



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH • HENDERSONVILLE**

March 2025 Chronicle

Note from Rev. Karla:

"There is the part of us that waits for the next bad thing to happen and at the same time we look to the horizon expecting to see the sun rise. The terrible will come, the pain will come, the joy will come, the beauty will come. All these things we hold as truth" -Kate Bowler

Beloved,

We are hovering on the threshold of Lent, the time in the liturgical year commemorating the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness, fasting, praying, and enduring. We begin with Ash Wednesday where we hear the words, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return." It's not exactly joyful, and yet it is a truth to remember. Author Kate Bowler writes, "Lent invites us to stop pretending we can hold it all together and instead sit with the weight of what we carry—the grief, the regrets, the messes we can't untangle, no matter how we try." I know that sounds heavy, but in reality, it's a gift to remember we are human, and so is everyone else, and we get to share the terrible and the joy in community.

We are offering a couple of opportunities to deepen your Lenten practice. First, please join us for Fat Ash Wednesdays to transition into the season. Pancakes at 5, Imposition of Glitter Ashes at 6. Please join us.

During the Sundays of Lent, Mark and I will be exploring ideas and progressive theology around the big things of faith~~the bible, the cross, prayer, and more. Then, on Tuesdays at 10 am, I will lead us into a deeper discussion of these ideas. Everyone is welcome.

In addition, we have a small devotional guide from our friends at The Salt Project, entitled: "Coming Back to Life." I think you will enjoy the practices and readings within its pages. We will have copies available beginning March 2.

One last quote from psychologist James Finley for the journey: *"God is the presence that spares us from nothing, even as God unexplainable sustains us in all things."*

**Big Peace + Deep Love,
Karla**

A Message from our Moderator, Bob McLendon

My son Patrick graduated from Mercer University with a degree in Philosophy. I remember kidding him that when I looked in the newspaper for employment opportunities, I did not see any listing for a Philosopher. Lately I have been reading some philosophy books trying to imagine what sparked Patrick interest in this discipline. Borden Parker [1847-1910] taught Philosophy at Boston Univ. for 30 years and he wrote a lot about the "moral and ethical life". He wrote "our moral task is to make this life, so far as possible an expression of rational goodwill. The greatest need in ethics is the unselfish will to do the right thing." His point was that errors in ethical judgment arise less from willful lying than from indifference to truth and doing the right thing. Social righteousness may be clearly expressed in our laws and constitution, but it lives only in the "moral vigilance" of the people. I am grateful that our church First Congregational has enlightened all of us in the importance of moral and ethical vigilance.

Church Council Meeting Highlights for February's Meeting - 2025

IMPORTANT NOTE: Council meetings are always open to all FCC Members and Friends. Please notify the Moderator, Bob McLendon, if you would like to attend.

☑ January Financial Results were very good!

○ Total Income YTD was \$13,666 more than budgeted.

○ Total Expenses YTD were \$4,122 less than budgeted.

○ The Net Result of the General Operating Fund YTD was \$17,788 - better than budgeted.

☑ Investments did well in January also.

☑ We received \$20,051 from the Ecusta Trail Attorneys.

☑ Overall, in 2024, we took in approximately 95% of what was pledged.

☑ An additional grant of \$2K has been attained for the parking lot retention pond.

☑ Pam Rogers will be the newly appointed Facilitator of the PPRM.

Lin Stogner

Clerk

Worship Attendance throughout February:

Feb 2: 143

Feb 16: 173

Feb 9: 155

Feb 23: 152

Lent and Easter at First Congregational Church



Wednesday, March 5 -- Fat Ash Wednesday: we begin our Lenten season with a free pancake supper at 5 pm in the Fellowship Hall, followed by the imposition of ashes service. Please sign-up this Sunday if you can attend!

Tuesdays at 10 am during Lent: Talk Back & Discussion with Karla Miller about the previous week's sermon topic.

Sundays in Lent and Easter: the sermons each Sunday

(with exception of March 23 when we have a guest preacher) will address aspects of progressive theology:

March 9 The Bible

March 16 God and Jesus

March 23 Rev. Brian Combs, guest preacher

March 30 Original Sin and Atonement

April 6 Prayer and Miracles

April 13 Palm Sunday

April 20 Easter

New Small Groups beginning in Lent



Banned Books Reading Group

IN AN ERA OF INCREASING BOOK BANS AND CENSORSHIP, Join me for a new reading group on March 13th at 1:00 pm to discuss banned books and to form a listing of books to read this year. Every person deserves access to diverse stories, perspectives, and ideas – especially those that challenge us to think differently about the world. For more information, contact Catherine.fairbanks@yahoo.com.



If you need time to unwind, consider joining the Mindfulness Coloring group beginning March 12 at 1:00 pm in the library. The fundamental concept of mindfulness coloring is that the act of coloring pre-drawn illustrations provides an opportunity to suspend our inner dialogue and engage in an activity that disregards the flow of negative thoughts that can dominate our lives. As with meditation, mindfulness coloring allows us to switch off extraneous thoughts and focus on the moment.

- Where: FCCH Library
- When: Weekly Starting Wednesday, March 12 at 1 pm, and each week thereafter
- Bring: Supplies of colored pencils, markers, coloring books, etc.
- Contact: catherine.fairbanks@yahoo.com



CIRCLE OF FRIENDS UPDATE

We have nearly reached the two-year mark for the Circle of Friends small group program. 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 is now time to begin the process again. We suggest that you meet with your current group through May and take the summer off. New groups will be formed with a plan to begin meeting in September.

HOW WILL IT WORK?

- Those who wish to participate will be assigned to groups of 8-10 people; couples will be in the same group. Each group will have a designated convener to handle logistics.
- 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.

WHAT'S THE SCHEDULE?

MARCH – Information will be provided regarding the small group program and new schedule for the next round of groups.


APRIL – JUNE - We will have registration forms available during coffee hour, and/or we can email you a form.

AUGUST – Groups will be formed and a kick-off event planned to get things started.

SEPTEMBER – Groups start meeting.

For further information feel free to contact any of the committee members:

Phyllis Rhinehart	321-848-6397	p1rhineha@gmail.com
Cathy Evans	770-841-7351	catbevans@yahoo.com
Krista Kaufman	828-513-9476	kristakaufman41@gmail.com



Do You Have an Idea for a FORUM Program?

We are looking for ideas for program presentations in Forum that would be helpful to our congregation. What subjects do you think we need to address in Forum? Or would you like to present a program in Forum? We want this learning hour to be helpful to our congregation, so your ideas will be appreciated.

Contact Karla
(karla@fcchendersonville.org)
or Mark
(mark@fcchendersonville.org).

Brian Combs will preach and lead FORUM on Sunday, March 23

Rev. Brian Combs, the founding pastor of the Haywood Street Congregation in Asheville, will speak in Forum, and offer the sermon in worship on March 23. The Haywood Street Congregation is a dynamic ministry to those who are without homes. Brian is a fantastic speaker, and impacted all of us who heard him speak this past summer. Invite your friends to be here for Forum and worship for this very special Sunday.

Live-Streaming Our Worship Service Task Force

Do you have interest or expertise in media or technology? Would you be interested in being a part of a task force to help us determine the best path forward? We're ready to move with this important project.

Please contact Mark
(mark@fcchendersonville.org)
if you would like to be a part of this task force.

Honoring Those Turning 90 Years Old

We want to honor members of our church who turn 90 years old by singing Happy Birthday in worship, offering a congregational blessing and most importantly, to have birthday cake in Coffee Hour. If you, or if you know of someone, who is turning 90, please contact Jennifer, our church administrator
(office@fcchendersonville.org).

Game Night at FCCH!!!

Everyone is invited to our first FCCH Game Night on Friday, March 28, at 6 p.m. This is the perfect event for all ages in our church to have a fun night together. Bring your favorite board game and a snack to share (if you want). We'll also have some pizza and soft drinks. Don't miss this fun event! If you need childcare, or for more information about Game Night, contact Angie or Jan Buchanan
(angelabuchanan05@gmail.com or revjanbuchanan2015@gmail.com).

John Pavlovitz is our Ashley Lecture Speaker in April

Mark your calendar for Saturday and Sunday, April 26 and 27, for the Ashley Lectures with John Pavlovitz. John is a dynamic speaker and amazing writer with four published books and an online blog read by thousands of people. John has a unique way of tying social justice, commentary on the state of our country, and spirituality. John will speak on April 26 at 10 am and 1 pm, and on Sunday, April 27, at 9 am Forum and in worship at 10:30 am. The lectures are free and a box lunch will be available for purchase by reservation (\$10).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Our Church Family



John Sams

The Rev. Dr. John R. Sams, a longtime member and former Moderator of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ passed away on February 11, 2025. John and his wife, Frances, spent their lives in mission work. Serving first in Thailand, then in the Philippines and finally as President of American Leprosy Mission. John and Frances retired to Hendersonville, North Carolina in 1990 and were proud to call FCC/UCC their church home. A service honoring John will be held at First Congregational Church at 11 am on Saturday, April 5, followed by a reception in the church Fellowship Hall.

Sunday School pictures from 2/16/25

1. Veronica and friends
2. Hannah and Harper share a moment
3. Penny loves stacking blocks



James Carlin

We're so proud of James Carlin, who recently donated 10 inches of hair to Wigs for Kids. He is so excited that he was able to help another child, and his haircut looks great!

(photo by Lauren Carlin)

Notes from our Service and Giving Team

A hearty **thank you** to all who recently donated soup of all varieties for the Service & Giving Souper Bowl collection. We thank Bill Shaffer for delivering 238 lbs. of soup to IAM just in time for those who need food assistance to enjoy a bowl of soup during our latest cold spell.

The FCC Service & Giving team is supporting our friends at Trinity Presbyterian who plan a "Guns to Gardens" event with a tentative date of June 21st. This event is in coordination with Hendersonville Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense and RawTools Inc. "Disabling a gun isn't something most people do every day. We are building a network that helps people connect with others who have the knowledge, resources, and safe spaces to disable guns according to Federal ART guidelines." Contact John Owens at john.owens@trinitypresb.org with questions or to volunteer to support this event.



www.childrenandfamily.org

Children and Family Resource Center invites
8 to 10 members of FCC to dinner at
Kenmure Country Club!

It's their way of thanking us for the support
we have provided over the years and especially
for our sponsorship of their September 2024 canceled
Harvest Dinner. The May 13 meal will be a served buffet
and stations with lots of options to accommodate food
preferences. **Check your May calendar; save the date.**
Kindly RSVP (by March 12) to Sheila Clendenning
bsheila.nc@gmail.com or text: 757 635 0931.



Rummage Sale for Project Linus

Saturday, March 22, 8:30am-2:00pm

Church Fellowship Hall

The mission of Project Linus is first to provide love, a sense of security, warmth and comfort to children who are seriously ill, traumatized or otherwise in need of the new handmade blankets, lovingly created by volunteers. This one-day sale will enable Project Linus to purchase materials to help continue its mission.

This past August, Project Linus partnering with our Service & Giving team and Upward Elementary School established 'calm spots' in each of the 23 classrooms. Initially, 23 hand-made blankets and over 100 pocket hugs for each "Calm Spot" at the school. Following devastating Hurricane Helene, Project Linus donated 75+ more blankets to school families and many more pocket hugs.

Sale Contributions: We invite you to come and join the fun! If you'd like to contribute items for the sale, we will be setting up the sale of Friday, March 21, from 8:30am-1:00pm in the Fellowship Hall. Please price and mark your items. No machinery or clothes, please. Knick-knacks, books, kitchen items, hand tools, jewelry, notions, decorations, crafts, puzzles, toys all accepted!

Sign up to help:

- 1) set up on Friday, March 21, anytime between 8:30am-1pm
- 2) to work the sale on Saturday, March 22, anytime from 8:30am-2pm
- 3) Bring refreshments for sale workers on Friday or Saturday

See Romella Hart-O'Keefe after church on Sundays or contact her directly with questions or to sign up at: 828-290-6197 or edrookeefe@gmail.com.

Community News & Involvement

Help Support Hispanic Community

Here are a few ways you can help to support the local Hispanic community now:

1. Are you a notary public? You don't have to speak Spanish. Contact Kimberly Dunbar (kdunbar@gracehendersonville.com) if you can assist.
2. Are you willing to transport items (i.e. food, medication), people or both? If so, please let Kimberly Dunbar know.
3. Write letters to your local elected leaders. Here are [sample letters](#) to get you started.



Resources for Women and Girls: What's Available and Needed?
American Association of University Women
Thursday, March 13. 11:30 AM (Optional Lunch)
12:00 PM. (Program)
First Congregational Church Hendersonville

Join Elizabeth Moss, Executive Director of IAM, Daniel Carley, Community Engagement Director of Pisgah Legal, and Krissey Browder Masotti, Development Director of THRIVE for a panel discussion.

Please RSVP to ssmreb@bellsouth.net if you plan to attend. To reserve a lunch, please indicate LC (chicken salad) or LT (smoked turkey) with chips, sweet tea and dessert (\$16) For more information, contact AAUWHendo@gmail.com



Presenting Juvenile Crime: Everyone's Concern, Everyone's Responsibility
March 18, 2025. 5:00 pm. Kaplan Auditorium, Main Library, 301 Washington Street
Free and Open to the Public
Henderson County Juvenile Crime Prevention council Chair Sally Bucholz will present on local available services and how we can support our at-risk youth in our community.



Birthdays in March

Shirley Retzsch	March 1	Cheryl Roberts	March 11	Craig Stogner	March 25
Mike Barker	March 1	James Carlin	March 12	Dee Shuttlesworth	March 27
Rich Stewart	March 3	Liz Hill	March 19	Scott Querin	March 31
Dana Vannoy	March 7	Jim Hollingsworth	March 24		

We'd like to celebrate YOU with YOU. Please let Jennifer know your birthday (without year!) by sending an email to office@fcchendersonville.org or by dropping a note by the office.



March 16 - April 6 MIGRANT FARM WORKERS SUPPLIES COLLECTION

COLLECTING THESE NEW ITEMS ONLY:

*OR, make a cash donation via check,
made out to First Congregational
with memo: "Migrant Farm Workers."*

Thank you!



- **100% Cotton Bandanas**
- **Work Gloves**
- **Ball Caps**
- **Toothbrushes**
- **Toothpaste**
- **Bar Soap**
- **Gatorade Powder**