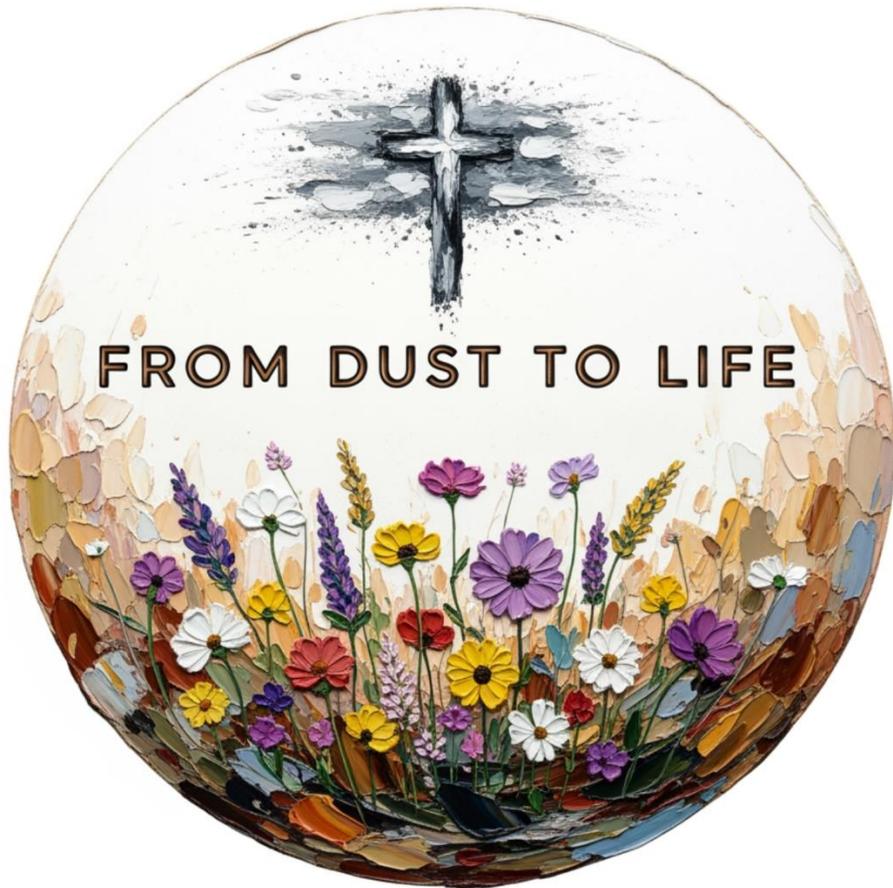


# FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

FEBRUARY 22, 2026



**"WAITING FOR GOD IN THE DESERT"**

**FIRST CHRISTIAN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

# **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*

# First Sunday in Lent

First Christian United Church of Christ, Burlington, NC  
*10:30 am Worship Service      February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2026*

*Rev. Stephen Ball, OSL*

## **THE COMMUNITY GATHERS**

CENTERING CHIMES

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

INTROIT

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: In the dry places, where the wind howls and the sand stings, we gather.

**People: We come, looking for a sign, waiting for a word.**

Leader: The desert is vast, and our hunger is deep.

**People: Yet even here, in the barren wild, God is moving.**

Leader: From the dust of our wandering, let us seek the Life that sustains us.

**All: Let us worship God.**

*\*HYMN OF PRAISE: "Lord Jesus, Who through Forty Days"*

*The New Century Hymnal #211*

CALL TO CONFESSION

Leader: In the stark light of the desert, there is nowhere to hide. The shadows we cast are long, and the illusions we maintain about our own self-sufficiency begin to crumble. We often come to this space parched, trying to convince ourselves that we aren't thirsty. But God meets us in the barren stretches of our lives, not to condemn our weakness, but to offer us a wellspring of grace. Let us lay down our defenses and speak the truth to the One who already knows our hearts.

SILENT CONFESSION

CORPORATE PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Leader: God of the Wilderness...

**People: ...we confess that we are a restless people. When the path becomes difficult and the landscape turns bleak, we grow impatient with Your silence. We admit that we have tried to manufacture our own miracles rather than trusting in Your providence. We have sought the bread of temporary comfort while ignoring the hunger of our souls. We have grasped for control and power because we are afraid of our own vulnerability. Forgive us for the ways we have wandered from Your voice. Wash the dust of cynicism from our spirits and lead us back to the life that only You can provide. Amen...**

## ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: The desert isn't just a place of testing; it's a place of beginning. The same Spirit that led Jesus into the wild is the one that leads you out of your mistakes. Hear the good news: You are seen, you are held, and you are forgiven. From the dust, life is rising. **Amen.**

### ***THE COMMUNITY LISTENS TO THE WORD***

SCRIPTURE: Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

#### SCRIPTURE RESPONSE

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

**People: Thanks be to God!**

RESPONSIVE PSALM: Psalm 32

*(Please note that "Selah" will be followed by a single chime and a pause.)*

Leader: Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

**People: Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit.**

Leader: While I kept silent, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long.

**People: For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah**

Leader: Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the guilt of my sin. **Selah**

**People: Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.**

Leader: You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. **Selah**

**People: I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.**

Leader: Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.

**People: Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the LORD.**

**All: Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.**

## GLORIA

**All: Glory to you, O Trinity, most holy and blessed;  
One God, now and forever. Amen.**

SCRIPTURE: Romans 5:12-19

#### SCRIPTURE RESPONSE

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

**People: Thanks be to God!**

ANTHEM: Here I Stand

READING OF SCRIPTURE

Pastor: A reading from Matthew 4:1-11

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE

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

**People: Thanks be to God!**

SERMON: *“Waiting for God in the Desert”*

Rev. Stephen Ball, OSL

***THE COMMUNITY RESPONDS TO THE WORD***

*\*HYMN OF CELEBRATION: “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross”*

*The New Century Hymnal #197*

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

INVITATION TO GIVE

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: “A Mighty Fortress”*

*The New Century Hymnal #439*

\*BENEDICTION

EXTROIT

POSTLUDE

# Announcements

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

**Tuesday, February 24<sup>th</sup>**

Deacons Meeting at 6:00 pm

**Sunday, March 1<sup>st</sup>**

Worship Service at 10:30 am

**Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>**

Finance Meeting at 11:00 am

**Monday, March 9<sup>th</sup>**

Official Board Meeting at 6:00 pm

**Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup>**

Margaret Lightbourne at 11:00 am  
*(Program on plants and flowers by Nancy Simmons. Bring a sandwich to enjoy)*

Centennial Circle at 5:30 pm

**Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>**

UCC Offering  
One Great Hour of Sharing

### **\*\*Missions Project\*\***

We will be collecting the following items through March 22<sup>nd</sup>. Please consider donating some items to help Allied Churches of Alamance County.

- Kitchen towels
- Bar towels
- Window cleaner
- 55 gal trash bags
- Paper towels
- Microfiber cleaning cloths

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Regular Office Hours**

Monday - 9am – 12pm

Tuesday – 9am – 12pm

Wednesday - 9am – 12pm

Thursday - 9am – 12pm

Friday - closed

### **John Graves Sunday School**

Will not meet 2/22, 3/1, or 3/8. Class will resume on 3/15.

### **Display of Crosses**

The idea is of a Cross Display during Lent, starting Ash Wednesday. This would be on display on tables in the church parlor like we did when photos of our parents were brought in. Invite people to bring photos, pictures, crosses of various sizes for stands or holders, and jewelry which will be laid flat on the table. Request that the crosses be labeled with names of owners in order to return them. The Spiritual Life Committee wishes to bring to people's awareness the importance of the cross. A plastic bin will be in the parlor as we start collecting them.

# 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

David Hodges  
Brenda Grogan  
Spanky Newsome  
Holly Bent  
Troy Marquardt  
Joy McPhail  
Blake Jones  
June Sellars  
Chris Wysocki  
Debbie Caporoli  
Nanci Isley  
*(Friend of Sherry Massey)*

## Serving in our Armed Forces

*CPT Kirk Workman  
James Barnwell*

## Notes

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

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## **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  
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