



*20 Devotions*  
*to Celebrate the 20th Anniversary*  
*of Christ United Methodist Church*

*Inspired by God and Written by*  
*The People of Christ Church*

**DAY 1****Saturday, October 17, 2015**

*The Lord is my solid rock, my fortress, my rescuer. My God is my rock – I take refuge in him! He's my shield, my salvation's strength, my place of safety. Psalm 18:2*

Christ Church has had a steadfast presence in our family's life since 2006. The people, the opportunities to serve and worship, and the stone building at the edge of the village square have all been a source of strength and solace for us. After our first Sunday worship at CUMC, we soon became members, and as the church grew, our son, Nate, grew too. With each passing Christmas, we had a Star, an Angel, a Wise Man and a Friendly Beast (X2) in the annual pageant.

Through several friend and family health issues, we found comfort placing our prayer requests into the offering plate knowing that the prayer group would hold us in their hearts. Christi Dye was one of the first people we called when we learned our Baby Kate was on her way. And, Mission 1:27 and Beyond our Borders gave us ways to help children and to share the message of Christ.

In the past three years, we have come to love the 8:30 service and the weekly opportunity it gives us to share in communion and to come closer to Jesus. The music uplifts us and the dependable community who serves and celebrates each week keeps us scrambling to get there.

When we lived in Southern Village, I enjoyed sitting on our porch hearing the church bells and seeing the lights of the steeple in the distance. They were a constant reminder of God's love and salvation. We no longer live in the neighborhood and cannot hear the bells or see the steeple at night, but Christ Church is a part of our family and has helped us know God no matter where we are.

***Oh, great and giving God, show us the way, and help us to find strength knowing you are always with us. Amen.***

*Paula Alexander—member since March, 2007*

**Sunday, October 18, 2015****DAY 2**

*But Jesus said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 19:14*

My wife Joyce and I moved to Chapel Hill in 1997 and began looking for a church to attend. We visited several until, one day, Joyce read about a new Methodist church that was going to be built in Southern Village. The first service we attended at Christ Church was on Easter Sunday, 1998. It was held outside on the site of our present church building, and the pastor was Raegan May. All worshipers stood in front of a large wooden cross made out of rough, unfinished wood, and it called to mind the cross upon which our savior Jesus Christ was crucified. I remember Raegan told us that by next Easter, we would be worshipping in our new church building on that very site, and we did.

Joyce and I began thinking about how we could serve at CUMC, and we learned about a new mission group that was forming called Beyond Our Borders. We attended the first meeting where the assembled group decided that BOB would concentrate its efforts on helping support poor children living in various countries "beyond our borders." This mission was a perfect fit for me. My mother died when I was 15 months old, and because my father was not able to care for me and my two older sisters, I was reared in a Christian orphanage from the time I was three-years-old until I turned 18. A few years ago, as I sat with my sister Edna at the bedside of our sister Elizabeth who was dying from lung cancer, we talked about our lives. We concluded we were quite fortunate to have been loved and cared for by such wonderful Christian people.

Since that first BOB meeting years ago, Joyce and I have worked to raise money to support the poor children living in Londrina, Brazil and Nicaragua. Some church members have asked why we need to go outside our own country in order to support poor children. My answer is that we do not. But, in Matthew 19:14, I notice that Jesus did not say "Suffer the little children of the United States . . ." but *all* children. It seems to me that Jesus is challenging us to support all His children wherever they may be.

***Heavenly Father, You came for the least, the lost and last of this world. Help us to be your feet, walking beside those in need, and let us be your hands to clothe, feed and shelter them. Amen.***

*Jim Anderson—member since October, 1999*

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, & turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh & refreshment to your bones." Proverbs 3:5-8*

On Friday, April 12th, 2002, my tidy little world flipped off its axis when a Durham neurologist uttered two simple words that became part of my everyday lexicon. "Brain tumor" immediately triggered anxiety, fear, anger and hope all at once, further scrambling my already dizzy brain. Within minutes, the doctor clarified his earlier statement, amending it to say that the pituitary tumor, located between my eyes, was chestnut-sized and most likely benign. He recommended that I seek an appointment with a Duke neurosurgeon.

Soon, I found myself in the capable hands of celebrated neurosurgeon Dr. Allan Friedman, said to be one of the best, if not the best, on the planet. And I also found myself in the more-than-capable hands of God the Father, King of kings, God of gods, and Lord of everything. My wife, Bonnie, and I had joined Christ Church in 2000 when we moved to Chapel Hill. Senior Pastor Raegan May wove the best sermons I had ever encountered. Associate Pastor Pat Hawkins was just as skilled, and intern Pastor Greg Moore was even then showing signs of becoming the dynamic minister he has become today. Suddenly, Pastor May's sermons took on added meaning for me. I don't think it was coincidence. His Sunday morning messages seemed to be aimed directly at me and my situation, and I took that as a sign that God was actually looking out for me. Greg visited me at Duke Hospital; then Pat followed up with an in-home visit. The staff constantly provided hope and reassurance, elements that are so essential to our survival.

During this time, I increased my own Bible reading -- giving it more time and doing it more often. I never conquered my fear of the surgery, but I did place my acceptance of it into God's hands. I gradually realized that I had to let God do what he does best. Just before being prepped for surgery, I remember asking God one more time for his help and saying to myself, "Thy will be done." I clung to Proverbs 3:5-8 in particular, words that carried me through surgery and recovery. That scripture remains part of my daily regimen, and it's just as important to me today as it was on May 16, 2002, the day of my surgery.

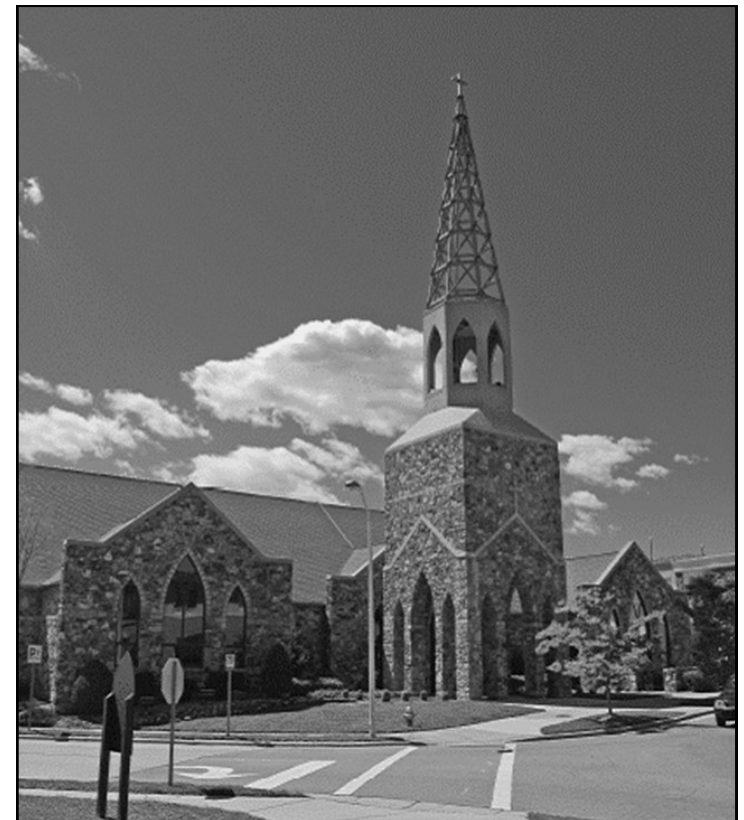
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I don't believe this scripture is difficult to interpret; however, living it is a lifelong challenge. Placing total trust in God and ceding one's own control of a situation can be an arduous task. We like to think we control our own destiny, but there are many times when we can't do that, & we have to trust that God knows our best interests. And, of course, He does.

***Father, help us to understand and trust that You are in charge, that You know our needs. Help us to turn away from the evil of our own self-sufficiency and to find the fulfillment only You can provide. Amen.***

*Bob Bevan—member since March, 2001*



*"Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Ephesians 6:10-11*

Immediately upon joining Christ Church in December, 2013, I was accepted. Connecting with a Sunday School class & the choir brought many new friends. I'd found my church. But a few months later, in a tiny oncology office, the conversation turned from Jesus to ultrasounds & biopsy results. I'd been diagnosed with an aggressive, rare cancer that would require almost a year of treatment. My physical discomfort grew & required pain medication. I was afraid to work & drive. I couldn't paint or write, two activities that nurtured my spirit. I existed in fear, both of death & of living. Surely God had made a mistake. "You have the wrong person. Choose somebody else, God," I implored. But I was chosen.

The next week, I connected with a prayer group at CUMC; I wanted to listen and hear from God with others. We met and talked. They asked questions. We prayed together. They believed in my strength and my health. They encouraged my determination to fight this disease and armed me with scripture like Ephesians 6:10-22 and Psalm 91. I left feeling more peace than I had since the diagnosis. The very next day, I experienced a turnaround. I started driving, eliminated my daytime pain medicine (which enabled me to resume work), and began to write and paint again with renewed vigor. I read scripture and searched on the internet for alternative resources. I felt armed to fight my cancer.

A year and a half later, I am clear of detectable cancer cells. I continue to pray, meditate and commune daily with the Holy Spirit. Nothing is lacking in my life. I am so grateful to be alive; there is no such thing as a bad day. The most difficult situation is sweet because I am alive and interacting in that moment. I am now a member of that prayer group: Shemaiah-God listening, God hearing. I praise God daily for the help the group continues to give me. They would say, "To God be the glory," and I would counter, "Amen".

***Dear God, We grant you sovereignty & wisdom in creating our lives. If we are to be sick, help us accept our pain & suffering with humility knowing you are watching over us, holding us close when we experience adversity. In Jesus, the great healer's, name. Amen.***

*Julia Burns—member since December, 2013*

*Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." Joshua 3:5*

When my children were young, "occasionally" they would grow impatient with me if I kept them waiting for something they were eager to do or have. In those moments, I would annoy the dickens out of them by launching into the refrain from Carly Simon's song, "Anticipation." You know the song I'm talking about. Here are the words to the refrain: "Anticipation, anticipation is making me late, is keeping me waiting." Whether it was the teasing or my off-key singing, I can tell you it didn't make them a bit patient!

So 20 years ago, when a small group of us gathered to pray for the Holy Spirit's inspiration and guidance as we did the first visioning for Christ UMC, I could identify with the impatience of my children. While we were buoyed by our anticipation of the reality of this faith community, we also were impatient to see the Lord's vision for us unfold. When I look back on our first 20 years, another line in that Carly Simon song comes to mind: "We can never know about the days to come..."

Those words ring true for each one of us who has been a part of the Christ UMC journey over its first two decades. We never would have imagined what the days ahead held for us, such abundant blessings and times of wrenching heartache. But we knew something much more important. We knew and claimed God's faithfulness to his faithful people. We dedicated ourselves and this church to God's purposes and watched as the Lord did wonders among us and through us.

I confess that anticipation is keeping me waiting again as God works through and in us to realize the days to come for Christ UMC. And while I wait, I rededicate myself to God's purpose for my life within this faith community. I want to see what other wonders the Lord will do among us. Don't you?

***Lord, as we await the wonders you will do among us, we claim the promise from Isaiah 40:31 : "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." Amen.***

*Jean Elia—member since January, 1996*

*How lovely is your dwelling place, O lord of hosts! Psalm 84: 1*

Growing up, my mama made me go to church every time they opened the doors. On Sundays alone, I attended Sunday School, "preaching," youth choir practice, Methodist Youth Fellowship, and the 7:00 pm service. As a result, I grew to hate Sundays. Marriage afforded me the freedom to choose how I spent my Sundays.

Fast forward about 25 years. I began missing the church, especially the music. I started visiting various churches around town, even branching out to different denominations, but none filled the bill. When someone telephoned one day and asked if I would be interested in receiving further information about a new Methodist church, I quickly said yes. On November 5, 1995 at Culbreth Middle School, I listened with rapt attention as Raegan May delivered the first sermon at Christ United Methodist Church. I could hardly wait to return the following Sunday. As I shook Raegan's hand after that service, he called me Anita. I was astonished that he knew my name on just the second week, and even more shocked that he knew everyone else's name too! But that was only one of Raegan's many talents that we so enjoyed.

On Sunday, December 3, 1995, my 47<sup>th</sup> birthday, I transferred my membership to Christ UMC in the first wave of Charter Members. I was excited at the ground-breaking for our new building a few years later, and plumb giddy when I stepped into our brand-new, bare-bones building a year after that. Its beauty has grown exponentially with its congregation, as has my love for our church. And I will love God's house on earth until I dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

***Dear God, thank you for the vision of those responsible for the inception and growth of Christ United Methodist Church. Please bless us as we continue to grow in your love together. Amen.***

*Anita Galliher—member since December, 1995*

*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them. Matthew 18:20*

It was supposed to be a one-time visit. My kids & I would stop by Christ Church to support my dear friend, Suzanne Hultman, as she led her first service after a lengthy, family-raising sabbatical. Many times as I drove by, I had admired the beautiful, towering stone structure with bells tolling. But on this particular Sunday evening - at the Wellspring service - it was my first time attending CUMC or any Methodist church. "The service is relaxed and really casual," Suzanne had told me. My boys, who were 13 and 8, wore athletic shorts and t-shirts.

The short days of January cloaked the church in darkness, but inside, the place lit up. Mary Day Saou and the Wellspring band sang songs of enthusiastic praise, and I glanced to see the reaction of my sons who were used to old hymns that made them sleepy at church. One of them gave me a thumbs up. As Suzanne preached, her message resonated and made me think of the many ways it applied to my life. Then the music softened to a contemplative solo, the title of which is long forgotten, but the effect is not. It stirred my soul. All of this was just the balm I needed after losing my father only a couple of weeks earlier.

When the service ended, several people approached us with smiles & extended hands of welcome. From day one, everything about the Wellspring service felt comfortable, like an easy chair in the family room that seems to say, "You're home" when you sink into it. The next week, my boys asked to go again. And again. What started as a one-time visit has turned into a permanent home, complete with a church family.

There's something very special about this intimate service. Maybe it's the small number of people or the relaxed "we-accept-you-as-you-are" vibe. Maybe it's the undeniable presence of God that envelopes Wellspring as surely as the night sky does. That "thing" that defies description is exactly what church should be. It is what connects us to God and to each other in the deepest way.

***Amazing God, thank you for Christ Church being a place of welcome where Your Spirit is palpable, a place for two or more to gather & to unite in prayer, fellowship, encouragement, & love. May we take your Spirit from this place & carry You into the world so others may know You. Amen.***

*Tracy Gibson—friend of CUMC since January, 2012*

*“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers” Hebrews 13:2*

My experience with Christ Church has been just a little over four years in length, compared to her rich history of twenty. Nevertheless, I am grateful to her --- and especially to the Lord --- for the privilege of being transplanted here from Connecticut and placed into her fine fellowship. It might help you to appreciate this gift of provision and hospitality if I told you that I had been an active part of a 200-member congregation “up North” for 40 years and that I was on staff there for 32! That church was my dear family, and its members were faithful Christians. Would I ever find such a wonderful place in Chapel Hill?

I believe it was the Lord who led me to say “Yes” to an apartment at Camden Governors Village a whole year before my retirement and move to the South. I remember driving by the lovely building that houses the people of God at Christ Church and wondering aloud: “This place has such beautiful style. Will it also have spiritual substance?”

Praise God that you welcomed me right away *and* blessed me by being believers who love the Lord! Without Christ Church, I may well have been deprived of great new friends and new places to serve, such as in the Choir, on the Prayer Team, and as a Stephen Minister. How well God knows our needs! He did indeed “set this solitary one in a new family!” [Psalm 68:6].

***Father, I thank you for Christ Church. Thank you for calling her into being these past 20 years and for sustaining her. Thank you for each pastor, leader, and member whom you have called into ministry here. Now by Your Holy Spirit, may you continue to bless her that she might be a blessing both near and far for many more years to come! I pray all this in the powerful name of Jesus, our Lord – Amen.***

*Sharon Guyer—member since October, 2011*

*Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Matthew 6:1-4*

I think the passage above sometimes may be misunderstood as advising people to refrain from doing good deeds publicly. I have often wondered if this meant Christians should abstain from living boldly. So, as I meditated on this text, I focused in on the particular phrase “*to be seen by them.*” It relates to the intention around practicing righteousness.

I think the Scripture reveals that followers of Christ should never do righteous things to gain the attention of others as if to boast of our goodness. But, it certainly *does not* direct us to refrain from living out our faith. The true intention of *our* “good works” should be that they stem from our love of God. And in that sense, they stop being *our* “good works” and become the Lord’s. So, when we do a good deed or help someone in public, let our intention be that our actions are seen as a reflection of the love God has so freely given to us.

***Dear Lord, We pray that as we attempt to live faithfully - privately and publicly - that we do so without the pretense of inflating our egos or affirming our own goodness. Rather, we pray that your goodness becomes the object of our every action and allows us to enjoy the blessing of charity you’ve given to our life in the secrecy and softness of prayer. Amen.***

*Aaron Hayworth—member since February, 2015*

*When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." John 8:12*

If you think about it, thunder and lightning are pretty weird. In a storm, first you *see* the lightning and then you *hear* it. But the weird thing is that they both are happening at the same time. We see the light at the exact and precise time, yet we hear the thunder at a delayed time, later than the light occurred.

Light is consistent, always the same speed. Light is constant. God's timing, like light, is always right. Our timing, like thunder, doesn't always match up with God's timing. Whether we agree with it or not, God's plan is always what is right. What's unfortunate is that sometimes we have to be in the middle of the storm for us to see that God's timing has been perfect all along.

Christ Church has helped me get through the storms of life and even avoid some, too, all the while supporting and fueling my faith and helping me to remember how perfect God is.

***You are the light, God, always constant and perfect.  
I confess, Lord, that sometimes I think my plan is what's right,  
not yours. Help me to realize that your plan is always right  
and that you are what's perfect, not me. Amen.***

*Chloe Hultman—Carrboro High School Senior &  
member since March, 2010*

*We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed... 2 Corinthians 4:7-9*

When I reflect back on Christ UMC and how God has used it mightily in the last 20 years, I am truly filled with awe. My awe is definitely evoked as I see, looking back, the many ways the Gospel has been lived out and proclaimed in the world through Christ UMC. Also, a sense of awe sweeps over me as I see how God has preserved this congregation through great suffering and times of trial. It is remarkable that in 20 years, Christ Church has stood through the tragic loss of the beloved founding pastor, and it has persevered through some complex turnover of ministers, staff and even members. God in Christ Jesus reminds us again and again in scripture, and in our own ordinary lives, that followers of Jesus live in extraordinary strength that is never our own.

The surpassing power evident at Christ UMC truly is of God. It is clear that God brought Christ UMC into being, and God has a mighty purpose for what He is doing in this congregation and for this community and the world. I have a sense that Christ UMC is beloved by God and is a place God is honing as a space of authentic discipleship and of healing in Christ's Resurrection power. Since becoming a part of this congregation 12 years ago, I have been privileged to see the depth of faith of the members here. The seriousness with which CUMC members take their walk with Jesus is breathtaking. This walk is always better on some days than others for all of us (as I know from my own life!). Folks here have persevered in following Jesus in the midst of suffering, loss, confusion, and heartache, as well as in goodness and abundance. Patient endurance is a mark of faithfulness, and CUMC has lived this as well as it has lived out joy and incredible grace.

I thank God often that I am privileged to be in ministry here. I feel I am caught up in God's amazing grace in the midst of this church. This is a praying congregation, which is so beautiful. I am filled with gratitude that my three children, my husband and I, as well as my mom and dad can call this Jesus community our church home. Your faithfulness has shaped us. Your faithfulness has illustrated discipleship to us. You show us all how to "do life together with Jesus." We are grateful!

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***Dear Lord, Thank you for your amazing and ongoing work at Christ UMC. Continue to fulfill your purpose here in this church, and keep us always focused on your vision of who we are called to be, for your glory always. Amen.***

*Pastor Suzanne Hultman—serving at Christ UMC since 2003*



*Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."*

Mathew 19:14

Before we ever came to visit Christ United Methodist Church, we drove past it every day on the way to school/preschool. Every day, at least one of my children would ask, "Can we go there?" Every day, I would say, "No, we're members at another church." Then one day, we decided to look at other churches, and Christ Church was the first one my kids wanted to visit. We walked in on our first Sunday and were directed to appropriate Sunday school classes for each child. My kids walked in to find friends from school in each class. When we left church that day, Jenna looked at me and said, "This is our church now." And it's been our church ever since.

Christ Church does a phenomenal job of bringing children to Jesus. From classrooms for every grade, to the Christmas pageant and the Wednesday night program, to summer mission trips for the youth group, children of all ages are welcome and want to come to church.

Building the desire to come to church and to know Jesus at an early age is crucial, not only for the spiritual life of the child, but for the church itself. The joy and laughter that only kids can bring to an event allow us to see Jesus through the children. And giving the children the desire to come to church allows Christ Church to continually live out Jesus' will and to walk in his footsteps.

***Dear God, thank you for everything you have done for Christ Church. Thank you for all the children. Please help us continue your mission of bringing the children to you, and through them, to grow closer to you. Amen.***

*Tracy Livers—member since March, 2007*



*... And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.*  
Matthew 28:20

I hold this scripture passage close to my heart as it provides me with comfort and hope.

I started attending Christ Church in January 2005 and became a member in December of that year. Several months later, Steve McElroy became our senior pastor. I feel so lucky to have been able to hear his words and his frequent referral to “allowing God to transform us”. One Sunday, Pastor Steve shared an analogy which I have never forgotten. He likened Jesus’ crucifixion on the cross to both a mirror and a window. When looking directly at Jesus, you cannot help but see His love and grace reflect back upon you, as if you are looking into a mirror. When looking beyond Him, as if He is a window, you see eternity and the promise of Heaven that is awaiting us and that is exemplified through the miracle of Jesus’ resurrection from the grave and His victory over death. Oh death where is thy sting? It’s gone! Find comfort with this analogy when you grieve the loss of someone you loved. Indeed, He is with us always, even to the end of the age.

A few years ago, I found myself in a dark valley. Factors in my life had changed so dramatically that, at times, the proverbial light was dim...only a flicker. I was alone. Struggles had replaced comfort. The disease of addiction had taken my husband and friend. But faith and prayer were a constant, and eventually, I made it out of that valley and onto level ground. It was an awakening because I knew I was not strong enough by myself to conquer the darkness. I was fortified by God. Yes, I need Him during the bad times. But I also need Him just as much when the going is easy. Indeed, He is with us always, even to the end of the age.

***Thank you, God, for loving us and showing us your unending grace. Thank you for your son Jesus, the greatest gift of all, and for blessing us with the very first Easter Sunday – the greatest day in history that ever was, is, or that will be. Amen***

*Julie Ann Lowery—member since December, 2005*

*Praise the Lord! Oh give thanks to the Lord for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Psalm 106:1*

My six children and I moved to the United States five years ago. We are just now marking that great anniversary. It is impossible to tell you how much my heart is filled with thanks to God for bringing me and my children safely to this country. How grateful I am we are in North Carolina in Chapel Hill! We are from Chad in Africa, and for a while, we lived as political refugees in the country of Cameroon, which is also in Africa.

My husband was killed because he did not want to fight with soldiers, and my family was in grave danger. I also have suffered being burned at the hands of the soldiers who killed my husband. Because of these experiences, I can tell you that I don’t understand why everyone in the USA is not praising God all of the time. God is so good, and this country is a country that belongs to God.

My family and I are so glad to be a part of Christ Church. We also attend another church often in Chapel Hill, but we love Christ UMC and believe God brought us here. I go to the Legacy Bible study, where I have made many friends. I ride the city bus to get to the study and am so grateful I can.

My children and I attend the evening service called Wellspring, and we love the community that has welcomed us there. The children have fun here and feel welcomed and loved. Members from CUMC pick us up and bring us home in the church van each Sunday evening, and that is a blessing. God is so good in so many ways, all the time!

I am thankful to this church for being a Christian community for me and for my children. I praise God for being so alive here and for working in the middle of the people here. Thank you for being a place that welcomes us. We are all a part of the body of Jesus Christ.

***Dear God, Praise your Holy name. Bless Christ UMC and guide her to serve you always. Amen.***

*Berthe Mairounga—friend of CUMC since June, 2014*

*Do not despise these small beginnings, for the LORD rejoices to see the work begin . . . Zechariah 4:10*

My husband and I have a vivid recollection of stopping by our Southern Village church property one sunny afternoon in 1999. Who could be there but Raegan May, dressed in plaid shorts and a short sleeve shirt! He was lovingly inspecting the newly poured concrete foundation. With the actual footprint of the Church stretching in several directions, Raegan's voice overflowed with enthusiasm as he envisioned the building coming together in the next few weeks. We followed him around the slab as he shared more details of the design. As we ascended the concrete steps leading up to the altar, we felt a jolt of excitement looking out over the amazing worship space. Over the next few weeks and months, GOD was present in EVERY detail as the planning and pieces fell into place...and there were millions of details.

Now, at the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I am especially reminded of all the dear saints who have been the body of Christ in so many ways at CUMC. Remember the callers who volunteered to invite people to Christ Church. Remember our first service at Culbreth Middle School. Remember the small children carrying the enormous cross and the Bible bearers leading the way as the pastors walked up to the front of the school auditorium each week.

Remember the "muggers" encouraging people with newly minted coffee mugs to join our church family in worship again. Remember the spark ignited by GOD as teachers and pastors broke open GOD's Word. Remember the laughter and voices of children participating in learning about GOD.

Remember how Raegan challenged the children, saying he could make an object lesson out of anything, and HE COULD...even with a "Mr. Potato Head!" Remember the love and devotion of those who sought to beautify the Church by adding stained glass windows, artwork, and lovely furnishings. Remember the mason who generously offered to lay stone for the same price as brick. Remember the beautiful vestments woven by Marguerite Nelson to adorn the altar. Remember the hand-sewn banners & lathed wooden baptismal bowl contributed by other church members.

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Remember Sarah Palmer Haynes, calling us to command as only Sarah could, to bring cookies to church on Sundays.

Remember countless servants who have sacrificed their time and talents to build this Church to honor GOD and welcome those who seek Him. Remember the generous hearts of those who are devoted to GOD and to building the LORD's Temple. And that work is continuing by the saints TODAY!

Oh what a blessing to be a part of Christ Church THEN and NOW. From the beginning, there was anticipation and excitement as many responded to the Holy Spirit's prompting to *Step Out in Faith*. Developer D.R. Bryan, led by his vision to have a church as an integral presence in the Southern Village community, *Stepped Out in Faith* to donate the land on which our church now stands. Raegan May *Stepped Out in Faith* in responding to the call to start a new Church in Chapel Hill. A core group of individuals *Stepped Out in Faith* to help with the formation of a new congregation. Many *Stepped Out in Faith* by opening their homes to and participating in prayer meetings to seek GOD's plan for this new Church. Twenty years later, here we are—a fully-formed congregation that continues to actively worship GOD as well as to seek, nurture and send disciples into the world. Christ Church has served and is continuing to serve as a seedbed for new believers to grow in their faith. Soli Deo Gloria!

***Father, Give us courage to step out in faith,  
to go where you send us without hesitation or fear,  
trusting that your presence goes with us and that  
you will provide all that we need. Amen.***

*Barbara Moore—member since December, 1995*

*Come unto me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon thee and learn of me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30*

This passage in Matthew has layers of meaning to me. First, it was part of the soliloquy I memorized as Thaddeus, one of the 12 disciples, when performing in the first two Last Supper dramas at Christ UMC. Both performances were so meaningful & culminated in celebration of the Eucharist, with each disciple administering the elements to members of the audience.

The passage is also meaningful as one of various occasions in the New Testament when Jesus invites us to come to Him. How does someone *come to Him* when He is omnipresent and therefore already here? I have come to understand that the action of coming to Him is really all about me and my taking the time to focus on Him. It's an act of attentiveness. I don't have to actually go anywhere, but I am asked to stop focusing on those other things which so often command my attention. It requires that I come into relationship with Jesus through prayer and contemplation. Coming to Jesus is not difficult, but it does require me to take the initiative – and He will be there waiting. The fact that Jesus invites us to come to Him also suggests that we are not “with Him” a lot of the time. Our days are so full of business and busyness, with tasks and responsibilities that keep us away from Jesus. His invitation is a very important reminder to spend more and more time with Him. And the more time that we spend with Jesus, the more that we will find rest for our souls.

In addition, this passage gives us insights into some of the most important qualities for us to strive for, since they are qualities Jesus uses to describe Himself – gentle and humble of heart. Gentleness and humility are outwardly focused qualities. They help define how we treat other people and are foundational if we are to love God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength and if we are to love others as ourselves. Finally, I love the imagery of being yoked to Jesus. If I can come to Him for a sustained amount of time, then He and I actually can be bound together. How amazingly peaceful it is to contemplate that Jesus is inviting us to be one with him!

**Lord, help me to come to You more often each day. Yoke us together so I can be one with You. Make me gentle and humble in heart, reflecting Your love of me to others throughout each day. Amen.**

*Ken Reeb—member since April, 1997*

*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being stained by the world. James 1:27*

When my daughter Maddie asked to travel with the Mission 1:27 team to Russia to visit the young boy we'd been writing to for several years, I said yes. I think I said yes not just because *she* asked, but because as her mother, I felt like the experience would be a great one for *both of us*. Just like that, I was going on Christ United Methodist Church's first family mission trip to Slobodskoy to visit the orphans. I thought I was going to help them. Yes, I'd be serving God, but I thought I'd mostly be in Russia to show the children what it was like to be loved and what it was like to have a family. Even if I wasn't their mother, I would show them what it was like to be loved by a mother. I had no idea what I was in for! With every touch, every hug, every smile, every glance, every moment, I was being filled with God's love – and not only myself, but all of us who traveled there that first spring. It was amazing to watch my daughter and her friends changing the lives of these children and to also witness how their lives were in turn changed by the orphans.

Never before had I felt God's presence so deeply as the day we prepared to say goodbye to those 108 children whom we had come to love during that week. I remember feeling anxious and not really knowing why. With Maddie by my side and the rest of our travel team, we followed the director out the front doors of the orphanage. All I remember is the cold air touching my face and my breath being taken away instantly. In front of me stood all 108 kids in two lines waiting for each of us to walk through to say our goodbyes. One more touch, one more hug, one more kiss and one more promise to return one day soon. I believe God was there. *I know* God was there. And I know God filled my heart with the love of all of these children through His love. God called me to that place without me even knowing. God knew where I needed to be, and He took me there.

**Thank you, God, for the gift of Christ United Methodist Church, for the gift of Russia, and for showing me what it means to be called to do your work and to be filled with your love. Amen.**

*Patsy Smith—member since October, 2001*

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Colossians 3:16*

CUMC is my home. I feel happy and loved when I walk through the doors! I was baptized and raised at Christ Church. It is where I have learned so much about God through music, amazing pastors, preschool teachers, and Sunday School teachers.

In my twelve years, I have been involved in kid's choir with Dr. Daniel, many Christmas pageants, the Sunday school program from pre-kindergarten to 5th grade, many summers of Vacation Bible School, and now youth group! I've also been so blessed to be able to be a singer for the 8:30 AM praise band & a first grade assistant Sunday School teacher.

This church is truly my home! The amount of love for God that spreads around the church is ongoing! Every Sunday when I wake up, I know my day is going to be filled with love, smiles, and God! Whenever people walk through the doors of CUMC, I hope they know that they are going to be blessed by God with love, joy, and smiles. I certainly have been!

**Dear God,**

**This church is a family.**

**Help us to learn together**

**To worship together**

**To share together**

**To play together**

**To pray together**

**To come together**

**And to reach out to everyone with love!**

**Amen.**

*Lilly Thompson—Culbreth Middle School 7th grader  
and baptized member since May, 2004*

*You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16*

I joined Christ United Methodist Church in the summer of 2010. Seven years prior to that time, the light within me had gone out. Maybe it was not completely out, but it was greatly diminished. Crisis after crisis, hardships, and mental health issues had taken their toll on me.

I saw the love in this church - the light - and wanted so much to become a part of that light once again. My journey here at CUMC began slowly. I could tell you awesome stories of Bible studies I have attended and Sunday school. I could tell you how much fun it is to be a part of both the choir and handbell choir. Our fellowship, missions, and worship are all very special. But do you know what makes it that way? Do you know what makes it all come together? It is the people here - you and me. It is through our giving, our working together, and most of all, the love we share that continues to make this church a light to so many.

I quickly realized how genuinely caring the people of this church are. I have made connections and friendships here that I have not experienced in past churches of which I was involved. We are a diverse group, which I believe is one of our strengths. We are young and old. We are single, married, divorced, and widowed. We are people with varying talents and gifts to offer to God, each other, and those beyond our walls.

So happy anniversary, CUMC! Let us continue to be that light to the world around us. Let's continue to be the energized people of God in showing His love to all of creation. We have a mission. Let's keep pressing on.

***Holy God, continue to guide our footsteps as we press on in bringing your light to those around us, our communities, as well as beyond our borders. Amen.***

*Ellen Wean—member since June, 2010*

*As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him – to you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:4-5*

I was not a member of our church when its name was chosen. However, I know it was chosen carefully. “We are Christ’s Church,” our founding pastor, Raegan May, used to say on a regular basis.

What does it mean to be Christ’s Church? For me, a fundamental characteristic is that we have not been a political church. At a time and place in which pastors preach regularly on political issues – right and left – our pastors have not done so. Instead, the focus of worship has always been on Christ and on how we can know and love him better.

Years ago, a major national political figure worshipped with us. It was exciting to see a face we knew from the news when we turned to pass the peace. This man and his family were welcomed to worship and grow with us as God’s people. However, our church had no desire to be pulled into a political agenda or to have this one person’s political views become our ongoing focus. That is not our mission. We are Christ’s Church.

As Christ Church, we offer many opportunities to grow in God’s love and to help manifest his love within our community. We provide a peaceful haven, safe from the whirlwind of political thought, confusion and argument.

We are Christ Church.

We are *Christ’s* Church.

***Thank you, dear God, for helping us to focus on loving you,  
loving each other, and loving our neighbors. Amen.***

*Cynthia Wheaton—member since February, 1998*

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