The Messenger

First Congregational Christian
UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

November 2026

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FROM THE PASTOR - NOVEMBER 2026

I do like liturgy. I mean, liturgy in the formal sense. I like the "smells and bells" of high church worship. I am moved by the beauty and subtlety of the dramatic ordering of the services. I like the weird, specialized vocabulary of liturgical things (e.g. intinction, gaudete, iconostasis, chasuble, anamnesis). I enjoy the rhythms of the liturgical year – beginning with Advent, then moving through the life of Christ, through Easter, and then to the Pentecostal beginnings of the church.

These long-held worship traditions nourish my soul in ways that I never experienced as a fundamentalist, or as a megachurch evangelical. It just feels like the ceremonial depth honors the richness and beauty of the divine mysteries.

Yet, at the same time, all that transcendent beauty can have the effect of distancing the divine from the ordinary. The holy is put on such a sacred pedestal that it sometimes causes us to forget that we find grace in simple things, ordinary things, queer things, and yes, new things.

Sometimes, too much tradition can put us in a rut that skews our vision of God and creation. We can forget sometimes that longstanding traditions were once innovations, holding their own season of novelty. We can also forget that traditions have their own cultural matrices from which they were born, and that other traditions from around the world can be just as valid. Sometimes, tradition can rob us of the freedom to be curious and creative, denying us the graces and joys of discovery.

Where am I going with all this? Not very far, to be honest. I just want to change Advent up. NBD…(that's "no big deal" in text-speak). I know Advent is not happening until the end of a busy November. This month, we have stewardship season, All Saints Sunday, Election Day, the CROP Walk, the Holiday Bazaar, Sharing Sunday, Thanksgiving, and the hanging of the greens – just to hit some of the highlights. But I'm introducing the Advent theme here and now so that everyone will know to expect it.

The Advent theme this year is "Echoes", and we'll explore echoes of creation (joy), covenant (love), Christ (hope), and Celebration (joy). For those keeping track, this means that we're mixing up the order of Advent Sundays from the usual HOPE>PEACE>JOY>LOVE sequence to PEACE>LOVE>JOY> HOPE. Are you feeling scandalized yet? Too big of a leap? No? Good. Thank you for your flexibility in this matter.

This Advent series is designed to carry us through the Biblical story in ways that devote greater attention to the whole, so that we might experience greater appreciation for the Christ-story that is bookended by it.

So, let's take a trip outside of the familiar. I know it's only slightly outside of the familiar. But changing the sequence and going off-lectionary for the Scripture readings, I believe, will offer something fresh that helps us experience Advent a little differently. I think it will help us pay attention to the echoes that sound and re-sound through the story that we ourselves live into today. I hope you will enjoy what's coming.

November 2025 WORSHIP CALENDAR
Sundays at 11:00 AM
Services are also (live)streamed on YouTube at
https://youtube.com/@fccucchesterfieldva8567

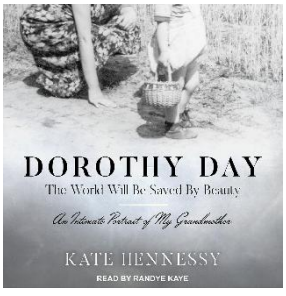
November 1	**All Saints Sunday (Communion Celebrated)** 1 John 3:1-3 "Pure Hope" with Rev. Willson
November 8	**24th Sunday after Pentecost (CROP Walk Sunday)** Psalms 78:1-7; "Pass It On" with Rev. Willson
November 15	**25th Sunday after Pentecost (Sharing Sunday/Open Mic & Pledges)** 1 Corinthians 14:26; Open-Mic Theme: "Living into Hope"
November 22	**Reign of Christ Sunday** Guest Pastor – Dr. Phyllis Tessieri
November 29	**1st Sunday of Advent – PEACE** "Echoes of Creation" with Rev. Willson

Sharing Sunday (open mic & pledges) on November 15. At the November 15 worship service, instead of the usual meditation from Rev. Willson, the congregation will be bringing the Word of God, in whatever form God has laid on your hearts. It will be an open mic service.

If you would like a theme to guide your thoughts, the theme is "Living into hope". Whether you stick with the theme or not, you are invited (if you wish) to step up to the mic and share what God has laid on your heart. Perhaps, it's a song or a brief meditation; a passage of Scripture that's been meaningful to you lately; or maybe it's a word of gratitude, or request for prayer.

The usual guidelines will apply: 1) Come forward to speak or wait for the roaming mic; 2) Prayerful quiet when someone is not sharing; 3) Supportive listening (even if you don't agree with what's being said); 4) Be mindful of your time when you are speaking to ensure that others will have the chance to speak; 5) Speak for yourself and not for someone else; 6) Please do not volunteer someone else to speak; 7) Remember, this is worship and not a council or business meeting. Please work problems out through the proper channels.
After our time of sharing, we will close our sharing time with a hymn and continue on through to the end of the service. All are welcome to share and like the psalmist said, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so."

Adult Faith Formation



We are continuing our study of "The World Will Be Saved by Beauty" this month:
Nov 1 - Chs. 10-11 (pp. 153-170)
Nov 8 - Chs. 12-13 (pp. 171-199)
Nov 15 - Chs. 14-15 (pp. 200-227)
Nov 22 - Chs. 16-17 (pp.228-250) (no class meeting this day)
Nov 29 - Chs. 18-19 (pp. 251-275)

The Messenger

Daylight Savings Time ends Nov 1st

Be sure to turn your clocks back on Saturday night!

November Birthdays

Rhoda Blocker	11/01
Lorie Rajput	11/01
Jeff Beatman	11/11
Richard Jones	11/17
George Meszaros	11/24
Henry Meszaros	11/24
Mark Griffith	11/25

Directory Update:

Herman Morris & Will Edwards
12518 Second Branch Rd
Chesterfield, VA 23838

Along with all of "Metro Richmond at Prayer," during November let's pray for Persons in Financial Need in Metropolitan Richmond.

Our expanded monthly **Social Justice Vigil** will be held on **Sunday, Nov 15** following worship. Bring a sign - or borrow one of ours - and join us in front of the church along Courthouse Road to show our solidarity with our Black brothers and sisters, immigrant neighbors, the LGBTQIA+ community, and others! Chairs can be provided if standing is a hardship.

The Breakfast Club will meet Sat, Nov 21 at 9 AM at River City Diner, 11430 W. Huguenot Rd.

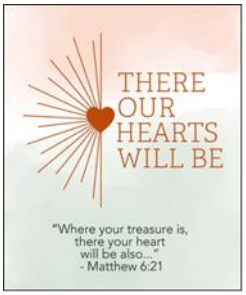
Dinner at Giuseppe's will be taking a break in November and December and will resume in January.

Sept 2026 Treasurer's Report

Opening balance – Sept 1 (checking + savings)	$ 59560
Deposits	$ 10099
Expenses	$ 12174
Ending balance – Sept 30	$ 57385
YTD change since Jan 1	$ -8763

2026 Stewardship Campaign

Stewardship Sunday November 15



The theme for our Stewardship Campaign this year is "There Our Hearts Will Be" – Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. We are invited to offer our contributions of time, talent, and treasure not through the lens of obligation but of love. Where our hearts go, our lives, choices, and resources will follow. How do we experience love, gratitude, and new possibilities at 1st Church? How could we each grow our impacts for good through pledges of money, time & talent in 2027? Beginning on Sunday, Nov 1, we will be provided with pledge cards and an invitation to consider those questions. We will receive and dedicate our pledge cards during worship on Nov 15. If you are unable to be in church that day, you can bring them early or mail them to the church. Thanks!

-the Stewardship Committee

Election Day is November 3rd

. These are difficult and challenging times for our local communities, our country, and the world. Divisive and heated rhetoric dominate the public dialogue. More and more people are withdrawing from engagement in the political process out of a growing sense of cynicism and mistrust. Now, more than ever, your voice and your efforts are needed. By faithfully committing to vote, we make a pledge not just to ourselves, but also to our community. Voting is the vehicle by which we express our love of neighbor. If you haven't voted early, make sure to vote on November 3rd.

Drop boxes for absentee ballots and curbside voting are available at all polling locations. Same day registration is also available for those eligible voters who are not yet registered or who have been purged from the voting rolls.

Below is the list of needed items for the CFBOC holiday meal package, as a guide for special items to contribute this month. Let's gather together and share our blessings.

2 cans (15 oz.) yams or sweet potatoes
1 box (13 oz.) instant mashed potatoes
1 can (14 oz.) cranberry sauce
2 cans (15 oz.) corn
2 cans (15 oz.) green vegetables
2 boxes stuffing (no bags)
2 cans or packages of gravy (no glass jars)
1 box hot chocolate
1 box tea bags
1 box or bag of cookies

We will also be receiving a special **Thanksgiving Offering on Sunday Nov 22** to help support the CFBOC Thanksgiving Basket program.

Many Parts, One Body: The Potomac Association Fall Meeting
November 14th, 9am-12pm at Rockville United Church, 355 Linthicum St. Rockville, MD 20851 and online (Zoom).

Join us for a spirit-filled fall meeting as we worship and fellowship together and discuss 2027 planning (including our annual budget).

This meeting is free, and you can attend online. This is a great way to connect with the wider church. You can register here.

JUSTICE DEMANDS RISC | RICHMONDERS INVOLVED TO STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITIES

Thanks to those who attended our RISC House Meeting in October, and the 16 who have committed thus far to be Network Members for the upcoming year. We shared information about work of this vital Justice Ministry Network and stories about what is weighing heavy on our hearts as well as our experiences with issues of safe and affordable housing, gun violence, and mental health. RISC will continue to focus on these issues this year and choose an additional area based on concerns shared by members of RISC congregations. We will have a special commissioning of our Justice Network Members and Team Leaders during the worship service on Sunday, November 8th..

RISC Community Problems Assembly
Nov 9th at 7 PM (doors open 6:15)
Second Baptist Church Southside
3300 Broad Rock Blvd

All of our Network Members are needed at the upcoming RISC Community Problems Assembly**. We will hear updates on our ongoing issue campaigns and then vote on the new focus area for RISC. The three broad issues that we will choose between, based on feedback from House Meetings, are Immigration, the Elderly, and Rising Costs & Affordability.** We get one vote per Network Member present at this meeting, so attendance is critical. Others interested in seeing the process at work are also invited! Carpooling from the church will be available.

Come help us decorate the sanctuary for the holiday season. Our hanging of the greens will begin at 3 PM on Sat Nov 28.

Hanging of the Greens

HOLIDAY BAZAAR
Saturday, Nov 14
10 AM – 3 PM

Haul out the holly! Our annual Holiday Bazaar will feature craft vendors, a bake sale, and the Old Curiosity Shoppe. Plan to do all your holiday shopping early. All proceeds from the sale fund our mission projects. We are also in need of baked items and donated gift quality items for resale from the congregation. So put on your elf ears and we will see you there!

Bake sale items can be brought first thing Saturday morning.

Donations of **gently used gift items and handmade craft items** for the Helping Hands "Olde Curiosity Shoppe" and craft table can be brought to church at any time up until, and including, the day of the sale. Please price items yourself.

All prices should be in whole dollar amounts.

Lots of volunteers are needed for a variety of tasks:

- Set-up (Thurs., Nov 12 at 3 PM)
- Clean-up (Sat. afternoon)
- Staffing the bake sale
- Staffing the "Olde Curiosity" table

Look for a sign-up sheet in the Narthex.

Finally, be sure to invite your family and friends to come and shop! There is an event page on Facebook that can be shared through social media https://www.facebook.com/events/2200850770474274

There is also a flyer at the end of this newsletter that you can print out and post in public spaces.

Richmond CROP Hunger Walk
Sunday, Nov 8
Registration/Rally and Hygiene Kit Assembly 1:30 PM
Step-off 2 PM
Grace Covenant Presbyterian Church 1627 Monument Ave.

CROP Hunger Walks are community-based fundraising events that have been held in cities and towns across the United States for nearly 60 years to support the global mission of Church World Service, a faith-based organization transforming communities around the globe through just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement and disaster.

On November 8, we will walk to raise funds to help neighbors here in our community and around the world to get the meals they need today and sustainable food security for tomorrow. One-fourth of the funds raised will support two local agencies – Shalom Farms and Peter Paul Development Center. Join the 1stUCC Walk team and walk with us – or sponsor our team or individual walkers. You can register or make a secure online donation at https://events.crophungerwalk.org/chw/team/first-congregational-christian-ucc
If you prefer to donate by check, make it out to CWS/CROP and bring or mail it to the church, attention: Gail Christie

This is our major annual Missions project, and everyone is encouraged to participate as a walker or donor. Thanks for your support!

Christmas Mother
CHESTERFIELD COLONIAL HEIGHTS

Gifts due Sunday, November 29th

As in previous years, we are sponsoring a family and a senior. For each recipient, they request a new outfit (slacks, shirt, underwear, and socks), a minimum of one large gift item from the wish list, and several small items. Gifts should be new, labeled with the family # and the name of the recipient. Please leave tags on clothing and include receipt/gift receipt in case of sizing issues. Gifts for the children can be wrapped or unwrapped; if unwrapped the parent(s) should be provided with wrapping paper.

Family #2011 is Olivia, an 82 year old senior. She requests black pants (size 2X), a white shirt (size 2X), size 12 white underwear, and a white bra size 3X/40D. Gift requests are gold or silver pierced earrings/jewelry set and a full size sheet and comforter set.

Family #2012 is Janie, also a senior, and two grandsons – Vincent, age 8, and Ka'Ronyae, age 5. Janie's clothing requests are jeans or sweats size 18, any color; XL short sleeved shirt, any color, size 10 briefs, 38B bra. Gift requests are a small room-sized heater, king size sheet set (any color), Pearl Art Diamond Craft kit, large print Bible.

Vincent wears youth size 10 pants (jeans or sweats), size 9 shirt – red, crew socks size 13-1, stretch boxers size 10. Gift requests are a scooter, anything Minecraft, and "surprise him." He likes books about dragons and autobiographies. Ka'Ronyae wears youth size 7 pants (jeans or sweats), size 6 shirt (blue), size 11-13 crew socks, stretch boxers size 8. Gift requests are a scooter, anything Sonic, anything with balloons. He likes books about sharks and books that sing or talk.

There is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex, with more details. Please check to see what has already been signed up for before you purchase anything. Save receipts as well; these will go in a separate envelope in case exchanges of clothing are needed. All donations of gifts and money should be brought to church no later than November 29. There are boxes in the narthex for these items.

Many thanks to Helping Hands for coordinating this project again this year!

Holiday Bazaar

Saturday Nov 14

10 AM – 3 PM

First Congregational
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
4310 Courthouse Rd, Chesterfield
(1/4 mi S of Hull St)

UNIQUE GIFTS

LOCAL CRAFTS

HOLIDAY DECOR

BAKE SALE

1stchurch.ucc@gmail.com; 804 276-5338
Proceeds benefit our outreach ministries