



FIRST NEWS

Vol. 33 No. 4 A Newsletter of First Congregational UCC Concord, NC www.firstchurchucc.org

JANUARY 2025



Inspirations

A NEW YEAR'S PRAYER FOR PEACE

Dear Lord,
Let this be a year
That moves us
One step closer
To each other.

Let this be a year
That brings us
Understanding in our hearts.

Let this be a year
That fills us with a yearning,
Burning feeling
For peace with one another
And a oneness, Lord, with you.
Amen.



Deacons CORNER

God's promises to believers can be found throughout the Bible. Will you claim this promise for the first quarter of 2025?

“ **Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.**”

Deuteronomy 31: 6 (NIV)

No promise from
God is empty of
power, for with God
there is no such
thing as
impossibility!

Luke 1:37

fb.com/rochellegriffinfitness



Birthdays This Month

- 4-Mario Diaz
- 7- Michael Milo
- 11 - Viola Barrett
- 18 - Sylvia Edwards



SCHOLARSHIP CALENDAR SALE

The **McCorkle-Polk Scholarship Committee** is selling **2025 Black History Calendars** to support the **Scholarship Fund**. Instead of just celebrating Black History in **February**, take the **whole year** to learn about who you are, where you came from, and why you are important to this country and the world. They are asking for **\$7.00 per calendar** (any amount over that is welcome, too!).



HEALTH CABINET FOCUS: START THE YEAR OFF RIGHT



Let's start the year off right—with our physical health, our mental health, and our spiritual health. See the attachment in this newsletter and listen to the EL Holloway Health Cabinet's presentation by

Sis.Danielle Foard next week to get some insight on how to accomplish these things. Let us all **Be Brilliantly Alive in 2025!**

A LOOK BACK AT DECEMBER

Our Annual Fellowship Dinner was held in-person for the first time since Covid on the 8th. On the 22nd, the **Youth did an interpretive dance**, and **Christmas cards and treat bags** were distributed.



The following persons are under the weather/confined to their homes/recuperating/just in need of prayer. Please remember them with your prayers, visits, and calls:

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| John Barrett | Annie Maxwell |
| Viola Barrett | Michael Milo |
| Terry Baxter, Sr. | Edith Russell |
| Mary Bostick | Vernon Russell |
| Marva Cook | Congolese Smith |
| Myrtle Edmond | Harold Steele, Jr. |
| Michael Edwards | Harold Steele, III |
| Corine Foard | Letisha Steele |
| Dexter Franklin | Mazella Steele |
| Hugerietta Franklin | Michael York |

And don't forget all our fellow earth dwellers living with disease, disasters and disharmony!!



- January 1: New Year's Day
- January 20: **ML King, Jr. Day**



January 20, 2025

Name: >

< Date:

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Word Search

C B D L M O V E M E N T
B R A V E N U S H E C W
L B J I X A D A R U Q V
C M L U Z P D R T U U W
U I Z D S F R E E D O M
L I B E R T Y O R A D R
L U O H S B I K T T M I
H A R M O N Y C Y E O G
Q M A L K K L W E N S H
E Q U A L I T Y D W O T
S I N J W N R U Y G C S
T D O X C G H P E B O Q
R F B T V H D E R V U U
U R E B V A O A R L R D
G D L G K P C C C O A P
G M I N I S T E R E G D
L K V K H Z O R N Q E H
E I W Q M T R A L A K S

Equality
Freedom
King
Leader
Protest
Doctor
Courage
Justice
Liberty
Minister
Nobel
Movement
Struggle
Rights
Peace
Harmony
Visionary
Dream
Hero
Brave

JANUARY 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1  New Year's Day	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20  Martin Luther King Jr. Day	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	
		December 2024 S M T W Th F Sa 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31		February 2025 S M T W Th F Sa 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28		

2025 Calendar 2026 Calendars

Health Resolutions For 2025

Here are 12 health resolutions you should make to start the year on the right note and improve your overall health.

1. Adopt a balanced diet

Incorporate more whole foods, fruits, and vegetables into your diet while reducing processed food intake.

2. Commit to regular exercise

Engage in at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily, such as walking, yoga, or strength training. Regular exercise boosts cardiovascular health, improves mood, and enhances overall energy levels.

3. Prioritise mental health

Practice mindfulness through meditation, journaling, or breathing exercises. Setting aside time to focus on mental well-being can reduce stress and improve emotional resilience.

4. Stay hydrated

Drink at least 8–10 glasses of water daily. Hydration is essential for maintaining bodily functions, skin health, and energy levels.

5. Get quality sleep

Aim for 7–8 hours of uninterrupted sleep every night. Create a calming bedtime routine and maintain a consistent sleep schedule to improve overall restfulness.

6. Schedule regular health check-ups

Preventive care is key to avoiding serious health issues. Commit to routine screenings, blood tests, and dental check-ups to stay ahead of potential problems.

7. Reduce screen time

Limit time spent on phones, laptops, and other devices. Incorporate digital detox periods into your day to improve focus and reduce eye strain.

8. Build a skincare routine

Take care of your skin by cleansing, moisturising, and applying sunscreen daily. Tailor your skincare products to your skin type for better results.

9. Practice sustainable living

Adopt eco-friendly habits such as reducing waste, choosing reusable products, and eating more plant-based meals. These practices benefit both your health and the planet.

10. Strengthen relationships

Healthy social connections are crucial for emotional well-being. Spend quality time with family and friends to nurture your support network.

11. Learn a new skill

Engaging in creative hobbies or learning something new, like cooking or gardening, can improve cognitive function and reduce stress.

12. Focus on self-care

Take time to relax and rejuvenate. Self-care practices like spa days, reading, or indulging in a favourite hobby can improve your overall mood and outlook on life.

Statistics show that only 8% of people stick to their new year resolutions, but starting small and being consistent can lead to long-term success. By integrating these new year health resolutions into your daily routine, you can create a healthier, more balanced lifestyle in 2025 and beyond. Start today to make the most of the year ahead!

Sunday, January 5, 2025

Scripture Reading: John 1:(1-9), 10-18

I have found that if you love life, life will love you back. —Arthur Rubinstein

Logos. Light. Life. These three words get a lot of mentions in today’s Bible reading. Let’s take a look at each of them.

Logos. In English, the Greek word “logos” translates to “word” in English. It refers not just to a spoken word, but a concept, a reasoning or a divine emanation. Jesus as the Logos means that he is the ultimate revelation of God to humanity. He embodies God’s wisdom, will and purpose. He was with God from the very beginning, involved in the creation of everything. This means that Jesus is not just a historical figure, but the eternal Son of God who sustains and governs all things.

Light. “In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” (vv. 4-5). Light is essential for life; it dispels darkness and brings clarity. Jesus is described as the light of the world, which means that Jesus brings truth and understanding to a world which, unfortunately, is shrouded in darkness. The light of Jesus points us to God and exposes the truth about our condition and our need for salvation.

The light of Jesus will bring light to our blind spots. Can you think about areas of your life where you need the light of Jesus to shine? Are there parts of your heart or mind clouded by fear, doubt or sin?

Life. “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth” (v. 14). In Jesus is life — eternal life, abundant life, true life. Jesus is the source from which all life flows. By becoming flesh and dwelling among us, Jesus made it possible for us to experience this life firsthand. And what was his life all about? Grace and truth, verse 14 — virtues that bring healing and freedom to our broken world.

On the first Sunday of a new year, it’s a good idea to review these key theological ideas as they relate to Jesus — and to you! What word is Jesus speaking to you today that he’d be pleased for you to remember throughout 2025?

From what kind of light would you benefit this year? The light that will lead you out of the darkness of fear and despair?

What do you see happening in your life in 2025? Into what life is God leading you?

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for being the Logos, the divine Word who reveals God’s heart to us. Help us to live in the light of your wisdom and to seek your guidance in all aspects of our lives. Amen.

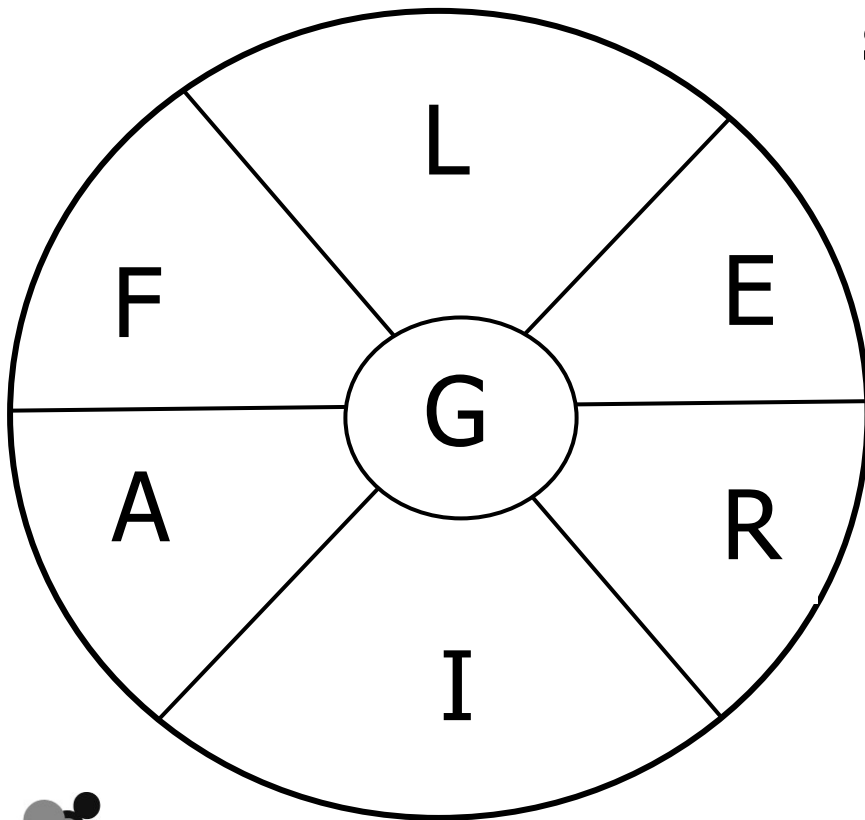
Week of January 5, 2025

Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday:** Genesis 1-5
- Monday:** Genesis 6-12
- Tuesday:** Genesis 13-18
- Wednesday:** Genesis 19-23
- Thursday:** Genesis 24-28
- Friday:** Genesis 29-32
- Saturday:** Genesis 33-36

READ
THROUGH
THE BIBLE
IN ONE
YEAR!

Each week, *HomeTouch* will provide daily readings from the Bible that will take you through the Bible in one year. Sometimes, we will suggest a **Verse to Remember**. Many *HomeTouch* readers try to memorize these verses; memorization stimulates both the mind and the heart!



SPELLING WHEEL

DIRECTIONS: How many words of three or more letters can you form using the letters in the wheel to the left? Each letter may only be used once.

EACH WORD MUST CONTAIN THE LETTER G.

Can you find the word that has seven letters in it? Suggested answers are below.

- 10 words = Good
- 14 words = Excellent
- 17+ words = Genius!



VERSE TO REMEMBER

I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

—Genesis 12:2 (NIV)

ANSWERS: glare, lager, agile, grail, large, regal, grief, girl, rage, gale, flag, gear, fig, age, gal, rag, leg, lag. The seven-letter word is: fragile.

January 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Sunday, January 12, 2025

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 43:1-7

The beauty of needing help is that it presents an opportunity for someone else to make a difference in your life. —Unknown

Louise Penny is a Canadian author of mystery novels set in the province of Quebec. The detective and hero of many of her novels is the francophone Chief Inspector Armand Gamache of the Sûreté du Québec. Of him, Penny writes, “Gamache had always held unfashionable beliefs. He believed the light would banish the shadows. That kindness was more powerful than cruelty, and that goodness existed, even in the most desperate places. He believed that evil had its limits.”

In many of her books, the fictional Gamache tells new detectives joining his team that there are four, three-word expressions which one should get used to saying, because if we get comfortable saying them, life will go a whole lot easier for us. They are:

- “I was wrong.”
- “I’m sorry.”
- “I don’t know.”
- “I need help.”

Being wrong. We’re not perfect. We are going to get our facts confused. We’re occasionally going to do the wrong thing. And so on. How much easier is it to simply acknowledge the error of our ways, rather than doggedly defend our foolishness?

Being sorry. It doesn’t hurt to apologize. A good, heartfelt “I’m sorry” can cover a multitude of sins.

Being ignorant. We can’t know everything, can we? Why be so proud as to suggest that we do? When we have no light to shed on a subject, why not keep our mouths shut, or defer to someone who has light to shed?

Being helpless. Everyone at some point in their life needs help. We were born helpless and required the guidance of others for the first 20 years of our lives, and we’re likely to require help for the last 20 years. Why not recognize it, and get on with it? In today’s Bible reading, there’s a great promise to remember when we’re feeling helpless: “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through the fire you shall not be burned” (Isaiah 43:2).

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: O God, help me to humbly recognize my limitations. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Sunday, January 19, 2025

Scripture Reading: John 2:1-11

*Joy is that deep settled confidence that God is in control
of every area of my life. —Paul Sailhamer*

Today's Bible reading tells the story of Jesus' first recorded miracle: the transformation of water to wine at the wedding in Cana. I wonder if the attendees received wedding invitations?

This reminds me of a passage in Isaiah 55: "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (v. 1). Sounds like an invitation, doesn't it?

In verses 1-3 of Isaiah 55, the prophet utters a dozen imperative verbs, a full one-third of which are the command to "come." Come to the waters; come, buy and eat; come, buy; come to me, he cries. And then he adds, "Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; ... return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on [you] and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (vv. 6-7). Again, this sounds like an invitation.

So, if you received a wedding invitation, how would you respond? The three most popular RSVPs are "joyfully accepts," "regretfully declines" or "not sure."

God knows who we are and invites us to attend the feast that's been prepared for us "before the foundation of the world." To that end, we might pray — in the words of the liturgy:

*By your Spirit make us one with Christ, One with each other,
And one in ministry to all the world, Until Christ comes in final victory
And we feast at his heavenly banquet.
Through your Son Jesus Christ, With the Holy Spirit in your holy church,
All honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, Now and forever.
Amen!*

So, how shall we respond? Joyfully accepts? Regretfully declines? Or not sure?

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labor and not to ask for any reward, except that of knowing that we do your will. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

—Ignatius of Loyola

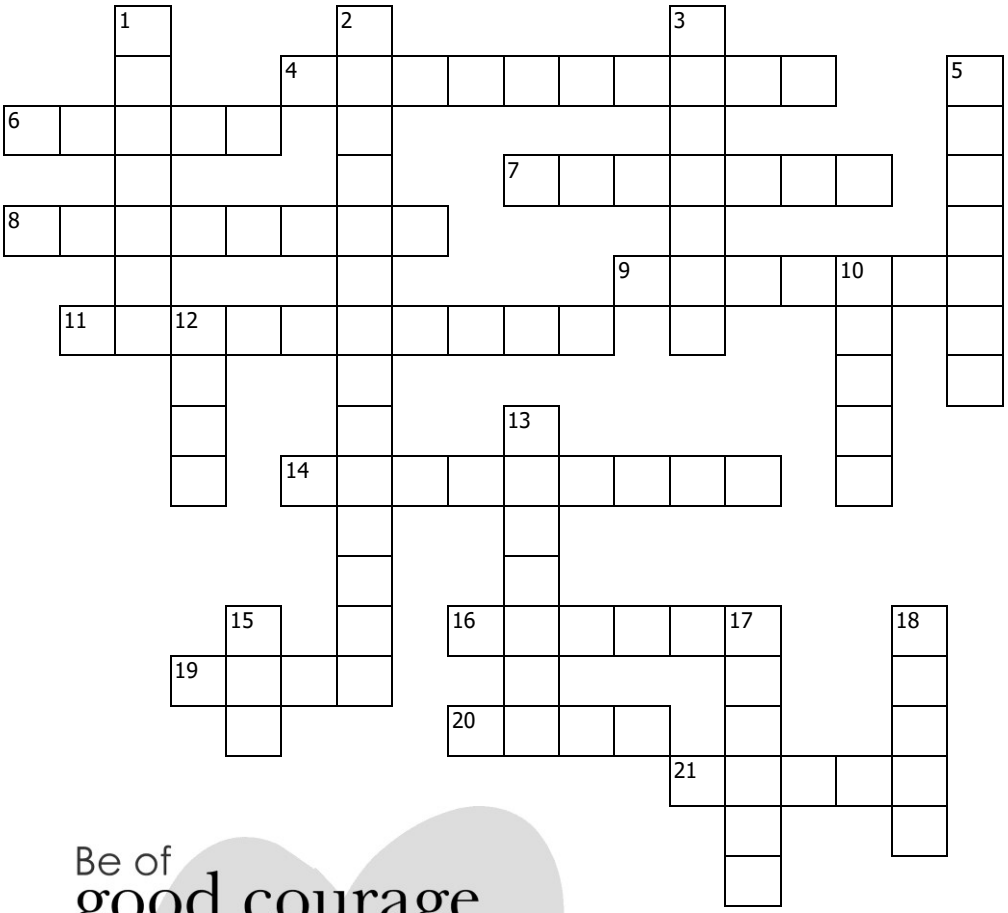


Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday:** Matthew 8-11
- Monday:** Matthew 12-15
- Tuesday:** Matthew 16-19
- Wednesday:** Matthew 20-22
- Thursday:** Matthew 23-25
- Friday:** Matthew 26-28
- Saturday:** Psalms 4-6

DANIEL, A SERVANT OF GOD

In the book of Daniel, we read of a young man who was extremely gifted and also committed to serving God, no matter how difficult the challenges. Use the clues to complete the crossword puzzle.



CLUES

1. Shadrack was thrown into this, 3:20
2. A king who went mad, 4:33
3. A friend of Daniel, 1:6
4. Saw handwriting on the wall, 5:9
5. Daniel's weeks, 9:24
6. Persian king, 10:1
7. Interpreter of Daniel's vision, 8:16
8. One of three friends, 3:19
9. Capital city of Chaldea, 1:1
10. What the den was full of, 6:16
11. Daniel's menu preference, 1:12
12. Animal with horn between its eyes, 8:5
13. A chief prince, 10:13
14. One of the last kings of Judah, 1:1
15. Number of horns on the fourth beast, 7:7
16. The Mede king, 5:31
17. The king made one for the people to worship, 3:14 (NRSV)
18. A word on the wall, 5:27
19. The second of four beasts, 7:5
20. Feet of ..., 2:33
21. What was cut from the mountain, 2:45 (NRSV)

Be of
good courage
and he shall
strengthen
your heart.
Psalm 27:14

Sunday, January 26, 2025

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

I'm not interested in having an orchestra sound like itself. I want it to sound like the composer. —Leonard Bernstein

When I was in high school, I played an oboe in the orchestra. There were only two of us. Just two! Lots of violins, not to speak of violas, cellos and bass viols. A very strong clarinet section. Four kids played flutes. The percussion section with its drums and tympani always drowned out anything we piped on our oboes. Of course, it was worse for others. We only had one piccolo player and one bassoonist.

But this is the nature of an orchestra, isn't it? Like the church, it's a living organism composed of various instruments: violins, cellos, flutes, trumpets, drums and many more. Each instrument has its unique sound and role. The violins might play the melody, the cellos add depth with their rich tones, the flutes provide light and airy accents, and the drums keep the rhythm. Individually, each instrument can create beautiful music, but it is only when they come together under the direction of the conductor that a symphony is truly born.

Think about the features of the church using the analogy of an orchestra:

Different gifts: Just as an orchestra consists of different instruments, the body of Christ is made up of individuals with various spiritual gifts.

One conductor: In an orchestra, the conductor unifies the diverse sounds of the instruments into a harmonious performance. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is the one who distributes these gifts and brings unity among believers. Despite our diverse gifts, we are all directed by the same Spirit to work together for God's glory.

Unique roles: As an oboe player, I had a specific role, as did every musician. Together, our contribution was essential to the overall performance. Likewise, each spiritual gift within the church is vital. Paul points out that the Holy Spirit is given for the common good.

Mutual support: In an orchestra, as in the church, if one section is missing or out of tune, the entire performance suffers. There's a certain interdependence of believers within the church which requires that we all perform within our roles to the best of our abilities.

We may think we're too insignificant or too weak to make a difference — sort of the way I felt as I played my little oboe. But each of us has been given unique gifts, and it is our responsibility to use them for the common good, building up the body of Christ and advancing God's kingdom.

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: O Lord, help me to recognize and embrace my unique role within the body of Christ. May I work together in unity, under the direction of your Holy Spirit, to bring glory to your name and to serve your purposes. Amen.

Week of January 12, 2025

Daily Bible Readings

- Sunday: Genesis 37-39
- Monday: Genesis 40-42
- Tuesday: Genesis 43-46
- Wednesday: Genesis 47-50
- Thursday: Matthew 1-4
- Friday: Matthew 5-7
- Saturday: Psalms 1-3

Verse to Remember

Happy are those ... [whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. —Psalm 1:1-3

FILL IN THE BLANKS

In Matthew 5 (see the reading above) we have the "Beatitudes," a series of "blessed" statements made by Jesus. Complete the sentence by following the directions. **DIRECTIONS:** Write a word to fit each definition. Then, transfer the letters to the numbered boxes to read one of these Beatitudes.

The color of coal

1 2 8 17 21

Red flower with thorns

9 — 4 3

Woman's garment

7 23 6 5 24

Small, round, green vegetable in a pod

14 10 16

One hikes on this, also known as a trail

— 20 11 12

An electric fish

13 15 —

Very dark green gemstone

18 19 22 — — — —



Answers:
black
rose
dress
pea
path
eel
emerald
Blessed are
the peace-
makers.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
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