



Christian Challenger

Vol. 66

November 6, 2019

No. 23

Fill a Thanksgiving Basket

Help families in Wichita Falls have a turkey dinner with all the trimmings. Pick up a *grocery bag and shopping list*, and/or a *turkey monetary donation envelope*, in the Chapel or Sanctuary Narthex, or in the Church Office. Then, return your envelope to the Church Office, or your bag filled with food items to either the Fellowship Hall stage or the Church Office by Sunday, November 17. A turkey and roasting pan will be added to complete the baskets for delivery.

If you have freezer space which can serve as a "turkey hotel" during the week of November 18-23, call the church office (692-2282).

Finally, help deliver these Thanksgiving Baskets on Saturday, November 23. Arrive at the Fellowship Hall at 9:45 am. A delivery route map and a delivery partner will be provided. In the one hour it takes to deliver, you will be richly blessed. If you are able to deliver a basket, sign up by calling the church office (692-2282).

Schedule of Events:

Now:

- Pick up your bag and shopping list and begin filling it
- Volunteer your freezer space as a "turkey hotel"

Sunday November 17:

- Deadline to return your bag and donation envelopes

Saturday, November 23:

- Meet in the Fellowship Hall at 9:45 am for coffee, donuts, delivery routes, and a blessing of the Thanksgiving Baskets
- Deliveries begin at 10:00 am

Coats for Kids



The Coats for Kids elves have begun their work. You are encouraged to become an "elf". Mark the following dates on your calendar and help FCC provide coats for deserving children in the WFISD.

November 10 (Sunday)

8:40 am, Chapel, and 10:45 am, Sanctuary
Blessing of Coats

November 18-22 (Monday-Friday)

9:00 am – 1:00 pm
Keystone Classroom (Rm 306)
Sort and deliver coats to the schools

**OUT
OF**



THE
JOY.
OF GIVING

Stewardship Campaign for 2020

Commitment Sunday, November 17th

Dr. Mark Bender, Preaching
The JOY of Giving – 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

Thanksgiving Fellowship Luncheon at Noon
Please make your reservations today
for a great meal and fellowship!

Please prayerfully consider the 2020 Grow One Challenge to increase your Estimate of Giving to our church by 1% of your annual income. Thank you!

Stewardship Moment – November 4, 2019

When was the last time you received a card in the mail?

Not long ago I received several sympathy cards and heartfelt notes from family and friends at the passing of my father in August. One special note, amongst many, stood out to me. One of my patients took the time to find my address and sent me a special card. She wrote a scripture and some caring words on the card along with a handmade crocheted bookmark for my bible. Then only fourteen days later I received birthday cards in the mail, including one from our loving staff here at the church. I remember how special it made me feel to open each envelope with great anticipation and read the sweet message inside, sometimes more than once.

Every Wednesday morning, our Elders sign cards for the people on our prayer list letting them know we are praying for them. Often during the time I was an Elder, people on the list would let us know how much those cards meant to them and looked forward to receiving them in the mailbox. There is a special JOY that comes to both the sender and the receiver with these special messages.

As we focus on the "O" in the word JOY – the focus of our Stewardship emphases this Fall – I invite you to take the time to make someone feel special. For the Lord said "Whatever you do for the least of these, you did for me."

Cindy Hernandez

Make Your Mark

Dr. Mark R. Bender
Senior Minister



Money Follows Mission

Earlier this week, I was at the monthly cluster meeting for Disciples churches in our general proximity. We were fortunate to be joined at this meeting by our Regional Minister and President, The Rev. Dr. Andy Mangum, who shared news from across the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Southwest. We heard stories about some of our partner ministries in South Texas who are doing amazing work with hurricane relief efforts, refugees, and inner city family ministry. We learned about a Disciples ministry in Abilene that is reaching neighbors over a shared meal. And we heard good news about how the Southwest Region is living into its new structure for ministry.

Inevitably, though, whether it is a cluster meeting, Minister's Week at Brite, General Assembly, or any other gathering of Disciples clergy, the conversation circles around to churches who are struggling. Our cluster meeting this week was no exception. We lamented the fact that many of our fellow Disciples congregations are dealing with shrinking attendance, decreasing finances, and aging congregations. Over time, this has forced upon them some difficult decisions, such as reducing staff, deferring maintenance, and cutting ministry programs.

When I hear stories like this, I generally find one thing to be true. The mission of these churches has become survival...of keeping the doors open and the bills paid. As a result, an "us" versus "them" mentality rises to the surface and the focus moves from those outside the church to those who are present. There is little talk about new ministries to reach their community. Those who remain center their hope on a "magic bullet" that will fix everything - a major bequest, a dynamic young leader, or doing more of the same thing they've always done.

People who think this way aren't bad people. The truth is their reactions are natural. Our natural reaction is to entrench when times get tough. Our natural reaction is to hang on to what we have more tightly and to carefully consider every initiative and expenditure. Our natural reaction is to avoid tough conversations and decisions for fear that it will cause people to disengage from church life. Unfortunately, these natural reactions lead the church away from the mission that God has entrusted to them. I once heard the wonderful pastor and author Charles Stanley say: "When a church gets off mission, God gets uninterested." Ouch!

Eighteen months ago as I began visiting with the Senior Minister Search Committee here at First Christian Church, one of the things that excited me most was that the conversations the church was having were not centered on survival. Sure, there were questions about how to best move forward into the future, how to reach the next generation, and how to mobilize our congregation to share our faith, but these were questions of mission. There weren't questions about how we would pay our bills or fund new ministry. What I quickly discovered to be a key component of this mindset is our congregation's generosity and faithful stewardship.

Kennon Callahan (who I seem to quote often in these

articles, but whose wisdom is sound) is known for saying that money follows mission. He writes:

Money follows mission, and not the reverse...Mission is more important than money. This does not diminish, deprecate, nor deny the value of money. Money is important. It is a means by which a portion of God's mission is advanced...It is crucial to never let money become more important than mission.

Callahan also points out the reality that many churches face when these priorities get mixed up:

Declining and dying congregations have forgotten mission. People do not give generously to congregations that have allowed mission to recede into the background. When the focus of meeting-after-meeting is primarily on getting enough money to balance the budget, people's generous impulses wither.

God calls congregations to mission. Churches that become preoccupied with money have lost their way...their central preoccupations are with money, membership, and maintenance.

Callahan gives this advice:

**When you grow
the mission, the
money will come.**

A clear vision of mission will be decisive in fostering [a] congregation's capacity for giving...People will give more for mission than for maintenance. When you grow the mission, the money will come - and it will be sufficient for the mission. (Giving and Stewardship in an Effective Church, Harper Collins, 1992)

What I found eighteen months ago about our congregation is even more true today. We are a congregation focused on doing what God in Jesus Christ has called us to do. Our Vision Team has invested more than 800 combined hours in prayer and intentional conversation about what God is calling us to do and how we will go about it. Although there will be many next steps to consider and live into as we go about our mission of *shepherding every person to encounter the abundant peace of Christ*, I'm excited about the possibilities this mission holds for us. In the coming months and years, we will be asking questions like:

- How will we shepherd every MSU student to encounter the abundant peace of Christ?
- How will we shepherd every child and youth at FCC to encounter the abundant peace of Christ?
- How will we shepherd the hungry in our community to encounter the abundant peace of Christ?

These are questions of mission. And what thrills me as we find ourselves in a season of thinking about our personal stewardship and commitment to joyous generosity, is that these are the kind of questions we are asking; that this is the kind of future you and I are investing our time, talent, and treasure into fulfilling. As long as we keep our focus on mission, I believe the conversations about our church won't be conversations of survival and lament, but conversations of vitality and thanksgiving to God for the mission and ministry fulfilled through the people of First Christian Church.

FCC MINISTRY NEWS AND CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS



A new series begins at *The Neighborhood* Wednesday, November 6:
 5:30 pm - Dinner
 6:00 pm - Worship

The **Challenger** is biweekly, with the next publication on Nov. 20! FCC Ministry News is sent by email every Monday.

Pickleball! Join us on Sunday afternoon in the gym to play Pickleball. No experience required, on the court instruction, and loads of fun. We play from 2-4, so come for the whole time, or half the time and find out what the BIG "dill" is!

Advent Bible Study: *Names for the Messiah* by Walter Brueggemann

In *Names for the Messiah*, Brueggemann, a Professor Emeritus of the Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary, and an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, ponders the four royal titles found in Isaiah 9:6—Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. This study gives us an insight on how the people then understood each title, if Jesus fulfilled the title or not, and how do we as Christian today interpret Jesus as a representative of each title?

Join Sheri Sutton as she leads this 4-week study beginning Wednesday, November 20th, in Room 310. **Each session will begin at 10:30 am.** Call the church office at 692-2282 to register and purchase a book. **Please read the Introduction and Week One before the first session.**

Men's Breakfast & Bible Study! Bring a friend and attend the FCC Men's Breakfast & Bible Study on Friday morning, November 8th, from 7:00-8:00 am, at Hwy Café, 2808 Jacksboro Hwy.

College Lunch Bunch will meet on Friday, November 8th, at noon in the MSU Student Center!

Christian Women's Fellowship

The **November CWF Luncheon** will be Monday, November 11th, at 11:45 am in the Fellowship Hall. The program will be the interviews of Carolyn Ford by Cathy Biggs, Helen Jackson by Cathy Gately and Nita Pratt by Glenda Tate. The devotional will be given by Dr. Mark Bender. Reservations are not required and guests are welcome. Cost is \$5.00 per person. The CWF Board will meet at 10:30 am in Room 310 prior to the luncheon.

Group Meetings will be as follows on Monday, November 18th: **Group 1** will meet at 1:30 pm at Melody Jennings' home, 1553 Singleton; and **Group 3** will meet at 2:00 pm in Room 405. On Wednesday, November 13th, **Group 2** will meet at 12:00 noon in Room 405.

Our support group for caregivers of all kinds, **On Hold**, is now meeting on the second Tuesday of the month, so the next meeting will be on Tuesday, November 12th, at 2414/2416 Barbados from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm. Just look for the ON HOLD sign out in front. This informal, come-and-go setting includes a light meal/refreshments and conversation aimed at support and encouragement. ON HOLD is a ministry to women and men who place their own lives "on hold" while they care for loved ones—grandchildren, aging parents, or anyone in between.

Through the Bible in a Year Study: Will meet only once in November on Thursday, November 14th.

November Meetings: will be as follows:

- Tuesday, Nov. 12th: **Memberships** at 6:00 pm, Parlor
Property at 6:00 pm, Rm 310
Worship at 7:00 pm, Rm 222
 - Tuesday, Nov. 19th: **Education** at 6:00 pm, Rm 222
Stewardship at 6:00 pm, Rm 310
Outreach at 6:00 pm, Lib/FH
 - Tuesday, Nov. 26th: **Executive Council** at 6:00 pm, Rm 310
- If you will need childcare, please RSVP to the church office, 692-2282, by noon on Mondays, Nov. 11th, 18th, & 25th.

2019 Thanksgiving Offering: The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is committed to higher education. Currently, over 52,000 students attend our fifteen Disciples related colleges and universities and seven seminaries and divinity houses. On Sundays, November 17th and 24th, Disciples churches across the US and Canada will be collecting the Thanksgiving Special Offering. Your gift to this offering helps to support the work of our institutions of higher learning in many ways: financially supporting Disciples related schools, providing undergraduate scholarships and support for spiritual life offices, and providing scholarships and support for those pursuing theological education.

So please give generously to this year's Thanksgiving Special Offering. Your gifts will make a world of difference as we continue our legacy of supporting education and our institutions of higher learning.

Mark your calendars! Join us on Sunday, December 1st, for our annual **Advent Workshop!** From 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm the Fellowship Hall will be filled with gingerbread house making stations and Christmas crafts. There will also be delicious food available. This is the perfect family event to kick off the Advent Season!

Member News:

♥**Hospitalized:** in Dallas is Alice Gordon; at Windmill Rehab is Joe Etoch; at the Gables is Ruth Beyer. Released and back home are Gretchen Bridgman, Rita Cason, Vince Machado.

♥Our condolences are extended to the family & friends of Marilee Smith. Marilee passed away on November 5th. Services will be Monday, November 11th, at 2:30 pm in the Chapel.



**Veterans Day
 Monday,
 November 11th**

FOR THE RECORD . . .	
CGRM: (Tues., Oct. 29)	24
The Neighborhood (Wed., Oct. 30)	33
Worship (Nov. 3): 8:40am.	37
10:45am.	180
Total Worship.	250
Sunday School	91
Sunday Receipts Needed Per Week	\$17,867.62
Sunday Receipts for 11/3/19	\$15,562.00
Through Nov. 4: Income \$722,582.33	Expenses \$740,031.38

This Sunday:

"Bringing A Good Work To Completion"
 Philippians 1:3-4
 Rev. Josh deSteiguer

OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday, November 10, 2019

STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN / BLESSING OF THE COATS
8:40 Worship (Chapel)
9:30 Sunday School / 9:45 Journey Through Scripture (Parlor)
10:45 Worship (Sanctuary)
12:00-12:30 Welcome Center Training (Sanctuary Narthex)
2:00-4:00 Pickleball (Gym)
3:45 Chancel Ringers (High School-Adults) (Stratten Hall)
5:00-5:45 Grow in Grace Choir (Grades K-5)
5:00-7:00 Chi Rho & CYF (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)
5:45-7:00 Young Disciples (Grades K-5) (Rm 402)

Monday, November 11, 2019 VETERANS DAY

7:30-6:00 Children Come First "CCF" (M-F)
9:00-12:00 Young Ages School "YAS" (M-F)
9:00 CCF Chapel (Chapel)
10:30 CWF Board Meeting (Rm 310)
11:45 CWF Luncheon (Fellowship Hall)
2:30 Marilee Smith Memorial Service (Chapel)
7:30 Boy Scouts Troop 15 (Fellowship Hall)

Tuesday, November 12, 2019

10:00 YAS Music (Tues. & Wed.) (Rm 220)
11:30-1:30 "On Hold" Caregivers Support Group (2414/2416 Barbados)
2:00 Library Committee (Library)
6:00 Membership Ministry Meeting (Parlor)
6:00 Property Ministry Meeting (Rm 310)
6:30 Common Ground Recovery Ministries Support Groups
7:00 Worship Ministry Meeting (Rm 222)

Wednesday, November 13, 2019

7:00 Elders' Breakfast (Rm 405/Chapel)
9:00 CCF Spanish/Music (Rm 220) (Wed & Fri)
11:00 YAS Board Meeting (Parlor)
5:30 Neighborhood Meal (Fellowship Hall)
6:00-7:00 The Neighborhood Worship (Fellowship Hall)
6:00-7:00 First Kidz (Grades Pre-K-5th) (Rm 402)
7:00-8:00 Youth Activities (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)
7:00-8:30 Chancel Choir (Stratten Hall)

Thursday, November 14, 2019

6:00 Through the Bible in a Year (Rm 310)

Friday, November 15, 2019

12:15 CCF Parent Advisory Committee Meeting (Rm 405)
Sunday, November 17, 2019 STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN COMMITMENT
SUNDAY / THANKSGIVING SPECIAL OFFERING
8:40 Worship (Chapel)
9:30 Sunday School / 9:45 Journey Through Scripture (Parlor)
10:45 Worship (Sanctuary)
12:00 Fellowship Luncheon (Fellowship Hall)
2:00-4:00 Pickleball (Gym)
3:45 Chancel Ringers (High School-Adults) (Stratten Hall)
5:00-5:45 Grow in Grace Choir (Grades K-5)
5:00-7:00 Chi Rho & CYF (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)
5:45-7:00 Young Disciples (Grades K-5) (Rm 402)

Monday, November 18, 2019

7:30-6:00 Children Come First "CCF" (M-F)
9:00-12:00 Young Ages School "YAS" (M-F)
9:00 CCF Chapel (Chapel)
9:00-1:00 Coats for Kids: Sorting & Delivering to Schools (Rm 306) (M-F)
1:30 CWF Group 1 (Melody Jennings' home, 1553 Singleton)
2:00 CWF Group 3 (Rm 405)
7:30 Boy Scouts Troop 15 (Fellowship Hall)

Tuesday, November 19, 2019

10:00 YAS Music (Tues. & Wed.) (Rm 220)
2:00 Library Committee (Library)
6:00 Education Ministry Meeting (Rm 222)
6:00 Stewardship Ministry Meeting (Rm 310)
6:00 Outreach Ministry Meeting (Library/Fellowship Hall)
6:30 Common Ground Recovery Ministries Support Groups

Wednesday, November 20, 2019

7:00 Elders' Breakfast (Rm 405/Chapel)
9:00 CCF Spanish/Music (Rm 220) (Wed. & Fri)
10:30 Sheri Sutton's Advent Bible Study (Rm 310)
12:00 CWF Group 3 (Rm 405)
5:00-6:00 MSU Mustang & Neighborhood Meals (Fellowship Hall)
6:00-7:00 The Neighborhood Worship (Fellowship Hall)
6:00-7:00 First Kidz (Grades Pre-K-5th) (Rm 402)
7:00-8:00 Youth Activities (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)
7:00-8:30 Chancel Choir (Stratten Hall)

Thursday, November 21, 2019

9:00 CWF Group 3 Birthday Breakfast (IHOP on SW Pkwy)
10:30 YAS Thanksgiving Feast (Fellowship Hall) (Thurs. & Fri.)
1:30 Knit Wits (Parlor)

Friday, November 22, 2019

12:00 College Lunch Bunch (MSU Student Center Food Court)
2:45 CCF Thanksgiving Dessert Feast (Fellowship Hall)

Saturday, November 23, 2019

9:45 Thanksgiving Baskets Delivery (Fellowship Hall)
7:00 YAS Float in the City of Lights Parade (Downtown)

SERVING SUNDAY

ELDERS

11/10: Dwight Ross III, Sherry Tucker; David Collins, Presiding

11/17: Debbi Schmidt, Andy Wilson; Rick Appling, Presiding

DIACONATE COMMUNION VISITATION

11/10: Terry Burross, Sherry Martin, Alan Freeman

11/17: Emily Thomas, Liz Thomas, Chris Showalter

DIACONATE COMMUNION PREPARATION

11/10: Larry & Debi Ballard

11/17: Sherry Martin & Teresa Archambo

NOVEMBER DIACONATE SERVERS

Sherry Martin & Kris Gossom, Co-Captains

Karen & Terry Burross, Chris Showalter, Debi & Larry Ballard, Alan Freeman, Lynette Gill, Liz Thomas, Teresa Archambo, Shirley Craft, Fred Gentry, Melody Jennings, Margaret Phillips, James Poole, Braelyn Crowe, Emily Thomas.

THE CHURCH STAFF...

Church Number 940-692-2282 FAX Number 940-696-3085

Web Page: www.firstchristianwf.com Church e-mail: susan@firstchristianwf.com

Dr. Mark Bender, Senior Minister 692-2282

Rev. Josh deSteiguer, Minister of Youth Ministries 692-2282

Claire Baer, Director of Children's Ministries 692-2282

Jeanette Showalter, Director of Music Ministries 763-8515

Cheryl Appling, Business Administrator 691-7265

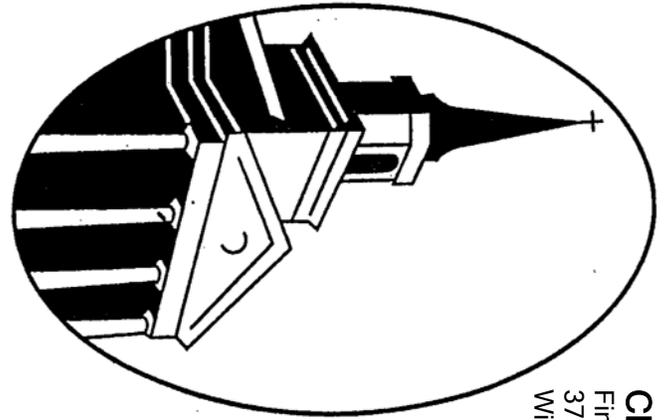
Heather Dickerson, Director of Children Come First 687-2231

Alisa Gardner, Director of Young Ages School 692-3640

Rev. Margaret Scales, Common Ground Recovery Ministries 337-1712

Susan Marrs, Executive Secretary Tina Williams, Financial Secretary

Karen Watson, Receptionist Debbie Watson, Organist



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.