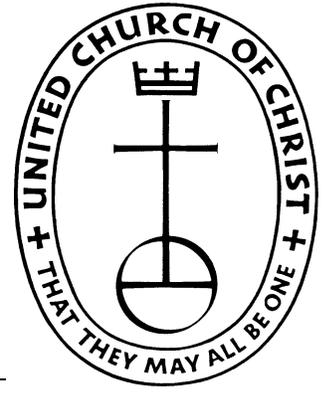


# First Christian United Church of Christ Newsletter January 2017

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*First Christian's celebrate Christmas with beautiful poinsettias!*

# First Christian UCC – January 2017 Newsletter

## SPECIAL PROGRAMS HELD IN ADVENT



Above/beside you see some photos from special programs we held this past Advent Season. We started out with our Hanging of the Greens Service in which we celebrated Christmas traditions from around the world. In mid-December, the Board of Christian Education sponsored its second annual Christmas Pageant. The following Sunday our choir led us in worship with the annual Service of Lessons and Carols. This year they were joined by the Festival Brass of Raleigh, as well as several duets by Beth and Nate Painter. Finally, our celebrations were brought to an end with our Candlelight Christmas Eve service as well as a Christmas Day service the next day.



## **PASTOR'S COLUMN**

As we prepare to turn the page on 2016 and begin 2017, I was going through one of my files when I came across the piece below that I've attached. It was written by a woman named Bonnie Mohr. As a preacher, I'm always setting aside interesting items that I think might be of use in a sermon at some point. I'm sure someone passed this on to me a while ago, but I'm not sure who. Whoever it was, many thanks!

As I thought about my column for this January newsletter, Mohr's piece jumped out at me. Often, life gets so busy that it does seem more like a race. We rush from here to there – from one appointment or meeting to another. Sometimes we become distracted by the busyness of it all. Other times, it's as though we have tunnel vision, the only thing we can see is the finish line, everything else blurs to indistinction. But as Mohr reminds us, life isn't a race – it's a journey. So let's attempt to make that journey faithfully and well. As you and I begin a new year, may we take the time to count our blessings and give thanks. We only get to make this journey once. Let's make the most of the life we have been given. And let us never forget who it is that journeys with us every step of the way.

And perhaps along that way, we can take Bonnie Mohr's counsel to heart as well!

Have a happy and blessed new year!

Mark

### **Living Life**

*Life is not a race-but indeed a journey. Be honest. Work hard. Be choosy.*

*Say "thank you". "I love you", and "great job" to someone each day.*

*Go to church, take time for prayer. The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh.*

*Let your handshake mean more than a pen and paper.*

*Love your life and what you've been given,*

*it is not accidental - search for your purpose and do it as best you can.*

*Dreaming does matter. It allows you to become that which you aspire to be.*

*Laugh often. Appreciate the little things in life and enjoy them.*

*Some of the best things really are free.*

*Do not worry, less wrinkles are more becoming.*

*Forgive, it frees the soul. Take time for yourself - plan for longevity.*

*Recognize the special people you've been blessed to know.*

*Live for today, enjoy the moment.*

*Bonnie Mohr*

## **HELP TAKE DOWN THE GREENS**

Now that Advent and Christmas are nearly past, we can set our eyes on a new year. However, before we get there, we need your help in "taking down the greens." Many thanks to all who helped us decorate. Let's do it again in reverse. Plan to come back on Saturday, January 7<sup>th</sup> to return our wreaths, tree and candles to their proper storage place. We will begin at 9:00 am. The more who are able to help, the faster it will go!

# **First Christian UCC – January 2017 Newsletter**

## **CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS HELD - UPDATE**

Following worship on December 11<sup>th</sup>, a congregational meeting was held. The purpose of the meeting was to approve the report of the Nominating Committee for boards and committee members for the year to come, as well as to act on the proposed 2017 budget. Both were approved unanimously. If you would like a copy of either, they are available in the church office.

Another item of business arose, but not for a vote, but as a report. You'll recall that several months ago, the church received a "letter of intent" from a real estate agent in Charlotte. An offer was made for the purchase of our property which has been on the market for some time. The Official Board made a counter offer to this letter with the stipulation that our stained-glass windows, as well as our organ and sound system were not included in the sale. Incidentally, these items were not included in the original listing.

After the Charlotte real estate agent received our counter offer, he passed it on. We never knew who it was that made the offer. This party, however, asked for an estimate on the value of our windows. This began a long process in which we tried to and determine the windows' origin and value. After extensive research, it was determined that we don't know the answer to either question. The windows were purchased by families in the church in memory or honor of loved ones. Apparently, those arrangements were made directly with the window company and the church has no record of those transactions. What we were able to determine was the replacement value of our windows which is around a quarter of a million dollars.

We reported this fact to the agent of the potential buyers and they then lowered their bid by \$300,000.00. At the last meeting of the Official Board, all members voted to turn down this counter offer.

## **ANNUAL REPORTS TO BE ASSEMBLED**

The annual meeting of the congregation will be held following worship on Sunday, February 5<sup>th</sup>. In anticipation of that meeting, all board and committee chairs have submitted reports for the activities of their groups in the past year. As you may recall, our annual report is often over 30 pages long. Therefore, assembling the report is a real undertaking, but the more hands we have helping, the lighter the load.

If you can lend a hand, please come to the church office at 10:00 am on Thursday, January 19<sup>th</sup>.

## **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION SCHEDULE CHANGES**

Because New Year's Day falls on a Sunday this year, it will be up to each individual Sunday School class to determine if they will meet that day. There will be no Sunday School on Christmas Day. In addition, the monthly meeting of the Board of Christian Education will convene following worship on January 15<sup>th</sup> rather than the 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **THE SUPPER CLUB – NEXT GATHERING**

The Supper Club's next gathering will be on January 3<sup>rd</sup> at 5:45 pm at the Kimber's Restaurant in Gibsonville. In order to make a reservation, please call Eleanor Lovgren at 226-2671 by December 29<sup>th</sup>. All are welcomed. Everyone pays their own bills. Invite a friend!

# **First Christian UCC – January 2017 Newsletter**

## **FIFTH SUNDAY PROGRAM ON DUBAI**

January 29<sup>th</sup> is a fifth Sunday this month and, as is our tradition, on fifth Sundays our Sunday School classes get together for a joint programs.

Several months ago, Matt Rice made a presentation on his mission trip to Africa. As a part of that journey, he also made a side trip to Dubai. On the 29<sup>th</sup>, Matt has agreed to do another presentation for us on his experiences in Dubai.

We will meet in the Bray Fellowship Hall at 9:30 am. As with his last program, you can expect some great pictures, and perhaps even some music accompanying his narrative of a very interesting cultural experience. Invite a friend to come!

## **THANK YOU FROM RODNEY PAUL**

In November our custodian, Rodney Paul and his family, asked to “borrow” the Bray Fellowship Hall for a shower in anticipation of the birth of their new grandchild. Below is the note of thanks that Rodney sent.

We would like to say thank you for the use of the fellowship hall on November 5<sup>th</sup>. Our daughter’s baby shower was a spirit-filled and wonderful celebration. We felt the love of the entire congregation as we celebrated the upcoming birth of our granddaughter (Madison Alease Paul). Please thank everyone on our behalf and Merry Christmas!

Rodney Paul and family

## **THANK YOU FOR YOUR SPECIAL GIFTS**

Over the course of 2016, the church has collected funds for a number of special offerings. The following is a summary of that giving:

- Our Church’s Wider Mission - \$1,360
- One Great Hour of Sharing - \$400
- Neighbor’s In Need - \$210
- Strengthen the Church - \$215
- Christmas Fund - \$505
- Christmas Cheer – 1,015
- Special Needs Fund - \$1,035

Thank you for these gifts which are over and above your on-going weekly giving. It is because of your generosity that we are able to carry on the ministry of Jesus Christ in this community and around the world.

# **First Christian UCC – January 2017 Newsletter**

## **A SERVICE OF WORSHIP FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY**

On Wednesday, January 18<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm churches throughout Alamance County will gather for an Ecumenical Worship Service of Prayer for Christian Unity. The service will be held at Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, 1620 Hanford Road. All are welcome!

That Wednesday is the beginning of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Since 2017 is the occasion of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the beginning of the Reformation, the theme: “Reconciliation – The Love of Christ Compels Us” (2 Corinthians 5:14-20) has been chosen. The service will reflect that reconciliation is a gift from God, intended for the entire creation.

This service will occur midweek between two important events in our community: the celebration of Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday on Monday and the inauguration of Donald John Trump as the forth-fifth President of the United States on Friday. While there have been many events that have divided our community and country in this past year, this worship service will lift up God’s desire to bring healing and reconciliation.

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## **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

### **Year to Date through 11-30-16**

	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Budget</b>
Income:	\$204,960.73	\$190,936.36
<u>Expense</u>	<u>\$175,713.63</u>	<u>\$190,941.56</u>
Net Balance:	\$ 29,247.10	<\$5.20>

Balance in Checking 11-30-16      \$26,949.66

As you can see, everyone’s continued support is still greatly needed to carry on the ministry of the church. Please send in your giving today.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Ken Little and Connie Collins  
Treasurer and Accounting Manager