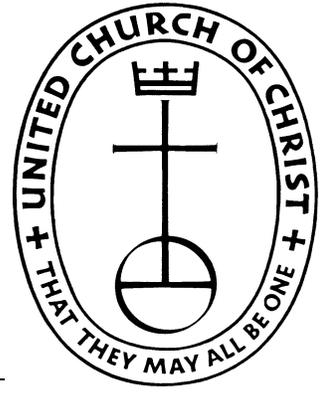


# First Christian United Church of Christ Newsletter August 2018

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*The Summer Symposium was held July 16<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> in the Bray Fellowship Hall. This year's speaker was Rabbi Rachel Brown. It was a time filled with much insight on Jewish faith.*

# First Christian UCC –August 2018 Newsletter

## PASTOR'S COLUMN

August is the time when we as a church not only turn the page of the calendar, but begin a new program year. After a quiet July, Sunday School begins anew. We have an ice cream social coming up. A little further down the road in September, we have an extra special homecoming celebration in the works. You can read about all these things and more later in this newsletter but, for the moment, I'd like to begin by looking back.

As I write this, Matt Rice and Dotti Davis are on their way home from a mission trip to Uganda. They have been away for two and a half weeks and are sure to be exhausted when they finally get home. Once they are sufficiently rested, however, we're going to want to hear all about their adventure. We hope to do that in a couple of ways.

On September 30<sup>th</sup> they will head a Christian Education session filled with pictures and music. Then, during worship, they will be our featured speakers sharing even more stories. We'll include some African music in the mix and share some African food at the reception afterwards!

But before they do any of that, I want to take a moment to thank them for their generous spirits and open hearts in participating in this mission program. Going to Africa may sound exotic, but it is a long, hard journey to get there with many hours on a plane. And, in many ways, once they landed, their journey had only begun. The trip to the refugee camp involved many more hours over bumpy and often dusty roads. And where they went was no five-star luxury hotel! But despite the physical toll the trip demanded, seeing the faces of the children they served in that place must have made it all worthwhile.

In many ways, you'd expect those kids to have every reason for despair. They've been displaced, not only from their homes, but in many cases from their home countries as well by war and violence,

poverty and corruption. They live in a camp with thousands of other displaced people. Yet, in the midst of all that, these kids have joy in their hearts and souls and, because of that fact, they have as much to give us as we have to give to them.

After Matt's presentation last year when he returned from this trip, Dotti came up to me and said "Do you think they'd take me? I feel like I need to go next year!" I suppose that God had placed on her heart a need to give, but she probably also had a need to experience those kids and accept all the love and joy that they had to share in return.



*Mini-Creche brought back from Africa as a gift to the church. On display in the glass display shelves in the church office*

As I write this piece, today is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Nelson Mandela. Today there are vast celebrations all across South Africa.

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Mandela's story is an amazing one. He fought against the brutal system of oppression that was apartheid. He was imprisoned for 27 long years. But, when he was released, he was not consumed with bitterness and hatred and a thirst for revenge. Instead, he became a force for reconciliation that helped that nation emerge from the shackles of its past into a bright new day of hope.

The Afrikaans in South Africa desperately held onto power because they feared that, if they ever relinquished that power, there would be a bloodbath. Instead, under the guiding hand of Nelson Mandela, there dawned a new era of peace.

There continue to be a whole range of serious social and political problems in South Africa and beyond. The refugee

camp where Dotti and Matt served bears witness to that fact. Yet, I wonder. Among those children with whom Matt and Dotti worked these past two weeks, was there a future Mandela just waiting to bloom? And would the love, nurture and education provided by those who operate that school be like sunshine that helps that flower grow and thrive?

Thank you, Matt and Dotti, for all you did. Blessing on you both. As we start our new program year here at church, you are an inspiration to us all!

Mark

## **ICE CREAM SOCIAL**

August 8<sup>th</sup> is the date of our Annual Ice Cream Social. Things will kick off in the Bray Fellowship Hall at 7 pm. This always promises to be a fun time with a whole array of wonderful frozen treats. And, if you have an ice cream freezer and would be willing to contribute to the cause, please be in touch with Phil Bray and let him know!

Along with ice cream there will be cookies and other snacks, along with great toppings. Invite a friend and join the fun.



## **HOMEcoming IS ON THE HORIZON**

September 16<sup>th</sup> is the date for this year's Homecoming celebration. But this year it will be extra special because it will mark both the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city of Burlington as well as the dedication of our very first sanctuary that was located across Church Street from where we are today. Many things are in the works for this event and you'll be learning more about them in the weeks ahead, but mark your calendars now.

In addition, there are a few things you can assist with in preparation. Are there any former members or church friends who should be invited to this event? If so, please call the

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church office with relevant information. Homecoming is also the Sunday when we recognize former members who passed away five, ten and fifteen years ago.

Also, as you know, we have a revolving display of art each month in our gallery. For September, rather than featuring one artist, we thought we'd welcome many. Do you have one piece of art that you would be willing to share for Homecoming month? If so, please be in touch with the church office.

Thank you for your help in making this year's Homecoming an extra special event..

### **SUNDAY SCHOOL RESUMES**

After taking July off, our Sunday School program will resume on August 8<sup>th</sup>. Teachers Appreciation Sunday is set for August 12<sup>th</sup>. And remember, with the start of Sunday School, the Official Board meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> will return to its 8:30 am start time.

### **WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP CIRCLES**

The Women's Fellowship of First Christian UCC will meet on Monday, August 6th at 6:00 pm. Members are asked to bring items for a salad supper. Our speaker will be Robin Wintringham of Habitats for Humanity.

### **SUPPER CLUB – AUGUST 7TH**

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 meeting at Valerio's Italian Restaurant (120 East Front Street) at 6:00 pm. Please call Eleanor Lovgren (336- 226-2671) by Thursday, August 2nd to make your reservation.

### **CAN YOU HELP FOSTER CHILDREN?**

In 2017, 11,000 children were taken in custody in North Carolina because of problematic family situations, and that number is expected to increase as the opioid addiction crisis sweeps the nation. As with most foster children, the only "suitcase" they own is a plastic trash bag that holds their belongings. The Alamance Foster Parent Association is trying to change that. They are collecting duffel bags and personal items to fill them with, in response to this need. A hamper has been placed in the Bray Fellowship Hall next to the mission work table against the side wall. Collected items can be placed there. In addition to duffels, items that are being sought include: socks in various sizes for both genders, underwear, again in various sizes for both genders, hair brushes and combs, hair accessories, travel size lotions, shaving cream, and razors for both male and female teens. Additional items include pocket tissues or wet wipes, sanitary napkins or tampons, and deodorant sticks. All items can be placed in the hamper in the Bray Hall. Next time you're shopping, think of the foster children you might help, then pick up a few items from this list. And if you have any gently used duffel bags, bring those in as well. For further information please call Rebecca Morton at 336-565-9251.

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## **BUDGET PROCESS BEGINS**

It may still be summer, but the Finance Committee has already begun the process of building a budget for 2019. Letters have gone out to the boards and committees asking for their budget needs in the coming year. These requests for funding will be assembled into a proposed budget that will be sent to the Official Board. Following the Board's action, our annual stewardship campaign will begin this fall.

## **AUGUST SERMON SERIES**

For the first three Sunday's in August, Mark will have a sermon series on the temptation of Christ. Each Sunday will focus on one of the three temptations. In preparation for the series you might want to compare the Gospel versions of this story. Mark's version is very brief, only two verses long (Mark 1:12-13). The versions in Matthew (4: 1-11) and Luke (4: 1-13) are the more traditional ones. Read them over. What are the differences? Why are there differences and what are their significance? There is no temptation story in John. Why is that? It should be an interesting three weeks!

## **PASTOR AWAY**

Mark and Margot will be away at the beach August 20<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>. Our guest preacher on the 26<sup>th</sup> will be the Rev. Beth Kennett. If a pastoral emergency should occur during this time, please contact Elsie Bolick, chair of the Board of Deacons. In addition, Margot's contract as the interim minister at Life's Journey UCC has not been extended. Her last Sunday there will be September 2<sup>nd</sup>. She looks forward to seeing people at First Christian later this fall.

## **SOUTHERN CONFERENCE ANNUAL GATHERING**

Carol and Jamie Fonville were delegates from First Christian United Church of Christ to the 53rd Annual Gathering of the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ which was held at Canterbury School in Greensboro, NC June 21-23, 2018.

This school was a beautiful location for our gathering of over 200 people from across the Southern Conference, which includes North Carolina and Eastern Virginia. The event featured various workshops on topics of importance to churches, worship events to inspire us, and business for the future work of our churches together. The meeting was a congenial, supportive gathering of delegates from our white and black congregations, with a growing representation of female clergy who are serving as pastors of churches.

Major time was devoted to "A Faithful Response to Sexual Violence in the #MeTooEra" where Rev. Dr. Sharon Ellis Davis provided a great deal of information about sexual violence in the United States where 1 out of every 6 women has been sexually abused and 65% of women have experienced "street harassment". She reminded us that the faith community needs to provide a response that is "ethically, morally, practically, and theologically grounded".

An additional major informational topic was "Immigration, Sanctuary and the Church" where churches involved in this movement described how they have sought to provide sanctuary for immigrants while their cases waited to be heard through our legal channels. Out of this presentation, and the approach of our government at that time of separating

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children from their parents when they entered our country seeking refuge at our southern border, an emergency resolution was passed, without descent, condemning the US government's anti-family practices of separating immigrant children from their parents. This resolution was sent to our congressional representatives who reside in the Southern Conference.

The Southern Conference continues to modify its staffing and programming based upon income support received from our member churches, with an adopted budget for 2019, for programming and staff, of \$402,900.

In addition to the workshops, worship times, and business, the gathering gave opportunity to visit with church friends from the past, make new acquaintances, and it strengthened and inspired our commitment to be the church, working together with others of the Christian faith.

Carol and Jamie Fonville

## **SPECIAL UPCOMING EVENTS**

In addition to the events that have been mentioned in individual articles in this edition, there are several more on the horizon. Be sure to mark your calendars:

- September 4            Supper Club
- September 16        Homecoming
- September 30        Mission Trip Presentation

## **NEW MEMBERS**

At least one new member will be joining the church on August 5<sup>th</sup>. If you know of others who would be interested, please speak with Mark.

## **FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

### **Year to Date through 06-30-18**

|                              | Actual             | Budget              |
|------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Income:                      | \$122,311.28       | \$101,211.54        |
| <u>Expense</u>               | <u>\$99,444.29</u> | <u>\$101,101.94</u> |
| Net Balance:                 | \$22,866.29        | \$ 109.60           |
| Balance in Checking 06-30-18 |                    | \$27,792.34         |

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