

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

www.firstreformeducc.org

March 2025

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A Prayer for Ash Wednesday and Lent

Dear Church,

The season of Lent is rapidly approaching, and on Ash Wednesday it's our tradition to receive a cross of ashes on our forehead, to remind us of our mortality, fragility, and dependence on God. Some churches burn the palm branches from Palm Sunday to create the ashes that will be placed on foreheads the next year. There's a kind of poetry in that – life and death, praise and lament, all condensed down into a smear of ashes on our skin.

I thought I would share an Ash Wednesday prayer I wrote a couple of years ago, as a way to prayerfully prepare to receive that smear of ashes, and enter this season of Lent.

(Our Ash Wednesday service this year will be a joint service with First Christian UCC and Life's Journey UCC, held at Life's Journey on March 5 at 6 p.m. I hope to see you there.)

Grace



God of Palm Branches and Ashes, of life and death,

When you knelt in the soil of creation and blew life into our nostrils, you stood back to examine what you made, and you called it good.

You called US good, as part of your wild and weird and wonderfully-made world.

You told us we belong here, as much as the trees and rivers and bluebirds.

And yet... and yet... Ash Wednesday is a day for "you made us good, and yet."

We are acutely aware of all the ways we have become disconnected from the rest of creation – instead of loving you and loving our neighbor, we've been misusing, misunderstanding, and mistreating our neighbors, as ourselves.

Today is a day for us to confess that you are God, and we are not.

Today is a day for us to confess that we NEED you, that we are fallible and mortal, as much as we would like to believe otherwise.

(continued on page 2)

A Prayer for Ash Wednesday and Lent (continued from page 1)

We live in a culture that values grit and independence, and yet today we confess our softness, and dependence

We are here by your grace alone, O God.

And we thank you that you are gracious and slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love. As we remember that we are dust, we also remember that you made yourself human, entering into the drama of palm branches and ashes, humbling yourself to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Be with us God, as we turn toward Jerusalem and make our pilgrimage to meet you there.

In Christ's name we pray, Amen.

Consistory Notes

The Consistory of FRUCC met on Wednesday, February 12, 2025. In addition to Grace McMullen, there were eight members in attendance.

Approval of Reports

The January 2025 minutes and financial reports were approved.

Ministry Reports

Faith Formation

- The Adult Formation class is beginning a new Lenten series, The Final Words From the Cross. The class will meet in the second floor classroom.
- Godly Play Godly Play training will be hosted at FRUCC March 14-16
- Grace will begin a Lenten Study based on materials from Kate Bowler which will run March 6 -April 24. Meetings will be in the parlor.

<u>Fellowship</u>

- There are eleven members of the Friendly Visitors and currently have seven members being visited.
- The next breakfast is scheduled for March 23.

Mission and Outreach

- The meal served at Freedon's Hope on January 30 was successful. The next meal will be on May 29.
- Housing Ministry needs a task force set up to explore how to help the community.

Senior Adults

Thursday, March27 11:30 a.m. at Western Steakhouse

Worship

• The Ash Wednesday service will be a joint venture with other local UCC churches.

Trustees

The congregation approved the funds to being updating fuse boxes with circuit breakers.

Old Business

- Discussion surrounding the Building Superintendent position continues.
- First ONA Covenant survey results (online only): 11 Yes, wholeheartedly; 2 Yes, but would appreciate more spiritual engagement; 2 No. Based on the Additional Comments, the covenant draft was edited, and a second survey has been made to send out to the congregation.
- Derek continues to work on the Cannon grant.
- Susan Puckett is checking in on the status of the Scholarship committee.
- The Consistory will be considering a membership check-in for all those listed on the roll.

New Business

 The Consistory approved a new ministry called Congregational Care, chaired by Brenda Sawyer, that will be divided in three subcommittees: Friendly Visitors (Brenda Sawyer), Connect (Kay Hunkins and Mike Young), and Reconnect (Laura Field and Kenny Septor).

> Respectfully Submitted, Laura Field, Secretary



New Lenten study begins for Adult Faith Formation

Beginning on March 9, the Adult Faith Formation class will be gin a new study series entitled The Final Words From the Cross. Every Sunday during Lent, we'll focus on Christ's dying hours and his final words as seen and heard through the eyes and ears of those who stood near the cross. Each week we'll focus on one of the characters at the cross, and reflect

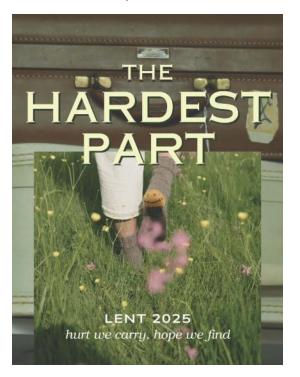


Lenten study offered

Life is this strange, tender mix, isn't it? Joy and sorrow, love and loss, heartbreak and hope, all tangled together.

This year, embrace Lent as it is—raw, honest, and tender. Let these 40 days be a time to pause, reflect, and find the courage to stay with the hard part, trusting that the good part is still coming.

Join Grace on Thursdays during Lent at 10 a.m. in the Parlor. No books or prep required. The classes will run March 6 - April 24.



Meals on Wheels Delivery Dates March 10-14

day.

the cross.

Birthdays

- 5 Amy Deal Jim Euliss
- 11 Linda Kellev
- **17** Pete Burgess
- **18** Kyle Haves
- 24 Claudette Fitzgerald

Greeters: Sandi Jones, Claire King, Pam Ratchford Trustee on Call: Kenny Septor

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**.





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ments of Jesus as we seek to

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what it means to be a witness at

The class will meet in the

classroom on the second floor at

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sus' dying words for our lives to-

The study comes with a week-

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PastorGrace McMullen51:Ministry Assistant/EditorCarol BurnettOrganistDavid RatchfordMusic Coordinator/Chime ChoirBeverly Pugh

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

Sunday Services9:45 a.m.Faith Formation11:00 a.m.Worship

All are welcome!

Jesus didn't reject people. Neither do we.

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

- RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED -

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







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

