

Voice of the Spire

The Newsletter of Arch Street United Methodist Church
A Reconciling Congregation



Spring 2017

Arch Street United Methodist Church

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Voice of the Spire

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Update from Robeson

Marge Donnelly

It has been almost half a year since Hurricane Matthew left a wake of destruction through the lives and property of the people of Robeson County, North Carolina. The 18 inches of rain that Robeson received during the storm caused catastrophic flooding when the levees of the Lumbie River broke. Some 14,000 homes in Robeson County were flooded. Of those, hundreds were condemned.

Recovery work in Robeson goes on, and will likely continue for years to come. At the height of the emergency, about 1,400 county residents were staying in temporary shelters. As of this writing, 355 families remain displaced, and are staying in hotels in Robeson and nearby Cumberland Counties. Many of the families who are still displaced were living in government-subsidized housing before the flood. Now, one of the biggest obstacles to placing them in permanent housing is a severe shortage of affordable rental property in the area.

In Robeson County, 18,505 assistance registrations have been filed with FEMA and \$23.975 million in assistance has been approved. Response is methodical where large governmental agencies are involved. Losses are still being assessed. Projections and plans are still being made.

The Robeson County Church and Community Center (RCCCC) has been working, as before the flood, to meet the immediate needs of its neighbors. And the need in Robeson County is great. It is one of our nation's most persistently impoverished counties. The losses suffered by the RCCCC in the flood were felt by a good many people. Lost at the RCCCC were clothing, medical equipment, emergency baby supplies, and all the food and refrigeration in their food pantry. Also lost were the Center's records and office equipment. The RCCCC was able to open up in a temporary location in mid-November and has been providing clothing to flood victims since then. Recently the food pantry reopened, but for



*The 2014 ASUMC Youth Mission Trip.
(Photo courtesy of Marge Donnelly)*

it to be fully operational, donations of refrigerators are needed. The Center hopes that repairs to its regular facility will be completed soon.

The people of Robeson are special to our congregation. The youth of Arch Street UMC have spent many, many hours over the past eight summers in service at the RCCCC. They have sorted clothes for the home store. They have unloaded trucks and packed boxes for the food pantry. This past summer, they built a wall and door at the Center during a couple of brutally hot days.

We are one-third of the way to Pastor Robin's fund-raising goal of \$8,000 to help restore the RCCCC. We ask all of Arch Street to please pray on this and donate as much as you can to help the Center get back to full operation and continue its essential work for the community.

News & People

Editor's note: Our faithful young adult members are a blessing to this congregation. At Rev. Hynicka's suggestion, I asked one of them if she would share what Arch Street means to her.

A Home at Arch Street UMC

Ellen Reed



I have grown up in the Methodist church. My mother was the director of Children's Ministries at my childhood church so I grew up going to church every Sunday. In college, I was lucky to live within walking distance to a Methodist church with a great campus ministry program. After college, I moved to Philly for grad school. It was my first time really living on my own, so naturally I began looking for a new church home in the city. It was important to me to find a Reconciling congregation. I also wanted to find a congregation that was engaged in the community and was passionate about social justice.

Arch Street was one of the first churches I visited after moving to the city. At Arch Street I was immediately welcomed. Robin made it a point to learn my name and greet me every Sunday, and Margaret made sure to introduce me to the UMW women.

I kept coming back to Arch Street and have made it my home church. I now serve as an usher on Sundays, and I look forward to becoming more engaged in the life of the church in the future.

The Trustees' Plans for 2017

Bryan Shay

As any member of our congregation would surely tell you, our church building is much more than just the place where Arch Street holds Sunday services. Rather, this beautiful and historic building is an integral and daily part of the church's mission and ministry. For Philadelphians and those from so many other places, it operates as a place of contemplation and reflection, a house of worship, a shelter, a sanctuary, a source of comfort, a space for celebration, a place of organization and activism, and a means by which to put our Christian values into action.

To ensure that the physical building and Arch Street's other properties continue to be effective tools to further our church's wide-ranging ministry, the Trustees have been hard at work. The work undertaken and overseen by the Trustees over the last few months and years has included many projects—some visible and others not always obvious. These include the installation of carpeting in the entrance outside the chapel in order to make a good first impression on the many visitors and guests who pass through the church on a daily basis; the installation of new flooring in Nichols Hall, which includes a labyrinth for personal reflection; installation of new appliances in the kitchen, which supports more efficient and safe service for our guests at Grace Café and the student-run overnight shelter; upgrades and repairs to Serenity House in furtherance of Arch Street's mission in the North Philadelphia community; renovation and upgrades to the bathrooms; necessary repairs to an aging roof; and repairs to the sidewalks outside the church building.

With the help of donations both large and small, and due in no small part to the

tireless efforts of our pastor in securing grants and other funding, the Trustees have set an ambitious agenda for 2017. The Trustees' priorities include completing the installation of a security system, which will make our members, guests, and staff safer as they work to further the church's mission; upgrading and installing new audiovisual equipment in the sanctuary, which will not only enhance the experience of Sunday worship, but also allow the church's message and ministry to extend far beyond our building's walls; repairing and upgrading the organ and organ console; upgrading the lighting in and around the sanctuary; additional repairs to the roof and spire that are necessary to ensure safety standards are met; and upgrading the flooring in the chapel.

Spearheading the Trustees' work in 2017 will be the committee's new chairman, Russ Alexander. Russ, who is a long-time and committed Trustee, takes over this leadership role from Jack McGrath, who stepped down as chairman after many years of able and purposeful leadership. Jack has graciously agreed to stay on as a Trustee, and Russ has dived into his new leadership role with vigor and a strong plan to continue the Trustees' work. Thus, although there has been a change in leadership, there has been no decrease in either energy or vision.

Our beautiful building is many things to many people. The Trustees are committed to maximizing the role that the church building and our other properties play in advancing Arch Street's ministry, and the Trustees pledge to continue to work hard in 2017 to make our church a welcoming, attractive, safe, and effective place for worship, ministry, shelter, advocacy, and any number of other roles the church plays in our community.

The Grace Café Worship Service

Rachel Ternes

“Good evening, everyone, and welcome to Grace Café! I’m Rachel, and as I do every Sunday evening at five o’clock, I want to invite anyone who’s interested to join the worship team! We work together before each worship service to choose and practice songs, prayers, poems, and stories to make our worship service more beautiful and personal. If you want to be a part of that, meet us over by the piano! No experience required.”

This—or something to this effect—is my announcement to the Grace Café congregation every Sunday evening. On Sunday afternoons, a diverse group of folks sharing the common need for a hot meal begin gathering in the sanctuary in anticipation of our Grace Café dinner. In the half hour before dinner, 100 or more of us share worship together (though attending worship is not required for eating dinner), and in the half hour before that, the worship team gathers to weave together a service.

The team has several loyal regulars, several members who join us occasionally, and some weeks we are blessed with the participation of a guest who’s just passing through. We work with limited time, limited resources, and a lot of heart and team spirit to create a worship service that we hope speaks in some way to every member of our diverse fellowship.

Sometimes a guest or volunteer contributes piano accompaniment, but most of the time our little choir sings a cappella to hymns and spirituals that we choose for their power, their familiarity, and their ease of joining in without necessarily looking at a hymnal. Sometimes, members of the worship team will read a prayer, poem, story, or personal reflection to the congregation.

The Grace Café worship team has become a wonderful little community. I love looking out into the congregation as we lead a song, seeing members light up with recognition and grooving along. But I am most inspired by our work whenever a member of the team is empowered to express what’s on their heart through a hymn suggestion, and is able to let their creative soul be seen while the hymn blesses the congregation.

If you sing, play an instrument, write poetry, or have another creative gift that you would like to contribute to the Grace Café worship team, please email me at RTernes@UMCmission.org!

A Letter from the Future: “Walls”

John Buzby

Every week, I share a message or a song with the congregation that has gathered for the Grace Café worship service. What follows is a message that I presented on February 19, 2017 in the form of a letter to my younger self. This is based on an exercise I was given by my therapist at JFK Behavioral Health Clinic. The assignment was to write a letter to my younger self from the present. It is often therapeutic to give some sage advice to yourself on the road to recovery. And it is also a creative and fun writing exercise. This is the second letter I presented for the Grace Café in what I hope will be a series of such letters.

2/19/17

Dear Johnny:

Once again I feel the need to write to you from the future. It is now 2017 and another year has passed. You certainly have grown since the last time I wrote to you. I am now 57 years old and many glorious things have happened to you during the past year of 2016. I have done

well in our recovery and we have found a purpose and a peace in our work at the Arch Street United Methodist Church.

But my apologies for interrupting you as you are curled up on your favorite reading chair engrossed in yet another adventure. For this will give you many hours of enjoyment and escape from a life that at times may seem unfair. But you should be careful. This will become an obsession for you, for this is the very thing that will lead you to isolation later in life and will lead us down the path to addiction and homelessness.

This isolation will allow us to build a massive wall around ourselves. Yet this dark journey will become an enormous gift, for it will force you out into the world and together we will shatter this wall. But there will always be more walls erected, which will lead us to ask, “What is this wall and how did it end up in my path?” The answers are not found in the whys and what-fors of this wall. For the very act of tearing down one wall will make it easier to tear down new ones.

There will be much talk of walls being erected in 2017. Still, the simple fact remains that you will become a great warrior—a warrior of the light. A wall can be erected by great machines and can be laid low by great weapons. But warriors of the light do not build walls—they tear them down with love and build bridges of hope.

Oh. Now I hear Mom calling us. She needs help raking the leaves. You will have plenty of hours left in your life—time for plenty of new adventures—time to live thousands of lives built with words.

Peace from the future,

John

Columns

Minister's Message



Rev. Robin Hynicka,
Senior Pastor

What is Sanctuary?

When you enter the large space where the members and friends of the Arch Street United Methodist Church worship each Sunday morning at 11:00, you are entering the sanctuary—the space designed and designated for sacred service and inclusive community building. It is a place of first, second, third, and unending

chances at enacting redemption, reconciliation, and restoration on all levels of human experience.

The word *sanctuary* has several synonyms: refuge, haven, harbor, oasis, and shelter. Obviously, Sanctuary is so much more than the dimensions of some physical space. Sanctuary is a timeless tabernacle of trust. It is the last place someone goes seeking justice during a period of personal plight or a season of systemic oppression. So whenever and wherever the world's systems of governance violate basic human rights, deny due process, and operate to privilege the powerful, a universal system of sacred resistance based on the rule of love arises.

Sanctuary arises from empathy, not imperial edict; arises from the spirit of the law, not the letter of the law; and arises from the uncommon courage of

the oppressed to resist evil and demand justice. Sanctuary is a spiritual designation, not a religious or political statement. Sanctuary is a way of living out a sacred covenant to seek justice, love kindness, and walk humbly.

Arch Street UMC is a Sanctuary that has so many dimensions. In particular, Arch Street is a Sanctuary for Javier Flores, who is classified by the world's systems as an undocumented immigrant from Mexico but who, in the tradition of Sanctuary, is called by God to be an individual of sacred worth seeking justice for himself, his family, and for so many others like him.

In this sense, Javier embodies the spirit of Sanctuary—*is* Sanctuary. We and the entire world would do well to learn from him.

Our History: Rev. John and Grace McElroy

Dale Shillito, Arch Street Historian

Mary Grace McElroy, wife of Rev. John McElroy, was much loved during their time at Arch Street. She had “a loving spirit and a sense of humor that endeared her to those she knew.” Grace was born on February 6, 1911 in Philadelphia, daughter of Clyde Gardener and Laura Shorter. She graduated from Woodbury (New Jersey) High School and went on to the Protestant Episcopal School of Nursing. She specialized in obstetrical nursing at the Pennsylvania Lying-In Hospital in Philadelphia. Grace was an officer and 50-year member of the Philanthropic Educational Organization of Women.

Three daughters were born to the McElroys: Barbara Patterson, Ruth Fehn, and Alexandra Bouman, who were growing up during their Arch Street years.

Those years extended from 1949 through 1959. In that last year, Rev. McElroy accepted a request to serve in a pulpit in the North Jersey Conference. His pastorate at Calvary UMC in East Orange lasted until 1968.

After the girls were grown, Grace went back to nursing, as staff and head nurse at several New Jersey hospitals. Having a particular interest public health, Rev. McElroy served as chairman of nursing at Methodist Hospital, Philadelphia, and East Orange General Hospital, and as a trustee at Brooklyn Methodist Hospital. He also served as a trustee at Drew University.

In 1978, after 46 years of pastoral service, John and Grace retired to Ocean City, New Jersey. John remained active as

chaplain of Ocean City Tabernacle and visitation minister for Linwood UMC.

In 1986, the couple moved to Rochester, New York to be near a daughter and grandchildren. In all, the couple had seven granddaughters, one grandson, and four great-grandchildren.

In 1996, they moved to a home for retired pastors at Cornwall Manor, Pennsylvania, where they reacquainted with colleagues from the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference including Rev. James and Angela Haney, also formerly of Arch Street.

Dr. McElroy lived to age 90, passing to our Lord on October 21, 2004. Grace lived to age 99, passing in 2013. The couple had been married for 66 years.

Make America Greater

Rev. Reinhard Kruse

Make America Greater:

Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with your God.

Make America Greater:

Allow more immigration.

Make America Greater:

Hear the words from the Statue of Liberty: Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free . . ."

Make America Greater:

I was hungry and you fed me.

Make America Greater:

I was naked and you clothed me.

Make America Greater:

I was sick and you healed me.

Make America Greater:

I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

Make America Greater:

Respect the LGBTQ.

Make America Greater:

Do not tolerate racism and hatred.

Make America Greater:

Insist on the freedom of religion,

speech, press, and the right to assemble.

Make America Greater:

Establish equality in gender employment and fair wages.

Make America Greater:

Obey the 9th Commandment: "Thou shall not bear false witness."

Make America Greater:

Obey Jesus's second commandment: Love your neighbor as yourself.

That is how you make America greater!!!!

The UMC and Our Transgender Siblings

Rev. Dave Krueger

On January 22nd, Arch Street UMC had the pleasure of hosting two speakers who were in town for the Creating Change conference organized by the National LGBTQ Task Force.

Rev. Liam M. Hooper and Rev. Louis Mitchell are both ministers and active leaders in support of the transgender community. They took turns preaching at the Sunday services and co-led a discussion during the Sunday School hour. The Sunday School discussion was particularly powerful as it was centered on the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel. After

the night-long struggle, Jacob walked away with a blessing and a new identity, which was revealed in his new name, Israel—"one who prevails with God." Liam and Louis told their own stories of transitioning and how they clung to God's grace and experienced many blessings even when grace was hard to come by in their own churches and families.

Transgender persons need the support of the church now more than ever. Laws protecting transgender rights are under great threat and transgender persons, especially those of color, continue to face

ridicule and violence. The very day before Liam and Louis visited Arch Street, a transgender woman was physically attacked on the 1300 block of Filbert Street, just steps away from the front door of our church. The offending individual, who used transphobic slurs and said that God would send the woman to Hell, was later arrested and charged with assault.

The United Methodist Church needs to speak out against such violence and the destructive language and theology that undergirds it.

Reflections on the Mentorship Program

Editor's note: The Winter issue of the Spire contained a group photo of the young adults taking part in Arch Street's mentorship program. Courtesy of Rachel Ternes, several now share their thoughts on why they joined the program and their experience to date.

"I chose to participate in this program because I know the value of community during discernment. I am excited to journey with those who are also participating as we are challenged and growing. May we hold each other accountable when it's necessary, uplift each other as we can,

and support each other through the year. I hope that through this process I will achieve the courage to take more formal steps in answering my call to ministry."

—*Lauren Rowello*

"After completing two service years in church-affiliated programs, I was looking for an opportunity to build community around a call to ministry, a ministry that seeks justice and peace. Getting to learn from and grow with this wonderful group of civic-minded young people has energized me to continue my call to serve God in the community and continue to fight for justice. The things I have learned from

my peers and mentors in the program have really complemented the work I have been doing with Heeding God's Call to End Gun Violence. This experience so far has been invaluable, so thanks for the support!" —*Jill Disbro*

"The mentoring cohort is one of the most validating intentional groups of people I have ever been a part of. I'm also glad for the opportunity to learn the theory behind organizing for justice. I already feel more capable as someone who is trying to make a difference in the world." —*Laura Jane Brubaker*

Events

Regular Sunday Activities

- 8:30 AM - Worship service, Chapel
- 9:45 AM - Adult Sunday School, Chapel
- 9:45 AM - Choir Rehearsal, Sanctuary
- 11:00 AM - Children's Sunday School, Nichols Hall
- 11:00 AM - Worship service, Sanctuary
- 12:20-3:00 PM - Deaconess Darlene, Sanctuary
- 2:00 PM - Unity Fellowship Church Service, Chapel
- 5:30 PM - Grace Café, Sanctuary and Nichols Hall

Weekly Activities

- Monday
 - 1:00 PM - Tea and Talk, Chapel
 - 5:30 PM - AA Meeting, Nichols Hall
 - 7:00 PM - Freedom Band Rehearsal, Chapel
- Tuesday
 - 12:00 PM - Bible Study with Rev. Waller, Sanctuary
- Wednesday
 - 6:00 PM - AA Meeting, Nichols Hall
- Thursday
 - 5:00 PM - Diversity Group, Chapel
 - 5:30 PM - AA Meeting, Nichols Hall

Please check the "Events" tab on our website (www.archstreetumc.org) for the latest calendar activities.

Committee Meetings, Special Events and Activities

United Methodist Men meet the first Saturday of the month at 10:00 AM; United Methodist Women meet the second Sunday of the month immediately after the 11:00 AM service; the Native American Indian Awareness Group meets the third Sunday of the month at 2:00 PM. Refer to the weekly "What's Happening" bulletin for exceptions to these dates.

April 2017

- Sun Apr 9: Palm/Passion Sunday
- Thur Apr 13: Tennebrae service
- Fri Apr 14: "Seven Last Words" service and Stations of the Cross
- Sun Apr 16: Easter

May 2017

- Sun May 15: Mothers Day

Submit calendar events to Nancy Megley (nmegley@msn.com). Listings for Summer 2017 issue are due June 1.

June 2017

- Sun Jun 4: Pentecost
- Jun 15-17: Annual Conference

Birthdays

April

- 1 - Devon Goodwin
- 2 - Donald Lathrop ("Country")
- 3 - Amy Woodworth
- 4 - Gabe Bedell, Elizabeth Fuller, Kenny Jackson, Seilala Tapealava
- 7 - Barbara Williams
- 10 - Rick Taylor
- 14 - Jason Regino
- 15 - Louella Chase, Solange Pereira
- 16 - Thomas Bowen
- 17 - Remone Mundle
- 24 - Anana Tinnhé

May

- 1 - Esther McAllister
- 2 - Thomas Freeman Jr., Amy Durfee West
- 3 - Michelle Brooks Whittaker
- 7 - Ilaisaane Tapealava
- 11 - Fred Farmer
- 12 - Jacob Bonfante, Jane Pipes
- 14 - Thomas L. Bartlow, Jordan Harris, Rev. Jeffrey Haskins
- 17 - Ken Bere
- 19 - Martin Farmer
- 20 - Miles Jefferson
- 21 - Frederick Farmer
- 26 - Timothy Adams
- 27 - Sophia Govorov
- 28 - Lea Booth
- 30 - Rev. Oscar Allen
- 31 - Alexander Govorov

June

- 1 - Agatha Lewis, Russell Whaley, Karen Wolfe
- 3 - Rev. Reinhard Kruse
- 4 - Tyler Liam Scott
- 5 - Nelson Warley
- 6 - Callie Chen, Alicia Garcia
- 9 - Davida Gobin
- 10 - Elaine Jenson
- 11 - Jean Bibber, Anne McCormick
- 13 - Deborah Fowlkes, Dr. Charles Lewis
- 15 - Susan Lee Miller
- 16 - Don Caskey
- 17 - Virginia Brown, Toni McIlwaine
- 18 - Karen Porter
- 19 - Audra Wolfe
- 21 - Ralph Ciampa, Paul Ertel
- 22 - Mark Lord-Schell
- 24 - William Crawford, Ted Koziara
- 25 - Rev. Dave Krueger, Alicia Thomas
- 26 - Roger Rohtert
- 27 - Nicole Gilmore
- 29 - John Buzby
- 30 - Vanessa Flacks-Brown, Alex Patterson, Chris Whaley

UMW Reorganization and Recommitment—Men, This Applies to You, Too!

Nancy Megley

The United Methodist Women at Arch Street started 2017 with a serious but enthusiastic rethinking of our mission and purpose. At the December meeting, president Margaret Harris noted that attendance had fallen off badly over the past year. Everyone is busy, and she asked us to consider over the next four weeks whether our UMW is no longer worthwhile and should be discontinued.

The response at the January 8th meeting was a resounding *NO!* We reminded ourselves that United Methodist Women is our denomination's largest provider of mission support for women, children, and youth worldwide (actually, with approximately 800,000 members, it is the largest denominational faith organization for women). Local UMW units support that work through member donations and by educating ourselves and the greater congregation about ways we can help to fight

injustice and oppression and offer hope and support to vulnerable people.

We also reminded ourselves how greatly we enjoy each other's company and how much we get out of the meetings, particularly the book discussions—even when some of us (guilty!) haven't read the book and rely on Margaret to parse it for us. And watching us try to discipline ourselves long enough to get the handouts, donation basket, and cookies passed can be quite entertaining!

At the January meeting, we renewed our commitment to Arch Street's UMW. Specifically, we will continue to collect donations for mission work. We will host book discussions and a monthly Get Acquainted Time (GAT) after the 11:00 service. To bring national UMW priorities to our congregation, Margaret has organized past educational programs on topics such as challenges facing undocumented immigrants in our community, women's health issues in Africa, and human trafficking abroad as well as right here in Philadelphia. These programs and the book discussions are open to men as well as women of the con-

gregation, and we spoke about holding them quarterly.

We also acknowledged that we have relied too heavily on Margaret (our only officer!) to keep everything going almost single-handedly—the exception being Grace Regino, who loyally attends every meeting and brings a supply of delicious treats to provide lunch for whoever comes. To round out their efforts, Elizabeth Brown volunteered to be our program director and will organize the GAT and other UMW events. I will serve as treasurer and submit our quarterly mission pledge to the district UMW.

Please see the weekly worship folder for a calendar of upcoming UMW events. The monthly GAT will be an opportunity to learn more about United Methodist Women—who we are and what we do. Everyone is also invited to our book discussions and educational programs (hear me, guys?). And we invite all women of the church to come to our meetings and see how you can get involved. You can expect great food, fun fellowship, and a rollicking discussion!

At the NSC Potluck, February 25th



The Nationalities Service Center (NSC), our neighbor at 1216 Arch Street, assists refugees who are being resettled in Philadelphia. For the past few years, Arch Street has provided food for a Thanksgiving celebration for NSC families and last fall we hosted it at Arch Street.

The guests greatly enjoyed the event and asked if it could happen more than once a year! We agreed, and on February 25th, we welcomed over 50 guests of all ages to the first quarterly potluck. We sampled wonderful unfamiliar food and enjoyed speaking with the adults and watching the kids have fun.



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Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Philadelphia, PA
Permit No. 164

Spring Issue
April – June 2017

Voice of the Spire, the newsletter of Arch Street United Methodist Church, is published 4 times per year and distributed free to members and friends of the congregation. To be added to our mailing list, please notify: Secretary, Arch Street United Methodist Church, 55 North Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107.

POSTMASTER: Return undeliverable pieces to Arch Street United Methodist Church, 55 North Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107.

Future Dates

Independence Day
July 4

UMW's Mission U
July 21–22

Youth Mission Trip
August

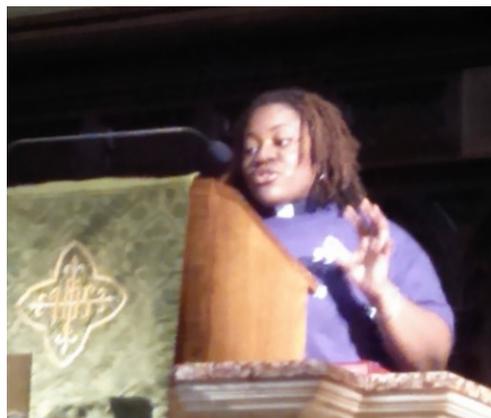
Labor Day
September 5

World Communion
Sunday
October 1

EPA Conference UMW
Annual Celebration
October 21

Read past issues of
Voice of the Spire
and follow events at
our website:
www.archstreetumc.org

Arch Street United Methodist Church



Rev. Naomi Leapheart was one of four guest speakers who preached on the theme of "Women of Indomitable Spirit" during African Heritage/International Women's Month at Arch Street.

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