Greetings and Welcome Back!

I hope you’ve had a wonderful summer filled with adventure and great moments with your family and friends! As much as I love the summer months, I am even more excited about beginning a new chapter of life this fall at North Raleigh United Methodist Church!

We welcome new Sunday School classes, Adult Bible Study Series, Small Group Studies, UMM activities, UMW Circles and activities, Youth Ministry, Mission and Outreach opportunities, not to mention the renewal of friendships based on faith, grace, and forgiveness!

This issue of Compass magazine will guide you through the compassionate generosity that is embodied by the members and staff of NRUMC. We are a congregation blessed with immense talents and gifts! It is a joy to see these gifts at work as we live our generous life in Christ.

When we joined NRUMC, we promised to uphold our membership with our Prayers, our Presence, our Gifts, our Service and our Witness. We call these The Keys to Living a Generous Life in Christ at NRUMC. In the weeks ahead, you will hear more about each of these Keys and how they apply to our own Generosity.

Each of us will find one or several of these keys that “speak” to us in our own generous life. Which key speaks to you? In this magazine you will have the opportunity to read and see how several members and staff of NRUMC use these Keys in their everyday life.

Again, welcome back! Let’s continue to explore how to Live Our Generous Life in Christ here at NRUMC using the Keys in this issue of Compass!

In Faith and Peace,

Janet Striegel
Generosity Team Chair

ENCOURAGING PEOPLE ON THEIR JOURNEY TO DISCOVER EXTRAORDINARY LIFE IN CHRIST

COMPASS is the magazine of North Raleigh United Methodist Church.

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DESIGN & LAYOUT: Lawrence Stewart

ON THE COVER: Brett Pardue, Associate Minister of Music, engages with a young student at this past summer’s first children’s music camp. In keeping with the Generosity theme of this issue of Compass, it is worth noting that this music camp was absolutely free for kids from the surrounding community. And this is one of the primary goals that NRUMC intends to achieve as we grow the ministry over the years. Photo by Michael J. Glasgow.

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PRESENCE

is the most important key for me to living a generous life at NRUMC. If 80% of life is showing up, that is even more true when building a community in Christ!

- Come to a worship service and you get focused time to worship God with others (and amazing music!).
- Attend the Alleluia Choir’s performances and you show the children how much they are loved and supported.
- Give a listening ear as a Stephen Minister, and you ease a person’s heart.
- Spend the night as an overnight host for Family Promise and you provide company and safety for those going through a tough time.

Your presence shows God in action within and outside the church. If you don’t show up, how can you live God’s love?

Kirsten Ioos
SERVICE

While gathering my thoughts and thinking about what “service” means to me, I concluded that a Christian life is essentially a life of service to others in Jesus’ name. There are many references to service in the Bible but below are several that really resonated with me:

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”

–1 Peter 4:10

“This is a trustworthy saying, and I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.”

–Titus 3:8

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh, rather, serve one another humbly in love.

–Galatians 5:13

Think about Jesus washing his disciples’ feet at the Last Supper. At the end, Jesus said. “I have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another’s feet.”

Service should be something you want to do in your heart and providing service should be a full-hearted effort. (Not something we do to “get a sale” or something to do “just to look good.”)

From personal experience, providing service to others does not only benefit those receiving your service, but the real rewards are received by those who provide service. I have many wonderful experiences that I would not have benefited from if I did not volunteer or work with others. Also, “service” is not only working with those who are less fortunate but can be with anyone needing to see God’s light.

In my opinion, in leading a Christian life of service, volunteer work is essential especially for Christians because the Lord has called all followers to be active “priests.” This means we should all represent God to other people in service. This is a crucial role in all Christian walks and this is an essential aspect of faith.

Scott Mooneyham

PRAYERS, PRESENCE, GIFTS, SERVICE, AND WITNESS

During my 30+ years at NRUMC I’ve developed a better understanding and appreciation for the vows we take when we join the church, particularly in the areas of prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. I’ve tried to improve my performance in each of these, though I continue to fall far short in the area of witness.

I had a unique opportunity to observe how our members live out these vows during the time I worked as business manager at the church. We have so many talented, faithful, and hard-working members that really showed me examples of how to live a generous life in Christ. By observing many of these servants in their day-to-day activities at and on behalf of NRUMC, I received encouragement to do better and do more.

I chose to focus my service in mainly administrative areas where I felt my skills could make the best contribution. Conversely, due to my total lack of skills in building or fixing things, I’ve stayed away from mission trips where I would most likely slow work efforts rather than help to make progress. I have served on Finance, Generosity, Endowment, Church Council, and Angel Tree. These activities have enriched my life because of the wonderful people I met and got to know better as we served together.

Bob Smith

Volunteers for the 2016 Angel Tree team, left to right: Bob Smith, Betty Osborne (deceased), Russ & Sheila Goff, Sue Pak, Beth Patton, Diane Hucke, Ruby Rosbach, and Peggi Pearson.
When the subject of a Generosity Campaign comes up, I think most people automatically think of giving money, and certainly financial giving is important and essential to the life of NRUMC. But for me, the giving of time and service to the church is equally important. We have an excellent staff at NRUMC, but there are many ministries and programs staffed and run by volunteers. Being retired, I am fortunate to have the time to get involved and serve in some of the volunteer ministries and programs.

Johnny Binkley

Johnny serves as a volunteer on our Audio Team, which records services, special programs, and assists with audio production during church events, committee and meetings. Pictured here are some of the members of the 2017 Audio Team during the renovation of our Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall audio system.

God has given spiritual gifts to all of us and each is different. Our gifts are as different as our personalities. Have you ever wondered why everyone in your family is so different? Why can’t they think like me and place importance on the same things I view as important? This difference is borne out more than ever today in politics. Our views and values in red and blue states are so polar opposite that we think the other side is a lesser human being not worthy of common courtesy. It’s ego, pride in our value of democracy as we see it, that makes us feel so strongly. We sometimes feel that same pride in our own abilities. On the other hand, some of us may feel our gifts are inadequate. Friends and siblings accomplish more than us. One may feel their own gifts are not necessary or important.

The hand may say to the elbow, I am more important because I do all the work around here. But without the elbow, the hand could not feed the body. Paul tells us in Romans: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, rather think of yourself with sober judgment. He goes on to say, just as each of us has one body with many members, those members do not all have the same function. So, in Christ, we who are many form one body.

We have different gifts according to the grace given us. I am not a musician, nor do I have a singing voice, but I enjoy having music and singing as part of our worship. I do not have the interest nor the capability to develop and manage the sound system like David Bass and the audio team do so superbly each worship service, but I am thankful for them. The point is, we each have a God-given gift of capability and each can be used to further the kingdom’s work.

If a person’s gift is preaching, Paul says, let them use it in proportion to their faith. If it is serving, let them serve. If it is teaching, let them teach. If it is contributing to the needs of others, let them give generously. If it is showing mercy, let them do it cheerfully.

Stepping forward to use our gifts for God’s purpose doesn’t mean we are responsible for the outcome. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians: So neither he who plants, nor he who waters is anything; but only God makes things grow.

Our endeavor should be put forward with love and dedication to do the best we can. It is up to us to be in prayer and listen to the Holy Spirit to determine what calling resonates with us, then step out in the confidence of Christ.

Lyle Gardner

During the March 2018 First Wednesday, members of the United Methodist Men cooked for the crowd! Below, left to right: Robert Morrison, Lyle Gardner, and Terry Godown.

Lyle Gardner
PRAYERS

My generous life at NRUMC begins with prayer. The Bible tells us to pray without ceasing. Even in our busy lives we can make time to pray for our church, each other, and ourselves. As we seek to live a generous life at NRUMC with our presence, gifts, service and witness, let us never forget to begin with prayer.

Ruby Rosbach

PRESENCE

At first blush, it would seem that this might be the least important and most effortless of all our spiritual gifts. In fact, in some cases, it’s absolutely the most important gift of all.

I had a perfect example of this recently.

Before we moved to the Triangle, I had worked in a company for close to 20 years and with another executive of that same company. He unexpectedly lost his wife of 40 years not too long ago.

When my wife, Darla and I went to the funeral home, it was apparent that our presence, along with that of many other friends of Bill’s, was the only thing holding Bill and his family up that night.

We learned in Stephen Ministry training just how important presence is. We don’t really have to say much when we’re at our best for others. In fact, we should not say much but just be present and listen. Everyone wants to be heard and we as Christians want to be there for others. Be present, be quiet and listen—that’s many times what our friends need from us.

Many, many years ago when we lived in Atlanta, Darla and I were members of a terrific Sunday School class called the Bereans. One of the other members in that class was a brilliant Christian writer and speaker by the name of Ken Boa. As I was thinking about what I wanted to tell you about “Presence,” I stumbled across Ken’s latest book Life in the Presence of God. Ken does a wonderful job of telling us how important it is not to just spend time with God the first thing in the morning or the last thing at night, but to remember that we can and should feel God’s presence throughout the day. Who knows? Maybe that person that we’re in the middle of a negotiation with would benefit from knowing that God is in the room with us!

When I think about Ken, even these 30 years later, I think of a man who lives, eats, sleeps and breathes in the presence of God and I’m envious because I personally go for long stretches without considering that God is present and that, of course, is my loss.

So, as you go about your week, think about the fact that you are in the presence of God and you will be a blessing to those who are in your presence.

Tom Skelton
When we join the United Methodist Church, we promise to uphold and honor our membership with our Prayers, our Presence, our Gifts, our Service, and our Witness.

Prayers, Presence, Gifts, Service—these are the easy ones! What about that thing called WITNESS?

My original ideas about Witness were the soapbox preacher on the corner, the white-haired man banging his fists on television, the people knocking on doors and leaving reading materials. I couldn’t see how this Witness thing applied to me.

As I matured, both in life and in faith, witness took on new meaning. I discovered I could be a witness by trying to live my life according to the Gospels. I could witness to My Generous Life in Christ at NRUMC is primarily facilitated by the privilege of serving on the staff at NRUMC. While my day is filled with challenging work and problem solving, I also am able to witness the amazing acts of love, care and leadership by our pastors and ministry leaders. I am able to witness the creativity and dedication of lay members and volunteers to sustain and grow NRUMC. I also am able to be a small part of providing much needed financial resources to the many outreach partners that NRUMC supports. I leave work each day humbled to be a part of a staff team that comes together to encourage people on their journey to discover an extraordinary life in Christ.

Janet Striegel (Generosity Chair) and Sue Haney spent their time at the Generosity table at last year’s Starting Point Sunday.

Ken Black, our unsung financial hero on the staff of NRUMC, sometimes juggles very specific aspects of our international mission trips. During our Casa Coins fundraising efforts, Ken meticulously sorted, counted, and coordinated the wrapping of thousands of coins to deliver to the bank. And in the times leading up to the Reynosa (Mexico) and Peru mission trips, some special above-and-beyond accounting methods were employed to aid participating members’ collecting efforts. Thanks, Ken! Top photo by Colleen Cook; bottom photo by Chase Groom.

Janet Striegel

Ken Black
Living a Generous Life in Christ at NRUMC means bringing my whole self to serve and empowering others to do the same. Nothing can separate us from the generosity of God’s grace, and in recognizing that, it is important for me to serve with authenticity. Authenticity does not mean perfection, it means showing up where I am today and giving as I am able, through prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. Bringing my whole self may seem unremarkable, but it enables me to focus on challenges and opportunities rather than our differences.

Jennifer Lanier

While all our keys are important and part of our vows, I’m going to focus on two: Gifts and Service. First a little clarity, I view gifts as sharing both our monetary gifts and our spiritual gifts. We can share our spiritual gifts through our service that includes a wide range of committees, missions, classes and many other God-directed activities of our church.

My wife, Janet and I were blessed to participate in Mark Tolley’s Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts class. Not only was Mark a great discussion leader/teacher, he also got his participants connected to using their newly discovered gifts in service opportunities (our classmates included Ruby Rosbach, Carolyn Weigel, Kendra McBride, Beth Lane, the Nippers, and Pat Ford!). Janet was asked to join Trustees, and I was asked to serve as an at-large member of Church Council.

As luck would have it, we had completed our vision, mission and values project the year before I joined Church Council, and we were thinking of next steps. We had decided to develop a Ministry Action Plan (MAP 1.0) and were hiring a former minister/consultant to head the project and select a team. I had sent an email to our senior pastor volunteering to be on the team. As it turned out, our pastor never received my email and the minister/consultant had a personal crisis and had to step away from the project. Janet was talking to the pastor after a Trustees meeting and the subject of the leaderless MAP 1.0 project came up and the next thing I knew, I was being asked to lead the project.

Long story short, I was able to use my spiritual gifts and years of planning/leadership experience from work with a very diverse and talented church team to develop MAP 1.0. This was followed by leading the MAP 1.0 Implementation Team (a somewhat successful effort), leading the new Stewardship Committee, heading MAP 2.0 and leading the successful implementation with a very strong/supportive Church Council, and finally joining and becoming chair of our Staff-Parish Relations Committee.

During this same period, Janet became a Stephen Minister and a year later I became a Stephen Minister (you know the “you try it and if it works for you, I’ll try it”). A year later we both became Stephen Leaders.

As you’ve probably guessed, my spiritual gifts are leadership, followed closely by compassion (so are Janet’s). When we open ourselves up to opportunities and use our gifts, talents and experience in God’s service, unexpected blessings unfold and truly amazing things can happen.

Scott Striegel

Family Promise of Wake County

Family Promise is an interfaith organization that provides homeless families temporary housing, education, and other services until they are able to get back on solid ground. They normally host four to five families each week at local churches. It is the only program in Wake County that keeps the family unit intact while they are homeless. Host churches provide transportation to the Family Promise Day Center and back to the church, nutritious meals, a safe place to spend the evening, a comfortable room to sleep, and the friendly assurance that we care for them. We are glad to be a Family Promise church!

NRUMC has hosted FPWC guests since June of 1994. Paul writes in Romans 12:13 that we should:

“Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”

At NRUMC, we provide a bedroom, three meals a day and a relaxing lounge in the evening for the FPWC guests.

About 100 volunteer positions need to be filled for each hosting week to be successful. Thank you to the volunteers and the members of the FPWC Coordinator Committee for serving so faithfully.

For more information, email Angie & Jim Banask at abanask@mpcllp.com or call them at 919.818.6300.
Perhaps this is one of the most important gifts we can give each other: “showing up” for one another. I’m grateful for the Visitation Teams that offer their gift of presence, reminding those who are sick and/or homebound that their church family is there for them, and that, more importantly, God is with them. Being homebound and/or sick can be incredibly isolating, both physically and emotionally. These teams offer phone calls and visits to say, “I am here. You are not forgotten.” God so loved our world that God wasn’t content to be removed, but God became invested and decided to enter into our world through the gift of presence in Jesus Christ. Jesus showed up for the sick, the outcast, the poor, and he called us to do the same.

Other ways I see NRUMC embodying sharing presence is through children’s and youth ministries, worship, and small groups. We show up for our kids and youth through Sunday School, VBS, Youth Group, and other special events. We support them on Confirmation Sunday and Graduation Sunday. We pray for them as they are in mission locally and globally. And we show up for one another as adults in our small groups, choir, Sunday School classes, and other small groups. We say with our presence, “This is important; you are important.” Worship and our participation in these small groups is not just for our own nurturing and spiritual growth, but it’s about being a part of something bigger—the community of faith, and the church universal.

Ashley Will

There are so many ways of being present for our youth and children: during the Confirmation retreat, confirmands read letters written by parents, friends, and other adults affirming them and the choices they’ve made (top); high school youth join seasoned adults during summer’s Appalachia Service Project (middle); and Brett Pardue guides children through Movement class as Bettina Lackey assists (bottom). Bettina also acted as a buddy for a special-needs child attending Music Camp! Top photo by Erin Sloan; bottom photo by Julie Morgan.

PRAYERS, PRESENCE, GIFTS, SERVICE, AND WITNESS

My attempt to live a generous life at NRUMC:

- I attempt to pray for my church and individual members.
- I strive to be present at worship services, events, and meetings throughout the year.
- My gifting reflects the value the church represents in my life. With my yearly pledge, as well as others, our leaders can develop a successful budget.
- Service in the church points to my desire to serve Christ.
- By being a witness in the community, I strive to demonstrate the Christian Way, even though flawed, to those I encounter.

Brenda McLean

Brenda McLean (far left) is the chair of the History Committee, tasked with gathering, recording, and preserving events, personnel, important documents, and other materials from each year in the life of NRUMC. Other members of the committee, from left, are Polly Smith, Frances Kunstling, Martha Gravely, and Will Bass.

Brenda McLean
In my prayer time, I try to routinely remember to be thankful for all that God has provided to me and my family. I am truly blessed. God has provided his gracious gifts to us and I do not want to go without thanking him, so I thank God in my prayers. More than that, however, I work hard to model God’s abundant grace by returning gifts to my church. When I do, I am reminded that it is truly better to give gifts than receive them. Remembering that all we have are gifts from God helps me to live a Generous Life in Christ.

Moreover, I have been fortunate to see how our church uses its financial resources to do God’s work in our world, both near and far. Through us and our generosity, we can spread love to our neighbors fulfilling our command to love one another as yourself. As a nurse leader—there were many days that my heart would weep for my patients and their families and for my staff as they struggled to cope with difficult situations, and I often used prayer as a way to reach out to them. We have all had experiences in which we are assured that Christ was walking with us in our journeys and when we knew that He was with us in times of darkness and pain. Prayer has always been my way of talking to Him, whether I’m driving and stopped in heavy traffic, walking on a beautiful morning listening to the songs of birds and nature around me, or even sitting quietly on my back patio or porch in the evening. Now, in later life, when I’m alone more often, I talk to Him almost unconsciously in my mind—I know that He “hears” my thoughts, and I know that He is here with me. What a blessing prayer has been and is for me!

Sue Haney

Prayer has always been an important part of my life—beginning with learning to say my prayers each night at my bedside as a child, hearing my grandmother say her prayers every night before she went to bed, and often calling on Jesus to be with me in times of stress and struggles. I found prayer to be a strong foundation in my practice as a nurse and a nurse leader—there were many days that my heart would weep for my patients and their families and for my staff as they struggled to cope with difficult situations, and I often used prayer as a way to reach out to them. We have all had experiences in which we are assured that Christ was walking with us in our journeys and when we knew that He was with us in times of darkness and pain. Prayer has always been my way of talking to Him, whether I’m driving and stopped in heavy traffic, walking on a beautiful morning listening to the songs of birds and nature around me, or even sitting quietly on my back patio or porch in the evening. Now, in later life, when I’m alone more often, I talk to Him almost unconsciously in my mind—I know that He “hears” my thoughts, and I know that He is here with me. What a blessing prayer has been and is for me!
Living a generous life in Christ for me means creating soul hospitality for individuals and groups. By this I mean giving of my time, effort, and energy toward work that seeks to create space for the necessary transformation that is the focus of our Christian journey. In my case, this involves working as a spiritual director both locally and within the conference, serving on the discipleship committee, facilitating small groups, and working to build a fully inclusive church through Reconciling Ministries, among other things. I believe that every member of this church has unique gifts and talents that God invites us to use to serve God’s people. How might God be calling you to serve here at NRUMC?

Melissa Auten

Mosaic Heart Ministry

Mosaic Heart Spiritual Direction is a practice offering individual and group spiritual direction to members of this congregation and the community. This ministry is offered by Melissa Auten, a trained spiritual director, small group facilitator, worship leader, and member of this congregation since 2003. Melissa is a 2015 graduate of the Summer Institute for Spiritual Formation at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, and a 2017 graduate of The Rohr Living School. She is a member of Spiritual Directors International.

Why Spiritual Direction?

If you are facing questions or concerns like these:

- How do I grow in my relationship with God?
- Why does God seem so distant?
- How do I sense God’s presence?
- Where is God in my day to day life?
- I don’t feel like I know how to really pray
- Where is God when people suffer?
- Is God more judging or loving?
- How do I discern God’s love for me?
- What are my gifts and how can I serve others?

For more info about Mosaic Heart Spiritual Direction, contemplative practices, or ways to experience a deeper and more fulfilling relationship with God, please contact Melissa (919.810.8593 or auten.melissa@yahoo.com).

Melissa is a member of the Exaltation! band, which leads music in our Souljourn Contemporary service (Sundays at 9:45).
At this time of year, our church is focused on generosity. I’ve been a member here long enough to remember back when every October the church would kick off The Stewardship Campaign. It would last all month and was basically focused on financial giving and the receiving of pledges. Somewhere along the line, the name and the focus of this campaign was deepened and broadened and became The Generosity Campaign. I think it’s a change for the better, because while responsible stewardship is a fine thing, generosity is a concept that is far deeper in its meaning and far more reaching in its impact in the world. Stewardship, in the traditional sense of receiving tithes and pledges, is unlikely to change the world, but generosity certainly can and does.

Generosity exists in a myriad of forms. While the giving of financial resources in support of the church and other organizations doing good work in the world is certainly one thing that comes to mind when we think of what it means to be generous, there are other forms of generosity that are just as deeply impactful in the world around us. One such form of generosity is something I would call generosity of spirit.

What does it mean to have a generous heart and soul? Richard Rohr writes the following about generosity of spirit: “In generosity, there is a wider perspective, in which we see our connection to all others. There is a humility that recognizes our place in the world and acknowledges that at another time we could be the one in need, whether that need is material, emotional, or spiritual. There is a sense of humor and an ability to laugh at ourselves so that we do not take ourselves too seriously. There is an acceptance of life, in which we do not force life to be other than what it is. There is a forgiveness of others and a release of what otherwise might have been. There is a gratitude for all that we have been given. Finally, we see others with a deep compassion and a desire to help those who are in need.”

We all know people who practice generosity of spirit. These are people who never fail to make us feel good about ourselves. They always comment on our strengths and are gentle with our flaws. They work to promote harmony in the workplace, the church, the home, rather than strife and conflict. These are people who are not easily offended and do not take themselves too seriously, but at the same time are very likely to be the first to stand up when real harm or wrongdoing is taking place. People who practice generosity of spirit do not draw attention to themselves and you will never know all the places they have served, all the resources they have given, all the time they have dedicated, because for them generosity is its own reward. These are the humble servants among us.

So as we go forward this month with our Generosity Campaign, do indeed be generous with your financial resources in support of our church. But also, perhaps, begin to consider how you can cultivate generosity of spirit in your day to day life. Consider making this your spiritual practice. Thus you will be giving twice to the world and doubly blessing it. Shalom!

Melissa Auten is a member of NRUMC and a spiritual director whose work focuses on contemplative practices as a means of personal transformation. She is a graduate of the Rohr Living School. For more information, please feel free to contact her at auten.melissa@yahoo.com.
The evening in February that the General Conference 2019 voted on outcomes for The Way Forward, I had been following the conference via live stream off and on throughout the day. In the time it took to leave my home in Wake Forest and arrive at the church to facilitate my weekly small group study, I would learn that the Traditional Plan had been passed. There was a heavy silence in the room and everyone was visibly shaken. “What do we do now?” was the unspoken question hanging in the air. Since I had no idea what else to do, we had our study discussion, though concentrating was difficult for everyone and we found ourselves lingering to talk in the hallway at length afterwards.

This same stunned reaction would reverberate throughout the UMC over the next several days and weeks, even as others celebrated the decision. As LGBTQAI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, asexual, intersex, plus) affirming people gathered in small groups in quiet conversations with our pastors and with each other, one thing became clear: this was a decision that was going to require some kind of response. A group of us wanted to do something, but what? What options did we have exactly? One of the pastors asked if I was familiar with Reconciling Ministries (RM). I was already an individual member of RM but until that moment, I hadn’t given much thought to trying to create an RM community at this church. I simply didn’t know how many others might share my convictions, but thanks to the decision in St. Louis, I was about to find out.

Over the course of the next six weeks, what started as a private conversation in a messaging group between several women would become an ad hoc organizing committee with each of us taking on a particular role. One worked to organize a database of people within the church who are not in opposition to same sex marriage or gay-clergy ordination, the two measures defeated by the passage of the Traditional Plan (TP). One sought consultation with the pastoral staff to consider what sort of concrete support measures might be needed to form a reconciling community within the church. Another contacted the National RM network and began an inquiry into how this community within NRUMC might become a local affiliate of Reconciling Ministries. All of us became engaged in conversations with friends and acquaintances within the congregation to determine who else might also be drawn to participate in some way in this work. Before long, a core team of eight people had formed who wanted to be directly involved in leading the work of creating a reconciling community at NRUMC. To date, 137 congregation members have indicated their interest in supporting the efforts to build an inclusive church. Not a bad start!

So what is Reconciling Ministries?
Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) is an organization seeking the inclusion of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities in both the policy and practices of United Methodist Church. The ministry currently has to date 1,031 affiliated congregations and 40,847 affiliated individuals. Since its inception in 1982, RMN has worked steadfastly towards the elimination of harmful language regarding LGBTQAI+ people in the Book of Discipline, and for the creation of a United Methodist Church which does not discriminate against this group in any way. Though the mandate at the forefront surrounds the church’s treatment of LGBTQAI+ people, the movement also recognizes that “inclusion” for marginalized groups transcends our current struggle around the question of homosexuality. The broader definition of inclusion includes the struggle to address all “isms” within the church: racism, sexism, classism, ableism, etc. So while the specific issue at hand is addressing the church’s ongoing harm to the LGBTQAI+ community, there is also a deep recognition that this is not the only area of harm that needs to be addressed and where reconciliation is needed.
It's important to understand that there are three different types of Reconciling Communities, each requiring a slightly different process and group of decision makers.

**Reconciling Church:** an entire congregation votes to adopt a statement of affirmation and affiliation with Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN).

**Reconciling Community:** a small group such as a Sunday school class, youth group, UMW Circle, music ministry, camping ministry, etc. In some churches, a new group is formed specifically to become a Reconciling Community. The entire group votes and is making the decision only for the group, not beyond. Church members who are not part of this group do not participate in the vote.

**Reconciling Campus Ministry:** a campus ministry vote typically includes student members and leaders, staff, and the Ministry Board.

Here at NRUMC, we have established a Reconciling Ministries Community within the church, however, we are not officially a Reconciling Church, that is something that would require a process of at least two years and a vote by the congregation. Typically it takes a lot of time, effort, and education for an entire church to become a Reconciling Church, so while there are many RM communities in our area, there are only two Reconciling Churches within the Triangle area.

The Reconciling Ministries group from NRUMC attended a formal Reconciling Ministries training in Cary on April 27, 2019.

**Reconciling Campus Ministry:** a campus ministry vote typically includes student members and leaders, staff, and the Ministry Board.

Here at NRUMC, we have established a Reconciling Ministries Community within the church, however, we are not officially a Reconciling Church, that is something that would require a process of at least two years and a vote by the congregation. Typically it takes a lot of time, effort, and education for an entire church to become a Reconciling Church, so while there are many RM communities in our area, there are only two Reconciling Churches within the Triangle area.

The focus of RM@NRUMC is education, service to the community (both inside and outside these walls), and the fostering of respectful conversation relative to the issue of inclusion. Here is some of what we have accomplished thus far:

- 16 church members attended formal RM training in Cary on April 27
- developed our Welcoming Statement and Covenant Agreement
- release of two email newsletters
- sponsored snack bags for the UMM/UMY Golf Tournament
- provided two hot breakfasts for Family Promise in May
- sponsored Driving Kindness bags in July
- signed up to host First Wednesday event in December
- planning our grand kick-off event at Starting Point Sunday in August
- date secured on the church calendar in October for an event to be determined
- creation of an RM@NRUMC Facebook group
- creation of a designated space on the new NRUMC website, complete with a giving option

We are also involved in sponsoring a Kindness Rock Garden—more news to come on this. So in a very short period of time, RM@NRUMC has managed to get a great deal accomplished.

We would love to share more about the good work we are doing here at NRUMC. Please feel free to approach any of our core team members and ask to hear our very personal stories about why this issue means so much to us. Invite us to speak at your small group, circle, or Sunday School Class. We invite healthy dialogue regarding your thoughts and concerns around the issue of becoming a fully inclusive church. We seek to listen and to learn as well as to speak and to lead. If you are a person who is interested in working toward a more inclusive church and would like to be added to our community, please contact the church office and your name will be referred to us. If you are part of our community already, we say “thank you!” and stay tuned for many more opportunities to learn and to serve both inside and outside the church in order to help build a more beautiful and diverse church.

For the month of July, the RM community sponsored the Driving Kindness bags, a ministry that provides homeless persons with bottles of water, snacks, bandages, and information for providing more permanent help. Photo by Eliza Williams.
During the early months of 2019, the Outreach Grants Committee of NRUMC notified our congregation of the availability of monies set aside by the Church to be offered in 2019 for grants to assist in the funding of local, area, and other projects or ministries during this calendar year. The committee received and reviewed requests for monetary support from five (5) entities serving local, area-wide, and international projects. Criteria for project selection previously agreed upon were confirmed, and the committee agreed to disburse the monies to the following grant applicants:

**Pardoned By Christ**
NRUMC recently fulfilled a request for funding to provide assistance with room and board, clothing, bus passes, and personal items for men recently released from incarceration and temporarily residing in one of their three homes. In 2018, NRUMC assisted with providing new windows for several of the houses.

**Summer Music Camp**
Just this summer in July, our church sponsored a summer music camp ministry to serve youth of all demographics in North Raleigh and surrounding communities, to foster a love of music, and to bring families to church through youth and music ministries. Camp was held July 8-12, 2019, and served children ages kindergarten through grade 5, providing introductory training in music theory, bells and chimes, and choir, as well as great fun. Ninety children attended with twenty-eight being from NRUMC and the rest from area neighborhoods and schools. All received lunch each day and lots of attention from the NRUMC members who served.

Above: Pardoned by Christ received funds from NRUMC to replace windows in several of their houses for former prisoners transitioning back into regular society.

Opposite page: On a mission trip to Haiti, one of the participants befriended Joséme (on the ladder) and learned of his desire to build a chicken-based business to support his family. He has since petitioned our grants program, and received start-up money to build a chicken coop.

Right: Kids get hands-on training with the handchimes at NRUMC’s Music Camp in July. Photo by Julie Morgan.
Society of St. Andrew (SoSA)

This organization sponsors volunteer-led gleaning projects in the area to provide food for area food banks and other feeding agencies. The project collects, bags and distributes food gleaned from area fields and gardens. Over 6 million pounds of fresh produce were saved and distributed by SoSA in North Carolina in 2018. One of our First Wednesday mission projects was creating the red mesh bags used to hold and transport gleaned produce.

Haiti Chicken Coop Project

During a NRUMC mission trip to Haiti, one of our church members learned of a young man who was struggling to start a business which would supply eggs, chickens, produce and Christian caring to his fellow Haitians. This young man reached out to NRUMC asking for financial support to begin his chicken business. With the receipt of funds from the NRUMC Outreach Grant Program, he has been able to build his chicken coop and begin his business in Haiti. He sends reports of his progress to our church member regularly.

Joséme has been able to complete the construction of the chicken coop with the funds we sent, but he has not been able to bring in the chickens yet. In order to move the chickens in, he needs to complete the roof on the house that he is building on the same land. He needs to be on site to care for the chickens properly. We were hoping that the grant money, plus additional contributions that were raised, would cover the cost of both projects, but inflation is so rampant in Haiti, that the materials he was able to purchase covered the cost of the chicken coop, but not the roof over the semi-completed house. He was approximately $1,000 short. To date, he has raised $600 of the shortfall and is picking up as much work as he can find to be able to complete the roof of his house. In the meantime, his family is living in the chicken coop until the house is ready. When they are able to move in, the chickens will be ready to move in!
Can you believe that summer is practically over? School is about to start back, and shopping for school supplies, new clothes, and everything that it entails is high priority in everyone’s minds. Here at NRUMC, we will soon start our new year of discipleship classes, special events, outreach, opportunities, music groups, and worship. To help us do that, Starting Point Sunday is on August 25. Our children will be promoted to new classes, and we will be reminded of the Keys to Living a Generous Life in Christ throughout the year as we seek to make our world better through outreach, giving, and discipleship.

This year the location for Starting Point Sunday has changed. All activities will take place in the back parking lot across from the Youth Building.

Ministry Opportunities
From 9:30 a.m. until 2:00 p.m., tables will be set up under the large tent displaying the many mission and ministry opportunities here at NRUMC, including small groups, Bible studies, Sunday School classes, children’s and youth groups, music ministry opportunities, and so much more! If you’re looking for ways to grow at North Raleigh, make sure to be here that morning!

Backpack Blessing
During the 11:15 a.m. worship service, we invite students, teachers, and school personnel to bring your backpack or lunch boxes for our annual Backpack Blessing. It will be a special time to lift up students of all ages, along with teachers and parents, dedicating them to God’s glory as we begin a new school year. During this worship service, we will celebrate our school partnership with Baileywick Elementary. Everyone is encouraged to bring school supplies to be given to Baileywick for students in need. Boxes for Baileywick, our annual school supplies drive, is running through Sunday, August 18, so be sure to drop supplies off in one of the boxes in the Atrium, lobby, or near the church office. Visit nrumc.org/boxes-for-baileywick for a list of supplies needed or see the poster in the Atrium or lobby.

Church Cookout & Kids’ Activities
Beginning at noon, you are invited to a church cookout featuring a hot dog combo provided by our United Methodist Men. There will be tables set up outside for sharing and social gathering, and you will still be able to browse the ministry tables. There will also be a Dunk Duke! Dunking Booth, games, and face painting for the kids!

As we look at the Keys to Living a Generous Life in Christ in this new season of study, worship and mission, we can only imagine the extraordinary places God will take us! Join us on Sunday, August 25 and find your place to grow and serve as we follow Him.

Contact the church office (info@nrumc.org or 919.847.1536) for more information.
The Disciple’s Pathway

NRUMC welcomes everyone! Whether attending for the first time or as a life-long member, know this is a caring environment to experience God’s love and grace. Part of this experience is what we call The Disciple’s Pathway.

John Wesley, one of the founders of the Methodist movement, believed faith is a lifetime of following Jesus, guided by the Holy Spirit and lived out through practice as we continue to grow in grace. Wesley promoted “tired and true” methods for spiritual growth such as reading Scripture, praying, worshipping, gathering in small groups, serving, and giving. We at NRUMC pray this Disciple’s Pathway brochure helps you develop a means for growing in faith as you follow Jesus. Take some time to explore possibilities and to pray for a deeper walk with God. We are here to help and encourage all by providing opportunities for growth so that God’s Spirit can work!

Here at North Raleigh, our classes are a part of Wesley’s time-tested tradition and provide the same kind of covenant relationship for learning, growth, and discovering ways to live a life of generosity in community with one another. Whether you are looking for a study focused on a basic understanding of the Bible or wanting to dive deeper into a particular part of Scripture, seeking time to fellowship with your church family, discovering long or short-term enrichment classes, or simply looking for a way to serve others through mission and outreach, we have many opportunities that will challenge and help you as we together seek to be the church God desires us to be.

Look for the 2019/20 Discipleship booklet in the lobby, Atrium, or near the church office entrance. Or pick one up at Starting Point Sunday and get a head-start on The Disciple’s Pathway by browsing the small groups and book and Bible studies that have been outlined for the upcoming year at NRUMC. Also available is the Every Member in Ministry booklet that details every ministry, mission, and outreach opportunity in our church. All of these resources are available online at nrumc.org as well!

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Serving Christ by Serving You!

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Our 2019 Season of Generosity Schedule

As part of our Generosity focus this year, Keys to Living a Generous Life in Christ at NRUMC, our pastors will lead us through a series of sermons starting September 29 and continuing through October 27.

These Keys to Living a Generous Life in Christ at NRUMC are based on the vows we make when we join the church:

“As members of this congregation, will you faithfully participate in its ministries by your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness?”

Prayers, Presence, Gifts, Service, and Witness. These five “keys” will be shared with the congregation during the following schedule:

- September 29–Gifts
- October 6–Presence
- October 13–Service
- October 20–Prayers
- October 27–Witness (Commitment Sunday)

And since October 27 is Commitment Sunday, the congregation will be invited to come forward and present their pledge cards for the upcoming year.

It’s going to be a powerful Generosity season at NRUMC, and we hope that you are planning on being a part of it. We want to see our outreach giving grow from last year’s 4% commitment to 6, 7, or even 8% this year! And with the amazing response we had last year, we know it’s possible! Come be a part of the ministries, missions, and outreach at NRUMC and help us make it happen.