



January 2026

friendship force

CENTRAL
NORTH CAROLINA

2026 FFCNC Board Members

FFCNC's 2026 board members were officially approved at our December Holiday Saturday brunch meeting. The board, which consists of many familiar faces and some first-timers, is as follows:

Don Woodward – President
Marta Rhodes – Treasurer
Barbara North – Secretary
Ken Ostberg - Membership
Roger Poplin – Journey Coordinator
Valerie Briggs – Social Activities
Martha Brown – Communications
Ray Kiszely – Open World



Wanted: Club Treasurer

No sooner did the new year begin than “life happens.” Marta Rhodes will need to pass the baton and the checkbook to a new treasurer. Obviously, this is a very important role. FFCNC could not function without a treasurer to manage our financial affairs. One does not need to be a CPA or financial analyst to fulfill these duties; however, attention to details, accuracy, and keeping clear records up to date is important. If you are a member of FFCNC and would consider accepting this responsibility, please contact Marta for a more detailed description of the role. You may text her at 336-971-5747 or email her at rhodesmarta@gmail.com. During the next four weeks she is available to work together with our new treasurer. Following that she will be available to continue to answer questions as needed.

Membership Update

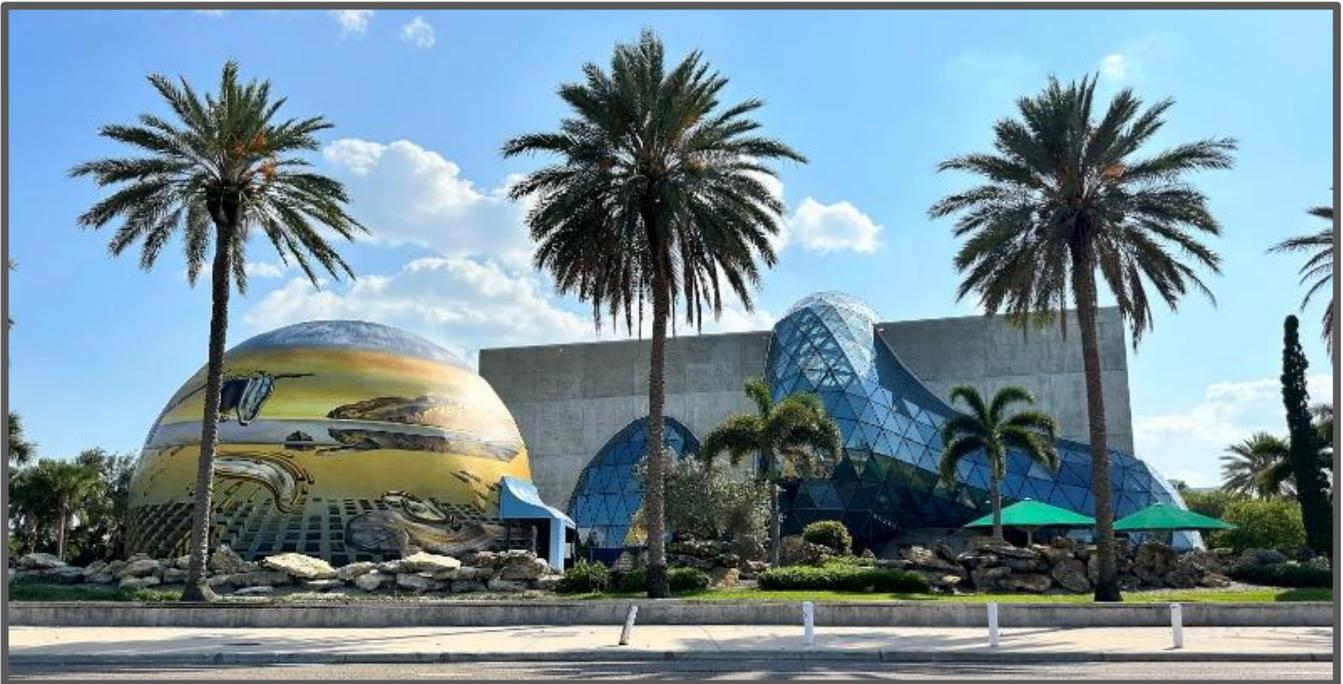
As of January 27 thirty-eight FFCNC members have paid "full membership" dues of \$100 and five have paid the "social membership" dues of \$35. As a reminder, any members who may wish to travel on outbound journey, international or domestic, should sign up for “full membership.”

A final reminder and membership renewal form was emailed to all members who had not renewed by Sunday, January 25. If you have any questions regarding your membership status, please contact Ken Ostberg at ken.ostberg@gmail.com or 336-391-2752.

Meet Our Newest Member

FFCNC member Julie O'Neal is now living in Chapel Hill. We will miss seeing her more frequently, but she remains an FFCNC member. Her most recent contribution to FFCNC is our newest member - Saeed Kazemian. Saeed was born in Iran but has lived in the US and has been a US citizen for several decades. He's currently a resident of Chapel Hill, as are his brother and sister. Saeed was a restaurant owner prior to his retirement and enjoys cooking for friends and family. His hobbies are hiking, kayaking, and traveling. His first adventure with FFCNC will be participating on our journey to visit the FF of Florida Suncoast.

Outbound to FF Florida Suncoast



Salvador Dali Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida

Next up for FFCNC's traveling members is a visit with FF of the Florida Suncoast club from February 2 through 9. This club is located in the Clearwater, Florida area on the Gulf coast. FFCNC members participating are Roger and Nan Poplin, Charles and Marilyn John, Peter and Nancy Peiffer, Danny Crump, Lundee Amos, Barbara North, Rod Edens, Don Woodward, Julie O'Neal, and Saeed Kazemian. Highlights of their itinerary include the Dunedin History Museum, the Dali Museum, the Tarpon Springs Historical Train Depot Museum, Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, the sponge docks, and a Superbowl party.



Sponge docks in Tarpon Springs, FL

Outbound to FF Kumamoto, Japan

Even though FFCNC's next outbound journey is several months away, plans are complete for both the homestay visit and an additional week of adventure prior to the homestay visit in Kumamoto. On April 6 Charles and Marilyn John, David and Melody Glick, Barbara North, Luz Kharabi, and Tomoko Thornburg will fly overnight to Tokyo. Over the course of the next eleven days, they will spend three nights with the FF club of Western Tokyo, three nights with the FF Aichi club, and two nights with the Osaka club followed by a two-night hotel stay in Hiroshima. After ten nights and 767 miles on bullet trains they will arrive in Kumamoto for a six-night stay with that FF club. Richard and Valerie Briggs will join them for the homestay in Kumamoto. The group will return to NC on April 23.

In a country of many cities with populations greater than one million, Kumamoto is considerably smaller with a population of about 740,000. Nonetheless, there are interesting sites to see including a castle, gardens, and Mount Aso - one of world's largest and most active volcanoes. Also of interest is Kumamoto's



Atomic Bomb Dome, Hiroshima



Kumamoto's Peace Pagoda

Peace Pagoda. After World War II, the Japanese Buddhist monk Nichidatsu Fujii decided to construct a Peace Pagoda atop Mount Hanaoka in the city to commemorate all those lost in war and to promote peace. Inaugurated in 1954, it was the first of over 80 Peace Pagodas built by Fujii and his followers all over the world.

Update on Social Activities

Assisting Valerie Briggs with social activities this year will be Lucy Kaplan, Karla Shanahan, Shanta Sharma, Eleanor Stoller, Caroline Maness, and Carolyn Dilda. Planning for small group dinners in the near future is in the works, so watch for more information about that. Valerie welcomes suggestions of new and interesting activities for our members. You may contact her at vibriggs@gmail.com or 270-401-4557.

