

January

2026 Newsletter

The Pastor's Report

End of the year reviews are always good for the soul. For me, I used the last sermon in 2025 to set our church's blessings to song with the Twelve Days of Christmas. By the end of the joyful noise I made unto the church (at least I hope it was), I think the case is quite convincing that First UCC was active, relevant, and faithful in 2025. I am grateful for the leadership of our board president Milt Hauck. He provided the humility, diplomacy, and kindness that is needed to lead the board. To the tune of the Twelve Days of Christmas, here is our script. You know how it goes. Belt it out and smile:

On the first day of Christmas...

Milt Hauck gave to me: a Joyful congregation

On the second... Don Fricke gave to me: Faith, Hope, and Love

On the third... Gail Bauknecht gave to me: Flowers every Sunday

On the fourth... Ed Bosse gave to me: an elevator working

On the fifth... Jimmy gave to me: HAND BELLS THAT RING!!

On the sixth... Ron Kirkman gave to me: SERVING in the city

On the seventh... Your Attendance gave to me: faithful dedication

On the eighth ... Seniors gave to me – constant laughs at Bingo

On the ninth... The men gave to me – assistance as it's needed

On the tenth... The women gave to me – Spirit renewal

On the eleventh... The Guild gave to me – Rummage Sale heroics

On the twelfth... Young parents gave to me – children with the offering

These are just a few ways that our congregation's faithfulness was in full view. As those in attendance mentioned, there were several additions to the building to celebrate in 2025, i.e. Nurturing Center, new kitchen doors, dishwasher. We also added groups like the Narcotics Anonymous group, Sisterhood of Seekers, Coffee Group on Sundays with Jimmy. Special events like the 170th anniversary, your 25th year with the WGs, the Pride service, two women priest ordinations, the MLK service, and the Share the Journey concert for immigration. All were faithful and joyful gatherings.

What's next? As Amy reminded me, we simply followed the lead of the Spirit in 2025. That's exactly what I know we are called to do in the coming year. We will have weddings and funerals. A baptism or two. Community service. We will welcome new faces. And, of course, Sunday worship. All of these are moments that reflect the prayer and heart of a faith family. There will be other opportunities that deepen and share our love of Christ in all that we do. We listen to the still speaking voice and trust that the Spirit will produce riches of grace, fellowship, authenticity, and love... and I'm sure a song or two for another sermon. Happy New Year!

May joyful songs fill our lives for 2026,

Dan

Pizza with the Pastor

Our next Pizza with the Pastor is Sunday, January 4th after the service. It's always a wonderful time of food, fun, and fellowship! See Pastor Dan or Amy if you'd like to join them at their home.

Fishes and Loaves Schedule

Fishes and Loaves has resumed, but will be each 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month, rather than every week. Here is the upcoming schedule: January 14th and 28th; February 11th and 25th; March 25th (no meals the weeks of the fall and spring rummage sales).

Memorial

Gift to the Music Fund in Memory of Howard & Dorothy Dick
From: Jim & Carol Bitzenhofer

Congregational Meetings Changed

Since the congregation approved going to a calendar year budget, the Church Board voted to move the Congregational meetings to January and July. We will meet on January 18, 2026 (the 25th is the backup date) with July 26, 2026 used to plan for the Fall.

What's the Buzz

Happy New Year! I hope 2025 was good to you. If you listened to Dan's rendition of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" the Sunday after Christmas, you know we have many things to be grateful for in the life of the church. And there is more on the way in 2026!

We begin the year with Bryce Kessler subbing for me on January 4th. His multiple talents on both cello and piano will be appreciated by all. On January 11th, Wilmington favorites Cece, Jessica, and Bekah will join me as special music guests. Then on the 18th, Dave Hawkins will perform all the music while I step aside to run the iPad and PowerPoint and give Bernie a much-needed break (thank you, Bernie, for stepping up each week and running our technology!). The choir returns on January 25th and the anthem they will sing is "Hold On," with a very meaningful message to keep moving forward.

While the handbell choir will not perform again until February, rehearsals for both groups begin back up on Wednesday, January 14th. The chancel choir meets at 6:00 p.m. in the choir room and the handbells at 7:15 p.m. in the sanctuary. If you have been thinking of joining either group, now is a great time to do so! Please come give a rehearsal a try – you will see how much fun we have!

The youth highlight from December was the addition of Derek Terry's artwork to the Family Center. If you haven't checked it out yet, take a look this month! I want to use the next few weeks to meet with my coffee gang and see what youth events look like in the spring. Those of us who threw axes a couple Good Fridays ago are long overdue for another outing, so be on the lookout for that announcement!

Have a great January!

Jimmy

Keep in Prayer

Family of Don Fricke (member); Lucille Isaacs (member); Ron Cummins (dear friend of Amanda Faulkner); Haley (friend of the Copenhaver's); Elsie & Bob Biddle (aunt and uncle of the Krebs Family); Whiting Family (cousins of the Krebs Family); Family of Jack Parsons (father of Patty Baldwin); David Krebs (member); Pat Froehle (member); Laura Hauck (member); Pam and family (friends of Hilda Faulkner); Joan Schmidt (daughter of the late Ollie Helm); Christi Simmons (friend of Michelle Richards); Family of Rosella Jamison (member); Family of Terrence Stern-Enzi – "Tt" (co-worker of Gina Kern); Jody Eversole (friend of Suwanna Kirkman); Sandy Echols (member); Dorothy (aunt of Suwanna Kirkman); Joe (uncle of Suwanna Kirkman); Carolyn Bruckmann (friend of the church); Chelsea and Sophia (mother and baby – friends of Pam, Hilda Faulkner's friend); Katie and family (daughter of Bernice and Terry Morgan, friends of the church); Bill Mayer (member); Lynne (friend of the church); Ramon (grandson of Hilda Faulkner); Diane Ripley (friend of the Kirkman's); Elaine Lewis (Jackie Smith's granddaughter); Family of William Kirkman (uncle of Ron Kirkman); Marvin Stamper (employee at C.M. Meyer & Assoc.); Su H. (friend of Bev Bosse); Darryl P. and Mickey P. (cousins of Bev Bosse); Friends from Clovernook (of Carol Ann White); Family of Anna Jean Shock (aunt of Ron Kirkman); Family of Gary Smith (husband of Sandy; step-father of Patty Baldwin); Sharon Kazee (prayer asked from Sandy Echols); Michelle Richards (dear friend of the Senior Social); Christine White (friend of Jackie Smith); Joey Miller (grandson of Ron Kirkman); Cindy Moeller (friend of Bruce & Kathie Steinhard); Kimberly Morgan (cousin of Ron Kirkman); Brian Kirkman (son of Ron Kirkman); Tiffany Nelson (friend of Ron Kirkman); Amanda and family (daughter of Hilda Faulkner); Kelly Ann Pennington (sister-in-law of Suwanna Kirkman); Family and friends of Jackie Smith; Vicki Thorner (Sue Bilz' cousin); Tina Maxwell (Sue Bilz' best friend); Beverly & Mike Rose (dear friends of Suwanna Kirkman); Michelle M. (cousin of Bev Bosse); Thomas (nephew of Hilda's friend, Pam); Kesha and Family (friends of Ron Kirkman); Charlie (friend of Herb Brookbank).





01/26 – Jason & Holly Rodenbeck
01/29 – Justin & Ashley Runck
01/29 – Dave & Wendy Hawkins

01/03 – Carol Ann White
01/03 – Julian Rose
01/08 – Tom Shelton
01/09 – Holly Rodenbeck
01/09 – Bill Spatz
01/11 – Ann Abbott
01/13 – Susan Bilz
01/14 – Grace Armstrong
01/14 – Bob Neumeister
01/14 – Dave Hawkins
01/16 – Sean Rose
01/17 – Jordan Owens
01/18 – Deb Neumeister
01/19 – Lex Weyand
01/19 – Diane Burger
01/24 – Nina Bilz
01/28 – Nate Weyand-Geise
01/28 – Cindy Beckman
01/30 – Chris Armstrong
01/30 – Paul Kluesener
01/31 – Larry Bronnert
01/31 – Jim Weyand
01/31 – William Smith

My sincere apologies to Geralyn Curtis for accidentally omitting her birthday last month.

***NOTE:** At the time of printing, the new calendar wasn't available, so my apologies if there's a birthday or anniversary omitted! We'll catch up next month.

First UCC Church Board Meeting Minutes

November 10, 2025 (In-Person & Zoom)

In attendance: Milt Hauck, Tom Shelton, Darrell Copenhaver, Bruce Steinhard, Jean Krebs, Gail Bauknecht, Ed Bosse, Bev Smith

Treasurer: Christy Meyer (Treasurer)

Pastor: Dan Weyand-Geise

Excused: Bill Henrich

I. Call to Order -- Milt called the meeting to order.

II. Devotion -- Pastor Dan – relative who influenced us the most.

III. Treasurer's Report (Christy): The October reports were accepted, and approval was given to pay November expenses.

Motion: Jean Second: Gail Accepted: All in favor

Bills and Expenses

Motion: Darrell Second: Bev Accepted: All in favor

IV. Recording Secretary's Report (Bruce) – The October report was accepted with corrections.

Motion: Darrell Second: Tom Accepted: All in favor

V. Financial Secretary's Report (Jean) –

Jean asked Ed to follow up on Deb's research on utilities (3a)

Motion: Bruce Second: Gail Accepted: All in favor

VI. Pastor's Report – Pastor Dan submitted his report to the Church Board

Senior Social – see 2b

- **IHN Hosting** – see his report
- **Fishes & Loaves** – see his report
- **Phil's** - see his report

- **Doug** – will present his second video on November 22 at 2:30 pm

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Motion: Darrell

Second: Jean

Accepted: All in favor

VII. Committee Reports

Facilities

- Dan reported the gardens are being finished for the year.
- Darrell reported the system will be blown out this week
- The outside faucet needs to be turned off in the water room
- Dan and Paul will be responsible for turning the heat on in the Family Center
- **Music (Jean)** – nothing to report
- **Budget (Jean)** – later

Tom – Hood over the stove will be cleaned and inspected Thursday morning.

Ed – reported the Electrical Box had no water in it during a recent check of it.

Reported we need to follow-up on the requirement from Duke Energy of getting protective pillars in front of the outside electrical box in the parking lot to protect it from being damaged.

Dan – regarding current Board members terms of service

Ed is eligible for a 2nd term

Darrell is going off the board after serving 2 terms

Bruce is eligible for a 2nd term

Milt has one more year, but is stepping down from being President of the board, with “Thanks for his service and leadership!”

IX. Old Business

- **By-Laws (Bruce and Pastor Dan)** – The Constitution & By-Laws are available by contacting the office, Bruce Steinhard, or Pastor Dan
- **Budget** – the budget was presented again for Final Approval
Moved – Gail **Seconded**: Bev **Accepted**: All in favor
- **Nominating (Milt)** – nothing at this time

X. New Business – A member of the church brought up the use of the word “Queer” in documents and talks in church, believing it to be offensive. Pastor Dan and other members of the Board explained that it is now accepted among the LGBTQI community and is okay to use it. The Board and Pastor Dan will need to educate our members and friends about this change in how the word is perceived.

XI. Adjournment

Moved: Gail **Seconded**: Bev **Accepted**: All in Favor

XII. Lord's Prayer

*Submitted by: J. Bruce Steinhard,
Recording Secretary*

Our Sympathy

To the family of Don Fricke, a beloved member of First Church for many, many years. Don died on December 26. A private graveside service will be held.

Please keep his family in your prayers. Don will always be remembered.

From Joan Chittister's Monastic Way for Winter. To subscribe to Chittister's material you can go to www.joanchittister.org for more information.

Where I live, winter is a raw and bitter, wind-swept and white, unpredictable and uncompromising time of year. We go from dry, cold, grey days to deep wet frozen days. The pavement turns from white snow to black ice from one moment to the other. The wind howls around the house, whipping wet leaves and soft snowflakes with it. One black night everything in sight is fogged in dark; the next morning even the inner city is clear and clean and deep, deep white. Then we stay inside, make popcorn, light the fire, curl up in blankets and play games. Indeed, winter, for us, is an experience in the struggles of life, in its twists and turns, in its great challenges and small triumphs. We watch where we walk now, we cling to the handrails from place to place, we drive slowly, deliberately, cautiously from corner to corner. We go through life more thoughtfully, more quietly, more prudently—with an eye to what might happen as well as for what is happening. We manage it all quite well, of course, but not cavalierly. Every step in life demands attention then.

The turn of the seasons in the north is a kaleidoscope of the seasons of life, of the face of God in time, of the very process of what it means to be alive. In the seasons we see the story of ourselves played out: early on, life without shape; later, life in pursuit of direction; finally, life on the way to its horizon; at the end, life, mellowed, going down into the sea of eternity. Through all of them, like warp and woof, lies the essential pattern, the obligation to say

“yes.”

Yes to today; yes to tomorrow; yes to life again.



Open & Affirming (ONA) Covenant First United Church of Christ

We, the members of First United Church of Christ, welcome you

If you are Asian, Black, Brown, Hispanic, Native American, or White;

If you are male, female, transgender, or gender non-conforming;

If you are 3 years old, 33 years old, or 103 years old;

If you are from just down the street, from across the country, or from another part of the globe;

If you grew up at Hoffner Church, were confirmed in the Catholic Church, got married in a non-denominational church, worshipped in a synagogue or mosque, or have never attended a religious service;

If you are single, married, widowed, divorced, separated, or partnered;

If you are straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, or unsure of your sexuality;

If you are a Democrat, Independent or Republican, affiliated with another political party or no party at all;

If you have, or have had, addictions, phobias, or a criminal record;

If you own your home, rent, live with your parents, or are homeless;

If you were baptized at First Church, or are worshipping here for the first time;

If you attend services every week, once a month, or once a year;

If you have typical or atypical skills, no matter your abilities or disabilities;

However the rest of the world describes you, and however you describe yourself:

You are a beloved child of God and are welcome at First Church.

Being fully welcome in our community here at First United Church of Christ means that as we keep the love of Christ at the center of all we do, our congregation will:

Always seek to affirm the person that you are with loving hearts and open minds.

Follow the way of Christ Jesus with you in loving and being loved by both God and neighbor, with the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.

Support and encourage you in your ongoing spiritual and religious journey.

Love you for the person you are by living out our denomination's promise that "No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome at First United Church of Christ."

FIRST UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Kim Ogden, Pastoral Administrator, Ext. 10

Church Board:

Milt Hauck, President

Tom Shelton, Vice-President

Darrell Copenhaver, Co-Vice-President

Bruce Steinhard, Recording Secretary

Jean Krebs, Financial Secretary

Ed Bosse

Bill Henrich

Gail Bauknecht

Beverly Smith

June Bronnert (past president)

Christy Meyer, Church Treasurer



Keeping the love of Christ at the center of everything we do
so that all members will be empowered to become
Spirit-Led Servant Leaders.