



December

NEWSLETTER 2025

Devotion



I think I might have to title this regular space: “Musings from the Back Porch.” It seems like I do much of my creative thinking sitting on the back porch. I have previously mentioned that the back of our house faces east, so sunrises can be spectacular. Recently I decided to take advantage of the situation and record a time-lapse video. I got up extra early and eagerly made my way through deep morning darkness, navigating family room furniture, to set up my camera. I found a good mounting point on the porch railing, ran a long USB-C cord so I wouldn’t run out of battery, synced everything to my phone, and waited. All of the preparations had been made; I even had my cozy hooded cardigan to keep me warm. I was ready. The sun, however, was not. As much as I longed to see the arrival of the sun, I still had to wait.

Sound familiar? It’s a fairly good metaphor for the Liturgical Season of Advent, in which we collectively prepare for God to make himself known through Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah. It is a season of anticipation, a four-week period for us to ready ourselves for God’s presence in our midst, for the Kingdom of God to manifest itself fully in our lives.

Devotion

We sing hymns like “Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus,” we pray daily devotions, we mark the days on our Advent calendars. We hold our spiritual breath as we prepare to see a new thing.

It’s an odd time; a time when we balance our upcoming celebration of that birth in Bethlehem over 2000 years ago with our longing to see Jesus return in an advent yet to come. We hold the past and the future in tension during Advent.

I knew as I sat wrapped up in my sweater, that the sunrise would come. The sun had come up yesterday, and the day before. Still, this one was going to be special because I was present for it. I was fully there, fully engaged in the moment — open for what the new day would bring. As I gazed out across the tree line at the gradually brightening sky, I could see evidence of what was coming, but still I had to wait.

Obviously, the sunrise came, I got my shot, and the day went on, but I had been changed through my perseverance.

And so, as much as we long for the arrival of the Son, we must wait. I promise you: the wait will be worth it.

Pastor Stephen

To see the video of my sunrise scan the QR code or go to:
<https://bit.ly/SunriseFromBackPorch>



OUR CHURCH FAMILY

Birthdays

Elsie Bolick - 12/21

Eleanor Lovgren - 12/27

Anniversaries

Keith & Julie Miller - 12/2

Those Remaining in Our Prayers

Buster Freeman

Nell Allred

Amber Massey

Joe Strickland

Ross Strange Sr.

Trisha Shelly

John Moon

Ray Palyok

Lewis Fowler

Keith Miller

Brooke Manning

David Hodges

Brenda Grogan

Spanky Newsome

Joe Winstead

Holly Bent

Troy Marquardt

Joy McPhail

Elizabeth Wilson

Blake Jones

Jerry Barnwell

Prayers

If you need prayers or know someone that does please let us know.

You can call the office or call your Deacon.

We are here to assist in anyway that's helpful.



ALAMANANCE STRINGS

2025 Annual Concert

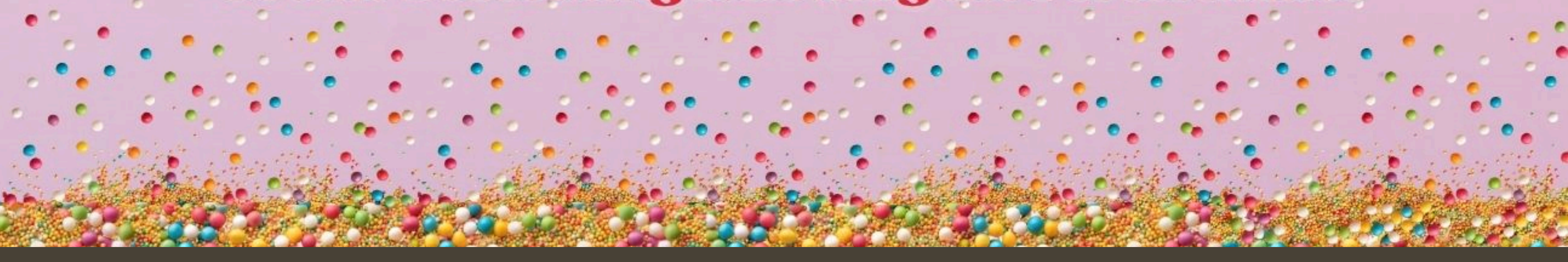
Dec. 6th

1:00 pm



First Christian United Church of Christ

Cookie Decorating following the Performance



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- **Wednesday, December 3rd**
 - *Finance Meeting at 11:00 am*
- **Sunday, December 7th**
 - *Worship with Communion*
 - *Christmas Cheer Contributions Due*
- **Monday, December 8th**
 - *Margaret Lightbourne Circle at 11:00 am*
 - *Official Board Meeting at 6:00 pm*
- **Tuesday, December 9th**
 - *Centennial Circle at 5:30 pm*
- **Sunday, December 14th**
 - *Congregational Meeting to Vote on the 2026 Budget*
- **Wednesday, December 24th**
 - *Christmas Eve Service (TBD)*
- **Tuesday, Dec. 23rd - Thursday, Jan. 1st**
 - *Office is Closed - Merry Christmas!*
- **Sunday, December 28th**
 - *There will be no Sunday School*
- **Tuesday, December 30th**
 - *Deacon's Meeting at 6:00 pm*

Community Engagement

Blessed Sacrament Food Distribution will be moving their location to their building on our block. We have agreed to allow them to use our parking lot for their distribution lines.

2nd Mondays from 10:30 - 1:30 pm

4th Mondays from 1:30 - 3:30 pm

THEMES & LITURGISTS

Communion

Ann & Jamie - 12/7

Julie & Matt - 12/24

Greeter

David Hodges

Ushers

Benji Terrell (head)

Julie Miller, Eleanor Lovgren, Charlie Vitou

Liturgists

December 7th - Brooke Manning

December 14th - Sherry Massey

December 21st - Nancey Simmons

December 24th - TBD

December 28th - Judy Hodges

Receptions

Please join us in the parlor for fellowship and light refreshments after
Worship on Sundays.

CHURCH INFORMATION

Mission Statement

(Revised 2/4/24)

First Christian United Church of Christ in Burlington, North Carolina opens wide its doors to all who hunger for God and God's righteousness. It seeks to provide rest for weary spirits, comfort for troubled hearts, and to inspire all to follow Jesus Christ in unselfish service to humankind. We, in the spirit of Jesus' great commandments, commit to love God and our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:28-34) and follow Paul's teaching of acceptance of one another (Romans 14:1-15: 13).

We believe that all people are created in God's image and are blessed and loved equally by God. We welcome with respect, and nurture with intention, the gifts of all who come to us on the journey of faith and seek eternal salvation under the New Covenant of Jesus Christ. We welcome everyone to join us in the life and leadership of our family of faith, and in our ongoing commitment as an Open and Affirming Congregation. The people of First Christian United Church of Christ are dedicated to always being a welcoming and loving church; a "House of Christian Fellowship for ALL people."

Office Hours

Monday - Thursday 9 am - 12 pm

Church Officers

President: Jamie Fonville

Vice President: Cindy Sharpe

Treasurer: Judy Kipp

Assistant Treasurer: Julie Miller

Secretary: Mark Garrison

Church Staff

Pastor: Rev. Stephen Ball, OSL

Organist / Choir Director: Matt Rice

Custodian: Rodney Paul Sr.

Office Administrator: Debbie Norris