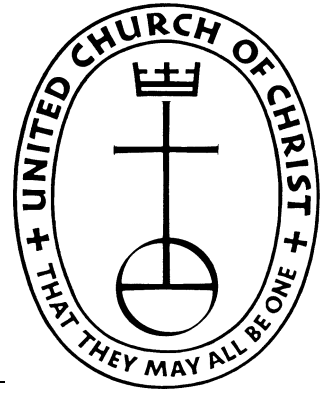


First Christian United Church of Christ Newsletter October 2017



First Christian's celebrated homecoming September 10th. Those who passed away 5, 10 and 15 years ago were remembered.

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PASTOR’S COLUMN

I want to take a moment to once more say “thank you” for the wonderful opportunity you provided me with a sabbatical this past summer. For ministers, sabbaticals allows us time to step away from the daily routines of ministry in order to pause, reflect, be refreshed and re-energized. We’re often encouraged to do things we don’t normally have the time to do on a regular basis: travel, be with family, read (for more than just sermon preparation), take time to consider “the bigger picture” rather than what needs to be done next. And, of course, there is the opportunity for spiritual rejuvenation and being still long enough so that we might hear the sound of that “still, small voice of God.”

In many ways, this past summer was a magical time for both me and Margot. We saw some amazing things throughout all our travels. We got a chance to spend a substantial amount of time with our grandchildren so that we could get to know them and they could better get to know us. Also, after Margot had spent a year and a half away serving First Congregational Church in Ashville as their interim, it was a joy to be able to spend all of that time together.

Thank you. You’ve been a wonderful congregation to serve!

One of the things that I encountered in my reading prior to the sabbatical was a sentiment from many pastors about how hard it was for them to come back to their churches after their time away. And I’d be less than honest to say that it wasn’t sad to say “goodbye” to that magical three months. But it wasn’t hard coming back to First Christian. Seeing you all again on my first Sunday back, Homecoming Sunday no less, brought joy to my heart. It was great to have had that chance to be away, but coming back really did feel like I was coming home.

And now, we turn our gaze to the future, and as you’ll see in this newsletter, there is a lot that will be happening in the next several weeks and months. October will be jam-packed. Turkey Day will soon be upon us on November 12th. During the season of Advent in December, in addition to the fulness of the season, there will be a few new things in store! And then before we know it, we’ll be knee-deep in a new year. Throughout it all, may you and I be guided by God’s hand. May we find joy in one another, strength in our ministry together, and renewed inspiration as we face the challenges of serving Jesus in this new age.

God bless you all!

Mark

MATT RICE, FEATURED ARTIST FOR ART GALLERY

Matt will be very busy this month. In addition to leading our congregation in music, he will also be making a special presentation to the church about his summer mission trip. In addition, he will be our featured artist in the First Christian Art Gallery. Beginning October 1st, look for pictures from Matt’s journey to Africa. We anticipate shots not only from his work at the Coburwas School, but also from his sojourn in South Africa near Cape Town.

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SUPPER CLUB SEPTEMBER 5TH

Every time that the Supper Club meets everyone has a great time. Many have participated in the gathering. The next event will be held Kimber's Restaurant in Gibsonville, on October 3rd, 2016 at 5:45 pm. The Supper Club will gather just a bit earlier in order to catch the early-bird special.

To reserve a space, please call the church office (336-226-7428) by Sunday October 1st. And invite a friend and join in the fun and fellowship!

JOURNEY TO GENEROSITY – THE WAY OF JESUS

The Board of Finance has begun working on a budget for First Christian United Church of Christ for 2018. In this process we are seeking to be good stewards of the money that has been shared with this church to enable it to carry out ministry in Jesus' name, and projecting how we may continue providing quality spiritual nourishment, emotional undergirding, and physical support to our members and the community around us.

We will begin a Stewardship Campaign in September as we seek the commitment of members and friends to support the ministry and work that Jesus is seeking to accomplish through this Church Family in 2018.

The theme for our stewardship reflection is "Journey to Generosity, the Way of Jesus". During this time you and I will have 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 with others for the benefit of those around us.

When the topic is stewardship, we often think it refers just to money and material goods. This is an important part of stewardship, especially when you seek to provide ministry through a building and the people who work to help the church function in its ministry. Stewardship should also be understood as to what we do with our various talents, our many opportunities to make a difference for good in life around us, in how we share our words, and even in the looks we share with others. All of life is really stewardship on what God has entrusted to each of us.

As we each consider what we may provide and do to help God accomplish God's desire of having life become better around us, may we first reflect upon our own lives and how God has been good to us. Then may we look to Jesus to better learn what Jesus is seeking to accomplish through each of our lives.

Why do you have life, and why has God sustained your life to this day? God has been generous. How is Jesus calling upon you to use your many and various gifts? How generous are you?

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SPECIAL SERVICE PLANNED FOR OCTOBER

October is here already and it will bring with it several special services.

World Communion Sunday will begin this series on October 1st. This is a day when many churches from various denominations all around the world will celebrate the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. At First Christian, we plan to use breads from various parts of the world for communion. In addition, we plan to sing hymns from around the globe.

Stewardship Sunday will be held on October 8th. Our stewardship mailing has gone out. (If you didn't receive a letter, let us know!) On the 8th we will have a service of blessing and dedication for our work in the coming year as pledge cards are returned. (See the accompanying article elsewhere in this newsletter.)

Family Day is a relatively new tradition in the life of the church. It will be held this year on October 15th. As in the past, we have invited a wide array of talented young people to help lead this special service of worship. Look for a lot of special music and a celebration of the depth and diversity of talent in our broader church family. Many thanks to Mollie Blum who recruited service participants.

Reformation Sunday will be special this year. October 29th, the last Sunday in October, is the traditional time to celebrate the birth of the Protestant Reformation. This year will be extra special however, as it marks the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. As the church today seems to be going through another period of reformation, join us on the 29th in our celebration as we both look back and gaze into the future.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION NEWS

As we jump into fall, there are two special events coming up planned by the Board of Christian Education. As you know, our Music Director, Matt Rice, returned to Africa for a work trip this past summer. This is the second year that Matt has journeyed to the Coburwas School, part of the Kyangwali Refugee Camp in Uganda. This year, Matt went as one of the group leaders and took a larger delegation of educators with him. Once more, their mission trip was very successful. On October 22nd, Matt will have a special, multi-media presentation for the congregation about his trip.

Gather in the Bray Fellowship Hall at 9:30 that morning. This program will take the place of regular Sunday School Classes that morning.

The Sunday following Matt's presentation will be a 5th Sunday. Traditionally, 5th Sundays are days when Sunday School classes gather for a joint program. Last year, we tried something new – a pot-luck breakfast and an opportunity to visit with fellow church members over a nice meal. Breakfast will start that day at 9:30 am. Bring what you can, and if you don't have access to a kitchen, come anyway. Last time, we had so many leftovers, the reception after worship was moved downstairs so that we could continue to enjoy the good food that was brought for breakfast. In addition to good food, the event was a lot of fun. Plan to join us!

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ANDES DEPARTING

Mark and Kathy Andes have been faithful members here at First Christian for many years. And this follows scores of years of ministry from both to numerous churches in both North Carolina and Virginia. Mark was even the pastor of Edgewood UCC here in town. However, with health concerns on the rise, the Andes have decided that they need to move closer to their daughter, Kristin, who lives in Charlotte. Their new address will be 733 Plantation Estate Dr., Apt. G12, Matthews, NC, 28105. They expect to move October 4th or 5th.

During our service on the 1st, we plan to recognize Kathy and Mark's ministry among us and send them off with our love. Please join us in this special time.

ANOTHER NEW ADDRESS

Eula Wellons has moved – not to a different city, but to a new room. If you go to visit her at Edgewood Village, you'll now find her down the hall, in room 252 (Edgewood Village, Room 252, 1840 Brookwood Ave., Burlington, NC) And she is very happy to have visitors.

EASTERN NC ASSOCIATION TO MEET

October 14th is the date set for the annual meeting of the Eastern North Carolina Association of the Southern Conference. This year we will gather at Burchette's Chapel UCC in Manson, NC. The theme of this year's meeting will be, "Tearing Down the Walls that Separate Us."

The event will begin at 8:45 that morning. In addition to worship and business, there will be three workshops exploring "Racial Injustice in the Criminal Justice System", "Immigration in Today's Environment" and "Moving Beyond the Welcome: Intrinsic Fabric of Christ's DNA."

This will also be our own Sharon Wheeler's last meeting as President of the association. Sharon, thank you for all that you have done, under sometimes trying circumstances.

Mark will be attending the meeting along with our church delegate, Carol Fonville, and Jamie Fonville who is a delegate as a retired UCC pastor.

FLOOD RELIEF OFFERING – OCTOBER 15TH

The month of September seemed to bring one natural disaster after another, but the hurricanes were the worst. First, Hurricane Harvey plowed into Houston and the Texas coast. No sooner had Harvey departed before Irma tore up vast portions of the Caribbean before causing massive destruction throughout Florida. Hurricane Jose offered only a glancing blow but on its heels was the massive Hurricane Maria. At this writing more than a week after the storm, Puerto Rico has been devastated. There are some 3 million people on the island, and most do not have food, water or electricity. Some parts are only now being reached.

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All of these storms have brought with them enormous hardship and suffering. On October 15th, we will have the opportunity to offer a hand of support. On that day we will collect a Flood Relief Offering. If you can't be in worship that day and would like to contribute, please send a check to the church office made out to "First Christian." Please write "Flood Relief" on the memo line.

EXPRESSIONS OF THANKS...

Dear Church Family,

Thank you for the love and support during my brother's illness and death. The prayers said for all my family help to carry each of us every day of this long journey.

Your friendship has been there for me all through the years. That is truly a blessing. Thank you,
David Allred

Dear First Christian United Church of Christ,

Thank you for helping make the Relay For Life a success. Together we honored all cancer survivors and remembered loved ones lost. Because of your support, we're able to take action against this terrible disease.

You are helping boost our efforts to provide patient programs and services, emotional support and trusted information for those facing a cancer diagnosis – and their families. And you're helping lead the fight to end cancer by supporting vital research.

Thank you again for helping save lives and leading the fight to end cancer. We deeply appreciate all you do.
With sincere thanks,
Brant Woodward

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Year to Date through 08-31-17

	Actual	Budget
Income:	\$120,703.66	\$138,520.50
<u>Expense</u>	<u>\$129,546.63</u>	<u>\$133,533.28</u>
Net Balance:	<\$8,836.97>	\$4,987.22
Balance in Checking 08-31-17		\$12,296.32

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