

CHOOSING TO FIGHT HUNGER

Church member Chris Turner reflects on the upcoming Stop Hunger Now campaign.

Choice. It's central to what it means to be human. It's central to what it means to be Christian. God doesn't force us to follow him. Instead, He gives us that choice and forgives us all the time when we make poor choices that lead us away from His will.

For most of us in Charlotte, we make choices all week long regarding what we eat and what we choose to feed our families. Should we grill out for the game? Should we take out-of-town guests to that new, hip restaurant? But for many of our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world, the choices for basic sustenance are limited. Sometimes there are no options.

Stop Hunger Now is a Raleigh-based ministry with a mission to "end hunger in our lifetime by providing food and life-changing aid to the world's most vulnerable..." Packing meals is a beloved practice at our church. We'll host two food-packing sessions on Sunday, October 2, in the Parish Life Building basement, with shifts from 9:45 to



A snapshot from last year's Stop Hunger Now.

11:30 a.m. and noon to 1:30 p.m. Sign up at www.LiveDifferentlyWeekend.org. You can also sign up in the Parish Life lobby on Sunday, September 18 and 25, from 8:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Will you choose to help?

A Conversation On Faith CAN WE TALK?

Most of us don't have Molly Barker'schutzpah. She dropped what she was doing, formed an organization to promote the radical notion of us actually talking and listening to one another, then rented a Mustang convertible and drove around the country striking up conversations with pretty much anyone and everyone.



Ken Garfield

In Williamsport, Pa., she spotted a guy named Dave at a Starbucks – his name was embroidered on his shirt – and asked if he wanted to talk about why our country is so polarized. "Hell, yes," he told her. Also in Williamsport, at the Holiday Inn, a housekeeper named Doray shared the secret to life: Everyone needs to be seen, heard and loved. Closer to home, lost on a run in Plaza Midwood, Molly and the owner of a pick-up truck shared their different interpretations of the Confederate flag he had stuck to his window. By the time she jogged away, they

still held different views. But at least they had talked.



Molly Barker

who made Molly bristle – until she noticed him at baggage claim, bending down to give a sip of water to his Down syndrome daughter.

Molly's Red Boot Coalition (www.theredbootcoalition.org) is pushing what it calls "honest sharing and compassionate listening." That's what brought her to Jubilee Hall the other night – to talk with 125 of us about the rancorous times we live in, and to preach a little. With her quick laugh and

But at least they had talked is Molly's rallying cry these days, for she is on a crusade to get us to seek out other people's stories. To honor their opinions. To stop being so quick to judge and condemn others. That includes the guy in the Trump T-shirt in the Akron (Ohio) airport



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SNAPSHOTS

H.O.T. Wednesday is back, offering a meal and fellowship Wednesdays from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. in Jubilee Hall. Save a seat at your table for a newcomer, or a stranger seeking warmth. Church suppers are a tough sell these days, what with Mom and/or Dad working late and the kids juggling soccer, piano and homework. And yet our church supper endures, flourishes even, a tradition based on the belief we all need a little refuge. And Shebra's meat loaf.

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

Sanctuary services
8:30, 9:45, 11:00 a.m.

Church In The Round
8:45 a.m., Jubilee Hall.

Holy Communion
9:30 a.m., Chapel.

Sunday School
9:45 a.m.

Continued Inside...

In Memory

The sympathy of the ministers and members is extended to:

The Families Of...

Mary Mae Crist, mother of Jami Masters and grandmother of Sterling and Randall Masters, who died on August 18, 2016. *Jacqueline Hart Lookabill*, wife of Gene Lookabill and mother of Gene Lookabill Jr., who died on August 23, 2016. *Bonn A. Gilbert Jr.*, stepfather of Kristy Thompson and grandfather of Wills and Julia Thompson, who died on August 28, 2016. *Gary Spence*, father of Simon Spence and Dominic Spence and grandfather of Jacob and Ethan Spence, who died on September 1, 2016.

Babies

Hobson Todd Gray, son of Elizabeth and Patrick Gray and brother of Cate Gray, born on July 10, 2016. *Nolen Elliott DeWeese*, son of Amanda and David DeWeese, grandson of David and Jan Kirkpatrick and great-grandson of Arlyene Armstrong, born on August 24, 2016. *Macy Pearl Fiery*, daughter of Mallory and Michael Fiery, born on August 26, 2016. *Ann "Annie" Beverly Nannini*, daughter of Julie and Bob Nannini, sister of Owen and Ben Nannini, granddaughter of Jim and Ann Young and niece of Andy Young and Brett Young, born on August 30, 2016.

Weddings

Justine Nomina and Maurice Corbett, married on September 10, 2016 at the church.

A JOURNEY BACK TO MY BEAUTIFUL FRIENDS IN HAITI

Church member John Snyder shares here his heart for Haiti. A mission team will travel to Bayonnais, Haiti, from October 26 to November 2 to continue the congregation's relationship with the people there. To learn more, attend a meeting at 6:00 p.m. Wednesday, September 21, in Room 103 of the Parish Life Building. Details are at www.myersparkumc.org/serve-under-Global-Missions.

On October 26, a team from our church will travel to the beautiful mountains of Bayonnais, Haiti. After a short flight to Miami, then to Port-au-Prince, we'll travel north by bus to work and interact with some of the most beautiful, thankful, peaceful people you will ever meet. As we make new friends in Haiti, we will cultivate lasting friendships with fellow church members blessed to share this journey.

This will be my second trip, and I can't wait to get back to see my little buddies. I can say without hesitation that my time in Haiti last autumn was transformative. My week in Bayonnais was the most serene and peaceful time I've ever experienced. We interacted with our Haitian brothers and sisters through their church, schools and health clinic.

The most moving experience for me came in the church service on Sunday morning. Everyone was dressed up, singing as one, knowing that they'd enjoy a full meal together after the



*Church member John Snyder and friends in Haiti.
Photo by Melissa McGill.*

service – 700 Haitians in all. A beautiful two-year-old Haitian girl in a pink dress sat on my lap. The presence of God in that service was undeniable.

It was a moment, and a journey, I will never forget. Won't you join me?

A Conversation On Faith CAN WE TALK?...

Continued From Front Page...

quirky vibe – she told us she was “scited” to be here, meaning scared and excited – Molly’s suited to tilt at windmills. Good thing, seeing how she’s promoting understanding in the middle of this bizarrely ugly Presidential campaign.

As I listened to Molly’s stories – God bless her for building her ministry around stories – I looked around the room. I saw some wonderful friends with good hearts, and strangers who had come to have their hearts touched. Hardly a one,

however, is likely to rent a Mustang convertible and drive from Charlotte to Las Vegas in hopes of changing America. But maybe we can embrace another one of the challenges Molly set before us:

“It’s about building just the smallest bridge,” she said. “Isn’t building a bridge more important than being right?”

Director of Communications Ken Garfield writes about church life.

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.



September 14, 2016

LIVE DIFFERENTLY WEEKEND

All are encouraged to help serve the hungry on #LiveDifferentlyWeekend October 1-2. Volunteers will pack 75,000 meals at the popular *Stop Hunger Now* project on Sunday, October 2, in the Parish Life Building basement. Shifts are from 9:45 to 11:30 a.m. and noon to 1:30 p.m. Other weekend opportunities: Preparing lunch for residents of McCreesh Place and sorting food at Second Harvest Food Bank. Sign up at www.LiveDifferentlyWeekend.org. Elsewhere in *the Cornerstone*, read church member Chris Turner's reflection on *Stop Hunger Now*, hair nets and all.

- **RELIGION AND POLITICS** In the midst of this bitter election season, Dr. Howell will explore religion and politics from a Christian and Methodist perspective at 7:00 p.m. Monday, September 26, in Jubilee Hall.
- **CARING FOR AGING PARENTS** A discussion at 7:00 p.m. Tuesday, September 20, in Francis Chapel will explore *Issues In Caring For Aging Parents*. The panel will include Parish Nurse Susan Mobley, Rev. Bill Roth and church member Bob Truscello. Among the topics: Spirituality, medical and legal concerns, and expectations when faced with this challenge.
- **ADULTS PLUS!** The Adults Plus! ministry for ages 55 and over meets at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, September 21, in Room 103 of the Parish Life Building. Molly Barker of the Red Boot Coalition will talk about her work promoting "honest sharing and compassionate listening" – continuing the conversation she shared with Dr. Howell earlier. A barbecue chicken lunch follows at noon in Jubilee Hall. To make a reservation by noon September 20, call 704-376-5520 (option two) or e-mail cmull@mpumc.org.
- **CPR/AED CLASSES** Learn adult and infant CPR and how to use the automated external defibrillators (AED) around the church at two classes: From 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Thursday, September 22, and Wednesday, October 5, in Room 110 of the Parish Life Building. Cost is \$30, paid in advance. RSVP to Carmen Rivera at 704-295-4818 or crivera@mpumc.org.
- **GIVE BLOOD** Donate blood from 7:30 a.m. to noon Sunday, October 16, in the Youth Building Gym. Appointments are recommended: Reserve a time from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. Sunday, September 25, and October 2 and 9, in the Parish Life Building lobby or by calling 704-376-8584. Walk-ins are also welcome.
- **MEDICARE D COUNSELING** Church members Nick Beard, Ron Knape, Jan Nomina and Bill Spier will offer counseling on Medicare prescription drug plans Mondays through Thursdays in the Church Library (Room 111) in the Parish Life Building starting Monday, October 17, and running through Tuesday, December 6. They'll hold meetings between 9:00 a.m. and noon. For an appointment, contact Carmen Rivera at 704-295-4818 or crivera@mpumc.org.
- **NEW CLASS FOR WOMEN** Women of all ages are invited to *Simply Women* meeting Sundays at 9:45 a.m. in Room 167 in the Youth Building starting September 18. Details: Director of Young Adults Jessica Stevens at 704-295-4803 or jessica@mpumc.org.
- **NEW MONASTICISM** This new short-term small group study will be offered by Dr. Melanie Dobson Thursdays from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. October 6 to November 10 in Room 105 of the Parish Life Building. It's for those hungering for a deeper spiritual life in the context of community. Details: www.myersparkumc.org/small-groups.
- **MINDFULNESS BOOK STUDY** Parish Nurse Susan Mobley will facilitate a book study on *Mindfulness: An Eight-Week Plan for Finding Peace in a Frantic World* by Mark Williams and Danny Penman. Mindfulness has been shown as a way to reduce stress and live more fully in the moment. The class will meet Mondays from 11:00 a.m. to noon from September 19 to November 14 in Room 103 in the Parish Life Building. To sign up, reach Carmen Rivera at 704-295-4818 or crivera@mpumc.org.
- **READ TO A SECOND-GRADER** Read weekly to a child through *For The Love Of Reading*, Tuesday or Thursday from 1:45 to 2:45 p.m. through April. Reach Beth Gage at bethdgage@gmail.com.



An illustration of the flooding in the Baton Rouge area. (David Grunfeld/NOLA.com The Times-Picayune via AP)

CALLED TO BATON ROUGE

Church members Peter and Mary Kelly share their journey in late August to Baton Rouge to help victims of the flood. Since rising waters ravaged much of Louisiana, Myers Park United Methodist Church has raised more than \$20,000 for relief efforts and collected 30-plus flood buckets. A trip to Louisiana is in the works for next month, to do some more good. To donate to relief efforts, visit www.myersparkumc.org/give.

Baton Rouge was calling us to serve. After the recent flood, we had donated funds to relief efforts but we felt called to work side by side with families whose homes had been damaged in the deluge. That led us on an 11-hour journey to Louisiana to work through several churches.

As we drove through neighborhoods, we saw piles of furniture in front of homes – carpeting, drywall, beds, appliances and more, all of it destroyed in the flood. Baseball fields, tennis courts and soccer fields remained under water. The flood brought 24 to 30 inches of rain to Baton Rouge over 24 hours. Homes that had not flooded in 50 years had as much as 36 inches of standing water in their homes.

Our hearts broke.

One day, we helped remove hardwood floors and treat the frame for mold in the home of a 91-year-old woman. She had lived there 50 years. We never did meet her, as she had been evacuated. Her daughter told us her mother's home wouldn't be ready for her return before January.

We worked in the home of a lovely elderly couple who had lived there 40 years. Both are in the early stages of Alzheimer's. Their children twice sent a boat to evacuate them, but they didn't want to leave. They couldn't believe the water would flood their home. We spent two days removing hardwood floors, hauling



Church members Peter and Mary Kelly with Rev. Warren Clifton (left) of The Well United Methodist Church.

out debris and cleaning up. We could see the exhaustion and confusion in their eyes.

Over six days in Baton Rouge, amid the grueling work, families shared stories that brought tears of sadness to our eyes and hearts. And yet there were tears of joy, too, over the loving response in the form of manual labor, prayers and money.

We plan to return to Baton Rouge next month. The city is still calling us.



SEPTEMBER 11...

High School Youth Associate Jason Rhymer shares a powerful Sunday with the church's high school youth, on September 11.

Unforgettable night with firemen at Stations 6 and 14 with 46 high schoolers and six adults. We brought baked goods and prayers to say thank you on this memorable day. At both stations, there were profound stories of how faith guides these men to do heroic things. Our youth were blown away hearing that firefighters really embody "Love your neighbor" and take that Scripture to new heights through their sacrifice. One firefighter in particular, Frank at Station 6, said he was called by God to be a fireman. He quoted the day (I think it was December 21, 1992), and said he still thinks about that calling every time he laces up his fire boots. We had church at a firehouse. We previously have had church at a Laundromat. This is the direction we are going, to have church without being in church.



Church youth spent 9/11 at a firehouse.

Want To Help Build?

MEET OUR NEW NEIGHBORS, THANKS TO HABITAT

By Jen Rothacker

When you're building your first-ever house, you get excited. For dad Abdelhadi, it's getting excited about learning a few new handyman moves. For mom Lalla, it's having a home that feeds into a strong high school. For their three daughters, it's all about choosing which rooms they get.

Said Abdelhadi Elbyar, speaking of his girls, ages 12, 6 and 5: "When they started looking, they asked, 'Where's my room, where's my room?'"

The Elbyars are building their 1,350-square-foot home in the Grier Heights community through Habitat for Humanity, with help from Myers Park United Methodist and Myers Park Presbyterian churches. Through October, volunteers from both churches will join the Elbyars most Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays – raising walls, putting on the roof and painting the four-bedroom, two-bath home. The family hopes to move in in January.

Abdelhadi moved from Morocco about 16 years ago. After short stints in New York and Alabama, he landed in Charlotte – where the weather is similar to Morocco's – and brought over Lalla and their oldest daughter. Abdelhadi is a Halal butcher. Lalla takes classes at Central Piedmont Community College and works occasionally at the Habitat ReStore.



Abdelhadi Elbyar and two of their daughters.

Photo by Jen Rothacker.

Since securing a Habitat home, the couple has attended more than 40 hours of home ownership classes. In addition, they come out to the worksite when they're not working. Abdelhadi loves it when a big group joins him on site – because he gets to meet new people, and because "when there's more people, the work gets done more quickly."

Want to help build? Go to www.myersparkumc.org/serve.

GOODBYE (AND THANKS) TO VANESSA, JEN

The church has said goodbye to **Event and Personnel Coordinator Vanessa Pierre-Parker**, who left the staff after nine years to become a school-based therapist at Monroe High School and Monroe Middle School. A calling, she calls it. Many in and out of the church knew Vanessa for her quiet good cheer as she handled employee benefits, payroll and facility scheduling for inside and outside groups. For many nonprofits that put on events in Jubilee Hall, Vanessa was the face of this church. While holding down a full-time job and taking care of a husband and three children, she earned a Masters degree in Marriage and Family Therapy at night from Pfeiffer University in Charlotte. The church will seek a successor to fill her post.

Local Missions Coordinator Jen Rothacker is also leaving the church staff, effective September 22. She's returning

to *The Charlotte Observer* as Events Manager, focused on generating revenue through *Observer*-branded events and other projects. She'll work with Publisher Ann Caulkins. Jen worked at the paper 18 years before coming to the church in January. While she leaves the staff, the Rothackers remain active members, engaged in many aspects of church life. Jen will continue displaying the considerable energy for which she's known.

The church continues seeking a successor to **Rev. Ellen Robison** as Minister of Worship and the Arts. Ellen now holds a similar position at The Riverside Church in Manhattan. There is no timetable for when the new person might be hired.



COMING SOON:

PLANNED GIVING, PHANTOM, FLU SHOTS

- With a new committee educating the congregation about the importance of planned giving, an event: Young parents (and others) are invited to *Advice For Parents: Preparing For The Unexpected* at 7:00 p.m. Monday, October 24, in Room 105 of the Parish Life Building. Two church members – estate planning attorney Sydney Warren and Ashley Gilbert, a mother of one who was widowed three years ago – will share their expertise and story. Child care is available. Details: Executive Director Saribeth Dozier at 704-295-4844 or saribeth@mpumc.org.
- Get a flu or pneumonia shot from 1:30 to 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, October 12, in Room 108 of the Parish Life Building. Details: Parish Nurse Susan Mobley at 704-295-4836 or smobley@mpumc.org.

- Calling all kids (and kids at heart): *The Phantom Of The Organ* Halloween organ concert will be at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, October 26, in the Sanctuary, right after H.O.T. Wednesday. Come in costume (or not).
- Church member Rachel Humphries of Refugee Support Services shared a sweet story behind this photo of Pun



*Pun, mother of Carman
(read the last note).*

from the last *Cornerstone*, taken at a swim party: “She’s a delight. She’s from Vietnam. Her son’s name is Carman. Guess why he’s named Carman. He was born in a car.”