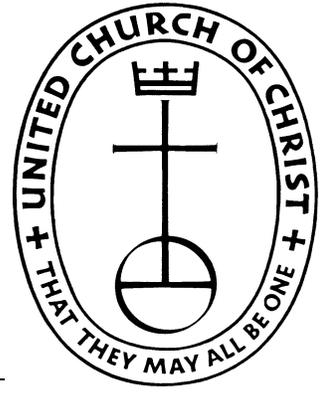


# First Christian United Church of Christ Newsletter December 2018

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*Turkey Day was filled with wonderful food, fabulous conversation and warm fellowship. A successful cake auction followed, in part due to our delicious dessert donations and experienced auctioneer.*

## **PASTOR'S COLUMN**

As the days get shorter and the nights grow longer, we enter the season of Advent, that liturgical time when we await the birth of Jesus Christ. And the growing winter's darkness outside our doors is a fitting metaphor for the inner spiritual journey that is Advent. Jesus was born in a time of darkness when the land was ruled by an army of occupation and the King went so far as to slaughter all the male infants of Bethlehem in an effort to eliminate any royal competition.

The Gospel of John is quiet graphic – the world is a place of darkness, but Jesus is the light that shines in that darkness, and the darkness will never overcome it. So, during this Advent season, amidst the growing shadows outside and the looming shadows within, we await that joyous moment when we proclaim “Christ, the Savior, is born!”

Yet, as we await “the Light of the World,” there are other lights that help guide us and provide light along the way. One of those lights is Beth Kennett. As you know, Beth was not only a member here at First Christian and served on our staff at one time, she also served on the staff of the Southern Conference and is presently working with the Center for Congregational Health in Winston-Salem. Part of Beth's job these days is to help train interim ministers and assist congregations going through a transition period between ministers. So, after I announced my retirement, Beth was one of the first people I called.

Our Official Board met on November 11<sup>th</sup> and Beth volunteered to come to the meeting before she needed to leave for Asheboro where she leads worship twice a month. Beth laid out for the Board what to expect in the months ahead and offered to return and spend more time if that would be helpful!

In essence, Beth said that the interim period shouldn't be rushed if you hope for the best outcome. She said there needs to be a time to celebrate my ministry among you, but also, there needs to be a time for people to mourn my loss. “It's a strange thing,” she said, “It's like you're mourning a death, but Mark's still alive! People need to have time and space to mourn that loss before they're fully ready to move on.”

Then, she added, there are two primary ways the transition period generally works. A transition team should be appointed to help the congregation work through five primary areas of concern. When that work is completed, the search for a new pastor can begin in earnest. During the transition time, the church can hire a specially trained intentional interim minister who will work with the transition team in their congregational self-study efforts, as well as carry out all the normal duties of pastoral ministry. The other option is to hire a regular interim who will attend to those pastoral duties, then hire a consultant who can come in and work with the transition team as needed on an occasional basis. Both options are equally viable.

The Deacons are even now beginning the process of assembling an interim minister search committee. The Rev. Eddie Weathers has identified at least one potential interim. (There may be more, but I caught him just before he was about to depart for a family trip to Texas.) Beth also promised to look at the Center's data base to identify potential candidates.

In some ways, my resignation has cast shadows across the church's life, but even so, there are always lights that shine in the darkness that help to light the way – people like Beth Kennett. And ultimately, there is the “Light of the World” who shines upon us all, whose birth we are about to celebrate. Even though the shadows may loom long this season, we are never forgotten by God who is ever faithful and the source of all hope and grace. Blessings upon you all!

*Mark*

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

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 December 4<sup>th</sup> at "It's All Good", 2306 S. Church Street, (where Tea for Two used to be). Please contact Eleanor Lovgren by November 29<sup>th</sup> to make your reservation.

## **IT'S A BUSY SEASON**

The season of Advent is that period of four Sundays preceding Christmas, and this year, the calendar is jam-packed.

- ❖ December 1<sup>st</sup> – Please come and help us decorate the sanctuary for the season. Meet in the sanctuary at 9:00 am.
- ❖ December 2<sup>nd</sup> – For this first Sunday of Advent we will be doing something new – celebrating a Moravian-style Lovefeast. This service will feature Moravian sweet buns and coffee served in the pews, as well as an opportunity to sing a number of Christmas carols and enjoy special music. In addition to lighting our Christmas tree, we will also light a Moravian star! In addition, we will begin the weekly lighting of the candles on our Advent Wreath. Join us for what promises to be a special event.
- ❖ December 9<sup>th</sup> – Will mark the second Sunday of Advent. In addition to morning worship, a congregational meeting will be convened at 11:30 am to act upon the proposed budget for 2019 as well as the report of the Nominating Committee. Because of the meeting, there will be no reception. Also, if you purchased gifts for our Christmas Cheer outreach, today is the day to bring them!
- ❖ December 16<sup>th</sup> – Our choir has been hard at work preparing for our annual Service of Lessons and Carols.
- ❖ December 23<sup>rd</sup> – On this fourth Sunday of Advent we will collect the Christmas Fund offering (see related article).
- ❖ December 24<sup>th</sup> – We will host our Christmas Eve candlelight, communion service beginning at 5:00 pm. Members of Life's Journey UCC will join us for this service as well as participate in a joint choir.
- ❖ December 30<sup>th</sup> – There will be no Sunday School or reception following worship on this the last Sunday of the year.

## **ANNUAL REPORTS DUE**

All committee and board chair's, take note. The deadline for your Annual Report is December 13<sup>th</sup>. Please submit all reports to Joan in the church office. Typed reports are welcomed, but not required.

## **OFFICE CLOSED / PASTOR AWAY**

Because of the holidays, the church office will be closed December 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> as well as on January 1<sup>st</sup>. Mark will be away for his last week of vacation the week following Christmas. In case a pastoral emergency should occur during this time please contact Elsie Bolick, chair of the Board of Deacons.

## **RECEPTION SIGN-UPS NEEDED**

As we prepare to turn the calendar page on a new year, the Deacons are hoping to find folks who can host receptions following worship. Traditionally, there is no reception on the first Sunday of the month. That leaves three Sundays to fill. If you can lend a hand, the sign-up sheet is in the Sellars Parlor. If you can help regularly, or even occasionally, all efforts are welcomed! And receptions don't need to be fancy. Drinks and cookies are fine. And thanks for your help.

## **MARGARET LIGHTBOURNE CIRCLE**

The Margaret Lightbourne Circle will meet Monday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> at the home of Betty King at 12 noon. Everyone is asked to bring a covered dish to celebrate at the annual Christmas Party.

## **BRING IN YOUR CRÈCHE**

Last December our art gallery overflowed with Christmas spirit as members shared family crèches. The response to this innovative idea was so wonderful we decided to do it again. The first Sunday of Advent is December 2<sup>nd</sup>. Bring in your crèche any time before that date. You might bring it with you when you help decorate the sanctuary on the 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **MANY THANKS - AGAIN**

As you'll recall, in October we collected a disaster relief offering in response to Hurricane Florence. Little did we know then, but hot on the heels of that first storm came another, Hurricane Michael. We were told that what was most needed were "clean-up buckets," 5-gallon buckets filled with various cleaning supplies and tools. In all, we were able to assemble 15 buckets. When all of our expenses had been covered for that project, we still had over \$235 remaining. We have since sent a check for that amount to the disaster relief office of the United Church of Christ in Cleveland. Thank you for your generous and heart-felt response.

In November, we collected another special offering, the UCC's Neighbor's In Need appeal. NIN supports domestic ministries with a special focus on the Native American and justice ministries. In all, we collected \$375 in NIN funds. As always, thank you for your support.

# First Christian UCC –December 2018 Newsletter

## CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING

The light of God surrounds us,  
The love of God enfolds us,  
The power of God protects us,  
The presence of God watches over us.  
- James Dillet Freeman

For over a century, the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund has been a tangible expression of God's love and light in the world. Year after year, United Church of Christ (UCC) members and congregations have reached out in kindness, compassion, and gratitude to those who have faithfully shepherded our Church in the past and who now find themselves facing unexpected financial needs.

In 2017, UCC congregations and members generously contributed over \$1,500,000 to the Christmas Fund. This enabled the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance (UCBMA), the charitable arm of the Pension Boards, to provide, on behalf of the whole Church, Supplementation of Small Annuities, Retiree Health Premium Supplementation, Emergency Grants, and Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to individuals in need.

The theme of this year's Christmas Fund Offering is The Light Is Surely Coming. Our goal is to raise \$1.7 million to help support these ministries of light and love. The recipients of your gifts are persons who have faithfully served the church for many years. And now, in their time of need, you can be the church to them. We invite and encourage you to join thousands of UCC members and congregations who will support this year's appeal and trust the light is surely coming.

On behalf of the hundreds of clergy, lay employees, and their families whose lives were touched by your support of the Christmas Fund Offering, we offer our sincere thanks for your generosity.

***Last year, we at First Christian contributed \$505 to this effort. Can we do even more this year?***

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## FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Year to Date through 09-30-18

	Actual	Budget
Income:	\$152,469.49	\$151,817.29
<u>Expense</u>	<u>\$146,271.98</u>	<u>\$151,762.69</u>
Net Balance:	\$6,197.51	\$54.60
Balance in Checking 09-30-18		\$16,032.41

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