



*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)

**June  
2020**

## Special Message and Prayer for Justice

by Phil Myers



As I've watched events unfold this week surrounding the death of George Floyd, not only have I struggled with feelings of deep sadness and anger, but also with how to express this mix of emotions in words. Earlier in the week, I recorded our regular worship service, but feel I would be remiss not to heed the call of Christ to speak out and work against racism, social and economic injustice, and oppression.

I want to share with you a brief excerpt from a speech given by Martin Luther King Jr, and offer a special prayer for justice. More importantly, I want to encourage each of us to seek and find concrete actions that we can take to work peacefully and effectively against injustice. In the coming weeks, I'll be discussing with our church leaders steps we as a congregation can take. If you would like to be part of that conversation, please let me know.

Martin Luther King Jr's 1967 speech: "The Other America" was given at Stanford University two years after California's Watts riots and race riots in Harlem the previous summer. Spoken more than 50 years ago, these words still speak to the present day. King, of course, never condoned or promoted riots and violence. He did, however, call us to learn from such events - to learn to ask ourselves hard questions. King says:

"Let me say as I've always said, and I will always continue to say, that riots are socially destructive and self-defeating. ... But in the final analysis, a riot is the language of the unheard. And what is it that America has failed to hear? It has failed to hear that the plight of the Negro poor has worsened over the last few years. It has failed to hear that the promises of freedom and justice have not been met. And it has failed to hear that large segments of white society are more concerned about tranquility and the status quo than about justice, equality, and humanity. And so in a real sense, our nation's summers of riots are caused by our nation's winters of delay. And as long as America postpones justice, we stand in the position of having these recurrences of violence and riots over and over again."

*Martin Luther King Jr., "The Other America"*

So, our challenge is to learn to listen and then decide, how we, like King, can act peacefully to bring about change.

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## Special Message and Prayer for Justice *(cont. from page 1)*

As we let those words surround us, will you pray with me?

Dear God,

We come to you today grieving, angered, overwhelmed. We ask you for wisdom and healing for our nation. Help us to be bold enough to help break the systems of injustice and change our culture. Open the eyes, the hearts, and the minds of leaders everywhere, that they may know not only how to respond to injustices and events today, but that they may take action to change our tomorrow. Lead our congregation to join other Christians in finding a path for action.

Many Americans like to say that this is the land of the free- but it's not free when black men and women are afraid to go for a run, afraid to drive at night, terrified that they could be physically harmed during any encounter with law enforcement - that isn't freedom.

You sent Jesus to show us that oppression of any kind is wrong. In your eyes, oh Lord, we are all precious children of God created in your image. Bring us peace and give us strength, yet never let us rest until we have all taken the steps to allow freedom and justice for everyone. Amen.

## Jesus didn't reject people. Neither do we.

We extend a special welcome to those who are single, married, divorced, gay, filthy rich, dirt poor, y no habla Ingles.

We extend a special welcome to those who are crying newborns, skinny as a rail or could afford to lose a few pounds.

You're welcome here if you're "just browsing," just woke up or just got out of jail.

We don't care if you're more Protestant than Martin Luther, or haven't been in church since little Joey's Baptism.

We extend a special welcome to those who are over 60 but not grown up yet, and to teenagers who are growing up too fast.

We welcome soccer moms, NASCAR dads, starving artists, tree-huggers, latte-sippers, vegetarians, junk-food eaters.

We welcome those who are in recovery or still addicted.

We welcome you if you're having problems or you're down in the dumps or if you don't like "organized religion" — we've been there too.

If you blew all your offering money at the dog track, you're welcome here.

We offer a special welcome to those who think the earth is flat, work too hard, don't work, can't spell, or because grandma is in town and wanted to go to church.

We welcome those who are inked, pierced or both.

We offer a special welcome to those who could use a prayer right now, had religion shoved down your throat as a kid or got lost in traffic and wound up here by mistake.

We welcome tourists, seekers and doubters, bleeding hearts ... **AND YOU!!!**

In sacred space, we are tempted to use the silence to think of ourselves, our problems, and our personal needs. The temptation to self-absorption is even more powerful in sacred spacing. Just look at how many people standing in line are oblivious to their surroundings and focused entirely on their own little world. What separates the secular from the sacred is our ability to surrender our egos to a higher purpose and prioritize the needs of others over our personal concerns.

—The Rev. Dr. Thomas G. Bandy  
from *Sacred Space to Sacred Spacing*

# What will the “new normal” look like?

by Joe Koehling from *ACS Technologies Ministry Impact Resources*

There is so much talk these days about “getting back to normal” after the COVID-19 global crisis is “over.” But will it ever really be “over”? Only time will tell. But, really, there is one thing for certain: **We will not be getting back to “normal.”**

All around the world, people in every nation will have to adopt a “new normal” that goes well beyond adopting new health and hygiene practices that will keep them from falling sick. We have been knitted together as a global community like never before. **The new normal will require us to take the valuable lessons that we’ve learned during quarantine and “shelter-in-place” forward into the future.** The new normal can be something that we, as a human race, can set in place with pride for the next generation. **It begins with us.**

## Streamlining Life

Most of us have learned during the COVID-19 crisis to reorganize our lives in such a way that it makes sense to us when we can’t leave our homes and can’t travel. When we have to cook all our meals at home, work from home, and have to homeschool our children. **Everything is completely different, and it’s taken some time to get used to. But we’ve done it.** Now moving forward? We get to choose what life will look like. We can add back in only the things that are the most meaningful. **And can use the virus’s shakeup to reposition ourselves into a life that has margin and aligns itself with our values and convictions.** We have the choice to let life control us. We can move forward with confidence, knowing we are doing what matters most, but most of all, we can focus our time on BEING, rather than just DOING. It’s up to us.

## Commitment to Intentionality in Relationships

The more time that passes, people all around the nation who previously thought they were introverts are realizing they need to interact with people to be recharged. They need a conversation, to look someone in the eye, get a hug, or at least give a handshake. In the absence of those things, people everywhere are being outrageously creative in the ways they are connecting with others. **Whether it’s over video calls or text message, or whether it’s by hanging out 6 feet apart in a driveway, people are being more intentional than ever in creating an opportunity for relationship.** The new normal must take that forward. We cannot lose this precious gift we have been given. Our relationships are important. More important than our work, our sports, or our careers. Our new normal must include a global commitment to building bonds that will last.

## Embracing Minimalism

As we sit inside our homes during shelter-in-place orders, we are experiencing a unique reality that is changing the way that we look at our abundance. We are decluttering our homes and making meals from scratch. All while we are trying to avoid Starbucks and fast-food drive-thrus. We are, unintentional though it may be, experiencing a sort of minimalism. Many of us are subsisting on the least amount of things needed to survive. We are learning to be content with what we have and not pursuing the Great American Dream of having more than everyone all around us. **Our grass is green, and we are not looking at our neighbor’s lawn.** For some, this causes anxiety. For others, however, this produces peace. A peace that can be carried into the new normal. A peace that can permeate life into the future, that helps us create calm in the midst of any chaos, and that helps us to spend our money on things that matter, rather on things that will not last. A long-lasting peace that helps us set priorities that define our lives for the better.

## Realizing what is important

Wedding ceremonies with hundreds of guests have been canceled. But the marriage is still on. Graduation ceremonies are called off. But young people are still going to college. Church services have been moved online. But worship and hearing from the Word of God are still happening with enthusiasm. Perhaps now, more than ever before in history, people around the world are realizing what is important. They are seeing that the activities that we once held so close to the heart are mere symbols of greater achievements in life that can never be taken away. Relationships come first. Knowledge and learning are rising to the top. Creativity is taking first place. Quality time together is prized above all.

***The COVID-19 virus has changed the world forever, but it has not changed the important things that are sewn deep within our hearts.*** Those are the things that will last forever and can never be taken away.

We will not “go back to normal.” When the COVID-19 global pandemic is over, there will be a new normal. And the vision for that new normal and how it all plays out is up to us. We have the power to make it all that we want it to be. We also have the power to allow life to consume us once again. The authority is ours to choose.

*Let’s make the right choice.*

## Consistory Notes

The Consistory of FRUCC, via Zoom, met Wednesday, May 13, at 7 p.m. In addition to Phil Myers and Elizabeth Sutton, there were six members in attendance.

### Approval of Reports:

The April 22 Consistory minutes were approved.

Phil reported that financial giving for April was in line with regular contributions and did not seem to have been effected by the shelter in place order. Second quarter subsidies from both the Clapp Endowment and Fowler Estate have been received. The April Financial Reports were approved.

### New Business:

In advance of the meeting, Phil had sent Consistory members two documents:

- 1) A copy of Governor Cooper's Three Phase Plan for re-opening businesses and churches in North Carolina, and
- 2) A list of best practices we will need to consider whenever we gather for activities at the church. Some of these practices include:
  - Providing hand sanitizer at each door
  - Requiring worship participants to wear masks. If yes, do we provide them?
  - Marking which pews people can and cannot sit on.
  - Refraining from singing to avoid potential spread of the virus.
  - No passing the peace.
  - Having the cleaning service sanitize surfaces between services.

Referencing governmental guidelines she has received in relation to her work, Suzan stressed that the use of masks would be essential when we gather in the building. While eager to return to in-person gatherings, Phil expressed concern for returning too early and putting church members at risk. Even meeting outdoors continues to have certain risks.

Arleen stated her belief that nothing had really changed since the shutdown order went into effect and that to resume meeting now may undo any progress made over the past two months.

By consensus, the group decided to refrain from resuming in-person worship services, educational classes, or fellowship events for the foreseeable future, possibly through the end of June. The group will revisit this issue at the June Consistory meeting.

The question was raised as to whether we should allow groups that utilize the building to resume their meetings as long as they don't hold the church liable. Concerns were raised as to the difficulty of sanitizing these spaces in order to adequately protect everyone. The church may need to consider investing in some mobile sanitizing units, ranging in cost from \$400-\$600 each.

One recommendation raised was the possibility of asking the smaller AA group (the closed meeting) to meet in the Parlor because this is a smaller space to clean and restrooms are readily accessible. Phil will explore this with the AA representative.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Phil Myers*  
 Acting Secretary

## Hamilton video series available for checkout

In March and April, the Adult Sunday School class viewed and discussed a DVD video series featuring Rev. Adam Hamilton called *The Walk: Five Essential Practices of the Christian Life*.

Individual sessions include:

- Worship and Prayer: A Living Hallelujah
- Study: The Importance of Listening and Paying Attention
- Serve: Here I Am, Lord, Send Me

- Give: Where Your Treasure Is...
- Share: Going Fishing, Reflecting Light
- The Five Practices from the Cross

The series is now available for anyone in the church to borrow and watch at home. Just call the church office to arrange for a pick up time.

## Financial Report

### January through May

#### JAN - MAY

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>Projected</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Contributions	29,690	23,842	-5,848
Other Income	1,320	31,152	29,832
Clapp Endowment	66,672	80,000	13,328
Fowler Endowment	13,251	15,900	2,649
Brown Endowment	3,334		-3,334
Fowler Restricted	1,042		-1,042
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>115,308</b>	<b>150,894</b>	<b>35,586</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>Projected</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Staff Compensation	76,171	76,708	537
Benevolence	2,917	2,565	-352
Programming and Wor- ship	3,667	2,067	-1,600
Operating Expenses	32,553	34,772	2,219
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>115,308</b>	<b>116,112</b>	<b>804</b>
<b>Net Gain</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>34,782</b>	<b>34,782</b>

#### Narrative Summary

##### Income (5 months)

- A. Contributions totaled \$ 23,842 - \$ 5,848 less than needed from the congregation.
- B. Other Income totaled \$ 31,152 - \$ 29,832 more than projected.  
*(This extra income is a result of the church receiving a PPP award of \$28,777).*
- C. 2 quarters of subsidy have been received from Clapp Endowment – \$ 80,000.
- D. 2 quarters of subsidy have been received from the Fowler Estate - \$ 15,900.
- E. Total Income YTD totaled \$ 150,894 - \$ 35,586 ahead due to subsidies and PPP.

##### Expenses (5 months)

- F. Staff Compensation expenses were \$ 76,708 - \$ 537 over budget.
- G. Benevolence expenses were \$ 2,565 - \$ 352 under budget.
- H. Programming & Worship expenses were \$ 2,067 - \$ 1,600 under budget.
- I. Operating expenses were \$ 34,772 - \$ 2,219 over budget.
- J. Total expenses YTD totaled \$ 116,112 - \$ 804 over budget.

##### Net GAIN (5 months)

- K. The Net Gain for Jan-May was \$ 34,782 due to the quarterly subsidies and the PPP award.

## Summer Day Camp cancelled

Due to safety requirements, AGAPE has cancelled all of their summer camps. We had received the guidelines that the church would be required to operate under and they were very strenuous. Discussion had been taking place as to whether the church would be able to meet them. Before a final agreement had been reached, AGAPE made the decision to cancel their summer programs.

We hope that our situation is better next year and we will be able to resume this widely enjoyed offering.



## Application for Paycheck Protection Program approved

Some of you may be wondering if FRUCC applied for the Paycheck Protection Program. Although we chose not to apply during the first allocation, it was decided to apply when the second round was released.

On May 4, we received \$28,777 through the PPP. This money is designated for a strict set of expenses, including payroll. FRUCC plans to use it all for payroll expenses as a way to boost the financial position of the church as Endowment income has taken a serious hit as a result of the stock market instability. With so many uncertainties in our current economy, we wanted to be sure we could provide needed assistance for our church families and our community.

At the end of the loan period, we will provide documentation stating how the funds were used and, at that time, the loan will become a grant with no repayment.

“Solutions are not found by pointing fingers; they are reached by extending hands.”

—Aysha Taryam

## June Birthdays

- 1 Terry Johnston
- 9 Jane McAteer
- 19 Brad Wideman
- 25 Steph Lawrie
- 29 Mary Wade



## May Day baskets delivered!

In an attempt to be more in touch with our older members who don't have internet and to support the residents of The Willows who are confined to their apartments, First Reformed put together May Day baskets for these folks. Thanks to Patti Black, Roxie's Florist provided fifty flower stems to fill the May Day baskets! The baskets also included a few pieces of candy and lots of good wishes. Elizabeth Sutton and Carol Burnett delivered the baskets on May 1 and were able to have safely distanced conversations with several members.



## Willows parade rescheduled

The parade for The Willows has been rescheduled for **Thursday, June 11, at 5:30 p.m.** We hope to have lots of folks to join in this fun outreach event. If you can participate, please gather in the parking lot (staying inside your vehicle) with cars decorated and/or signs of encouragement and greeting at 5:15 p.m. on June 11. Once everyone's gathered, Elizabeth will lead the way for the parade!



## Thank you

Reverend Myers,

I hope you are doing well and staying safe. I wanted to reach out and give you an update on my final grades for my first year at Lees McRae College.

My Fall semester I finished with a 3.718 GPA and on the Dean's List

Intro to Ecology A-  
 Fundamentals of Human & Animal Relationships A  
 First Year Seminar A  
 Fly Fishing A  
 Intro to Religion A-  
 Fundamentals of College Reading & Writing B

My Spring semester I finished with a 3.94 GPA and on the Dean's List

Women Artists A-  
 Intro to Evolution A  
 Rhetoric & Composition I A  
 Social Problems A  
 Fundamentals of College Math A

I have completed a total of 32 credit hours and have enrolled in 9 hours over the summer. My first year was great and I am enjoying being a student at LMC and the adventures and outdoor experiences available to me in Banner Elk. I know things are difficult during this time but if you could please share this with your congregation and the Fowler family. I am very grateful for the scholarship opportunity and want to make sure you are all kept up to date on my scholastic progress.

Carson Presson  
 Walter M. Williams Class of 2019  
 Lees McRae College Class of 2023  
 (Recipient of Clyde Fowler Scholarship)

First Reformed UCC,

Thank you for your generous support. Your donation of \$2,000 will help us overcome the shortfall of construction funds because our ReStore is closed. You are enabling us to continue building decent, affordable housing in Alamance County in 2010.

Chris Gillespie  
 Executive Director, Habitat for Humanity

Dear Pastor Myers,

Thank you for your contribution to Piedmont Rescue Mission. We greatly appreciate your giving heart and kindness toward this ministry. Your generosity will make a difference of those who come to us for help.

Toney Honeycutt  
 Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Thank you so much for your recent gift of \$2,000 to our program on 4/17/20. Your gift will help us serve those in our community who are most in need of nutritional assistance.

We can't thank you enough for your gift.

Amanda Bartolomeo  
 Executive Director, MOW

Dear Mr. Myers,

Thank you for your gift to CrossRoads. Donations have always been an essential part of our agency's funding. Your contribution is greatly appreciated and with your help, this gift will allow us to continue providing critical, comprehensive and compassionate services to hundreds of individuals who have been victimized in Alamance and Caswell Counties.

Meredith Peffley  
 Executive Director

First Reformed UCC,

Thank you so much for the flowers and candy. Thank you for the thoughts behind them. God bless you for your kindness.

Betty Covert  
 Willows Resident

Dear Fiends,

The contributions by our donors and volunteers are the true reasons why we are able to assist those in need throughout the community. Your support means so much to us and we are profoundly grateful to have you as part of our donor family.

Jai Baker  
 Director, ACAC

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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.	Sunday School
10:30 a.m.	Fellowship Time
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

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Burlington, NC 27215

- RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED -



## Gifts to the Church

In giving thanks to God for the blessing of our church family and our community, please also remember that your generosity during this time is critical. Just because we are not physically gathering for worship, does not mean that the work of our church stops. While recognizing the impact of this virus has on your life, consider continuing your financial gifts to the church as you are able. Your generosity will provide invaluable help to those in need during these uncertain times. Offerings may be made online at:

<http://firstreformeducc.org/gifts/>

You may also mail your offering check to  
513 W. Front Street  
Burlington, NC 27215

**Thank you!**

## Stay Connected

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

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

Facebook:  
First Reformed UCC of Burlington, NC



Instagram:  
[frucc\\_of\\_burlington\\_nc](https://www.instagram.com/frucc_of_burlington_nc)



**Meals on Wheels**

**Delivery Dates**

**June 8-12**