



FIRST NEWS

April 2008

Welcome Reverend Patten!

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By now everyone should have received your letter announcing the hiring of our new Intentional Interim Minister, Reverend Walter R. Patten, Ph.D. After an extensive search and interview process by the Interim Search Committee and confirmation by the Consistory, we believe that Reverend Patten has been called to serve our church in this capacity. He is tentatively scheduled to begin his duties on April 15th, with April 20th as his first Sunday.

Reverend Patten is a longtime UCC pastor with strong educational credentials. He attended the University of North Carolina for undergraduate studies, earned his Master of Divinity from Duke Divinity School, and completed his doctorate in religion from Duke University. He also holds Interim Ministry Certification from the Center for Congregational Health. He is quite familiar with central North Carolina, having served at Grace UCC in Rockwell and Peace UCC in Greensboro. More recently, he served as Intentional Interim Minister at Paul's Chapel UCC in Lexington and at Mt. Hope UCC in Whitsett. He preached a "supply" sermon for our church on March 2nd and was warmly received by our congregation.

Reverend Patten, his wife Elyse and daughter Rachael live in Greensboro. Elyse teaches Honors English at Grimsley High School, where Rachael is a student. Reverend Patten's diverse interests include foreign languages, reading, writing, hiking, fishing, exercise and music. He looks forward to joining with our fine choir!

We welcome Reverend Patten to First Reformed and look forward to the talents and gifts he will share. Please offer him your full support as he leads us during this interim period.

Intentional Interim Search Committee

Sunday, April 20, 2008 will be the first Sunday that the new Intentional Interim Minister, Reverend Walter Patten will be in our pulpit. The Interim Search Committee and Board of Congregational Life would like to invite the congregation to a "Meet and Greet" catered lunch immediately following the worship service that Sunday. This will give us an opportunity to meet Reverend Patten, his wife, Elyse and daughter, Rachael.

To assist with a count for the caterer, please make your reservations by filling in the form below and put in the offering plate or call the church office at 248-2617. There is no charge, but donations will be accepted at the door. Deadline for signup is Wednesday, April 16th.

FAMILY NAME _____

NUMBER ATTENDING: _____



An Expression of Interim Pastoral Gratitude and Appreciation

The Interim Minister Search Committee and the Consistory have invited me to use this space in the April edition of **First News** to offer a personal word of greetings to you, the members and friends of First Reformed UCC, as your newly selected Intentional Interim Minister. You should have received a mailing, dated March 27, 2008, which introduces me and my family briefly; if, for some reason, you did not receive such a mailing, I am sure that Paula Lopp will provide one for you from the church office, upon request. Some of you may have been present on Sunday, March 2, 2008, when I was privileged to serve as our worship leader in a “supply” capacity, and some of you may know me from wider WNCA and Southern Conference contexts.

However this may be, I am excited about the privilege of getting to know all of you a great deal better within an Intentional Interim Ministry setting, one which is presently scheduled to begin on Tuesday, April 15 (whether our tax returns are ready or not!), my first Sunday then being on April 20. While these plans are still tentative as of this writing, my understanding is that we will enjoy a catered (free will donation) luncheon immediately after our April 20 service, providing a casual opportunity for us to enjoy each other and to get better acquainted. I do hope that you will make every effort to attend both this service of worship and this time of informal fellowship and breaking of bread together.

I am hoping that we will have a period of time where you may ask questions either about me and my family or about Intentional Interim Ministry, which, while it has been around for perhaps thirty years or so, may still require some explanation for some of us. For now, suffice it to say that I will serve as your full-time, 24/7, pastor, engaging the wide range of ministries that the Rev. Mike Hooper did so effectively. In addition to those services, however, I will lead the formation and the functioning of a “Transition Team,” a group of perhaps 18 members that will be chosen by you, the congregation, representing the various key voices and constituencies within the congregation. Our Team will engage in a series of “developmental” studies, the results of which will then be shared with you, the larger congregation, in a series of meetings we call “assemblies.” These assemblies both inform you of the Team’s findings and invite you to share in our work of discovery, providing additional feedback to the questions that the Team itself (not me!) has identified as important. In this manner, the entire congregation participates in this process of discovery, discernment and growth, not just the Team.

At the very center of this process of congregational self-study and renewal--involving as it does aspects of healing and grieving, growth and discernment, forgiveness and reconciliation--is spiritually grounded *gratitude*. Embedded somewhere within Karl Barth’s massive *Church Dogmatics* is this statement:

“Grace and gratitude belong together like heaven and earth. Grace evokes gratitude like the voice an echo. Gratitude follows grace like thunder lightning...(We) are speaking of the grace of God who is God for us, and of the gratitude of (humankind) as (our) response to this grace. Here, at any rate, the two belong together, so that only gratitude can correspond to grace, and this correspondence cannot fail. Its failure, ingratitude, is sin, transgression.

Radically and basically all sin is simply ingratitude—(human) refusal of the one but necessary thing which is proper to and is required of (those) with whom God has graciously entered into covenant. As far as (we are) concerned there can be no question of anything but gratitude; but gratitude is the complement which we must necessarily fulfill.”

I included the word “gratitude” in my title to this message to you. That inclusion was neither casual nor formulaic, but central and vital to our ministry together. I think that Barth and Henri Nouwen and others are exactly right when they place gratitude at the very center of any authentically faithful response to God’s blessings among us. Any inquiry or study or ministry we engage will be honest and truthful and productive if we engage it with gratitude, with appreciative, humble faithfulness at every step of the way...this is the truly “safe” place from which to conduct any inquiry, any ministry. As it is with gratitude that I approach my ministry with you, I invite you to share that Biblically grounded vision with me, so that we may together partake in deepest humility of those fruits of which the Apostle Paul speaks in Philippians 4:8:

“Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

By doing so, this practice will enable us to think and speak about everything else without defensiveness and in safety, in trust and openness to God in Jesus Christ whose spirit seeks to guide us toward the deepest Christian wisdom. By focusing upon the countless blessings which God has bestowed upon us in Jesus Christ and by expressing our praise and thanksgiving and gratitude for these blessings, our sins and mistakes and missteps become the relatively small things they always were—large when seen through the magnifying glass of our own guilt and the harsh judgment of others but small in comparison to God’s merciful grace and compassion to heal us of our wounds, self-imposed or otherwise, and to set us on paths of new beginnings in the fullness of Christ’s resurrection for us and through us. Our sins become small when seen through the magnifying glass of Christ’s victorious love for us and through us.

Paul continues: “Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.” (Philippians 4:9) Too often we tend to think of “peace” primarily as an inner, emotional tranquility. While that is certainly a wonderful gift for which we should be grateful, I am speaking here more of a “holistic formation of the congregation that counters affliction, discord, conflict, lostness” (*Memories, Hopes and Conversations*, Mark Lau Branson, p. 64) with a surpassing and surprising knowledge of the infinite resources of God’s grace in Jesus Christ to overcome every impediment to our happiness and effectiveness as His Body, the Church.

I am profoundly grateful to God to be among you shortly.

Blessings and Shalom.

Rev. Walter Patten

Consistory Highlights

March 2008

The Board of Christian Education is planning the Sunday school picnic for Sunday, June 22nd at Finch Park. We will again have shelter #1 with the adjacent ball field.



The Property Committee continues to work on the acoustics and lighting for the fellowship hall.

Peggy Bates announced that tickets for the Nazareth Children's Home Fun festival on June 14th are available for \$5 each. See Peggy Bates if you are interested.

The Bell Choir is practicing hard and will be performing during the worship service soon.

A Love Offering for Touching Davidson County with Love will be received during the morning worship service on Sunday, April 6th. Please come prepared to give to this worthwhile cause.

The Interim Search Committee continues to work on securing an Intentional Interim Minister. With confidentiality issues they cannot reveal any information from their meetings at this time.

United Friendship Club

Co-Presidents: Eulene Shepherd and Camille Morgan

The United Friendship Club met Wednesday, March 26th at noon in the fellowship hall with 32 members and friends present. After a delicious covered dish lunch, Melody Evans shared a few puns for humor and then led inspiring devotions. Joyce Price, the club treasurer, gave a report of funds.

The highlight of the afternoon was the program, presented by our own Reverend June Grubb, about a United Church of Christ mission trip to Biloxi, Mississippi. There were ninety people from different UCC congregations, including two churches in Massachusetts and two in Connecticut. The other eleven churches were from this area. Team members ranged in age from 22 to 77, with 28 people from the Western North Carolina Association. June referred to a web site www.wnca-soc.org where pictures of the trip can be viewed. The program was informative and interesting.

The next meeting of the Friendship Club will be Wednesday, April 23rd. Please plan to join us for fun, food, and fellowship.

Women's Life Fellowship

Co-Presidents: Raeann Biesecker and Mary Jo Jessup



The Women's Life Fellowship served a meal of stew beef, rice, green beans, bread and dessert to the people living at the homeless shelter. After serving the meal we had a business meeting in the parlor with Lee Jessup as our guest speaker. Lee shared with us pictures and stories of his trip to Belize. Since our group donated money to assist in the purchase of vitamins for this area, it was nice to see who our donation helped. We look forward to the opportunity to help again in the future. After Lee's presentation we had a brief business meeting to discuss and finalize plans for some upcoming events. Belinda Yates prepared refreshments for us.

Our next meeting is Tuesday, April 8th at 7 p.m. in the parlor. All women of the church are welcome and child care is provided.

Reminders:	Tuesday, April 8	Regular Meeting
	Monday, April 14	Set up and decorate for Ladies' Night Out
	Tuesday, April 15	Ladies' Night Out

Men's Brotherhood

By: Clifford Lopp

The Men's Brotherhood met Thursday, March 13th in the fellowship hall with twenty members present. We enjoyed a meal and fellowship. The President, Frank Leonard shared a short program.



The Men's Brotherhood will be serving the evening meal at the Homeless Shelter May 12th.

NOTE: The Property Committee will be spreading pine needles around the church buildings on Friday, April 4th at 5 p.m. and what is not completed will be finished Saturday, April 5th at 9 a.m. We can use the help and support of all.

All men of the church are welcome to attend the regular monthly meetings. Our next meeting is April 17th at 6 p.m. This will be a catered meal. Please let the church office know if you are attending so we can give the caterer a count. Plan to come to our meeting in April and help us serve at the shelter in May.

Director of Christian Education

Amy McNeill

I hope everyone had a wonderful Easter and spring break. A lot of exciting events were enjoyed at the church with Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and the Easter Cantata. Thank you to everyone who made those special services possible for our church family.



I have some exciting news!!! Vacation Bible School is right around the corner and plans are starting to be made. We are going to try something new this year at our church by hosting a one day Vacation Bible School. Second UCC has agreed to try this with us in hopes of having a higher attendance and more volunteers for this wonderful program. With the many varied schedules of our members we are letting you know now to “save-the-date” **Saturday, June 21, 2008 from 9 a.m.—3 p.m.** This will be a fun-packed day of excitement. Please let me know if you will be able to help make this day a success by volunteering. I will have more information as we get closer to the date. Until then, please keep the Board of Christian Education in your prayers as we plan this years’ Vacation Bible School. Thank you!

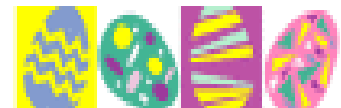
Sunday School Perfect Attendance

The following had perfect attendance during the month of March:

Kalyssa Hutchens	Ashley Johnson	Nancy Robbins	Corinne Gray
Laura Strenk	Katarina Strenk	James Gray	Alice Gray
Gladys Snider	Wanda Daye	Jo Hudson	Ramona Yarbrough
Sandra Hutchens	Carolyn Spivey	Betty Bates	Marguerite Leonard
Doris Flynt	Elizabeth Sink	Butch Bouchard	C.H. Bates
J.W. Bates	Earlie Hartley	John Hudson	Don Leonard
Cliff Lopp	John Potts	Jeff Hutchens	Janette Neal
Cathy Waitman	Clifford Lopp	Paula Lopp	

Middle/High School Sunday School Class

To celebrate Easter, the class made Blessing Eggs. The eggs were handmade by covering a balloon with newspaper strips which had been



saturated with watered down glue. A small opening without newspaper was left. Then each egg was colorfully painted. The balloon was popped and the egg was ready to be turned into a Blessing Egg. The opening provided a slot so special notes of kindness, prayers, thank-yous, etc. could be secretly inserted into the egg. On Easter Sunday, the eggs were cracked open so everyone could read their blessings!

Thank-you...

To the First Reformed UCC Congregation and Trustees,

Thank you for graciously awarding me the scholarship to support my education in medical school. I am very thankful for all of my church family's love and support.



Sincerely, Devin Odom

The following sent thank you notes in response to our church's benevolent gifts:

Hospice of Davidson County

Davidson Medical Ministries Clinic

Our Churches Wider Mission

Habitat for Humanity



During the month of March the Kids' Club continued learning about Lent. We made a bulletin board of the roadway to Lent, and put the things we are thankful for on it. At the following meeting the children made Easter Egg wreaths for Easter. We also discussed the seven senses and how they contribute to everyday life.

In April Kids' Club will meet on Tuesday the 8th in the upstairs music room at 7 p.m. and again on Sunday April 20th following the children's sermon. I look forward to seeing everyone as we enjoy new adventures together.

Corinne Gray

CONGRATULATIONS to Corinne Gray who was chosen as "Our Neighbor" in The Dispatch. She is working to receive her Girl Scout Gold Award with her project being our church's Kids' Club. Not only is she achieving something for herself, she is sharing her talents with the young children of our church.

Property Committee Work Dates

Friday, April 4th & Saturday, April 5th

The Property Committee will be spreading pine needles Friday, April 4th beginning at 5 p.m. Work not completed on Friday will be finished Saturday, April 5th beginning at 9 a.m.



LADIES' NIGHT OUT

Tuesday, April 15, 2008



The Women's Life Fellowship is pleased to sponsor our sixth annual Ladies' Night Out featuring Virginia Boyd, author of One Fell Swoop. Tickets are \$15.00 and can be purchased from any Women's Life member or by contacting the church office. All tickets will be pre-sold and only 112 tickets are available. Stephanie Owens will provide the meal. So mark your calendar and reserve your tickets now and we look forward to seeing you on April 15th.

Piano Concert

Sunday, May 4, 2008

Mark your calendar for a special afternoon of music. First Reformed United Church of Christ Thomason Endowment is sponsoring John Einhaus, Classical Concert Pianist for an afternoon performance in the church sanctuary.



As we partake of Holy Communion Sunday, April 6th let's pause to think about what the experience really means. The following was copied. The author is Carol Knapp.

Thumbnail cubes of bread are arranged on a gleaming silver tray. There's a hush in the sanctuary; piano music drifts from the altar as the tray is passed down the rows.

I reach for my own small piece. It is light and feathery in my hand. Silently, I acknowledge my sins before the One Who died for them. Hope flickers in my heart like the flame of the communion candle. Maybe next time I will be more careful in my choices. For now it is enough to slip the bit of bread in my mouth, remembering the sacrifice of my Savior.

Until last Sunday, this had been my usual Communion experience. What made that day different was, for the first time, I was responsible for preparing the communion bread. The night before, my husband had brought me two loaves of French bread. I pulled out the cutting board, picked up a knife and began to trim the crusts off the loaves. As I performed this simple task, I became acutely aware of what I was doing and why.

Then I thought about the other things these loaves might have been used for — a party snack dipped in seasoned sour cream, a side order smeared with butter and served with pasta in a restaurant, lunch for ducks on a pond. Instead, this bread would be fed to hearts famished for forgiveness, and longing for God's hope and healing in their lives.

As I watched the bits of bread disappear from the tray at Communion that Sunday, I felt a new awe: God's Son gave His body on the Cross and called it the Bread of Life. Such bread is not to be handled casually.

MARCH MEMORIALS

Nora Perryman DeLapp

Merle and Jerry Hodges
Katherine Skipper
Henry and Juanita Beck
Don and Lois Leonard
Jacqueline Leonard
Banks and Eulene Shepherd
Mildred Hilton

Douglas A Lopp {Cliff Lopp's Brother}

Banks & Eulene Shepherd
Holton Davis

APRIL STEWARDS

Ushers: Chairperson: Peggy Bates
 Captain: Brad Biesecker
 Ushers: Adena Wall, Jeff Hutchens, Nicole Smith

Plate Attendant: Scott Frye

Sound Tech: Jordan McCarn

Acolytes: Laura and Katarina Strenk

Adult Joint Sunday School: Responsible for lesson - - - New Way Class

Social: Host/Hostess: Amy and Birke McNeill and Nicole and Mark Smith

Greeters: April 6 Jo and John Hudson
 April 13 Jeff Hutchens, Sandra Hutchens, and Kalyssa Hutchens
 April 20 Katherine Skipper and Joyce Price
 April 27 Scott and Doris Frye

Nursery: April 6 Jenny and Scott Biesecker
 April 13 Keri Hartle and Ashlee Lopp
 April 20 Belinda Yates
 April 27



John Gray, Betty Barber {wife of John Barber}, Ethel Bailey, Sadie Bailey,
 Bruce Younts, Jared Perrell {Clifton & Harriette Murphy's Grandson},
 Jacob Berrier {Great-Grandson of Mary Berrier}, Mary Louise Leonard,
 Ike Green, Louise Rollins, Frances Leonard, Rita Tussey, Henry and Juanita Beck

We extend **SYMPATHY** to and share Christian hope with...

- Cliff Lopp upon the death of his Brother, Douglas Lopp
- Ann Johnson Crandell upon the death of her
 Father-in-law, Larry Crandell
- The family of Iva Craven our faithful church member and friend



April 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 11 a.m. (P) MORNING GLORY CIRCLE 6:30 p.m. Bell Choir 7:30 p.m. Adult Choir	3 5:30 p.m. (P) YOGA Class	4 5 p.m. PROPERTY COMMITTEE WORKDAY	5 9 a.m. PROPERTY COMMITTEE WORKDAY
6 9:45 Joint SS 10:20 April Social (FH) 11:00 Holy Communion Special Offering	7	8 7 p.m. (P) WOMEN'S LIFE FELLOWSHIP	9 6:30 p.m. Bell Choir 7:30 p.m. Adult Choir	10 5:30 p.m. (P) YOGA Class	11	12
13 7 p.m. (WW) CONSISTORY MTG	14 5:30 p.m. (Parlor) Scrap Booking Class	15 7 p.m. (FH) <i>Ladies' Night Out</i>	16 6:30 p.m. Bell Choir 7:30 p.m. Adult Choir	17 5:30 p.m. (P) YOGA Class 6 p.m. (FH) MEN'S BROTHERHOOD	18	19 TOUCHING DAVIDSON COUNTY WITH LOVE
Meet & Greet 20 Reverend Walter Patten and his family at lunch immediately following the worship service.	21	22	23 NOON (FH) FRIENDSHIP CLUB 6:30 p.m. Bell Choir 7:30 p.m. Adult Choir	24 5:30 p.m. (P) YOGA Class	25	26
27	28 5:30 p.m. (Parlor) Scrap Booking Class	29	30 6:30 p.m. Bell Choir 7:30 p.m. Adult Choir			

Touching Davidson County With Love

The planning is nearing an end and we are looking forward to a productive day April 19th when several local churches come together to reach out in providing acts of love and kindness in the community as a witness to Christ. "Touching Davidson County With Love" brings together participating churches who will provide individual volunteers for varied projects. We are pleased to have Birke McNeill and Ted Smith heading up our volunteers. If you are not able to physically participate here is an opportunity for ALL members of First Reformed United Church of Christ.

Sunday, April 6th we will be receiving a special offering. All funds received will be used to purchase items necessary for construction projects or financial assistance. Please make your checks payable to First Reformed UCC and write TDCWL in the memo line. You will be given credit on your giving statement for tax purposes.



Special Offering TDCWL

First News

First Reformed United Church of Christ

104 East Center Street
Lexington, NC 27292

Phone: 336-248-2617

Fax: 336-248-6163

E-mail: church@frucc.org



CHURCH STAFF	
Minister-on-Call.....	Reverend June Grubb
Director of Christian Education.....	Amy McNeill
Administrative Asst	Paula Lopp
Choir Director.....	Paul Freeman
Organist	Lee Ann Peele
SUNDAY SERVICES	
Sunday School.....	9:45 a.m.
Worship Service.....	11:00 a.m.

Non-Profit Organization

U.S. Postage Paid, Permit #168

Lexington, NC 27292