Beloved FCCH,

Advent is here! Advent is from the Latin “adventus” which means coming. I love this season of waiting and anticipation, wondering how the Divine might be born anew in my life, this year. It is different every Advent—~I never know what to expect when I am expecting God to bring forth! My spiritual practices for Advent vary, but I always find a special space in my days to reflect—~either with a devotional guide, a sketchbook or journal. It is good to be quiet when you are expecting. My prayer for each of you is that you find the time to reflect on how God is being born in you this season.

BC-AD
by U.A. Fanthorpe

This was the moment when Before
Turned into After, and the future’s
Uninvented timekeepers presented arms.

This was the moment when nothing
Happened. Only dull peace
Sprawled boringly over the earth.

This was the moment when even energetic Romans
Could find nothing better to do
Than counting heads in remote provinces.

And this was the moment
When a few farm workers and three
Members of an obscure Persian sect

Walked haphazard by starlight straight
Into the kingdom of heaven.

Love,
Karla Miller
The Environmental Stewardship Group (ESG) formed in April of this year, largely inspired by Forum programming organized by Ed O'Keefe around the “Project Drawdown” global warming initiative. The three primary foci of activity are described below. Regular participants include Bob and Cary Battle, Nancy Keswani, Maralee McMillan, Melissa Melum (facilitator), Bob Miles, Jim Nourse, Ed and Romella O'Keefe, Bill Shaffer, Phil Taylor.

**Stream Restoration**

We have been actively involved in the first of a multi-year project to restore the stream and portion of Wash Creek on our property with the ultimate goal of National Wildlife Federation Sacred Grounds Wildlife Habitat certification. We have been clearing out invasive non-native plants to allow existing natives to prosper in addition to new native plantings with more planned next year. Project Lead is Bill Shaffer, and we are collaborating with Ben Coonrod from Ministry of Physical Resources as well as MountainTrue, Town of Laurel Park, and Conserving Carolina (who will likely take ownership of the railroad tracks for the Ecusta Trail). Take a look! But remember: This is a multi-year project that will take a few years to begin to flourish.

**Stream Monitoring**

We are collaborating with MountainTrue on their Adopt-A-Stream monitoring activities involving three potential elements: Visual Surveys, Biomonitoring, Chemical Monitoring. Ginger Fisher and Dede Walton are undertaking the Visual Surveys with the Sunday School, and they have already done some wonderful work. Look for a new bulletin board and/or new website information for details and photos! Biomonitoring starts with MountainTrue training for adults in March 2020, and the need for chemical monitoring will be evaluated as we move forward next year. Project Lead is Cary Battle.

**Educational Outreach to Address Global Warming Issues**

This year’s focus is a program entitled “Healthy Diet, Healthy Planet.” Developed and presented by Melissa Melum, it involves a talk with discussion and educational table. It has been offered twice at Forum, and Melissa hosted the table at the Climate Crisis forum at Grace Lutheran Church in November. Creation Care Alliance (a branch of MountainTrue) is sponsoring the program at FCCH on November 23. Next year we will be planning another education outreach project. Melissa Melum remains the Project Lead in this area.

For more information, contact Melissa Melum mfm322@gmail.com or the appropriate project lead. The next meeting will be at noon on Sunday, January 5. Everyone is welcome!
SERVICE & GIVING NOTES

Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

It’s been a busy, successful year for Service and Giving, formerly Missions and Service. Perhaps the most visible event was this name change, which we believe more accurately reflects the spirit of our intentions.

As custodians of 10 percent of the church’s budget, in 2019 we made direct allocations of $27,480 to local, national, and international charitable organizations and made available another $8,520 through the matching funds program.

With the hurricanes that swept through the U.S. and other parts of the world, some of our donations were earmarked for these natural disasters. Specifically, Service and Giving pledged $700 to be matched by the congregation.

2019 also saw an expansion of our support for Planned Parenthood as we began contributing to the International Planned Parenthood Federation, supplementing the gift we make to the local chapter.

We made our first donation to an organization focused on climate change, adding The Union of Concerned Scientists to our roster. We also added the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, increasing the number of organizations we support that focus on legal issues related to social justice.

Letters of appreciation and newsletters from agencies that receive our support are in a binder in the reception area.

Across the congregation, FCCH members and friends also offered their time and talent through volunteering throughout the community at, among others: Back to School Fest, Feed the Kids, Hendersonville Rescue Mission, Hunger Walk, IAM, and MLK Day of Service.

Volunteer directories are available at the Narthex and gallery entrances to the sanctuary. Service and Giving meets the second Thursday of each month at 10 am in Fellowship Hall. All are welcome to attend.
Church Council Highlights
November 2019

Learned from Ron Miller, Treasurer, that everything is on track financially. We are ahead of budget at the present time. Finance will decide on the amount to take from the Heritage fund at their December meeting, as it looks like the full budgeted disbursement will not be required.

Learned that the Nominating Committee has filled the officer and HRM positions for next year and is assisting ministries and other groups.

Reviewed Mark Acker’s new job description.

Voted to establish a new church account for the Environmental Stewardship Group to receive a donation from a solar panel vendor. Agreed that this was a one time only approval. Concern was expressed about the appropriateness of such donations.

Learned that a new Incident Report Form will be used to report any on-property accidents. Completed forms should be given to Ron for sending to our insurance company.

Approved the purchase of new parlor furniture for $6,000.

Set the Annual Congregational Meeting for January 26, 2020 after worship.

Decided to eliminate Council’s December meeting. Next meeting is January 8, 2020.

Learned that Nicolas Aguilar has started building benches at the labyrinth for his Eagle Scout project.

Learned that building doors will not be re-keyed. The door near the parlor will be keyed in the future. A key policy/form is being created.

Reviewed a letter to Council from Fe Avis addressing considerations for the future and encouraging Council to be proactive. Appreciation was expressed to Fe for his interest and support.
FELLOWSHIP SUPPER

Tuesday, January 21, 2020
Social time begins 5:00 pm - Dinner begins 5:30 pm

Mark your calendars for the first Fellowship Supper of the New Year on January 21st. We are honored to have Rod Whiteside, the Mayor of Fletcher as our speaker in January. Mayor Whiteside was elected Mayor in 2017, and is an outstanding speaker. He is a graduate of Brevard High School and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He is employed by the Ingles corporate office and is the father of Taylor and Carter. Monday, January 20th is Martin Luther King day, and so our Tuesday evening dinner will continue to highlight Dr. King’s legacy. Please join us for a very special evening.

Social time begins at 5:00 P.M. with a Pot Luck supper to follow at 5:30. The program will begin at 6:15. If you are new, and have not attended these monthly suppers (3rd Tuesday of each month), please come and enjoy meeting others in the church.

Bring a dish to share, plus your own place setting, including a plate, utensils and a mug for a hot beverage. There will be a time to sign up so we can set a place for you!

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

IAM (Interfaith Assistance Ministry) experiences a big demand before Christmas for holiday food. Please donate nonperishable items to the box in the front reception area. Stuffing mix, cranberry sauce, sweet potatoes, canned yams, canned vegetables, potatoes/instant potatoes, cake mixes, icing, and canned pumpkin are especially needed. Most needed are 6-10 lb. fresh hams, 8-15 lb. turkeys, and turkey breasts. Please deliver these directly to IAM at 310 Freeman Street, right off Four Seasons Blvd. near Belk.
Dec. 1: "8 Habits of Love: Forgiveness" Mark Acker
We continue our facilitated discussion of Ed Bacon’s 8 Habits of Love. Ed Bacon says: "The only essential to practicing the Habit of Forgiveness is a genuine wish for both yourself and your adversary to become whole. When we experience Forgiveness, it is as though a powerful, loving energy is released and able to move through us." Please join us for a discussion of the importance of forgiving others and ourselves, what makes forgiveness difficult, and the healing power of forgiveness. Mark Acker is Minister of Music at First Congregational Church.

Dec 8: How Stories, Poems, Words, and Music Fire My Artistic Vision Connie Knight
Costanza Knight, known as Connie, has been a full time working artist for 30 years. She will share her account of how stories, poems, words, and music have inspired her to paint in a series and create works of art on a grand scale with more meaning to her. The first years of her working life she was a Speech-Language Pathologist. She attributes this vocation as laying the groundwork for her interest in words, text, and meaning in her visual art. Many of her paintings will be shared in this presentation as examples of the numbers of series that have been the outcome of this strong interest in prose, poetry and music.

Dec 15: Revisiting Ashley Lecture: Bishop Spong Larry Anderson
THE FOURTH GOSPEL; TALES OF A JEWISH MYSTIC by Bishop J S Spong presents a mystical picture of Jesus very different from other New Testament writers. Spong’s many books, like most of the Bible scholars who have done the Ashley Lecture series at FCCH, explore "rescuing the Bible from fundamentalism and literalism".

Rev Larry Anderson is a frequent presenter at FORUM and a member of our church for 15 years. From a northern Illinois dairy farm to the Chicago Theological Seminary to parish ministry to 25 years as a psychotherapist in Michigan, Larry likes to bring an attitude of curiosity and discussion to the Forum.

Dec 22: No Forum as we prepare for the Christmas pageant.
Dec. 29: Release and Renew  Romella Hart O’Keefe
This is an end of the year celebration. The burning bowl ceremony is an opportunity to release to God negative thoughts, feelings, memories and habits that we have clung to during the year. Writing down what we are leasing and committing it to the flame, opens us to the possibilities of new beginnings. With clarity of mind and in anticipation of beginning again, you will be invited to write a letter to God about your hopes and prayers for the New Year. (These letters will be kept for you until December 1st of 2020 when they will be mailed back to you.) Finally, we will end with a White Stone ceremony to celebrate your anticipated new beginning. Please join us for this blessed time of release and renewal.

Romella Hart-O’Keefe is Co-Facilitator of our church’s Prayer Chaplain Program. She retired from a position with Erie County in Buffalo, NY where she was first Director of the Early Intervention Program for children with Disabilities in Erie County, Buffalo, NY.

Jan 5: 8 Habits of Love 6: Fun  Karla Miller
We continue our monthly facilitated discussion of Ashley lecturer Ed Bacon’s 8 Habits of Love, with a focus on Fun. Rev. Karla Miller will lead the discussion.

Jan 12: Soulful Trees  Mary Eichorn
Tree lover? Spiritual wisdom seeker? If so, join Mary Eichorn, retired Clinical Social Worker and friend of FCCH, an interactive forum using photographs to reflect the diversity, beauty and soul found in trees. Perhaps the trees can be a catalyst for re-connecting with our core humanity and unearth qualities we may have lost sight of, such as: resourcefulness, resiliency, optimism, and hope.

Jan 19: Return to El Paso  Annie Fritschner
Shawn Kelly went to El Paso in the spring to support immigrants seeking asylum. When she returned home she told a compelling, emotional story about the conditions on the border. More recently Annie Fritschner retuned to El Paso and will recount the changes at our southern border.

Jan 26: The Writer’s Forum  Rand Bishop
The Writer’s Forum is devoted to our writers, whether church members, friends, or visitors. The writer reads his or her own work, any genre, to the group. If you’d like to read, please contact Rand Bishop at 808-697-0090 or randbishop33@gmail.com. Come support our creativity! Rand, a retired college professor of English, facilitates a Writer’s Roundtable every fourth Thursday morning at the church.
INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

The decision to close the church will be determined when we feel that our church parking lot and sidewalks around the church present a safety hazard. If the church opening is delayed or the church is closed, the following steps will be taken:

Information will be posted on our website fcchendersonville.org

WLOS-TV will be notified. Channel 13 or online WLOS church closings

Your safety is the most important thing. If you do not feel comfortable driving to church, please stay home.

DON'T HAVE A BLUE CHRISTMAS

We here at First Congregational Church want you to feel our congregation is family whether or not you are a member. We are like-minded souls bound by the acceptance of who we are on our personal journey towards wholeness and authenticity. This is important especially around the Holidays when expectations can be high and reality can be lonely and difficult.

For those of us who are not challenged by issues, please reach out and extend yourself with your heart. This is the season of Love and Light after all! If you suspect a serious mental health problem e.g. depression, please let go of stigma and seek the professional help needed. You may contact the mental health committee for recommendations. Karel Bodamer, 828-551-4475.
Eighth Annual HOLIDAY COOKIE SALE

Saturday, December 7, 2019, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

December 7th, the date for our annual cookie sale is fast approaching. Cookie bakers are still needed so, if you would be willing to bake holiday cookies for this sale, it would be much appreciated. The sign-up sheets are on the table in the reception area. The instructions, for getting the baked items to the sale, are listed on a poster at the table.

All church members benefit from these sales because the money raised goes into the Needs of the Church Fund. Recently over $1200, from the fund, was spent to install the church-wide WIFI system and more was spent for 6 chairs with arms for choir members. In the past, purchases included 40 chairs for the choir room, two side tables for the Church Parlor, materials for installing the picture hanging in the Hallway Gallery, new stove tops and the refrigerator. Please go to the "cookie" table to see a complete listing of all the purchases made possible for the church, since our first sale in 2011.

ADVENT WORSHIP

Please join us in a meaningful celebration of Advent. Our worship services each Sunday will guide us in our journey through this holy season.

December 1 – Communion and World’s AIDS Day
December 8 – Advent Quiet Service
December 15 – A Service of Music offered by the FCCH Choir and instruments
December 22 – Christmas Pageant
December 24 – Christmas Eve candlelight service – 5 pm.
Endings and beginnings—out with the old and in with the new—is often the message we tell ourselves at this time of year. The excitement of Christmas and the beginning of a New Year may be followed by a kind of gray “let down” when the festivities are done and we un-decorate.

It’s time to “begin again.” So let’s come to the well and dip our bucket into that ongoing spring of life that is always and ever available to us.

Pull your bucket up filled to overflowing with messages of ever flowing love and blessing. Write your name on this message and repeat it often during the New Year.

You __________________________, are

a beautiful child of God, beloved and unique.

There is no one in the universe just like you, neither before nor after your life here on earth, a special spark of the Divine, right here, right now. Let your light shine!

You are God’s gift to us all. You are blessed and a blessing.

Child of God, you are loved!

We pray that you will re-experience your own special “being-ness” throughout this Holy Season and New Year. We love you, we appreciate you, and we behold the Christ Spirit, that wondrous light of the Divine in you!

Christmas and New Year’s Blessings,

Romella and Ed O’Keefe, Prayer Chaplain Coordinators
IMMIGRATION/INCLUSION NEWS

For anyone who missed the well-attended, three-part Immigration 101 Series, co-sponsored by FCCH, Comprehensive Part 3 on November 14 was featured on the front page of the Times-News on November 16. The following day, an excellent editorial entitled “Reform Not Scapegoating” followed up on the series. Don’t miss either article or these events. For more info, contact Pat or Ed Argue (pkargue@gmail.com).

December:

10th: 10:30-11:30 - Annual ICE Conference - Courtroom 2-New Courthouse. The Sheriff will attend. If you want a seat, arrive by 10 to allow time for security check.

14th - 4-9pm - Fiesta, inaugural free family-friendly multi-cultural event at Grace Lutheran, sponsored by True Ridge. Food & fun for all.

NO MONTHLY SILENT VIGIL for Compassionate Immigration Reform.

January:

16th: 11-1 – Lunch & Learn, “Due Process for Immigrants,” co-sponsored by FCCH at Agudas Israel.

17th: 4-4:30 - Silent Vigil for Compassionate Immigration Reform – Old Courthouse

20th: 12:30 - 6th Annual MLK Day of Service, co-sponsored by FCCH to take place at St. James Episcopal Church – Stay tuned for more details and sign-up sheets.
The FCCH Bookclub will start the year off with “BLOWOUT” by Rachel Maddow on January 14th. Maddow takes us on a journey around the globe revealing the greed and corruption of Big Oil and Gas and drawing a surprising conclusion about why the Russian government hacked the 2016 U.S. election. John Walters will lead our discussion on this important book. Join us in the church library on Tuesday the 14th at 2:00.

PRAYER LIST

Al & Joan Diaz
Mildred Gardner
Judith Hartwell (friend of Trisha LaGrange)
Carol Inman
Gabriel Kerr and Family (friend of Karla Miller)
Priscilla Milo (friend of Joady Perrett)
Betsey Parker
Ingrid Perry
Mike & Margee Richardson (Lester Vier’s family)
Jessica Smith (Tierneys’ niece)
Jeanne Weston (Lester Vier’s sister)
Jane Wilson (friend of Joady Perrett)
Carol Woeppel
Tanis Yorio (friend of Carol Woeppel)

Thank you for letting us know of people who need to be added to our prayer list as well as those that are ready to be taken off.

THE WRITERS’ ROUNDTABLE

Writers—whether members of the church or not— who would like to read from their work (any genre) at a Writers’ Roundtable, are invited to register with Rand Bishop (697-0090 or randbishop33@gmail.com). Listeners are also welcome. The Writers’ Roundtable meets on the fourth Thursday of every month in the Church Parlor at 11:30 am. If you’re reading, please bring 5-6 duplicates of your work to share. Check with Rand for details. The next meeting time is Thursday, January 29th at 11:30.
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<th>December Lectionary</th>
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<td>Second Sunday after Christmas</td>
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<td>December 1</td>
<td>January 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isa 2:1-5</td>
<td>Jer 31:7-14 or Sirach 24:1-12</td>
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<td>Ps 122</td>
<td>Ps 147:12-20 or Wisd of Sol 10:15-21</td>
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<td>Rom 13:11-14</td>
<td>Eph 1:13-14</td>
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<td>Matt 24:36-44</td>
<td>John 1:1-9, 10-18</td>
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<td><strong>Called to Gift</strong></td>
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<td>Isa 11:1-10</td>
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<td>Rom 15:4-13</td>
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<td>Matt 3:1-12</td>
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<td><strong>Vision of Peace</strong></td>
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<td>Ps 146:5-10 or Luke 1:46b-55</td>
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<td>James 5:7-10</td>
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<td>Matt 11:2-11</td>
<td>Acts 10:34-43</td>
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<td><strong>Heartbeat of Justice</strong></td>
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<td>Fourth Sunday of Advent</td>
<td><strong>Possibilities Unfolding</strong></td>
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<td>Isa 7:10-16</td>
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<td>Ps 80:1-7, 17-19</td>
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<td>Rom 1:1-7</td>
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<td><strong>God With Us</strong></td>
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<td>First Sunday after Christmas</td>
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<td>December 29</td>
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<td>Isa 63:7-9</td>
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<td>Ps 148</td>
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<td>Heb 2:10-18</td>
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<td><strong>Cosmic Praise</strong></td>
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<td>Second Sunday after Epiphany</td>
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<td>January 19</td>
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<td>John 1:29-42</td>
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<td><strong>All That We Are</strong></td>
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<td>Isa 9:1-4</td>
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<td>Matt 4:12-23</td>
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<td><strong>Called Together</strong></td>
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**December Birthdays**

01: John Jaster  
01: Mark Ray  
02: Ian Zimmerman  
02: Ericka Fagerlin  
02: James Luzadder  
03: Liz Brennan  
03: Carol Inman  
04: Nicolas Aguilar  
04: Kinsey Jenkins  
07: Donna Gross  
07: Debbie Cope  
12: Linda Laderach  
15: Richard Tyler  
16: Charles Littleton  
17: Becky Rowland  
21: Nancy Keswani  
25: Martha Hogenboom  
27: Doreen Jenkins

**December Anniversaries**

06: Mark & Lynne Cigal  
18: Bob & Cary Battle  
27: Bob & Sharon McLendon  
28: Jace Kahn & Cynthia Bright  
28: Bob Miles & Diane Swift

**January Birthdays**

02: Jayne Miller  
10: Gill Emery  
13: Bob Palmer  
13: Bev Ward  
16: Alan Schmalz  
16: Larry Anderson  
16: Mark Acker  
17: Ellen Honea  
20: Diane Rhoades  
22: Pat Argue  
29: Cynthia Bright  
19: Becky Evans  
31: Liz Thurston

**January Anniversaries**

Jan. 21: Fe Avis & Shawn Kelly  
Jan. 22: Richard & Diana Brantley
Christmas Sabbath

In recognition of the holiness of Christmas, there will not be any meetings scheduled at the Church from December 23rd thru December 27th at the church. Wishing you a joyful time with friends and family.

From the Church Staff
Karla, Mark, Sheryl,
Dora and Charles -
extend our warmest Christmas greetings to you all.
The office will be closed From December 23rd through January 1st.

ATTENDANCE

Children's
Worship Sunday School
11/03 - 181 4
11/10 - 160 5
11/17 - 189 13
11/24 - 200 8

Average Worship Attendance: 183

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Sheryl Tellier, Administrator (sheryl@fcchendersonville.org)
Dora & Charles Littleton, Custodians

Rev. David G. Kelly, Jr., Pastor Emeritus

Next Chronicle deadline January 22, 2019
First Congregational UCC
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Justice, Compassion, Inclusion