A Conversation On Faith: ‘A COOL THING TO DO’

Our church held a blood drive a couple of Sundays ago, an unsung ministry that has taken on deeper meaning this autumn. Hurricane Matthew forced the cancelation of many blood drives, even as illness, injury and the need for blood remain unceasing. Twenty-eight people came to the Youth Building Gym to donate, among them one young woman with a deeply personal reason to give of herself.

Jazmin Francis, 17, lost her father to illness in September. Ross Francis was just 68 years old, a happy-go-lucky fellow known to many around our church. I had the honor of celebrating his life by writing his obituary. I shared how he loved to fish in charity tournaments and go out for breakfast with his wife, Guynn, or a buddy. Simple pleasures, and a simple motivation moving his daughter, Jazmin. As she waited to give blood, she told me that during the course of her dad’s illness, he had required transfusions.

“Someone donated to give him blood,” she said, “so I’m donating to give someone else blood.”

Love and sacrifice, boiled down to its essence.

“A cool thing to do,” said Jazmin.

Every two seconds in the United States someone needs blood. The church’s next blood drive is Sunday, February 26. Director of Communications Ken Garfield writes about church life.

HOSPICE, WHERE ARE THEY NOW?, OUR STORIES

• Church member Carol Anne Lawler, who serves as Faith Community Educator for Hospice in Charlotte, shares several programs as part of Home Care & Hospice Month in November. Among them, an advance care planning workshop at 5:45 p.m. Wednesday, November 9, at Levine Auditorium on the campus of Queens University. To learn more about Hospice and how church members can help comfort the sick and dying, reach her at LawlerC@hpccr.org.

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CLIMBING MOUNT KILIMANJARO

‘Putting One Foot In Front Of The Other’

Church members Scott and Law-Ann Vaughn and Grant and Kathy Balogh in July climbed Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania — the highest peak on the African continent — with a group of North Carolinians. They did it to raise money and awareness for Healing Hands of Joy, an Ethiopian organization that provides spiritual healing and support for women who have suffered from obstetric fistula. It’s a childbirth injury that leads women to deliver stillbirth babies. Visit www.healinghandsjoy.com to learn more. Law-Ann here shares the adventure.

You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.

I grew up in a family that sang a lot. Now, as an adult, I often have a song playing in my head. So when my husband, Scott, and I and 19 others began our climb up Mount Kilimanjaro, the words above from Isaiah, put to song, ran through my head. We began our seven-day journey with a sense of joy and peace, sprinkled with anticipation of unknown things that lay ahead.

We trained for the journey, hiking various N.C. mountains. But we heard from folks who had climbed before us that there isn’t much you can do to prepare for the extreme altitude of Mount Kilimanjaro’s Uhuru Peak (19,341 feet). We took the outside of breakfast with his wife, Guynn, or a buddy. Simple pleasures, and a simple motivation moving his daughter, Jazmin. As she waited to give blood, she told me that during the course of her dad’s illness, he had required transfusions.

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“God’s Word, In My Life” shares a Bible verse and its meaning in the writer’s life. Here, church member Lisa Stockton Howell shares her heart for the church partnership with Sedgefield Elementary and Middle School. To get involved, visit www.myersparkumc.org/serve.

My faith calls me to become involved in issues around educational equity. As a Christian, I believe I am called to care for all children in our community, that the schools are our schools, the students our children. I am thankful to belong to a congregation that has a vibrant partnership with the two Sedgefield schools. Most recently, we had great fun at the first Sedgefield Middle School Homecoming Tailgate. Ultimately, I believe my faith calls me to help create a community where our congregation’s support is wonderful, but not essential. Where our schools have equitable resources regardless of the community where it is located. The Methodist Book of Resolutions states: “The public school is the primary route for most children into full participation in our economic, political, and community life. As a consequence of inequities in our society, we have a moral responsibility to support, strengthen, and reform public schools.”

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In Memory

The sympathy of the ministers and members is extended to:

The Families Of...

Robert “Bob” W. Fuller, father of Linda Hagemeyer, grandfather of Eric Hagemeyer and great-grandfather of Addison and Hendrika Heykoop “Henny” Hatley, mother of Ellen Archer and grandmother of Addison and Mary Archer, who died on October 16, 2016.

Hendrika Heykoop “Henny” Hatley, mother of Ellen Archer and grandmother of Addison and Mary Archer, who died on October 16, 2016.

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Morgan Little and Christian Hunt, married on October 22, 2016, at the church.

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Each issue of the Cornerstone offers a bonus page of programs, classes and other activities offering the faithful a chance to learn, serve and grow. To share news for The Life Of The Church, reach Director of Communications Ken Garfield at 704-295-4819 or ken@mpumc.org.

November 2, 2016

• **GRIEF SUPPORT WORKSHOP** A Grief Support Workshop will be from 6:30 to 7:45 p.m. Monday, November 7, 14, 21 and 28, in Room 109 of the Parish Life Building. Hospice chaplain and grief counselor Beth Brittain will lead the gatherings, offering the chance to share conversation and emotions. To sign up, reach Carmen Rivera at 704-295-4818 or crivera@mpumc.org.

• **ADULTS PLUS!** Continuing its #LiveDifferently focus, the ministry to adults age 55 and over will host a panel discussion on food insecurity in Charlotte at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, November 16, in Room 103 of the Parish Life Building. Representatives from Loaves & Fishes, Men’s Shelter and Sedgefield Elementary will share stories and statistics and invite the audience to be a part of the solution. There will be no meal on this special day. Instead, those attending are asked to bring $5 or more for a “foodless meal,” plus canned goods and other items for Loaves & Fishes. Make a reservation by noon November 15 by calling 704-376-5520 (option two) or e-mailing cmull@mpumc.org.

• **WOMEN’S RETREAT** Registration is open for the 11th annual Women’s Retreat February 10-12, 2017, at Caraway Conference Center near Asheboro. Sign up at www.myersparkumc.org/women. The theme for the popular gathering is *Joy: Knowing, Being, Giving*. It will be led by Rev. Sarah Kalish of First United Methodist in Wadesboro. Cost is $185 for double occupancy.

• **CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE** A new Contemplative Life ministry will offer retreat experiences in monastic communities, focused on times of silence plus worship and prayer with monks. *Days Apart* to Belmont Abbey in Gaston County are January 18 and March 11. A *Weekend Apart* is May 19-22 at Mepkin Abbey, a Trappist monastery along the S.C. coast. To learn more or sign up, reach Christine Mull at 704-295-4815 or cmull@mpumc.org.

• **BE A GREETER** Greeters are being recruited to welcome folks on Sunday morning, help newcomers find their way and generally make the church as welcoming as possible. All ages are welcome. Training will be provided. To sign up or learn more, reach Rob Dellibovi or Julie Patrick at robertandjulieann@gmail.com.

• **TWO COLLECTIONS IN ONE** In response to a request from our partner schools, the church is collecting food and copy paper for Sedgefield Elementary and Middle schools. Pick up a blue bag in the Parish Life lobby that lists food needs for Sedgefield Elementary and paper requests for Sedgefield Middle teachers, fill it up and return it by Wednesday, November 16.

• **ASHEVILLE MISSION** Join the church for a mission weekend November 4-6 in Asheville and work beside sisters and brothers at The Haywood Street Congregation. The group will paint, work in a clothing closet and clean the property from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturday, November 5. Sunday, the group will stay for worship and a meal. All ages are welcome. Visit www.myersparkumc.org/serve for more.

• **MISSIONS E-NEWSLETTER** E-mail missions@mpumc.org to receive the weekly #LiveDifferently e-newsletter highlighting outreach.

• **MEDICARE D COUNSELING** Church members Nick Beard, Ron Knape, Jan Nomina and Bill Spier are offering one-on-one counseling on Medicare prescription drug plans Mondays through Thursdays in the Church Library (Room 111) in the Parish Life Building through Tuesday, December 6. They’ll hold meetings between 9:00 a.m. and noon. It’s important to reevaluate your plan each year. To make an appointment, reach Carmen Rivera at 704-295-4818 or crivera@mpumc.org.

• **STUDY HANDEL’S MESSIAH** An Advent study on Handel’s Messiah will be from 10:00 a.m. to noon Thursdays from November 3 to December 1 in Room 105 of the Parish Life Building. The group will explore the Scriptural texts of Handel’s Messiah to deepen appreciation of this timeless piece. No class Thanksgiving Day, November 24. Details and registration: www.myersparkumc.org/small-groups.

• **HELP THE CHURCH LIBRARY** Honor a loved one by making a donation to buy a book that’s already in the library, in Room 111 in the Parish Life Building. Instructions, prices and books on the library wish list are at the main desk in the library. Details: Linda Myers at 704-907-0864 or lsmyers@mindspring.com.
CLIMBING MOUNT KILIMANJARO...

Continued From Front Page...

Church members LouAnn and Scott Vaughn, in the midst of their adventure.

recommended medication, and began our climb by putting one foot in front of the other, again and again.

We were a group of 21 climbers. Supporting our team were 87 Tanzanians. I carried a daypack filled with extra layers of clothing, water and snacks. When we reached our camp on any given day, the tents and potties were in place, food was on the stove and our Tanzanian friends greeted us in song. True to Isaiah's verses, the mountains and the hills had indeed broken forth in song.

We hiked and camped for five days before reaching the base of the summit. The days were filled with laughter, storytelling and singing. It was not too strenuous or steep, as we continued to put one foot in front of the other, again and again.

Summit night was different. We left the base camp at midnight to make the seemingly vertical climb to Uhuru Peak by sunup. I thought I was going to freeze. I prayed for the sun to come up and for God to give me the strength to make it to the top. I could hardly breathe, much less hum or sing the tunes that filled my head. Yet our guides literally sang us up the mountain. Every bit of my energy focused on breathing and putting one foot in front of the other, again and again. When the sun revealed itself, it shone in a perfect starburst pattern over the puffy cloud floor below us. We reached the peak at 8:30 a.m., took pictures, then headed back down.

Descending was hard. By the time we reached our base camp, my legs felt like Jell-O. I didn't think I could continue putting one foot in front of the other. But somehow, we made it. The next morning, the sun came up again and my perspective had changed. I was on the other side of the most challenging physical thing I’d ever done. I could breathe again. For the first time that last morning, we sang a song for our Tanzanian crew. We created some new verses and taught them our Kilimanjaro version of *This Little Light of Mine*.

What did I learn from climbing Mount Kilimanjaro?

I learned that God uses so many people in my life to give me support and encouragement. I learned that, with God’s help, I can keep putting one foot in front of the other, again and again, and that when I least expect it, the hills might burst into song. I learned that a new day provides a new perspective, and that music is a universal language. I learned that we are all God's children, traveling together, putting one foot in front of the other, again and again, sometimes moving forward on the strength of little more than a song.
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Here’s the best part: If it wasn’t for the support, prayers and encouragement of this great church, we wouldn’t be where we are today. With that being said, we are thrilled to invite you all – yes, everyone! – to our special day. Please join us for the holy worship service of marriage at 4:00 p.m. Saturday, November 19, in the Sanctuary. Come to the service and be the body of Christ, representing God’s love as the third cord.

After the Unrest: Asking Questions, Passing the Peace

By Ken Garfield

Pursuing reconciliation:

• There were more questions than answers as Charlotte Observer editorialists Taylor Batten, Eric Frazier and Peter St. Onge led a MeckMin luncheon dialogue on issues arising from Charlotte’s recent unrest. What can we do about segregated schools and neighborhoods? How do we quit harboring preconceptions about people? How do we help people see a pathway to better opportunity? A larger-than-normal crowd of 125 turned out for the interfaith network’s Food For Thought gathering – a reflection of the community’s hunger for remedies. The first step in this difficult journey to reconciliation? As St. Onge said, “One of the things we have to do is try.” Two more MeckMin gatherings of note: Molly Barker, who founded the Red Boot Coalition to promote what she calls “honest sharing and compassionate listening,” will speak at 11:45 a.m. Thursday, November 17, at Covenant Presbyterian Church. The annual interfaith Thanksgiving service is at 7:00 p.m. Tuesday, November 22, at Providence Baptist Church. Details are at www.meckmin.org.

• Pass The Peace dinners are bringing together members from our church, the largely African American St. Mark’s United Methodist, police officers and youth. Church member LouAnn Vaughn shares a special moment from one dinner conversation at Napa on Providence: “We spent most of the time bearing each other’s stories. We listened to the hopes and dreams of the youth. The black police officer who joined us is amazing. He wants youth to feel comfortable with him, and sees everyone as a child of God. At the end, the manager came to our table and told us that some anonymous diners had paid for our dinner, all eight of us. Evidently it was a couple that had been sitting close by and understood what we were doing. They told the manager to thank the officers for their service and to tell us they support what we are doing as a group. Pretty cool stuff.” To join a dinner, or learn more about other reconciliation efforts at church, reach Ron Knapke at ronknapke@icloud.com.

• Dr. Howell is lining up programs for January and February exploring reconciliation. In the works: Bible scholar Ben Witherington on Paul’s teachings on reconciliation; a class on the Bible’s best stories of reconciliation and healing; a celebration of Negro spirituals, and more. Details to come.
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