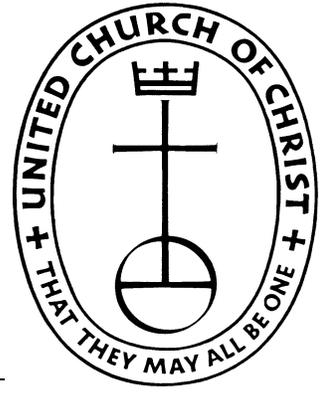


**First Christian
United Church of Christ
Newsletter
November 2017**



*Turkey Day... our celebration of God and our
fellowship together... will be held on Sunday,
November 12th.
More details inside...*

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PASTOR'S COLUMN

To say that life has been eventful these past several weeks would be a gross understatement. It seems that every time we turn around, a new disaster strikes. Hurricane Harvey slammed into southern Texas causing massive flooding in the Houston area. Shortly thereafter, Hurricane Irma tore across Florida leaving destruction in its wake along both coasts. Then, Hurricane Maria brought devastation to the island of Puerto Rico. At this writing more than a month after the storm, 80% of the island remains without power, 30% is without fresh potable water, and 80% of the island's agriculture was destroyed, promising food shortages in the months to come.

Add to these hurricanes, a massive earthquake in Mexico and devastating wildfires in California, it seems like nature itself has turned against us. Then, as if natural disasters were not enough, a shooter in Las Vegas opened fire with military style weapons killing nearly 50 and wounding some 500 more. Then, on top of it all, there is the roiling chaos that regularly comes out of Washington DC that is poisoning the well of our civic lives together.

Sometimes it feels as if we have stepped onto a nightmarish carnival ride. All we want to do is get off, but the ride never stops. It just keeps going around and around with new horrors emerging almost every week.

What are we to think of all of this? On one side of the scale, natural disasters appear to be the new normal. Climate change is real, and the result is extreme weather on a regular basis. And living in a coastal state where sea level rise could have a catastrophic consequence, we as a people need to prepare. When a hurricane strikes Ireland, as one did a couple of weeks ago, you know you are living in crazy times! What can we do? Promote energy efficiency wherever possible - in our homes, our state and globally through international agreements. And if the prospect of ocean levels rising three feet by 2050 isn't sufficient motivation for action, perhaps, a glance at the Bible might help.

In Genesis we are told that this world is God's beautiful garden – and God has entrusted this garden to our care. In return, God expects us to be responsible gardeners. We would never allow someone to plant toxins next to our tomatoes in the back yard, but for some reason we turn a blind eye when this happens on a global scale. In many ways, Genesis seems to suggest that how you and I treat God's gift of nature is a reflection on how we value God. If we trash the gift, what do we really think of the gift giver?

But toxic environments are not only in the realm of nature, our civic life together also seems to be under assault. Margot and I recently had a conversation about national values. She observed that in many countries around the globe, there is a strong sense of national values because the vast majority of their people have a common heritage, history and shared social customs. The US, by contrast, is made up of people from a vast array of different nations, races, cultures, and even languages. It is much more difficult to have common values when we are so diverse.

There have always been times when the civic fabric of our society has frayed and frayed badly. Yet, I would argue, that our diversity has always been one of our greatest strengths and at the core of our shared values. Respect for others, the freedom to speak our minds and have the expectation of being heard, the freedom to pursue our individual dreams while affirming others who pursue different dreams. These are all a part of who we are as a people, and it has helped to make this country great.

Yet, lately, our marching orders seem to dictate fear, anger, mistrust, disrespect, a

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suspicion of anyone who does not look like us, talk like us, think like us. Sometimes this same poisonous spirit can even take root in our communities of faith where people often draw lines in the sand, divide into factions and “go to war” with one another so that “their side” might prevail. But, whether it’s at a national level, community level, or faith community level, if we ever allow ourselves to be drawn into and “us/them” way of thinking, we will have become part of the problem even as Jesus calls us to be part of the solution.

We are entering the season of Thanksgiving. Turkey Day is hard upon us here at First Christian, and November 23rd follows closely behind. It is a season for us to stop and give thanks for the many blessings that are ours. Maybe it’s time that we recall that original Thanksgiving when European settlers relied on the generosity and hospitality of native people who already inhabited these shores. They helped those Pilgrims endure that first winter. And in the end, they sat down together, white and red together. They gave thanks for the bounty of this good earth, even in the midst of difficult and trying times. They gave thanks to God for standing by them and seeing them through. And they gave thanks for each other that, standing together with grace and generosity, they were able to endure.

During this month of Thanksgiving, 2017, may we too count our blessings and give thanks – for this precious world that has been entrusted to our care by God; for the rich array of diverse people who surround us – who help us look at the world through different eyes, who help us think in ways we’ve never thought before.

Portions of the fabric of our lives will occasionally fray, both individually and collectively. This world is not perfect, even as we ourselves are not perfect. But in this month of Thanksgiving, let us refuse to allow ourselves to be sucked into the toxic chaos that roils around us. Rather than allowing others to provoke in us anger, hatred, and fear of those who are “other,” may our souls bless the God who created all people and all that is – and let us give thanks!

Mark

TURKEY DAY – NOVEMBER 12TH

As Thanksgiving draws near, so also does Turkey Day at First Christian. Again, this year we are planning Turkey Day a week earlier than in the past. That way no one should miss out on our feast because of Thanksgiving travel plans. Again, this year, we have invited Ted Wheeler and his crew to cater the meal which will immediately follow worship. The menu will include turkey and the usual side dishes along with desserts provided by the deacons.

A contribution of \$10.00 per person is requested, but if you can give more to help cover the cost of those for whom this contribution would be a burden – please do so. But in any case, plan to come. There will be plenty of good food and fellowship, and during worship there will be a special recognition of members who have turned 90 this year along with those who are our 50-year members.

If you plan to attend, let us know so that we can be prepared 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.

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FAMILY DAY SERVICE – A SPIRITUAL TIME

October 15th was the date of our Family Day Service and it was a celebration of young and old alike. The Fonville's grandchildren got us off to a rousing start with their wonderful songs for our prelude. The rest of the service followed suit with a rich array of music from Travis Pipes on both flute and saxophone (not at the same time!). This was followed by solos from Mason Greer, and Callie McVickers (Elsie Bolick's granddaughter) accompanied by Stuart Haithcock, her father on guitar. Stuart also led the congregation, playing two hymns on his guitar.

Beyond music, we were also blessed with strong worship leadership from Matthew Knight, Ashlyn Reid, Isaac Anning and Drew Russell. The service concluded with the same postlude that closed Doris Allen's funeral service a few days before, "Climb Every Mountain." As the service concluded, more than a few were heard saying, "I want that played at my funeral as well!"

Finally, many thanks to Mollie Blum who recruited all of the talented folks who participated in this year's service.

ADVENT IS COMING – ORDER YOUR POINSETTIA NOW

December 3rd will be the first Sunday in Advent this year. That means we'll decorate the sanctuary on Saturday, December 2nd. Meet in the sanctuary at 9:00 am. If enough workers come, decorations should be completed in a little over an hour. Mark your calendars! But 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 29th. 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 19th. Return forms and payment directly to Lola Pipes. Checks should be made out to First Christian. Please write "poinsettia" on the memo line.

HURRICANE RELIEF OFFERING

On October 15th, First Christian collected money for a hurricane relief fund. In all some \$1600.00 was collected, including a \$300.00 contribution from the Women's Fellowship. This year we have seen an unprecedented number of storms strike with deadly force. From Texas to Florida to the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, which is still largely without power and fresh running water, the suffering and loss has been immense. Fortunately, our denomination, the United Church of Christ, has a disaster response network that brings assistance where and when it is needed. Additionally, 100% of what we give goes straight to direct relief aid. How is that possible? Because we already have the infrastructure in place to deliver assistance without a portion of what is given being siphoned off for administrative purposes. Our support for the broader church has already paid for that. As a result, through the church, our gifts are able to go even further.

Thank you for your help at this crucial time. And if you haven't yet given, it's not too late. Make checks payable to the church and write "disaster relief" on the memo line.

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STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN WRAPPING UP

The Board of Finance is in the final stages of preparing the 2018 budget for the Official Board. At its meeting on November 12th, the Board will act on this budget then pass it on to the congregation for approval at the congregational meeting scheduled for December 10th immediately following worship. Thanks to everyone who made a pledge in support of the ministry of this church for the year ahead. And, if you have not yet submitted a pledge card it's not too late! For our ministry to be strong, it takes us all working together. What each person gives is important.

NEIGHBORS IN NEED OFFERING – NOVEMBER 5TH

The Neighbors in Need offering, which we will receive on November 5th, 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 advocate), Justice and Witness continues its strong policy advocate 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 of American Indian Ministries (CAIM). Historically, forebears of Hocak 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.

Neighbors in Need helps make another world possible. It needs your support. Please give generously.

SUPPER CLUB NOVEMBER 7TH

Every time that the Supper Club meets everyone has a great time. Many have participated in the gathering. The next event will be held Valerio's Restaurant located downtown Burlington beside the Paramount Theater at 6:00 pm.

To reserve a space, please call the Eleanor Lovgren (336-226-2671) by Thursday, November 2nd. And invite a friend and join in the fun and fellowship!

DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME ENDS

November 4th is the date. When you go to bed that Saturday night, remember to set your clocks back one hour and enjoy the extra sleep. Sunday School will begin at 9:30 am, Eastern Standard Time.

First Christian UCC – November 2017 Newsletter **CHURCH WOMEN UNITED WORLD COMMUNION DAY**

Saturday, November 18th is the date for Church Women United's World Communion Day. Church Women United is composed of a wide array of women's fellowship groups that cross denominational boundaries and include those of all races. The theme of this year's event will be "Kindling New Fires of Peace." The event will be held at the Twin Lakes Sullivan Center and will begin at 10:00 am. No reservations are necessary. An "in-kind" offering will go to the Family Abuse Services of Alamance County. Suggested items to contribute include: toilet paper, dishwasher detergent, laundry detergent (in pods), liquid cleaners, bleach, paper towels, facial tissue, and aluminum.

A WORD OF THANKS

During this season of Thanksgiving, I want to thank you all for your kind card and gift on Pastor's Appreciation Sunday. It came as a complete surprise, and it was a delightful one. Margot and I used your gift to go out to dinner and a movie. It was a wonderful time. Thank You again.

Mark

CONGREGATIONAL NOTES

- The Board of Finance will meet on November 7th this month rather than the 14th.
- Recent statements of giving were sent from the church office. However, one week's worth of contributions were inadvertently omitted from that mailing. If you wrote a check to the church on January 15th, a new, corrected statement will be sent to you. If you didn't write a check on that date, your statement should be correct.
- Memorial gifts in memory of Doris Allen have been coming in. To date \$935 has been contributed in her memory.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Year to Date through 09-30-17

	Actual	Budget
Income:	\$155,281.43	\$150,224.25
<u>Expense</u>	<u>\$145,495.92</u>	<u>\$150,225.01</u>
Net Balance:	\$9,785.51	<\$0.76>
Balance in Checking 09-30-17		\$24,754.26

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