

Board Meeting



Members of the *2023* First Christian Church Board are encouraged to be present for a brief Board Meeting on Sunday, January 28, at 11:45 am in the Sanctuary. At this meeting, the Leadership Development Committee will present the slate of nominees for leadership positions and the Stewardship and Finance Ministry will present the 2024 budget.

Congregational Meeting



Mark your calendars for Sunday, February 4, 2024, at 11:45 am (following the 10:45 am worship service) for the annual Congregational Meeting. At this brief meeting, members of the congregation will approve leadership positions (Elders, Diaconate, Trustee, Endowment Trustee, etc.) and the 2024 operating budget.

You Ought to Be in Pictures...!



We need you for the new 2024 church directory! Registration has begun to start scheduling your family's photo time between February 9-11, 2024. (An additional make-up date will be available for those unable to schedule that week).

You can choose your time online at: firstchristianwf.com/directory. Additionally, members of the Membership ministry will be available in the Narthex before and after worship the next few weeks to help you register. So gather the family and schedule your photo time!

Fat Tuesday Pancake Dinner



In 600 AD, Pope Gregory prohibited Christians from eating all forms of meat and animal products, including dairy, during the 40 days of Lent. Christians abided by the rule and made pancakes on Shrove (Fat) Tuesday in order to use up their butter, milk, and eggs before Ash Wednesday. On Tuesday, February 13 - the day before Ash Wednesday - you're invited to bring the whole family and stop by the Fellowship Hall between 5:00 - 7:00 pm for pancakes, sausage, bacon, juice, milk, and a whole lot of fun!

Ash Wednesday



Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the liturgical season of Lent. Come begin the 40 day journey to Easter by observing this day set aside to return to the Lord and to make a new beginning in your faith as you recall your own mortality and God's grace. Join in worship at 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall.

Pastor's Class 2024



It is time to start thinking about if your child is ready to participate in Pastor's Class!

Pastor's class is a 6-week study, beginning February 18, for children 3rd-5th grade who desire to profess their faith and make a commitment to be a devoted follower of Christ through the sacrament of Baptism. During these 6 sessions, your child will learn

along peers and seasoned congregation members the foundations of our faith and what it means to be a follower and disciple of Jesus Christ.

If your student is interested in participating please contact Claire Baer.

Save the Date

CCSW Regional Assembly 2024

October 25-26, 2024

First Christian Church – Amarillo TX
Theme: Faithful Steps Forward (2 Cor. 4:7-12)

Keynote Speaker: Rev. Terri Hord Owens
General Minister & President of the
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
in the United States and Canada

Make Your Mark

Dr. Mark R. Bender
Senior Minister



Outward-Focused Hospitality

Last Sunday in worship, our scripture focused on the calling of the disciples in the Gospel of John. As I noted, John's narratives about the disciples following Jesus vary from those found in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In John, most of these new followers of Jesus had been followers of John the Baptist. That seemed to be the case for Andrew, who then invited his brother Simon to join him in following Jesus (John 1:40-42).

But, I wanted to begin this column by taking us to Matthew's version of the calling of Andrew and Peter:

As Jesus walked alongside the Galilee Sea, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, throwing nets into the sea, because they were fishermen. "Come, follow, me," he said, "and I show you how to fish for people." (Matthew 4:18-19)

Imagine Jesus saying, "You've been fishing for fish your whole lives. You are pretty good fisherman, and now I need you. Follow me, join me in this world-changing, status-quo-breaking movement, and I'll make you fish for people." This was quite the call...and quite the challenge for those first disciples. They had to choose to leave behind much of what they knew to experience something new. Jesus was starting a movement...and we are invited to be a part of that movement today. It's a movement that awakens us and others to a new reality - one that sees the world through the eyes of Jesus.

One of the ways (but not the only way!) that this movement continues today is in the way the church relentlessly continues to be fishers of people through our collective ministry. But the challenge facing churches like ours is that it is really easy to get comfortable. It's really easy to become attached to the church as we know it. In some churches, this is reflected in statements like: "I love how we know nearly everyone's name." "We know when we come to worship or to another event that I'll get to catch up with friends." "We love the close connection we have with each other."

Now, there is nothing wrong with these statements. Church should be a place where people come to know and be known. It should be a community of believers on a faith journey together. Church ought to deepen connections between each other and Jesus Christ. But, without realizing it, we can easily move from emphasizing connection to emphasizing the comfort and concerns of insiders...unintentionally losing concern for those outside. It's not that churches don't want to reach new people. It's just that churches can become comfortable without realizing that the "comfort" of those on the inside begins to build barriers that inadvertently keep outsiders out.

I'm grateful that in the five-plus years that I've been a part of our church, I've seen you welcome others and intentionally engage with those who are making their way to First Christian Church for the first time. And I haven't heard anyone suggest that we are at the perfect size - that we need to stop growing. Yet, the switch from an outward-focus to an inward-focus can happen in a snap. And, if that happens, a church focused on itself can begin to lose its potential in the wider community.

That's why our Evangelism Ministry is spending much of 2024 focused on our ministry of hospitality. This focus starts

with the idea that this Sunday could be the first Sunday for someone. Maybe it's that young woman who hasn't been to church after going away to college. Maybe she'll walk through our doors this week. Or perhaps it's a man who lost his wife of 30 years to cancer and he's seeking community and direction. Maybe he'll walk through our doors this Sunday. No matter who it is, we want to be ready. And while that requires some systems and some volunteers focused on that welcome, this kind of hospitality is everyone's job.

All of us have had an experience of walking into a business, a restaurant, or a hotel, and within seconds, formed an opinion about the place. Maybe it was the smell or the lack of cleanliness that caused you to immediately turn around and walk out. Or perhaps it was a long line or the lack of customer service that turned you off. Whatever it was, something in your first impression said "I don't feel comfortable here and I'm not going to stay." But all of us have also walked into a retail store with no intention of shopping, but were drawn in by an interesting display, or the welcome of a sales associate. We quickly found ourselves not wanting to leave.

Yvonne Gentile, the director of Hospitality and Connections at Church of the Resurrection in Kansas City, notes that the church creates this same effect. The hospitality we demonstrate matters. She suggests that "our hospitality can be a bridge that draws people in and encourages them to take a next step of faith, or it can be the barrier where individuals quickly decide to disengage."

While there are many components to getting hospitality right, Gentile contends that our welcome and hospitality as a church should represent Jesus Christ, and that means going above and beyond, stretching beyond our own comforts. To that end, she offers some simple ideas that everyone of us can practice:

The 3-minute rule. Each person should be encouraged to spend just three minutes before and after a worship service or event greeting those they do not know. Even in a friendly congregation, the gravitational pull is to visit with those we know. However, the result is that when guests come,

their experience too often is that no one speaks to them. So the 3-minute rule reminds us to be intentional about greeting and getting to know others we don't know.

The 10-foot rule. Each person in the congregation should be attentive to the people and environment within ten feet of them. Guests do not want to be overwhelmed with welcome, so there must be a balance between great hospitality and having an entire congregation converge on someone new. The 10-foot rule ensures those in closest proximity take responsibility for introducing themselves and engaging guests with great hospitality. In addition to being responsible for noticing guests within ten feet, each congregant is responsible for the environment by taking care of anything that may need to be addressed (picking up trash, straightening hymnals and pew cards, and other aspects of the environment that contribute to a good, welcoming first impression.

So, as 2024 unfolds, let me challenge you to take on these two simple, yet important practices. Intentionally spend three minutes focusing on others before you catch up with your friends. Be cognizant of those within 10 feet of you and the environment around you. When we do just these two small steps, we build upon the great things already happening here... and the great movement Jesus set in motion for us, for them, and for the world.

Mark



FCC MINISTRY NEWS AND CALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

2024 Stewardship Update

As we step into 2024, we are so thankful for the 115 individuals and families that have committed \$861,937.00 with their Estimates of Giving for 2024. These commitments serve as a tool to help guide and shape our ministries to *shepherd every person to encounter the abundant peace of Christ*.

Given the excitement for what God has in store for us in 2024, it's not too late for you to add your "tool" to the "toolbox" by making an Estimate of Giving for 2024. There are several options that make it easy for you to give such as ACH withdrawals, online giving, and more. Learn more by contacting Tina Williams, our Financial Secretary, at 940-692-2282 or by email at tina@firstchristianwf.com. She'll be happy to explain those options to you.

Welcome New Members!



It was a joy to welcome Ken & Pat Herman into our membership on Sunday, December 31st, during the 10:45 worship service. Their contact information is 2702 Lansing Blvd, 76309, Ken's cell: 443-735-2150, Pat's cell: 410-603-2135. Welcome, Ken & Pat!



It was a pleasure to welcome Terry Caves, husband of member, Teresa Caves, into our membership on Sunday, January 7th, during the 8:40 worship service. Terry's contact information is 1904 Barna Rd, 76302. Welcome, Terry!



It was a delight to welcome Stephen Henry into our membership on Sunday, January 14th, during the 10:45 worship service. Stephen's contact information is 4584 Mistletoe Dr, 76310, 940-594-1349. Welcome, Stephen!

Christian Women's Fellowship Group Meetings



The January CWF Group Meetings will be as follows: **Group 2** will meet on Wednesday, January 17th, at 12:00 noon in Room 405. **Group 1** will meet on Monday, January 22nd, at 12:00 noon for a luncheon at Cindy Collins' home, 4821 Dickens.

Sanctuary Flowers



There are open dates for Sanctuary flower donations! If you would like flowers displayed in the Sanctuary worship service in honor or in memory of a loved one or group, please contact Sherry Tucker at 940-696-2490.



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



Wednesdays at
The Neighborhood
6:00 pm | Fellowship Hall

The **Challenger** is biweekly, with the next publication on Jan. 31! FCC Ministry News is sent by email every Tuesday.

Member News:

♥**Hospitalized:** at URHCS is Shirley Craft & Larry Spradley; at Encompass Rehab-Wichita Falls is Barnett "Guy" McNeely; at Encompass Rehab-Arlington TX is Curtis Dolberry; released to his daughter's home for rehab in Corsicana TX is David Wyatt.

♥Our sympathies are extended to Claire Baer and family on learning of the death of her father, Lamar Baer, on December 29th. Services were held on January 12th.

♥Our condolences are extended to Ricky Scales and family on learning of the death of his mother, Barbara Scales, on December 31st. Services were held on January 3rd.

♥We extend our sympathies to James Poole and family on learning of the death of his wife, Sheila Poole, on January 4th. Services were held on January 9th.

♥Congratulations to Leigh Kidwell & Hal Ray, who were married on January 6th in the Chapel by Dr. Bender. Leigh is the mother of Carla Moran and grandmother of Maris Moran.

♥Congratulations to MSU Chancel Choir members Russell McCabe & Willow Webb on the birth of their daughter, Freya Diane McCabe, on January 13th. Freya Diane weighed 7 lbs. 12 oz. and was 20 1/2 inches long.

Interfaith Outreach Services Pantry Sunday

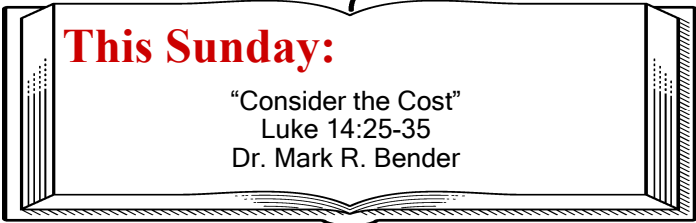


The **January** items will be canned potatoes, canned vegetables (any kind of single vegetable or mixed vegetables), pasta & pasta sauce. **Interfaith is always in need of regular size paper grocery sacks.** You may drop off any of the monthly requested items or paper sacks at any time in the large box on the porch by the Chapel entrance.

If you would like 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.



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



This Sunday:

“Consider the Cost”
Luke 14:25-35
Dr. Mark R. Bender

OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday, January 21, 2024

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 Elder & Diaconate Training (Fellowship Hall)
3:00 Pickleball (Gym)
3:45 Chancel Ringers (High School-Adults) (Stratten Hall)
5:00 Young Disciples Choir (Grades K-5) (Stratten Hall)
5:00 Youth Fellowship (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)
5:45 Young Disciples (Grades K-5) (Rm 402/405)

Monday, January 22, 2024

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)
12:00 Christian Women’s Fellowship Group 1 Meeting (4821 Dickens)
4:00 College Bible Study (Rm 305)
7:30 Boy Scout Troop 15 (Fellowship Hall)

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

9:30 FCC Staff Mtg/Worship Planning (Rm 310)
10:00 YAS Music (Rm 300)
6:00 Executive Council Meeting (Rm 310)
6:30 Common Ground Recovery Ministries Groups (Rms 304, 306, 308)

Wednesday, January 24, 2024

7:00 Elders’ Breakfast (Rm 405)
9:00 CCF Spanish (Rm 300)
10:00 YAS Music (Rm 300)
1:00 Stretch Class (Parlor)
5:30 The Neighborhood Brown Bag Fellowship (Fellowship Hall)
6:00 The Neighborhood Worship Service (Fellowship Hall)
6:00 First Kidz (Pre-K-5) (Rm 402)
7:00 Youth Fellowship (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)
7:00 Chancel Choir Rehearsal (High School-Adults) (Stratten Hall)

Thursday, January 25, 2024

6:30 Manners Matter (Fellowship Hall)
Friday, January 26, 2024
9:00 CCF Music (Rm 300)
12:15 CCF Parent Advisory Committee Meeting (Rm 310)
JYF Midwinter Camp (Jan. 26-28) (Disciples Crossing-Athens TX)

Sunday, January 28, 2024

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)

11:45 2023 Church Board Meeting (Sanctuary)
12:15 Women of the Resurrection Rehearsal (Fellowship Hall)
3:00 Pickleball (Gym)
3:45 Chancel Ringers (High School-Adults) (Stratten Hall)
5:00 Young Disciples Choir (Grades K-5) (Stratten Hall)
5:00 Youth Fellowship (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)
5:45 Young Disciples (Grades K-5) (Rm 402/405)

Monday, January 29, 2024

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)
4:00 College Bible Study (Rm 305)
7:30 Boy Scout Troop 15 (Fellowship Hall)

Tuesday, January 30, 2024

9:30 FCC Staff Mtg/Worship Planning (Rm 310)
10:00 YAS Music (Rm 300)
6:30 Common Ground Recovery Ministries Groups (Rms 304, 306, 308)

Wednesday, January 31, 2024

7:00 Elders’ Breakfast (Rm 405)
9:00 CCF Spanish (Rm 300)
10:00 YAS Music (Rm 300)
1:00 Stretch Class (Parlor)
5:30 The Neighborhood Brown Bag Fellowship (Fellowship Hall)
6:00 The Neighborhood Worship Service (Fellowship Hall)
6:00 First Kidz (Pre-K-5) (Rm 402)
7:00 Youth Fellowship (Grades 6-12) (Rm 403/Gym)
7:00 Chancel Choir Rehearsal (High School-Adults) (Stratten Hall)

Thursday, February 1, 2024

6:30 Manners Matter (Fellowship Hall)
9:00 YAS Chapel (Chapel)

Friday, February 2, 2024

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

**SERVING SUNDAY
ELDERS**

1/21: Emily Wilson, Kerry Roach; Linda C. Carr, Presiding
1/28: Sarah Cook, Dwight Ross III; John Cook, Presiding

JANUARY DIACONATE SERVERS

Caitlin Barker, Karen Burross, Jim & Karen LaValley, Sandra Ross, Debbie & Mark Turnbow, Twila Boydston, Michael Elyea Jr., Colleen James, Carla Moran, Dixie Williams, Ethan Earley

DIACONATE SCHEDULED FOR COMMUNION PREPARATION

1/21: Dixie Williams & Ethan Earley
1/28: Caitlin Barker & Karen Burross

DIACONATE SCHEDULED FOR COMMUNION VISITATION

1/21: Debbie Turnbow, Mark Turnbow, Colleen James
1/28: Dixie Williams, Sandra Ross, Carla Moran

THE CHURCH STAFF . . .

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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., Jan. 9) 4
Neighborhood (Wed., Jan. 10) 30
Sunday School (Sun. Jan. 14) 46
Worship (Jan. 14): 8:40am Worship Service 22
10:45am Worship Service 240
Total Worship 292

Sunday Receipts for 1/14/24 \$2,275.00
Through Jan. 15: Income \$54,294.07 Expenses \$84,793.58

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