



# Christian Challenger

Vol. 67

April 22, 2020

No. 8

## Virtual Activities Happening at FCC

### Ministry through Music Continues!

#### Chancel Choir

Each day, the Chancel Choir receives an email with a greeting and a video of an anthem attached. Sometimes, it's a song the choir has sung before so they can sing along. Sometimes, it's a new anthem for them to enjoy.

The MSU Choir students are excited to be contributing to worship through videos of solos to be used in the service.

#### Chancel Ringers

The Chancel Ringers are planning a "socially distanced" rehearsal and recording to be shared in worship.

### Youth & College Ministry

#### Youth Group

Wednesday night devotional on Instagram Live at [fccwf\\_youth](#) at 7:00pm.

Sunday Youth hangout and Bible study via Zoom at 7:00pm.

#### College

College Bible study via Zoom every Thursday at 6:00pm.

If any youth or college age folks would like to join us via the zoom calls or receive our verses of the day they can get in touch with me at [josh@firstchristianwfc.com](mailto:josh@firstchristianwfc.com), or call or text at 817-565-0446 and I will send them the zoom links.

### Children's Ministry

#### Bible Story Time!

Join Claire and friends for a nightly Bible story! Stories are posted on the [First Christian Facebook Page](#) weekday evenings at 7:00pm.

#### Sunday School!

Sunday School videos will be posted to the [Young Disciples Facebook Page](#) on Friday evenings for families to do together over the weekend.

#### Zoom Check-Ins!

Claire will host a zoom meeting every Friday afternoon at 2:00 pm for any children's ministry family that would like to hop on and see friends and spend a little time in fellowship. Zoom information will be posted in the [Young Disciples Facebook Page](#).

### Adult Ministry

#### Romans Bible Study

Join Dr. Bender for a study through the book of Romans on Sunday afternoons at 4:00 pm via Zoom. For Zoom information contact Dr. Bender at [mark@firstchristianwfc.com](mailto:mark@firstchristianwfc.com).

#### Adult Sunday School

Many classes have begun to meet via Zoom to do their regular Sunday School! Be sure to stay in touch with those in your class so you don't miss out on any online fellowship opportunities.

#### Virtual Narthex

Join us after the [Facebook Live](#) worship service on Sunday morning for "Virtual Narthex" This is a time for us to gather and share a little about life and prayer requests from our congregation. The information for this zoom meeting will be included in the Friday From First email and on Sunday morning during the live feed!

#### SNFL (Sunday Night Fellowship Live)

Join us on [Facebook live](#) Sunday evening at 6:00 pm for a fun fellowship event! So far we have played Trivia, Bingo, Pictionary, and Family Feud. Who knows what we will come up with next!

### Stewardship

How do I continue to give when I can't place my tithe in the offering plate?

#### Ways to Give

##### ONLINE

[firstchristianwfc.com](http://firstchristianwfc.com)



##### BY MAIL



##### MOBILE APP

The GivePlus+ App

GIVE PLUS+



# Make Your Mark

Dr. Mark R. Bender  
Senior Minister



*rethink your church. It's a time to shed 'the way we've always done it' mindset and move into a new and exciting future."*

## Time Out

Jan Linn is a pastor, author, and thought leader within our denomination. Over the years, he has pushed the church to consider new paradigms for worship, evangelism, and, in particular, leadership and administration. I haven't always agreed with him, but Linn has often stretched my thinking.

In his book *Reclaiming Evangelism* (Chalice Press, 1998), Linn proposed a "time out." He suggested that given the enormity of changes the church was facing, a time-out was needed. (Keep in mind, this was at a time when the internet was becoming mainstream, attendance in mainline churches was continuing to decline, and the country was divided by talk of impeachment). Linn recommended a year-long congregational sabbatical to pray, listen, and discover what it was that God wanted to do in them, with them, and through them.

Linn's proposal was that, during the Sabbatical, the church suspend all the regular routines and schedules. No new programs should be considered or developed. The normal committees and meetings should be reduced to a minimum, keeping just those absolutely necessary to maintain church life. In order to "consciously [disengage] from all the stuff that [the] church was frenetically doing," Linn suggested the church limit its activities to worship with one another, praying with and for one another, studying with one another, and sharing their stories of faith and spiritual growth with one another. Linn wrote: *Sabbatical time is a practical way to step back and live deeper into the Spirit in the trust that new life will emerge.*

In the mid-2000s, one of my fellow associate ministers would often suggest (when the "machinery of church life" was grinding upon the church staff): "Let's do a congregational sabbatical. Let's stop doing everything except for worship. Then we can get back to focusing on what matters." Doug Skinner, who was our Senior Minister at the time, was always very patient with that suggestion. He understood the theory and thinking behind it. But Doug also wisely knew the challenge of implementing such a suggestion. In "normal" times, the church would be hesitant to embrace such a radical departure from regular patterns and practices.

Interestingly, Doug remembered this church sabbatical idea. In a recent blog post, he wrote:

*Well, the congregational sabbatical that Jan Linn called for 20 years ago is the sabbatical that we are in right now according to Thom Rainer. The suspension of routine church life could be the pause we've needed to reflect on the change that's coming. The mantra of these days is - "Nothing should go back to normal. Normal wasn't working. If we go back to the way things were, we will have lost the lesson. May we rise up and do better." This is the same wisdom as Thom Rainer's counsel to churches - "It is a time to*



Fortuitously (and providentially), as a congregation, we didn't need the "sabbatical" we find ourselves in to think about what church life should look like. Throughout much of 2019, our Vision Team spent time examining our congregational life and thinking about the essentials. As this team considered how we best help those who call First Christian home worship God and grow in their discipleship, four essentials were apparent. These became the four components of our strategy: GROW by worshipping weekly, KNOW by studying regularly, GO by serving consistently, and SHOW the peace of Christ every day. And when the COVID-19 shelter-in-place orders went into effect, we already had a framework in place to determine what to focus on in order for worship and spiritual growth to continue.

Now, to be clear, having a strategy and executing that strategy are two different things. And in the last five weeks, we probably haven't done everything right or as fully as we would prefer. But, I am proud of our leadership for taking the steps to make sure we continued to worship together (online), to find ways to study God's word together, to focus outward through service and generosity, and to seek the peace of Christ in the midst of an unsettling time. That's what we are called to do as a church and I'm grateful that we had that

clarity in place when this crisis emerged.

But, the Vision Team also prayerfully discerned the things you and I should do - things that will show that the church is on target with its mission and strategy. Those actions and practices come in the form of five questions:

*How am I:*

- *Growing my faith through daily spiritual practices?*
- *Strengthening my faith through weekly church involvement?*
- *Modeling my faith through joyful service and generosity?*
- *Sharing my faith through intentional investment in others?*
- *Living my faith through the consistent pursuit of peace?*

These are the questions you and I should be asking as we find ourselves in new patterns and routines. For example, you might ask: Am I praying and reading my Bible every day? Am I making an effort to join the church for worship online each week? Am I giving generously of my resources, particularly to those in need? Am I using this time to develop spiritual friendships; to meet neighbors I didn't know before? Am I living in fear or am I living a life characterized by the peace Jesus offers (John 14:27)?

These are new and challenging times. But these can also be times of growth - for us as a church, and for us as individual followers of Christ. To borrow a phrase from *Apollo 13*, instead of this *being the worst disaster we have ever experienced*, we have the potential - by prayer and practice - for this to *be our finest hour*.

Mark

# FCC MINISTRY NEWS AND CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS



The **Challenger** is biweekly, with the next publication on May 6! FCC Ministry News is sent by email every Monday.

## Pantry Sunday for Interfaith Outreach Services:

You can help keep the pantry shelves filled by:

1. Donating some extras that you may have;
2. Picking up a few additional cans when you *have* to go shop for your household; or
3. Ordering some food for Interfaith and having it shipped from an online source. Amazon, Walmart, Jet.com and others are shipping food, but deliveries are taking longer than usual.

If you have food you want to donate directly, you can bring it to Interfaith (1101 11th St.), which is only open on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday right now. However, please do not make an extra trip out - continue to shelter in place. You can also drop food off at the church. A large box is on the porch by the Chapel entrance and it will be emptied daily. A third option is for you to call Interfaith (940-322-1365) and arrange for an Interfaith staff member to pick up the food from your porch.

The most needed items at this time include: all kinds of beans, vegetables, macaroni and cheese, spaghetti sauce and pasta, and peanut butter and jelly.

4. If you would like to support Interfaith with a financial gift, you can mail your donation to Interfaith (1101 11th St., Wichita Falls, TX 76301), or you can donate on their website.

**Young Ages 2020-21 Registration:** Young Ages is currently enrolling students for our 2020-21 school year. If you or someone you know are looking for a morning preschool for 3, 4 or 5 year old's, then we're the place to be. Classes are 9:00-12:00 and you can choose from 2, 3 or 5 days a week. Our office is currently closed, and we can't give tours at this time but our Facebook page and website, [youngagesschool.wixsite.com/youngages](http://youngagesschool.wixsite.com/youngages), offer a wonderful glimpse into our program. Enrollment Forms can be found on our website and submitted electronically or printed and mailed in. Please contact Alisa Gardner, Director, at [youngagesschool@yahoo.com](mailto:youngagesschool@yahoo.com) for more information. We look forward to hearing from you!



## May Birthdays

- 1 Dana Allison, Gaylan Judah, Mirayah Opela, Treva Spradley, Emily Wilson
- 2 Chad Pontius
- 3 Joe Barrett
- 4 Jim LaValley, Kirstan Raber
- 5 John Cook, Jerry Johnson, Greyson Westbrook
- 6 Ashley Burross, Lela Burross, Brenda Elrod, Rachel McLaughlin, Kelly Murphey
- 8 Delight Clements, Sandra Marvel
- 9 Kinsley Burross
- 10 Linda McCoy, Lita Watson
- 11 Cheryl Appling, Wendi Jo Miller, Judy Muir, Cheryl Smiley
- 12 Linda C. Carr
- 14 Amara Rodriguez
- 15 Lily Barker, Debbi Schmidt
- 16 Karen Burross
- 17 Christopher McKenzie, Lonny Morrison, Mary Schriber
- 18 Lauren Johnson
- 20 Fred Farrell
- 22 Leann Elder, Kiran Rodriguez, Steven Young
- 23 Emalee Gentry, Margaret Harris, Betty Rafuse, Glorie Steele
- 24 Jack Brunson, David Diebold, Ethan Earley
- 25 Phyllis Hiraki, Sue Wineinger
- 26 Sally Hastings
- 27 Chesta Owens, Julia Ward, Paula Zahn
- 28 Margo Harris, Eric Hartman, Doug Thompson, Eddie Tucker
- 29 Ann Gunn

## May Anniversaries

- 8 Tonia & Vince Machado
- 17 Ashley & Richard Barker
- 21 Abby & Nathan Van De Vyvere
- 24 Francine Carraro & Kevin Coleman
- 27 Gidget & Michael Pettibon



## May Scripture Readings

- |                          |                           |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Romans 8:12-17         | 17 2 Corinthians 4:7-18   |
| 2 Luke 15:11-32          | 18 John 15:1-10           |
| 3 Mark 1:35-39           | 19 Luke 10:38-42          |
| 4 Matthew 25:31-40       | 20 John 5:19-24           |
| 5 Philippians 4:6-9      | 21 1 Corinthians 12:14-26 |
| 6 Philemon vv.4-7        | 22 Ecclesiastes 4:9-12    |
| 7 2 Corinthians 5:6-9    | 23 Matthew 6:25-34        |
| 8 1 Peter 2:1-10         | 24 1 John 3:1-2           |
| 9 Colossians 1:1-14      | 25 Psalm 139:1-12         |
| 10 John 14:1-4           | 26 2 Samuel 7:18-29       |
| 11 2 Timothy 2:14-19     | 27 1 Corinthians 9:20-23  |
| 12 2 Corinthians 9:10-15 | 28 Romans 5:1-11          |
| 13 Mark 11:19-24         | 29 Philippians 4:10-19    |
| 14 1 Peter 3:13-17       | 30 Hebrews 12:4-11        |
| 15 Psalm 143:5-10        | 31 Luke 10:29-37          |
| 16 Matthew 5:1-12        |                           |

## FOR THE RECORD . . .

CGRM: (Tues., Apr. 14) . . . . .	Did not meet
Wednesday Online Prayer Service (Wed., Apr. 15) . . . . .	29
Sunday School (Sun. Apr. 19) . . . . .	Did not meet
Worship (Apr. 19): 10:45am Online Facebook Page . . . . .	208
	Total Worship . . . . . 237
Sunday Receipts Needed Per Week	\$18,362.35
Sunday Receipts for 4/19/20	\$10,723.00
Through Apr. 20: Income \$289,626.45	Expenses \$297,816.82

## This Sunday:

"What The Lord Has Done For You"  
Mark 5:1-20  
Rev. Josh deSteiguer

## OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday, April 26, 2020

9:30 Adult Sunday School Classes (via Zoom)  
10:45 Worship (Watch the Livestream on Facebook.com/  
FCCWF)

4:00 Romans Bible Study (via Zoom)  
6:00 Sunday Night Fellowship Live! (Watch the Livestream  
on Facebook.com/FCCWF)  
7:00 Youth (Grades 6-12) (via Instagram Live)

Tuesday, April 28, 2020

9:30 FCC Staff Meeting (via Zoom)  
6:00 Executive Council Meeting (via Zoom)

Wednesday, April 29, 2020

7:00 Elders' Breakfast (via Zoom)  
6:00 The Neighborhood Service  
7:00 Youth (Grades 6-12) (via Instagram Live)

Thursday, April 30, 2020

6:00 College Bible Study (via Zoom)

Sunday, May 3, 2020

9:30 Adult Sunday School Classes (via Zoom)  
10:45 Worship (Watch the Livestream on Facebook.com/  
FCCWF)

4:00 Romans Bible Study (via Zoom)  
6:00 Sunday Night Fellowship Live! (Watch the Livestream  
on Facebook.com/FCCWF)  
7:00 Youth (Grades 6-12) (via Instagram Live)

Tuesday, May 5, 2020

9:30 FCC Staff Meeting (via Zoom)

Wednesday, May 6, 2020

7:00 Elders' Breakfast (via Zoom)  
7:30-6:00 Children Come First (W-F)  
6:00 The Neighborhood Service  
7:00 Youth (Grades 6-12) (via Instagram Live)

Thursday, May 7, 2020

6:00 College Bible Study (via Zoom)

### Member News:

♥**Hospitalized:** at URHCS is Russell Wilson; at House of Hope are Gretchen Bridgman, Jean Puckett & Glorie Steele. Released and back home is Carolyn Ford.

♥Our sympathies are extended to Donna Long and Randy Long & Family on learning of the death of Donna's husband and Randy's father, Tom Long Jr., on April 8<sup>th</sup>. Services were held on April 11<sup>th</sup>.

♥Our condolences are extended to Cheryl Opie & Family on learning of the death of her husband, John Opie, on April 11<sup>th</sup>.

♥We extend our sympathies to JJ Johnson, Robert Vincent, Teena Britt & Family on learning of the death of JJ & Robert's great-grandfather and Teena's grandfather, Rayburn Hightower, on April 11<sup>th</sup>.

♥We extend our condolences to Lydora Martin & Family on learning of the death of her sister, Charinda Moreira, on April 13<sup>th</sup>.

## SERVING SUNDAY

### ELDERS

4/26: Linda Cook, Jerry Johnson; Howard Morris, Presiding  
5/3: Kathleen Lauck, Richard Phillips; Woody Gossom, Presiding

### DIACONATE COMMUNION VISITATION

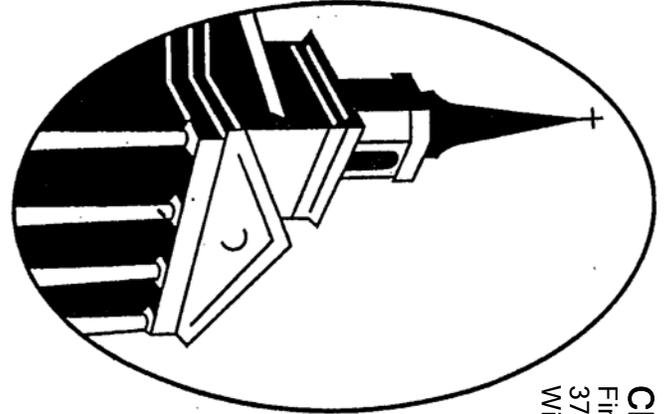
### DIACONATE COMMUNION PREPARATION

### APRIL DIACONATE SERVERS

Twila Boydston, Captain  
Debi & Larry Ballard, Alan Freeman, Kris Gossom, Hollie Murphey, Liz Thomas, Shirley Craft, Ronnie James, Jim & Karen LaValley, James Poole, Jaiden "JJ" Johnson, Sheila Reynolds, Tyler Thomas, Isabell Murphey, 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	



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