Greetings North Raleigh Family & Friends,

The witness of Jesus as he walked on this earth was to reach out and offer God’s love and grace to every person he meets, both spiritual and physical. The fact that Jesus, the Son of God, took on human form transforms how we view the physical world. Our faith is not a form of escape from the world, but one of engagement with the world. Jesus engaged the world through the following ways:

- Jesus heals 10 lepers, gives sight to the blind, and makes the lame walk.
- Jesus feeds the hungry and welcomes the outcast and sinners.
- Jesus teaches: “Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family (feeding the hungry & thirsty, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, caring for the sick and imprisoned) you did it to me.” (Matthew 25: 40)

This issue of the Compass is filled with the ways that God has called the faithful in North Raleigh to join in the ministry of Jesus to touch the needs of this world with God’s love.

The first article by our youth ministers, Jen & Nick, show how our youth are shaped as disciples by reaching out to serve God’s people: Tekoa Missions, Appalachian Service Project, Peru Mission, Yam Jam, Youth Storm Response, & Compassion International.

Isaiah 11:6 says, “And a little child shall lead them.” Over the last 2 years our children has taken the lead to support Zoe Ministries, a mission that empowers orphans around the world to be self sufficient within 3 years. Cassidy Plunkett shares how we are now following the children’s lead to participate in this ministry.

David Bass then shares a beautiful story about the power of reaching out to share God’s love to a community in Reynosa over a long period of time. Please take note of the crosses made by our children and adults that we made during our 1st Wednesday Supper to share with the people of Reynosa.

The Contemplative Corner invites us to simplify our life both physically and spiritually. Melissa Auten notes that in removing clutter, our soul is open to receive the gifts of love and peace that God so freely gives.

Pastor Alan introduces us to the Leadership Development Program that re-energizes the work begun by former pastor Brian Gentle to lead us in this complex world in which we now live.

Jesus proclaimed, “I come to seek and save the lost…” when he proclaimed that salvation had come to the home of Zaccheaus, a tax collector. We join in this ministry of our Lord, reaching out to meet the physical and spiritual needs of God’s children.

In Faith and Peace,
Duke Lackey, Senior Pastor
God Is Always at Work

Tekoa Missions–Summer 2019
Our Middle School youth spent a week in the mountains of Cleveland County, NC serving Ms. Kay and Mr. Bobby by building a 12x12 deck on their home. It was one of the hottest weeks of the year, but these youth and leaders persevered! The students especially bonded with Ms. Kay, who they learned was a gospel musician and graciously played for those who came inside to take breaks from the heat. We have kept in touch with them by writing letters and continuing to pray for them.

[The following section about ASP was written by Nicholas Richart, Ed.]

Youth Service through ASP–Summer 2019
Our trip with the Appalachia Service Project was everything I needed it to be. Each day, everyone seemed to grow closer to one another – whether it was through working hard on our projects or sharing a belly laugh at Dairy Queen. By the end of the week, instead of seeing individual people that had come together, I witnessed one big family working together and helping one another to reach our common goal. Through the hard work of our amazing team, we were able to give a family a home with a solid foundation and a floor for their baby to walk on, as well as put a roof over the head of our other family. Even better, we were able to share the love of Christ in tangible and intangible ways through sharing meals with our families, pulling pranks with Roscoe, or tackling each other into the mud puddle during ultimate frisbee.

If you spend any time with our youth you will quickly learn that that most are less interested in talking about their faith than serving others and putting their faith in action. They look forward to our summer missions trips all year as a chance to do just that–serve as the hands and feet of Jesus. They will tell you that they feel most connected to the work of God when they are sweaty, dirty, and tired from a long day’s work, feeling that they have truly made a difference. We give thanks to our church family at NRUMC and the opportunities that our youth are given to experience the Kingdom of God at work in the world around them.

What was truly amazing was the level of solidarity our team of students had with the community of Jackson. Everyone was on the same level – it wasn’t “us” serving “them,” it was everyone sharing life together (one family member even got up on the roof to work with us!). The students talked about the randomness of life and even discussed how easily we could have been born into the same situation of these hardworking families. We came to understand that this doesn’t make one side better than the other, it just means we can find common ground and work together. Our lives and homes may look a little different but these families that welcomed us in showed us a love that is humbling and inspiring.

Another striking point about this trip and the work of the Appalachia Service Project was the enormity of the work that was, and is still, being done. We learned that every ASP county hosts volunteer teams every week of the year to complete projects. That sounds wonderful – so many brothers and sisters in Christ coming to serve, so much good being done throughout the year. But that opened our eyes to the flip side… so many brothers and sisters are in need that there seems to be a never ending list of work to be done. Our week in Jackson was just a drop in the bucket – and even then, our team was trying to finish the work of the team before us and we left our projects hoping the next team could see them to completion. The silver lining is this: there are opportunities to serve all the time, all around us. This means that there is always a chance to share our lives with those around us, a chance to find common ground with our brothers and sisters, an opportunity to experience the love of Christ with someone – even if your lives and homes look a little different.

Opposite: While at Camp Tekoa in Casar, NC, our middle school youth worked together on the demolition of an old, unsafe deck for Ms. Kay and Mr. Bobby.
One of our students reflected, 

“I saw God in the people around me. If we were working or waiting, they showed compassion and fellowship throughout each day no matter what.”

Find God in the people around you; see those around you the way God sees them! Whether you are working or waiting, make yourself available to show compassion and offer fellowship to the ones God loves.

As part of an Appalachia Service Project mission trip, youth and adult volunteers installed a new tin roof on a home in Jackson, KY, and repaired subflooring and a foundation.
Peru 2019

This team spent two weeks pouring the foundation of a new Sanctuary in Trujillo and leading children’s ministry at several churches in the Andes, bearing witness to the ways God is at work in the lives of our Peruvian brothers and sisters.

Youth Storm Response

Our youth participated in this year-long Conference-wide effort to raise $500,000 for Hurricane Relief in North Carolina. We’re proud to say that they surpassed their goal and raised $567,361 which will be matched by the NC Conference to provide over one million dollars towards rebuilding after recent hurricanes!

Compassion International

This year our youth group celebrated that after providing support for over 7 years, one of our sponsored children through Compassion International graduated! Joel lives in Ecuador and we continue to pray for him. The students continue to support Brenda Nakacwa, who lives in Uganda, through Compassion by collecting change every week at youth group. Their sponsorship ensures that Brenda has food, water, and access to education and programming where they will hear about the love and grace of Jesus Christ. They also write her letters and pray for her.

As you can see, we take seriously our goal to teach youth to serve their neighbor and put their faith in action. We also believe that serving in mission might just be our best opportunity to do church intergenerationally.

We invite each of you to join us this Spring as we partner again with SOSA and host a Potato Drop during Big Idea on Saturday, March 28th, 2020. Come help us sort and bag and distribute potatoes! We need MANY hands!

We also look forward to our Summer 2020 Mission Trips where we will participate with Faith Ministries in Reynosa, Mexico and City Service Mission in Philadelphia, PN. If you are interested in attending one of our summer mission trips, talk to Jen!

Thank you again to all who helped make the 2019 Golf Tournament a success and therefore made these opportunities possible for our youth! Our youth are already getting excited for our summer 2020 mission trips, and the Youth Ministry thanks you in advance for your support and participation in this Spring’s Golf Tournament Fundraiser on April 27th, 2020.

YAM JAM–Fall 2020 Service Project

For the last 3 years NRUMC youth ministry has participated in YAM JAM through the Society of Saint Andrew. This October, in just over 4 hours, we gathered and bagged over 5 TONS of potatoes to be distributed to our community. WOW!
Much of our recent mission work and service in the world as people of faith has centered around offering relief to those in need. We offer money and resources to help brothers and sisters who are struggling both locally and internationally, to survive. While this is certainly a necessary form of Christian response, the organizers of ZOE Empowers have discerned that creating opportunities for empowerment is a more sustainable way to approach outreach. It is with this understanding that ZOE Empowers has become what it is today: a ministry which helps to support youth and children who are orphaned and living in extreme poverty, in ways that foster hope and community building, so that they are able to create a life that provides for their own needs, and often the needs of their families and other children in the community as well. ZOE is not about giving to an unending need, but rather about freeing a people from dependence on others, and walking alongside them as they grow to be independent community builders and create sustainable life.

ZOE began as a ministry in Africa, but now serves areas of South America and India as well. ZOE employs local social workers and caregivers to gather young entrepreneurs in working groups where peers hold one another accountable and cheer one another along, mentoring and sharing in each other’s growth. In a few short months, children are able to build sustainable small businesses and have an impact on their local economy. Participants are able to use their gifts and become more fully who God has created them to be - and to access regular nutrition and healthcare. Shifting a missional focus from relief to empowerment has been fruitful.

I believe it is incredibly important to teach our children that they are loved and created in the image of God for goodness in the world, and that truth is such for all of humanity. We cannot be fully who we are called to be in Christ without nutrition, health, and shelter. And we cannot be fully who we are called to be in Christ’s community, until all of God’s creation lives in such abundance. Because of its focus on

“If you have come to help me you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

–Lilla Watson
empowering youth and children, we have chosen to support ZOE through our Vacation Bible School at NRUMC the past two summers. Our children have learned about other children like them who live in circumstances that are unimaginably deprived, and unnecessary. As children of God, all of us, we can learn to offer even the smallest of resources we are given, to make a big impact. Each day VBS participants brought in money: pennies on Day One, nickels Day Two, dimes Day Three, quarters Day Four, and paper money on Day Five. In a friendly “boys vs. girls” competition, together our children raised over $2,000 each summer, for a total of $5,262 to date. As a fun incentive to reach our goals, we celebrated with pies in the face, but the real celebration is with our brothers and sisters we hope will be blessed by our small offering. This is over half of North Raleigh’s fundraising goal in order to help sponsor a group of children who will have the opportunity to participate in ZOE ministries for three years, and graduate from the program.

Our Outreach Committee has chosen to follow our VBS Children’s lead, pledging to be an Empowerment Group Partner with ZOE. We are in the process of forming a team which will travel to Malawi as a new working group is formed, and meet the children we will grow in relationship with over their three years as ZOE participants. We are looking forward to following their flourishing and learning their stories at VBS here in 2020.

For more information about joining in the ZOE mission, or traveling to Malawi September 9-17, 2020, please email David Bass or call him at 919-414-6427. Travel arrangements are in the works!

At VBS, the children brought in money each day to give to ZOE Empowers as their mission project.

ZOE Empowers is an outreach of the United Methodist Church. For a greater understanding of how ZOE’s approach to mission is rooted in Wesleyan theology, please consider reading From Relief to Empowerment: How Your Church Can Cultivate Sustainable Mission, by Laceye and Gaston Warner. A portion of each book sale goes to ZOE. Find them on the web at zoeempowers.org
Flash back to 2012, the first year I went to Reynosa…

We only built one house that year. The house we helped to build sat behind the family’s original plywood house, which held all five family members – two parents, two sons, and a daughter. The family member who worked on the house with us was the oldest son, 14-year-old Luciano. Quiet and somewhat shy at the beginning of the week, he quickly formed a bond with all of us. Although he was no longer in school, he knew some English, which he loved to practice with us. My wife, Julie liked to call him “Justin Beiber,” because of the beautiful smile he’d flash sometimes. He’d call Julie “tia” (aunt) and Jay (Mackie) “abuelo” (grandfather). He rode in the van with us and sat with us at lunch. It was hard to say farewell to Luciano at the end of the week.

We saw him again the next year, when he was a volunteer on one of the houses we were building. But we didn’t see him after that, and gradually my memory of his street and his house faded and merged with the memories of all the other streets and all the other houses in Reynosa. But those of us who were there always enjoyed sharing our memories of working with him, and we hoped he was doing well.

Back to 2019…

On the second day of our trip we went to a work site to pour a roof. When we pour a roof, it’s for a house that was completed a few weeks earlier. All the mortar in the walls and the concrete in the columns must fully set before they are ready to take the weight of the concrete roof. This day, the roof was to be for an addition to an existing house, and I noticed the plaque on the addition said that it was built with the youth of First UMC in Athens, Alabama. As I was waiting for the work to start, I noticed that someone was looking at the original house and was looking at a plaque identifying it as a Faith Ministry house. Curious, I went to see who had built the original house…

North Raleigh UMC, 2012.

It was Luciano’s house.

When we travel to Reynosa, the most obvious things we build are houses, but the most important things we build are relationships.
Shortly after I went running over to the rest of the group to let them know what I found, we saw Luciano, now a handsome young man of 21. He was as surprised and delighted as we were to see each other again. Through hugs and smiles, our lives reconnected once again. We shared pictures from our time together in 2012 and caught up on what life was like for each of us.

Although I hope our paths will cross again, there’s no guarantee that they will. Luciano works on the second shift at a fabrication shop, and we don’t often work on houses in the area where his family lives. But even if we don’t see Luciano again, each of us carries the imprint of our connection, the shared love that flows from God through us and to each other. And the imprint of that love and that connection is repeated all over Reynosa, between every person that we’ve come in contact with over the years.

It’s not something that happens only in Reynosa, though – each of us can let God’s love flow through us to everyone we encounter. You never know what kind of relationship you’ll build.

Clockwise from bottom left: Julie Bass, David Bass, Beth Ludwig, Luciano, and Jay Mackie at the work site of the addition to the 2012 house originally built by the NRUMC volunteers; a volunteer hugs Luciano, now a grown man of 21; David Bass gives the families the crosses so carefully crafted at our September First Wednesday Fellowship Dinner; Julie Bass, David Bass, Jay Mackie, and Anne Weil pray with the families as the homes and work are dedicated; the remaining three photos show volunteers working to get the concrete mixed and the roof of the addition poured.
At our September First Wednesday Fellowship Dinner, our mission project was decorating wooden crosses to give to the families in Reynosa, Mexico for whom we build houses. On these pages are all the crosses that were decorated. What a great visual representation of the diversity of God’s children!

How would you decorate your own cross?

Click here to download a printable template.
The Contemplative Corner:
Clearing Clutter & Making SPACE:
A Spiritual Discipline for Advent

Marie Kondo has taken the world by storm. Everywhere I go people are talking about her Netflix series “Tidying Up with Marie Kondo.” If you have not seen the show or heard of the tiny Japanese woman who is a decluttering expert, you might be in need of a pop-culture makeover.

The modus operandi of the show is pretty straightforward: Marie shows up at the house of a typical American family and begins clearing, sorting, organizing, decluttering, and helping people part with things that no longer “spark joy.” The effect of watching her show is that one feels compelled immediately to tackle a messy drawer, begin hauling stuff out of the attic, or start reorganizing the pantry. The show is so popular that her name has actually been turned into a verb, for example: “I’ve been Marie Kondo-ing my house all weekend.” My only real beef with Marie is her “30-book rule”--as in she thinks you should not keep more than 30 books in your home. (I have more than 30 books just on my nightstand and piled on the floor around my bed, plus several bookcases that are slap full, so I’m probably not gonna roll over on that one! Sorry, Marie!)

The phenomenal success of the Marie Kondo movement has gotten my attention. Anything that catches on like wildfire as this show has is all about longing. Marie is tapping into a longing in our collective consciousness. But a longing for what? I believe the longing is for simplicity and space. We live in a world that is crammed full of unrelenting stimuli. Our cell phones and other portable electronic devices keep us continuously connected to Twitter, Facebook, Instagram--all vying for our attention, not to mention the ubiquitous cable network news running in the background 24/7. Even my smart car will interrupt my peace and quiet by reminding me it’s time to change the oil. All of these things bombard the senses and worse yet, embedded in them are advertisements designed to spur us into more and more and more conspicuous consumption which will in turn create the need for Marie Kondo to come and visit our houses! It’s a vicious cycle that is sometimes hard to figure out how to escape. Maybe it’s too hard to quit all of this connectivity cold turkey. Maybe a better way would be to begin by taking a few baby steps. Maybe we can’t unplug entirely, but perhaps we could begin by simply freeing up a little space amidst all the glaring clutter of life? Maybe this might be a good time of year to consider it?

As this issue of Compass hits your inbox, we will be entering the season of Advent. Advent means “coming” in Latin, and in the church, it is celebrated as the four Sundays leading up to Christmas.

Advent has typically been a time of anticipation, preparation, and making space for the arrival of the Christ. In a world where practically every moment can feel scheduled or intruded upon, what might it be like to intentionally set aside some space for prayer, devotion, reflection, and fasting from the constant stimulation that is our modern life? In ancient times people often fasted for the 40 days leading up to Christmas for the purpose of focusing on the coming of the Christ child. Imagine creating such a ritual for yourself alongside other long standing American traditions like Black Friday and Cyber Monday. I can feel the tension unwind between my shoulder blades just thinking about this.

A simple way to start might be to substitute a new habit for an old one. Perhaps you start your morning with coffee and the news. Instead, you might consider substituting the news with an Advent devotional reading. Long drive to work? Instead of the radio, try driving in silence or listening to an audio book or podcast devoted to deepening the heart of your faith. Little time before work? Try a solitary evening walk (minus electronic devices), just noticing the sounds, sights, and smells of winter. Anything that helps us to stop, slow down, and attend to the miracles of the natural world all around us and our own breath as we move is an exercise in creating sacred space, and it is in such spaces that we are most likely to be apprehended by the Holy Spirit. Slowing down, being attentive, focusing on the real reason we celebrate this season is a wonderful soul-decluttering exercise. And Marie doesn’t even need to visit our homes to accomplish it. Now that’s something that sparks joy!

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 Church is entering uncertain times. The challenges we face are many and complex. Efforts that once produced much fruit now seem to raise a meager harvest. The causes for all this are many and not all agree as to why what is happening in and around the Church is happening. Yet, one thing seems certain, things are changing.

North Raleigh is hardly idle in response to the changing environment. The Long-Range Plan and its implementation through MAP 3.0 has initiated many different responses to help North Raleigh navigate through this season of change. One of the most exciting initiatives launched in the last year is our Leadership Development Program (LDP). The LDP re-ignites the leadership development work started some years ago by Brian Gentle and shapes it to address changes, challenges, and opportunities for today.

The LDP currently offers a series of speakers in the fall and early spring focusing on a central leadership challenge. A key-note speaker offers a general look at a particular challenge while a workshop follows a few weeks later drilling down deeper and offering practical guidance to leaders addressing the same challenge. The LDP also is designing specialized training for members of the Church Council and is working to find ways for current and future leaders to be mentored by more experienced leaders.

The LDP’s first speaker series launched this past fall and was focused on “Leading Amid Differences.” Former North Carolina Governor Pat McCrory was the first key-note speaker. This event was followed up by a workshop led by Rev. Chris Brady who taught active-listening skills to address and resolve conflict.

The Long-Range Plan and its implementation through MAP 3.0 has initiated many different responses to help North Raleigh navigate through this season of change.
The LDP will focus on developing an entrepreneurial spirit among Christian leaders during its 2020 spring speaker series. Speakers will include Rev. Dr. Greg Jones, dean of Duke Divinity School, a world-known theologian and expert on social entrepreneurship and leadership. Dr. Margaret Brunson, a noted leadership expert with extensive experience in the public and non-profit world will lead a workshop to complete the spring series in March.

Just as we believe the Church is a priesthood of all believers, at North Raleigh we are equally committed to the premise that everyone is called to lead in some capacity. Mature and prepared Christian leaders are needed to navigate through the uncertain times in which we live. Leadership is not just about holding a church office. It is about leading where you are, inspiring others to follow Christ, and helping the Church and its surrounding community thrive.

For more information or to learn more about how to be involved, contact one of the members of the Leadership Development Team: Tom Skelton, chair, Sue Haney, Leah Wiebe-Smith, Mike Browdy, Mary Fran Parkman, Peter Kasbohm, and Rev. Alan Felton.
Advent Study: All Earth Is Waiting

Quite simply, we have a responsibility to care for this earth in preparation for Christ’s return. This is the message of All Earth is Waiting. Explore the familiar Advent themes of hope, preparation, joy, and peace with the heavens and earth in mind, and consider how all creation longs for the coming of Christ, taking seriously the notion that the good news of Christ is good news for all the world.

BEGINNING NOVEMBER 26
Tuesday Mornings with the Journey Mom’s Group
(9:30-11:00 a.m., Education Building E25)
Led by Cassidy Plunkett

Tuesday Mornings with the Clergy
(10:00-11:15 a.m., Main Building Room S2)
Led by Pastor Ashley Will

BEGINNING DECEMBER 1
9:45 a.m. Sunday School
New Friendship (Main Building S3)
Seekers (Education Building E26)
The Well (Education Building E24)

11:00 a.m. Sunday School
Reflections (Main Building S1)

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Serving Christ by Serving You!

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Our 2019 Advent Schedule

December 1: 1st Sunday in Advent
7:00 p.m. Christson Service & Angel Illumination with reception (Sanctuary)

December 4: 5:00 p.m. First Wednesday Fellowship Dinner with ornament crafting (Fellowship Hall)

December 8: 2nd Sunday in Advent
8:30 a.m. Gloria, Chancel Choir Cantata (Sanctuary)
11:15 a.m. Gloria, Chancel Choir Cantata (Sanctuary)

December 14: 3:00 p.m. Children’s Nativity Workshop (Youth Center)

December 15: 3rd Sunday in Advent
11:00 a.m. Advent Organ Escape (Lunch following) Shared by Dr. Candace Bailey

December 20: 6:30 p.m. Blue Christmas Service (Sanctuary)
The holiday season ought to be a time of joy as we eagerly await celebrating the birth of Jesus. However, for many, this season stands with reminders of the loss of loved ones, broken relationships, illness, or other situations that make celebrating difficult. Join us for a service of comfort as we gather near the winter solstice, the longest night of the year.

December 22: 4th Sunday in Advent
8:30 a.m. Service of Lessons & Carols
10:00 a.m. Service of Lessons & Carols
11:15 a.m. Service of Lessons & Carols

December 24: Christmas Eve Services
All services include candlelight.
2:00 p.m. Traditional Family Service
3:30 p.m. Traditional Family Service
5:30 p.m. Contemporary Service w/Communion
7:30 p.m. Traditional Service w/Communion
9:30 p.m. Traditional Service w/Communion

Candle lighting will be included in all services. As children are welcome during this fancy time, no child care will be available for any services. The 7:30 service is very popular. We encourage you to be at the church by 7:00 or consider attending the 9:30 service. Carpooling or parking at Lafayette Village shopping center is suggested.