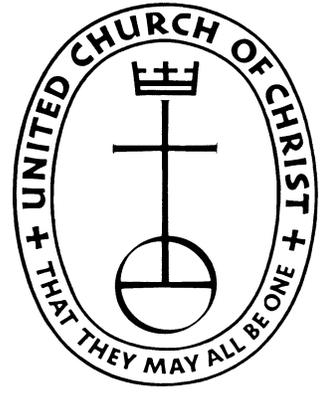


**First Christian
United Church of Christ
Newsletter
April 2018**



Make plans to come out and enjoy a great meal and wonderful entertainment by "The Cornpickers" on May 4th at our Annual Spaghetti Dinner fundraiser.

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PASTOR'S COLUMN

Long ago when our kids were little, I served a church up in Vermont. One day I was out driving with our oldest daughter, Courtney. She asked me, "Dad, what's your favorite season?" I thought a moment then replied, "It used to be spring!"

Weather in northern New England is quiet stark in its contrasts. Summer is lush and green with pleasant temperatures and little humidity. Winter is the exact opposite. Everything is a pristine winter from the snow's first fall till it finally melts (often in May!) Fall is probably the most spectacular of all with a broad array of sugar maples displaying vibrant reds and orange shades on all of the looming mountains.

Then there is spring time in Vermont – a.k.a. mud season. Usually in winter, the ground freezes two feet down. When it finally starts to thaw in the spring, the top layer of ground warms, but the water from that thaw, combined with melting snow has nowhere to go because the ground below is still frozen. It's easy to lose a boot stepping on what you think is solid ground only to have your foot swallowed by mud! No, spring in Vermont is a season you want to forget, but spring further south is something entirely different.

As we look in our yards or drive around town, there's a riot of color that greets us this time of year. Azaleas and dogwood are blooming. Apple and cherry trees too. And there are so many more, all singing the beauty of our glorious home here in North Carolina. After a long winter, the sights and smells of spring lift the spirit and touch the soul. But despite all of that, there are many in our world who have been so beaten down that it's hard for their spirits to be lifted. That's why the ministry of the church is so important.

This past Sunday, we held our annual cake auction to raise money for cancer research. We broke an all-time church record, bringing in nearly \$5,300! For our small church, that's truly amazing.

In another few days, our Board of Deacons will join with the Alamance Council for the Blind to raise funds through our annual Spaghetti Supper.

But helping fight cancer and supporting those who are visually impaired is just a small part of what we do. There are many more programs and ministries that we support financially throughout the year. But it's the small quiet things that so many of us do that may have the greatest impact. A number of cakes that were brought on Sunday were purchased to give to neighbors going through times of hardship or grief. That small act of kindness can mean so much during difficult times. Holding the hand of a friend living in a nursing home, delivering meals-on-wheels, writing a letter to political representatives asking them to take a stand for justice – there are so many ways that you and I regularly do the work of ministry inspired by this church. And many will never know of them!

So, let me suggest this image to you. As you drive around town marveling at all the beautiful colors of spring, think not just of the flowers that sprout from the ground – think also of your own life as a flower bringing beauty, love and hope to those you touch.

Spring is my favorite season of the year for all the wonder it brings just for the looking. May our lives be that way as well. In this season when we celebrate the Resurrection, may our lives bring new life to those who have known too little. May our lives touch, comfort and inspire those around us in this season of hope!

Mark

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SPAGHETTI SUPPER

If you haven't yet gotten your ticket for our annual Spaghetti Supper, it's not too late. The doors will open at 5:00 pm on May 4th, and food will continue to be served till 7:30 pm. Tickets are \$9 per person; kids eat free! Also, carry out meals will be available, and if there is sauce left over at the end of the evening it will be available for sale by the quart.

We are also delighted to have "The Cornpickers" back with us to provide entertainment. It should be a fun evening for one and all.

The dinner is a fund raiser co-sponsored by the Board of Deacons and the Alamance Council for the Blind.

Tickets may be purchased from a deacon or at the door.

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS

- Mother's Day, May 13th: Each woman who attends worship that day will receive a special unique gift.
- Pentecost Sunday, May 20th: Since our seasonal banners have been so well received, the Board of Deacons has decided to expand our selection. Look for new red banners on Pentecost Sunday. Red is the liturgical color for the first two Sundays of Pentecost. Following that, new green banners will be displayed.
- Senior Recognition Sunday, June 3rd: We will have two graduating seniors who will be recognized that day.
- Bingo Night, June 6th: Be sure to mark your calendars now for this big event. The cage will start turning at 7:00 pm.

STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH OFFERING – MAY 20TH

Please join us in planting the seeds needed to grow and sustain our denomination by making a gift to the Strengthen the Church offering.

The Strengthen the Church offering supports the expansion of ministry and growth of UCC local congregations. Your support of this offering will help the UCC fulfill on its commitment to creating a just world for all by investing in new ministries and practices that meet the emerging needs of local communities.

In 2017, your support made possible:

- 12 awards totaling almost \$350,000 through the New and Renewing Spiritual Communities grant program!
- The Adese Fellowship program launched it's first class of 14 future church leaders!
- The addition of 24 new faith communities to the UCC!

In addition, half of your offering supports ministry in your local conference while the

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second half goes towards supporting the strengthening of the church nationally!

Please join us in common mission, vision, and purpose with the Strengthen the Church offering on May 20th, 2018. And thank you for your support!!

SUPPER CLUB – MAY 1ST

The Supper Club gathering will be held on May 1st at Harbor Inn Seafood at 6:00 pm. This is a “pay your own way” event. Come, join in on the fun and fellowship we always experience at these gatherings. Please call Eleanor Lovgren (336-226-2671) to make your reservation.

UGANDA MISSION TRIP

As you know, Matt Rice and Dotti Davis will be traveling to Uganda this summer to work at a school in the Kyangwali Refugee Center.

Matt recently received a letter from the director of this program about an exciting new project that they are envisioning. We share a bit of that letter with you here:

“The community is still celebrating and rejoicing because of your act of kindness in the last two years. The school fence and school van have changed the image of the school and have drastically improved the learning environment. We are sincerely thankful to work with you.

This year, 2018, we are excited for another great partnership to do exciting things to change lives. Huge thank you to you for your courage and commitment to engage more people by telling them about the community in Kyangwali and encouraging them to come and to support our community. We can’t express how much this means to us. You guys are our friends and part of our family, thank you.

We want to bring to your attention a need we want to address, the need to create an alternative learning opportunity for youth who cannot go to secondary school. As you know, young people are the majority in our community of over 70,000 people. And over 75% of those who are at the age of going to secondary school do not go to school. When it comes to the level of going to University, less than 1% do. This year, we are planning to create a Vocational Center that will create alternative learning opportunities for youth who can learn practical skills and be able to earn a living instead of living in hopelessness and helplessness.

Practical skills tailored to the community needs can unleash the potential of thousands of refugees who have no access to secondary and tertiary education. Of all the people, refugee children and youth, should be given employment skills and entrepreneurial tools to start their own ventures for a better future.

Young people will be trained in many areas: computer skills, tailoring, carpentry, welding and many others. We already have over 15 computers and some tailoring machines. We hope to create more partnerships and the most important part you can play is to work with us to have a strong start.

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The engineer is still working on the exact costs that we need to set up the first three classroom size rooms and added equipment. The initial costs is estimated to be \$30,000.

I hope that this excites you. We are all happy that we are trailblazing this project which has the potential to change the lives of many boys and girls whose potential and dreams are trapped in the refugee settlements because they do not have an opportunity to learn.

You are part of the heavenly answer to the issues we are working hard to address in Kyangwali.

God bless you so much,
Joseph

We are still collecting gifts to help support Dotti and Matt on this mission. And, if you'd like to make an additional contribution in support of this vocational project, please make a note of it on your check. All checks should be made out to First Christian and write "mission trip" on the memo line.

MARGARET LIGHTBOURNE CIRCLE MEETING

The next meeting of the Margaret Lightbourne Circle will take place on May 7th at 1:30 pm in the church conference room. This will be our last meeting until the annual combined meeting in August.

THANK YOU

Dear Members,

Thank you so much for your generous donation of \$500.00 to the Open Door Clinic. Your donation will go towards patient care by allowing us to purchase lifesaving medications and medical supplies for our patients.

We could not fulfill our mission to offer free health services with dignity, professionalism and concern for the indigent and uninsured of Alamance County without the help of our donors and sponsors. Local church congregations are important to us continuing to serve those in need.

Sincerely,
Tracy Salisbury, Executive Director

NEXT NEWSLETTER

The next edition of our church newsletter will be a combined summer edition. If you know of items that need to be publicized in June or July, the deadline for the newsletter is May 24th. In August we will return to our regular publishing schedule.

PASTOR AWAY

Mark will be out of the office May 18-25. During this time he will be attending the wedding of a niece (Margot will be officiating). Then, they both will attend the Festival of Homiletics which this year will be held in Washington, DC. The Rev. Jamie Fonville will be our preacher on May 20th

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LOOKING FORWARD TO OUR CELEBRATIONS OF MOTHERS AND FATHERS

In celebration of Mother's Day this year, we will be honoring our church women all during the month of May. The deacons request that church members bring framed photographs of mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters, or friends to be displayed in our church parlor. Plans are to honor our men during the month of June. The pictures should be identified and given to Helen Little, Nell Allred, or Merle Sharpe.

FIRST SUNDAY IS ALLIED CHURCH SUNDAY

At a recent meeting of the Board of Deacons the topic of food collection for Allied Churches arose. Many of us have gotten out of the habit of bringing food to drop off in the Allied Church barrels inside the door to the Bray Hall. So, we have decided to make a renewed effort by designating the first Sunday of every month as Allied Church Sunday. The first Sunday, of course, is communion Sunday. So, when you come to worship on those days to share in the Lord's Supper, bring dried or canned food items with you to help feed hungry people in our community.

NEW ART GALLERY DISPLAY IN MAY

Iris Workman will be our "artist in residence" for the month of May. As Iris has many artistic interests, she says that her display will be an eclectic collection of items that she has created over the years. Take a moment to visit our art gallery on the walkway between the sanctuary and the Education Building.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Year to Date through 03-31-18

	Actual	Budget
Income:	\$63,491.22	\$50,605.79
<u>Expense</u>	<u>\$50,788.19</u>	<u>\$50,441.19</u>
Net Balance:	\$12,703.03	\$164.60
Balance in Checking 03-31-18		\$16,444.45

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