

Thanksgiving Baskets



If you would like to help deliver the Thanksgiving Baskets this Saturday, November 19, you MUST call the church office, or email Karen, by 12:00 pm Thursday (November 17) to sign

up - so that we will know how many routes to make. It's best to deliver in pairs, so if you don't have a partner, we will provide one for you.

If you have signed up to deliver the Baskets, please gather in the East parking lot at 9:45 am on Saturday, November 19. You can remain in your car as we line the cars up and wait for everyone to gather for our 10:00 am blessing and send off. Volunteers will load the Thanksgiving Baskets and hand the routes to you - in your car. In the short time it takes to deliver the baskets to local families, you will be richly blessed.

Join Us for a Fellowship Lunch

Join your church family, as well as our invited guests - the International Students from MSU - for a Fellowship Lunch this Sunday, November 20, at 12:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall.

Please let us know you are coming by completing an RSVP online at our website or by calling the church office (940.692.2282).

Fain Sock Tree

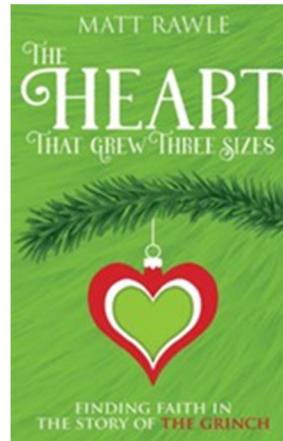


Now that the weather has turned into more like Fall, it's time to be thinking about gathering socks, scarves, hats, and gloves for the children at Fain School. The Christmas tree will be put up in the church office the week of Thanksgiving, and we need to remember to "decorate" the tree with these items. The kids get out a little earlier this year for Christmas break, so we will need to deliver these items to Fain around the 12th or 13th of December.

So, as you begin to do your Christmas shopping, remember to pick up some hats, scarves, gloves, and socks for the children at Fain School. Our congregation always comes through to help these children. They get so excited when the tree is put up at Fain and decorated with all of these items.

2022 Advent Bible Study *The Heart That Grew Three Sizes*

by Matt Rawle



Rediscover the gift of Advent that comes without packages, ribbons, and bows. We don't know why the Grinch hated Christmas. We just know he did. In *The Heart That Grew Three Sizes*, Matt Rawle explores the faith themes in this Christmas classic, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*, including how did the Grinch's heart grow three sizes come Christmas morning? How did Christmas save the Grinch? Could it be that the very thing we think we hate is the one thing that changes our lives? In this Advent study, we will look at a familiar

classic through the lens of faith and see how Christ speaks to us through our culture.

Join Sheri Sutton for this 4-week study beginning November 30. There will be two in-person options for this study: either Wednesday mornings at 10:30 am or Wednesday evenings at 5:30 pm. Both sessions will meet in Room 310. A Zoom option will be offered at both times as well with the sign-in information available before the first session.

To facilitate our discussions, there will be a 10-minute video presentation each session. Please call the church office at (940) 692-2282 to register. Books are available in the church office for \$15.00 each. **Read the Introduction, A Quick Refresher, and Chapter 1 before the first session.**

Night in Bethlehem



Join us Sunday, December 11 from 5:30-7:00 pm for "A Night In Bethlehem"! During this 2-hour Christmas program, families wander through the bustling Bethlehem marketplace and discover what life was like when Jesus was born.

Unlike your typical "living Nativity," everyone will create unique keepsakes as they interact with local shopkeepers

who share the Christmas story.

If you would like to volunteer to help in a station or as a greeter, please contact Claire Baer or call the church office at 940-692-2282.

Make Your Mark

Dr. Mark R. Bender
Senior Minister



Why Join The Church? - Part 2

In Part 1, I began addressing a question that I've heard asked numerous times in recent weeks: *Why join the church?* And what I provided was a sociological description of the culture of "joining" in the 2020s as well as a couple definitions of church membership. However, as my eleventh grade English teacher would say, you've provided a lot of background (the "what"). But where is the "so what?"

A former colleague of mine recently shared how someone had posted on their neighborhood social media site that they were looking for a church. They confessed that they hadn't been in a long time but felt like they needed to get back to one. So, they were looking for recommendations, and they set two parameters for their search. They wanted to go to a church: 1) with good people; and 2) that wasn't "too demanding."

My friend said he didn't respond. He belongs to a church he likes and would have gladly recommended it, but said he couldn't get past the parameters of this neighbor's search. If the boxes to check in



order to attend are "good people" and "not demanding," he said, his church wouldn't be a good fit. As he noted, the people at every church he has ever served were "good" until they weren't. That's because every church was made up of people, and people are jumble of contradictions. They could be kind and good, and just as mean as a snake. They could be thoughtful and reasonable as well as ignorant and unteachable. They could be noble and sacrificial, and petty and selfish.

Likewise, he said, the "not demanding" parameter would be a challenge. He said he was tempted to post a quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship*: "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die." Or a quote from C.S. Lewis: "I didn't go to religion to make me happy. I always knew a bottle of Port would do that. If you want a religion to make you feel really comfortable, I certainly don't recommend Christianity." My former colleague didn't post either but he acknowledged that lots of churches, including the ones he's pastored, are often guilty of "bait and switch." We offer "fun" and "friendship" when all we've really got is a Savior who deals with wounded and wounding lives, and a Lord who intends to change us fundamentally and irrevocably.

Over time, well-meaning churches have left people confused. They get disillusioned when the new church shine and smell wears off - when not everyone is nice to you, when they don't sing all your favorite hymns, when the preacher, who's never preached anything you disagree with, suddenly ruffles your feathers. The people aren't nice anymore and the demands are growing. This has led increasing numbers of people to attempt spirituality on their own, without the benefit of contact with any kind of organized religion (sometimes referred to as "spiritual but not religious"). They read books, talk to friends, listen to music, and take classes at colleges and universities. They pursue their spiritual interests in largely private and informal sorts of ways. And they often see the church as something that gets in the way of their spiritual journey rather than as something that actually helps to support and encourage it. If we're honest with ourselves then we'll have to admit that there's some truth in this criticism.

E. Stanley Jones, a Methodist missionary to India for more than 50 years, said that the first time he went forward at church seeking the Kingdom of God, a relationship with Jesus Christ, and the assurance of life both abundant and eternal, what he was offered instead was church membership. Southern Baptist author and preacher Calvin Miller lamented the same issue. He said that too often he's seen people come to church because they're spiritually starving and all they're given is a chance to chair a committee or to play second base on the church league softball team.

In the same *Christianity Today* article that I quoted in Part 1, Ben Patterson also addressed this reality:

It is true that a name on a membership roll makes for nothing in itself. But how seriously can we take a person who says he wants to be part of the church but doesn't want to sign his name publicly? It is true the organized church is filled with foibles. But are those who shun a commitment free of foibles? To paraphrase a line from Chesterton, one gets the impression they believe in the One Holy, Apostolic, and Absolutely Pure Church of Christ, of which they regret to say they are the only members. Yes, the church is blemished. But Christ still loves her, says Paul, not because she is without blemish but that he might one day present her so. He sees the church, warts and all, and knows he must first love that which he would change. The church on the corner is not the church it should be, but it is the church that will one day be all God has called it to be. To go public and join it is the first step in loving it as Jesus does.

As Jones, Miller, and Patterson, along with many others, acknowledge, the church sometimes gets in its own way. And it would be easy to think that the solution to not getting "burned" by the church is to not join one. But, instead, what belonging to the church does is remind us that, despite our shortcomings, God still loves us. And, what belonging to the church does is convert us to reality. Here's how Bonhoeffer described it in his book, *Life Together*.

Innumerable times a whole Christian community has broken down because it had sprung from a wish dream. The serious Christian, set down for the first time in a Christian community, is likely to bring with him a very definite idea of what Christian life together should be and to try to realize it. But God's grace speedily shatters such dreams. Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves.

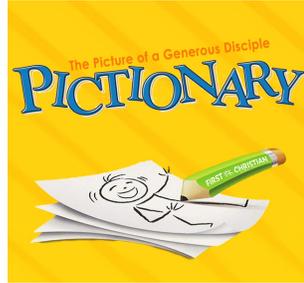
By sheer grace, God will not permit us to live even for a brief period in a dream world. He does not abandon us to those rapturous experiences and lofty moods that come over us like a dream. God is not a God of emotions but the God of truth. Only that fellowship which faces such disillusionment, with all its unhappy and ugly aspects, begins to be what it should be in God's sight, begins to grasp in faith the promise that is given to it. The sooner this shock of disillusionment comes to an individual and to a community the better for both.

So, if belonging to a church gives us a better dose of reality - one that reflects, but also speaks a word of hope to the challenges and heartaches of real life - then what does the church do to nurture the spiritual impulses people find in themselves, including the felt need to "get back to a church..."? That's what we'll address in Part 3.

Mark

FCC MINISTRY NEWS AND CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

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



Wednesdays at
The Neighborhood
6:00 pm | Fellowship Hall

Save the Date!



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

Thanksgiving Special Offering — November 20

The Thanksgiving Special Offering benefits the Colleges, Universities, Seminaries, and Divinity Houses affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). It supports everything from scholarships, to religious life offices, to faculty growth and development. By giving to the Thanksgiving Offering you are helping our institutions invest in students as they prepare themselves to become leaders. Please give generously to this offering which will be received on November 20. Your gift makes a difference in the lives of our students and it makes a difference in the world.

Manners Matter



Manners Matter is an etiquette program for 5th and 6th graders taught by the fun and energetic Dee King. During this program students will learn simple etiquette like handshakes, introductions, small talk, table manners, and social media etiquette.

Manners Matter will take place on Thursday evenings beginning January 12 and

concluding on February 16 from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm. Cost is \$100 per student. Registration for FCC church members will open on November 21 and General Registration will open November 28. You will find the online registration on the First Christian Church website in the coming weeks.

Christmas Mission Market

Do you have someone who is difficult to shop for? Someone who seems to have everything already? Why not give them the gift of transformed lives.

On Sunday, December 11, at 9:30 am, we will be holding our second annual Christmas Mission Market in the Fellowship Hall. That morning, you will have the opportunity to make donations to an outreach partner of First Christian Church in honor of your loved one. And while you do, your donations will go to support the work of these organizations in the coming year.

Mark your calendars for the Christmas Mission Market on December 11 and the opportunity to make a difference in our community, region, and world.

The **Challenger** is biweekly, with the next publication on Nov. 30! FCC Ministry News is sent by email every Tuesday.

From the Mailbox. . .

Dear Lee Bybee, Jane Long & the First Christian Church, Your acts of kindness do not go unnoticed. Year after year, your amazing ministry provides warmth to many precious children.

Thank you so much for the hours and money you put into this sweet service.

On behalf of Ben Franklin Elementary, thank you for your love & generous spirits.

Sincerely,
Allison Crittenden

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, November 20th, at 6:00 pm, in the Fellowship Hall and via Zoom.

College Bible Study – Sundays right after church: Join Brooke and fellow students on Sundays right after church for fellowship and a delicious meal at a different restaurant each week. The next meeting will be November 27th at Rapid Fire Pizza. For more information follow the **FCC Wichita Falls College Ministry** on Instagram (@fccwf_college).

Pantry Sunday for Interfaith Outreach Services: The **November** items are **Rice and Dried Beans** (1 or 2 pound bags).

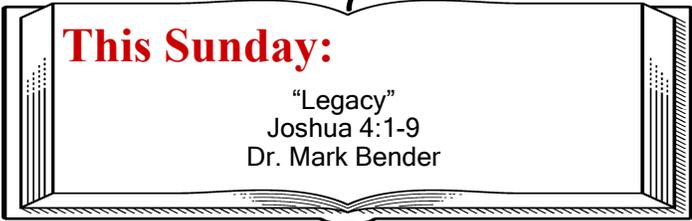
The **December** items will be **tuna and toilet tissue**.

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.

Member News:

♥**Hospitalized:** at URHCS is Sam Maynor; at Kell West is Clara Mills. Released and back home are Alice Gordon, Scot Hafley, Sandra Ketchum, Tres Ward, and Phil Willis.



**SERVING SUNDAY
ELDERS**

11/20: Richard Phillips, Jerry Johnson; Bill Jennings, Presiding
11/27: Jerry Johnson, Kim Ballard; Scot Hafley, Presiding

NOVEMBER DIACONATE SERVERS
Jodi Bender, Vicki Kunkle, Terry Burross, Lee Bybee, Claudine Farrell, Ann Kable, Sherry Martin, Curtis Sullivan, Christopher McKenzie, Bentley Ware.

DIACONATE SCHEDULED FOR COMMUNION PREPARATION
11/20: Ann Kable & Curtis Sullivan 11/27: Sherry Martin & Christopher McKenzie
DIACONATE SCHEDULED FOR COMMUNION VISITATION
11/27: Bentley Ware, Lee Bybee, Terry Burross

OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday, November 20, 2022 THANKSGIVING SPECIAL OFFERING / STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN COMMITMENT SUNDAY

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 Fellowship Lunch (Fellowship Hall)
NO College Bible Study
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)
6:00 Young Disciples (Grades K-5) (Rm 402/405)
6:00 New Testament Bible Study (Fellowship Hall & Zoom)

Monday, November 21, 2022

7:30-6:00 Children Come First "CCF" (M-W)
Young Ages Preschool "YAS" Closed This Week
9:00 CCF Chapel (Chapel)
10:00 CWF Service Day Preparing the Wreaths (Rm 310)
1:00 CWF Group 1 Lunch & Meeting (Rm 310)
6:00 Leadership Development Committee Meeting (Rm 310)
6:00 CCF Health & Safety Training (Rm 306)
7:30 Boy Scouts Troop 15 (Fellowship Hall)

Tuesday, November 22, 2022

9:30 FCC Staff Meeting / Worship Planning (Rm 310)
6:30 Common Ground Recovery Ministries "CGRM" Support Groups

Wednesday, November 23, 2022

7:00 Elders' Breakfast (Rm 405)
9:00 CCF Spanish (Rm 300)
NO Stretch Class (Parlor)
NO Wednesday Evening Activities

Thursday, November 24, 2022 THANKSGIVING DAY

Church Building, Offices & All Programs Closed

Friday, November 25, 2022

Church Building, Offices & All Programs Closed

Sunday, November 27, 2022 FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT /

HANGING OF THE GREENS

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 (Rapid Fire Pizza)
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)
6:00 Young Disciples (Grades K-5) (Rm 402/405)

Monday, November 28, 2022

MANNERS MATTERS REGISTRATION BEGINS
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, November 29, 2022

9:30 FCC Staff Meeting / Worship Planning (Rm 310)
6:00 Executive Council Meeting (Rm 310)
6:30 Common Ground Recovery Ministries "CGRM" Support Groups

Wednesday, November 30, 2022

7:00 Elders' Breakfast (Rm 405)
9:00 CCF Spanish (Rm 300)
10:15 Sheri Sutton's Advent Bible Study (Rm 310)
1:00 Stretch Class (Parlor)
5:30 Sheri Sutton's Advent Bible Study (Rm 310)
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)

Thursday, December 1, 2022

10:00 YAS Chapel (Chapel)

Friday, December 2, 2022

9:00 CCF Music (Rm 300)
10:00 YAS Chapel (Chapel)

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., Nov. 8)	12	
Neighborhood (Wed., Nov. 9)	22	
Sunday School (Sun. Nov. 13)	82	
Worship (Nov. 13): 8:40am Worship Service	34	
10:45am Worship Service	217	
Total Worship	273	
Sunday Receipts Needed Per Week		\$21,040.06
Sunday Receipts for 11/13/22		\$17,273.00
Through Nov. 14: Income \$812,669.37		Expenses \$938,782.29

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FIRST CHRISTIAN CHALLENGER
WICHITA FALLS, TEXAS
3701 Taft Boulevard | Wichita Falls TX 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.