



February  
NEWSLETTER 2026

# Devotion

Chocolate. Coffee. Alcohol. Meat. Facebook. Soda. Caffeine.

Are you seeing the pattern? These things don't normally have an association, but during this time of year they have something in common:

Lent. For those people who observe the season of Lent, the first thing they generally ask each other is, "What are you giving up for Lent?" The response is usually something small, something peripheral to our daily living. Sure, for many of us giving up coffee isn't a small thing, but neither is it really something that gives meaning to our lives.

The idea of sacrificing something during Lent seems like a relatively easy way to fulfill a religious expectation. However, if we leave it at that surface level, all we accomplish is to give ourselves a massive caffeine-withdrawal headache! The deeper application is to think of Lent as a season of fasting – refraining from consumption of things in our lives that might be a distraction from a more profound spiritual awareness. In our denominational context, fasting is not a religious requirement, so we might not be familiar with it as a practice. Almost all of us, however, have had to fast before a medical test or procedure. Why must we fast? Because eating and drinking would interfere with the procedure, or even be dangerous to our health. Refraining from practices which interfere with our goal of opening ourselves to the presence of the Spirit can only be spiritually healthy.

# Devotion

I urge you this season not to think of this as giving something up, denying yourself some pleasure. Think of it instead as giving something away. Replace that inward-facing, selfward-directed activity with an outward-directed practice of generosity. As we journey from Ash Wednesday toward the cross of Good Friday, remember that we do not make this pilgrimage alone; we journey together. So, together let us show in our life the hope that lies beyond the cross: the life of the People of the Resurrection.

*God of roads and pathways, lead us.*

*Provide for us the guidance of your Spirit.*

*Strengthen us. Prepare us. Walk with us.*

*From the solemn confession that we arise but from dust to the somber observance of the body of our Lord laid to rest, instill in us a growing confidence that we are walking toward the promise of new life in Your presence.*

Amen.

Pastor Stephen

# OUR CHURCH FAMILY

## Birthdays

Lewis Fowler 2/5

Linda Smith 2/22

## Anniversaries

Mike & Linda Smith 2/23

## Those Remaining in Our Prayers

Buster Freeman

Nell Allred

Amber Massey

Joe Strickland

Ross Strange Sr.

Trisha Shelly

John Moon

Ray Palyok

Lewis Fowler

Carolyn Wolley / Family

Dave Smudski / Family

Brooke Manning

David Hodges

Brenda Grogan

Spanky Newsome

Holly Bent

Troy Marquardt

Joy McPhail

Blake Jones

Jerry Barnwell

Chris Wysocki

Debbie Caporoli

Nanci Isley

## 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.

# SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

- **Monday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>**
  - *Margaret Lightbourne Circle at 11:30 am*
- **Wednesday, February 4<sup>th</sup>**
  - *Finance Meeting at 11:00 am*
- **Monday, February 9<sup>th</sup>**
  - *Official Board Meeting at 6:00 pm*
- **Tuesday, February 10<sup>th</sup>**
  - *Centennial Circle at 5:30 pm*
- **Sunday, February 15<sup>th</sup>**
  - *Congregational Meeting after worship*
- **Monday, February 16<sup>th</sup>**
  - *President's Day - office is closed*
- **Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>**
  - *Ash Wednesday*
- **Tuesday, February 24<sup>th</sup>**
  - *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

Julie Miller 2/1

## Greeter

Tena Barnwell

## Ushers

Benji Terrell (head)

Julie Miller, Eleanor Lovgren, Charlie Vitou

## Liturgists

February 1<sup>st</sup> - Carol Fonville

February 8<sup>th</sup> - Brooke Manning

February 15<sup>th</sup> - Tena Barnwell

February 22<sup>nd</sup> - Julie Miller

## 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