



Christian Challenger

Vol. 64

July 12, 2017

No. 14

Summer Ministry Update

The summer months may mean fewer meetings for ministry teams and the Executive Council, but programs for children and youth moved into high gear over the last few weeks. Our Christian Youth Fellowship mission team was among more than 250 volunteers participating in Disciple Summer Mission during the last week in June. The team worked alongside All Hands Volunteers on flood recovery for homes in Baton

Rouge, LA. Last summer saw historic flooding in Baton Rouge and many families have yet to move home again. The FCC team removed dry wall and insulation, conducted mold remediation, and then worked to restore interiors. Evenings were spent in large group worship and fun events.

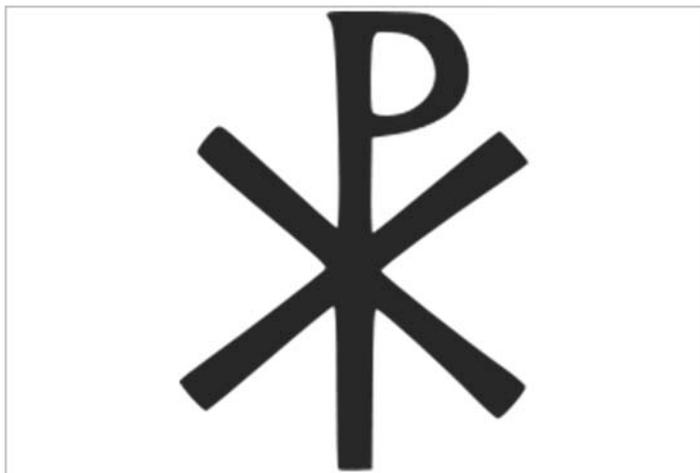
Two weeks later it's time for Vacation Bible School! On the first day we welcomed 93 children and added to that number on Tuesday.

Thanks to talented decorators, our Fellowship Hall, hallways and classrooms have been transformed into an ocean paradise. The daily themes for Deep Sea Discovery, linked to a daily Bible story, are: God knows me; God hears me; God strengthens me; God loves me; God sends me.

Thanks for your prayers for summer ministry.



The Benedict Option? Part V



Chi Rho, the first two Greek letters of "Christ"

The last organized Roman onslaught on Christians was a 13 year reign of terror under the Emperor Diocletian [284-305], an attack so vicious and comprehensive that it would be remembered as "The Great Persecution." One of the observers of that onslaught was Constantine, son of Constantius, the junior emperor, or "Caesar" in the Western Empire. Constantine, though a gifted general, was effectively being held hostage in Diocletian's imperial court in Byzantium to insure that his father remained compliant. Though Constantine paid due homage to the Roman gods, he was nonetheless held in suspicion because his mother, Helena, was suspected of being a devout Christian, which, in fact, she was.

In 312, seven years after Diocletian surrendered the throne, Constantine was heralded Emperor in the West. His accession followed an astonishing victory in the Battle of Milvian Bridge, a triumph he attributed to divine intercession after he had the Greek letters "Chi Rho" (the symbol of persecuted Christians) emblazoned on the shields of his soldiers. A year later, in 313, Constantine and Licinius, the Emperor in the East, jointly proclaimed the Edict of Milan, which gave Christians legal status within the Empire. After 250 long years, the convulsions of persecution seemed to have ceased. Though he would not be baptized until he was on his deathbed, Constantine was very protective of the Church, and deeply concerned about the well-being of the believers within it.

Absent a unifying threat from without, Christians began to grow contentious within. The great theological conflicts of the 1st Century, whose issues can be discerned in the New Testament, had been resolved. Christianity was clearly something other than a Jewish sect, and Docetism (a variance of Gnosticism, which asserted that the spirit was good and the body evil) was manifestly understood as non-apostolic and fraudulent. Christians had never been more unified than they were during the long years of persecution. But the end of that persecution opened the door to serious internecine conflict. It is a recurring historic reality that Christians can have security or unity, but not both at the same time. When Christians wage war against one another, we have neither.

A bishop named Arius [256-336] had asserted that even though Jesus Christ was the *logos*—the "Word of God"—he was not eternally pre-existent, and had been *created* by God as an instrument to make the universe and redeem humankind. That

made Christ a "creature" of God, made like any other creature and thereby subordinate to God the Father and Creator. Another bishop, Athanasius [298-373], citing John's Gospel [1.1-18] became Arianism's most articulate and impassioned opponent, asserting that as the "begotten" Son of God and the incarnate *logos*, Jesus Christ was not only fully human but also fully divine and thus co-equal to the Father. The dispute caused great controversy and division among Christian churches, with a substantial number of the most learned, progressive bishops endorsing Arianism, while most lay Christians, with their allegiance to scripture and tradition, supported the Biblical orthodoxy of Athanasius. Insults were hurled, fights broke out, congregations were split, bishops were exiled. *Disputandi pruritus ecclesiarum scabies*, the historian Henry Wotton would later declare: "An itch for disputation is the mange of the churches."

To a non-Christian, the issue must have seemed trifling. As the Emperor Constantine said when the conflict grew intense,

...a point of discussion...suggested by the contentious spirit fostered by misused leisure...merely an intellectual exercise...too sublime and abstruse...small and insignificant.

But was it? The controversy was more than a theological dispute. It was a cultural one as well, one that marked a dividing line between academicians and practitioners—i.e., between those who could discourse on the finer tenets of religion and those whose simpler faith in Christ had far too often cost them and their forbears their blood, freedom and lives. The former were learned and refined, and, to a large extent, had the means and the social connections to escape the persecution that had enmeshed their less educated, less sophisticated, less affluent brothers and sisters in Christ. Those who had never forgotten the faith that was worth their life and more were not prepared to accept that Jesus had only been "a creature" of the Father. In many ways, it was a conflict between bishops and culturally attuned priests on one side, and the vast majority of faithful lay believers on the other. In the 19th Century, the English priest John Henry (later Cardinal) Newman said it was the Christian people themselves, far more than their ostensible shepherds, who "proclaimed, enforced, maintained and (humanly speaking) preserved" the doctrine of the divinity of Christ:

...the body of the episcopate was unfaithful to its commission, while the body of the laity was faithful to its baptism...

For two and one half centuries, stalwart Christians had been prepared to die for the faith that proclaimed Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, Son of the living God. They were not prepared to grant the likes of Nero, Valerian and Diocletian a posthumous victory simply because some nimble cosmopolitan intellectuals felt inspired to be trendy.

Constantine, not yet baptized, didn't understand the gravity of the issues, but he certainly took note of the anger those issues provoked. Resolved to get the matter settled, he summoned a great Council of Christians to come to Nicaea and sort the matter out [To be continued].

Dave

Prayer: Almighty and loving God, show us the truth that the truth may set us free. This we pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

FCC MINISTRY NEWS AND CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

COMING ATTRACTIONS

FCC GOES TO THE MOVIES 2017

Featured Film	See the movie at FCC	Movie clips in worship
High Noon	July 13 at 3pm, July 15 at 7 pm	July 16
Brave	July 20 at 3pm, July 22 at 7 pm	July 23
Life of Pi	July 27 at 3 pm, July 29 at 7 pm	July 30
The Lion King	Aug. 3 at 3 pm, Aug. 5 at 7 pm	August 6
E.T.	Aug. 10 at 3 pm, Aug. 12 at 7 pm	August 13

The **Challenger** is biweekly, so NO Challenger next week!

Tea at Two on Tuesdays! Claudine Farrell & Renee Hoke host a gathering for women on Tuesday afternoons on the last Tuesday of the month. Bring your favorite tea cup and join us on Tuesday, July 25th, at 2 pm in the Church Parlor. There will be hot tea, tasty treats, and great conversation. Everyone is welcome—bring a friend or neighbor!

World Outreach Ministry: Welcome, MSU International Students!

The Outreach Committee plans to once again welcome new international students to MSU this Fall. These students will be housed in apartments off campus. They will arrive with just two suitcases, no room for linens, or a pot or dishes. If each student could have a little help, this could mean the world to them.

As they arrive in August, we'd like to be able to give each student a laundry basket (you may purchase a laundry basket or pick one up in the church office) filled with a list of household items that is available in the church office.

Be thinking about what you have around your home you could spare to help a new student turn an apartment into a home! We will collect and deliver the baskets at the end of August. If you have any questions please call Sally Hastings at 224-4416 or Ann Hunter at 631-5661 or 692-2282.

First Time Guests! We are excited to report that the following persons visited for the first time on July 2nd: Rev. Paul Goodrich.

Member News: *We want to be as inclusive as possible with our Member News, so if you know about an honor someone received, an important event in someone's life, or about an illness or death, please call the church—692-2282. Thanks!*

♥**Hospitalized:** at Kell West is Frances Williams. Released and back home is Billy Bumgarner.

♥**Military Deployed:** is Jodi Schmidt, daughter of Debbi & Dennis Schmidt. Please keep them all in your prayers.

♥Our sympathies are extended to Ralph Armstrong and Family on learning of the death of his wife, Ruth "Bert" Armstrong, on July 9th. Services were held on July 11th in the Sanctuary.

♥We extend our condolences to the family of Elrhea Williams. Elrhea passed away on July 1st. Services were held on July 5th at the Crestview Memorial Park Chapel.

♥Our sympathies are also extended to Lisa & Rachel Pullam on learning of the death of their mother & grandmother, Nora Moore, on June 28th. Services were held July 1st at First United Methodist Church of Wichita Falls.

Take advantage of and enjoy your First Christian Church Library and its contents any time the church building is open.

This Sunday:

8:40 & 10:45 Services:

"Do Not Forsake Me"
Psalm 27

Dr. David B. Hartman, Jr.

SERVING SUNDAY

ELDERS

7/16: Mike Spiller, Jr., Robert Hernandez; Cal Edgemon, Presiding
7/23: Mike Spiller, Jr., Robert Hernandez; Sally Hastings, Presiding

DIACONATE COMMUNION VISITATION

7/16: Kathleen Lauck, Bobby Dean, Sandy Hay
7/23: Diane Spiller, Mac Reid, Brandi Brannon

DIACONATE COMMUNION PREPARATION

7/16: Hannah Ward & Jill Griffin
7/23: Carly & Slate Westbrook

JULY DIACONATE SERVERS

Brandi Brannon, Kathleen Lauck, Madi Showalter, Carly & Slate Westbrook, Sandra Whatley, Bob & Mary Carlton, Jill Griffin, Colleen James, Sandra Ross, Francine Carraro, Bobby Dean, Sandy Hay, Mac Reid, Chris Showalter, Hannah & Luke Ward.

OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday, July 16, 2017

8:40 Worship (Chapel)
9:30 Sunday School
10:45 Worship (Sanctuary)

Monday, July 17, 2017

Chi Rho Camp II (Grades 6-7) (July 17-22) (Athens TX)
7:30-6:00 Children Come First (M-F)
10:15 FCC Staff Meeting (Office)
7:30 Boy Scouts Troop 15 (Fellowship Hall)

Tuesday, July 18, 2017

6:00 Common Ground Recovery Ministries Support Groups:
Rebuilding from Broken Relationships (Rm 222)
Substance Abuse (Rm 304) Parenting (Rm 305 & 306)
Grief (Rm 307) Women's C.A.R.E. (Rm 308)
Anger Management (Rm 309)

Wednesday, July 19, 2017

7:00 Elders' Breakfast (Rm 405/Chapel)
6:30-7:30 The Neighborhood Worship (Fellowship Hall)
7:30 The Neighborhood Tailgate (FH/Outside)

Thursday, July 20, 2017

9:00 CWF Group 3 Birthday Breakfast (IHOP on SW Pkwy)
1:30 Knit Wits (Parlor)
3:00 FCC at the Movies "Brave" (Theater Rm)
6:30 Worship/Evangelism/Education Chairs Mtg (Library)

Saturday, July 22, 2017

7:00 FCC at the Movies "Brave" (Theater Rm)

Sunday, July 23, 2017

8:40 Worship (Chapel)
9:30 Sunday School
10:45 Worship (Fellowship Hall)

Monday, July 24, 2017

7:30-6:00 Children Come First (M-F)
10:15 FCC Staff Meeting (Office)
7:30 Boy Scouts Troop 15 (Fellowship Hall)

Tuesday, July 25, 2017

2:00 Tea at Two (Parlor)
6:00 Common Ground Recovery Ministries Support Groups:
Rebuilding from Broken Relationships (Rm 222)
Substance Abuse (Rm 304) Parenting (Rm 305 & 306)
Grief (Rm 307) Women's C.A.R.E. (Rm 308)
Anger Management (Rm 309)

Wednesday, July 26, 2017

7:00 Elders' Breakfast (Rm 405/Chapel)
6:00-7:00 The Neighborhood Worship (Fellowship Hall)
7:30 The Neighborhood Tailgate (FH/Outside)

Thursday, July 27, 2017

3:00 FCC at the Movies "Life of Pi" (Theater Rm)

Saturday, July 29, 2017

7:00 FCC at the Movies "Life of Pi" (Theater Rm)

THE CHURCH STAFF . . .

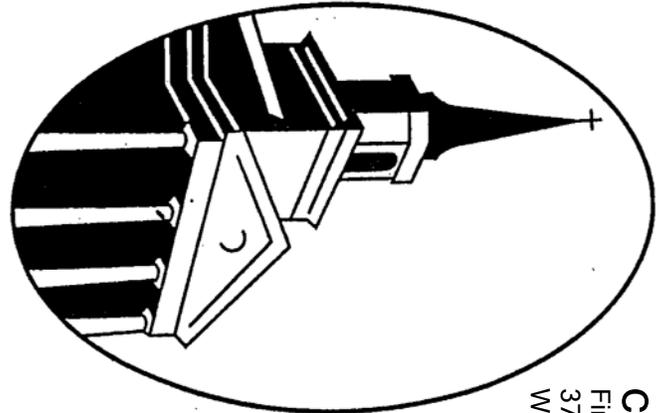
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Cheryl Appling, Business Administrator 691-7265
Jeanette Showalter, Director of Music Ministries 763-8515
Maggie Ross, Interim Sunday Evening Youth Ministries 692-2282
Madi Showalter, Children's Ministries Intern 692-2282
Heather Dickerson, Director of Children Come First 687-2231
Karen Bivona, Director of Young Ages School 692-3640
Laurel Clement, Common Ground Recovery Ministries 642-7021
Susan Marrs, Executive Secretary Tina Williams, Financial Secretary
Ann Hunter, Receptionist Debbie Watson, Organist

FOR THE RECORD . . .

CGRM: (Tues., July 4) Did not meet
The Neighborhood (Wed., July 5) 22
8:40 Worship . . . 38 10:45 Worship . . . 153
Total Worship 213
Sunday School 76
Sunday Receipts Needed Per Week \$15,815.66
Sunday Receipts for 7/9/17 \$13,722.00
Through July 10: Income \$405,399.34 Expenses \$404,032.24

PERSECUTED CHURCH PRAYERS THIS WEEK ARE FOR:

Pray for the distribution of Bibles and New Testaments in
Myanmar.



CHRISTIAN CHALLENGER
First Christian Church
3701 Taft Boulevard
Wichita Falls, Texas 76308

THE CHRISTIAN CHALLENGER
Pub. No. (USPS 559-820) Published
biweekly by First Christian Church, 3701
Taft Blvd., Wichita Falls TX 76308-2315.
Periodical postage paid at Wichita Falls
TX. - POSTMASTER: Send Address
Changes to Christian Challenger, 3701
Taft Blvd., Wichita Falls, TX 76308-2315.