



**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH • HENDERSONVILLE**

In our diversity we find strength...

No matter where you've been, or where you are
on life's journey, you are welcome and needed here!



2025

February Chronicle

FCCH

***In this edition, we take a look back at
our activities and successes, assess
where we are as a community, and
look for future opportunities to
engage and serve together.***



A Note from Our Pastor . . .

Dear FCCH,

There is so much happening around our church! Please read this Chronicle and mark your calendars.

My valentine to you is a poem by Chelan Harkin.

It's when the earth shakes
And foundations crumble
That our light is called
To rise up.
It's when everything falls away
And shakes us to the core
And awakens all
Of our hidden ghosts
That we dig deeper to find
Once inaccessible strength.
It's in times when division is fierce
That we must reach for each other
And hold each other much
Much tighter.

Do not fall away now.
This is the time to rise.
Your light is being summoned.
Your integrity is being tested
That it may stand more tall.
When everything collapses
We must find within us
That which is indomitable.
Rise, and find the strength in your heart.
Rise, and find the strength in each other
Burn through your devastation,
Make it your fuel.
Bring forth your light.
Now is not the time
To be afraid of the dark.

Beloved FCCH, you are a big part of my heart, and I am grateful to be a part of yours.

In Love's sake,
Karla



A Message from Our Moderator, Bob McLendon

I wanted to thank all of you who attended our Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday Jan 26. Approximately 100 members attended which far exceeded what is needed for a quorum. We are a congregational church which means our members elect our leaders, finalize our budget, approve any expenditures over \$10,000 and give wide range of recommendations to our Ministries. Your voice is important and needed. We will have another important opportunity for our congregation to give guidance to our elected leadership on Sunday Feb. 23 at 9am Forum which will be conducted by our Church Council. At the closing of our recent Annual Meeting as Moderator I had the opportunity to make a few remarks about the year ahead - 2025 for FCC . Below is a brief summary of my remarks for those who were not able to attend.

Summary of Moderator Bob Mc Lendon remarks at closing of Annual Meeting of FCC

Jan. 26, 2025: Your Facilitators of Ministries and Church Council have a clear sense of purpose but more importantly we see our work not as a task but as a blessing.

Let us at FCC " Imagine Together " 2025 knowing that compassion and love are the lifeblood of our church. Our congregation knows that service to others shapes our own well being and happiness and inspires us to be closer to God. You know it - I know it - Compassion is our defiant, relentless spirit at FCC that simply will not allow this church to turn away when someone is hurting, even for people we do not know. Our church and congregation has no tolerance for bigotry, violence, or hatred. I believe that FCC is a church that this community desperately needs more than ever in 2025. With inspiration from our ministers Karla and Mark this congregation will do our best everyday to be "kinder than necessary".

I would like to sincerely thank again on behalf of our congregation the outgoing leadership. Most of which have served in leadership roles for 3 years or more. When you see them please express your appreciation for the many hours of work they have given to your church.

Linda Laderach - Facilitator of Worship

Stephanie Lowder - Facilitator of Community Service and Giving

Bruce Mills - Facilitator of Community Service and Giving

Mindy Myers - Facilitator of Physical Resources

Mark Fagerlin - Facilitator for Finance

Dawn Kucera - Interim Facilitator for Finance



In closing this column I encourage you to think "What are the seeds God is trying to plant in you" for our church.



Friends and Families of FCCH



Sunday Worship

Attendance

Jan 5 - 155

Jan 12 - no svc/ice

Jan 19 - 135

Jan 26 - 145

Sunday School

A new Sunday School assistant has been hired! **Please welcome Hannah Cerceda!!!**

They sure do stay busy!

Our February Birthdays!



Ginger Zemp Feb 2

Elle Travis Feb 3

Carolyn Wilson Feb 4

Virginia Erwin Feb 4

Mike Erwin Feb 6

John Caldemeyer Feb 6

Sammye Whitney Feb 8

Conrad Weeks Feb 8

Linda Yopps Feb 15

Ken Whitney Feb 20

Susan Janhke Feb 20

Jan Caldemeyer Feb 22

Xavier Cone Feb 27

Anne Ogburn Feb 28



2 New Members **Welcomed into** **the FCCH Family!**

<-- Joanne Rather
and
Janet Slimak -->





Church Council Meeting Highlights for January'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.

Year End Financial Results were exceptionally good!

- o Total Income YTD was \$39,668 more than budgeted.
- o Total Expenses YTD were \$925 more than budgeted.
- o The Net Result of the General Operating Fund YTD was \$38,743*- better than budgeted.

- Although our investments were not as good in December, we still ended the year in good shape.
- The Church Council voted to move the \$38,743* better than budgeted Net Results to the property maintenance fund.
- The Church Council approved the 2025 Final Budget presented at the Annual Congregational Meeting.
- The Buddy K band will perform in the Fellowship Hall Saturday, February 15 at 3 PM. Snacks and drinks will be served.
- The Council voted to allow the PPRM group to delay nominations and election of new members until the completion of the Bylaws revisions.
- Two Council members will not be seeking waivers or re-election: Linda Laderach, Facilitator of the Ministry of Worship and Mindy Myers, Facilitator of the Ministry of Physical Resources.
- We were given a beautiful Grand Piano, located in the Fellowship Hall, by Jan Kelly.

Lin Stogner
Clerk





What We Imagine



Imagine Together

The theme of our pledge drive this year was “Imagine Together”. As part of our drive, along with your pledge card, you were invited to submit what you imagined FCC could become. We received quite a number of responses from you and given that we’re First Congregational, the variety of responses was wide. We can’t promise that we’ll be able to accomplish everything, but we’re certainly looking at them all. Mostly we wanted everyone to know that we heard you, we appreciate your responses and we’ll be considering them as we move through 2025. Here’s some of what we all imagined together.

Broadly Aspirational

- Church is taking care of the Earth that takes care of us.
- Offer a place for those who feel isolated, forgotten, and ignored – even at church.

Physical Improvements

- Imagines some change or improvement to the physical part of our church:
- Imagine having a commercial kitchen where we can practice even more hospitality with our neighbors, the immigrant community, farmers, non-profits . . . And imagine all the yummy food shared together!
- FULLY online: service live-streamed



What We Imagine (continued)

External Church Activity.

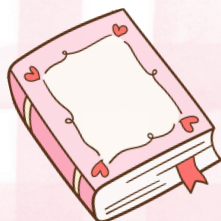
Imagines something our church could start or assist within the broader community:

- MORE community sharing – more coffee, meditation, concerts, parking lots fairs – especially with other congregations.
- Invite & produce live theater/performances.
- Partner with other churches in the community who are like minded to do stuff.
- Uplift – ride share for anyone able to drive church members to whatever

Internal Church Activity.

Imagines something our congregation and minsters could do:

- Game nights; Trivia; Any events to socialize
- Encourage more young families. More child participation within the church service. Children being A PART of (connected to) the whole church, not apart.
- Do work on racism & classism.
- I dream/imagine about a praise & worship time, singing songs of contemporary Christian artists.
- A church that has pastoral associates (volunteers) who can assist the ministers with more routine pastoral type visits.
- Healing HeART together! I would like to facilitate an ongoing healing arts group.





Strengthening Our Connections:



As a congregation, we regularly look for ways to strengthen connections with each other. One way to do that is to warmly welcome all to coffee hour following the service.

Toward that end, you'll notice two changes at upcoming coffee hours:

- 1) one or more long "community" tables will be set up to make it easier to meet and talk with each other; and
- 2) a designated volunteer will be on hand to guide interested parties to the community tables and introduce them to others seated there. This may be particularly helpful for newer members and visitors. A sheet will be available at coffee hour to sign up to be a coffee hour guide. Please take advantage of this important opportunity that requires little time but could mean so much to someone who is easily overwhelmed by large gatherings.

We can all do our part in welcoming others, as Karla has mentioned, by inviting those we don't know—either before the service begins, during the Holy Hello time, or immediately following the service—to join us at coffee hour, a Friendship Dinner or a Sunday morning Forum session.

There are so many ways to be welcomed and feel welcome at FCCUCC. These small changes are meant to strengthen connections already made and create new ones. Do you have other ideas on how we might accomplish that? Use the attendance pad found in the pews to write any suggestions.

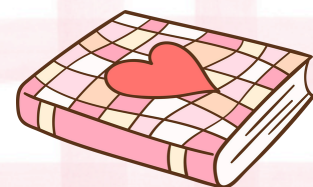
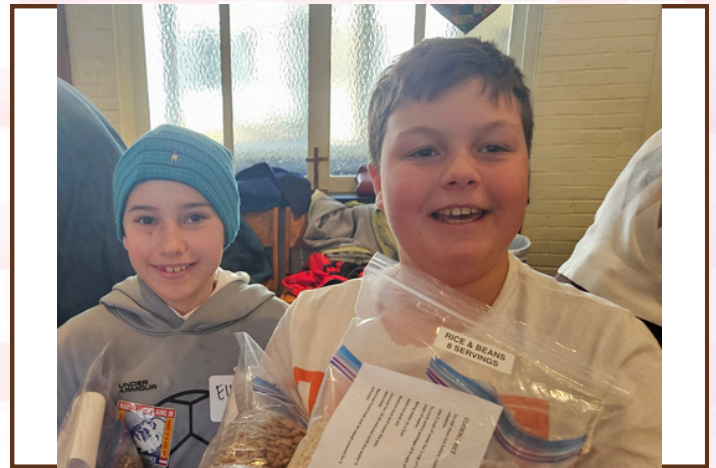




FCCH at MLK Day of Service



We packed 952 meals for families of 4 (3808 single meals) plus 160 extra bean packages. At least 200 volunteers, including Gov. Stein and Mrs. Stein, participated. Funds allocated by FCC and other area congregations made possible the purchase of supplies.





Caregivers of Mother Earth



Did you know that **Caregivers of Mother Earth and FCCH** support mental health for school children at Upward Elementary School through an after school garden club, pocket hugs for every child and “calm spots” in each classroom?

Members of the Henderson County Public School Board heard all about it in brief public comments delivered by Elle Travis on Jan. 13th.

FCCH's Service/Giving team focused on Upward Elementary School in our 2024 back-to-school drive, donating 300 book bags in August. Proceeds from the sale of the late Ed O'Keefe's amazing book collection were donated by Romella Hart-O'Keefe.

Your kindness and generosity as a congregation continues to create ripples for good in our community."

Best,
Elle Travis, Chief Pollinator





Social Justice and Community Involvement



Feed the Kids Coalition is a 501(c)(3) organization comprised of teams from many Henderson County faith-based and civic groups who care about the health and welfare of local children. In 2013, the formal non-profit Feed the Kids Coalition was established. Six community teams rotate every six weeks, feeding 275–350 youth different meals each Friday in about one hour. Team #1, volunteers from First Congregational and St. James only, has contributed thousands of volunteer hours, in-kind donations and lots of kitchen time in their rotations. Beyond all the food buying, preparation and serving, something far more profound happens. While providing basic nutrition, there is time to talk and to listen, to each other and the kids. Relationships are created with the children, friendships formed, traditions built. The volunteers have a really good time in the kitchen as well, preparing the entrée, veggies and fruit.

Please come take a look at what we are about and what we are doing in person, or you can visit feedthekidscoalition.org.

We hope you decide to sign up for a few hours every 6 weeks. There are many ways to plug in – shopping, food preparation* (chopping to stirring and all in between), serving, transporting and cleaning up.

To sign up, or for questions, please contact team leaders: Here at First Congregational—> Joyce Tierney, joycie47@gmail.com, 203-530-0318.

Anyone and everyone interested is much appreciated and welcomed to fill your hearts as you feed the kids. - First Congregational Team, Feed The Kids

Hendersonville Rescue Mission Feed The Adults

Not only do First Congregational members Feed the Kids on a regular basis, but also – for more than ten years – we've been helping to feed the community's hungry at Hendersonville Rescue Mission on Maple Street.

On two, and sometimes three, nights a month, two First Congregational volunteers serve already-prepared hot dinners to about 40 men, women and children – which takes about one hour.

You can view the food serving process on the Rescue Mission's website: hendersonvillerescuemission.org.

If you'd like more information about this volunteer opportunity, please ask First Congregational's team leader:

Pat Argue, 891-4521 or pkargue@gmail.com.

Just as with the Rescue Mission's diners, new food serving team members are always welcome. Join us



League Sponsors Program on Welcoming All Our Learners

Did you know that Henderson County Public Schools has served as a leader in providing services to our growing multilingual community?

The League of Women Voters of Henderson County invites you to learn about the amazing work of our educators at a lunch and learn program, presented by Simone Wertenberger, “Welcoming All Our Learners—Language Learning Strategies That Work,” to be held Feb. 25 from 11:30 am-1:00 pm at the First Congregational Church, 1735 5th Ave W, Hendersonville, NC.

Attendees are invited to bring lunch; the League will provide beverages and dessert.
For more information about the League, go to the LWVHC website at: <https://www.lwvhcnc.org>.

Belated thanks to generous members & friends who donated Senior Blessings last December. Sharon Johnson & Sheila Clendenning delivered more than 80 festively-wrapped shoeboxes filled with FCC love for clients of the Council on Aging.

