

**WE WELCOME VISITORS** who are attending our service of worship today. **EVERYONE** is requested to sign the attendance pad found at the end of each pew. We request visitors also to note their addresses and telephone numbers.

**FLOWERS:** The flowers on the altar are given to the glory of God and in honor of ALL volunteers of First Reformed United Church of Christ by Reverend Banks and Eulene Shepherd.

**USHERS:** J.W. Bates, Ramona Yarbrough, Denise Durham, and Sylvia Walser

**PLATE ATTENDANT:** Buddy Lohr

**ACOLYTES:** Laura and Katarina Strenk

**GREETERS:** Jerry and Aurelia Smith

**NURSERY** {Birth through 6 years-old}: Betty Bates

**PRAYER CONCERNS:** Don Leonard, John Rollins, Elmer Morgan {The Laurels of Forest Glenn, 1101 Hartwell St, Garner, NC 27529}, Ronnie Durham, Willie Ruth Leonard, Sadie Bailey, Rita Tussey, Arlene Swing, Margaret Trexler, Jacqueline Leonard, Frances Leonard, Joel Reece, Juanita and Henry Beck, Ernestine and Henry Kennedy, Ernie Bonner, Johnny Sink, Paul Stevens (Lisa Nelson's Cousin), Van "Buster" Conrad (Gray Family), Melvin Evans (Paul Freeman's Uncle), Jacob Berrier, Susan Cadwallader (Anne Fletcher's Mother), and Sgt. Russell Mullis, USMC (Jerri Russell's son who is serving in Afghanistan). To place a name on the prayer chain, please call Adena Wall at 249-1904 or the church office.

### **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

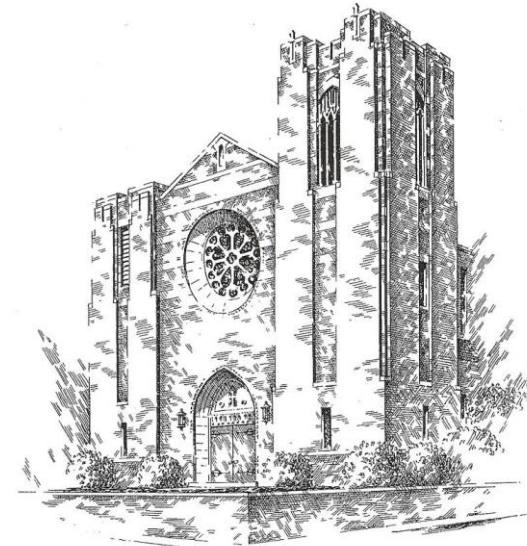
Sunday, January 10	9:45 a.m. ---SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR EVERYONE 11:00 a.m. ---WORSHIP SERVICE KIDS' CLUB {Following Children's Moment} 6:00 p.m. ----New Elders and Deacons meet with Reverend Patten (Parlor) 7:00 p.m. --- <b>CONSISTORY MEETING</b> {Willing Workers Classroom}
Monday, January 11	Morning Glory Circle Serves Meal at Homeless Shelter 5:30 p.m. ---Scrap Book/Craft Night {Parlor}
Tuesday, January 12	6:30 p.m. ---Pastoral Search Committee {Parlor}
Wednesday, January 13	7:00 p.m. ---Adult Choir Practice
Thursday, January 14	5:30 p.m. ---YOGA Class 7:15 p.m. --- <b>LIVING THE QUESTIONS STUDY</b> {Fellowship Hall}
Sunday, January 17	9:45 a.m. ---SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES FOR EVERYONE 11:00 a.m. ---WORSHIP SERVICE {CHURCH ANNIVERSARY}

January 3, 2010	Attendance (Worship 112)	Offering Received \$3,048.00
January 4, 2009	Attendance (Worship 123)	Needed each Sunday to meet Budget \$5,581.00

#### Church Staff

Reverend Walter Patten, Ph.D., Intentional Interim Minister	(Cell #336-420-2728	Home #336-632-1985)
Paul Freeman, Choir Director	Lee Ann Peele, Organist	Paula Lopp, Administrative Asst

# *First Reformed United Church of Christ*



*Where People Discover - - -  
The Love of God  
The Power to Love Others  
The Ability to Love Ourselves*

*104 East Center Street  
Lexington, NC 27292  
Website [www.frucc.org](http://www.frucc.org)*

*Office (336) 248-2617  
Fax (336) 248-6163  
email - [church@frucc.org](mailto:church@frucc.org)*

*Sunday, January 10, 2010*

# Service of Divine Worship

First Sunday After Epiphany

January 10, 2010

## Preparation for Worship

Prelude "O Worship the King" Haydn  
\*Chimes Sounding the Hour  
\*Time of Greeting  
Announcements  
Choral Call to Worship  
Solemn Declaration and Choral Amen

## Praise to God

\*Hymn "Joy to the World" No. 120

\*Responsive Call to Worship (Texts from Isaiah 60:1-3 and 43:1-3)

Minister: Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

**People: For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples;**

Minister: But the Lord will arise upon you.

**People: Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.**

Minister: But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel:

**People: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.**

Minister: When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;

**People: When you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.**

Minister: For I am the Lord your God,

**People: The Holy One of Israel, your Savior.**

\*Gloria Patri

Invocation

## Confession of Sin

Call to Confession

Unison Prayer for the Confession of Sin

**Gracious God, you have come to us as the Christ-Child, beckoning us to open our lives to your tender loving mercy and compassion, offering to shed light abroad in**

**the midst of our darkness. We bless you Lord that you have persuaded us to permit some of that light in. We ask your forgiveness when we have remained un-persuaded to take what seems like a great risk, to relinquish our precious illusions of control to your care and direction. Be with us now as we accompany our young man Jesus to His baptism, helping us to see that He has submitted to your baptismal covenant with Him for our sakes, not for His own. You name our Jesus your "Son, the Beloved," and you say that you "are well pleased with Him." Grant to us a similar spirit of submission, that in handing our lives over to you, you hand our lives back to us, renewed, transformed, cleansed, healed; in Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.**

The Kyrie and Assurance of Pardon - - - Amen Sung

## Witness of Faith

The Pastoral Prayer

Children's Moment {Followed by Kids' Club in the Education Building}

Anthem "O Come Sweet Spirit" Zaninelli

## Proclamation of the Word

The New Testament Lessons

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22 {Page #935 of Pew Bible}

Acts 8:14-17 {Page #999 of Pew Bible}

Sermon

**WHAT'S IN A NAME?**

Prayer

## Response Through Dedication

Invitation to Give

Giving of Tithes and Offerings

The Offertory

\*The Doxology and Offertory Prayer

## Preparation for Obedience in the World

\*Hymn "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling" No. 272

\*Responsive Call to Dedication

Leader: And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

**People: Then I said, "Here am I! Send me."**

\*The Benediction

\*Postlude "Ye Servants of God" Wilson

\*Those who are able please stand

## *Living the Questions Study Series*

We will begin our next sequence of seven sessions of our “**Living the Questions**” series at **7:15 p.m., January 14, 2010 in our Educational Building**. This series of studies is entitled “Reclaiming the World”. Lesson topics include:

- January 14, 2010 “Restoring Relationships”
- January 21, 2010 “The Prophetic Jesus”
- January 28, 2010 “Evil, Suffering and A God of Love”
- February 4, 2010 “The Myth of Redemptive Violence”
- February 11, 2010 “Practicing Resurrection”
- February 18, 2010 “Debunking the Rapture”
- February 25, 2010 “Reclaiming the World”

As before, we will use a stimulating DVD to prompt our discussions, along with lesson handouts for personal work. NOTE: If you would like a copy of the written lesson in advance please contact the church office.

### Prologue to *The Innkeeper: A Christmas Story*.

Families and individuals who attended our Christmas Eve Service received a special Christmas gift from me after that service: a copy of *The Innkeeper: A Christmas Story*. My oldest daughters had been asking me for years to give them a copy of such a story that I wrote approximately 25 years ago as the minister of Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Chapel Hill, when they were children. Problem was, and is, that I could not find the original manuscript; so, about a month ago, I resolved to re-imagine that story as best I could, and to expand upon it as it seemed appropriate to do so. Some new elements emerged with this fresh effort, among them the theological and metaphorical connections between Hanukka and Christmas, which I personally found to be very satisfying, even compelling. Though, this observation brings me to the following disclaimer in the next paragraph, however attractive this organic connection between Judaism and Christianity might be as it plays out in my story.

*The Innkeeper: A Christmas Story* is **not** to be taken as “gospel truth” as to what “actually happened” on the night of Jesus’ birth. Being based exclusively upon Luke 2: 1-20 (thus precluding any references to “The Wise Men,” who appear only in Matthew), **it is simply my faithfully imaginative, and I hope intelligent and theologically responsible, attempt to depict one narrative way in which these key events of our Lord’s nativity could have occurred.** However, to state the obvious,

I was not there and I do not know what “actually happened” or “when” it happened, so many other plausible accounts could and have been imagined by people of faith who were, like me, simply seeking a greater understanding of these mysteries and of some of the phenomena (particularly with “light”) that have been associated with them over the centuries. Add to this the predominant opinion of modern Biblical scholarship which suggests that Jesus was most likely born in the springtime of the year, which connects more with the Nisan and Iyar periods of the Hebrew calendar, not Kislev. Add to this the strong likelihood that, given the strong anti-Jewish bias that evolved in the earliest centuries of Christian development, had any early references connecting Hanukka to Christ’s nativity been found in the earliest Christian manuscripts, they would likely have been removed by a series of well-intentioned editors who wanted to maintain a sharp distance between the “daughter” religion of Christianity and the “parent” religion of Judaism. However, the present absence of Hannuka references in the nativity scriptures does not necessarily imply that they were there originally. I am suggesting that they might have been or could have been. Now, we simply do not know.

That said, I did not intend for this story to be read by Biblical scholars, but by my children and grandchildren and by faithful Christians at FRUCC for whom Christmas Eve is important. I wanted our people at FRUCC to experience this story of our Lord’s nativity as a “gift,” as one way to “magnify” (to use Mary’s word) this text, to open it up with theologically, personally and historically plausible details which could strengthen our appreciation of the mysteries being pointed to in Luke 2: 1-20. At the end of the day, however, they remain mysteries.

For those of you whose Christmas Eve experience was enhanced by your reading of *The Innkeeper*, you have already received the gift intended. For those of you who may have been puzzled by this or that aspect of this story, we now have a new basis for dialogue and sharing, which is always a good development, from my point of view. For those of you who did not receive a copy of “The Innkeeper,” and want one, please contact me (336-420-2728) and we will arrange to get one for your family.

With such a faithfully imaginative story, we in the UCC are taking one of our founding theologians, Reinhold Niebuhr, to heart: We are taking Luke 2: 1-20 seriously, but not necessarily literally; though, for me, there is a place even for literal truth in our faith, if by “literal” we mean the legitimacy of the historical question about, say, “what actually happened on the night Jesus was born.” The difficulty of answering that question accurately, however, is another matter, always leaving plenty of room for “faith.” Such Biblical texts as Luke 2: 1-20 remain mysterious, no matter how many stories are written to “magnify” them, and only people given to meekness and humility will find this concluding assessment to be comforting.

Wishing You A Belated Merry Christmas! Rev. Walt