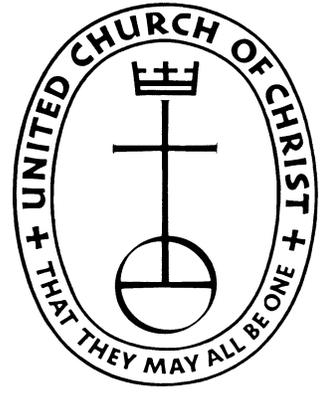


**First Christian  
United Church of Christ  
Newsletter  
February 2018**



*Lent* IS A TIME TO  
**GROW** *W*  
CLOSER TO *Christ*

*The Season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday (February 14<sup>th</sup>) and runs for 40 days, ending on April 1<sup>st</sup>, Easter Sunday. The 40 days do not include Sundays, as each Sunday is its own a day of celebrating the Resurrection. Lent is a season where Christians focus on simple living, prayer, and service in order that we may to grow closer to God.*

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## PASTOR'S COLUMN

We have some outside lights on our porch that are set up on a timer. In the middle of December when it started to get dark at 4 pm that's when they would light up. Earlier in January I reset the timer to come on closer to 4:30 pm, but the other day when they came on at that time, Margot looked at me and asked, "Why are the lights on? It's still light outside!" It certainly was. Our timer has since been readjusted!

Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the days are lengthening. The shadows of winter are giving way to the luxurious light of spring. To be sure, the sun remains low in the sky, but on a clear day when the sun shines upon your face, it almost warms you to the soul.

That's what the season of Lent is all about. Actually, the word "Lent" comes from an old English word that means to lengthen. But what we celebrate at church this season is not the track of the sun itself. That serves only as a metaphor for a journey of our spirits. As we move from the cold darkness of winter to the blooming light of spring, may each of us make a spiritual journey as well. Beyond the distractions of college basketball games and the Super Bowl, let us take some time to slow down from life's busy pace. Set aside extra time to talk with God each day. Spend an extra 15 minutes noticing the people and things around you – the setting sun, the robin hopping around in your garden, the smile of the child at the store, the laughter of an old friend. Then, once you have noticed, give thanks to God for each small gift as well as the gift that is your life.

Take time to consider some of your life's struggles, as well as those who stood by you and helped pull you through. Remember also life's treasured moments and the joyful fulfillment and satisfaction of each, and how they enriched your life.

Re-read a book of the Bible you haven't touched in years, and as you read, ask, what is something new I'm discovering in these pages?

Take time to listen to music that stirs your soul and perhaps brings a tear to your eye. Take time to visit someone who is sick or shut-in. By your presence you will bring the touch of God.

Whatever spiritual disciplines works for you, do them during these next few weeks, and listen also to your heart and soul as God reaches out to embrace and renew you in the process.

One thing you might also add to your list of Lenten practices is to attend a noon Ash Wednesday service on February 14<sup>th</sup>, Valentine's Day. An interesting juxtaposition of dates, don't you think? Following the moving three-church Christmas Eve service we hosted this past year, there was some energy for another joint service. Margot suggested a simple Ash Wednesday service at Life's Journey. At noon on the 14<sup>th</sup>, folks from Life's Journey, First Reformed and First Christian will gather to hear the story, be marked by the cross with ashes, then go forth as a silent witness to our neighbors.

Moving from shadows to light is not just something we do as we watch the daylight hours stretch out before us, during Lent, it is also a journey of the soul as we approach our joyous celebration of the Resurrection on Easter. As we make this journey together, may God bless us and help us grow.

*Mark*

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## THE SEASON OF LENT

Lent is the season in the church that begins on Ash Wednesday and helps prepare us for our celebration of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday. Ash Wednesday traditionally has been a day set aside for contrition and confession, as a result, it is also a day of healing. This year, Ash Wednesday falls on February 14<sup>th</sup>, Valentine's Day, which may be appropriate because, in many ways, this season is like a love letter from God to us. The Gospel According to John tells us that God so loved the world and all those in it, that Jesus was sent to bring us life.

This Ash Wednesday we will mark the day with a three-church mid-day service at Life's Journey UCC. Participating in that service will be not only members of Life's Journey and First Christian, but also First Reformed. This half hour service will begin at noon and is designed so that folks who work will be able to join us. Life's Journey UCC is located at 2121 Edgewood Ave.

In addition to this Ash Wednesday service, our choir is planning another special presentation on Palm/Passion Sunday. Plans are still in the works, but it looks to be a service centered around the so called "seven last words of Christ." Watch next month's newsletter for further details.

## CORINTHIANS IN CONTEXT

"Corinthians in Context" is the topic of the next special educational series sponsored by our Board of Christian Education. As for the past two years, Dr. Lynn Huber will be our instructor for this four-week program. Dr. Huber is Professor of Religious Studies at Elon University.

As Dr. Huber describes the class:

Destroyed and then rebuilt and colonized by the Romans, the ancient city of Corinth was a city characterized by the diversity of its inhabitants, who came from throughout the Mediterranean world. Given this, it is not surprising that the apostle Paul was especially concerned with how the Christians in Corinth got along. In this four-week series we will explore the contours of Paul's "Corinthian Correspondence" with attention to the ancient context of the city itself, emphasizing especially how Paul sought to unify the community that found itself in the midst of conflict.

- Week 1: The City in Context: We will look at the history of the city and Paul's time there, as described in Acts.
- Week 2: The Contours of the Correspondence: We will address the occasion of Paul's writing 1 and 2 Corinthians, including a discussion of whether 2 Corinthians was a composite letter.
- Week 3: The Problem with Divisions: We will discuss Paul's discussion of the division that undergirds the community in Corinth, including disagreements over eating idol meat.
- Week 4: Being the Body of Christ: We will examine how Paul "solves" the Corinthian problem by encouraging the community to embody Christ in

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anticipation of the resurrection.

All sessions will be held in the Bray Fellowship Hall beginning promptly at 9:30 am each Sunday in February. And many thanks to the Board for organizing this program on Paul's correspondence to the ancient church in Corinth.

## **ANNUAL MEETING – FEBRUARY 4TH**

Immediately following worship on February 4<sup>th</sup> we will hold our Annual Congregational Meeting. In addition to adopting our Annual Report and approving an update to the Nominating Committee's report, we will also install newly elected church officers and board members. Finally, there will be a brief memorial service as we remember those First Christians who passed away in 2017.

Annual Reports are available in the sanctuary and the church office. Please, one per family. Extra copies of our church directory are available. Look for the lavender colored pages near the Annual Reports. Help yourself to as many of these as you can use. And please, remember to bring your Annual Report to the meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup>.

## **A WORD OF THANKS**

The folks at Christmas Cheer sent the following thank you note:

Dear First Christian Church,

Thank you for your donation of toys , gifts and Walmart gift cards. Supporters like you help us provide Christmas for less fortunate children and the elderly. Thank you so very much for the wonderful donation of gifts to Christmas Cheer. Without people like you we could not help the less fortunate in Alamance County.

With humble thanks, Christmas Cheer

In all we contributed nearly \$1,400 to Christmas Cheer this year!

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

- Every **Sunday in February** at 9:30 am – “Corinthians in Context” by Dr. Lynn Huber
- **February 4<sup>th</sup>** - Annual Congregational Meeting immediately following worship.
- **February 6<sup>th</sup>** - Supper Club meeting at Valerio's, 120East Front Street at 6:00 pm. Please call Eleanor Lovgren by February 1<sup>st</sup> to make your reservation.
- **February 14<sup>th</sup>** – Noon, Ash Wednesday Service @ Life's Journey UCC.
- **February 25<sup>th</sup>** – After worship, Deacon's cluster gathering, Bray Hall

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## **SUPPER CLUB – FEBRUARY 6<sup>TH</sup>**

The Supper Club gathering will be held on Feb. 6th. We (the Supper Club) will be meeting at Valerio's, 120 East Front Street at 6:00 pm. This is a "pay your own way" event. Come join in on the fun and fellowship always experienced at these gatherings. Please call Eleanor Lovgren (336-226-2671) by 8pm on Feb. 1st to make your reservation.

## **CHURCH WOMEN UNITED**

Church Women United will hold its annual Tea and Annual Meeting this year on February 3<sup>rd</sup>. "Fill My Cup" is the theme of this year's event which will be held at the Bellemont United Methodist Church in Burlington. Check in will begin at 1:45pm with the program starting at 2:00 pm. Attendees are encouraged to bring items for the Family Abuse Center.

If you plan to attend, please notify Judy Springer at [jkspringer@bellsouth.net](mailto:jkspringer@bellsouth.net). Or at 3831 Wade Coble Dr. in Burlington, 27215,

## **OLD FRIENDS RE-VISIT THE ART GALLERY**

We are pleased to welcome back to the First Christian Art Gallery two old friends. In February, Ken Little will display some of his latest photography. Then, in March, Stuart Haithcock will share some of his latest creations. Stop by before or after worship and enjoy the shows!

## **MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE – A FOCUS ON FEBRUARY 11<sup>TH</sup>**

Occasionally during Sunday morning worship we have a service when there is an opportunity for the congregation to share spiritual experiences during the time set aside for the sermon. We had one such service in January focused on baptism. The scripture reading for February 11<sup>th</sup> is the Transfiguration of Jesus – one of the most mystical experiences of all!

Have you ever experienced a moment when spiritual truths and insights became profound and possibly even life-changing for you? What happened? How did it touch you? How were you changed? And would you be willing to share your story with others? One survey found that such experiences are much more common than most realize, it's just that people often fail to share such experiences with others. Yet, in the sharing, others can often be deeply moved.

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During our service on the 11<sup>th</sup>, Mark will come down out of the pulpit and invite members of the congregation to share such memories as they feel moved to do so. Then, the “sermon” will conclude with some brief reflections on Jesus’ Transfiguration and that transcendent moment for James, Peter and John. Please join us that day and feel free to share!

## **DEACONS INVITE CHURCH FAMILY TO CLUSTER MEETING**

The Board of Deacons will be hosting a MEET, GREET, AND EAT EVENT after our worship service on Sunday, February 25 in Bray Fellowship Hall. Deacons and their Cluster Groups will gather around tables for light refreshments and the opportunity to better get to know each other through this guided fellowship time. Make plans to attend this social opportunity after our worship service on February 25 so we may better get to know each other as the First Christian Church Family!

## **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

### **Year to Date through 12-31-17**

	Actual	Budget
Income:	\$183,183.38	\$200,299.00
<u>Expense</u>	<u>\$192,906.23</u>	<u>\$200,299.00</u>
Net Balance:	<\$9,722.85>	\$ 0
Balance in Checking 12-31-17		\$3,430.39

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