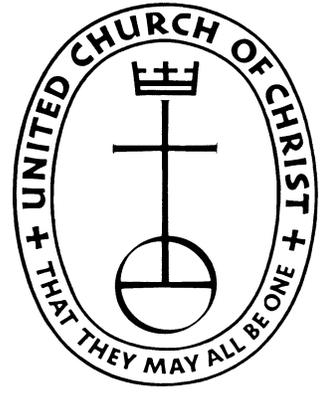


**First Christian  
United Church of Christ  
Newsletter  
March 2018**



*As we travel through the Season of Lent we will end our journey at Holy Week... starting with our Palm/Passion Sunday service on March 25<sup>th</sup>, followed by a joint Maundy Thursday Service at First Reformed on March 29<sup>th</sup>. Make plans to join us as we celebrate our Lord.*

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## **PASTOR'S COLUMN**

As I write this, I'm trying to scratch a number of things off of my "to-do" list here at church before going in for shoulder surgery tomorrow. A number of people have told me of their own experiences with similar surgery and their recoveries have been widely different in each case. As a result, it's hard to know exactly what to anticipate and how long it will take till I'm back on a normal schedule. Jamie Fonville will be leading worship for us on February 25<sup>th</sup> and the Rev. Eddie Weathers will preach on March 4<sup>th</sup>. Eddie is a friend and colleague who serves on the staff of the Southern Conference as our Minister of Church Affairs. I may be able to attend that service and help serve communion on that day but, we'll see...

One thing I know is that I will be back with you for our Holy Week celebrations. In all likelihood, I'll still be wearing a sling at that time, but perhaps that's appropriate for a season in which we are keenly aware of issues of mortality! In any case, there are several special services in the works for that week that are described elsewhere in this newsletter. I hope that you will be able to join us for them. They all should be meaningful.

Beyond all the "happenings" at church during this busy season, being slowed down a bit by this bad shoulder has some added advantages. It makes me look at life from a different perspective and realize how many others around me are dealing with far more significant health issues than a mere bad shoulder. There are so many who regularly face heart disease, cancer, MS and so many other diseases, with so much dignity and grace it is truly inspiring.

Also, dealing with this shoulder makes me aware of just how much in life I take for granted. Then, I learn the humility, but also grace, in asking others for help. It has been a real learning experience! I've also been forced to slow down enough that I've noticed some of the little treasures in life along the way that I'm usually too busy to be bothered with. Yet, I am convinced that it is often precisely through those "little things" that God seeks to catch our attention, touch our souls and perhaps even reveal profound new insights about our own lives or the lives of others around us.

I've also become acutely aware what a friend a nice, cold bag of ice can be!

My hope for all of us during this sacred season is that we all slow down a bit, make time for God, just as God has made time for us. Then, having made that journey together, by the time we reach Easter, will really have something to celebrate!

*Mark*

## **HOLY WEEK BEGINS MARCH 25TH**

Holy week is the week that immediately proceeds our celebration of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday. This year the week will be both full and hopefully meaningful.

It will begin on March 25 with a service that will combine elements of both Palm and Passion Sunday. We will begin by remembering Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem long ago. Palms will be distributed. Songs will be sung, but then we will quickly move into retelling the events of Jesus' Passion and death upon the cross. The focus of this year's service will be "the seven last words of Jesus." You may recall that last year, this service was filled with a lot of powerfully moving music by the choir. This year, expect no less. They have already begun working on this service and several members of Matt's old high school choir plan to

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join us on that day.

Maundy Thursday will mark a change for us. In the past, we have shared a simple meal together in the Bray Fellowship Hall followed by a service remembering the events of Jesus' Last Supper with His disciples. However, following a successful joint service with Life's Journey and First Reformed UCC on Christmas Eve and Ash Wednesday. First Reformed has invited us to their church for our celebration of Maundy Thursday. This year there will be no meal beforehand. Instead we will gather in their sanctuary at 6:30 pm for a service that will include a celebration of Holy Communion. (please note, for those concerned with driving after dark, we will be on Daylight Savings Time at this time.) Also, since we will not be serving communion at First Christian for Maundy Thursday this year, the Board of Deacons have decided that we will serve communion on March 4<sup>th</sup>, the first Sunday of the month, as in our regular practice.

Following our joint service on the 27<sup>th</sup>, we will wait the three days Jesus was in the tomb before our celebration of Easter. Then on April 1<sup>st</sup>, we will gather for a sunrise service on the lawn outside the church office at 7:30 am followed by a breakfast hosted by the Deacons in the Bray Fellowship Hall. At our regular service of worship that day at 10:30 am, look for some more special music with brass accompaniment as well as some new banners!

## **ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING – MARCH 11<sup>TH</sup>**

It is easy to feel overwhelmed when we look at all the areas of need in God's world; there is hunger, sickness, and injustice in so many communities. It is easy to feel there is nothing we can do to help. We can feel trapped by hopelessness and fear that what little we can do – won't have an impact.

But there is hope! Better yet: we are that hope!

As the Apostle Paul writes, "by the power at work within us," God is able to "accomplish abundantly more than we can ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:30). "We are agents of transformation that God uses to transfigure this world" (Archbishop Desmond Tutu).

Wishing and dreaming of a better world means nothing if we don't realize that God gives us community to practice love and compassion. We cannot only care for ourselves, but we must also care about those around us, both near and far.

Our gifts become part of a loving legacy in ways we can't foresee. Our gifts become blessings to people we don't know and blesses in ways we can't expect. We can make a difference beyond what we can imagine.

We will collect our One Great Hour of Sharing Offering on March 11<sup>th</sup>. Make checks payable to the church and write OGHS on the memo line.

And, thank you. Your gifts make a difference beyond what we can imagine.

## **DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME RETURNS**

It seems like it was just a few weeks ago that we went off Daylight Savings Time, but on March 11<sup>th</sup> it will return. Before going to bed that Saturday night, set your clocks ahead one hour. Then we'll see you bright and early on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

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## **NEWS AT FIRST CHRISTIAN**

- Many thanks to Ken Little for sharing more of his photographs in our art gallery last month. Elsie Bolick's son, Stuart Haithcock, will once more share his talent with us in March. Stop by the gallery and enjoy.
- The Board of Christian Education is interested in replacing the church's old and very dated television set with a newer flat screen. Have you recently updated your own television and would like to donate your old one to the church? If so, please call the church office.
- Many thanks to Keith Miller for his work in securing better outside light on the Church and Davis Street porticos of our sanctuary. (see photo below)



## **MARGARET LIGHTBOURNE CIRCLE MEETING**

The next meeting of the Margaret Lightbourne Circle will take place on March 5<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 pm in the church conference room.

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## **EVENTS IN THE COMMUNITY**

- On Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> beginning at 10 am, Church Women United will gather at Low's Lutheran Church (2136 NC 61) to celebrate the World Day of Prayer.
- Saturday, March 24<sup>th</sup>, the Eastern North Carolina Church Women United will join for their Spring Gathering. The event will run from 9-2 at Elon Community Church UCC (217 N. Williamson Ave in Elon).  
Be strengthened by Testimonies and Prayer. Enjoy Skits, Music, Workshops, Fun, Games... and much more. Serving Morning Refreshments and Lunch. Offering to Domestic Violence Charity. Each woman is asked to bring a new gently used item for the Silent Auction.  
"Unsinkable Joy" is this year's theme. Registration is open until March 15<sup>th</sup>. Over 100 women registered last year and they hope for more this year. For registration forms go to [www.soc-ucc.org](http://www.soc-ucc.org) or call Rev. Tanya Best ([TLCBest459@aol.com](mailto:TLCBest459@aol.com)). For more information call (919-236-5778).
- First Reformed is hosting a lecture series entitled "The Challenge of the Christian Bible" by John Dominic Crossan on March 23<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup>. The event will begin Friday night 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm. Then resume Saturday from 9:00 am – 10:30 am and 11:00 am – 12:30 pm. The cost is \$10 for Friday, \$20 for Saturday and \$25 for both days. To register, visit [www.123formbuilder.com/form3368347/event-Registration-Form](http://www.123formbuilder.com/form3368347/event-Registration-Form). Or you can call the church at 336-226-7346.

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

The Supper Club gathering will be held on March 6th. We (the Supper Club) will be meeting at Mosca's Restaurant in the Rosewood Village shopping center, 3402 S Church St, Burlington. 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 March 1st to make your reservation.

## **UGANDA MISSION TRIP EXPANDED**

For the past two summers, Matt Rice has been part of a special educational mission project to the Kyangwali Refugee Camp in Uganda. When Matt made his report on this last trip, Dotti Davis immediately asked if others could go as well. As a result, she will be part of this year's delegation.

They will be ministering to the children at the Coburwas Primary School. Children in this school come from the neighboring countries of Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan as well as Uganda itself. The refugees are often the victims of civil war genocide and the AIDS epidemic. Many have little hope of ever returning to their home countries.

Last year the church raised over \$2600 in support of this trip. With two going this year, we hope to do even better. Make checks payable to First Christian and write

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“Mission Trip” on the memo line.

Last year there were two teams of educators making this trip. This year there will be three and Matt will serve as the team leader for one of these groups. Thank you for helping to make this important ministry possible.

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

### Year to Date through 01-31-18

	Actual	Budget
Income:	\$16,672.20	\$16,868.61
<u>Expense</u>	<u>\$17,682.52</u>	<u>\$16,868.89</u>
Net Balance:	<\$1,010.32>	<\$ 0.28>
Balance in Checking 01-31-18		\$2,527.85

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