Beloved FCCH ~

I offer you this month a prayer I wrote for the beginning of Lent, which first appeared in the Western North Carolina Association (WNCA) of the Southern Conference of the UCC weekly newsletter on February 26, 2020. Blessings to you as you walk through Lent together.

As I begin this journey of fasting and seeking, and remembering I am made of stardust and earth, I return to You, over and over and over again.

I pray for my mind, my heart, my body, ashes to ashes and dust to dust, to repent - return to You.

I am but a glittering smudge of glory and a being falling short--failing short--so short of all the Glory inside me.

In the silence of my mind I consider You, O Holy Love. Longingly I pray for your Presence to stalk the spaces in the wrinkles of my brain.

In the gaping empty of my broken heart, cracked open, I hope your Shimmering shines upon Impossible possibility.

In the breath in my bones,
In the heartbeat in my pulse,
In the fibre and matter of my every cell, I crave You,
Ash of my ashes, Dust of my dust, Glimmer and Ground of my being.
Amen.

Love,
Karla
THE MINISTRY FAIR ….. is coming on March 15th

So just what is a Ministry Fair? For those who have been attending First Congregational for a while, I think the last Ministry Fair was about five years ago. For newer members and friends, or for those who might have missed the last one, read on …

The Ministry Fair will occur during coffee hour on Sunday, March 15 in Fellowship Hall. There will be tables around the hall with information on the active groups at First Congregational – ministries, sub-ministries, interest groups, and other activities that occur on a weekly or monthly basis at our church.

The purpose of this event is two-fold:

First, this is an educational opportunity for everyone to learn about our activities and for you to see if any of these connect with your individual passions. It is meant to be a “one-stop-shop” so to speak. So rather than waiting for some article in the Chronicle or searching out the list of meetings on a bulletin board, you can learn about almost everything we are doing at one place and time. Almost 30 activities will be represented.

Some tables will have information pages on specific activities. Some will have sign-up sheets for anyone interested in signing up to be involved or to just request more information by e-mail or phone. And there will be “experts” at many of the tables to answer your questions.

Our hope is that you will find one or more activities that match your passions, and thereby will become more involved in the life of your church. These activities provide a great way to build relationships with other members and friends, both new and more established, and to join together in making a difference in the world.

Second, you probably have noticed that we are growing in both worship attendance and membership – especially over the last two years. To continue to do all the things we are doing, the church needs more people to be involved in our work. This helps to spread the workload when there are more hands involved. And new people bring new ideas and new energy to our activities, which is always welcome.

So I hope to see you at the Ministry Fair!

And a special thanks to the Fair planning team: Pastor Karla, Mark Acker, Dawn Kucera, and Nancy Keswani.

Thanks for reading,

Phil Taylor, Moderator
NEW BUSINESS

1. **Check Signing Resolution.** Council approved a resolution adding three people to be authorized to sign checks. These are Phil Taylor, Donna Jones and Joan Nobling.

2. **Wellness Action Group Mission Statement.** The former Mental Health Group has renamed itself the Wellness Action Group, and has expanded their mission to include issues dealing with healthy self-care practices, self-discovery and personal growth. Council gave voice approval to their new mission statement.

3. **Pastor’s report.** Karla asked that if anyone knows of a person who is ill or having surgery, please let Sheryl know (sheryl@fcchendersonville.org). At Karla’s request, the Council approved her writing a letter to Trinity Presbyterian, congratulating them on their steps toward being a more progressive affirming church.

4. **Upcoming important dates:**
   - March 4: Spiritual Day Apart
   - March 19: Community Labyrinth Walk – with special lighting (tiki torches) and music
   - March 25-April 3: Karla on vacation
   - April 26: UCC Ministry Specialist Jim Luck here for leadership training – More to come
   - May 30: Roger Smith Concert Series – Atlanta Gay Men’s Chorus returns, as kick-off event for Hendersonville Pride Week. FCCH will host a panel discussion during this week.
   - June 1- 5: Karla will be in Virginia for a Preaching Convention, part of a series

HIGHLIGHTS FROM MINISTRY REPORTS

1. **Ministry of Financial Resources** is seeking a co-facilitator. Contact John Walters if interested.

2. **Ministry to Members and Friends** Seeking someone as librarian. Contact LiB Shore. The CD player part of the sound system is broken – attempting to have it repaired.

3. **The Ministry of Physical Resources** – Parlor renovation is close to completion. Maintenance items include a roof leak, furnace issues (being worked on), broken dishwasher (will be replaced).

**Comments on church growth.** Phil introduced the topic of our church size and rapid growth and the Council engaged in a preliminary discussion.

Written By:
Dawn Kucera, Acting Clerk
SERVICE & GIVING

The team is pleased to welcome new members as well as a new, thematic reporting method. Vetted agencies have been organized into six categories: Food Insecurity & Homeless, Crisis Intervention, Education, Environment, Inclusivity and Healthcare. One or two different categories will be discussed monthly. Pre-meeting, e-mailed agency evaluations including donation recommendations, will be read in advance by team members.

The three agencies in the Environment category, Conserving Carolina, Mountain True and Union of Concerned Scientists will be discussed in March. Any congregation member interested in the environmental agencies category are welcome to attend, but should contact Bill Shaffer, category chair for advance reports or to suggest an additional agency for consideration. Pre-budgeted funds will be distributed to those agencies if approved by a Service & Giving majority.

Service & Giving, with Linda Laderach (lladerac@mtholyoke.edu) and Bill Shaffer (wdsiii333@gmail.com) co-facilitating, meets monthly on the second Thursday so the next meeting is March 12 at 10 am. As ever, all are welcome! Be sure to watch the S&G bulletin board on the gallery wall for updates.

Plastic Bags and Bottles

Your plastic bag contributions are helping many people. Half are given to a group that cut the bags into strips and crochet these into vapor barrier/insulated mats placed under sleeping bags distributed by THRIVE to persons who are homeless. The other bags are given to IAM and Safelight for clients clothing and supplies. Needed are clean plastic bottles with screw tops that can hold at least ½ cup liquid. IAM fills the bottles with shampoo, dish, laundry and hand/body washing detergents, etc. to give to clients. (No water bottles please!) Boxes for both plastic bag and plastic bottle contributions are in the reception area. Thanks for your help!

MINISTRY FAIR

Plan now to join us at a very special Coffee Hour/Ministry Fair following worship on Sunday, March 15. Information and sign-ups will be available at tables around Fellowship Hall, telling you about all the ministries and ways that you can be involved in the ministries of our church. Please join us for a very special day!
FELLOWSHIP SUPPER

Tuesday, March 17, 2020
Social time begins 5:00 pm - Dinner begins 5:30 pm

Our Program will be presented by Marina Kovalyova, a social worker and the Community Resource Coordinator for Henderson County. Marina is a person who is passionate about helping older adults, and those who care for older adults, to have a great life. She will share information about the amazing services and resources available to everyone. Please join us for a lively and informative evening!

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 sign-up sheet in the reception area soon so we can set a place for you!

Lent at First Congregational

Spiritual Day Apart. Wednesday, March 4, 11 am - 3 pm. Prayer stations and readings for reflection in the Sanctuary, and walking the labyrinth are all a part of this time set apart for individual contemplative renewal.

Twilight Labyrinth Walk. Thursday, March 19, 5 - 7 pm. The labyrinth will be open for walking in the beautiful dusk of the day. Candles and music will enhance your individual walk and reflection.

Maundy Thursday Service. Thursday, April 9, 6:30 pm. You are invited to observe Holy Week through the symbolic extinguishing of candles, readings, silence, music and communion.
March 1: 8 Habits of Love: Community
Robert Miles
This talk will conclude our review of 8 habits of love from the book by Ed Bacon, a previous Ashley Lecturer, by summarizing his sense of church community and suggestions to practice community. For Bacon, community thrives “where people know and feel their interconnectedness.” We will discuss practices of community in this church, ways this habit could be expanded, and consider habits that could be added to the eight in the book. Robert Miles retired as a licensed counselor. He serves on the Service & Giving and Compassionate Action groups at First Congregational and has been a local leader in efforts to reduce gun violence.

March 8: Creating Your Best End of Life
Jose Said Osio, Michele Skeele and Diane Swift
Three certified End of Life Doulas will discuss ways they can help you have the best possible end of life experience, which include: planning for spiritual, physical and emotional well being; assisting you in planning an end of life celebration or funeral; and being present at your bedside as you near death. They also can be present for grieving family members. Each Doula will explain ways that they like to serve.

Said Osio is a volunteer and ambassador for Four Seasons Hospice. He is a death literacy activist who has pioneered Death Cafes in western NC for more than six years.

Michele Skeele is a certified therapeutic musician who plays Native American flute for hospice and at other end of life ceremonies, sings in the Threshold Choir, and is a home funeral guide.

Diane Swift is a retired psychotherapist, ordained minister, and Unity Prayer Chaplain who provides pastoral counseling. She and Said started and facilitate the monthly Hendersonville Death Café.

March 15: 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 on the 4th Thursday each month at 11:30 a.m. in the Library.
March 22: The Connection between Trees and Me

Mary Eichorn

This will be an interactive workshop in which we will be reflecting on the diversity, beauty, and soul found in trees to help us gain insight into the wisdom inherent in our own souls. A photographic exhibit will be used to help us reconnect with our core humanity and unearth qualities we may have forgotten, such as: resourcefulness, re-generativity, reliability, resiliency, and hope.

Mary Eichorn received an undergraduate degree from Kennesaw State University and a Master’s Degree in Social Work from the University of Georgia. Currently retired, she has lived in Hendersonville for the past 5 years. She was a practicing psychotherapist/counselor for the past 25 years, the last 15 in private practice. Mary, being a tree lover, has found a home here amongst our beautiful flora. She has come to believe that the trees have much wisdom to impart...especially since they predate us by centuries. She, therefore, started snapping photos of trees, eventually adding words, and the results, hopefully, tell a story of their lives.

The FCCH Bookclub will meet on Tuesday, March 10, at 2 pm in the church library for a discussion of “37 Days of Peril” by Truman Everts. This is the incredible true adventure of the only person to have survived so long while lost in Yellowstone wilderness. Separated from his party, abandoned by his horse, Evert wandered Yellowstone, alone and injured, without supplies, for 37 days. Come join us for this story of courage and inspiration and a testament to one man’s will to survive. Pete Tintle will lead us on this journey.

Many thanks, dear friends of the congregation for all the cards and prayers on our behalf during these days of being laid up. It sure means a lot! We’re “on the mend” now and should be more up and about, back to doing things more actively soon.

God bless you all, and much love and prayers back to you all, too.

Louise & Lester Vier
Our Beloved Karla’s Installation Service
SUNDAY SCHOOL REPORT
February, 2020

Ginger Zemp, Sunday School Teacher
Dede Walton, Nursery Teacher

Monthly Theme: The Golden Rule as Practiced in Cultures and Faiths
Around the World

The Sunday School children continued to learn about how people in different cultures say and show the Golden Rule. They gathered branches from the church yard, then decorated cards with different versions of the Golden Rule. They used colorful yarns to wrap their branches and hang their statements. The project was completed and the beautiful projects were taken home on Feb. 23.

Our next focus will be on Lent; what it signifies, how we mark it, and how to help each other reach our Lenten goals. We are seeing deeper understanding and greater participation from our children as they learn from their experiences in church each Sunday.
COME TO THE WELL

The Kitchen Table

This is where I first encountered the concept
Of prayer as, not some piece memorized and recited,
But, as an ongoing conversation with the universe.
   It was at my parent’s encouragement,
      That each of us was invited to be
         The initiator of that conversation.
And as I grew I realized that these prayers
   Were but the beginnings of a longer conversation;
      One that offered life in all its riches.
This is where the plans for the day began;
   Where I made a silent plea for help in the understanding
      Of some obscure concept
   It is where family and friends sat
      To communicate, to celebrate each day.
     And this is where I cried for comfort
When, too young, my brother passed away.
   The location and the actual table,
     Have changed many times over the years.
   But the conversation goes on.
The memories of my grandmother’s table,
   Where she mixed biscuits, cornbread
     And paddled sweet cream into butter,
        Are part of the conversation too.
When questioned by a younger cousin
Why she muttered "Lordy, Lordy" as she worked;
   She smiled, and said, "I'm prayin'."
     Today, my table is a small one,
        That belonged first to my mother,
           And then to my brother.
           Tied with memories of them,
              They too are a part of my conversation
                 With the universe.
       But today I sit in quiet meditation
And am present to the early morning light,
The call of birds and the stream outside.
   The kitchen table -
     Surely, this too is Holy ground.

Sammye Whitney
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 (828-697-0090 or randbishop33@gmail.com). Listeners are also welcome. The Writers’ Roundtable meets on the fourth Thursday of every month in the Church Library 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 date is Thursday, March 26th.

PRAYER SHawl MINISTry
We meet the first Tuesday of the month at 10 am in the Parlor. Grab some yarn and your needles and join us!

Human Trafficking Awareness Group Being Formed. Led by Trinity Presbyterian Church, a Community Human Trafficking Awareness committee is being formed. This group will look at ways to raise awareness about human trafficking and also about ways to help children and youth to be safe on social media. We would like to have at least one person from FCCH to be a part of this community group. If you would be willing to be a part of this group, please contact Mark Acker (mark@fcchendersonville.org.)
PRAYER LIST

Al & Joan Diaz
Sue Eastin ([friend of Becky Rowland](#))
Don Emon
Jackie Green
Gabriel Kerr and Family ([friend of Karla Miller](#))
Trisha LaGrange
Kelly O’Toole & Family ([friend of Mindy Myers](#))
Betsey Parker
Ingrid Perry
Glory Stack ([friend of Mills/Hollingsworth](#))
David Vandre
Janice Walters
Donalee Wermeister ([friend of Koopman’s](#))
Patti 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. Please contact your Administrator ([sheryl@fcchendersonville.org](mailto:sheryl@fcchendersonville.org)).

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**We Care About You!**

We want to know when you are facing surgery, are admitted to the hospital, are sick, or dealing with deep sadness. Karla can be reached at 781-835-6893 and Mark Acker 615-430-3506, and if you or someone you know would like to be added to the prayer list, please contact our Administrator, Sheryl Tellier, at ([sheryl@fcchendersonville.org](mailto:sheryl@fcchendersonville.org)).
Mental Health Group Expands Mission and Name

Church Council unanimously accepted the new mission and name proposed by the Mental Health Work Group. The new name is the “Wellness Action Group,” which will be addressing a much broader array of health and wellness topics and issues, in addition to mental health. Below is the expanded mission statement:

The First Congregational United Church of Christ Wellness Action Group, previously called the Mental Health Group, is committed to providing leadership and action in order to achieve the following for both church members and non-members alike:

The goals and aspirations outlined in our WISE (Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, Engaged) Congregation for Mental Health covenant:

providing and promoting education (especially the reduction of stigma), activities, and resources for individuals and families, as well as advocating for legislative action and collaborating with other mental health organizations. We joyously extend our church’s compassionate welcome and love to individuals who experience mental illness/brain disorders or are touched by them.

* Healthy self-care practices, including: self-love; nutrition/diet; exercise; Meditation and mindfulness; sleep; managing stress; mind-body-emotions-spirit connections

* Self-discovery and personal growth, including:
  * Eastern spirituality practices
  * Personality assessments, like Enneagrams and Meyers Briggs, including embracing our shadow side and nurturing our inner child
  * Applying the arts for spiritual expression and growth
  * Modern self-help therapies, like cognitive and dialectical behavior therapies

We will use the following venues and mechanisms for achieving our mission:
Sunday Forums, Chronicle articles, Sunday worship, Fellowship Suppers, special programs and workshops, church library offerings, and the church website.

The group meets each third Friday at 9 am in the church library, and all members and friends are cordially invited to join us. Bring your interests and ideas and help us better serve our congregation and community.

By Gary Cyphers, for the Wellness Action Group
March Birthdays

01: Shirley Retzsch
03: David Vandre
03: Sharon McLendon
04: Roy Harris
08: Jean Raymond
09: Linda Welch
09: Judy Cyphers
12: Tamara Gregg
17: Bob Miles
20: Jim Nourse
23: Dora Littleton
24: Jim Hollingsworth
25: Melissa Melum
25: Lin Stogner
25: Bobby Sutter
26: Linda Simpson
26: Jim Rash
27: Ron Miller
28: Roger Haagenson
29: Dawn Kucera
29: Lois Popanz

March Anniversaries

03: Robert & Lydia Gossett
06: Chris & Kirsten Cone
07: Richard & Dona Tyler
08: Claudia & Ron Schopper
09: Jim & Judith Nourse
23: Charles & Dora Littleton
February, 2020
Worship

Children’s Worship  Sunday School
02/02 - 195  8
02/09 - 182  4
02/16 - 166  9
02/23 - 185  5
02/26 - 51 (Ash Wednesday service)

Average Worship Attendance: 182

Did you know........
Sunday sermons are available to listen to on our website. Go to fcchendersonville.org and click on Sunday Sermon

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Next Chronicle deadline March 25, 2020