

The Chronicle - June 2026

WE LOVE
THIS PLACE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC • HVILLE

Beloved,

Happy June, and Happy Pride month. The first Pride Celebration in Henderson County was in 2019, with a picnic in Patton Park. Since then Pride has grown exponentially in our community, and FCCH has been involved since its inception.

Of “mainline” denominations in USA (think Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Catholic, Baptist, etc.) the United Church of Christ has been at the forefront of welcome, inclusion and CELEBRATION of the LGBTQI+ community within the church and society. In 1972, the first openly gay minister, Bill Johnson was ordained. He and 35 other folk founded the UCC Gay Caucus that same year, which later was renamed the UCC Coalition for Lesbian/Gay Concerns, now known as the Open and Affirming Coalition.

It was the Coalition that created the Open and Affirming movement, a process in which individual UCC congregations go through in order to be certified as an Open and Affirming Church, which is the signifier that a particular congregation is inclusive of LGBTQI+ folk and concerns. New York City's Riverside Church, under the pastoral leadership of the late Rev. William Sloane Coffin, was the first in the UCC to be listed as Open and Affirming in 1987. Just over 20 years later, in 2008, FCCH became the 735th Open and Affirming Church. Today, in 2026, there are almost 2000 Open and Affirming congregations in the United Church of Christ.

If you would like to know more about the history of the UCC's involvement in the movement for LGBTQI+ rights in the larger movement in our country, here is a wonderful timeline: <https://openandaffirming.org/about/history/#timeline>

See you at PRIDE on Saturday, June 6 at Jackson Park!

Big Love and Deep Peace,
Karla



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Updates from within the Church



FULL TUM, DRY BUM

During the first two weeks of May, the Service and Giving Committee held a baby wipe and diaper drive. As usual, our generous congregation responded. Two cars full of diapers and wipes were delivered to the Children and Family Resource Center. In addition, over \$500 in donations was collected.

Founded in 1998, the Children and Family Resource Center merged three separate non-profit agencies to consolidate services, promote communication and collaboration, and simplify access to children's services. Today, CFRC offers programs that address the various aspects of early childhood development and education, quality child care, parenting and family support. In addition, the CFRC also serves as a referral center for clients who are in need of other services in our community.

CFRC is just one of the local agencies that our church supports through donations and drives. The group in the church that manages this is the Service and Giving Committee. The committee meets monthly to review local agencies, decide how to allocate the money the church tithes and how to manage various drives. It's a fun, at times boisterous, group that does the good work of our church. It's an easy and great way to learn about the social safety net in Hendersonville, what the church is doing to help and to meet other like-minded members of the Congregation. Call the office or email Dede Walton (dede_walton@yahoo.com) to join us.

Circle of Friends Update

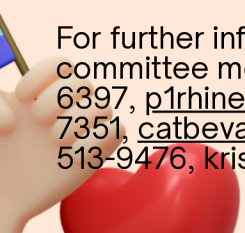
The current Circle of Friends groups will be ending in June. The purpose of these groups has been to develop relationships with people you may not have previously known by sharing food and fellowship together. It will soon be time to begin the process again.

HOW WILL IT WORK?

- Those who wish to participate will be assigned to a group of 8-10 people; partners/spouses will be assigned to the same group. Each group will have a designated convener to handle group logistics (meeting times/place etc).
- There will be a one-year commitment to meet monthly.
- Each group will determine how to shape their group experience.
- Most importantly, this is a trusted space. What happens in the group stays in the group.

Registration forms will be available during coffee time on June 28, July 12 and Aug 2. We will also have forms available on the table in the "Holy" hallway throughout the summer, please fill the form out and place in wire basket in the office. Toward the end of August, you will be notified of your new group with the expectation that groups will begin meeting in September.

For further information feel free to contact any of the committee members: Phyllis Rhinehart, 321-848-6397, p1rhinehart@gmail.com; Cathy Evans, 770-841-7351, catbevans@yahoo.com; Krista Kaufman 828-513-9476, kristakaufman41@gmail.com



SUMMER '26 with FCCH

all the fun times! our sharing times!



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH • HENDERSONVILLE

FCCH SUMMER 2026

PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY 101

Join Karla in a study on what it means to be a progressive Christian. We will talk about the Bible seriously, all things theology and more.

Wednesdays 11:00 am or 5:00 pm

May 27, June 3, June 10, June 17

SUMMER DRUM CIRCLE

Saturday, June 13, 10am, Fellowship Hall

GAME NIGHT FUN

Thursday, June 11 & Thursday, August 13

6PM, Fellowship Hall: Bring yourself, games, snacks!

LET'S GET OUTSIDE!

Saturday, July 11, 9 am: Bullington Gardens & Forest Bathing with Anne Ogburn

Saturday, August 1, 9 am: Bearwallow Mountain hike with Karla

ICE CREAM TRAIL

Tuesday, June 9, 2 pm McConnell Farms

Sunday, July 12, 2 pm Celtic Creamery

Tuesday, August 11, 2 pm Whitt's Custard

BIRTHDAY COFFEE HOURS

Sundays June 7 & July 5 & August 2



FELLOWSHIP DINNERS

Tuesday, June 16 5:00 pm

Tuesday, August 18 5:00 pm



THE SUMMER DAY



Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean —
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down —
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

Mary Oliver



We are so proud of Zach Cone's acceptance into the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM)–Morganton. This highly selective program recognizes exceptional students who demonstrate not only academic excellence but also curiosity, discipline, and a passion for learning. Being chosen for NCSSM–Morganton is a remarkable honor that opens doors to advanced studies, meaningful research opportunities, and a community of scholars dedicated to innovation and leadership. As part of this opportunity, Zach also benefits from a strong college pathway, including automatic consideration for admission within the University of North Carolina system and a tuition-free experience for his 4-year college. Zach will begin his residential program on August 14th for his junior and senior years.

SUNDAYS OF SUMMER '26

SUMMER WORSHIP

JUNE

ACROSS THE AISLE: LEARNING FROM OUR NEIGHBORS

- June 7 **PRIDE SUNDAY** Karla
- June 14 When I Was a Witch Karla
- June 21 A Buddhist, a Jew, a Muslim, and a Preacher Walk Into a Bar Karla
- June 28 Rev. Brian Combs from Haywood Street Community, Asheville

JULY

THE BIBLE IS BANANAS!

WEIRD TALES FROM THE GOOD BOOK

There are some really weird stories in the Bible ~ talking donkeys, women turned into salt shakers, insecure bald prophets and more. Can we glean anything from them? This month Mark and Karla will tackle some of these unusual tales.

- July 5 Mark preaching
- July 12, 19, 26 Karla preaching



AUGUST

ASKING FOR A FRIEND: QUESTIONS FROM THE CONGREGATION

This month Karla and Mark will take on some of your questions! We will gather your questions in July, and create our sermon series from them. Should be interesting!

- August 2, 16, 30 Karla preaching
- August 9 Mark preaching
- August 23 John Pavlovitz speaking

SUMMER FORUMS

JUNE

- June 7 LGBTQ Panel: Bruce Mills & Jim Hollingsworth, Kendra Ray & Teresa Ramer, Angie & Jan Buchanan
- June 14 Bill Combs: Quantum Physics & Spirituality
- June 21 Janet Granger: The Language of our Pets
- June 28 Rev. Brian Combs, guest speaker

JULY

- July 5 Mark Acker: "The Gift of Aging" in conversation with Joan Chittister
- July 12 Marcia Walker: Mindfulness and Meditation
- July 19 Karla Miller: Reflections from Camino 2
- July 26 Alen Yeck: The Veterans Healing Farm

AUGUST

- August 2 David Conard: Detachment and AI Anon Vision
- August 9 Divina: Artists at FCCH share their works
- August 16 Creating Personal Altars with Karla Miller
- August 23 John Pavlovitz
- August 30 The Life and Times of Romella Hart O' Keefe

WHO'S PHOTOGENIC?? You are! No, YOU ARE!



Enjoy posing with wings for PRIDE!

Photos submitted by Sheila Clendenning

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Highlight of Month: MILTON STEWART



Our very own, Milton Stewart, was awarded the 2026 Governor's Medallion for Volunteer Service recognizing his lifetime of volunteerism to his greater community which includes establishing and tending to our Vegetable Garden.

The nomination for this award, tells more of Milton's contributions throughout his life of serving others through volunteerism.

A career educator, Milton Stewart focused most of his earliest volunteerism on mentoring varied youth groups. An avid golfer and elementary school physical education teacher, he included basic golfing skills for his hundreds of pupils over the course of a 30-year career, even providing golf clubs and balls. Beyond his regular teaching schedule, he led a Boy Scout troop for more than 20 years. Migrant students (5th and 6th grades) enjoyed access to an after-school program in which he taught woodworking and auto mechanics skills, organizing and chaperoning field trips for them. In 2005, the Mayor of Broward County FL honored Milton with an official "Appreciation Day" for his efforts to provide beginning golf skills to boys and girls in all age groups in after school county recreation department programs.

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Highlight of Month: MILTON STEWART

Still in use today at Oswald Park is the 3-hole youth focused golf course for which Milton was the main designer and developer. Throughout the 1990s to the early 2000s, Milton volunteered with the national First Tee youth golf program in Broward County. This program builds both golf and life skills, using golf to develop character and good values. It is impossible to quantify the total number of youngsters' lives Milton's efforts touched over the past 40 years through these municipal initiatives.

Milton and his wife Jeannie began their Henderson County volunteer service soon after moving here in 2008, mostly through their beloved First Congregational Church. His annual outreach for contributions to First Congregational's Hunger Walk teams has resulted in a personal total of \$2,000+/year consistently. Very few Sundays go by without the Stewarts' essential service in the FCC fellowship hall's kitchen, and Milton's cheerful smile at the coffee urn is cherished by every member and visitor. Light bulbs to be changed? Dishwasher to be replaced? Collected aluminum cans/other metals to be recycled? Roof of new labyrinth gazebo to be installed? Spring-fed garden irrigation system to be established and maintained, eliminating the need to rely on expensive city water supply? Garden fence to be painted? And so on...Call Milton! Every year since 2011 when Milton and the Physical Resources team at First Congregational began the conversion of a rocky, weedy area of the church property into "Milton's Garden", he can be found there early mornings Monday through Thursday, March through October, at least 20 hours per week (even this past summer at the age of 92!). Those 640+ volunteer hours each year are augmented in the off-season by time devoted to repairs and maintenance. He and his stalwart volunteer team of garden helpers rejoice in sharing the work of producing potatoes, green beans, tomatoes, okra, beets, cucumbers, zucchini, peppers, etc. which have found their way to families' tables via donations of healthy fresh food to Interfaith Assistance Ministry, Dandelion Restaurant and the Hendersonville Rescue Mission. In 2025 1,900 pounds went to IAM; the garden has averaged a total of 1,500 pounds per year since 2011. The compost bin Milton constructed is open to community members who want to contribute to the garden's success. In the autumn, Milton recruits garden crew members to glean apples at his friend's private apple orchard, thus adding fresh fruit to the bounty. To consider the impact upon the health and well-being of countless area neighbors due to his vision and leadership resulting in an estimated total of 22,500 pounds of fresh food from Milton's Garden is humbling indeed.

Innumerable lives from Florida to North Carolina have been forever brightened and improved by Milton Stewart's servant heart at work. We are grateful to have the opportunity to nominate him for this Lifetime of Volunteer Service award.

Electronics Donation Drive-Thru Sat., Aug.1, 10a-1p

HOORAY! - Your old electronics can do so much more than gather dust.

The Social Justice Team is pleased to announce that your used electronics can be donated in the parking lot to THROUGH THE TREES for recycling so start collecting now!

Through the Trees is a community-based nonprofit based in Brevard whose mission is to bridge the digital divide. www.throughthetrees.us It supports rural broadband expansion, internet and computer access for low-income households, and is working on digital literacy initiatives related to technology in the area

It currently accepts the following items, so we will too:

- Computers (desktops and laptops)
- Computer accessories/cables
- Cell Phones
- Tablets
- TV sound bars & Desktop speakers
- Digital Cameras (3.5mm Aux)
- Gaming systems

It accepts old and broken computers to utilize working parts and recycle responsibly. There will be someone on site to help clear personal information from devices for anyone who isn't able to do that themselves.

It does **NOT** accept the following so neither will we:

- TVs & AV Equipment (DVD, Blu-Ray, etc.)
- Printers & Ink Cartridges
- Stereos & bare-wire speakers
- Household appliances

We would love your help. We will need a couple of volunteers to handle donations and a van or truck to take items to Brevard. Please contact Connie Knight at knightcolor@gmail.com

Our first electronics recycling event is for our congregation only but spread the word among our members and friends. Our donations will help to build a community where everyone is connected, knowledgeable, and supported in the digital world. Together, we can empower every individual to thrive online. Hooray!!

"Meet The Light Eaters' Dream—a bear that seems to know more than it's saying. Created by FCC members Theodore Sharps and Marcia Walker, it draws from Zoë Schlanger's 2024 book "The Light Eaters," documenting the unseen ways in which plants quietly communicate, share resources, and make decisions—challenging the boundary between plant and animal life. Like the living systems that sustain and connect us, Mountain Aging Partners supports caregivers and older adults in our community—helping them age with dignity and independence. Join us in celebrating art that shines a light on compassion, connection, and the steady work of caring for one another—so that No One Ages Alone."



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Service & Giving Highlights–May

At our May meeting we reviewed the successful Children and Family Resource Center's "Full Tum, Dry Bum" drive. \$575 in cash was collected as well as a big car load of diapers, wipes, etc. Thank you to Lillian and Roger for delivering to the Children and Family Resource Center. And thank you for this successful effort.

We are planning to be intentional with the bulletin board at the end of the hallway near the reception desk. Please check it out for upcoming activities sponsored by Service & Giving and an upcoming bulletin board from Social Justice team.

Pat Argue shared that Social Justice team will collaborate with Through the Trees for an inaugural drive-thru collecting used electronics. On August 1st from 10:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. used electronics can be dropped off in FCC parking lot. Desired items will be listed for congregation on the bulletin board mentioned above and elsewhere in this issue. Please make note of the specific items.

FCC is a sponsor of the Hendersonville PRIDE Festival, scheduled on June 6th from noon until five at Jackson Park. We will have a large booth and welcome volunteer participation for setup, takedown, and booth staffing. This is a family friendly celebration which grows larger every year. Plan to come and enjoy the festivities even if you are unable to volunteer.

We discussed our church contributions to non-profits relating to healthcare, crisis intervention, and inclusivity. Approval was given to the recommendations of those teams involved with each area.

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.

Next meeting/gathering: June 11- time to be determined. No July meeting during Church sabbath.

Everyone is always welcome to join Service & Giving. Our next regular meeting will be on August 13 at 10:00 in the Choir Room

Submitted by Pat Argue and Dede Walton

Treasurers Highlights:

- Total General Operating Fund income YTD was \$10,333 more than budgeted.
- Total General Operating Fund expenses YTD were \$353 more than budgeted.
- Net result of General Operating Fund YTD was \$9,980 better than budgeted.
- Heritage Fund balance as of 4/30/2026: \$777,220



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May 15, 2026
Treska's

<---- This Circle of Friends small group met at Treska's for lunch, on Friday, May 15, to end the COF season. Members shown are - in the hat is Larry Anderson, and clockwise from him are Sharon Johnson, Dottie Koopman, Dawn Kucera, Fern Carter, Mike Sergeant, Rich Yount, and Jen Alm, and Susan Cowardin.
Submitted by Dawn Kucera

Swinging with the Buddy K Big Band!

On May 17, Buddy K Big Band tunes transported the assembled crowd with their upbeat, toe-tapping sounds!
Photos by Ruthie Rosauer



Roddy and Aurora install a new birdfeeder during Sunday School on a beautiful Sunday morning!



The Roger Smith Concert Series brought JOY to Hendersonville with the music of "Beyond the Yellow Brick Road" presented by Atlanta Gay Men's Chorus!



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**HVL
PRIDE
FEST 2026**

LOVE IN TECHNICOLOR

Saturday, June 6, 2026
12 pm - 5 pm
Jackson Park
Hendersonville, NC




**WE NEED
YOUR SHOES!**

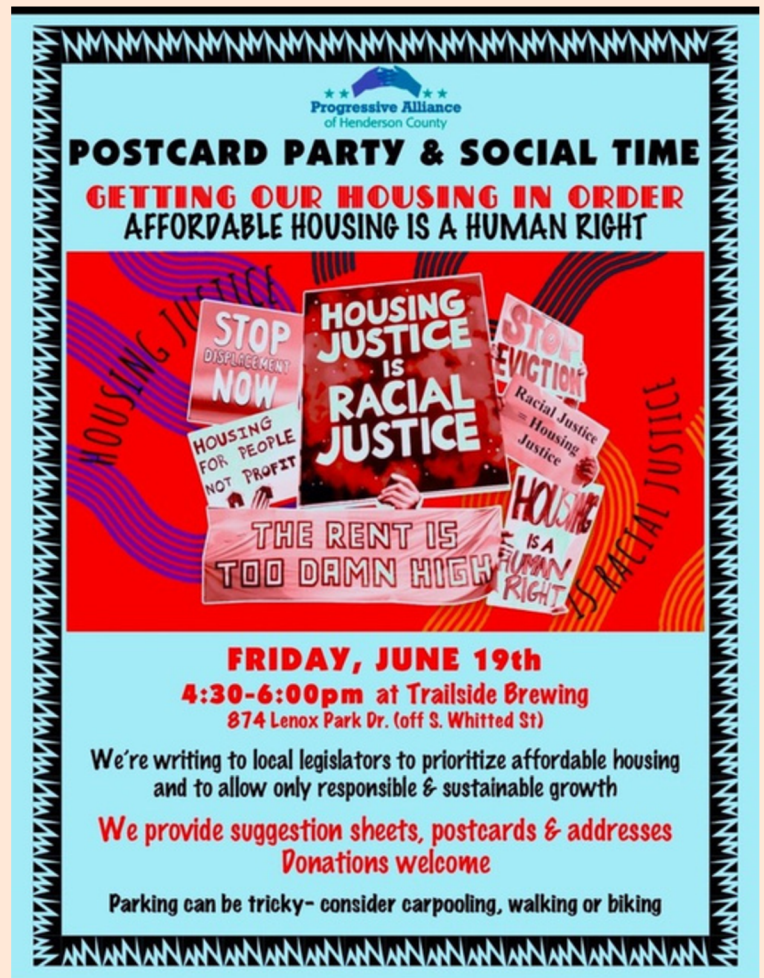
Upward Elementary School is hosting a shoe drive fundraiser to fund a new playground and the PTO. Your gently worn, used and new shoes not only support us and this community, but communities all over the world!


Any size and and style accepted! Kids and adults!


DROP OFF SHOES AT:
FitClub
Carolina Ace Hardware
EFitness Studio

CONTACT:
UpwardPTO@yahoo.com

COLLECTION ENDS JUNE 30TH!




POSTCARD PARTY & SOCIAL TIME
GETTING OUR HOUSING IN ORDER
AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS A HUMAN RIGHT



FRIDAY, JUNE 19th
4:30-6:00pm at Trailside Brewing
874 Lenox Park Dr. (off S. Whitted St)

We're writing to local legislators to prioritize affordable housing and to allow only responsible & sustainable growth

We provide suggestion sheets, postcards & addresses
Donations welcome

Parking can be tricky- consider carpooling, walking or biking