



Christian Challenger

Vol. 67

July 1, 2020

No. 13



To Mars and Beyond Family VBS!

Join us for a VBS event created for the whole family!

Date & Time: Sunday, July 19; 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Where: First Christian Church Parking Lot

To Mars and Beyond VBS invites Voyagers of all ages on a space travel adventure to explore where God's power can take them! Along the journey, Voyagers discover a new realm of possibilities as they reach for the stars and encounter the limitless power and love of God!

Sign up via Facebook post, Ministry News email, or by calling Claire in the Church Office.

All children must have an adult present with them

An Update On Our Sunday Morning Worship Re-Entry Plan

As you know, given the recent spike in COVID-19 cases in Wichita County, the Worship ReEntry Task Force recommended that we press PAUSE on our *Sunday Morning Worship ReEntry Plan*. This decision is not a "start-over" but a temporary suspension of our ReEntry plan.

However, even though the plan has been paused, the parts of the plan already in effect continue: The 10:45 am worship livestream, House Churches, the 8:40 am Drive In Communion Service, and the addition of the Presiding Elders and special musicians to the Sanctuary. We hope that you are taking advantage of these worship opportunities.

We will also continue to monitor conditions, and will regularly reevaluate and reassess when we can safely resume our *ReEntry Plan*.

We appreciate your patience and grace, and your faithfulness to First Christian Church as this ReEntry Plan unfolds. We look forward to when we can be safely back together again.

The First Christian Church Sunday Morning Worship
ReEntry Task Force

*Mark Turnbow, Doug Kunkle, Rick Appling,
Susan Buckley, Robert Hastings, Sally Hastings,
Jerry Johnson, Jim LaValley, Chris Showalter,
Stacey Strickland, Dr. Mark Bender, Cheryl Appling,
Claire Baer, Rev. Josh deSteiguer, Jeanette Showalter,
and Debbie Watson.*

Don't Forget to "Like Us" on



Or Subscribe to "Us" on



Join us on the East Parking lot Sunday mornings at 8:40 am for a Drive-In Communion service! This short service features hymns, prayers, a message, and communion. Come start your Sunday with this Onsite Worship Experience.

Make Your Mark

Dr. Mark R. Bender
Senior Minister



Here to Stay

In the month of June, I made two road trips to Missouri. The first was to be with Chelsea when she had back surgery and the second was to meet up with family for a few days away in Branson. The miles I logged going to and from gave me some time to do some reading...well, listening to a few audio books (or what used to be called “books on tape”).

One of the books I listened to was *Digital Minimalism* by Cal Newport. By the title, I expected this to be a book which suggested we do away with technology. That wasn't the case. Newport, however, laid out a compelling argument for the appropriate use of technology. He suggested that technology has its place but it shouldn't have the control over our lives that it now has. He pointed out that, to our brains, the scroll feature in our social media feeds is similar to pulling the lever on a slot machine. *Just one more swipe (pull) and we will win.* Of course, the “win” in our social media feed is one more interesting article, one more cat video, one more “like” of our post.

As I rolled down the highway, Newport's book got me thinking about technology and its role in our lives. And while I don't disagree that technology (and some of the large tech companies) have helped addict us to it, I also believe there is a place for it...even for the church. After all, in the past few months as COVID-19 has impacted our lives, the use of technology became a primary avenue for staying connected and engaged as a church.

At a recent staff meeting, we read an article by Carey Nieuwhof. Nieuwhof is a former lawyer-turned-pastor and has become a sought-after speaker and author. In this article, Nieuwhof noted that our worlds and our thinking have changed radically. As such, he writes, when churches resume in-person gatherings, “you're not re-opening to normal, but to a new normal.” And his caution to churches and church leaders is to not let the innovation curve come to a stop.

One of the areas Nieuwhof suggests the church give intentional energy to is online ministry. “Don't get me wrong,” Nieuwhof writes, “A lot of energy, passion, prayer, and effort belong in in-person ministry. The gathered church is here to stay.” But, online church can't be an “add-on.”

“In the same way remote work will become the new normal for many people in the wider economy, online church might become a default option for many people. Hating that doesn't make it go away...Everyone you want to reach is online. It's time for the church to finally act like it.”

While I might argue that not *everyone* is online (we know this to be true among our congregation), I think

Nieuwhof's intended point is valuable. Online ministry is here to stay and we have to make that a part of our future efforts.

If you have been watching our worship livestream on Facebook, perhaps you have noted some of the people who are watching with you. Many are the people you would regularly see on Sunday mornings here at First Christian Church. It is so great to see our members and regular attendees commenting about each other's presence online, sharing notes about how much the other is missed, and joining together in worship.

But it has also been interesting to see *who else* is watching. Nearly every week, joining us in worship are:

- members who have been inactive for a while
- former members who have moved away
- friends of current members and participants
- family members of current members and participants
- other church leaders from around the country
- people who have a church home somewhere else, but appreciate our services

We have a fairly faithful following each week from each of these categories. Some of these people are local, while many are joining us from hundreds of miles away. Online church has enabled us to broaden the ministry reach of First Christian Church beyond Wichita Falls. While tracking “attendance” is a bit of a challenge in the digital world, it is almost certain that our worship participation numbers in these last few months are 25-50% higher than historical averages for the same period.

All this to say, our digital efforts are another way we *shepherd every person to encounter the abundant peace of Christ.* Our mission hasn't changed even though our methods have changed. And even as we move back to in-person worship, the need to *shepherd* online will remain. This has become another way that we live into Jesus' commission to “go into all the world and make disciples” (Matthew 28:16-20).

H. Richard Niebuhr wrote, “The great Christian revolutions came not by the discovery of something that was not known before. They happen when someone takes radically something that was always there.” Perhaps, in a time of radical change, we have uncovered new and innovative ways to connect people to something that doesn't change: Jesus Christ (Hebrews 13:8). And if that's true, that is the real “win” of online church.



Mark

FCC MINISTRY NEWS AND CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS



Thank you for joining us on our church streaming platforms in recent weeks. This has enabled First Christian Church to provide worship and fellowship for all of us while maintaining our social distancing.

Why not share with your neighbors and friends? By forwarding our worship invitations and then “liking and sharing” our various streaming services and events, this is an easy and vital way to point those you know and care about, to the ministries of First Christian Church...and, in turn, to Jesus Christ.

If you haven't already, we also urge you to subscribe to our YouTube channel. (You can do so by navigating to YouTube.com and searching for “First Christian Church Wichita Falls”.) Subscribing not only provides a very stable and high-quality livestream, this channel also houses recorded versions of each occasion we stream.

So like and share...and subscribe! These simple acts will ensure First Christian Church grows our digital footprint in our community and the area.



The **Challenger** is biweekly, with the next publication on July 15! 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 on Pantry Sunday, July 5th: **The collected item(s) will be: Ramen Noodles or Cup Noodles and cans or corn.**

2. Donating directly anytime into the large box on the porch by the Chapel entrance. It will be emptied daily over the summer.

3. 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](#).

Thank you for your 301 lbs of food donations in May through the Chapel box! The next highest church in town gave 146 lbs, so FCC did double that and we also beat our donation from May of last year of 99 lbs through our “normal” Pantry Sunday. The Chapel donation box is working and FCC folks are amazing!

Member News:

♥**Hospitalized:** at the Gables is Carolyn Ford. Released and back home are Joe Etoch, Craig Reynolds, Margaret Scales & Ted Smith.

♥Our sympathies are extended to Troy Self & Family on learning of the death of his wife, Georgann Self, on June 22nd in Jacksonville FL.

♥Our condolences are extended to Brenda Almanza and Johnny Almanza and Families on learning of the death of their husband and brother, Kenneth “Skipper” Almanza, on June 24th.

Ways to Give

ONLINE

firstchristianwf.com



BY MAIL



MOBILE APP

The GivePlus+ App

GIVE PLUS+



FOR THE RECORD . . .

CGRM: (Tues., June 23)	24
Neighborhood Online Prayer Service (Wed., June 24)	13
Sunday School (Sun. June 28 – via Zoom).	24
Worship (June 28): 8:40am Drive In Worship Service	40
10:45am Online Facebook Page	227
Total Worship.	280
Sunday Receipts Needed Per Week	\$18,362.35
Sunday Receipts for 6/28/20	\$3,766.00
Through June 29: Income \$436,978.14	Expenses \$437,262.85

This Sunday:

“Favors”
Ezra 7:11-28
Dr. Mark Bender

OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday, July 5, 2020

8:40 Drive In Worship Service (East Parking Lot)
9:30 Adult Sunday School Classes (via Zoom)
10:45 Worship (Watch the Livestream on YouTube or
Facebook.com/FCCWF)
4:00 Romans Bible Study (Rm 310 & Zoom)
7:00 Youth (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)

Monday, July 6, 2020

7:45-5:30 Children Come First (M-Th) (Classrooms/Gym)
8:30-11:00 CCF Music (M-Th)
10:00-11:00 CCF Chapel (Chapel)

Tuesday, July 7, 2020

9:00-10:00 CCF Chapel (Chapel)
9:30 FCC Staff Meeting (Rm 310)
4:00 CCF Kona Ice (East Parking Lot)
6:30 Common Ground Recovery Ministries Support Groups
(Rm 304-308)

Wednesday, July 8, 2020

7:00 Elders' Breakfast (Fellowship Hall)
8:30-11:00 CCF Chapel (Chapel)
6:00 The Neighborhood Service (Watch the Livestream on
YouTube or Facebook.com/FCCWF)
7:00 Youth (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)

Thursday, July 9, 2020

8:30-9:30 CCF Chapel (Chapel)
6:00 College Bible Study (Rm 405)

Friday, July 10, 2020

12:00 Regional Youth Ministry Council Installation Service
(Sanctuary)

Sunday, July 12, 2020

8:40 Drive In Worship Service (East Parking Lot)
9:30 Adult Sunday School Classes (via Zoom)
10:45 Worship (Sanctuary or Watch the Livestream on
YouTube or Facebook.com/FCCWF)
4:00 Romans Bible Study (Rm 310 & Zoom)
7:00 Youth (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)

Monday, July 13, 2020

7:45-5:30 Children Come First (M-Th) (Classrooms/Gym)
8:30-11:00 CCF Music (M-Th)
10:00-11:00 CCF Chapel (Chapel)

Tuesday, July 14, 2020

9:00-10:00 CCF Chapel (Chapel)
9:30 FCC Staff Meeting (Rm 310)
4:00 CCF Kona Ice (East Parking Lot)
6:30 Common Ground Recovery Ministries Support Groups
(Rm 304-308)

Wednesday, July 15, 2020

7:00 Elders' Breakfast (Fellowship Hall)
8:30-11:00 CCF Chapel (Chapel)
6:00 The Neighborhood Service (Watch the Livestream on
YouTube or Facebook.com/FCCWF)
7:00 Youth (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)

Thursday, July 16, 2020

6:00 College Bible Study (Rm 405)

SERVING SUNDAY

ELDERS

7/5: Emily Wilson, Cheryl Smiley; Linda C. Carr, Presiding
7/12: Ricky Scales, Cindy Hernandez; Gary Ballard, Presiding

DIACONATE COMMUNION VISITATION

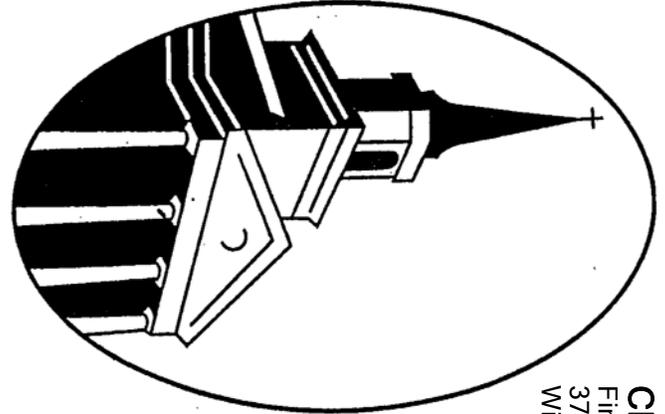
DIACONATE COMMUNION PREPARATION

JULY DIACONATE SERVERS

Twila Boydson, 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 . . .

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