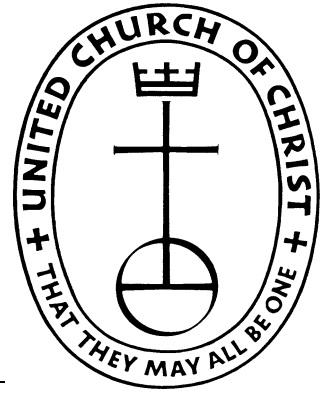


**First Christian
United Church of Christ
Newsletter
November 2018**



*Turkey Day... our celebration of God
and our fellowship together... will be
held on Sunday November 11th.
More details inside...*

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PASTOR’S COLUMN

At this point I trust that all of you have received word of my retirement at the end of January 2019. My time with you has been a true gift. I’ve served several churches over the years, but none have had the sense of love and community that First Christian possesses. I have felt that love and support from the very start. You are a unique community of faith and it has been a privilege to serve among you. However, as we look to the future, I thought it might be helpful to share with you the process you’ll likely go through in locating and calling your next pastor.

According to our constitution and by-laws, the Board of Deacons has the responsibility of hiring an interim minister. Sometime soon we will be in touch with the Rev. Eddie Weathers in the Eastern North Carolina Association office of the Southern Conference to let him know of my retirement. Rev. Weathers is the search and call person for the association and he will know of available interim pastors in our area. We will also be in touch with Beth Kennett who works with a number of interim ministers. Once candidates have been identified, a designated group from the Board of Deacons will interview them, then make a recommendation to the full Board. My last Sunday will be January 27th. Your interim should start February 1st.

During this interim time, many things will happen. Not only will your interim lead worship, provide pastoral care, and attend to administrative duties, but they should also help guide the congregation through a process of self-study. What are the things you value most from the church’s past? What are the things you value but are willing to release? And maybe, most importantly, what are your hopes and dreams for the future? A transition team should be appointed to help the congregation work through these questions. It is important to include this step in the process because it not only helps to affirm who are, but it also helps identify the qualities you are looking for in a new pastor.

Once this work is completed, a pastoral search committee will be elected. Again, our constitution calls for the Official Board to nominate a committee of no more than seven, who will then be elected by vote of the congregation. The search committee will use the work done by the transition team to compile a church profile that, once completed, will be sent to the search and call office at our denominational head-quarters in Cleveland. The position will be posted nation-wide. Interested candidates will send their profiles to the church and the committee will begin the process of assessing them. Questions will be asked. Sermons sent. Interviews held. Members of the committee may travel to hear candidates preach in their home setting, or candidates might be invited to preach in a “neutral pulpit” at a nearby UCC church.

Once a final candidate is identified, they will be invited to meet the congregation, preach and lead worship at a Sunday service. Then the congregation will vote. After the vote, it will probably be another two months before your new pastor will be able to begin. He or she will need to give notice to the church they are presently serving in most cases.

In all, a pastoral search often takes a year and a half to two years to complete. Sometimes churches get nervous and are tempted to short-circuit the process in order to speed things up. But it is a tried and true process. It has worked well for a long time as congregations work to discern God’s will and the appropriate candidate who is the right match to help the church move into God’s future.

As we look at the future, none of us knows what we can expect. And that uncertainty is often unsettling. Yet, God has held this congregation dear for countless generations. God is not about to give up on any of us! The real question is, will we be open to the new direction

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that God may lead?

In this season of Thanksgiving, we are asked to pause, count our blessings and give thanks. This church has certainly been one of the major blessings in my life, as have all of you. Keep at the work that God sets before you. Transition times are hard work, but don't lose heart. The rewards are worth it and First Christian still has many more blessings to bestow.

Mark

SUPPER CLUB – NOVEMBER 6TH

Every time that the Supper Club meets, it's a great time of fun and fellowship! Many have participated in the gatherings and all have had a wonderful time. The next event will be meeting at Valerio's Italian Restaurant, 120 E Front St, Burlington at 6:00 pm on November 6th. Please contact Eleanor Lovgren or Phil Bray by Sunday November 4th if you plan to attend.

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME ENDS

November 3rd is the date. When you go to bed that Saturday night, remember to set your clocks back one hour and enjoy an extra hour of sleep. Sunday School will begin at 9:30am, Eastern Standard Time.



TURKEY DAY / CAKE AUCTION – NOV. 11TH

This year our Turkey Day Celebration will have a new twist. We will still gather in the Bray Fellowship Hall following worship for a wonderful Thanksgiving feast catered by Ted Wheeler. But following the meal, there will be a cake and pie auction to raise funds for light repairs in our sanctuary.

The menu for our meal will include turkey, dressing and the usual Thanksgiving dishes. A \$10 contribution is requested, but if you can give more to help cover the cost of those for whom this contribution is a burden, please do. In any case, please come and invite a friend. During our service of worship, we will honor members who have turned 90 this year as well as 50-year members.

If you plan to attend, let us know so that we can prepare for the appropriate numbers. Call the church office or fill out the reservation form in the Sunday morning bulletin and drop it in one of the offering plates.

Then, following the meal, you will have an opportunity to bid on cakes and pies to save for your Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations. If you are able to contribute a cake or pie,

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please tightly wrap it in plastic wrap so that it can be easily frozen.

ADVENT IS COMING – ORDER YOUR POINSETTIA NOW

December 2nd will be the first Sunday in Advent this year. That means we'll decorate the sanctuary on Saturday, December 1st. Meet in the sanctuary at 9:00 am. If enough workers come, decorations should be completed in a little over an hour.

As you know, poinsettias are also an essential part of our sanctuary's decorations, and the time to order them is now. Order forms will be available in worship bulletins and at the church office beginning October 28th. The cost of the poinsettias this year will be \$12 and may be purchased in memory or in honor of a loved one. The deadline for orders is Sunday, November 18th. Return forms and payment directly to Julie Miller. Checks should be made out to First Christian. Please write "poinsettia" on the memo line.

BUCKET REPORT

On October 14th, 15 "Clean-up Buckets" were assembled in the Bray Fellowship Hall. After Hurricane Florence came ashore leaving destruction in its wake, we collected offerings for disaster relief. In all, nearly \$1000 was collected including a \$250 grant from the United Church of Christ. We were told that one of the most immediate needs was for clean-up buckets – 5-gallon buckets filled with 14 different kinds of cleaning supplies and tools. All our buckets were filled, with Jamie and Carol Fonville coordinating our efforts.

The buckets were dropped at a required distribution site. Our Southern Conference set a goal of 500 buckets in response to the hurricane. It's good to know that we did our part in this effort. Beyond the cost of buckets and supplies, left over funds have been sent to the UCC disaster relief office where 100% of our gifts will be used for direct service in response to other disasters. Thank you all who contributed and to all who helped assemble the buckets.



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LAITY SUNDAY – A TRUE JOY

October 21st was designated as Laity Sunday this year. In the past, this had been our Family Day service, but with fewer young people in the congregation, we made a pivot to “Laity Sunday”. The entire service was led by lay people. Julie Miller, Nancey Simmons, and Dotti Davis served as our liturgists, and Keith Miller, Nancy Thomas, and Benjie Terrell each spoke about their journeys of faith. In addition, along with the choir and Matt Rice, Carol Fonville accompanied music for the service on the piano.

In all it was a moving and powerful service. The only short-coming was that October is a month when many of our members are away. It has been suggested that, in the future, we hold Laity Sunday in March during the season of Lent leading up to Easter.

If you missed the service and would like to hear it, go to our church’s website, firstchristianucc.org and click on the “listen to sermon” button near the bottom right of the page for the most current service recorded. If you do not hear the service you desire there, click on the “download archive” tab at the top of the page, this will lead you to a page with several services and other archives listed by date. Click on the desired item to listen to a service or view an older Wednesday Musing or newsletter.

CONGREGATIONAL NOTES

- On October 15th we said our goodbyes to Parker King. Parkie had been ill for some time, but his end was sudden. Please keep his family in your prayers. To date a total of \$765 has been contributed in his memory.
- New updated directories are available in both the office and sanctuary. Look for the blue sheets. Many thanks to all who provided updated information.
- The church office will be closed on Thanksgiving Day, November 22nd,
- The Finance Committee will meet at 2 pm on Thursday, November 1st. This will replace its regular November meeting.

STEWARDSHIP – “WHAT SHALL WE BRING”

The theme for our stewardship reflection this year has been "What Shall We Bring?" During this time you and I have had the opportunity for our own personal reflection upon what this means to each of us. For me, it means understanding that although we do not have God supplying all of our wants, God does supply us for our needs. God even gives us more than we really need, so that we have the opportunity to share for the benefit of those around us.

A concern we should have is what are we doing to help God's work to be done in our own families, through this Church Family, in those places we are an influence in the community, and even into the world.

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A way we indicate to God our desire to assist God's work through this Church Family is through our gifts of money, time and talents as we seek to enable God to use our lives to accomplish good.

The Board of Finance thanks all who have turned in Pledge cards/Estimate of Giving cards to help us meet our financial obligations in 2019. If you have not returned a card, please do so to help carry on the ministry of First Christian United Church of Christ. The Board of Finance will complete a final Budget for 2019 that will be mailed out to members prior to our Congregational Meeting after our worship service on December 9, 2018 to approve a budget for 2019.

Jamie Fonville, Chair of the Board of Finance

NEIGHBORS IN NEED OFFERING

The Neighbors In Need offering, which we will receive on November 9th, supports the UCC's ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to fund a wide array of local and national justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects. Through ucc.org/justice, our national Justice and Witness Ministries office offers resources, news updates, and action alerts on a broad spectrum of justice issues. Working with members of the UCC Justice and Peace Action Network (a network of thousands of UCC justice and peace advocates), Justice and Witness continues its strong policy advocacy work on issues such as the federal budget, voting rights, immigration, health care, hate crimes, civil liberties, and environmental justice. Neighbors In Need also supports our American Indian neighbors in the UCC. One-third of the offering supports the UCC's Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM). Historically, forebears of the UCC established churches and worked with Lakota, Dakota, Nakota, Mandan, Hidatsa, Arickara, and Hockak in North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, and northern Nebraska. Today there are 20 UCC congregations on reservations and one urban, multi-tribal UCC congregation in Minneapolis, Minnesota. These churches and their pastors are supported by CAIM. CAIM is also an invaluable resource for more than 1,000 individuals from dozens of other tribes and nations who are members of other UCC congregations in the U.S.

CHRISTMAS CHEER IS COMING

Christmas is still two months away but our support for Christmas Cheer is more immediate. In the near future we will make available a list of items that are needed. Again, this year, rather than adopting a particular family, we will help fill in the gaps for the Christmas Cheer program overall. If shopping is a difficulty, others can do the shopping for you. There will be a barrel for your gifts in the Bray Fellowship Hall. Gifts should be unwrapped. They will be delivered to Christmas Cheer for distribution in early December.