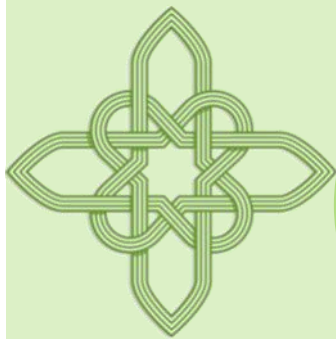


Striving to become living expressions of God's extravagant grace and love.



Connection

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

www.firstreformeducc.org

November 2024

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Ground of Being



Dear Church,

As I write this, I have no idea what the outcome of the November election will be. We are all getting bombarded with ads, flyers in our mailbox, text messages, road signs, and news articles about various candidates (and two in particular). Maybe you feel tentatively hopeful, or maybe you would just like to get this election season over with. Either way, I do encourage you to exercise your right to vote on or before November 5th.

As we wait to see what the outcome will be, I thought it might be helpful to meditate on the non-anxious presence of God. We might be wringing our hands, but God is not anxious. We might feel like the ground beneath us is threatening to give way, but God is our true "Ground of Being," as theologian Paul Tillich put it. Even if it seems like things will never be the same, and we are dismayed at the way our culture and country is changing... God remains. God is still love, Jesus is still the incarnation of that love, and the Holy Spirit is still sustaining us in love and moving in our world today.

In autumn, the leaves change, because that is their way. The world is always changing, because that is the way of the world. But we have confidence, even though leaves change color and fall, that the roots of the tree are still alive and working – even though we can't see exactly what's going on! In the same way, we can have confidence that God is still alive and working in the world, even though we can't always see what's going on!

The Church can be a powerful force for good, and a powerful force for change. No matter the outcome on November 5th, let's take a deep breath, and ask God to grant us the wisdom to discern how we might be part of God's good work, starting right where we are.

May the non-anxious presence of God grant you peace, now and forever.

Blessings my friends,
Grace

Consistory Notes

The Consistory of FRUCC met on Wednesday, October 9, 2024. In addition to Grace McMullen, six members were in attendance: Derek Smith, Susan Hayes, Chuck Terrell, Brenda Sawyer, Arleen Widerman, Claudette Fitzgerald, and guest Julie Smith joined by Skype.

Approval of Reports

The September minutes and financial reports were approved

Ministry Reports

Faith Formation

- Working on a new plan for Sunday School going forward, moving back to a rotating schedule of shared leadership.
- ONA book study is underway

Fellowship

- The next breakfast will be in the new year. January 5 or 12 are possible dates.

Pastor's Report

- First Baptism and Installation
- Installation was amazing and meaningful – many thanks to everyone involved!
- I've started the UCC History & Polity course, to be completed in December.
- Will have a longer conversation with the pastor of First Congregation UCC Asheville later this

With gladness and thanksgiving

... The long day of the year is almost done,
and nature in the sunset musing stands,
gray-robed, and violet-hooded like a nun,
looking abroad o'er yellow harvest lands: ...

Empty and folded are her busy hands;
her corn and wine and oil are safely stored,
as in the twilight of the year she stands,
and with her gladness seems to thank the Lord.

Thus let us rest awhile from toil and care,
in the sweet sabbath of this autumn calm,
and lift our hearts to heaven in grateful prayer,
and sing with nature our thanksgiving psalm.

—Kate Seymour Maclean (1829-1916)

month about how we can build a long-term partnership as they help their community rebuild.

Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee met and is halfway through evaluations. The last two will be completed on 10/15/2024.

Old Business

- Yoga contract signed.
- The door quote has been approved, and a start date will be set soon.
- Currently working on pump switch for fountain.
- Reached out to three cleaning companies for janitorial quotes. Only 1 looked promising. Looking for suggestions for other companies to contact.

New Business

- Superintendent discussion – the possibility of adding a position for facility oversight.
- Staff and communication: The possibility of assigning a committee member to each employee to assist with communication, a check-in that would happen more often than once a year.
- Worked on the 2025 budget.

Respectfully Submitted,
Claudette Fitzgerald

Honoring our veterans

Veterans Day has its roots in what was called Armistice Day, when a peace agreement ended World War I on November 11, 1918. President Wilson proclaimed that Armistice Day was to be marked with solemn pride in heroism and with gratitude for victory as well as the “opportunity it has given America to show her sympathy with peace and justice.” In 1954, the remembrance was renamed Veterans Day to honor all U.S. military personnel. It's a reminder to pray for and honor all who serve and sacrifice, to support and assist their families, and to pray that God will bring peace on earth.



The Morning Circle will meet Wednesday, November 6. All are welcome!



Greeters: Steve Balog, Susan Balog, David French

Trustee on Call: Gary Lefew

Meals on Wheels

Delivery Dates

November 18 - 22

Parable of the pufflings

As summer ends on a remote island off Iceland, parent puffins — black and white seabirds with rainbow beaks — stop bringing fish to their chicks. These “pufflings,” whose first few weeks were lived in burrows in cliffs, now must launch into a wind current to glide out over the sea and find their own food. Some babies, however, mistake a lit-up house or gas station for moonlight on the water and, as locals say, “fall out of the sky.” Because pufflings can’t yet take off from land and fly, if left alone they starve.

So for generations, during “puffling season” people on this island have stayed up late to rescue baby birds. On his *Animal* podcast, reporter Sam Anderson tells how, with an islander’s help, he picks up a puffling one night, placing it in a box for morning release over the ocean. As the frightened, confused

Birthdays

- 3 Owen Merrill
- 8 Eli Fitzgerald
- 9 Alanda Jones
Sue McAteer
- 16 Teresa Ibarra
- 17 Susan Puckett
- 21 Kenny Septor
- 27 Wally Shearin
- 28 Cole Widerman



Evening Circle



Thursday, November 14, at 7 p.m.

bird squeals and scratches to get free, Anderson supposes it thinks this is the worst night of its life. In fact, it is the best: It’s being saved.

We humans often get confused, pulled in wrong directions. We’re misled and land in trouble from which we cannot save ourselves. Scared and confused, we believe we’re irredeemably trapped in the worst of circumstances. We can’t perceive that, even now, we are being protected and rescued, that God is working to give back to us the fullness of life we cannot attain for ourselves.

Hang on, beloved one. Though you can’t sense it at this moment, you are held in God’s care, soon to be lifted on the wind of the Holy Spirit.

—Heidi Hyland Mann



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

Senior Adults

**Thursday, November 21
11:30 a.m.
Prego’s**

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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.



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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.