

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

November 2020

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Anniversary Sunday

November 1

Celebrating 131 years of ministry

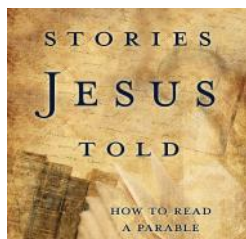
Anthem by the Chime Choir

Guest Organist: Mark Rumley

Mindful that the true foundation of the church is its members,
we will recognize the decade that each person
joined our community of faith.

No meal will be served following the service.

Fall Bible Study continues



Even if you've missed earlier sessions of the Fall Bible Study, *Stories Jesus Told*, it's never too late to join in! Remaining sessions include:

- Nov. 3 - The Prodigal Son
Luke 15:11-32
- Nov. 10 - The Rich Man and Lazarus
Luke 16:19-31
- Nov. 17 - Zoom session with Dr. Greg Carey
(to be confirmed)

Identical sessions are held each week on Tuesday evenings at 7:15 p.m. and Wednesday mornings at 10:30 a.m. Options for participation include in-person or via Zoom. If you would like to participate, you can either email Pastor Myers at fruccrev@gmail.com or send a text to 336-214-7129.

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. Although our worship may look a little different right now, it 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



Leaf Raking Service Project

Saturday, November 14

Volunteers from both Macedonia Lutheran Church and First Reformed UCC will gather on Saturday, November 14 for a Fall Cleanup Day. From 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. they will rake leaves – and perform other limited yard cleanup – for several clients of Meals on Wheels. The plan is to work at 8-10 sites with 5-6 workers at each site.

For more information, contact Beverly Pugh.

Thanksgiving Sunday

November 22

Instead of collecting non-perishable goods for the local food pantry, the congregation is invited to contribute to a special



Thanksgiving Love Offering. Donations will be given to Allied Churches of Alamance County to support the many services they offer to our community.

Hanging of the Greens Service

Sunday, November 29

Recalling the enthusiasm and energy that accompanied last year's Hanging of the Greens Service, the church's Worship Team plans to celebrate a similar service on the First Sunday of Advent, November 29.

Prior to that day, team members will remove our Advent/Christmas decorations from storage and adorn the sanctuary. While most of the decorations will be in place on Sunday morning, a few - particularly the Chrismons - will not. During the Sunday service, different members of the church will be invited to place these remaining pieces in their appropriate spot while readers share the meaning and significance of the piece.

Join us on November 29 as we complete the decorating of the sanctuary and as we dedicate these symbols, and ourselves, to the glory of God!

A meaningful month

Consumerism can prevent us from noticing needs, writes Walter Brueggemann (*The Prophetic Imagination*). A culture steeped in materialism and greed can “block out the cries of the denied ones ... so that no one discerns misery alive in the heart of God.”

In November, we celebrate Thanksgiving, Christ the King Sunday and the start of Advent. What does it mean that Christ is our King? How can we truly give God thanks and prepare for Jesus’ coming? It’s a good time to ponder what hurts God’s heart — and how we can help.

If someone is lonely, perhaps we can invite them to Thanksgiving dinner. If we sense inequality saddening God, we might advocate for fair policies. If God is in pain because some of his children have too little, we can share our resources. In so doing, we welcome Christ the King among us, and give him meaningful thanks.



Always thankful

Martin Rinkart, a German Lutheran minister, wrote the hymn “Now Thank We All Our God” in 1636. At the time, the Thirty Years’ War was ravaging central Europe, claiming millions of lives. Rinkart served as pastor in Eilenburg, a walled town that became a crowded refuge for starving fugitives. Although Rinkart was struggling to provide for his own family, he opened his own home to people in need.

After the plague entered Eilenburg, Rinkart conducted up to 50 funerals a day — including services for his wife and the only other two pastors in town. Amid the despair, he wrote many hymns, including “Now Thank We All Our God.” Originally intended as a table prayer, it’s now sung at Thanksgiving to remember God’s “countless gifts of love” — even during hardships.



FRUCC website

Have you visited the FRUCC Website lately? Here is just a sampling of what you can find there...

- ◆ Details about the latest events and programs;
- ◆ Videos of our worship services spanning from March to the present;
- ◆ Videos of church members reading children’s books;
- ◆ The dates for the 2021 Summer Day Camp;
- ◆ Copies of the monthly newsletter.
- ◆ Copies of the church’s monthly calendar.
- ◆ A slideshow of the stained glass windows in the sanctuary; and
- ◆ **MUCH, MUCH MORE!!!**

Take a look for yourself by going visiting

firstreformeducc.org

Looking Ahead

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Dec. 24 | Christmas Eve MOWS Delivery |
| Dec. 24 | Christmas Eve Service, 5:00 pm |
| Dec. 27 | No Live Worship Service
(pre-recorded service only) |

Stay Connected

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

Website:
firstreformeducc.org

Facebook:
First Reformed UCC of Burlington, NC

Instagram:
[frucc_of_burlington_nc](https://www.instagram.com/frucc_of_burlington_nc)



Consistory Notes

The Consistory of FRUCC, in person and via Zoom, met Wednesday, October 14 at 7 p.m. In addition to Phil Myers and Elizabeth Sutton, all members were in attendance.

Mission and Outreach:

- \$450 raised for CROP Walk

Approval of Reports:

The September minutes and financial reports were approved.

Old Business:

- Yoga & Tai Chi Resuming with the understanding that they must follow state regulations.
- AA & AI-non must sign waivers to abide by state regulations while having their meetings.
- Financial Review : Ray Deal found someone that is willing to look over the financial books to help clean them up and get organized. Ray Deal, Phil Myers, Steve Balog, and Carol Burnett would assist.

New Business

- Need to purchase a new CD Duplicator the cost is \$150. Money from the Fowler Estate to be used to purchase the new CD Duplicator
- A motion pass to send a gift to Alamance Arts Council in honor of Teresa Chandler of the amount of \$150 and a gift of \$50 in honor of Georgia Wade.
- Nominating Committee: Suzan Evans, Mara Small and maybe Nancy Burgess.
- 2021 Budget Preparation will be planned soon with the Executive Committee and Endowment Committee. Phil Myers will contact everyone to set the date for the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Mara Small
Consistory Secretary



The beauty of stewardship

Stewardship has to do with how we manage our time, talent, resources — basically our entire lives. It's a beautiful concept when properly understood. Here are the basics of good stewardship:

God is the source of all creation, including our lives. God is the primary owner of all that exists.

We are blessed by being given the task of managing well all that we have influence over: our lives, our abilities, our minds and bodies, our time, our part of the earth, our finances, our children, our church buildings, our automobiles, etc.

Although we can make decisions regarding each of the above, ultimately we are responsible to God. Sooner or later, we must give an account of our management of God's creation and of God's gifts.

When we properly use the talents, resources and property that God allows us to manage, we find great joy. Think of planting a garden which soon overflows with colorful flowers, wonderful vegetables and flavorful herbs, etc. God gave us the plot of ground, God gave us the seed, God gave us the wisdom and

strength to bring forth such beauty, such good things to see or eat, or smell. Yet we did the work, with God's help, to make it a reality. Like Adam we tilled it and kept it. But God gave the increase. God's provisions and our labor brought the garden to its fulfillment.

Good stewardship enables us to do something positive and wonderful with the money God has allowed us to have. What feels better than knowing one has managed money well? Our bank account, our checkbook and our portfolio tell the story. When money is handled well, we have enough for ourselves and are still able to give to God's work.

That is the beauty of stewardship.



Financial Report

Comparison of Year to Date 2019 and 2020

OPERATING BUDGET		2019	2020
INCOME			
1	Contributions	54,098	43,142
2	Other Income	4,566	32,535
3	Clapp Endowment	101,834	120,000
4	Fowler Endowment	32,208	23,850
5	Brown Endowment		
7	Total Income	192,706	219,527
EXPENSES			
8	Staff Compensation	134,419	132,891
9	Benevolence	9,305	6,404
10	Programming and Worship	4,261	4,259
11	Operating Expenses	54,618	56,183
12	Total Expenses	202,603	199,737
13	Net Total	-9,897	19,790

A Few Observations

Comparing YTD Revenue and Expenses for both 2019 and 2010:

Revenue

- Contributions for 2020 are nearly \$11,000 less than last year this time.
- Other income for 2020 is almost \$28,000 ahead due to the PPP Loan received.
- Subsidies received from the Endowments are \$9,808 more than last year.
- Total Revenue for 2020 is \$26,800 ahead of 2019 (due to PPP Loan).

Expenses

- Staff Compensation for 2020 is \$1,528 less than in 2019.
- Benevolence gifts for 2020 are almost \$3,000 less than in 2019.
- Programming and Worship expenses are practically even for the two years.
- Operating expenses for 2020 are a little over \$1,500 more than in 2019.
- Total Expenses for 2020 are almost \$3,000 less than in 2019.

Net Total

- Last year this time, we were looking at a net loss of \$9,897.
- At the end of the 3rd qtr. in 2020, we have a net gain of \$19,790.
- Had we not received the PPP loan of \$28,777, we would be in the red \$9,000.

Worship speakers uncover what remains in a pandemic marking loss

written by Rev. C. L Stumb

If delegates and ministers were able to navigate past the technical clicks and cursors (hopefully not curses) of a Zoom platform, they found on their screens some theological exegesis, proclamation of a living Word, and a shout-out for the word "LOVE."

Catawba president, David P. Nelson (Ph.D.), speaking in the opening worship segment, highlighted a text that would capture his message: "by this all will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." "That statement has always intrigued me," he said and explained. "Of all the things we tend to put in place as testimony for Jesus, which is sometimes how much we know, what kind of theology we have, what doctrines we adhere to, the way we dress, whether we have wealth, all this, when Jesus said simply that the world will know that you are my disciples **if you love one another**. The primary impetus to love is born out of relationship."

On Saturday, Rev. Rob Edwards, pastor at Bay-side Christian Church, offered a pre-meeting Bible study. Most delegates were not having to endure lines at a Starbucks, so attendance was good. Rev. Micah Royal listened to Rev. Rob Edwards proclaim: "**We need hope, not more hype.**" Royal highlighted Edwards' message, "Be anchored in what cannot be shaken -- in Christ, in community, in customs (i.e. spiritual practices that keep us connected), in communion," and Royal continued, "Just what this preacher needed to hear!"

Solitude as soul care

Richard J. Foster (*Celebration of Discipline*) says solitude is "more a state of mind and heart" than a place: "There is a solitude of the heart that can be maintained at all times. Crowds, or the lack of them, have little to do with this inward attentiveness."

Although Jesus preferred crowd-free alone times, that's not always feasible. But no matter your surroundings and responsibilities, you can carve out intentional time to "be still" (Psalm 46:10). Try these tips for adding solitude to life's rhythms:

The closing speaker, Frank A. Wright, (Ph.D.), Homiletics Professor at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, reviewing I Corinthians 13, kept saying to the gathered, "You remember...." "You remember if I give all I possess to the poor...." "You remember at the last wedding you went to ,,. love is patient, love is kind, love does not envy; it does not boast, is not self seeking, is not easily angered; it keeps no record of wrong; it does not delight in evil, love never fails; you remember... you remember...."

Wright offered a rather exhaustive chronology of losses people are experiencing during COVID-19. He categorized the sermon as a lament, a mourning, dirge, a eulogy, permission to cry. In addition to the obvious, he referenced data that is saying 40% of black businesses will close as a result of the Pandemic. From a mental health perspective, he cited a statistic that suggested half of the population is in some form of depression.

"**These things remain,**" he said in an affirming tone, noting the words as sermon title. "I got stuck on the word **remain**, because some things will be lost."

"Yes, we can face loss, the disappointments, the heartaches, the injustice, the hatred, the racism, the prejudice, the sexism, ... because these three things **remain**: faith, hope love."

- Take a day. Every month or two, enjoy a day of solitude. Turn off your phone and spend the day with God.
- Take an hour. Treat this time as an important calendar appointment. Keep it free to protect your solitude.
- Take a minute. Before a big meeting or as you're answering the phone, breathe deeply and invite God into the moment.

—Janna Firestone



Thank you!

Thank you so much for your donation of 125 birthday and food items for our clients. The meals we deliver might be the only meals our clients eat all week. Those we serve look forward to the “extra” items that they receive from time to time.

Amanda Bartolomeo
Alamance County Meals on Wheels

November Birthdays

3 Owen Merrill
8 Eli Fitzgerald
9 Alanda Jones
16 Teresa Ibarra
17 Susan Puckett
27 Wally Shearin
28 Karen Small
30 Grayson Holt



A Pastoral Epistle from the Conference Minister

Rev. Edward S. Davis (D.Min.)

I am grateful to our God for all of you who attended the first Unified Virtual 55th Annual Gathering and Association Meetings of the Southern Conference. Those in attendance who journeyed into new territory with us, by being a part of our first ever, virtual meeting, helped to make Southern Conference history in 2020. I am grateful to our planning committee who worked tirelessly and diligently to make this meeting a reality. In particular, our tech committee, which was comprised of those individuals who had advanced experiences in technology where it pertains to virtual church. Because of COVID-19 we have had to adjust and adopt to new ways of doing church together. The highlights of the meeting for me were the two powerful messages delivered by our opening and closing worship preachers Dr. Nelson and Dr. Thomas. Both individuals spoke on the subject of hope, focusing on unity as it pertains to the body of Christ.

We are excited about the outcomes, although like any new venture, there are some bugs that were inherent in the process, but that is with every new venture. Fortunately, we will learn as we become more efficient at doing meetings in this virtual format. I am grateful for all of our workshop presenters, especially members of the SOC, who participated in both worship services, and I am especially grateful to Corinth Reformed UCC, 1st Congregation of Hendersonville, Providence UCC (EVA), Trinity UCC, and Union Chapel UCC, for their contribution to our worship experience. They provided music with Bell choirs as well as uplifting music with instruments that magnified the experience.

The staff of the Southern Conference contributed whole heartedly to going into the deep waters of what we did not know, and I want to commend them

for their grace and how they brought their associations along for the journey. In future gatherings, we intend to make sure that our youth play a more active role in the planning and design of our annual meeting, and we will use this experience to create virtual new church starts in the future. Yes, the annual gathering tech team is already planning and designing what it would be like for us to have virtual churches in the Conference exclusively. It is part of a proposal that I will submit to my colleagues in conference ministry to start virtual new church starts. We will consult with pastors who want to expand their reach, not only in the Conference and in our nation, but also globally.

With that being said, we thank our God for giving us this vision, for leading us down the pathways of understanding of how to do the process efficiently. Most of all, I thank you for showing up to experience this new reality of the virtual Southern Conference Annual Gathering and Association Meetings.

Meals on Wheels

Delivery Dates

November 23 and 24

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513 West Front Street
Burlington, NC 27215
(336)226-7346
frucc@bellsouth.net
firstreformeducc.org

Pastor	Phillip Myers
Director of Family Ministries	Elizabeth Sutton
Ministry Assistant/Editor	Carol Burnett
Organist	David Ratchford
Music Coordinator/Chime Choir	Beverly Pugh

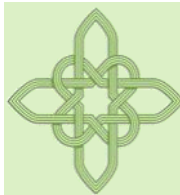
Suggestions and contributions for our newsletter
are welcomed and encouraged.
The deadline for each issue is
the 15th of each month.

Sunday Services

9:45 a.m.	Sunday School
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.

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Burlington, NC 27215

- RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED -



In everything
give thanks.

1 Thessalonians 5:18, NASB