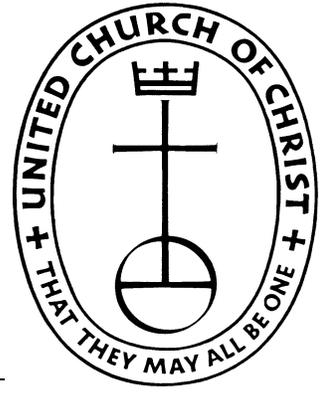


First Christian United Church of Christ Newsletter January 2020



The Christmas Season at First Cristian UCC is always filled with great gatherings of praise, worship, fun, fellowship and wonderful music!

NEWS FROM MARK & MARGOT PICKETT

We (the church) received a card and letter from Rev. Mark & Margot Pickett during the Christmas Season... we thought we would share these with you...

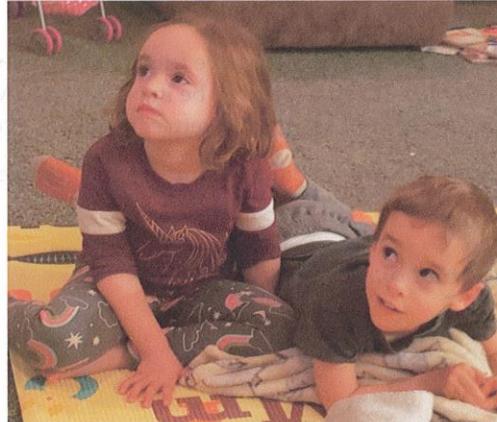
December 2019
4620 Lucca Drive
Longmont, CO 80503

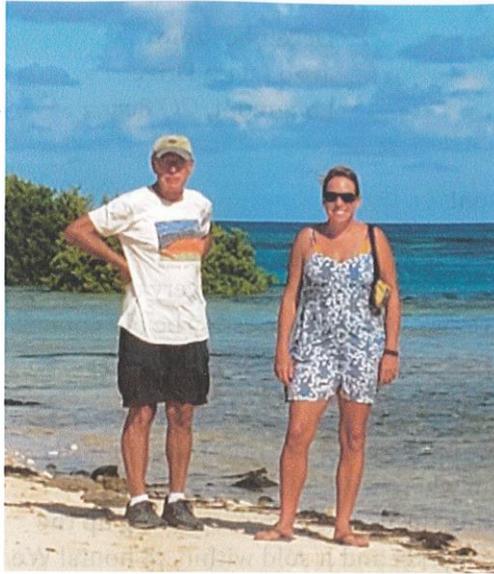
Greetings and Blessings for a Joyous Holiday Season!

As I write this letter, “Who Knows Where the Time Goes,” the old Judy Collins’ song, is echoing in my mind. How can it possibly be almost 2020? And why does every day slip by faster and faster, especially in retirement? Furthermore, how can I possibly be old enough to have retired?

Yes, I said Retirement. I retired September of 2018 and Mark waited until this past February. Then we really started working hard! We (and when I say “we” I mean mostly Mark) made minor repairs to our house in Durham where we’d lived for 24 years, including resurfacing the floors, painting, renovating the powder room, sprucing up the front garden and so on. And then we put it on the market and it sold within 48 hours! We had already purchased a house in Longmont, Colorado. So after a week at Ocracoke we drove both cars across country and moved in to our new house on May 22. It didn’t take long for Mark to decide that he really couldn’t live with the current state of kitchen or the (fake) wood floors and so in August we put on our work clothes again and replaced the floor and started a fabulous kitchen makeover. We are delighted with the outcome! And even while we enjoy that, Mark has started planning the next home improvement project.

As you’ve probably guessed, we moved to Colorado to be close to the grandkids—as well as Michal and Ben. And we are very close indeed: 1 mile away as the crow flies. It is perfect—close enough to be there in 5 minutes, but not the same neighborhood. Before we moved we would see the kids 2 or 3 times a year; now it’s 2 or 3 times a week. We often pick them up from school so Michal doesn’t have to worry about whether she can get there in time from her job at Colorado University in Boulder. Asher will turn 5 in January and goes to a public preschool. Grey “is almost 4,” as she has been proudly declaring since she turned 3½ in August. Her birthday in February cannot come soon enough! She goes to Montessori preschool about half a mile from Asher’s school which makes the chauffeurs’ job pretty easy. I took this photo earlier this week as they chilled after school watching “Shaun the Sheep” (2 big thumbs up!).





We are excited that Courtney will be here for Christmas, too. She had been teaching at the School for Field Studies' center in the Turks and Caicos for almost 18 months but decided the time has come to return to the U.S. Those of you who follow her or me on Facebook know that the scenery there is flat out gorgeous, but it's also extremely isolated and a very poor country, especially South Caicos, the island where the SFS center is. On top of that, the staff all live, eat, teach and study in the same small facility as the students, so there is a real sense of claustrophobia. Courtney is really looking forward to being back where she can cook fresh food, have her own space, take hot showers, enjoy winter

and be with family. While she looks for a new job Courtney will be housesitting for us because...

We're going back to Durham for 3 months starting January 1! Not only does that mean we will miss most of the winter months here in Colorado, we'll also get to spend time with longtime friends in NC, and watch Duke basketball in person at Cameron Indoor Stadium. Giving up those season tickets was just too hard to do! Following basketball season we're going to England for 2 weeks. Retirement may mean we're getting old, but we're making the most of it!

We are always happy to have friends and family visit us, but don't look for us in Colorado until May. If you happen to be in NC January-March, send me an email or call me; we'd love to see you! Margot.Pickett@gmail.com, 919-414-6053.

For now, we're wishing you much joy and hope and love during the holiday season!

Margot and Mark



Dear Friends at First Christian,

May your season be blessed
with hope and happiness.

Many, many blessings on one
and all during this sacred
season. We miss you, but also
we are enjoying life out west,
especially being close to family.
Merry Christmas!
Maak & Margot

MARGARET LIGHTBOURNE CIRCLE

The Margaret Lightbourne Circle will meet Monday, January 6th at 10:30 am in the conference room. All are welcome!

PASTORS' COLUMN

Many years ago we read the book, *Sleeping with Bread: Holding What Gives You Life* by Dennis, Sheila & Matthew Linn. It introduces a prayer practice called the examen which is a way to look for God's presence, grace and leading in your life. We have found this practice helpful and commend it to you.

Juanita Ryan explains it this way: *Examen is the practice of prayerful reflection at the end of the day. It is a practice that can help us identify where we are receiving God's help and where we are needing to ask for God's help.*

Days tend to blur into each other. Moments of grace and grief are often not given the time of reflection they need. Examen is a form of prayer that involves stopping for a few moments before we end a day to pick up the shells that washed ashore ... so that we can pay attention to them and receive the treasures they hold.

In other words, this practice helps us to look for "Emmanuel - God with us" in the joys and the struggles of every-day life. As we come to the end of 2019, you may want to experiment with the examen in relation to the year that passed and the new year that is coming. Here are some possible ways to engage in such a prayer:

***Begin:** With a pause and a slow, deep breath or two; become aware that you are in the presence of God – the One who calls you beloved. You may want to light a candle as a reminder that Christ's Light is always with you.

***Review:** Choose the questions that you want to ask. Here are some possibilities: "For what moment today/last year am I most grateful? and For what moment today/last year am I least grateful?" Or, "When did I feel most alive? and When did I most feel life draining out of me?" Or, "What was the high point?" and "What was the low point?"

***Response:** In light of my review, what is my response/my prayer to the God of my life?

***As I Look Ahead** what comes to mind? With what spirit/hope/prayer do I want to enter tomorrow/ the new year?

***Close:** Go out into the new day/new year remembering who you are and whose you are... the beloved of God.

You may want to keep a journal of your examen, or share your reflections with someone close to you. And if you give this prayer practice a try – we would love to hear your thoughts and wonderings.

With love and hope and prayers for 2020 – Tim and Deborah

PLEASE CONSIDER HELPING WITH THE RECEPTIONS

On the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and possible 5th Sundays of each month different individuals host the reception and time of fellowship immediately following worship. Please let Nancey Simmons know if you can help with these.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE A LITURGIST?

If you are interested in being a liturgist here at First Christian UCC, please speak to Julie Miller or one of the pastors. Guidelines will be provided to help you acquaint yourself with this position.

SUPPER CLUB – DECEMBER 3RD

Every time that the Supper Club meets, it's a great time of fun and fellowship! Many have participated in the gatherings and all have had a wonderful time. The next event will be on January 7th at 5:45 pm at Kimber's in Gibsonville. Please contact Eleanor Lovgren or Phil Bray by January 5th to make your reservation. This helps to assure adequate seating for everyone present.

COME HELP OUT!

Please come out **on Saturday, January 11th and join us at 9 am** in the sanctuary if you are able to help us take down the church's Christmas decorations. Everyone is invited to join in on the fun and fellowship as we store away our greens for another year.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Year to Date through 11-30-19

	Actual	Budget
Income:	\$185,327.50	\$189,656.50
<u>Expense</u>	<u>\$148,370.91</u>	<u>\$189,675.66</u>
Net Balance:	\$36,956.59	<\$19.16>
Balance in Checking 11-30-19		\$13,693.30

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