

Sunday, July 26, 2026

The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost



WELCOME

First Christian United Church of Christ Mission Statement
(Revised February 4, 2024)

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."

To All God's beloved...who are called to be saints... -Romans 1.7

To be a saint is to be sanctified;
set apart for a sacred purpose.
That would be you.
Every breath of your life is for a sacred purpose:
to shed light, to radiate God's love.
You don't have to be influential,
or pious, virtuous or pure.
You have to be yourself.
The You of you is what God has made holy.
You are God's beloved.
All you have to do is act like it.
Everything you do today is an opportunity
to embody God's love,
not by your effort or skill,
but by the love you embody.
The light of God is in you.
Be transparent to it.

*Steve Garnaas-Holmes
Unfolding Light*

The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Christmas in July

First Christian United Church of Christ, Burlington, NC

July 26th, 2026 at 10:30 am

Rev. Stephen Ball, OSL

THE COMMUNITY GATHERS

CENTERING CHIMES

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

INTROIT

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: The humidity of a North Carolina July clings to us like a heavy woolen winter coat we forgot to take off, yet here we are, blinking into the neon glare of a mid-summer nativity. We gather because the calendar cannot contain the audacity of the incarnation.

People: We look for the light that shatters our longest nights, even when the sun sets at nine o'clock in the evening.

Leader: The grace of God has appeared, not wrapped in swaddling clothes on a crisp winter night, but breaking through the heat waves of our current exhaustion.

People: Let us worship the God of winter chills and summer swelter, the one who upends our seasons and demands our lives.

**HYMN OF PRAISE: "Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates"*

The New Century Hymnal #117

THE ACT OF CONTRITION

Leader: It is a peculiar thing to look at a manger when the asphalt outside is hot enough to fry an egg. It forces us to admit that we sometimes prefer our holy infants quiet, cold, and safely tucked away in December, where they don't interfere with our summer vacations or our carefully curated comfort. The Apostle Paul writes to Titus that this grace isn't just a cozy sentiment; it is a strict tutor, training us to renounce worldly passions. We like the grace. We are considerably less fond of the tuition. Let us confess how often we skip class.

People: God of the blazing sun and the quiet stable, we confess that our souls are suffering from a spiritual heatstroke. We have treated your radical grace as if it were nothing more than a nostalgic holiday playlist – pleasant background noise that requires nothing of us. You ask for self-control, and we offer impulse buys. You demand uprightness, and we slouch into indifference. You call us to be a people eager for good deeds, but we are often just eager for a break.

We have insulated ourselves from the cries of the marginalized while praying for our own comfort. Forgive us for freezing you out in December and ignoring your heat in July. Melt our stubborn hearts, and reform our cool apathy into a burning passion for your justice.

Leader: The grace of God does not wait. It has already appeared, bringing salvation to all. Hear the good news that is older than time and fresher than tomorrow morning: you are forgiven, you are redeemed, and you are being made new.

THE COMMUNITY LISTENS TO THE WORD

SCRIPTURE: Isaiah 9:2-7

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE

Leader: The Word of God for the people of God.

People: Thanks be to God!

RESPONSIVE PSALM from Psalm 96

Leader: O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.

People: Sing to the LORD; bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.

Leader: Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.

People: For great is the LORD and greatly to be praised; he is to be revered above all gods.

Leader: For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but the LORD made the heavens.

People: Honor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

Leader: Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

People: Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts.

Leader: Worship the LORD in holy splendor; tremble before him, all the earth.

People: Say among the nations, "The LORD is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity."

Leader: Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar and all that fills it;

People: Let the field exult and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD, for he is coming, for he is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with his truth.

GLORIA PATRI: (#759 NCH)

**All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:1-14

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE

Leader: The Word of God for the people of God.

People: Thanks be to God!

ANTHEM *Seekers of Light*

by Martin / Angerman

SCRIPTURE: Titus 2:11-14

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE

Pastor: The Word of God for the people of God.

People: Thanks be to God!

SERMON: “*Christmas...in July?*”

Rev. Stephen Ball, OSL

THE COMMUNITY RESPONDS TO THE WORD

*HYMN OF CELEBRATION: “*Lo, How A Rose E’re Blooming*”

The Hymnal #160

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE PRAYER OF OUR SAVIOR

Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

CHORAL RESPONSE

THE MINISTRY OF GENEROSITY

DOXOLOGY

ALL: Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;

Praise God, all creatures here below;

Praise God above, ye heavenly host;

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

THE COMMUNITY GOES INTO THE WORLD

*HYMN OF DEDICATION: “*Go Tell It on the Mountain*”

The New Century Hymnal #154

*BENEDICTION

EXTROIT

POSTLUDE

Announcements

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Tuesday, July 28th

Deacon Meeting at 6:00 pm

Monday, August 3rd

Women's Circle Super Salad Supper Bar
at 5:30 pm in Bray Hall
with Guest Speaker
from Allied Ministries Jai Baker
All are welcome to attend
Please RSVP to Carol Fonville

Wednesday, August 5th

Finance Meeting at 11:00 am

Monday, August 10th

Official Board Meeting at 6:00 pm

Tuesday, August 25th

Deacons Meeting at 6:00 pm

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Office Hours

Monday - 9am – 12pm

Tuesday – 9am – 12pm

Wednesday - 9am – 12pm

Thursday - 9am – 12pm

Friday - closed

Serving in our Armed Forces

CPT Kirk Workman

James Barnwell

Dalton Anthony Jones, Ensign US Navy

(Family of June & Dotti)

Notes

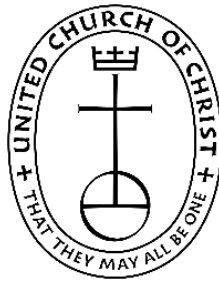
Inspired by something said in the word or sung in a song today? Take a moment to write it here to remember later.

Our Love and Prayers

Please remember all our sick, at home members, others in need of our prayers, and those in our area hospitals in your prayers this week.

Buster Freeman
Nell Allred
Amber Massey
Joe Strickland
Ross Strange Sr.
Trisha Shelly
Ray Palyok
(Matt's Step-Father)
Lewis Fowler
Carolyn Wolley / Family
Dave Smudski / Family
The Family of Susan Horne
Patty Howey
(Charlie Vitou's Niece)

Brenda Grogan
Rodney Paul Sr.
Holly Bent
Nanci Isley
(Friend of Sherry Massey)
Curtis Foster
Jon & Judy Kipp
Betty King & Roger King
Troy Marquardt
Blake Jones
June Sellars
Nancy Hughes
(Trish Ball's Mother)



Church Officers

President: Jamie Fonville
Vice President: Cindy Sharpe
Treasurer: Judy Kipp
Assistant Treasurer: Julie Miller
Secretary: Matt Rice

Church Staff

Pastor: Rev. Stephen Ball, OSL
pastorfcucc@gmail.com / 336-276-0374
Organist/Choir Director: Matt Rice
Custodian: Rodney Paul
Office Administrator: Debbie Norris
(Office Hours: Monday to Thursday 9 -12pm)

Worship Participants

Liturgist: Julie Miller
Hymn Leaders & Anthem: Choir
Greeters: Benjie Terrell & David Hodges
Ushers: Benjie Terrell, Julie Miller, Charlie Vitou, Eleanor Lovgren