

# **COMMUNITY CHURCH OF THE MIDLANDS**

***Unapologetically Christian, Unapologetically Progressive***

## **Pastor's Paragraphs**

### **AN EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE AT THANKSGIVING**

There is so much for which I am grateful - "things," of course, but, especially, *people*. Among them are all of you, and I never tire of reminding you how much each of you is loved and valued. But, during this special season of thanksgiving, I want to highlight two individuals whose transformative presence and physical absence have impacted all of us: Dale and Norma Sessions.

Years ago (I don't remember how many), Dale and Norma came to us from a local Episcopal church that had once been meaningful to them but had ceased to provide that which it offered in the past. That church lost two incredibly wonderful people, and we were the fortunate recipients of their valued presence.

When Dale and I were quite young (although I was older than he), Dale's parents and my parents attended the same church and were close friends. At that time, Dale was quiet, introspective, and seemed to prefer to spend time alone. He said very little and almost never laughed. But time changes us all. Through the years, Dale became a marvelously expressive, insightful individual, and no one was more gregarious or had a better sense of humor than he. In fact, he was my favorite insult comic, and he knew it. Every Sunday after church, he always came up to tell me how terrible the sermon was, but each Sunday after that, he told me it was even worse than before. Perhaps I still hide from the truth by assuming that was Dale's sense of

humor rather than an expression of reality! But I do miss his words of “encouragement.”

Actually, he slipped up one day and offered me a compliment. He said that some of his and Norma’s most deeply meaningful spiritual experiences in worship had taken place at CCM. Coming from someone with Dale’s considerable acumen, that *was* a compliment.

When our associate pastor, the Rev. Nancy Zuckerman, left us to care for her terminally ill mother in Florida, Dale, an experienced, degreed, ordained minister, offered to fill her place by being of assistance in any way he could. So, he and I shared preaching responsibilities for an extended period of time. Always, he was a faithful, supportive presence until he received his unfortunate diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease and felt he needed to become just a member of the congregation again. Nevertheless, in our discussion groups, Dale’s wit and wisdom continued to enrich us.

But, oh my goodness, although Dale was a bright, transformative presence, could he have been at his *very best* without his dear wife, Norma? Norma, herself, is a gem, and I don’t know anyone who could be a better wife, even a better *person*, than she. Norma’s great sense of humor, quiet, winsome personality and intelligence are obvious, but she also possesses absolutely amazing *spiritual* depth as one of her most qualitative assets. Moreover, since Dale became ill, I know of no one who could have responded to that challenging situation with more grace, wisdom and love than she. Also, her excellent training and experience in social work and gerontology have been incredibly valuable assets. She and Dale have shared their unanticipated journey with others where they live at Loman Home, and Norma has helped to teach seminary students about Alzheimer’s disease as well as to take a leadership role in worship services geared especially for compromised patients. She also has served as a choir member and lector in the Chapel. So, despite the unwelcome reality of having to deal with an insidious illness, both Dale and Norma, nevertheless, have been busy enriching the lives of

others with their own knowledge and experience; and Norma has taken on those responsibilities in addition to being a caretaker *par excellence*.

When getting Dale dressed and ready to come to CCM on Sunday mornings became more challenging, Norma realized that they would not be able to continue to join us for worship, study, and fellowship. We missed them immensely. After all, who *could* take the place of Dale and Norma? They are irreplaceable!

However, our treasurer, Gary Davis, recently shared with me the news that, though no longer *physically* present, Dale and Norma have continued through the years to mail their tithe to be supportive of our ministry of CCM. Since we are a small fellowship, their generosity has, at times, actually helped to keep us afloat! It is wonderful that they value what they experienced here enough to want to continue to have a part in its continuation. It *also* is wonderful in *another* way. Although, Dale no longer is able to share with us through preaching, there is a vital sense in which, through their financial gifts, his ministry among us continues. Moreover, Norma's ministry of significant caring is continuing as well. Though absent physically, they nevertheless are *still* present—every Sunday and every week that we gather, throughout the year.

So, for all that is past and for all that *continues* to be, I am thankful for our dear Dale and Norma Sessions. Indeed, we *ALL* are thankful for them—every one of us!

Dale and Norma, we know you still receive this newsletter; so, to both of you, we send our profound love and endless appreciation. God bless.

**With a heart full of gratitude,**

**John**

# IT'S HAPPENING AT CCM

*November, 2018*

*This month and next month, we will gather on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday  
INSTEAD of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>.*

**Sunday, November 11<sup>th</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the Month)**

**10:00 a.m. CONVERSATIONS WITH OUR PASTOR**

Can you believe it? It's been an entire year since we had our last opportunity to have one of our unique Conversations with Our Pastor sessions. You said you wanted to do it more frequently, but our two recent series went longer than expected, which pushed the conversations opportunity to this later date. Because of its popularity each time we have scheduled it in the past, perhaps we can provide these opportunities more frequently in the coming year.

But why do we call this opportunity at CCM *unique*? We do so because it *is* a CCM *distinctive*. As far as we know, there is no other church in the city that schedules a time for the entire fellowship to engage in such a free and open opportunity for dialog with the pastor.

In our session this month, please feel free to ask any questions you might have about beliefs or about how to apply spiritual principles to the issues of daily life. Enquiries about the ups and downs of daily living, relationships or current ethical concerns are always welcome and generally are of great interest to the group. This time is for *you*!

We plan to adjourn between 11:30 a.m. and 12 noon.

**Sunday, November 18<sup>th</sup> (3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of the Month)****10:00 a.m. ANNUAL THANKSGIVING WORSHIP GATHERING**

Our Thanksgiving worship is always a special time for us. But, of course, it's important to be honest: There is much that has taken place in our nation and in the world, as well as in some of our lives that makes it difficult for many of us to *feel* thankful. So our pastor has decided to address that reality in his message, "GIVING THANKS IN A CHALLENGING TIME."

An opportunity for the congregation to "talk back" to the sermon will take place immediately following worship. We plan to adjourn at around 12 noon.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### ***CHRISTMAS IS COMING!***

LAST CALL! LAST CALL! *LAST CALL* to sign up for our annual CHRISTMAS FELLOWSHIP BRUNCH! It will take place on Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m. It is absolutely necessary to know well in advance how many people will be present so we will know what size private room to reserve. *Many* of the private rooms *already* are reserved, but a few are left. Before *those* disappear, we need to know now about your desire to celebrate the season with us. You can make your reservation(s) by calling our pastor (331-9999) to give him the number in your party.

Since the majority of smaller rooms are no longer available, please invite your friends, neighbors and extended family to join you. The *large* private

rooms cannot be reserved for small groups at most restaurants; so, as the old saying goes, “the more the merrier.” We look forward to hearing from you!

## ***ANNUAL CHRISTMAS WORSHIP***

Our CHRISTMAS WORSHIP GATHERING AND TRADITIONAL CANDLELIGHTING CEREMONY this year will be on Sunday, December 16<sup>th</sup> (the *THIRD* Sunday of the month) from 10:00 a.m. until about 11:30 a.m. with no discussion afterward. The Christmas service is being held a Sunday earlier than usual for the convenience of our members and friends who plan to be out of town during Christmas week. This will be our last gathering in 2018 and is always a meaningful time of togetherness.

## ***LOOKING AHEAD***

In January, we’ll be returning to our usual schedule of gathering on the second and fourth Sunday of the month. Therefore, our New Year’s worship service will be on Sunday, January 13<sup>th</sup> (2019), followed by Enlightenment on Sunday, January 27<sup>th</sup>—both at 10:00 a.m.

## ***LOOKING BACK***

As most of you know, for the last several months we have been offering a really significant series on *stress*—coping with it in constructive ways by utilizing a combination of spiritual wisdom *and* proven principles culled from the latest scientific research. Our last session on October 28<sup>th</sup> focused on helpful ways to *improve* relationships between ourselves and anyone else that we live with—a spouse, a partner or a roommate. We also focused on developing more vital, less superficial *friendships*. Information was provided on how to connect with others in ways that give greater-than-ordinary benefits: actually, boosting one’s immune system and, amazingly, *extending* each individual’s years of life. Other important related subjects were discussed as well, including how to *deepen* any relationship, improve

“emotional tone,” and utilize profitably the results of powerful new research related to all of the matters mentioned above.

Because of events scheduled to celebrate Thanksgiving and the Christmas season, the aforementioned seminar on de-stressing our lives through more vital relationships was our final opportunity to learn how to live more fully in 2018. We’re glad that our last session had so many helpful insights that we can use for our benefit in everyday life.

### ***WHO HAS A BIRTHDAY? WE’LL TELL YOU!***

Our astute webmaster, Mark Fox, will be celebrating on November 9<sup>th</sup>. Our wonderful soprano soloist, Evelyn Clary, will “live it up” on November 13<sup>th</sup>; and our esteemed resident philosopher, Betty Sullivan, will blow out *her* candles on November 28<sup>th</sup>. To each of these outstanding CCMers, we wish the very best new year possible—one filled with value, peace, joy, and love!

### ***NOTED SPEAKER COMES TO COLUMBIA***

The Rev. Jim Dant, pastor of the huge “100% inclusive” First Baptist Church in Greenville, SC and author of the new book, *THIS I KNOW*, will be coming to Columbia for a one night engagement on Tuesday, November 27<sup>th</sup>. This noted pastor will explore the so-called “clobber verses” in the Bible that often have been used *against* LGBTQ+ persons. He will explain that, contrary to a great deal of misinformation and misinterpretation, there is *no valid* Christian, biblical argument against same-sex relationships between consenting adults. If you want to be enlightened by a well-qualified *progressive* Christian pastor, this presentation is open to the public at no charge.

The event will take place at Kathwood Baptist Church 4000 Trenholm Road, in the Forest Acres area of Columbia, at 7:00 p.m. (You might want to come early to be assured of getting a parking space and a seat in the sanctuary.)

P.S.: You might find it interesting to note, if you've forgotten *our* history as a progressive fellowship in the Midlands, that CCM has been a 100% inclusive church from our *inception*. That was *twenty years ago*, long before most other Christian churches in our city had even considered the *possibility* of doing so. We have been and continue to be open and welcoming to *everyone*. Also, we are deeply honored to be a group of God's people who led the way in following the biblical directive, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for *ALL* people." Would love do less?



# CCM:

## REDEFINING WHAT CHURCH CAN BE

***WHEREVER YOU ARE, THE DIFFERENCE  
IS WORTH ANY DISTANCE!***

### **Our Telephone:**

Senior Pastor: (803) 331-9999. Our mobile cell phone is more reliable than our landline phone, because it is on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If no one answers, it usually means that our pastor is in a meeting, in a counseling session, doing regular spiritual mentoring, or is involved in some other form of ministry; but he will return your call as soon as possible, so please be sure to leave a message.

### **Our Websites:**

CommunityChurchMidlands.com (Also .net, .info and .org)

*or*

CommunityChurchOfTheMidlands.com (Also .net, .info and .org)

**Our Mailing Address:** P.O. Box 6946, Columbia, S.C. 29260-6946

**Our Location:** CCM usually gathers on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of each month, and any changes will be noted in our monthly newsletter. Please join us at the gorgeous Seven Oaks Community Center in beautiful Seven Oaks

Park, 200 Leisure Lane (between St. Andrews and Piney Grove roads, just off I-26 West). When you enter the spacious parking lot, you'll see the main entrance to our newly renovated building on your right. Once you are inside the Reception Area, our meeting locality is on your left. For updates on our programming, to verify meeting times, to learn about changes in scheduling, or for any pastoral need, please feel free to call 331-9999, night or day.

***ALWAYS, WE'RE HERE FOR YOU!***