

COVENANT CONNECTION

The Newsletter of the North County Churches Uniting for Racial Harmony and Justice

Member Churches

Winter, 2018

Bellefontaine United Methodist
Bethel Providence Christian
Black Jack Baptist
Christ Ministries at the Community Church
Christ Our Redeemer AME
Church of the Master UCC
Florissant Presbyterian
Immanuel UCC
John Knox Presbyterian
Lutheran Church of the Atonement
Lutheran Church of the Living Christ
Most Holy Name of Jesus Catholic
Most Sacred Heart Catholic
New Creation in Christ
Olivet Missionary Baptist
Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic
St. Andrew United Methodist
St. Barnabas Episcopal
St. Ferdinand Roman Catholic
St. Mark's United Methodist
St. Martin de Porres Catholic
St. Norbert Catholic
St. Rose Philippine Duchesne Catholic
Third Presbyterian
Trinity Church of the Nazarene

Dear NCCU Members:

I hope all of you had a blessed Christmas.

As usual, I was blessed and very grateful for the goodness and love of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. I had the pleasure of spending time with some of my family and unofficially adopted family members.

Again this year, the NCCU Summons of Joy Program went well. Some of you might have seen the response of some individuals who received gift certificates instead of traffic tickets for minor violations. We have had the program for three years. It was adopted by our Discussion and Solutions Committee that consists of representatives of five police departments and of Florissant and Hazelwood School Districts, as well as three pastors and several other leaders. We organized following the shooting of Michael Brown, during the Ferguson riots to explore ways in which the police and community could improve relations,

The Committee adopted the Program with the support and cooperation of the Florissant Police Department. Six of our Churches in Florissant donated the funds to NCCU, and we bought \$100 gift certificates for the police department to pass out to those they stop for minor traffic stops and who appear to have a financial need. The first year we gave the Department 45, last year 98, and this year 64 thanks to the generosity of the churches and their commitment to bringing people together.

Those who receive the certificates respond in incredible ways including hugging officers, thanking them many times over, and some even breaking down in tears because they are so grateful to receive a gift instead of a ticket. Police officers involved in the program love it also, because they have never been so well received by those they have contact with. We are very grateful to our Churches.

I hope that all of you will have a blessed New Year.

Rance

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Covenant Renewal Ceremony

A joyous worship service was held at St. Rose Philippine Duchesne Catholic Church at 3 pm. on Sunday, November 25th to celebrate new member congregations and renew the commitment of all current members. Rev. Cedric Portis, the speaker from Third Presbyterian Church, delivered a moving and uplifting message, and the choir, also from Third Presbyterian, provided a program of beautiful and exciting music.

Dr. Rance Thomas presented plaques to commemorate the newly committed churches. Rev. Mary Drew received the plaque for Lutheran Church of the Living Christ, and Rev. Lijo Kallarckal received the one for St. Martin De Pores Catholic Church.

All were then invited to come forward and renew their commitment by signing the Covenant.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Oratorical Contest

The NCCU's annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Oratorical contest began in November with the submission of essays (written oratory). on this year's theme, ***Standing for Truth, Knowledge and Unconditional Love.*** 52 essays were received. The essay winners presented their speeches at John Knox Presbyterian Church on Saturday, December 15. before a panel of six judges. In a first for the competition, Arden Isbell presented her speech by SKYPE as her family was out of town.

The winners who presented were:

Grades 3-5 Brice Anderson, Blossom Wood Day School, **Arlazza Hardwick**, Fairview Elementary, Jennings School District, and **Skye E. Harris**, Arrowpoint Elementary School, Hazelwood School District

Grades 6-8 Jamie Climaco, Hazelwood East Middle School, **Trinity Collins**, Jennings Junior High School, and **Anthony Stephen Holmes**, North County Christian School

Grades 9-12 Arden Isbell, Trinity Catholic High School, and **Jada Vence**, Trinity Catholic High School

Adults Kimberly Hill Burroughs Neeley, Larimore Elementary School, Hazelwood School District, **RaShawn Johnson**, Johnson-Wabash Elementary School, Ferguson-Florissant School District, **Dr. Tonya Jones-Clinton**, Special School District

The five winners from the December presentations will repeat their speeches at the *Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration* which will be held at 6 p.m. on January 22 at the Terry M. Fisher Theater, St. Louis Community College Florissant Valley.

A reception with hors d'oeuvres will be held 5:00 - 6:00 p.m. The public is invited to the celebration and there is no charge for admission. Dr. Thomas will present each of the winners with a \$100 check and Certificate. The Immanuel United Church of Christ choir will also participate in the ceremony.

The five winners are:

Grades 3-5 Brice Anderson, Blossom Wood Day School, Spirit and Truth Church, and **Arlazza Hardwick**, Fairview Elementary, Jennings School District

Grades 6-8 Anthony Steven Holmes, North County Christian School, St. Matthew the Apostle Church

Grades 9-12 Arden Isbell, Trinity Catholic High School, Hope Church

Adult Dr. Tonya Jones-Clinton, Special School District Ferguson-Florissant School District, Second New Zion MBC

Pastor John Higgins Retires

As of January 1, 2019 John Higgins will have retired from his position as Pastor of John Knox Presbyterian Church. Pastor John has been an active supporter of the NCCU and served on its Board since its inception. Thanks to him and his congregation, NCCU has had a home base. John Knox has provided office support and meeting spaces and has hosted many events such as the recent Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Oratory Contest. Pastor John also served on the **Discussion and Solutions Committee** and he first brought the idea of the **Summons of Joy Program** to the board where it was adopted. The NCCU Board offers appreciation and thanks to Pastor John for all he has done to support the NCCU. Best Wishes for a healthy and joyful retirement.

NCCU BOARD

Dr. Rance Thomas, President
Dr. Barbara Thompson, Vice President
Harry Goff, Treasurer
Rev. John Higgins, Chaplain
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Randy Henning
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Sharon Johnson
JoAnn Ott, Newsletter Editor
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Ritenour School District to Receive Award

In addition to the awards for the Oratory Contest at the Dr. Martin Luther King Celebration at Florissant Valley Community College, Dr. Thomas will also present the 2019 Dr. Rance Thomas Excellence in Community Partnership Award to Ritenour School District for their work in partnership with Florissant Valley Community College and other organizations on improving education. The Award was created in 2018 to honor Dr. Thomas and his partnership with the College and other organizations in the St. Louis Metropolitan Area.

Other Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Celebrations

In addition to the monetary award and Certificate, one of the Oratory contest winners will be honored by being asked to present his/her Essay during the City of Hazelwood's Annual Dr. King Celebration.

Christian Hospital Foundation will also celebrate Dr. King's great work with a luncheon on January 18th from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. with the theme "*Embracing the Dream--the Beloved Community*". Dr. Thomas serves on the Steering Committee of the Foundation and will give the invocation at the Ceremony.

Immanuel United Church of Christ Gift to NCCU

The NCCU Board is grateful and humbled by the gift of \$1000 contributed by Immanuel United Church of Christ for the continuing work of the NCCU. The donation will be used to support some of our major projects. We are currently considering a Program to work with at-risk students in grades 6-12 to prevent them from turning to crime, drugs, economic dependency and other negative behaviors. This program will cost thousands of dollars, but we feel that it is truly a worthwhile undertaking.

Thanks Due in Oratory Contest

Dr. Thomas congratulates all of the students who entered the Oratory Contest. The Board is so proud of all of your efforts and the understanding and love expressed in your essays.

Also, thank you to all the teachers, counselors, principals, parents, and family members for supporting the students as they wrote the essays, for submitting the essays, and for helping them prepare their presentations.

A special thank you to the staff members, administrators, parents, grandparents, and other family members who attended Saturday in support of their students. Your support means so much to the students! Please convey to them that, as we stated Saturday morning, they are ALL winners.

Thank you for your continued support.

Standing for Truth, Knowledge, and Unconditional Love

by Brice Anderson, 4th Grade

Dr. King gave sermons, speeches, and peaceful protests to stand up in a time when black people were treated unfairly. Today, here in St. Louis, people are still protesting and being treated unfairly. I feel that Dr. King's message of truth, knowledge and love can help us now. I know it will take more than me to stand up like he did, but just like him, I have a dream.

I am standing for the truth by not doing wrong things. Dr. King went to jail for telling the truth. He knew it was wrong to discriminate against people. He fought for equality and that all men are created equal.

Knowledge is an important tool to fight unfairness. You cannot fix a problem if you don't find ways to fix it and if you are not willing to learn. I try my best to do my work because I look up to Dr. King because of all the good he did.

Dr. King stood up for a change, not just for black people but for all people. He believed that all races should unite. He knew love for humans could end racism. I was going to kindergarten when I participated in a peaceful protest in Ferguson with my Dad. We go to a barbershop in Ferguson and people were protesting for Michael Brown. I was little, but I remember being a part of the people standing for what was right. We were not scared to be there because the people that come to the barbershop are like a family, and they talked about what was going on in the neighborhood. You feel love and belonging there all the time.

The truth, knowledge, and unconditional love is still very important today, just as it was that day in Ferguson. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. still has a dream to be carried on. He influenced black and white people to work together. His influence helps me to try hard.

Other Contest Winners may appear in future issues.