



Trunk or Treat

On Sunday, October 30, we will be co-hosting a combined Trunk or Treat with First Presbyterian from 4:00-6:00 pm. There are many ways that you can help! You can host a trunk and pass out candy, run a game, provide candy, or even make a donation to fund a "special item"

like bounce houses and face painting!

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Claire (940-692-2282 or Claire@firstchristianwf.com).

Fall Bible Study Retreat — October 20

In 2017, the Bible Study Groups at First Christian Church (Wednesday morning) and First United Methodist Church (Thursday morning) participated in a combined day-long retreat at Camp Chaparral. This year marks the fifth year for these two groups to gather under the mission to provide an event that is grounded in God's love and grace as we strive to build an environment of mutual trust, to offer an opportunity for fellowship, and to enrich individual spiritual growth for all participants.

Participation is open this year to anyone who would like to attend whether or not you attend either of the Bible studies. We will gather Thursday, October 20 at Camp Chaparral from 9:45am to 3:30pm. Lunch will be provided and is included in the registration fee of \$35.00.

This year's speaker is Rev. Kim Meyers from St. Andrew United Methodist Church, Plano, TX and her presentation is titled *Body, Mind, and Soul* inspired by the Gospel of Mark 12:28-31.

Registration forms are available in the church office. The deadline to register is this Thursday, October 13. If you have any questions, please contact Sheri Sutton at (940)781-2495 or the church office.



Food Truck Party Greatest Hits - Parents Night Out

Let your child relive the fun and formative events of the *Food Truck Party* Vacation Bible School...all while giving you an evening for a fun time with friends, to run errands, to go on a date, or to take some time for yourself!

On Friday, October 21, from 5:30 - 8:30 pm, we'll be replaying the greatest hits from this summer's VBS. We'll be singing the songs, building crafts, conducting science experiments, remembering the powerful stories of God's provision, and more. There is no charge for this event and dinner for your child is included! Register at:

firstchristianwf.com/pno.

Book Fair



The Book Fair is coming to Children Come 1st on October 24 - November 4. Tables will be set up in the childcare hallway, with books on display for purchase. The Book Fair is a great place to find the most current, and age appropriate books for young learners through adults. Please consider shopping our Book Fair. All Book Fair proceeds will go to help purchase books and materials for our classrooms. Children Come 1st thanks you for your support!

No Kringles This Year

All of us at Young Ages would love to thank you for your faithful support of our program over the past 50 years. You have purchased hundreds of Kringles each fall, which in turn allowed us to make many updates to our school. Unfortunately, due to the rising cost the company is charging for the Kringles and the elimination of free shipping, the Young Ages Board has opted not to participate in the Kringle fundraiser this year. It was not an easy decision and we hope to offer these delicious pasties next year! Thank you once again for your ongoing support of Young Ages!



Alisa Gardner, Director

Make Your Mark

Dr. Mark R. Bender
Senior Minister



The Need for Spiritual Formation

In last month's *Christianity Today*, James Bryan Smith wrote an article about the Christian spiritual formation movement. He described how Richard Foster's 1978 book, the *Celebration of Discipline* - what has become the standard text on the spiritual disciplines - caused Christians who had never heard of solitude, silence, or meditation to start practicing these disciplines.

However, a few years into this movement, it was Foster himself who raised a concern. Many Christians were practicing these disciplines in isolation and they needed more guidance. This led to the growth of movements like *Renovaré* (which means "to renew") as well as book series on spiritual formation, formation ministries, and even graduate programs on formation.

The late Dallas Willard, a Christian scholar and professor, noted that the rise of the spiritual formation movement was "a sign of deep hunger and deep need in the church." But, Willard echoed Foster's concern that the focus would be on the practice of the spiritual disciplines rather than on what they were intended to do. They would "naturally degenerate into a focus on technique - on the *how* and not the *why* of the spiritual exercises." The reason this happens, he said, is that the practice of the disciplines, though challenging, naturally has an immediate sense of payoff. And given that measuring spiritual growth itself is difficult, knowing whether one has completed a devotional practice is not. As Willard said, "If I spend five minutes in prayer or 15 minutes reading a devotional book, I will feel as if I have done something 'spiritual.'" Or to say it another way, the disciplines could become a form of idolatry - the means become the ends as we focus more on the disciplines than on God.

Here at First Christian, one of our Life Measures (the signs that individuals are living out our mission of *shepherding every person to encounter the abundant peace of Christ*) is **Growing My Faith**. To assess this, the question each individual is asked to personally consider is: "have I engaged in a spiritual practice today?" The intent behind this question is not to add one more item on your to-do list to cross off, but instead to call you and me to intentionally deepen our relationship with God and to create space for God's grace to work in our lives. The individual practices I describe below are not simply tasks to be completed but spiritual practices designed to move Christ even more fully to the center of our lives.

Dallas Willard voiced another concern when it came to spiritual formation. Willard strongly believed that one of the primary roles of the local church was to create disciples as Christ mandated in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20). But in his 2006 book, *The Great Omission*, Willard suggested that many churches had moved the emphasis to "making Christians" instead of making disciples. He remarked: "[Today], one can be a Christian (by virtue of a confession of faith) without being - or even intending to be - a disciple. In other words, one can feel confident he or she is a Christian because of an assent to a doctrine (such as 'Jesus rose from the dead') without any intention of doing what Jesus said to do (like 'bless those who curse you,' 'love your enemy,' and so on)."

Willard argued that church "success" should not be measured by the common measures - "the ABCs" - attendance, buildings, and cash - but by the D - discipleship. Jesus, he said, was not interested in making bigger churches but in making "bigger Christians." In the same way that the practice of individual spiritual disciplines could lead to isolation, churches that shortchange discipleship can end up with isolated members. When people begin experiencing meaningful growth in their spiritual lives, if the church neglects its role in discipleship, they might feel there is no place for them.



While I certainly have some concern about how our church can continue to help the more spiritually mature grow in their faith, I am even more concerned about discipleship on the other end of the spectrum - for those who are new to the faith or just beginning the journey. (I'll write more about that in a future column). But no matter where you are on the continuum of faith maturity, there are spiritual practices that can advance your individual relationship with Jesus Christ.

Let's start with some individual practices. These might include reflecting on scripture (what does it mean to me?), prayers for guidance, journaling, giving, solitude, and Bible reading. These practices are the building blocks of a Christ-centered life. Just as great marriages are not built on the first rush of romantic love but on effort, attention, and listening, so, too, our spiritual growth is enhanced by dedicating time to working on our relationship with Christ. But, just as Willard warned, these can't be either a person's only spiritual practice nor the end in itself. And that's where the church comes in.

It used to be the thinking that church activity = spiritual growth. The more people participated in church activities, the more likely it would be that those activities would produce a person who loves God and loves others. However, research over time has shown that there are a few specific practices the church can offer to promote discipleship. These include serving those in need through the church (e.g. Rise Against Hunger, Thanksgiving baskets, MSU International Student welcome baskets, Coats for Kids), serving in the church (e.g. greeters, VBS volunteers, youth sponsors), small groups, worship services, and adult education classes.

But there is one more category of spiritual practices - one that, when practiced can counter the concern of isolation. These are the spiritual activities done with others. This includes sharing your faith with another person, developing spiritual friendships (prayer partners, accountability partners, etc.), serving those in need on your own (e.g. Meals on Wheels, Volunteering at Interfaith Outreach, Read 2 Learn), and having and/or becoming a spiritual mentor. These activities further recognize that faith is not an individual act, but one done in community.

In one of his other books, *Renovation of the Heart*, Dallas Willard wrote, "I rarely ever meet anyone...who is not doing his or her very best to serve Christ in the best way he or she knows how - usually sacrificially, and frequently with much good effect. But we need to understand how we can do better." So, while the process of spiritual growth is unique and will always have an enormous-Spirit led component, that commitment to doing better is perhaps one of the best ways we can express our desire to make Jesus Christ the center of our lives.

Mark

FCC MINISTRY NEWS AND CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

Save the Date!



Saturday, January 7, 2023
10:00 am to 12:00 pm | Fellowship Hall
(with setup beginning at 9:00 am)

		T	H	E
G	A	M	E	S
P	E	O	P	L
E	P	L	A	Y

Sundays at
8:40 am | Chapel
10:45 am | Sanctuary



Fall Retreats at Disciples Crossing

Fall retreats at Disciples Crossing Camp are right around the corner!

- **DC Youth Middle School:** November 4-6 (Registration closes on October 21)
- **DC Kids Fall Retreat:** November 18-20 (Registration closes November 4)
- **DC Youth High School:** December 2-4 (Registration closes November 18).

Each retreat costs \$130 and scholarships are available - see Brooke or Claire for more details.

Registration is now open, so if you have a 1st grader thru senior in High school who would like to attend you can register them at:

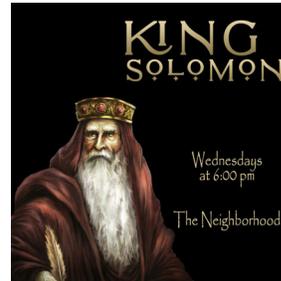
disciplescrossing.org/retreats.

FCC Swag Shop



Get outfitted with the latest FCC Swag! We've got t-shirts, polo shirts, denim shirts, button downs, and vests, with more on the way. Not only will you look good in this gear, it may provide an opportunity for you to share about First Christian Church in the community. You never know who will see your gear and

ask about it! Check out the online swag store on our website, www.firstchristianwf.com/swag, and order today!



Wednesdays at
The Neighborhood
6:00 pm | Fellowship Hall

The **Challenger** is biweekly, with the next publication on Oct. 26! FCC Ministry News is sent by email every Tuesday.

Christian Women's Fellowship

Group Meetings will be as follows: **Group 2** will meet on Wednesday, October 12th, at 12:00 noon in Room 405. **Group 1** will meet on Monday, October 17th, at 1:00 pm at Robbie Walker's home, 1535 Mesquite.

College Bible Study - Sundays right after church: Join Brooke and fellow students on Sundays right after church starting on October 23rd for fellowship and a delicious meal at a different restaurant each week. For more information follow the **FCC Wichita Falls College Ministry** on Instagram (@fccwf_college).

Pantry Sunday for Interfaith Outreach Services: The **October** items are **Spaghetti Sauce** and **Cans of beans** (any kind but NOT green beans).

The **November** items will be **Rice and Dried Beans** (1 or 2 pound bags).

Interfaith is in need of regular size paper grocery sacks. If you have any to spare, please drop them off in the large box on the porch by the Chapel entrance.

You can continue to help keep the pantry shelves filled by: Donating the monthly items or any type of food items directly anytime into the large box on the porch by the Chapel entrance. To support Interfaith with a financial gift, you may mail your donation to Interfaith (1101 11th St., Wichita Falls, TX 76301), or donate on their website.

New Testament in a Year: Our next gathering to discuss the makeup of the New Testament and what we're reading will take place on Sunday, October 23rd, at 6:00 pm, in the Fellowship Hall and via Zoom.

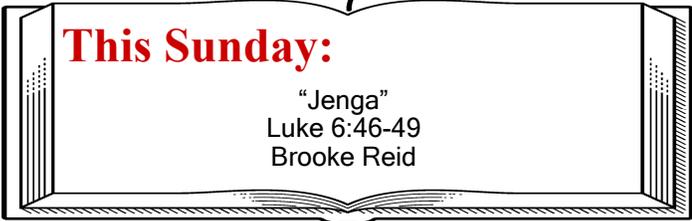
Member News:

♥**Hospitalized:** at URHCS is Peggy Fitts. Released and back home are Shirley Craft, Robert Hernandez & Jo Ella Rice.



Stretch Class

Wednesdays | 1:00 pm | Parlor
with Cindy Hernandez
There is no charge for this class.



This Sunday:

“Jenga”
 Luke 6:46-49
 Brooke Reid

OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday, October 16, 2022

8:40 Worship (Chapel)
 9:30 Sunday School / Journey Through Scripture (Parlor)
 10:45 Worship (Sanctuary or Join the Livestream on YouTube or Facebook.com/FCCWF)

3:45 Chancel Ringers (High School-Adults) (Stratten Hall)
 5:00 Young Disciples Choir (Grades K-5) (Stratten Hall)
 5:00 Youth Activities (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)
 5:30 Parenting the Love & Logic Way (Rm 310)
 6:00 Young Disciples (Grades K-5) (Rm 402/405)

Monday, October 17, 2022

7:30-6:00 Children Come First “CCF” (M-F)
 9:00-12:00 Young Ages Preschool “YAS” (M-F)
 9:00 CCF Chapel (Chapel)
 1:00 CWF Group 1 Meeting (Robbie Walker’s home, 1535 Mesquite)
 5:30 VBS/Parents Night Out Volunteers Meeting (Rm 405)
 6:00 Leadership Development Committee Meeting (Rm 310)
 7:30 Boy Scouts Troop 15 (Fellowship Hall)

Tuesday, October 18, 2022

9:30 FCC Staff Meeting / Worship Planning (Rm 310)
 12:00 Evangelism Ministry Meeting (Rm 310)
 6:00 Faith Formation Ministry Meeting (Parlor)
 6:00 Stewardship Ministry Meeting (Rm 310)
 6:30 Common Ground Recovery Ministries “CGRM” Support Groups
 7:00 Worship Ministry Meeting (Rm 200)

Wednesday, October 19, 2022

7:00 Elders’ Breakfast (Rm 405)
 9:00 CCF Spanish (Rm 300)
 10:15 Sheri Sutton’s Bible Study Group (Rm 310)
 1:00 Stretch Class (Parlor)
 5:30 Brown Bag Fellowship (Fellowship Hall)
 6:00 Neighborhood Worship Service (Fellowship Hall)
 6:00 First Kidz (PreK-5th Grade) Rm 402/405
 6:00 Youth to “Field of Faith” Community Youth Event (Grades 6-12) (Memorial Stadium)

7:00 Chancel Choir (Grades 9–Adults) (Stratten Hall)

Thursday, October 20, 2022

9:45-3:30 Fall Bible Study Retreat (Camp Chaparral)

Friday, October 21, 2022

9:00 CCF Music (Rm 300)
 5:30-8:30 Food Truck Party Greatest Hits—Parents Night Out

Sunday, October 23, 2022

8:40 Worship (Chapel)
 9:30 Sunday School / Journey Through Scripture (Parlor)
 10:45 Worship (Sanctuary or Join the Livestream on YouTube or Facebook.com/FCCWF)

12:00 College Bible Study (TBD)
 3:45 Chancel Ringers (High School-Adults) (Stratten Hall)
 5:00 Young Disciples Choir (Grades K-5) (Stratten Hall)
 5:00 Youth Activities (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)
 5:30 Parenting the Love & Logic Way (Rm 310)
 6:00 Young Disciples (Grades K-5) (Rm 402/405)
 6:00 New Testament Bible Study (Fellowship Hall)

Monday, October 24, 2022

7:30-6:00 Children Come First “CCF” (M-F)
 9:00-12:00 Young Ages Preschool “YAS” (M-F)
 9:00 CCF Chapel (Chapel)
 6:00 Leadership Development Committee Meeting (Rm 310)
 7:30 Boy Scouts Troop 15 (Fellowship Hall)

Tuesday, October 25, 2022

9:30 FCC Staff Meeting / Worship Planning (Rm 310)
 10:00 YAS Music (Fellowship Hall)
 6:00 Executive Council Meeting (Rm 310)
 6:30 Common Ground Recovery Ministries “CGRM” Support Groups

Wednesday, October 26, 2022

7:00 Elders’ Breakfast (Rm 405)
 9:00 CCF Spanish (Rm 300)
 10:15 Sheri Sutton’s Bible Study Group (Rm 310)
 1:00 Stretch Class (Parlor)
 5:30 Brown Bag Fellowship (Fellowship Hall)
 6:00 Neighborhood Worship Service (Fellowship Hall)
 6:00 First Kidz (PreK-5th Grade) (Rm 402/405)
 7:00 Youth Activities (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)
 7:00 Chancel Choir (Grades 9–Adults) (Stratten Hall)

Friday, October 28, 2022

9:00 CCF Trick-or-Treating in the Building
 5:30 MSU Mustang Meal (Fellowship Hall)

SERVING SUNDAY ELDERS

10/16: David Collins, Scot Hafley; Larry Spradley, Presiding
 10/23: Richard Phillips, Bill Jennings; Brooke Reid, Presiding

OCTOBER DIACONATE SERVERS

Maggy Anderson, Marc Cannedy, Leann Elder, Julia Ward, Debi & Larry Ballard, Linda Gipson, Bob Hayes, LyDora Martin, Nancy Smith, Hailey Wineinger

DIACONATE SCHEDULED FOR COMMUNION PREPARATION

10/16: Debi & Larry Ballard 10/23: Maggy Anderson & LyDora Martin

DIACONATE SCHEDULED FOR COMMUNION VISITATION

10/16: Debi Ballard, Larry Ballard, Stacey Lingbeek
 10/23: Linda Gipson, Bob Hayes, Julia Ward

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
Brooke Reid, Director of Youth & Young Adults			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
Ashli Fischer, Director of Children Come First			687-2231
Alisa Gardner, Director of Young Ages School			692-3640
Elizabeth Ivey, Common Ground Recovery Ministries			337-1712
Susan Marrs, Executive Secretary		Tina Williams, Financial Secretary	
Karen Watson, Administrative Assistant		Debbie Watson, Organist	
Tim Williamson, Director of Digital Media			

FOR THE RECORD . . .

CGRM: (Tues., Oct. 4)	15	
Neighborhood (Wed., Oct. 5)	31	
Sunday School (Sun. Oct. 9)	78	
Worship (Oct. 9): 8:40am Worship Service	37	
10:45am Worship Service	215	
Total Worship	283	
Sunday Receipts Needed Per Week		\$21,040.06
Sunday Receipts for 10/9/22		\$11,852.00
Through Sept. 26: Income \$690,607.70		Expenses \$842,559.63

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