

**Core Values of  
First Congregational United Church of Christ  
Hendersonville, North Carolina**

**Welcoming and Inclusive**

- Being open, accepting, and non-judgmental toward diverse people, viewpoints and beliefs
- Being “open and affirming” (UCC’s formal commitment to people with different gender identities and sexual orientations)
- Welcoming and assimilating strangers with friendly hospitality and generosity, whether they become members or not
- Encouraging and respecting diverse sources of wisdom on our spiritual journey, including from other faith traditions

Examples of how we express this value: LGBT outreach, including conducting gay marriages; sharing our building with the MCC Church; Great Religions lecture series; many ecumenical activities and events, like Seder celebration; receiving into membership non-Christians; and participation in many cooperative interfaith events and activities

**Progressive Christianity**

- Striving to understand and follow the teachings and actions of Jesus
- Being a covenantal rather than creedal church – This means our being in relationship with God and understanding that this includes loving and caring for each other in all our diversity, rather than expecting everyone to believe the same thing
- Valuing right actions more than right beliefs, leading to an action-oriented congregation that “walks its talk” and is willing to take risks through those actions
- Benefiting from sermons relevant to modern day issues and current affairs
- Being free to believe and act in accordance with our own experience of God
- Questioning, thinking, evolving, and life-long learning

Examples of how we express this value: worship which is devoid of doctrines or creeds; weekly Adult Forums; Ashley Lecture Series; book & Bible studies; winter education series; a progressive children’s Sunday school curriculum; and much activism/advocacy around social justice issues

**Nurturing Community**

- Enjoying and getting to know one another as a church family and spiritual home
- Nourishing and supporting our members’ spiritual and personal journeys, whatever they may be, and joyfully and generously ministering to their needs
- Offering a sense of belonging and promoting participation in congregational activities
- Demonstrating genuine friendliness and generosity toward one another with little conflict, i.e. disagreeing with one another and still respecting and loving the other
- Offering opportunities for personal and spiritual growth in a loving and accepting environment
- Being inspired by music that lifts our spirits and deepens our worship
- Encouraging members and non-members to easily participate in church life and to pursue their passions and ideas

Examples of how we express this value: Coffee Hour after Sunday services; monthly fellowship suppers; Connections groups; prayer ministry and Compassion Guild; sensitive pastoral care; members initiating the vegetable garden and solar panels

### **Practicing Compassion**

- Empathizing with and practicing compassion, especially for those who are less fortunate and in need – “every single one” wherever they may be
- Dedicating at least 10% of the church’s annual budget to well-researched charitable and social justice organizations, in addition to special giving opportunities
- Volunteering with many community service projects and organizations – as a church and as individuals

Examples of how we express this value: very active mission and service group; financial support of about 30 local, national, and global agencies; top church fund-raising for the Hunger Walk; Feed the Kids and Rescue Mission volunteering; Dream Scholarship and Immigration Network; donation to IAM of vegetables from church garden; La Capilla Church summer tutoring; and individual volunteer service with many local caring organizations, like Hospice, Humane Society, IAM, and Boys and Girls Club

### **Justice/Social Action:**

- Standing with the outcast and oppressed, the denigrated and afflicted in order to seek peace and justice
- Standing up against discriminatory social and legal practices by embodying resistance and daring
- Participating in effective social justice issue action groups, including homelessness/housing, gun violence, mental health, national inclusiveness/immigration, and care of all of God’s creation
- Supporting a pastor who takes risks for justice and peace

Examples of how we express this value: public stands and demonstrations against unfair laws and policies, like NC restrictive marriage amendment and transgender law; writing our elected officials, letters to the editor and op-ed pieces; placing ads in local newspapers; participating in community vigils for social change, like gun violence; collaborations with like-minded groups; and installing solar panels to protect the environment