

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

# Connection

The newsletter of First Reformed United Church of Christ, Burlington, NC

[www.firstreformeducc.org](http://www.firstreformeducc.org)

## February 2025

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### Holy Side Effect

Dear Church,

A new year always catches me by surprise! And somehow it is already February. The Christmas lights are barely down, and it seems as though the church hardly catches its breath before the New Year demands our attention with Very Important Things To Do. Goal-setting and visioning for the year. Building upkeep and caretaking. And of course, the core purposes of pastoral care and worship continue on.

During our Consistory Retreat at the end of January, I wondered if we sometimes put the cart before the horse when it comes to "the business of the church." We are so occupied with keeping the "machine" humming along – which is not a machine at all, but the wonderful and complex and beautiful organism that is the church! – that we sometimes forget to pause and breathe, to pray, and remind ourselves of WHY we do what we do.

Rev. Tracy Barnowe, a UCC pastor, has said that our ultimate goal as a church should not be *about the church*, but *should be scriptural, and guided by Christ*.

Here's an example of one of those guiding lights:



*(continued page 2)*

## Holy Side Effect *(continued from page 1)*

“Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another” (John 13:34).

About this particular scripture, Barnowe writes:

*“This is how Jesus loved: with patience, kindness, truth, respect, sanctuary, equality, and nurture of body and spirit... Everything that we do in helping our congregations to grow and thrive must begin with this scriptural foundation.*

*Some of the results may include more butts in the pews, narrowing the gap in*

*the budget, filling out our choir, or launching a new ministry in the community. But those are just the outcomes of our goals, the side effects. Everything should stem from our real goals.”*

As we venture further into 2025, with all the possibility and challenges it holds, my prayer is that we would keep the love of Christ as our guiding light. If we embody that kind of love with one another, everything else is just a holy side effect.

Much love,  
Grace

## Living out our mission statement

The Consistory met on January 25 for a retreat in a lovely, quiet setting in Durham. This allowed us time to share dreams and concerns and set goals, as well as conduct the business of the church.

Grace planned the retreat around our Mission Statement, which was a wonderful way to plan. Have you read the complete mission statement lately? It is worth your time to take a look at it.

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

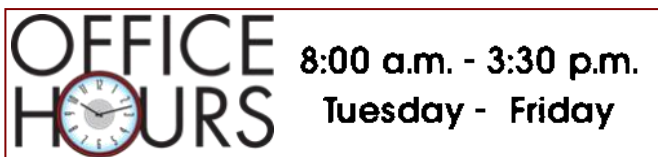
- **Welcoming all persons with warmth and hospitality.**
- **Gathering in moments of worship and celebration characterized by authenticity, vitality, and creativity.**
- **Offering a variety of opportunities for spiritual growth, faith development, and supportive fellowship.**
- **Helping people to explore and develop their own individual gifts for ministry and inviting them to share generously of their time, talent and resources.**

- **Engaging in acts of service and love that will express the compassion, mercy, and justice of Christ in the world.**

As we reviewed these mission statements and the work that flows from them, with Grace’s thoughtful leadership, we determined that our goals for 2025 as gleaned from scripture are to **let love be our goal and guiding principle** for all that we do. Love God, with our whole being and love our neighbor as ourselves.

Our church needs each of you to do your part as we seek to live out our Mission Statement. If you have not already signed up for at least one area of participation, please consider doing so. On February 9, we will have a Soup and Sandwich Lunch after church. You will see displays from each of the five areas our mission, and specific ways that you can help. We need you to be a part of our ministry!

Arleen Widerman  
Consistory President



“You don’t love someone because they’re perfect; you love them in spite of the fact that they’re not.” —Jodi Picoult

**Greeters:** Don Doornheim, Claudette Fitzgerald, David French  
**Trustee on Call:** Kay Hunkins

**Meals on Wheels**  
**Delivery Dates**  
**February 10-14**

## Senior Adults

Thursday, February 27  
11:30 a.m.  
at Mosca's

## Birthdays

- 4 Pam Ratchford
- 10 Donna Taylor
- 21 David Ratchford
- 23 Gary Lefew



## Soup and sandwich lunch offered February 9

“Souper” Bowl Sunday!!! On Sunday, February 9, the Evening Circle will host their annual soup and sandwich lunch in the fellowship hall right after worship. This is the Evening Circle’s primary fundraising event. There is no cost for the meal, but donations will be accepted to support the mission and outreach projects of the Evening Circle throughout the year. Checks can be made payable to First Reformed UCC with



“Evening Circle” noted on the memo line. Come out and enjoy fun, fellowship and a hearty meal before the BIG GAME!

Also, learn more about the projects and ministry endeavors of our church in 2025. Each of our ministry teams will have a station where you can learn more about their work, the ways they support the mission of our church, and how you can help!

## Amid life’s storms

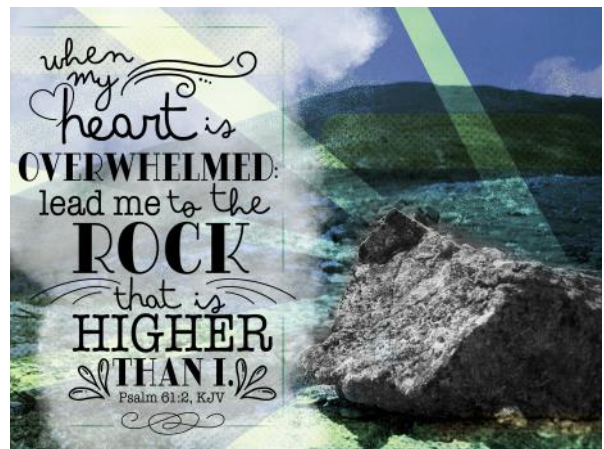
The hurricanes that battered the East Coast in fall 2024 also battered my soul. I was over the rain and humidity. I was tired of lugging my two pre-schoolers through the downpours and driving through flash floods at night. Yet I had no reason to complain. Our house was still standing, with no damage.

The news around us was worrying and heart-breaking. “What if that was us?” I wondered. “Would I be strong enough?”

Then the kids asked to play outside. Even though I knew they’d get wet and muddy, I gave in. When a rainbow appeared, I’d never been more humbled as I remembered: I don’t need to be anxious. I don’t need to be strong enough. God watches over us all. He knows the hurt and sorrow. And he promises to be “our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1, ESV).

Lord, forgive my unbelief. “Hear my cry, O God ... when my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I” (Psalm 61:1-2, ESV).

—Kristen Greene



*Evening Circle*

**Thursday,  
February 13  
at 7 p.m.**

*Second Thursdays 7 p.m.*

**The Morning  
Circle will meet  
Wednesday,  
February 5,  
at 10:00 a.m.  
All are welcome!**

*Morning Circle*  
First Wednesdays  
10 a.m. in church parlor

## Consistory Notes

The Consistory of FRUCC held its retreat Saturday, January 25, 2025 at The Trees in Durham. In addition to Grace McMullen there were seven members in attendance.

### Approval of Reports

The December 2024 minutes and the December financial reports were approved. It was noted that the books for 2024 were closed.

Approval was given for a 90-day trial for Laura Horton to host yoga at FRUCC on Mondays.

### Ministry Reports

#### Faith Formation

- The Adult Formation class is doing a study on the book "The Gift of Years" by Joan Chittister is underway on Sunday mornings. Sixteen were present at the first meeting.
- Godly Play helpers received Safe Church Training on January 5. Godly Play Training will be held at FRUCC March 14-16 using Endowment funds. Open to other local churches (would help lower costs). Will need volunteers for lunch to be provided Saturday and Sunday.
- Note: Grace has been the default Faith Formation chair. Hoping someone else can take over the role more consistently.

#### Fellowship

- Currently in conversation with Derek Smith to take over as committee chair. Will need help recruiting others to join.
- Next Fellowship meal idea is to bring back the Spaghetti Supper. It would be ticketed and open to the community. A date is to be confirmed.

#### Mission and Outreach

- The Little Food Pantry is being stocked at least four days a week. Currently using budgeted funds to make purchases to restock.
- We are committed to provide lunch for 50+ on three fifth-Thursdays starting on January 30 at 11 a.m. Servers will be needed for each of these.
- There is planning for a Silent Auction fundraiser for SAFE in conjunction with the Spaghetti Supper.

#### Worship

- Bev Pugh is attending the Alamance Chorale Vocal Workshop at First Baptist Church of Elon on February 1. Workshop focus is vocal health for older singers.

#### Trustees

Insurance company needs the church to upgrade electrical panels. Quote from King Electric for \$11,775. Congregational vote needed because quote is over \$10,000. Congregational vote set for Sunday, February 9, 2025, after worship service.

#### Old Business

- Discussion surrounding the Building Superintendent position continues.
- Derek Smith provided an update about cameras. Quote approved but not yet installed.
- Derek is also working to complete the Cannon Grant for doors and other repairs. They will reimburse part of the expense. The work must be completed before the grant can be completed and submitted.
- Arleen Widerman noted the need to research a new elevator maintenance company before the contract for Otis Elevators is renewed.

#### New Business

- Beverly Pugh has forwarded an insurance information request from trustees to the Executive Director and YMA Board. Working with YMA staff to schedule a time to provide an update on the use of the \$50,000 instrument donation.
- Appointment of Officers:

Arleen Widerman - President

Jim Euliss - Vice-President

Laura Field - Secretary

Treasurer - Steve Balog

Assistant. Secretary - Susan Hayes

Assistant. Treasurer - Arleen Widerman

Respectfully Submitted,  
Laura Field, Secretary



All,  
 Thank you so much  
 for the birthday bag  
 donations / our clients love  
 receiving them! Thank  
 you  
 ACMDW

First Reformed Family,  
 Merry Christmas!  
 Daniel and I have been  
 missing you all very much during  
 this particular season and we  
 are so grateful for the sweet  
 cards and updates.  
 We continue to pray for you all  
 and hope that this new year  
 continues to find FRUCC growing  
 in community, grace, and love.  
 Wish you all the  
 best, Stella and  
 Daniel.

Dear Friends at First Reformed Church,  
 I must say thank you for  
 thinking of me!  
 I enjoyed the goodies in the  
 bag — so nice!  
 I miss all of you!  
 Love,  
 Carol Berke  
 Merry Christmas!

January 1, 2025  
 Dear Consistory,  
 Thank you so much for  
 the generous gift card I  
 received at Christmas. I  
 appreciate the support from  
 the Consistory and congregation  
 as I seek to bring glory to  
 God through the music ministry.  
 Blessings, Bev

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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.	Faith Formation
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 -



*Happy Valentines Day*

## Mission Statement

At First Reformed UCC, we are:

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

## Stay Connected

If you haven't done so already, please be  
sure you join FRUCC's social media accounts.

Website:  
firstreformeducc.org

Facebook:  
First Reformed UCC of Burlington, NC



Instagram:  
frucc\_of\_burlington\_nc

