



# March Chronicle 2026

## First Congregational UCC Hendersonville

Beloved FCCH,

During Lent, we are invited to center our practices on the theme "Love Heals." This naturally raises the questions: What is love? What is healing? Lent offers space to explore, with curiosity and openness, how love and healing might shape our daily lives and quietly transform us.

Recently, I experienced this in an unexpected way. This past week, the Southern Conference of the United Church of Christ invited clergy to a Lenten retreat on self-care. Our conference spans more than 200 congregations across North Carolina and southern Virginia, representing a wide range of theologies. I wondered if the retreat would feel like my version of rest. My inner skeptic was lively and unconvinced that anything meaningful awaited me.

Encouraged by colleagues who promised beautiful grounds and decent food, I packed an ambitious stack of books, my journals, knitting, and my captious expectations, and headed to St. Francis Springs Prayer Center in Rockingham County.

What unfolded surprised me. The very things I anticipated resisting, small talk, icebreakers, even morning movement, became moments of ease and connection. There were parts that felt tenderly complicated, including prayer language that did not fully reflect my theology. Yet even there, grace surfaced through shared scripture, quiet presence, and the simple gift of being together. The experience was healing, not in the ways I expected, but in ways I did not know I needed.

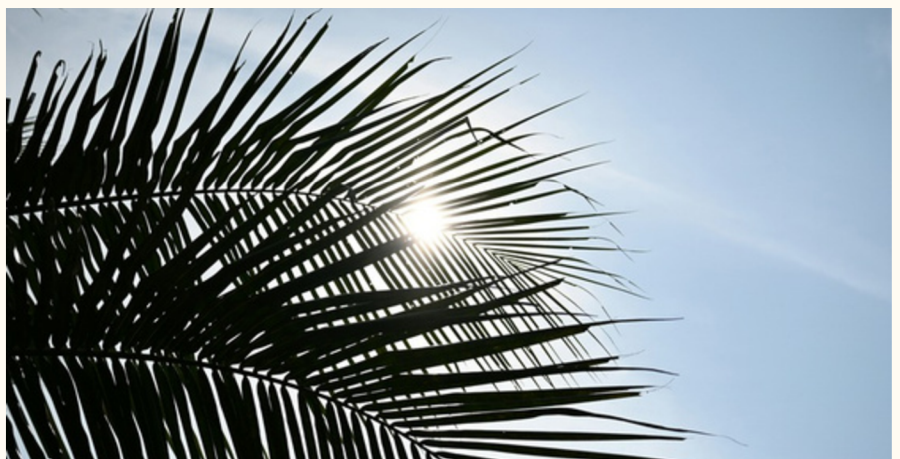
Lent often invites us to step beyond familiar edges so we can discover new pathways of healing love. Perhaps this season offers an invitation for you as well.

To that end, if you have not walked the labyrinth recently, Jennifer Austin-Janssen will be gathering at the FCCH labyrinth at noon each Wednesday in March for a communal walk. Join her.

Music, too, carries healing. On March 12 at 6:30 pm in the sanctuary, we will host a Singing Resistance Teach-In led by Asheville musicians Samara and Jess. Together we will sing songs of solidarity that are echoing through protests and gatherings across the country. Singing these songs recently reminded me how collective voice can steady the heart and renew hope.

As Lent unfolds, may you encounter love that heals, sometimes gently, sometimes unexpectedly, always faithfully. My prayer is that this season opens space for healing and love to meet you along the way.

Big Love and Deep Peace,  
Karla





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### MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Mike Barker	3/1
Shirley Retzsch	3/1
David Vandre	3/3
Jennifer Austin-Janssen	3/7
Cheryl Roberts	3/11
James Carlin	3/12
David Squibb	3/23
Jim Hollingsworth	3/24
Craig Stogner	3/25
Dee Shuttlesworth	3/27
Ron Miller	3/27
Kay Harkins	3/28
Dawn Kucera	3/29
Sharon McLendon	3/30
Scott Querin	3/31

### February Worship Attendance

February 1 - ice / canceled  
February 8 - 151  
February 15 - 134  
February 22 - 153



### A Letter from our Moderator, Bill Shaffer

As your new Moderator, I wanted to thank everyone for the support and trust you've shown by letting me help guide FCC this next year. You've given me a great Council to work with so I think we'll be in good shape.

I see First Congregational Church as being at an inflection point. Under Karla and Mark and with the past several years' Council leadership we've grown to the point where both financially and with membership, we've moved from being a small church on the corner to being the progressive Christian leader in Hendersonville.

Looking around the sanctuary on a Sunday morning, the love, support and energy I sense is amazing. This growth will involve some changes in how we do things but I'm looking forward to it and I'm sure we're all up to it. I want to encourage everyone to complete the green Member/Friend Information sheet that you've been given. In addition to the contact information, the back side is also important. As you fill this out, please think about how you can help make your passions and interests into a part of our church. As we grow, we'll all need to step up and help lead the activities that make First Congregational Church such a wonderful place.

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### Project Linus Rummage Sale Coming Soon!

As you tackle Spring cleaning this month, keep the Project Linus Rummage Sale in mind! We would love to have the treasures you no longer need! The Rummage sale will be April 17-18, and soon Romella will ask for volunteers to help set up for the sale on Thurs., April 16, and run the sale on Friday and Saturday! All proceeds from these very successful rummage sales benefit Project Linus who provides blankets for children in distress throughout Western North Carolina.



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### FORUMS IN LENT - 9 am Sundays, Fellowship Hall

- March 8 - Stories of Resilience. Resilience is the ability to adapt, cope and bounce back from adversity, tragedy or trauma. In this Forum, we'll hear stories of resilience from three members of our congregation, and then we gather in small groups to share (if you want) our own stories of resilience in our lives. Join us for a meaningful time of getting to know each other on a deeper level.
- March 15 - Janet Slimak will lead this forum discussion on "The Power of Words" and how our choice of words makes the difference between success and failure. The goal is to discover how our words either empower or disempower ourselves and others.
- March 22 - The Life of a Teacher: A conversation with Bal Goleman. Did you know that our own Bal Goleman was National Teacher of the Year, that she has a high school in Miami named after her, and that there is a short film on YouTube about her? Join us for a conversation with this amazing member of our congregation.
- March 29 - Getting to know Becca Stevens. Rev. Becca Stevens is a minister, author, speaker and the founder of Thistle Farms, a global recovery ministry for women. Becca will be our 2026 Ashley Lecture Series speaker April 11-12. Through a fantastic video and discussion we will learn about the life and work of this amazing person.

### LENTEN SERMON SERIES - 10:30 am Sundays, Sanctuary

We are basing our Lenten preaching series on themes presented in Becca Stevens' book, Love Heals.

- March 8 - Love Heals Across the World: Branching Out into New Territories
- March 15 - Love Heals on the Edges of our Hearts: Growing through Painful Spaces
- March 22 - Love Heals in Letting Go + Making Space
- March 29 - **PALM SUNDAY** Love Heals Beyond Stress and Fear
- April 5 - **EASTER** Love Heals in the Valley of Death and Upon the Mountaintop



### Maundy Thursday Communion and Tenebrae Service

Thursday, April 2, 6:00 pm - Sanctuary

This quiet, reflective service is a meaningful mark in Holy Week. We will celebrate communion, listen to scripture and special readings, have special music while gradually extinguish the light and enter darkness.

### Easter Sunrise Service at Jump Off Rock

Sunday, April 5, 7:00 am - Jump Off Rock

Join our community gathering to celebrate the freshness and promise of Easter in the dawn of morning!

Arrange for carpooling with your friends, as parking is very limited at The Rock. Using the FCCCH parking lot is easy and convenient. Please bring your own chair to the Sunrise service, if you would like.

# LENT FCCH STYLE



## Fat Ash Wednesday Pancake Supper and Ash Wednesday Imposition of Ashes Service



Thanks to Dawn Kucera, Sheila Clendenning and Mark Acker for capturing these photos!



Phyllis Rhinehart and a band of helpers fed us in grand style for the Fat Ash pancake supper!

Then Karla and Mark blessed us with ashes after lighting candles. Kathleen Vard played her singing bowls to set the mood of reflection.



This Circle of Friends group has lots of fun, hence the smiles, when they get together! Sheila Clendenning, DJ Walker, Glenn Gross, Pete Heuberger, Donna Gross, Ellen Brazauskus



This past Saturday, 16 FCCH members & friends gathered for an introduction to drumming and playing a djembe. Mark Rabinowitz led us through some basic, then gently led us through introductory rhythms, which got more complicated as the morning went on! Stay tuned for more opportunities to drum in community at FCCH!



## Service & Giving Highlights – February 2026

Following the annual meeting vote, Service & Giving learned its budget would be \$40,600 ( 10% of the annual budget) which will be allocated by percentages to the non-profit agencies. Service & Giving has seven categories for non-profit agencies: Food insecurity & homelessness, crisis intervention, education, environment, inclusivity, healthcare and animals, plus matching funds.

A short questionnaire was sent to each non-profit agency with whom we partnered last year. Those agencies with no response will be contacted by team members before our March meeting. Team members in each category are encouraged to meet together to discuss the needs, volunteer opportunities, and survey information before our March meeting.

IAM volunteer Pete Hueberger advocated for this agency which is in crisis mode due to loss of much of its federal funding. IAM needs support more than ever. Families who received weekly grocery supplies in the past may only receive those grocery supplies bi-weekly at this time.

We discussed our FCC Migrant Supply Drive and chose February 22, March 1 & 8 for the annual drive. This year we will be collecting powdered hydration kits and clothing items: adult men's medium & small long-sleeved shirts, socks, and ball caps. A bulletin board will be creating featuring these requested items at the end of the holy hallway. The goal is to pack 600 bags in March, and volunteers are welcome to pack bags. More information about this volunteer opportunity will be forthcoming.

At our next meeting we will be making decisions about allotment of funds for each category. If you are looking for productive ways to help others, please check out the Volunteer Opportunities Directory in the Members section of our website, [www.fcchendersonville.org](http://www.fcchendersonville.org).

For more information about the Service & Giving team, for which guests and new members are always welcome, contact team lead Dede Walton [dede\\_walton@yahoo.com](mailto:dede_walton@yahoo.com).

The next meeting is **Thursday, March 12 at 10:00 am** in the Choir Room.

Did you know that fellow congregant Trisha LaGrange is now doing some pet-sitting? Give Trisha a call if you need her services as you plan your summer travel! She cares for both dogs and cats. Trisha's phone number is 828-692-8494.



# **SINGING RESISTANCE**

## **Community Teach-In**

**HENDERSONVILLE**

**MARCH 12, 6:30 PM**

**Come learn songs of  
Resistance and Solidarity  
to sing at rallies and protests**

**First Congregational Church  
1735 5th Ave West**

**All ages, orientations, and voices  
welcome!**



# Loving Our Community

## COMPANIONSHIP TRAINING

Participants will be introduced to the revolutionary Companionship Model that has five tenets: hospitality, neighboring, side-by-side, listening, and accompaniment. This workshop will provide participants an understanding of how to move from a transactional exchange model to a relational engagement model that enables substantial change when helping others, and how to integrate Companionship into their organizations and communities. The training will be led by Pam Spach Hurley and Wanda Rae Clary, both of Atrium Health's Faith Community Health Ministry. Refreshments will be provided. Up to 25 people can attend; please contact the church office to register.

Grace Lutheran Church  
1245 6th Avenue West  
Hendersonville, NC 28739  
(828) 693-4890

This is part of an educational series on behavioral health and well-being and is being funded through an initiative of the North Carolina Council of Churches.

Thursday March 19  
1-4:30 pm

Progressive Alliance  
of Henderson County  
**POSTCARD PARTY & SOCIAL TIME**  
with

**MOMS DEMAND ACTION**  
FOR GUN SENSE IN AMERICA

# WE CAN END GUN VIOLENCE

**FRIDAY, MARCH 20th**  
**4:30-6:00pm** at Trailside Brewing  
874 Lenox Park Dr. (off S. Whitted St)

**WE NEED EACH OTHER MORE THAN EVER.**  
Bring friends, neighbors, kids and grandkids.  
We provide suggestion sheets & postcards for children to color.

Parking can be tricky- consider carpooling, walking or biking

## LEGAL OBSERVER TRAINING FOR THE PUBLIC



LEGAL OBSERVERS ARE TRAINED COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO BEAR WITNESS AND SERVE AS A CALM, NEUTRAL PRESENCE IN PUBLIC SITUATIONS WHERE RIGHTS, SAFETY, OR WELL-BEING MAY BE AFFECTED.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 22 1 - 2:30 PM**



Hosted by Unity of The Blue Ridge

Led by Civil Rights Attorney Alan S. Graf

Free • Open to the Public

Registration Required | Capacity Limited 200

**REGISTER NOW**



Alan S. Graf is a civil rights attorney and lifelong activist with more than 60 years of experience defending constitutional rights. He has trained Legal Observers nationwide and represented veterans, protesters, unhoused people, and others whose rights were at risk.

Unity of The Blue Ridge is an inclusive spiritual center focused on sacred oneness and compassionate living.  
828-891-8700 unity@unitync.net unityblueridge.org



## TOGETHER WE CAN BE

UCC Mental Health Network

Welcoming • Inclusive  
Supportive • Engaged



The UCC Mental Health Network W.I.S.E committee invites all who are becoming W.I.S.E. and already certified W.I.S.E. to come launch the new program year with fellowship and WISE sharing!

We can't wait to see you!

In your service,

The UCC Mental Health Network's WISE Committee

**MARCH | 9th | 2026**

**6:30-7:30 PM EST ON ZOOM**

[Click Here to Join the Zoom Meeting](#)

# Loving Our Community



**VIRTUAL DRAG QUEEN BIBLE STUDY  
W/ REV. MARGE ERIN SPREAD**

**MARCH 3, 2026**  
7PM-8:30PM ET



**Lesson:**  
***Spilling Tea at the Well (John 4:1-30)***

**A DEEP DIVE INTO QUEER THEOLOGY**

- Historical context behind the text
- Queer interpretations in plain language
- Space for your questions & reflections
- A brave, affirming space

**REGISTRATION STARTS AT \$15 FOR INDIVIDUALS  
AND \$75 FOR SMALL CHURCHES.**



Register online at [OpenAndAffirming.org](https://OpenAndAffirming.org)



The Henderson County League of Women Voters is hosting a program, “Why Local News Matters” on local, small town reporting in the digital age on Monday, March 16 from 5:00-6:30 pm at the Henderson County Public Library, Kaplan Auditorium, 301 N. Washington St., Hendersonville, NC.

To celebrate Sunshine Week, Ruth Birge, former publisher of the Times-News, and John Boyle, reporter for the Asheville Watchdog, will discuss the past and future of small-town news reporting.

The League of Women Voters is concerned about the decline of access to valid, local news for voters and its impact on democracy. The League supports credible and ethical local journalism, in whatever format it is published, as essential to democracy. Access to trustworthy information is necessary for citizens to cast an informed ballot, and dependable local news sources are integral to this pursuit.

For more information about the League, go to the LWVHC website at: [www.lwvhcnc.org](http://www.lwvhcnc.org). LWVHC welcomes all members of our community to this event!