

Spaghetti church?

Dear Church Family,

I have told a few people recently that I have been "thoughtfully throwing spaghetti at the wall" of the church, to see what sticks. Of course, this is a little tongue in cheek. In an effort to create a more enriching worship experience for everyone, I've been trying out some different ideas. The most recent one was the **Jubilee Service** on January 14th in the Fellowship Hall. Sally Morris, the musician-in-residence at Wake Forest School of Divinity, led us in vibrant new music, and I heard from many folks that the service exuded joy and inclusiveness. Seems like that was a piece of spaghetti that stuck! We'll explore how to incorporate more of those elements into our services, and perhaps do a service in the Fellowship Hall on a regular basis.

Another experiment has been a little table in the middle of the sanctuary with coloring supplies and books -- a trial-run for something called a "**Pray-Ground**." I observed that our church is experiencing a catch-22 when it comes to kids: we don't have quite enough for a full-blown children's ministry, but unless we provide something for families with kids, we're not likely to attract more. I did some research on what other churches in a similar boat were doing, and learned about Pray-Grounds. Here is a brief summary I found online: "Pray-Grounds were introduced only a few years ago in response to a number of shifts and changes in today's Protestant church culture, such as

- parents desiring to have their young children in worship with them;
- parents not wishing to leave their child in a church nursery with a "stranger";
- congregations that do not have enough children to sustain a Sunday School program;
- the understanding that the children can only learn to worship by regularly being in worship; among other situations unique to each individual congregation.

A Pray-Ground is a designated place in the front of the sanctuary where young children can experience worship through age-appropriate worship materials

and tools that will help keep them engaged in what is happening — materials such as children's Bibles and books, coloring/drawing materials, soft toys, Play-Doh and pipe cleaners and other manipulables, items related to the scripture theme such as smooth stones, feathers, shells, etc." For a deeper dive, check out karenwarejackson.com/resources.html

In our trial-run, we have observed that the kids have taken to the space, but our sanctuary has GREAT acoustics, which means noise and movement are amplified, which might be distracting for adults. The question now is: how will we adapt? (The Pray-Ground, and perhaps the culture of our church.)

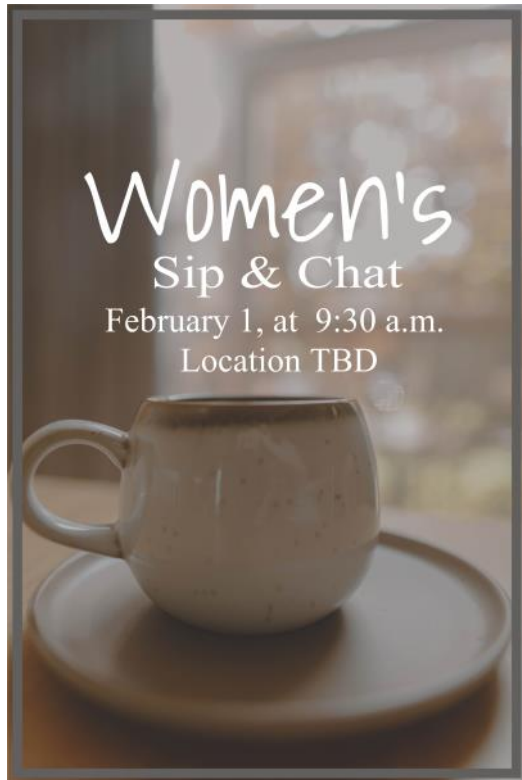
I am already working on some ideas for how to adapt the Pray-Ground (and hopefully launching a Montessori-style children's church called Godly Play in the next year). In the meantime, my hope is that we can be patient with the Pray-Ground while we adapt, since it signals to families that we're thinking of them while we figure out "what sticks."

Friends, I am grateful every day to be your pastor and to witness your willingness to try new things! One of my pastor friends told me what her mentor told her: "The church needs innovation, and there is no innovation without failure! So try things, knowing that no matter what, Christ is still risen!"

He is risen indeed!

Love,
Pastor Grace





Scholarships available

If you are a high school senior or a current college student seeking scholarship money, First Reformed UCC offers three scholarships. Any active church member currently attending or planning to attend an institution of higher education is eligible to apply. Applications are available in the church office and are due no later than March 31.



Meals on Wheels

Delivery Dates

February 12 - 16

New Consistory officers elected

The Consistory officers are:

President: Derek Smith

Vice President: Tom Burgess

Treasurer: Arleen Widerman

Secretary: Claudette Fitzgerald
(Assistant: Susan Hayes)

Are you plugged into your passion?

If you weren't able to attend the Plug Into Your Passion event on January 21, or if you needed some time to think about it, please consider where your area(s) of interest or passion lies. The leaders below will be more than happy to have your assistance throughout this year! If you have any questions about the ministry areas, please contact Pastor Grace or one of the leaders listed.

Faith Formation

Co-leaders - Grace McMullen and TBA

Consistory Liaison - TBA

Fellowship

Co-Leaders - Susan Hayes and Amy Deal

Consistory Liaison - Susan Hayes

Mission and Outreach

Co-Leaders - Beverly Pugh and Sandi Jones

Consistory Liaison - Teresa Ibarra

Community Liaison - Beverly Pugh

Worship

Co-Leaders - Julie Lefew and Claudette Fitzgerald

Consistory Liaison - Claudette Fitzgerald

Community Liaison - David French

"Don't do it for applause. Do it because it ignites a fire inside you."

— Hiral Nagda

Consistory Notes

The Consistory of FRUCC met on Wednesday, January 10, 2024. In addition to Grace McMullen, eight members were in attendance .

Approval of Reports

The December minutes were approved.

Election of Officers

- Derek Smith agreed to continue as President.
- Claudette Fitzgerald agreed to continue as Secretary.
- Arleen Widerman will be treasurer.
- Tom Burgess be Vice President.

Ministry Team Reports

Fellowship Teresa Ibarra, Susan Hayes
Breakfast is planned for March 24, Palm Sunday.

Mission and Outreach

Tom Burgess, Teresa Ibarra

- Hometown mission trip 2024 is on hold.
- Lifeline Screening event is scheduled for Thursday, February 29, 2024, from 8:15 a.m. - 5:30p.m., set up to wrap up. Will use all ground floor spaces.

Trustees

- Heating issues found with the blowers and coils on the 3rd floor. Repairs have been made, but long term will require replacing and repairing the current system or replacing with a gas pack on the roof.

Pastor’s Report

- Playground may need a facilitator other than a family member and possible move toward that back of the sanctuary.

- Participated in some continuing education at the Franklinton Center.
- Had the last meeting with the transition team in December. Pastoral team has been established.

Old Business

- The Scholarship committee met on January 7 and is working to streamline the process and update timelines to more closely match the school schedules.
- As we prepare to move to Spectrum after speaking to the trustees about the fire alarm collaboration with the Burlington Fire Department since Sentry can’t tell us which phone line the fire alarm is hood into. Awaiting further information.
- YMA safe church training certificates and paperwork are still in progress but are almost completed.
- Yoga rental agreement has been executed, and classes are ongoing.
- Door update: Trustees and Derek Smith are working to get a date from Cardinal Joinery in Winston Salem to get the third quote by the February meeting.

New business

- The motion to approve the 2024 housing allowance of \$21,600.00 for Grace McMullen was carried.
- It was decided to move the February meeting from February 14 to February 21.

Respectfully submitted,
Claudette Fitzgerald
Consistory Secretary

Greeters:

Trustee on Call:

Song Leaders:

Senior Adults

Thursday, February 22

Carver’s Restaurant (3353 S. Church St.)

Adult Sunday school class to begin Lenten study

Lent starts on February 14 this year! The Adult Sunday School class will be studying “LUKE, Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts, and Outlaws.” We will be using materials from Adam Hamilton. The six sessions include:

Lifting Up the Lowly	February 18
Simon, Do You See This Woman?	February 25
Parables from the Underside	March 3
On the Journey to Jerusalem	March 10
The Final Week	March 17
Crucified with the Outlaws	March 24

For each class, we will have a short video followed by discussion. Class members, we will sign up to facilitate each meeting. Susan Balog will start with February 18.

If you are looking for a meaningful way to mark Lent, forget about chocolate and join us for these study sessions! All are welcome!

Lenten Study



The Morning Circle will meet Wednesday, February 7, at 10:00 a.m. in the church parlor.



OFFICE HOURS 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Tuesday - Friday



Birthdays

- 4 Alex Small
- 10 Donna Taylor
- 23 Gary Lefew



**Evening Circle
 Wednesday,
 February 21,
 at 7 pm
 in church parlor**

Life Line Screening scheduled for February 29

On Thursday, February 29, First Reformed will serve as the host for a one day health screening event for our community conducted by Life Line Screening. The organization provides the following information:

“Life Line Screening is the leading provider of annual screenings for risks of cardiovascular disease, stroke, and other chronic diseases. Designed by doctors and administered by trained professionals, our screenings can help detect hidden health issues before they become serious problems. Since 1993, we have screened over 10 million people and provided peace of mind or early detection of health risks.”

For more information, check the organization’s website: lifelinescreening.com. Preregistration is required for the event and can be completed on the website or by calling 866-964-9087.

This health screening event was approved by the First Reformed Consistory as part of the Mission and Outreach Ministry Team.

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Pastor	Grace McMullen
Ministry Assistant/Editor	Carol Burnett
Organist	David Ratchford
Music Coordinator/Chime Choir	Beverly Pugh

Suggestions and contributions for our newsletter
are welcomed and encouraged.
The deadline for each issue is
the 15th of each month.

Sunday Services

9:45 a.m.	Sunday School
11:00 a.m.	Worship

All are welcome!

Jesus didn't reject people. Neither do we.



Striving to become living expressions of God's extravagant grace and love.

Connection

First Reformed United Church of Christ
513 West Front Street
Burlington, NC 27215

- RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED -



Mission Statement

At First Reformed UCC, we are:

***Striving to become living expressions
of God's extravagant grace and love.***

We seek to accomplish this by...

1. Welcoming all persons with a warmth and hospitality that will help them realize that God loves them beyond imagination and that they are of extreme value.
2. Gathering in moments of worship and celebration characterized by authenticity, vitality, and creativity – where one may experience and share the life-changing presence of God in a multitude of ways.
3. Offering a variety of opportunities for spiritual growth, faith development, and supportive fellowship.
4. Helping persons to explore and develop their own individual gifts for ministry and inviting them to share generously of their time, talents and resources.
5. Engaging in acts of service and love that will express the compassion, mercy, and justice of Christ in the world.