



BLACKNALL

MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

January/February 2013

In This Issue...

[Heart of Darkness or Hope in the Darkness? A New Narrative about a NEW Thing](#) by Cullen Rodgers-Gates

[Re-membering: A Look at Our New Members](#) by Margaret Frothingham

[Serving Up Friendship at Saturday Suppers](#) by Scott Hawkins

[FAQ's with Pregnancy Support Services](#) by Mimi Every

[Urbana 2012](#) by Julie Bryce

[Communion Conversations](#) by Amy Rowell

[Young Children & Worship Training](#) by Amy Rowell

Dear Blacknall family,

I can't remember a flu season like this. I haven't spoken to the medical professionals around here in any formal way, but the anecdotal evidence is strong! The coughing, the muscle aches and pains, the drained look on the faces of sufferers bravely keeping on...I am surprised I don't see more people sporting masks as they make their way around town.

We haven't been untouched around Blacknall. There is noticeable coughing and wheezing on Sunday mornings. I commend you brave souls who will not be deterred from the worship of God! I wonder if we should up the alcoholic content of the communion "wine" around here, just to be on the safe side?

The staff has not been immune. Beth Solie, Tanya Kronstad, and Erin Daniel all went down. I missed the first Sunday in my thirty-three years of pastoral ministry due to illness; David D. gladly stepped into my preaching responsibility that morning with only a few hours notice. Even the indomitable Mike Sardi, a noble Pennsylvanian who is the fittest guy around here, was taken out.

But Dave Stuntz had the worst of it, and we all knew it. Not only was he afflicted with pneumonia (am I violating HIPPA here?), but he had a violent reaction to an antibiotic that made him unable to use his hands. Imagine! A musician, a master pianist, without the ability to play. Dave said it was the first time since adolescence that he didn't play a Christmas carol.

Yes, Christmas. We missed our worship leader at Christmas. Dave felt horrible, the physical symptoms made worse by a sense that he was betraying his Blacknall family. At Christmas! But without hesitation, others said, "Yes, I can help." Dave's symptoms lingered; these folks said "yes" repeatedly. They set aside their own plans to prepare and lead.

We are glad to have Dave returned to us, almost fully mended. But I am reminded of the strength and beauty of the body of Christ, and how much we need each other to play our parts, to exercise our gifts, if our life together is to have depth and be what God has called us to be as a church.

Life is so busy for all of us; we feel the lack of margin and we calculate carefully the cost of saying "yes" to any invitations to serve. But the vitality of our life together is only as strong as our participation in it. Even more so, our maturity as a congregation depends on it (Ephesians 4:13). Otherwise, without realizing it, we become consumers of "religious goods and services," spectators instead of disciples, and we have lost our way.

Sometimes it takes illness to remind us of these deeper truths. Thanks for playing your part. We are stronger, better, more faithful, together.

Gratefully,
Allan

*...the vitality of
our life together is
only as strong as
our participation
in it.*



Heart of Darkness or Hope in the Darkness?

A New Narrative About a NEW Thing

CULLEN RODGERS-GATES [CULLEN.RODGERSGATES@GMAIL.COM]

In 1899, Polish author Joseph Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness*—a novella about an exploration to the region of Africa that today is known as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Despite Conrad's clear indictment in the book about the condition of all human hearts, his work has specifically and profoundly influenced Western prejudices toward African realities.

The DRC is a massive country, equivalent to the size of the United States east of the Mississippi River. It is a land overflowing in natural wealth, boasting the second largest rainforest in the world and myriad mineral resources throughout the eastern part of the country. Yet, for all its beauty and grandeur, it is a land that has been decimated with more than 120 years of ruthless colonialism, dictatorial rule and civil war. State and economic institutions have been ravaged. Infrastructure demolished. A seemingly hopeless situation. The heart of darkness.



But contrary to negative and disparaging conclusions fueled by a narrow reading of Conrad's infamous work and to much of the sensationalistic journalism from contemporary media sources, this is not the whole story, nor the final word, about Africa or the DRC, specifically.

Amid the wasteland of a devastated society Congo Initiative is part of a Christ-centered hope for the future. Congo Initiative's (CI) vision is "to train and develop strong, indigenous Christian leaders to transform their communities and their nation of the Democratic Republic of Congo." Based in Beni, North Kivu province, CI addresses a critical lack of moral leadership in the DRC by equipping Christians as agents of transformation for the sake of the Gospel. CI is doing a new thing, as described in its guiding Scripture: "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland" (Isaiah 43:19). Hope in the midst of hopelessness. Light breaking through the dark cloak of despair.



Daniel Masumbuko's (left) story is one example of the new thing God is doing in DRC.

Daniel Masumbuko is one of the unsung heroes of hope in eastern DRC—a man of genuine humility and quiet strength. Content to stand outside the spotlight, Daniel serves as an indispensable and invaluable member of the CI leadership team. This is a person who has known great hardship and has faced life and death situations. Held at gun point, threatened, and forced to flee during DRC's civil war (1996-2002), Daniel carries in his soul both the deep anguish of a nation torn apart and real hope for that nation's healing. In addition to directing CI's financial affairs and serving as Chaplain to 560+ students at the Christian Bilingual University of Congo (UCBC), Daniel also leads CI's reconciliation ministry through the Center for Church Renewal and Global Mission.

Continued on the next page

In 2012, Daniel and his team conducted more than 40 workshops for healing and reconciliation throughout northern and eastern DRC, serving nearly 10,000 victims of psychological trauma. More than 2,500 people were reconciled to each other individually and as families.

All of this was possible because of Daniel's enduring courage and absolute commitment to the renewal of DRC. A man of great wisdom, Daniel is regarded by students and faculty at UCBC as one of the most trustworthy and respected individuals they know. In short, Daniel is a model of the Congolese leader that CI and UCBC desire for its students to become, and this is why he was one of ten global finalists for the 2012 Tanenbaum Peacemaker in Action award. For many of us, the notion of bringing hope and change to a place like the DRC is daunting, to say the least, and at times, seems near impossible. For Daniel, it is simply a way of life, lived in total reliance upon God, the One who is reconciling all things.

As we begin 2013, exciting developments are taking place with Congo Initiative and Blacknall's growing relationship with this ministry. We look forward to sharing more with you in this coming year. Join other Blacknall members on the second Sunday evening of each month (6:30 p.m. in the Parlor) to pray for our brothers and sisters in DRC. **And mark your calendars for February 21-24 when David and Kaswera Kasali will be in Durham.** They are so excited about spending more time building relationships with our congregation. Together, we can be part of living the story about the NEW thing God is doing in the heart of Africa. And in the process, we might just discover a NEW thing He wants to do in our hearts as a church.

Cullen Rodgers-Gates is the Director of Operations at Congo Initiative, Inc. and a member of Blacknall.

Re-membering: A Look at Our New Members

MARGARET FROTHINGHAM [MFROTHINGHAM@BLACKNALL.ORG]

I once attended a workshop called "Re-membering: A Renewed Sense of God's Presence." The word "re-membering" was intentional. The focus of the workshop was to encourage church members to build a sense of connection with each other by sharing stories about their lives.

The newest new members, who stood before the congregation on December 9 are a fascinating bunch. During one of our classes, we solicited one fact from each class member. The facts are teasers about their stories. One of the new members ran out of a bank during a bank robbery in order to take an exam; another has lived on the border of Europe and Asia for two years. One wrote a screen play, another one wrote a children's book. One can juggle, one can tie a one-handed bowline, and another was in a traveling fiddle band as a child! One of them has feet that don't stink (we passed around his shoe to test this claim). Then there are stories of glacial climbing, adventures stranded on a desert island, accounts of broken teeth and torn up knees and a pierced tongue. All of them have stories of Christ's love, action and invitation.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Katie & Ryan Connolly
Tim Dunham
Xiaomin Fu
Jennifer Godleski
Andy & Nancy Jones
Chad & Sanyin Miller
Bret & Ryan Runestad
Andy & Annie Scott
Scott & Sarah Simmons
and Susan Wunderink

As you welcome them, I encourage you to do a little re-membering yourself. Do you remember standing up front as a new member? Do you remember who else was in your class? Go back and try to remember your first year at Blacknall and who invited you to participate. You could be part of the new members' welcome story in the coming year, so please help them get more connected as members of our church family.

Margaret Frothingham is the Director of Congregational Care at Blacknall.





Serving up Friendship at Saturday Suppers

SCOTT HAWKINS [SCOTTHAWKINSDUKEISI@GMAIL.COM]

I met J. during the International Student Inc.'s (ISI) first "Saturday Supper" last fall. Though he and I had not met while eating or during the ice-breaker activity, we found ourselves in the same discussion group with five other students from Korea, Turkey, China, Brazil, and Nepal. We were instructed to, in a few words, explain what we *like, love* and that which is big in *life* presently. Apparently, my own spontaneous responses caught his attention, for he wrote me an email later that evening:

“ It was great for me to have a pleasant time with you and the people of ISI... You showed the love of Jesus! As [the] Bible says, you care for the strangers!...I was born and grown as Christian, so if someone asks me about "life" I think of God automatically, but my mind doesn't accept the fact that my life is given by God for the glory of God. I know Jesus Christ is my savior, but I do not recognize him in my life. I want to know and feel Jesus Christ in my real life. I hope my faith will grow here during my stay. ”

At his request we have met with one another about twice a month since last September while sharing food, mutual interests, life discussions and incredibly stimulating discovery Bible reading and reflection. I feel honored with the time we spend together and the trust that he has been giving me. In fact, early on I admitted that maybe he was an answer to my own prayer that I might enjoy making friends with a Korean man, for I have been blessed by them in the past.

See whom the Lord might bring into your life (and vice-versa) during another ISI Saturday Supper: **February 23 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall.**

Scott Hawkins is the Campus Director of International Students, Inc. at Duke and a member of Blacknall.

FAQ's with Pregnancy Support Services

MIMI EVERY [MIMI@PREGNANCYSUPPORT.ORG]

Pregnancy Support Services (PSS) is a life-affirming Christian ministry supporting women who are facing the challenges of unplanned pregnancy, promoting sexual integrity, and offering post-abortion recovery support. Blacknall has been a financial and prayer supporter of PSS since it's inception 30 years ago.

How can I get involved?

There are many volunteer opportunities ranging from working directly with clients (requiring training which we provide) to data entry, fixing refreshments for events, teaching parenting classes, sorting baby clothes, serving on the Board, and even cleaning in the Durham center. Contact Mimi Every for more information on how to get involved.

Can I bring you my baby's outgrown clothes and other baby items?

Yes! We take clothes up to size 18 months. Items must be "gently used" and free from stains. We also accept Pack 'n' Plays, exersaucers, strollers, and swings. We cannot accept used car seats. Other items that are helpful are wipes, baby toiletries, disposable diapers up to size 3, hooded bath towels and wash cloths.

Where can I bring baby items that I want to donate?

Our Clothing Closet is in our Durham center, located at 14 Consultant Place, Suite 250, Durham. Hours are Mon./Wed. 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.; Tues./Thurs. 9:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.; Fri. 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. You will be given a receipt for your donations.

Thank you for your interest!

Mimi Every is the Executive Director of Pregnancy Support Services and a member of Blacknall.



Urbana 2012

JULIE BRYCE [JULIEABRYCE@GMAIL.COM]

You can tell a lot about a group's familiarity with one another by the way they act around food. The Thursday we arrived in St. Louis for the opening night of Urbana12, the first thing we did was head to the grocery store. Headed home with breakfast and lunch supplies, we put our food away, in stock piles so we could tell whose food was whose. (We laughed when we realized more than one of us had bought a large jar of Nutella.)

The first couple of days, we all pretty much ate our own food. I remember Tanya Moore and I split a bag of apples and a loaf of bread, but for the most part, we all ate from our own stashes. Contrast this politeness to the way your family acts the day after Thanksgiving, digging into leftovers and you'll see my point. We weren't a community, not yet. But by Monday morning, the last day of Urbana, our polite respect for one another's food had been replaced with the comfortable familiarity that declares all food communal. And as a result, none was left.



In a matter of days, we'd become a community—a comfortable one at that. We'd grown used to looking over our shoulders for Dave & Sam Dunderdale, who always fell behind when we walked anywhere. (It helped when Dave wore his Pittsburgh Steelers hat—it acted as a homing beacon.) We grew accustomed to following Garrett Dahms, self-appointed line leader, who kindly commanded us where to go and the fastest way to get there. And yes, everyone quickly learned that I am nearly always seven minutes late.

There is something deeply encouraging about community, especially communities that are forged quickly without much concern for polite warm-up periods. Urbana was jam-packed with joy, but despite the exuberant worship and compelling speakers, my favorite part was the community God built among us in five short days, and experiencing all that richness together.

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."
Galatians 6:2

Julie Bryce attended Urbana12 and is a member of Blacknall.

Communion Conversations

AMY ROWELL [AROWELL@BLACKNALL.ORG]

How much does a child need to understand about Communion before participating in it? At Blacknall, we welcome baptized children of believers to participate in this important sacrament as soon as parents feel their child is ready. But, how does a parent know when their child might be "ready"? How does one even talk about Communion with their child? In our Children & Communion Conversations, which began last fall and finish at the end of January, we ask these kinds of questions. We provide a place for children to learn about the meaning of Communion on their own level, as well as a place to interact with their parents about it. Of course, these classes are *not* a requirement for children to celebrate the Table—all are welcome! And yet, we want to lay a foundation of understanding for our children that will (hopefully) serve them for years to come about the meaning and importance of this church practice. If you're curious about whether or not your child might be ready, or you want them to learn more about Communion, please come to our upcoming meeting: **Sunday, January 27 at 6:30 p.m. in the Upper Room.**

Amy Rowell is the Director of Children's Ministry - Elementary at Blacknall.



Young Children & Worship Training

AMY ROWELL [AROWELL@BLACKNALL.ORG]

Did you know that while the adults are worshipping on Sunday mornings in the Sanctuary, our children (four years old through second grade) are learning to worship in their own worship centers downstairs? **In Children's Worship, our aim is to lead children in an encounter with God that results in a sense of awe and wonder about who God is. We engage children's imagination as a way of helping them think deeply about who God is, as revealed in Scripture.** Each week, children listen to a story from Scripture told with figures that ignite the imagination, and then are prompted to reflect on the meaning of that story for their own lives. Over time, children develop not only a familiarity with these stories, but also a love for them, and for our God who is revealed in them. Just look at the responses they create during these times—or ask them to tell you one of their favorite stories! You might be surprised at what they know!

If you are at all intrigued or interested in this important ministry that nurtures the spiritual formation of our children, please consider learning more by attending one of our upcoming trainings: **Saturday, February 2, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (for current volunteers)** or **Friday, February 22 to Sunday, February 24 (for prospective volunteers).**

Our Mission

Blacknall Memorial Presbyterian Church is called to glorify the Triune God, to make known the crucified and risen Christ, and to advance the Kingdom that God is building in us, in Durham, and around the world.

BLACKNALL MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
919.286.5586 | churchoffice@blacknall.org | www.blacknall.org