

# First Family News

Our Second Century

February 2018

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## God's Timing is Perfect

I am wondering if you are like me and thinking, how did January pass so quickly? It's been a fulsome time. Full of so much to consider, ponder, pray about, discern... full of so much activity and work in getting ready to join you, full of "advent" and "epiphany" moments.

And now, those of us who follow the church calendar are leaning into the season called Lent which begins on February 14<sup>th</sup> – Ash Wednesday. I look forward to being with you, physically and fully in the next "advent/epiphany/lent" season of the life of this congregation. God's timing in our individual and corporate lives is perfect. I sense this – for us, as together we lean into the faith journey ahead of us.

The cycle of the church seasons has been an enriching concept for me throughout my life. I enjoy reflecting upon how the meanings of each season are happening in my own life and the lives of people I know and love.

This brings me to state the obvious: we don't know each other very well. This brings me to share with you the importance of doing "first things first" – as in any interim pastorate. Already I am learning some of your stories. We need to spend some time establishing a relationship founded on love and trust and revitalizing our faith in God as a faith community. This usually takes four to six months for a foundational level, but continues for much longer. For deep change to happen, the cycle begins with awareness, then information gathering and analysis. LFCC, you have engaged these steps in the past couple of years in the work you have done with Partnership for Hope from Disciples Home Missions. Now enters your new pastor.

For this next phase, I need to experience your understandings/reflections of these two important steps that you have already done so that we can continue onward into the vision/plan stage of deep change. This intentional work requires work/prayer/discernment which leads into forming the action plan of moving into your future. Your action plan will lead to a phase of reflection and evaluation, to ascertain if you are on track with the human plans and discern if you have listened to God's plans for you. All along this cycle of change, it is imperative for us to be listening to God, nurturing our faith in God, and continuing to trust each other. Rest assured, God is faithful. Churches are doing the sort of thing we are engaging. God is providing for us, even when we have no idea that God is at work. Let us be confident that God's timing is perfect.

Lent is a great time for us to begin our journey together! I am hopeful and eager to serve as your minister for the next phases of your spiritual formation and tangible physical development as the body of Christ known as Lawrenceville First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Yours in Christ's Love,

Melinda+

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# An Introduction...

The Reverend Melinda McDonald comes to Lawrenceville First Christian Church with over 18 years of facilitating Christian discipleship in various ways. "I have loved sharing with others the practice of prayer and daily devotional work, listening to others' stories of challenge, pain and joy, as well as developing and facilitating congregation-wide Christian formation programs. Strengthening one's relationship with God creates a genuine desire to serve actively as the Light and Love of Christ in the world."

"Many people of faith are wondering: how does the church continue going forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Helping the church move into its next phase has been my major focus for the past four years. God's people have responded throughout history to adapt amid the changing seasons of the world. Being faithful and being open to God's call means we face into the future, confident that God is going before us."

Melinda completed her Master of Divinity degree from The School of Divinity at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, NC. She was ordained as an elder in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in 2015. She has served in Episcopal, Disciples of Christ, and United Methodist Church settings.

As a former language arts teacher, Melinda engaged the hearts and minds of her students through the study of literature. The power of "story" to transform lives in the classroom was/is a powerful ministry. For her personally, the greatest story of God's love is the main story for everyone to experience!

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## Planning Session

The Leadership Council will hold a planning session for the coming year on February 18, 2018, following the 10:50 a.m. Worship Service. We will have a light lunch and then conduct our planning session. The session is expected to last between two and three hours. Our new Minister, Reverend Melinda McDonald, will lead the event. Melinda and the Leadership Council invite anyone in the Church who would like to participate to attend the planning session. In order to provide for the correct amount of food and materials, we need to know how many people to expect. If you would like to attend the planning session, please place your name on the sign-up sheet that will be provided in the Church lobby on Sunday, February 4<sup>th</sup> and Sunday, February 11<sup>th</sup>, or send an email to Lee Thompson at [vlt@thompson-sweeny.com](mailto:vlt@thompson-sweeny.com). We hope to see you on February 18<sup>th</sup>.

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## Dates to Remember for Spiritual Formation in Lent 2018

**Ash Wednesday** is February 14 - yes, it's on Valentine's Day this year! We will have two services this year - a short spoken one at 12:30 with imposition of ashes, and a service at 7 pm, also with the imposition of ashes.

**Bread, Broth (& Book)** will be on **Tuesday evenings this Lent: 2/20, 2/27, 3/13 and 3/20.** We will begin at 6 for fellowship and food, and promptly at 7 until 7:45 discuss some points based on the book, *Listening Hearts: Discerning Call in Community 20th Anniversary Edition* by Farnham, et al. The book is \$12.56 from Amazon and I plan to lead a detailed book study on this in the Fall. The content will be valuable for anyone who wants to learn how to listen for God's direction. The book presents its content very simply and straightforwardly, but it is steeped in wisdom. Even if you are not a reader, please plan to come and be with us and "listen in"/hear questions, comments, get to know your new pastor opportunity, etc.

\*Who is an Amazon prime member and can order the book for us? Please email Melinda to let me know.

**Lenten Quiet Time** will be offered on Sunday afternoon, March 4th from 2 until 3:45. Pastor Melinda needs a reader for 2:00, 2:30, 3:00, and 3:30. A sign-up sheet will be placed in the hall, but please email Melinda also. This event will be a time for you to bring your Bibles and journals if you wish (or your knitting!) simply to be still and spend some quiet time with God. There will be a praying-in-color station, an examen station, and a praying-via-movement station. The readings will be short ones followed by a prayer and then we each will go to a spot somewhere to meditate/journal. If the weather cooperates, we will be able to enjoy the prayer garden outside. This event is designed in a flexible way so folks can come for one reading and spend 30 minutes or stay for an hour or two or the entire event. We will have a short service at 3 pm. Any questions? Please email Pastor Melinda at [melindamcdonald07@gmail.com](mailto:melindamcdonald07@gmail.com).

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## February Birthdays & Anniversaries

4 Jim & Nan Anders - Anniversary  
7 Pamela Evatt-Machado  
9 Jimmy Peeples  
10 Al Groves  
14 Evelyn Carlisle  
15 Rebecca Thompson  
19 Annie Ballew  
19 Buck Oakes  
20 Melissa & Tom McAfee - Anniversary  
21 Martha Ann Wages  
22 Mark Jensen  
27 Kaeden Carter  
24 Gerald Kersey  
28 Louise Craft  
28 Sha Parks

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## Important February Dates

Feb 2-4: 2018 Youth Assembly at Epworth By the Sea  
Feb 4: Fifth Sunday After the Epiphany  
First Sunday Food  
5pm – Choir practice

- Feb 6: TONTO/Retirees Luncheon  
Feb 11: Transfiguration Sunday – Last Sunday before Lent  
Rev. Melinda McDonald starts at LFCC  
Linger Longer to welcome Rev. Melinda McDonald  
5pm – Choir practice  
Feb 13: Retirees Breakfast  
Feb 14: Ash Wednesday  
12:30pm – Ash Wednesday Service  
7pm – Ash Wednesday Service  
Feb 16: 7:35 – Fellowship Outing – Atlanta Gladiators  
Feb 18: First Sunday in Lent  
Leadership Council Planning Meeting after the 10:50am service  
4pm – Youth Bowling at Stars & Strikes  
5pm – Choir practice  
Feb 20: 6pm – Bread & Broth Fellowship Meal  
7pm – Lenten Devotion  
Feb 24: Camp Christian Work Day  
Feb 25: Second Sunday in Lent  
Camp Christian Giving Tree drive begins  
Linger Longer to celebrate October-February birthdays  
5pm – Choir practice  
Feb 27: 6pm – Bread & Broth Fellowship Meal  
7pm – Lenten Devotion
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## February Worship Helpers

- Feb 4: Scripture Reader – Anna Harrison  
Communion Meditation – Hoyt Huff  
Greeter – Lee Thompson  
Feb 11: Responsive Reader – Riley Ballew  
Scripture Reader – Karen Jensen  
Communion Meditation – Bruce Johnson  
Greeter – Josué Figueira Machado  
Feb 18: Responsive Reader – Riley Ballew  
Scripture Reader – Mabel Simmons  
Communion Meditation – Anna Harrison  
Greeter – Josué Figueira Machado  
Feb 25: Responsive Reader – Riley Ballew  
Scripture Reader – Connie Thompson  
Communion Meditation – Kim Peeples  
Greeter – Josué Figueira Machado
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## Serving at the Table in February

- Elders – Beth Thompson & Connie Thompson (4)  
Deacons: Anna Harrison & Riley Ballew (11, 18 & 25)  
Communion Preparation: Mary Jo Alvord & Candace Richardson

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# Camp Christian Giving Tree

On Sundays, February 25-March 11, the Camp Christian Giving Tree will be set up in the gathering area. Your donations will go toward water bottles, various types of balls (recreation equipment), an outdoor ceiling fan for "Lawrencevilla" and possibly another villa, and some other items. The Youth will also receive donations at the Giving Tree Souper Sunday meal (featuring soup!) following 10:50 worship on March 11. Thanks for your support of Camp in advance.

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## A Thank You Note from Rev. Melinda McDonald

Dear People of God,

I find myself wanting to give each and every one of you a written thank you note for your help in getting me situated into my apartment here in Lawrenceville. This manner is short of my usual habit, but please know how very much I appreciate all of those helping hands and hearts on January 8th and January 13th.

Thank you also to those who have helped me with household goods. Eric and I really appreciate these gifts which will be gently used and given later to someone in need at the end of my interim.

Your hospitality makes God smile!

In Christ,

Melinda



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Music Director: Kim Peebles