

**First Congregational Christian
UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST**

February 2024



4310 Courthouse Road; Chesterfield, VA 23832

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[Facebook.com/1stUCC](https://www.facebook.com/1stUCC)

Lent is about mortality and transformation. We begin the season of Lent on Ash Wednesday with the sign of the cross smeared on our foreheads with ashes as the words are spoken over us, "Dust thou art, and to dust thou wilt return." We begin this season of Lent not only reminded of our death, but also marked for death.

The Lenten journey, with its climax in Holy Week and Good Friday and Easter, is about participating in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Put somewhat abstractly, this means dying to an old identity--the identity conferred by culture, by tradition, by parents, perhaps--and being born into a new identity--an identity centered in the Spirit of God. It means dying to an old way of being, and being born into a new way of being, a way of being centered once again in God.

Put slightly more concretely, this path of death and resurrection, of radical centering in God, may mean for some of us that we need to die to specific things in our lives--perhaps to a behavior or a pattern of behavior that has become destructive or dysfunctional; perhaps to a relationship that has ended or gone bad; perhaps to an unresolved grief that needs to be let go of; perhaps to a career or job that has either been taken from us or that no longer nourishes us; or perhaps even we need to die to a deadness in our lives.

You can even die to deadness, and this dying is also oftentimes a daily rhythm in our lives--that daily occurrence that happens to some of us as we remind ourselves of the reality of God in our relationship to God; that reminder that can take us out of ourselves, lift us out of our confinement, take away our feeling of being burdened and weighed down. That's the first focal point of a life that takes Jesus seriously: that radical centering in the Spirit of God that is at the very center of the Christian life. Now, this radical centering in God does not leave us unchanged. It transforms us, and this leads us to the second focal point of what it means to follow Jesus, what it means to take Jesus seriously.

In a single sentence, it means compassion in the world of the every day. Slightly more fully, it means a life of compassion and a passion for justice. To speak of compassion as the core value of the Christian life may seem like old hat to us, like ho-hum. But, contrasted for a moment to what some Christians have thought the Christian life is most centrally about, that it is really about righteousness--keeping your moral shirt-tails clean, avoiding being stained by the world--in that sense, the Christian life is profoundly different from compassion. In many ways, compassion is virtually the opposite of righteousness in that sense. Jesus, as a person, was filled with compassion, and he calls us to compassion.

Jesus was also filled with a passion for justice. This is probably the least understood part of the teaching of Jesus in the modern American church, and maybe throughout most of the church's history. God's justice is about social justice. God's justice is about the equitable distribution of God's earth, and a passion for God's justice sets you against all of those systems designed by people in their own narrow self-interests to benefit the few at the expense of the many. Indeed, it was Jesus' passion for justice that got him killed. That is why the authorities, the powers that be, executed him. The journey of Lent reminds us of that, too.

--from "Taking Jesus Seriously" by Dr. Marcus Borg

FEBRUARY WORSHIP CALENDAR
Sundays at 11:00 AM

Worship is livestreamed on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/1stUCC>

- February 4** **Fifth Sunday after Epiphany**
The Sacrament of Holy Communion
Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147:1-11, 20c; 1 Corinthians 9:16-23; Mark 1:29-39
- February 11** **Transfiguration Sunday**
2 Kings 2:1-12; Psalm 50:1-6; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9
- February 18** **First Sunday in Lent**
Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15
Guest pastor: Dr. Phyllis R.P. Tessieri
- February 25** **Second Sunday in Lent**
Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22:23-31; Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38
Guest pastor: Dr. Phyllis R.P. Tessieri



February 14
Ash Wednesday Service
6 PM

Join us on Feb 14 for a special Ash Wednesday Service, led by guest pastor Dr. Phyllis R.P. Tessieri.



February Birthdays

- 2/02 Mary Parker
- 2/04 Barbara Walrod
- 2/07 Eva Hall
- 2/14 Ethel Witthaus
- 2/15 Addie Hinton
- 2/19 George Marshall



Along with all of "Metro Richmond at Prayer," during February let's pray for the Coming of God's Realm in Metropolitan Richmond.

Directory Updates/Corrections

Myra Nagel
804 217-5263
804 754-5145 (mobile)

June Conner
Landline discontinued; use mobile

Carolyn Jacobs
Hattiejl629@gmail.com

Ethel Witthaus
2100 Brandermill Pkwy Apt 301
Midlothian VA 23112
804 419-9441
No longer using email



Our monthly Black Lives Matter protests continue. Wear a mask, bring a sign, and join us along Courthouse Road in front of the church after worship on **Sunday, Feb 18.**



Souper Bowl of Caring Sunday February 11

Special Offering and Potluck

In 1990, Souper Bowl of Caring began with a simple prayer from a single youth group:

“Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those without a bowl of soup to eat.”

Since then, the Souper Bowl of Caring has become a powerful movement that transforms the time around the Big Game into the nation's largest celebration of giving and caring for those in need.

Share in God's love for our neighbors in need and give generously on Souper Bowl Sunday. All of the donations collected will go directly to our Souper Bowl of Caring Charity of Choice - Shalom Farms – to support their mission to provide fresh, healthy food and educational programs about healthy eating to the Richmond community. You can learn more about them at shalomfarms.org

Our Souper Bowl potluck luncheon of soups and bread returns this year – thanks to Women's Fellowship for organizing this! We will have a collection pot there for the offering, or it can be mailed to the church or donated online.

Please indicate “Souper Bowl” on the memo line of your check or Venmo payment.



GROW FOOD. GROW COMMUNITY.



Congregational RISC Network Meeting Sunday, Feb 4

The RISC Issue Committees have been busy meeting with officials and gathering information for our issue campaigns – Affordable Housing, Healthy Homes, and Gun Violence Prevention. Updates on these issues will be presented at our upcoming Congregational RISC Network Meeting, which will be held immediately after worship on February 4th. All are welcome to attend and learn more about these issues. **It is very important that all of our RISC Network Members attend** – this is also the meeting at which we will plan for our congregational participation in the Nehemiah Action.

RISC Justice Rally - Tuesday, Feb 27
7 PM, Second Baptist Church Southside
3300 Broad Rock Blvd. Richmond.
One of the 4 annual meetings for all Network members.

We will present to our membership the specific set of "asks" for this year's Nehemiah Action, and provide detailed reports on our preliminary meetings with officials.

Nehemiah Action - Tuesday, March 19
6:30 PM, St. Paul's Baptist Church 4247
Creighton Rd. Richmond Come and bring your friends as we gather to demand justice in numbers too large to ignore! **For all Network Members and everyone in the congregation!**

Women's Fellowship

Women's Fellowship met on Jan 21 after church. The current officers will continue in their positions in 2024, but a co-chair is needed and our current secretary would welcome anyone interested in assuming her duties. Let Sharon Macauley know if you would be interested in either of these positions.

While we search for a permanent pastor, Women's Fellowship will continue to contact members of the congregation on a regular basis.

Some of the funds raised by the Olde Curiosity Shoppe in November were disbursed as follows: \$150 to Side by Side, which supports parents, caregivers, and family members of LGBTQ+ youth, and \$150 to Blue Ridge Abortion Fund, which provides financial, transportation, and lodging assistance for women in Central Virginia needing abortions.

A variety of upcoming activities and dates were discussed.

Souper Bowl Sunday – Feb 11. Women's Fellowship will organize a soup-based potluck lunch.

March 10 – the next regular Women's Fellowship meeting after church will feature instruction in the craft of cardmaking. All materials will be supplied.

We will host a community **Buy Nothing Day** again this year, on Saturday April 20. Start going through your unwanted household goods to donate!

A date was also set for the **2024 Holiday Bazaar**, which will be held on **November 16**.

Men's Fellowship

The monthly Men's Fellowship breakfast will be held on **Saturday, Feb 10 at 9 AM** at the River City Diner, 11430 West Huguenot Rd., Midlothian.



At the congregational meeting on Jan 28, we voted to become a congregational covenant partner of the Justice & Witness Action Network of the Central Atlantic Conference. This network is made up of State Action Networks, Issue Action Networks, and the Faith and Democracy Campaign. If you are interested in being part of our congregation's Justice Team, see Gail Christie. Here are some current network updates:

Faith and Democracy 2024

Yes, Virginia, there are Presidential Primary Elections (both parties) on March 5! Early voting at the Registrar's Office and by mail is already underway. Satellite voting locations in Chesterfield - at the same 5 libraries as before - will be open for just one week for this election, from Saturday, Feb 24 through Saturday March 2. You can view sample ballots [here](#). Monday, Feb 12 is the deadline to register to vote. Seventeen-year-olds who will be 18 by election day in November are eligible to register and vote in the primary election.

Justice & Witness Action Network – VA

We are lobbying for 3 bills during the 2024 legislative session.

HB2/SB2 is a ban on assault-style weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines.

HB174/SB101 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, gender, or sexual orientation in the issuance of marriage licenses.

HB1244 – puts additional limits on the use of solitary confinement (no corresponding Senate bill)

Things move very quickly, so Gail Christie will be sending out email updates with calls to action. You can join the Justice and Witness Action Network and get Action Alerts [here](#).