Beloved FCCH,

I love the month of February, because it contains one of my most favorite dates—February 14—Valentine’s Day! Now, before you groan and moan how it is an over-rated and over-commercialized day (because I agree), hear me out. For me, I have embraced my own idea that this day is simply about love and relationship. That’s it. I don’t have to worry if I have a valentine, because the whole world is my valentine—you are my valentine, I am my valentine, the person with the screaming baby in the carriage in front of me at the grocery store is my valentine, and even my least favorite politician in my valentine.

My practice, then, is just to love. To express love in spite of and beyond my irritations, my resentments and my shortcomings. I still need to address those flaws, but for the month (because I believe holidays—including birthdays—should be celebrated for a month) my job is to extravagantly love.

Beloved, let us love one another. For love is of God and everyone who loves, knows God, for God is love (1 John 4:7).

With love,

Karla
MODERATOR’S COLUMN

In December, church Council approved the formation of the Reconciliation Leadership Team (RLT), a group whose objective will be to help First Congregational move forward in support of our shared goals for our church by promoting reconciliation, healing, and forgiveness. This group will use the suggestions found in the Center for Congregational Health (CCH) report, as well as their own vision and creativity to devise a process to meet those goals.

In an on-line vote, the Council approved the members of the team. They are: Ann Allen, Ed Argue, Dawn Kucera, Linda Laderach, Bob McLendon, Karla Miller, and Phil Taylor. The team will choose its own chairperson. In keeping with the decision that this be a lay-led team, neither Karla nor I will be the chair. The group will operate by consensus and communicate frequently with church Council and the congregation.

A potential first step in the process might be a “letting go” ceremony of some sort. This would be designed to focus on our future as a church and put the past controversy behind us. Its emphasis would be on “we” as the church, and not on groups or factions within the church.

The CCH report suggests some themes for discussion, based on what they heard in the listening groups. These themes are: the meaning of being a welcoming congregation; what we mean by being a loving congregation; and the ramifications of our rapid growth. In addition, following the CCH report guidance, the group will consider the concepts of justice, compassion, taking responsibility for one’s actions, and the ability to self-define our beliefs and to discuss our disagreements and grievances.

These discussion groups will be open to everyone (via Zoom), and topic experts may be provided as appropriate.

I anticipate that this process will take about four months, but that may change depending on the team’s decisions and the interest level of the congregation. The RLT may also recommend “spin-off” groups to address other specific topics and recommend appropriate actions or decisions.

I encourage everyone to watch for more information and to participate in the process as much as possible. I believe there is more that unites us than divides us, and I sincerely hope and pray we can soon find our way to a place where we are united.

Thanks for reading,
Phil Taylor, Moderator
COUNCIL MEETING DECEMBER HIGHLIGHTS
via Zoom December 9, 2020

Financial Report
A preliminary budget was sent out for congregational approval in November. There were 124 responses, with 116 voting to approve. Since this exceeded the required quorum of 94, the preliminary budget passed. Financially, things are fine. Income is down, but so are expenses. Members have donated $7,500 for Matching Gifts to date, matched by Service and Giving.

Stewardship Report
The number of pledging units and the amount pledged are down from last year. This is attributed to several factors, such as the church not meeting in person, due to the pandemic and some suspected fallout from the conflict situation. Everyone is urged to submit their pledges, so Ron can finalize the budget.

Nominating Committee
Most positions have been filled; a few are still open. Work continues. Several current Council members are willing to continue, but need waivers, since they are exceeding their term limits. Council approved waivers for Phil Taylor, Mindy Myers, Ken Whitney and Ron Miller.

Conflict Resolution
A volunteer team met to discuss the way forward. Unanimously approved the process be led by a trusted group of FCC lay people.

Other Items
◊ Mark Acker will revert to a half-time position starting in 2021.
◊ Planning for the annual meeting in January 2021 has begun. There will be a hybrid of Zoom/mailings.

Karla’s Report
◊ There will be several special services over the holidays via video and Zoom.
◊ Church has been decorated inside and out with lights - a beacon of hope in these dark times.

Dawn Kucera, Clerk

January Minutes next page…….
Financial Report
Ron Miller reported that we are in pretty good shape financially. Income is down, but expenses are down even more, so we have a surplus in 2020 of a little under $20,000. $10,000 of this was unspent money from the Service and Giving budget - this will be moved to 2021, the rest to the property maintenance fund. The 2021 budget will look much like the one in 2020.

Stewardship Report
So far there are 94 units pledging around $189,000, with three more late reporting units, amount not reported. This is fewer than at the same time last year.

Conflict Resolution
Karla and Phil have identified potential members of a Reconciliation Leadership Team (RLT), that will lead efforts to move forward and re-build relationships.

Other Items
- The HRM is looking at creating two new part-time positions: A technical assistant to help with all the online work; and a pastoral care assistant. They will be developing a detailed justification and job descriptions.
- Starting to look at live-streaming worship services once we can meet in person again, to serve those who won’t be able to attend, or would feel uncomfortable doing so.

Karla’s Report
Karla and Phil expressed their deep appreciation to all Council members and other leaders who have served during this past difficult year, and recognized the Council members ending their service.

Dawn Kucera, Clerk
TELL ME MORE ABOUT FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH UCC

Are you interested in becoming a member or know more about FCCH?

Please join Karla Miller for a “Tell Me More” session on Zoom on Sunday, February 21 at 12:00 p.m.

If you are interested in attending this Zoom meeting, please contact the church administrator for more information. Unfamiliar with Zoom? Ask Sheryl for a private training session. (sheryl@fcchendersonville.org).

Our racial justice group, in an effort to help make education in our community more egalitarian, wants to see a more diverse teaching staff in the Henderson County Public Schools. The student population in the schools is now American Indian (less than 1%), Asian (1%), Two or More Races (4%), Black (4%), Hispanic/Latino (26%), and White (64%). It is evident that more a more diverse teaching staff would more accurately represent the school population. We plan to send a letter to the new Superintendent of Schools, Dr. John Bryant, requesting that he make this a priority. We are doing this in conjunction with other local churches. All participating churches hope to meet with him in February. If you are interested in signing your name to this letter, please let us know by contacting Connie Knight (knightcolor@gmail.com).
SERVICE & GIVING REPORT
Linda Laderach and Bill Shaffer, co-Facilitators

As this past year began, the Service and Giving group was eagerly anticipating its work under new leadership and with some proposed new procedures. After debate and discussion during our initial meetings in March, we devoted our allocations to environmental groups with plans to address a different area of need in each of the subsequent months. Like everyone else, our world was upended by Covid-19. As we resumed meeting by Zoom, the committee decided we needed a new approach to our efforts that would accommodate the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

Financially instead of working towards our annual line item in the budget, we instead coordinated monthly with the church Treasurer and adjusted our donations to reflect the changes in the church’s financial status. We decided to focus all our efforts this year on local agencies and in particular those dealing with pandemic related issues.

We also felt we needed a way to engage the church community more directly in our giving efforts. To do this we conducted several pandemic safe but in person, drive up donation drives. The first in June generated almost 2,000 pounds of food and raised over $6,500 that was split between three local food pantries. The second in August masked and generous members of the congregation and the larger community dropped off $4,470 and 540 pounds of needed school supplies including backpacks, pencils, pens, crayons, markers, paper, glue, tissues, wipes, and hand sanitizers and young people’s masks. These were distributed to school children in Henderson County through programs at IAM and the Boys and Girls Club. In September we worked with HCHC sponsors of the Hunger Walk Jubilee to collect over $11,000 and 2 vans full of food as part of the pandemic version of the annual Hunger walk. Our final event was held on a bright day in early December. The Cornucopia of Giving collected mittens, gloves, hats and scarves as well as unwrapped toys and money for the Boys and Girls Club Christmas Toy program and personalized gifts for seniors coordinated through the Council on Aging.

In addition to raising money, food and supplies for needy citizens, these events had some additional benefits. They presented the generous activist spirit of FCUCC to the broader neighborhood around the church through signage and fliers. And in a year missing most social contacts, they provided a way for the church community to interact in a safe but meaningful way. Special thanks this year to Pat Argue for taking minutes, writing Chronicle articles and writing amazing articles for the press, promoting events to the larger community; to Sheila Clendenning for her social media fliers; to van delivery drivers Nancy Kaczor, Sharon Johnson and Bill Shaffer; to Sharon Johnson and Bruce Mills, our box procurement people; worker bees Elle Travis, Jim Hollingsworth, Phil Taylor.
Sincere thanks to all donors for the successful, virtual MLK Service Day, especially Josie Crum who was part of the opening Zoom program, and the other Sunday School meal baggers. The Storehouse was overwhelmed by our support!

**OFFERING ENVELOPES**

Offering envelopes are now available for those who use them or if you would like to.

Please contact your church administrator sheryl@fcchendersonville.org to make arrangements to pick up a box of envelopes at the office.
Shhhhh it's a SURPRISE!

And it was! Somehow we all managed to keep Mark Acker’s surprise birthday/anniversary party a secret!

Not only was it Mark’s Big 65th Birthday, it is also his fifth Anniversary of serving this congregation as our Minister of Music and Pastoral Associate. Dozens and dozens of people sent in birthday cards and notes.

We joined together on Zoom for well wishes and a really bad (yet perfectly wonderful) chorus of Happy Birthday.

We love you, Mark!
Look What’s Happening in Sunday School!
by Ginger Kemp

Working with the youngest members of our congregation is a real joy for Dede Walton and myself. We prepare lessons designed to spark their curiosity about ways of being kind to others, caring for the natural world, and understanding the gifts and responsibilities that God gives us. We also give them opportunities to interview each other and to share information and ideas that are important to them. Popular!

Several of the projects we have completed over the past few years include the Children’s Garden Project, the Carbon Footprint Project, the Wash Creek Preservation Project, a variety of Kindness activities, Discovering Other Faiths Around the World, and this year’s special Christmas Pageant Presentation. We are currently interviewing adult members of the congregation about ideas of faith and friendship.

The pandemic has limited us to online Sunday School classes through Zoom. Our attendance has been smaller, but the children who do participate are enthusiastic about seeing each other and participating in the activities and stories we share online. Pet of the Week Interviews have been a real hit! Parents have been very supportive with technical assistance and great program ideas. We are thrilled that Karla and Mark join us and participate in our planning and activities.

First Congregational has much to be proud of in their young members, who are growing rapidly and demonstrating remarkable maturity, insights, and talents. We hope to see them more actively involved in a wider array of church activities as we move past the restrictions of Covid.
**Sunday School Monthly Report - January**
Ginger Zemp, Sunday School Teacher / Dede Walton, Nursery Teacher

**Monthly Theme: Celebrating the Births of Remarkable People**

This Christmas the Sunday School children celebrated Jesus’s birth by enacting a very special Christmas Pageant for the congregation. They wore period costumes and gave on-the-scene interviews at the stable in Bethlehem, which were videotaped and shared with the congregation during the Christmas service. The children and several parents added their own special insights to the telling of Jesus’ birth, and feedback from the congregation was very encouraging. We wish to thank producer Karla Miller and Director Maralee McMillan.

In January we celebrated Martin Luther King’s birthday. The children talked about King’s important role in our history, shared an inspirational song, and packed beans and rice for distribution to local families in need. Josie Crum read part of King’s Eulogy in a community-wide Zoom celebration. We are very proud of the children’s growing participation in and contribution to our church and community.

Each week a member of the congregation is joining us on Zoom as the children interview their Church Friends of the Week. If you’d like to be part of this activity, please contact Ginger Zemp, 828 620-2096.

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**IMMIGRATION NEWS & NEEDS**

Stewart Detention Center in Lumpkin GA houses our regional ICE detainees. El Refugio does fantastic work for the families of those detained at Stewart and for those released. See [www.elrefugiostewart.org](http://www.elrefugiostewart.org). With the new administration, more detainees are reportedly being released (YAY) and they need these things immediately.

**Backpacks, Men’s coats and jackets, Men’s sneakers and casual shoes**

**Men’s polo shirts (Size M, especially) and Men’s t-shirts (Size L, especially)**

Gently used items, are accepted and there is a Target registry: [https://bit.ly/3c2WTnK](https://bit.ly/3c2WTnK). Target items will be shipped directly Patti Ghezzi [patti@elrefugioministry.org](mailto:patti@elrefugioministry.org). Gently used items need to be delivered to her house: 140 Wynn Dr., Avondale Estates, GA 30002.

Locally, Heartwood Refuge & Retreat Center, 159 Osceola Rd., Hendersonville, will have bins on their front porch to collect the clothing. If you wish to give money or a Target card Lori Garcia McCammon at True Ridge (trueridge.org) will take that and send it to El Refugio. She will also see that the clothing is shipped to Patti Ghezzi at 3140 Wynn Dr., Avondale Estates, Georgia 30002. If you want to send money or clothing directly to Patti that will be fine. For more information, contact Pat Argue [pkargue@gmail.com](mailto:pkargue@gmail.com). Many thanks.
If your church can help you in any way, whether through providing a listening ear or picking up a prescription, we are here for you.

Please email Karla or Mark:
karla@fcchendersonville.org
mark@fcchendersonville.org

Did you know?
There are many things of interest on the website (www.fcchendersonville.org)
  click on links below

CHURCH CALENDAR (Activities)
WEEKLY SUNDAY SERVICE VIDEO (Sunday Worship Videos)
CURRENT WEEK’S ANNOUNCEMENTS (Members page)
CHURCH COUNCIL MINUTES (Members page)
CURRENT ANNUAL REPORT (Members page)
CHURCH DIRECTORY (Members page)

The church directory is password protected.
If you don’t have the password or have other questions, please contact
sheryl@fcchendersonville.org
A new group to study the book called **JOURNEY TO FREEDOM** by Scott Reall, led by Mark Acker. This book is loosely based on concepts from the twelve step movement, and it includes daily readings and questions. Each week, we will gather on Zoom on Thursdays at 1:00 p.m. to discuss the readings and to share how the readings and questions spoke to us. Persons who are willing to be vulnerable and to dig deep into their own challenges will get the most from this group. This group will meet for seven weeks, and will begin **Thursday, February 4, at 1:00 p.m.** To sign up, or for more information, please contact Mark Acker at mark@fcchendersonville.org.

**CASTE: THE ORIGIN OF OUR DISCONTENTS** by Isabel Wilkerson beginning **Tuesday, February 9th @ 2pm.** (we will meet for 6 weeks)

Led by John Ariatti and Karla Miller

A book study on Pulitzer Prize winner Isabel Wilkerson’s new book which points to our entire social structure as an unrecognized caste system. Wilkerson notes that we tend to refer to slavery as a “sad, dark chapter” in America when in fact it lasted for hundreds of years—but in order to maintain a social order and an “economy whose bottom gear was torture” it was necessary to give blacks the lowest possible status. Whites in turn got top status. In between came the middle castes of “Asians, Latinos, indigenous people, and immigrants of African descent” to fill out the originally bipolar hierarchy. As Wilkerson develops her argument, she brings in historical figures like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Satchel Paige. She even looks at the Nazis, who turned to us when they were seeking ways to institutionalize racism in the Third Reich. —**Chris Schluep, Amazon**

To sign up or for more information, please contact John Ariatti, jja28739@gmail.com
PRAYER LIST

Josh Bledsoe
Roger Bohn (father of Diane Bohn Rose)
Janet Bostwick
Nancy Colvin (friend of Ann Twiggs)
Norma Daly (friend of Anne Cain)
Kay Davis, in the death of her brother, Neil Mullaney
Al & Joan Diaz
Sue Eastin (friend of Becky Rowland)
Betty Gilliam (sister of Frances Yoder)
Joy Greenfield (friend of Trisha LaGrange)
MJ Heubach (friend of Jace Kahn)
Family & friends of Steve Hogenboom
Esther Jillson (friend of Becky Rowland)
Dorothy Kelly (sister of Ellen Honea)
Yvonne Kyker
Trisha LaGrange
Patsy McCurry
Joseph Orost (son of Jean Glasgow-Hawkins)
Ed & Romella O'Keefe
Betsey Parker
Cindy Royce and spouse Barb Gingrich (friends of Ann Twiggs)
Family of Alyce Sanders Poe
Joanne Schenck (friends of Al & Joan Diaz)
Family & Friends of Mike Sollom
Family & Friends of Eve Teerlinck
Ann Twiggs
Richard Tyler
David Vandre

For words of encouragement, appreciation, hope, caring, gratitude and love, just take a breath, pick up the phone and call:

Ben Coonrod  828-284-0695  Diane Rhoades  828-696-9969
Ed O'Keefe  828-890-4889  Joady Perrett  828-243-3337
Sammye Whitney  570-664-1141  Romella Hart-O'Keefe  828-890-4889
February Birthdays

01: Maralee McMillan
02: Ginger Zemp
03: Ellie Travis
03: Rand Bishop
04: Virginia Erwin
05: Bob Koopman
06: Mike Erwin
06: John Caldemeyer
08: Sammye Whitney
08: Conrad Weeks
15: Linda Yopps
17: Mary Woolsey
20: Ken Whitney
20: Susan Jahnke
21: Cherie Barget
22: Joan Jaeger
22: Jan Caldemeyer
24: Richard Brantley
24: Joady Perrett
27: Xzvier Joseph Cone
28: Anne Ogburn

February Anniversaries

07: Milton & Jeannie Stewart
15: Roger & Mary Woolsey
16: Phillip Wiehe/Linda McFadden
19: Don & Dottie Culver
24: Kinsey & Doreen Jenkins
The Congregational Chronicle is published monthly, except for December/January and June/July issues, by First Congregational UCC
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Sheryl Tellier, Administrator
(sheryl@fcchendersonville.org)
Dora & Charles Littleton, Custodians
Rev. David G. Kelly, Jr., Pastor Emeritus

Did you know………
Sunday worship services are available to view on our website. Go to fcchendersonville.org and click on Sunday Sermon or view from Home Page.

Attendance

December/January 2020
Virtual Worship

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Next Chronicle article deadline is February 19, 2021
(please send your submission to sheryl@fcchendersonville.org)