

# Faith Report

## Reconciling: Unity Month

by Pastor Stan Long

While watching the president's State of the Union Address recently, I had to remind myself that what I was seeing was no dream: The United States of America, the land that fought a bloody civil war over slavery, the land of Jim Crow laws, the land where Malcom X declared that "the white man is the devil"...our land actually did elect a black President. As a 58-year-old African American, I occasionally sit back amazed by this fact. There are always certain things that you hope to see in life but, in all honesty, you can never imagine.

In the scriptures we see over and over again that our God delights in doing much more than we can imagine! In the 1950's and 60's when Dr. Martin Luther King marched, prayed, suffered, dreamed and patiently trusted God, he and others saw a bright future for this nation. Meanwhile, many others here and around the world watched pessimistically, thinking that significant changes would never be made in America's racial policies and attitudes. Having said that, we should also remember that the dream of equal opportunity, equal access and social harmony which has become a reality for many people of color is still a nightmare for many people.

According to recent U.S. Cen-

sus Bureau data, nearly 25% of all African Americans live in poverty—a higher percentage than any other ethnic group. The current unemployment rate among blacks hovers around 16%. This means that one out of every four African American families has not experienced the blessings of racial progress and, as the income gap widens, despair and hopelessness grow.

Experts suggest that the racial picture in our country has become much more complex with the increased influence of the African American middle class, the rapid growth of Latino people, and as the presence of immigrants from all over the globe. This is both a challenge and an opportunity for the Christian church. The gospel of Christ has not changed. Jesus Christ is still the Savior of the world. He is reconciling people to the true and living God and to one another. If Jesus is reconciling people from every tribe, language and people group, what should the worshipping, serving, missional church look like in this much more complex society?

**Ephesians 2:13-14** *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.*

February at FCF is Unity Month where we celebrate the Reconciliation. There will be personal testimonies during worship and we will dig a little deeper at Adult Soul Food classes. The classes will focus on relationships across the divides of race and class. The month will end with a weekend seminar entitled "The Deal" led by Dr. Carl Ellis. This will focus upon our covenant relationship with God, which is the basis for our reconciliation.

Faith Christian Fellowship exists to celebrate the reconciling work of Christ and encourage grace-filled followers of Jesus in our city. We want to do our part to fulfill the dream of folks like Dr. King. Even more so we want to fulfill the prayer of Jesus in John 17. Jesus wants His people to be "united so that the world would know" that the Father truly sent Him from above. Can God pull this off through us? Let us prayerfully connect with one another this Unity Month and do our part to make it happen!

**Ephesians 3:20-21** *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. ♦*



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*United that the  
world would  
know*

*<sup>27</sup>All the ends of  
the earth shall  
remember  
and turn to the  
LORD,  
and all the fami-  
lies of the na-  
tions  
shall worship  
before you.  
Ps. 22:27*

**“The Deal ”**

What is the message that God has for the world? What is the Old Testament all about and how does it relate to Jesus? How does the entire Bible fit together? Sign up for “The Deal” seminar on Friday and Saturday March 2-3 to find out.

Dr. Carl Ellis will be our speaker. Carl is a long time friend of FCF and is president of Project Joseph, a Chattanooga, Tennessee-based ministry that equips the church with seminars and educational resources for reaching Muslims. He is also an adjunct professor at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia.

Registration is \$30 per person or \$35 after February 28. Please sign up in the church lobby. ♦

**Youth Ski Weekend Retreat**

Fourteen kids. Two youth directors. Five volunteers. One overnight trip to Wisp ski resort included a mountain roller coaster, talks, games, PGF (pretty good food), and of course, lots of skiing. That was the agenda at the youth weekend retreat near Deep Creek Lake last month.

A special shout-out is due to youth directors Army Arnold and Blake Scheidt, and the adult volunteers: Katrina Heine, Rebecca Odegaard, Leeza Scheidt, Emily Sippel and Gary Belvin. ♦

**Bits and Pieces**

- Congratulations to former member Rafik Hanna and Jessamyn Vogel who were married in New Jersey on Jan. 14.
- Congratulations to Don Rittler who was accepted and affirmed as Elder Emeritus at the recent annual congregational meeting in recognition of his many years of servant leadership in the Chesapeake Presbytery and at FCF.
- Congratulations also to the following men who were elected to leadership positions at our congregational meeting: Geoff Lu (Elder), Dan Ellis (Deacon) and Weldon Newton (Deacon).

CALENDAR	
<b>Feb. 3</b>	<b>Concert of Prayer 7p.m. at Central Presbyterian Church</b>
<b>Feb. 8</b>	<b>Faith Leadership Night 7 p.m.</b>
<b>Feb. 11</b>	<b>Men’s prayer breakfast</b>
<b>Feb. 20</b>	<b>Office closed for Presidents’ Day</b>
<b>Feb. 25</b>	<b>Women’s Prayer Breakfast, 8.30 a.m. (rescheduled)</b>
<b>Mar. 2-3</b>	<b>‘The Deal’ seminar with Rev. Dr. Carl Ellis</b>

