Cynthia is describing as “sanctification.” As we embrace change—be it large or small, incremental or sweeping, regarding how our community is formed and operates, or within the structure of our personal lives and relationships—we open ourselves to the movement of the Holy Spirit. This is the glory of the human being fully alive! So when we feel ourselves resisting change, our gut tightening in response to something new and different, or a sense of sadness and loss when things fail to remain the same, we might take a moment to pause and remember: change is integral to our ongoing transformation into the image and likeness of Christ. So be not afraid—if God is for us, who can be against us?

Shalom!

Melissa Auten is a certified spiritual director and graduate of The Rohr Living School, Center for Action and Contemplation, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

You can’t stop the future. You can’t rewind the past. The only way to learn the secret... is to press play.

—Jay Asher

The Contemplative Corner: The Spirituality of Change by Melissa Auten

“It is the full emergence of the glory of the mind of Christ. We begin with a view that God is not opposed to us; God is for us. How is God served by people who fail to germinate? God is rapturously delighted in every human being whose heart breaks open and blooms. Then, as human beings come to their glory, the world comes to its glory. It’s a view which is inclusive, recognizing that human beings on all paths are called to glorification, to the full emergence of the human being. It’s evolutionary in that we are a work in progress, both individually and collectively. Creation itself is not static but dynamic.”

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During a retreat weekend a few years ago, the men at my table gathered in the sanctuary and prayed for each other. After the prayer, one of them taught us a song. We sang it together as a benediction. The song is called I Will Change Your Name.

I will change your name
You shall no longer be called
Wounded, outcast, lonely or afraid
I will change your name
Your new name shall be
Confidence, joyfulness, overcoming one
Faithfulness, friend of God
One who seeks My face
© 1987 Mercy/Vineyard Publishing

The song meant a lot to me then and still does today. I've tried to find a recorded version online. There are plenty of beautiful arrangements of the song, but nothing sounds anything like how we sang it in the sanctuary that day.

We sang it as though we'd experienced transformation. On that final day of the retreat, we were changed, no longer like the men who arrived at the retreat center two days earlier. God interrupted our lives, broke into our brokenness, and made us new creations.

God does this every day because God is still creating. God takes our sin, our brokenness, all of the obstacles to grace we've put between us and God and redeems it. That means God takes what is old and makes it new, what is dead and breathes life into it, replaces the darkest places of our lives with the light of Jesus Christ.

Our hope and prayer for our youth during Big Idea 2018 was that, during the weekend, they would experience the redemption made possible by an ever-creating God, the forgiveness available to them through his son Jesus Christ, and the fire the Holy Spirit can place in their hearts. We hoped God would change their name during the weekend, so the theme title for Big Idea this year was Name Changer.

During the testimony time Sunday morning, the youth spoke to two prompts:

What did God change your name to this weekend?
How will you live into this new name on Monday?

A young lady stood up and said, “Before this weekend my name was unwelcome, but God changed it to included.”

What new name do you hope God will call you?
Thank you to all who made BIG IDEA 2018 life-changing! Jonathan Page from Fieldstone UMC inspired us. Who can make the longest word using alphabet soup?! Guest band, Cooper’s Wrench, led worship.

On this page: MISSION!! St. Patrick’s Day party for Springmoor residents, making hot chocolate mix for church members, sprucing up Baileywick School’s grounds, sorting clothes for Note in the Pocket, and packaging meals at Rise Against Hunger.
Last fall, our congregation participated in a General Fund Generosity campaign with the emphasis on ministry “Beyond Ourselves.” As a church, we committed to designate four percent of every pledge specifically to mission and outreach beyond ourselves.

It is our pleasure to report that, through your generosity and faithfulness, we have seen an increase in pledges from 2017 to 2018 by over $250,000! With your generosity, we are able to commit nearly $39,500 specifically to mission. However, our Outreach committee approved a budget of $42,800 in late 2017, which leaves us with $16,700 to invest in the Kingdom of God!

This is where you come in. We have formed a new “Outreach Advisory Team” which will discern where to allocate these funds. But we are asking you: how might God be calling us to invest in our community and our world? What are your dreams for our church reaching beyond itself? How can we partner with what God is already doing through non-profit organizations and ministries?

We invite you as a church to dream. How can this money be used to change lives? Indeed, this is the Gospel call—to experience and be agents of transformation. This is who we are as the church! If you have an organization or initiative close to your heart, we invite you to prayerfully submit an Outreach Ministries Funding Request, found on our website (nrumc.org) under the “Resources” tab, and at the church office.

We are profoundly grateful and astounded at the generosity of our congregation. Now, let’s get to work for the Kingdom!
You may have noticed our new space for welcoming our youngest members on Sunday mornings. Early in 2018, our infant and toddler nursery was moved from the Youth Center to the Sanctuary Building. This project required careful planning, and many moving parts, but the end result has meant a more hospitable space. With the nursery located in the Sanctuary Building, worshiping parents are always just a few steps away from their little ones, and have ease of access if they need to step out of a service. New visiting parents who are trying to navigate our campus for the first time can rest assured that their children are safely around the corner under the same roof. And, set on the hallway that follows behind the Fellowship Hall, many in our congregation can walk by each Sunday morning and look in on our little ones, waving and offering warm hellos.

The two new nursery rooms are connected so that parents can drop off and pick up in one location, and infants can be allowed to sleep. During Vacation Bible School this summer, our older children will work together to create artwork for the walls of the nursery as a blessing to the babies who are to come. Additionally, the move has freed up two new classrooms in the Youth Center for use during the Sunday School hour to be used by our ever-growing Children’s and Youth ministries. Please stop by and thank our wonderful nursery staff and witness the beautiful ministry taking place. We are called to nurture and care for our families, and grateful to have a new safe space to do so.
Before you started as Children’s Minister, several families left NRUMC. Was that the impetus for creating a more organized ministry?

I think that’s true. Dr. Seate (Billy) was here at the time, and he thought we needed children’s ministry. Children’s programs were under the director of education, and they needed to be two separate entities. As the church grew, it got to be too much. I heard things like “there aren’t enough programs for the kids,” and “There are some for the big ones, but not for the little ones.” There was Sunday School, and Vacation Bible School, but it was small, maybe 50 kids. Nothing was organized. Every year it changed, and there was no consistency.

What is your background? What drew you to children’s ministry? How did you end up in that position?

I’ve done it all my life. I’ve always gravitated to the children. Youth was more organized, but not children. When I came here, it was the most natural place to start. I was here for only a couple of weeks, and I started helping Liz Hounshell, the education director at the time. She threw me right into VBS! Rick was traveling a lot, so I had the time to do it. I enjoyed it, but it was kind of hairy there for a couple of years. I never officially started my staff position until Dr. Bob (O’Keef) came. That was around 1999, because we came back from Ireland in 1989, and were in Ohio for 10 years. There wasn’t a lot of building when we came here. As we drove around, I always looked for where the Methodist churches were. One of the reasons the real estate agent brought us out this way was because I saw this church. And I wanted to live near the church because if you’re going to work in the church or do things in the church, you want to be close, especially if you have children. You want to have good access to your church. When we came here, we had to get off of highway 70 at Angus Barn, and get on Westgate, or go down Lynn Road and come back up. So 540 was real nice! It cut off a lot of time to get here.

Describe to me how you moved from volunteer to Children’s Minister.

I got that title when Dr. Seate called me into his office, and he thought we needed children’s ministry. I had been working on getting a children’s minister at the church. He wanted to recommend me to the SPRC. Well, I said, “I’ve never done anything like that, I can’t do that.” He said, “Yes, you can.” And I said, “Well, OK.” Eventually, the SPRC appointed me as NRUMC’s first children’s minister.

worked with Liz Hounshell, who officially became the adult discipleship minister.

How large was the membership at that time?

I don’t know, but I do know the first year we had VBS, we had 50 kids. And the last year, we had 169. I was on staff 13 years. We did more outreach over the years, putting signs out, bringing kids in. We had a lot of kids that didn’t come to this church who would come here for VBS. I had people calling me in January, February, asking what the VBS dates were, because they were planning their vacations and they didn’t want to miss VBS. We would put it in the bulletin very early, but people outside the church didn’t know that, so they would call in. We were running out of classrooms; at that point, we didn’t have this area (main sanctuary building). I would use the whole campus. Anybody that had meetings that week would meet off-campus, or cancel their meetings. I used every space in this church. We used the whole education building, the whole youth building.

What other church staff was there when you started and how did it grow?

When I first started here, there was a secretary, a pastor and associate pastor, Michael (Glasgow), Liz (Hounshell), and Becky Albritton (head of the preschool). Mark Tolley took over a lot of the adult education that Liz used to do. She centered more on the kids after that. Kathleen Snyder and Rachel (Probst) Bass came in after Liz, before Mark took over the adults. Keith Glover and Brian Gentle, retired pastors, were on staff but not appointed. Retired and hired! Amy Perry was our office admin, and then Jackie Davis, then Jason Keilman.

What programs & events did you implement?

We started LOGOS, a weekly Bible study for children, 1st grade through 5th. We served them dinner, made a craft, and then had class time. That was when Dr. Bob was here and he had designated Wednesday as all Bible studies in the church. It worked for a while! I knew the LOGOS program because I had helped in it at one of my other churches. We started Bible Buddies for the little ones on Sundays. Originally scheduled for earlier in the day, we moved it to later when the older children practiced so that parents would only have one drop-off and one pick-up. It worked out well for everyone. We started Children’s Sunday, where the children would do the call to worship, the prayer, the
scripture. We tried to get children involved in church. We started honoring mothers and fathers during church on Mother’s Day and Father’s Day. We started the palm processional on Palm Sunday, and the Daddy-Daughter Dance, Trunk-or-Treat, and the Craft & Cookie party with Santa. Ruth Andrews and Carol Hall started All God’s Children, a ministry for special needs kids. We enlarged the nursery (got two rooms) and started doing Bible work with some of the older toddlers. Eventually LOGOS became DIVE.

When you look back at your ministry, what do you find most satisfying?
I really enjoyed LOGOS and VBS. I thought we did a great job there. The people on the Children’s Council were so wonderful to work with. We got more kids, and I’ve always wanted children to want to come to church. With little children, you have to nurture them. You have to nurture adults and youth, too, but it’s important to teach children why you’re coming to church. You have to nurture adults and youth, too, but it’s important to teach children why you’re coming to church. I just always wanted them to be happy to come. They loved the music, they liked Bible Buddies, and had a good time at VBS. We tried to make it exciting. Another thing I liked about LOGOS was that we had table parents during dinner. We tried to get older people, people whose children were raised and gone, to connect with the younger children. We wanted to foster this connection because some of these kids didn’t have grandparents nearby. We had parents and other volunteers to help in the kitchen.

How critical do you think inter-generational activities are to children’s ministry?
I think it’s everything; I think it’s wonderful. That’s why I felt that LOGOS was so important. Children’s Sunday, when the kids acted as greeters, handed out bulletins, and participated in parts of worship, was also a great way to encourage adult interaction with the kids.

Do you see dreams for the children’s ministry being fulfilled today?
I think it’s doing very well. Kids are happy when you’re around them. I like the nursery move. It’s good to have it in the main building because it is more convenient for the parents. It used to be in the education building, and then when they moved it to the youth building, nobody could find us! When you have a large campus, it helps to have the children in as few places as possible [the Preparedness Team is currently developing security protocols for our church campus.—Ed.].

Did you ever have to compete with extracurricular activities that the kids were involved in?
Yes, we competed with that all the time. During VBS, we knew that on Tuesday nights, only half the kids would show up because it was swim-meet night. We used to have parents that would take their kids out of LOGOS because of dance class. I would wonder why they couldn’t bring the kids to church after the sports activities. Soccer also takes a lot of the kids away on Sunday mornings. The sports always took priority over church activities, and is still an ongoing challenge.

How important do you feel parent involvement is with children’s ministry?
I think it’s vital. I don’t think they should be with their children all the time necessarily, but I think the children should see their parents being here and participating. I remember my mother sometimes bringing cookies to school, and I would see her and think, “That’s my mother!” Kids feel good about seeing their parents involved in their activities. I think it gives the parents insight into who we are and what we’re doing. They can get to know the teachers and the people that are working with their kids.

Overall, I was so happy doing children’s ministry, very proud of the kids, especially seeing and hearing them sing on Sundays. It’s so nice to go around and you see them now as youth, but they still know you. It’s fun to watch them have a good time. I like them to be happy when they’re here. When they’re singing, you can see how happy they are! There was one lady who came in to church who said, “Why are there so many people at the 8:30 service?” I said, “The kids are singing!” And when they sing, they do such a good job. They’re having a good time, and I’m hoping that we’re teaching them well. A lot of times parents that have never come to church come now because of their kids.

That’s a wonderful tribute to children’s ministry. And I had several families that told me, “Well, we never come to church, but we saw the sign and someone told us about VBS. So we’re going to come to church now.” I had that happen several times. I’m just glad that our kids know that they’re wanted in the ministries of the church.

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You have to nurture adults and youth, too, but it’s important to teach children why you’re coming to church.
NRUMC's new faces

Mary Honeycutt
Program Assistant for Membership Care & Connections

Brett Pardue
Associate Minister of Music

Elizabeth Lebria
Program Assistant for Children, Family, and Adult Discipleship

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Serving Christ by Serving You!

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Facilities Manager
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We are now in the Easter Season, the fifty days from Easter to Pentecost Sunday. Our sermon focus will come from the Gospel of John over the next six Sundays and our Easter study is Adam Hamilton’s book, John: The Gospel of Light and Life.

You are invited to read John’s Gospel during the Easter season. This is how we’ll be breaking up the readings and the sermon focus for each week:

April 8: John 1; Word Made Flesh
April 15: John 2-5; Life in Abundance
April 22: John 6-11; Bread for the Journey
April 29: John 12-17; Lightening the Load
May 6: John 18-19; It is Completed
May 13: John 20-21; I am Sending You

We are an Easter people! Our joy and opportunity is to carry the light of God’s love revealed in the resurrected Jesus Christ to a world that is hungry to receive the grace and love that God continually offers.

The Gospel of John: Light and Life

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee is pleased to announce that Elizabeth Lebria has accepted the position of program assistant for Children and Families. She will support these ministries and provide administrative support in programming for Adult Discipleship. Elizabeth has experience in church preschool and young children’s programming, and will be a great asset to our children’s programs. Her first day of ministry with us was April 23. Please pray for Elizabeth as she transitions to her new role at North Raleigh UMC.

Brett Pardue
Associate Minister of Music

Brett Pardue has recently joined our church music staff as part-time associate minister of music. He has made the move back to North Carolina and his first official day with us was April 12. Brett comes to us from New Jersey and brings a wealth of experience and ministry in vocal, piano and organ performance, musical direction and instruction, and has worked closely with children and adults. We look forward to having Brett as a part of our church staff. Please be in prayer for Brett and his fiancée Allison Gross as they complete their transition back home to North Carolina.

Elizabeth Lebria
Program Assistant for Children, Family, and Adult Discipleship

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee is pleased to announce that Elizabeth Lebria has accepted the position of program assistant for Children and Families. She will support these ministries and provide administrative support in programming for Adult Discipleship. Elizabeth has experience in church preschool and young children’s programming, and will be a great asset to our children’s programs. Her first day of ministry with us was April 23. Please pray for Elizabeth as she transitions to her new role at North Raleigh UMC.

Mary Honeycutt
Program Assistant for Member Care & Connections

Mary Honeycutt was hired as program assistant for Membership Care & Connections and began work on March 5. She came to us with a career in both the corporate world and church ministry. Her previous experience involved overseeing and training volunteers, and administering various office responsibilities, including database management and developing and organizing church communications. We already have the privilege of working with her day-to-day, and look forward to many years of fruitful collaboration.