

# Spreading the Good Word

September, 2017

FIRST AND ST. STEPHEN'S  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
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## MINISTRY TEAM

Rev. Kelly M. Sisson  
*Pastor*  
Georgi Funderburk  
*Dir. Of Christian Education*  
Jeffrey Beyers  
*Organist and Choir Director*

## SUPPORT

Rev. Alexander Vishio  
*Asst. Minister for Social  
Justice & Witness*  
Emily Perl  
*President of the Consistory*

## SUNDAY MORNINGS

Children's Church School  
and  
Adult Christian Education  
9:30 a.m.  
  
Service of Worship  
10:30 a.m.

Celebration of Holy Communion:  
First Sunday of the Month

## OUR MISSION STATEMENT

*As we become more fully God's  
people, First and St. Stephen's  
United Church of Christ  
CARES by...*  
*Committing to Christ*  
*Advocating for social justice*  
*Rejoicing in worship*  
*Empowering for discipleship*  
*Sharing God's Extravagant  
welcome.*

## THE MINISTRIES WE SUPPORT INCLUDE:

Earl's Place & Prospect Place  
Assistance Center of Towson  
Churches  
The United Church of Christ  
Habitat for Humanity

**"No matter who you are, or where  
you are on life's journey, you are  
welcome here."**

## From the Pastor

One of my favorite quotes comes from the UCC's former General Minister, The Rev. John Thomas. It was after a tense plenary at the 2005 General Synod of the UCC, held in Atlanta, GA – with the entire country watching as the United Church of Christ became the first mainline Christian denomination to overwhelmingly support marriage equality.

In the press conference that followed that vote, a reporter commented to Rev. Thomas, "You have endured attacks from political and denominational leaders beyond your own UCC. You must have really thick skin. How do you do what you do?" Without missing a beat, the General Minister responded, "You don't need thick skin if you have a centered spirit." *You don't need thick skin, if you have a centered spirit.*

In these weeks post-Charlottesville, and as our senses are heightened to how hate-filled people can be, I have been praying daily for a centered spirit.

I challenged individuals in the congregation to pray the following prayer daily. It was sent to our present General Minister, John Dorhauer, just before he marched with faith leaders in Boston. May this daily prayer challenge and center you as you continue the work for justice.

much joy!  
kelly

Spirit God, Loving God, God of all  
My heart hurts with pain of inequality  
My heart is saddened by HATE  
I stand against nastiness and violence and racism  
I stand for love and compassion  
The horribleness of shouting hate  
The awfulness of going backwards in time  
God, my God, loves  
I stand with my brothers and sisters of color  
I stand with my sisters and brothers of all nationalities  
I stand with all my brothers and sisters of all creeds  
and religions and orientations  
I stand with love  
My heart hurts  
My soul is in pain  
I will not be quiet  
I will lead with love  
I will stand with love  
I will not be silent  
God of all, Loving God, Spirit God

By Mindy Quellhorst

## SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

### Sunday, September 10<sup>th</sup> –

- \* A day not to miss worship! During the service, we will offer our prayers and support as we make promises to “The Funderburk Five” and witness their **baptisms**. Plan to be there, along with their families, as we pledge our support and prayers for Nicholas, William, Veronica, Aurora, and Eliada.
- \* YOUTH – Party at Georgi’s from 3:00pm to 6:00pm

### Sunday, September 17<sup>th</sup> –

- \* New school year programming begins - 9:30am education for all ages!
- \* Involvement Fair! Stay after worship for fun, refreshments, and information! There will be several booths set up to offer ways to get or stay involved with the missions and ministries of FSSUCC. Sign up for Habitat, Choir, New Members’ Class, Food for Thought, and much more!
- \* YOUTH will be involved in the Involvement Fair, too!

### Sunday, September 24<sup>th</sup> –

- \*YOUTH Fellowship – Noon to 2:00pm

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

> **Consistory Person of the Month** is Nora Jones. Nora writes, “ I joined First and St. Stephens with my partner in 2016. What gives me the greatest joy is being able to help others. I have worked with various populations in the last 20 years. My favorite quote personally coined is, " Nice guys don't always finish last we are just in a different race!" Thank you for the opportunity to serve."



> Are you hiding a secret musical talent? Or, have the desire to make a joyful noise? The Church Choir will resume practice and worship leadership on **Sunday, September 10th**. **Choir rehearsal begins at 9:15am on Sunday mornings**. The choir would love to welcome you into their joyful method of ministry.

>Are you a New Member? A visitor who is interested in membership? Join us on **September 17th** after worship to begin a New Members’ Class! We will talk about the UCC in general and First and St. Stephen's specifically. Come learn about us and get acquainted!

> **Sunday, September 24<sup>th</sup>** is **Climate Justice Sunday**. As we sing, pray, hear scriptures, and share our resources, we will be challenged to consider how we might be better stewards of our environment. We will be joined that day by Dave Neun from the Baltimore Area Chapter of 350.org and Rev. Alex Vishio from our own congregation.

> We had fun crafting art every Wednesday afternoon this summer. From knitting to drawing to quilting to needlework – it has been fun to laugh together, play together, and be creative together. We’ve discussed theology, justice issues, told jokes, shared our stories. But people who work during the days have missed out! So, starting in September through the end of this year – Art in the Afternoon will become **Art in the Evening – on the first Wednesday of every month from 6:30 – 8:30p.m.**



## SAVE THESE DATES IN OCTOBER!

Sunday, October 1st – **Worldwide Communion** – as we join Christians from across the globe this day to remember just how wide the welcome is of this holy meal.

Saturday, October 14th – **Habitat for Humanity** build day. If you are interested in helping, contact Dave Noppenberger for details: [noppenbd@gmail.com](mailto:noppenbd@gmail.com).

Sunday, October 22nd - **Churchwide Business Meeting**

Sunday, October 29th - **Installation of our Pastor**

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

This school year, First & St. Stephen's UCC will continue to support students experiencing food insecurity through the Food for Thought program. Last year, over 50,000 students in BCPS qualified for Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS). That's 45% of all students. Of those students, 2,700 were identified as homeless, or home-insecure (couch surfing, sharing a home with another family.) These students often struggle in school due to the distraction of hunger. The FARMS program helps support hungry students during the school day, but over the weekend, they may still not know where their next meal will come from. That's why a couple years ago, a few churches got together to support these students and formed Food for Thought. Last year, Food for Thought Baltimore County distributed backpacks of food for the weekends to over 130 students in BCPS. First & St. Stephen's UCC contributed to 12 of those 130 students, and we have recommitted our support this year to our partner school, Pleasant Plains Elementary.

If you are interested in helping our church with this program, contact Rachel Christian at [rachelxn92@gmail.com](mailto:rachelxn92@gmail.com).

## MESSAGE FROM RACHEL EZELL

I teach at Deep Creek Middle School. About 73% of our students receive free and reduced meals, which means the majority of our students are living in or near poverty. While our congregation sponsors a local school with backpacks of food, my school could use your help in one of several ways:

- Save Boxtops for Education and give them to me at church.
- Buy school supplies and I will share them with our teachers and students, as needed.
- As you clean out "stuff" from your home, bring it to me. Twice per year we have "Sales" where students can spend "money" they have earned for good behavior. We accept everything – toys, books, clothes, etc. for all ages and sizes.
- At Christmas, you can sponsor a family in need so the children get gifts and food for the holiday.
- If you shop at Giant and use their shopping card, you can designate Deep Creek Middle School to receive a portion of the amount you spend. (We ended up with several hundred dollars through this program last year.)

If you are interested, I also collect pop tops from aluminum cans for the Ronald McDonald House, so you can bring those to me, as well.

Thank you for any support you can offer.

Rachel Ezell

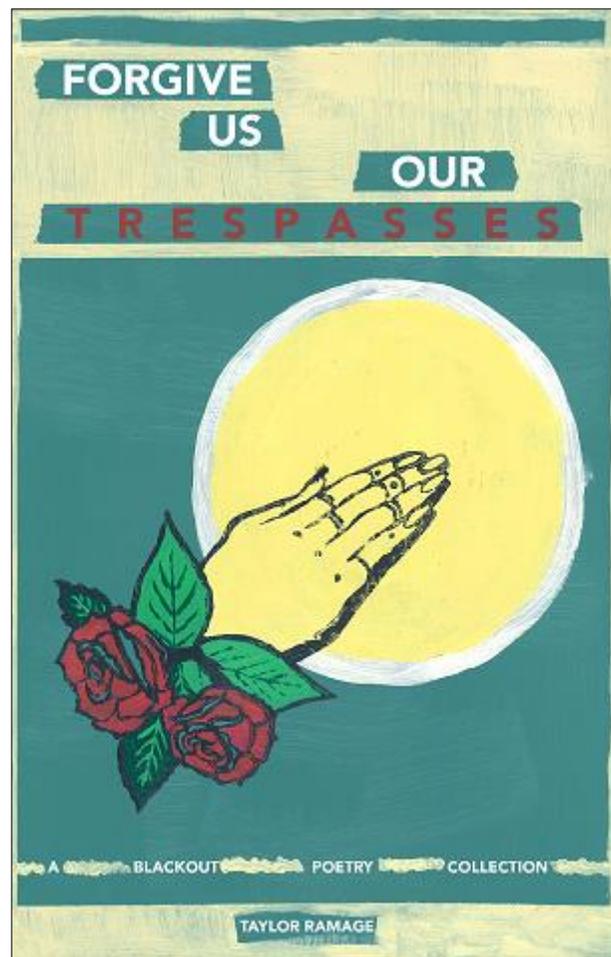
## TAYLOR RAMAGE – POET

*One of our own members, Taylor Ramage, is publishing her first poetry collection on 10/3/17! It's called Forgive Us Our Trespasses. Peace, joy, sorrow, and bittersweet relief blend together in this collection. Faith, doubt, and happiness are regular, intermingled realities we all experience. Using a form of poetry called blackout poetry, this collection creates new meanings from its old source text. The book is available on Amazon. [https://www.amazon.com/Forgive-Our-Trespasses-Taylor-Ramage-ebook/dp/B0756295XT/ref=sr\\_1\\_13?ie=UTF8&qid=1503966003&sr=8-13&keywords=forgive+us+our+trespasses](https://www.amazon.com/Forgive-Our-Trespasses-Taylor-Ramage-ebook/dp/B0756295XT/ref=sr_1_13?ie=UTF8&qid=1503966003&sr=8-13&keywords=forgive+us+our+trespasses)*

Sidebar from Taylor:

Blackout poetry is a form of poetry where you take a book or newspaper article or what have you, block off certain words or phrases, and then cover up or erase the rest. Here's a blog post where I announced it--I included an example of one of the poems because it's easier to see than to explain. ☺

<https://taylorryamage.wordpress.com/2017/08/28/book-release-announcement-forgive-us-our-trespasses-10317/>



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