



Christian Challenger

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December 2, 2020

No. 24



Our Sock Tree

For the 25th year the Sock Tree for Fain Elementary School students is up in the church office. This year we will be decorating it with colorful socks, hats, gloves and kids pajamas! The donated items will be taken to Fain on December 14.

The Fain counselor has listed pajamas as a need they have year-round, so the Outreach Ministry decided the sock tree would be a great time for anyone who wants to help with that can. The pj's can be for boys or girls, size 6 to about 16 (probably smaller sizes will be needed more).



Sign Up for the Advent Devotional Emails

Are you receiving the daily Advent Devotional Emails written by members of the FCC family?

If you would like to receive these emails, the easiest way to sign up is to text the keyword **ADVENT** to 940-310-5673. If you have questions or need assistance, call the church office.

Save the Date to Rise Against Hunger

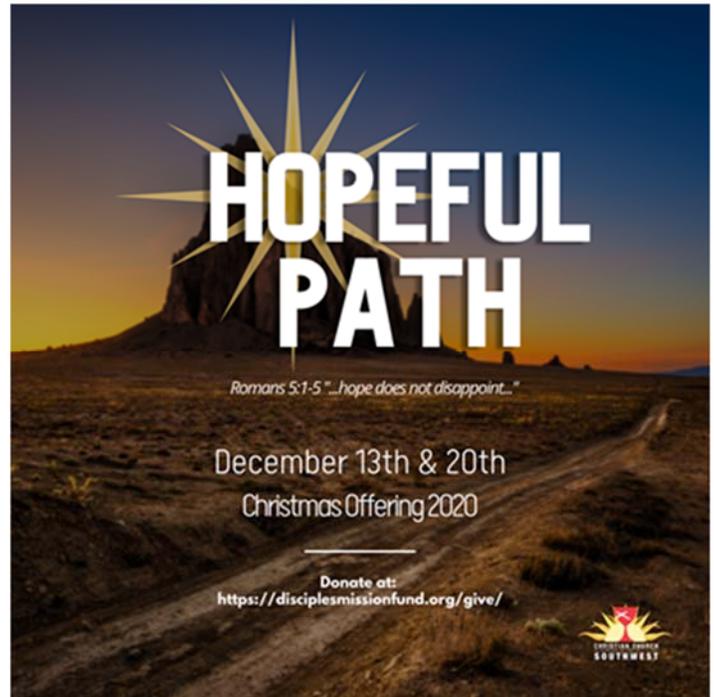
Mark your calendars for January 9, 2021. On that day, FCC will be partnering with Rise Against Hunger to pack more than 10,000 meals. Watch for registration information later this month.



Christmas Eve at First Christian Church

While Christmas Eve will be lovely and meaningful, it will also look a little different this year due to necessary safety measures. Note the new times for this year's celebrations.

- 4:30 pm - Nativity Experience with Live Animals (Front Lawn)
- 5:00 pm - *A Visit to the Christmas Crib* Service (Sanctuary)
- 8:00 pm - Traditional Christmas Eve Service (Sanctuary and Livestream)
- 11:00 pm - Traditional Christmas Eve Service (Sanctuary)



Christmas Offering 2020

This year the Christian Church in the Southwest has chosen "Hopeful Path" as our Christmas Offering theme and Romans 5:1-5 as the biblical foundation. This passage foreshadowed what this year has proven--that hope doesn't happen by accident. The image of a path symbolizes the work of crafting hope. Paths are not so much found as made. Hope like a path is built. Hope is built from God, and to God, and most importantly with God.

"...hope does not disappoint..." These four words come in the middle of the first five verses of Romans 5. It is a promise for the CCSW to claim during the closing months of 2020 and the opening months of 2021. Hope is not wishful thinking, helpless anticipation, or blind optimism. Hope is the gritty determination to remain faithful in the midst of difficulty and hardship. To see a hopeful path and go together along that path in devotion to God our Creator and Sustainer.

We invite you to join us on the Hopeful Path, and we ask you to prayerfully consider your contribution to the ministry of the CCSW on either Sundays, December 13 or 20, through your checks to "FCC" and designated as "DMF: Christmas Offering" or through the Region's online giving platform at www.ccsw.org/donate. One-hundred percent of your contribution to the Disciples Mission Fund (DMF) Christmas Offering goes to support our Region.

Make Your Mark

Dr. Mark R. Bender
Senior Minister



Making the Switch

Over the years, I've become a fan of Will Mancini. Mancini is the founder of *Auxano*, *Younique*, and now the *Future Church Co* - three organizations devoted to gospel-centered planning. In church "consulting" and strategic planning circles, Will is one of the top thought leaders. And, recently, he's been "thinking" quite a bit about the disruption the church has experienced recently and the new patterns that may result.

In a recent post, Mancini wrote:



I still remember the first train set I had as a kid. It was a simple oval. For a while, I absolutely loved it and would play with it for hours, watching the train go round and round. But over time, I learned that trains were actually capable of—and built for!—a lot more than going in an oval. That was when I started adding switches.

When you add switches to a simple oval track, it's like a new world opens up. You can build new shapes, discover new patterns, and take the train to places it never could have gone before.

The same thing happens when a paradigm-shifting idea finds a place in our view of the world. We realize that, although it was nice for a time, we've only been going in an oval, oblivious to the potential we've been missing out on.

Mancini suggests that in order for churches to address the specific and significant challenges we are experiencing right now, we've got to flip some "switches" - two of which are named below.

One of these switches we've got to flip is the one that switches from *recapturing the past* to *redesigning the future*. Recapturing the past is that notion of moving back to what has worked before. Perhaps what was successful five, ten, or even thirty years ago could be successful again. Plus, we have all of the systems in place for the processes of the past. Leaders know what to do and people in the church know what to expect. It makes recapturing the past pretty attractive.

But, the big problem is we can't recapture the past. In order to truly recapture the past, all of the disruptions in culture over the last five, ten, or thirty years would have to return to their former state as well. Mancini writes:

Recapturing the past seems easier...but it actually won't be easier, because you and your team will end up straining against a ridiculously strong prevailing wind. It will be like doing ministry for a culture that no longer exists. So your [leaders and volunteers] will expend a lot

of time and energy on tactics that are no longer as effective as they used to be.

The second switch that needs to be flipped is the one that flips from *what's been lost* to *what's most important*. The amount and scope of loss that we feel right now is nearly overwhelming. People are feeling the loss of security at work or in their finances. People are nervous about their health. Everyone is feeling the loss of our normal pre-COVID patterns of shopping, eating out, and hanging out with our friends. And many of us in the church are feeling the loss of a paradigm of church we were used to and liked (for the most part).

Again, Mancini makes a helpful comment about this reality:

People have lost more of what they consider "normal" than at any other time in their lives. That sense of loss produces grief, anger, and the desire or need to blame something (or someone) for the loss they feel. Misunderstood loss is what drives the spread of online conspiracy theories. Misunderstood loss is what drives people to rail against government control and claim religious persecution. All of these are direct manifestations of the amount and scope of loss that pervades our society and our churches.

[Yet...] As a church, you still have what matters most. You have everything you need for life and godliness. You have the presence and authority and mission of Jesus. You have the power of the gospel. COVID-19 didn't take any of this away.

I was recently in a gathering of churches from across our Region. As I heard leaders from other Disciples churches sharing about their struggles (many of which related to *recapturing the past* and dealing with *what's been lost*), I found that I kept wanting to ask these other leaders, "But what's your mission?" I wasn't asking this because I believe that First Christian Church, Wichita Falls, has it all figured out. We don't. But, I feel like we are navigating through the choppy waters of 2020 with less anxiety because we have a clear mission. To me, it felt like many of these other churches were simply "throwing spaghetti on the wall to see what would stick." They were trying anything and everything without any consistency or thought about what would best serve them and their community.

During our visioning process last year, one of the things our vision team had to wrestle with was the difference between Lower Room and Upper Room vision. The Lower Room consists of four elements - place, personality, programs, and people. These are the things that initially attract someone to our church. And there is nothing inherently wrong with them, but they can become destructive when they become the emotional center of the church. The Upper Room is about our purpose as a church - why we exist at a specific time in this specific place with these specific people. It's the unique expression of our DNA as a church. It's who we are and who we are called to be.

As we learned in the visioning process, people don't resist change; they resist loss. And for some churches, it's the loss of the Lower Room elements due to COVID-19 that has created such disruption. It's why the focus on our purpose and mission matters. As the people who compose First Christian Church, Wichita Falls, being a little sad about what we can't do today that we used to do nine months ago is just fine. But, we can't let that draw us off mission. We can't let it prevent us from *shepherding every person to encounter the abundant peace of Christ*. That's the track we are staying on - the one that will take us to new and wonderful places we've never been before.

Mark

FCC MINISTRY NEWS AND CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS



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.

The **Challenger** is biweekly, with the next publication on Dec. 16! FCC Ministry News is sent by email every Tuesday.

Pantry Sunday – For Interfaith Outreach Services will be this Sunday, **December 6th**. You can continue to help keep the pantry shelves filled by: Donating items needed for Pantry Sunday in December or any type of food items directly anytime into the large box on the porch by the Chapel entrance. **The December collected item(s) will be: Macaroni and Cheese; and Ramen or Cup Noodles...both are needed!!**

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, Thank you!! Young Ages School



would like to thank all of the church members who participated in our Kringle and Coffee fundraiser. I am happy to report that we raised over \$2,700.00 for our school. A special thanks to our wonderful board, especially Susan Buckley, for working so hard on this project. We have purchased many new toys for the classrooms, replaced a rug and are working on adding some playground toys. Thank you again for your continued support of our program.

Member News:

♥**Hospitalized:** Released and back home are Sally Hastings, Jane Long, Gwynnaeth Stewart, Ali Thompson, Abi Thompson.

♥Our sympathies are extended to Judy Muir & Family on learning of the death of her cousin, Bob Burditt, on November 18th.

♥Our condolences are extended to Frances Williams & Family on learning of the death of her brother.

♥We also extend our sympathies to Shirley Craft & Family on learning of the death of her father, Everette Layton Brown, on November 26th.

♥We also extend our condolences to Lynette Gill & Family on learning of the death of her mother, Kathryn Henke, on November 30th.

♥Our sympathies are also extended to Ted Lauck and Katherine Lauck & Family on learning of the death of Ted's brother and Kathleen's uncle, Burt Lauck, on November 30th.



Journey Through Scripture will not meet in person until January 2021. Larry Spradley will continue to share his Bible study by email on Friday mornings with the group.

Christian Women's Fellowship "CWF" will not be having their December Luncheon or Board Meeting.

What's Your Favorite Hymn? Our organist would like to include your favorite hymn in the worship service on Sunday mornings. Please give us your name, hymn title, and then in 25 words or less, tell us why this hymn is special to you.

You can email your hymn information to susan@firstchristianwf.com, or you can bring it to the church office.



Time To Order Poinsettias!

We will be using 100 poinsettias to decorate for Advent. If you would like to furnish one in memory or honor of a loved one, please fill out the form below and return it with your check to the church office. The poinsettias are \$7.50 each and the deadline to order is December 6th.

Donor _____

In memory/honor of _____
(circle one)

In memory/honor of _____
(circle one)

In memory/honor of _____
(circle one)

For Office use only: date received _____ # ordered _____

Total paid _____ Cash / Check # _____

FOR THE RECORD . . .

CGRM: (Tues., Nov. 24)	27
Neighborhood (Wed., Nov. 25)	Did not meet
Sunday School (Sun. Nov. 29)	59
Worship (Nov. 15): 8:40am Drive In Worship Service	11
10:45am Worship Service	263
Total Worship	274
Sunday Receipts Needed Per Week	\$18,362.35
Sunday Receipts for 11/29/20	\$6,900.00
Through Nov. 30: Income \$805,745.19	Expenses \$842,517.18

This Sunday:

"I Will Send"
Malachi 3:1-12, 4:5-6
Dr. Mark R. Bender

OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday, December 6, 2020

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT / PANTRY SUNDAY

8:40 Drive In Worship Service (East Parking Lot)

9:30 Sunday School (In Person & Zoom)

10:45 Worship (Sanctuary or Watch the Livestream on YouTube or Facebook.com/FCCWF)

4:00 Chancel Choir (High School-Adults) (Sanctuary)

5:00 Youth (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)

6:00 Young Disciples (Grades K-5) (Rm 402)

Monday, December 7, 2020

7:30-6:00 Children Come First (M-F)

8:55-10:30 CCF Music (Rm 220)

9:00-9:30 CCF Chapel (Chapel)

9:00-12:00 Young Ages Preschool (M-F)

7:30 Boy Scouts Troop 15 (Fellowship Hall)

Tuesday, December 8, 2020

9:30 FCC Staff Meeting / Worship Planning (Rm 310/Zoom)

10:00-11:00 YAS Music (Rm 220) (Tu/Wed)

6:00 Property Ministry Meeting (Zoom)

6:00 World Outreach Ministry Meeting (Zoom)

6:30 Common Ground Recovery Ministries Support Groups (Rm 304-308)

7:00 Worship Ministry Meeting (Zoom)

Wednesday, December 9, 2020

7:00 Elders' Breakfast (Fellowship Hall)

8:55-10:30 CCF Chapel (Chapel)

9:00-9:30 CCF Music (Rm 220)

10:30 Sheri Sutton's Advent Bible Study (Zoom)

5:30 Brown Bag Fellowship (Fellowship Hall)

6:00 Neighborhood Worship (Fellowship Hall)

6:00 First Kidz (PreK-5th) (Rm 402)

7:00 Youth (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)

7:00 Chancel Ringers (High School-Adults) (Stratten Hall)

Thursday, December 10, 2020

9:00-9:30 CCF Music (Rm 220)

6:00 College Bible Study (Rapid Fire)

7:00 Bible Story Time with Claire (Facebook/YouTube)

Friday, December 11, 2020

8:55-10:30 CCF Music (Rm 220)

Saturday, December 12, 2020
Recording the Burtis "Christmas Eve" play (Sanctuary)

Sunday, December 13, 2020

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

8:40 Drive In Worship Service (East Parking Lot)

9:30 Sunday School (In Person & Zoom)

10:45 Worship (Sanctuary or Watch the Livestream on YouTube or Facebook.com/FCCWF)

5:00 Youth (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)

6:00 Young Disciples (Grades K-5) (Rm 402)

Monday, December 14, 2020

7:30-6:00 Children Come First (M-F)

8:55-10:30 CCF Music (Rm 220)

9:00-9:30 CCF Chapel (Chapel)

9:00-12:00 Young Ages Preschool (M-F)

7:30 Boy Scouts Troop 15 (Fellowship Hall)

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

9:30 FCC Staff Meeting / Worship Planning (Rm 310/Zoom)

10:00-11:00 YAS Music (Rm 220) (Tu/Wed)

6:00 Stewardship Ministry Meeting (Zoom)

6:30 Common Ground Recovery Ministries Support Groups (Rm 304-308)

Wednesday, December 16, 2020

7:00 Elders' Breakfast (Fellowship Hall)

8:55-10:30 CCF Chapel (Chapel)

9:00-9:30 CCF Music (Rm 220)

10:30 Sheri Sutton's Advent Bible Study (Zoom)

Children's Advent Video Premieres (Facebook/YouTube)

5:30 Brown Bag Fellowship (Fellowship Hall)

6:00 Neighborhood Worship (Fellowship Hall)

6:00 First Kidz (PreK-5th) (Rm 402)

7:00 Youth (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)

7:00 Chancel Ringers (High School-Adults) (Stratten Hall)

Thursday, December 17, 2020

9:00-9:30 CCF Music (Rm 220)

10:00 YAS Christmas Parties (Classrooms)

6:00 College Bible Study (Rapid Fire)

7:00 Bible Story Time with Claire (Facebook/YouTube)

Friday, December 18, 2020

8:55-10:30 CCF Music (Rm 220)

10:00 YAS Christmas Parties (Classrooms)

SERVING SUNDAY

ELDERS

12/6: Rick Appling, Sherry Tucker; Sandra Ross, Presiding

12/13: David Collins, Andy Wilson; Linda C. Carr, Presiding

DECEMBER DIACONATE SERVERS

Dave Clark, Captain

Ashley & Kyle Burross, Linda Gipson, Ann Kable, Curtis Sullivan, Brandi Brannon, Fred Gentry, Margaret Phillips, Fred & Jane Ridenour, Jodi Bender, Leann Elder, Robert Hastings, Stacey Lingbeek, Ashley Warton, Abby Bender.

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

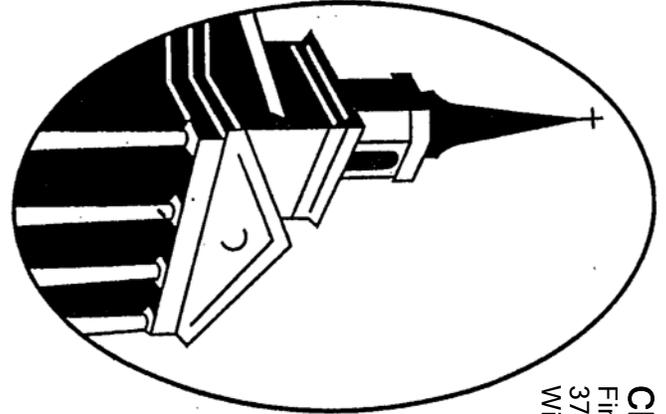
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