



**First Christian
United Church of Christ
Newsletter
April 2017**



Join us for our upcoming Easter Season Services:

April 9th - A Special Stations of the Cross Service - 10:30 am

April 13th - Maundy Thursday Service and Meal - 5:30 pm

April 16th - Sunrise Service - 7:30 am

April 16th - Easter Worship Celebration - 10:30 am

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PASTOR'S COLUMN

Spring is going to be a busy time at First Christian and the busiest part of that season will be Holy Week. Please see the Holy Week article elsewhere in this newsletter for further details, but I'd like to take a moment to highlight April 9th. This year we are going to do something a little different on this Sunday. Traditionally, this is both Palm Sunday and Passion Sunday. In the past we have started our service in the Bray Fellowship Hall with a blessing of palm branches, then a procession up to the sanctuary. This year, however, we are going to start in the sanctuary and the focus of the service will be Jesus' Passion.

Matt Rice suggested this idea - it will be a service centered around the so call "stations of the cross" that will involve special music between each station. I hope you will be able to join us for this event. Come – hear the story of Jesus' journey to the cross retold in both word and music as we make our own spiritual journey towards to joy of Jesus' Resurrection on Easter!

Let me also give you a brief update on sabbatical interim plans. We are presently finalizing contract details with Beth Kennett. She will officially start on May 30th and will work through September 3rd. There are two Sundays when she will be away, on July 2nd and August 20th because of prior commitments.

Her position will be part-time and she will be working closely with the Board of Deacons. Beth is looking forward to being back in a local church, even if it is only on a part-time basis, and she is especially looking forward to re-connecting with folks here at First Christian. The Official Board will be approving her contract in the near future. When that work is completed, we will make copies available of Beth's job description to any church members who are interested.

Margot's last Sunday in Asheville will be May 14th. I'm planning to take the week of 15th off to help her move home. Then, a few days later, she will be journeying to Germany, leading a group of pastors from our Southern Conference for a two-week stay, hosted by our partner church, the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland.

As I said, it's going to be a busy spring around First Christian – but it should be a good and growing time for us all.

Mark

THE SUPPER CLUB – NEXT GATHERING

The Supper Club's next gathering will be on April 4th at 5:45 pm at Kimber's Restaurant in Gibsonville. Please note this is a little earlier than our regular time. We need to get there before 6pm to take advantage of their early bird special. To make a reservation, please call Eleanor Lovgren at 226-2671 by March 27th no later than 8:00 pm. All are welcomed. Everyone pays their own bills. Invite a friend!

NEW MEMBER'S CLASS

Are you interested in church membership or would you just like to learn more about First Christian and its heritage? Speak to Mark or call the church office. A class will be forming in the near future.

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HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

This year Holy Week begins on April 9th, and will culminate with our celebration of the Resurrection one week later on the 16th. And, in between, there will be a whole array of special services to mark this sacred season.

Holy Week is that seven-day period when we recall the last week of Jesus' life before His death and Resurrection. It was a week of high drama and we hope to recapture some of the spirit of that pathos in our times of worship.

On the 9th we will celebrate Passion Sunday with a special service focused on "the stations of the cross." Jesus' journey to Calvary will be retold in scripture, with a large wooden cross, the extinguishing of candles and an abundance of special music. Along with guest musicians, the choir is hard at work on music for this unique service. The service itself will begin at 10:30 am in our sanctuary – not in the Bray Fellowship Hall as in years past.

On April 13th, we will gather in the Bray Fellowship Hall for our Maundy Thursday meal and service. Maundy Thursday is the time when we remember Jesus gathering His disciples in the upper room for one last meal together. It was at that "Last Supper" that Jesus took bread and wine and served it to His followers as a symbol of His broken body and poured out blood, a meal that we in the church have reenacted ever since through our monthly celebration of communion.

On the 13th, like Jesus and His disciples long ago, we too will gather for a meal. This simple dinner of soup and sandwiches will be hosted by the Board of Deacons. Then, at each of our tables, we will celebrate the Lord's Supper. Finally, the cross will be draped in black. Participants are asked to depart this service in silence.

After the darkness that will conclude the service on Thursday night, we will wait. We will wait till the early morning hours on Easter Sunday. At 7:30 a.m. on that day, we will gather once more, this time on the lawn in front of the church office. With shouts of "He Is Risen!", we will celebrate Jesus' Resurrection with our annual Sunrise Service.

If you are able, please bring fresh flowers from your garden to help decorate the cross at the end of the service. Following the service, a breakfast will be served in the Bray Fellowship Hall. Once again, many thanks to the Board of Deacons for hosting this event! Please note, in case of inclement weather, the Sunrise Service will be held in the sanctuary.

Finally, at 10:30 a.m. we will reconvene in the sanctuary for our full celebration of Easter. Join us as our spiritual journey through Lent draws to a close.

Please note, because we will be celebrating the Lord's Supper on Maundy Thursday, communion will not be served on April 2nd.

FIRST AID KITS UPGRADED

It was recently called to our attention that the first aid kits at the church needed an upgrade and that we needed more of them. As a result, the Deacons formed a task force to look into the matter. Now we have three fully stocked kits in various areas around our building. They are located in the church kitchen, in the area where you exit the elevator into the sanctuary, as well as in the Conference Room in our office building. The next time you pass through any of those areas, please take a moment to note the location of the kits so that, in the future, if they are needed, you'll know exactly where to go.

Also, there is a check list inside each kit. If you use any supplies, just check off the items that were used and return the form to the church office (or drop it in an offering plate). That way we can make sure that all kits will remain fully stocked.

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Uganda Mission Trip This Summer

Dear First Christian Family.

As I mentioned in the fall, I am returning to Kyangwali Refugee Camp in Uganda on my second mission trip. Last year, \$2,350.00 was raised between First Christian and Reidsville High School for the Coburwas Primary School. These monies were used to purchase textbooks for all grade levels. We also provided assistance with instructional techniques and evangelical work.

The children at Coburwas come mostly from the neighboring countries of Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan. They are victims of civil war, genocide and the AIDS epidemic, and have very little hope of ever returning to their native countries. Coburwas, associated with the refugee camp, is attempting to give these children a future through education and ministry. I am returning to Coburwas on this faith-based mission to help continue develop a long-term partnership with educators from the United States.

This year, the team has grown from 5 volunteers to 28, and has been divided into two teams. Along with the work from last year, we plan to host a day full of activities for the children as well as a time for worship. My goal is to raise \$3,000.00. In addition to the human resources we will bring, I would also like for us to be able to sponsor a teacher at the school (annual salary of \$1,200.00) and perhaps a few students (\$400.00/student a year).

If you would like to contribute to this effort, donations can be made directly to the church. Please make checks payable to First Christian but write Uganda Mission Trip on the memo line. Any contribution would be welcomed, but if you could make a donation of \$400 or more, we could designate a student scholarship or a quarter of a teacher's salary in your honor. The target date to reach my goal is Sunday, June 4th, 2017. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Matt Rice

CARRIE MCLEAN TAYLOR SCHOLARSHIP FUND

The following criteria may be relevant to one or more students:

1. The individual must be a faithful member of the First Christian United Church of Christ for at least two years and be actively involved in Church and community activities.
2. The individual must be a high school graduate or college student who has a financial need.
3. The individual is sincere in graduating from a college, university, community college or seminary. Awards will not be given for post graduate studies except for seminary.
4. The individual must complete an application before being considered as a recipient of a scholarship gift, and may reapply for additional gifts on a year-to-year basis.

Interested students should see the church website (firstchristianucc.org) or contact the church office for an application form. The deadline is June 15, 2017.

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP NEWS

The Margaret Lightbourne Circle will meet Monday, April 3rd in the church conference room at 1:30 pm. Members are asked to bring their bibles.

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SOUTHERN CONFERENCE TOWN HALL MEETINGS PLANNED

This spring, our Southern Conference is trying to promote dialogue among our members concerning the state of our churches and the Southern Conference. Multiple gatherings are planned across all three of our associations. All church members are encouraged to pick an event that is closest and most convenient for them, then come and share your thoughts.

The three gatherings that are closest to us are on March 27th at Hillsborough UCC, April 4th at Life's Journey UCC here in Burlington, and April 5th at Melfield UCC in Haw River. One possibility for our members might be to attend the Supper Club dinner at Kimber's Restaurant on the 4th at 5:45 pm, then, after the meal, go to the Town Hall meeting at Life's Journey (2121 Edgewood Ave).

Another upcoming Conference event will be the spring meeting of Church Women in our Eastern North Carolina Association. The gathering will be held from 9:00 am – 2:00 pm on April 1st at the United Church of Chapel Hill.

LOOKING AHEAD

Be sure to mark your calendars. We have two special events coming up in May. The first is our annual Spaghetti Supper on May 12th. Meals will begin being served at 5:00 pm and the Cornpickers will again entertain us, starting at 6:30 pm. Tickets are available from any deacon or at the door for \$8. And children 12 and under eat free!

Then, another food event will be held on May 21st. That will be the day of our Hot Dog Lunch and Cake Auction to benefit Relay for Life. As you know, this is both a fun event and helps to raise significant support of cancer research. And if you can bake a cake or contribute any special treats, please speak with Mike Smith.

APRIL IN THE ART GALLERY

The hallway between our Education Building and the sanctuary, now known as our art gallery, has been a successful venture at First Christian. We have been blessed with many beautiful works of art from our church family. April's artist will be Agnes Garrison, our secretary Joan Paschal's mother. Mrs. Garrison began painting after she retired. She followed in the footsteps of her mother and took art classes at location provided by Alamance Community College. Over the years, she has blessed her family with many pieces that will be cherished for years to come. Stop in and enjoy the beauty!

ALLIED CHURCHES CALLED A NEW DIRECTOR

Allied Churches of Alamance County has recently hired a new Executive Director, Richard Gary. Mr. Gary will begin on April 3rd. A resident of McLeansville, he has served most recently at the ResCare Community Alternative in Winston Salem. He also has extensive service experience with several other community support organizations.

Allied Churches runs a homeless shelter, a community kitchen and a food pantry. It serves countless people in need every day.

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FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Year to Date through 02-28-17

	Actual	Budget
Income:	\$21,407.40	\$38,371.00
<u>Expense</u>	<u>\$33,169.60</u>	<u>\$33,382.90</u>
Net Balance: <\$11,762.20>		\$4,988.10

Balance in Checking 02-28-17 \$17,555.64

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