

The CHRISTIAN





FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(Disciples of Christ)

Visitor

Join Us In Support of MCUM's Important Programs *No Contact MCUM Drive on Dec. 13 from 1:00 - 3:00 pm at FCC*

Our partners in ministry at Monroe County United Ministries (MCUM) have served our community for many years by meeting childcare and basic needs through their Compass Early Learning Center (childcare and preschool) and Self-Sufficiency Center that includes a food and supply pantry. MCUM began as local faith communities (including FCC) came together to meet the community's greatest needs. It has grown over the years, playing a vital role for low-income families in Monroe County.

The pandemic has created additional stress on community service organizations. No doubt you've seen the news stories showing long lines at food pantries. MCUM is experiencing shortages at their pantry as well as a financial need to keep the childcare and preschool funded.

So, join us for a special Advent MCUM Food & Supply Drive. FCC will be collecting donations of non-perishable food, personal hygiene products and cleaning supplies during the Advent season. **Bring donations to FCC on Sunday, December 13 for a special drive-through event from 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm.** Simply drive through our alley (from Kirkwood Ave.) to drop off donations. As you drive through, you will be greeted by members of your FCC family and staff. Donations will be arranged around a very special crèche scene. If you'd like, you can park on the street and walk over to take a picture around the crèche with all of the donated items. Please wear a mask and remain socially distant if you choose to walk up to the crèche scene.

We will also have Christmas Eve taper candles for Members and friends to light on Christmas Eve. Please consider contributing to this important drive! FCC has supported MCUM since the very beginning. They really need our support now. Invite friends, family and neighbors to bring donations. All are welcome. Thank you!

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Also, you will find sprinkled throughout this issue pictures of some at-home Advent worship spaces submitted by members of your FCC family. Can you tell who sent the pictures?

Pastor's Pen

Even During the Night

The nights are getting longer—as if we need another reminder that we are experiencing an added layer of darkness during this season of Advent! The good news is that the Season of Advent gives us permission to acknowledge the darkness, to forego any forced and fake “holly jolly,” and to cry out “Come, Lord, Come!” As people of faith, we don’t have to sweep our pain, grief, and longings under the rug and pretend that they don’t exist. We can name them to God in our prayers of lamentation. And, as people of faith, we can also trust in God’s presence—even during the night.

That’s what John of the Cross (1542-1591) did during a dark period in his life. The poem below was written while he was imprisoned in a tiny and dark cell where (except when rarely permitted an oil lamp) he had to stand on a bench to read his prayer book by the light that came through a hole to the adjoining room. My prayer is that you, like John of the Cross, might place your trust in God’s presence, **even during the night.**

Even During the Night

Attributed to John of the Cross

*Surely I know the spring that swiftly flows
Even during the night.*

*That everlasting spring is deeply hidden,
But surely I know the place where it begins,
Even during the night.*

*I don't know its source, because it has none.
But I know that all beginnings come from this one,
Even during the night.*

*I do know that nothing can equal its beauty
And that from it both heaven and earth drink
Even during the night.*

*I know there is no limit to its depth
And that no one can wade across its breadth,
Even during the night.*

*Its brightness is never clouded over,
And I know that from it all light flows,
Even during the night.*

*I know its current is so forceful
That it floods the nations, heaven, and hell
Even during the night.*

*The current that is born of this stream,
I know, is powerful and strong
Even during the night.*

*The living stream that I so desire,
I see in the bread of life,
Even during the night.*

AMEN





SINGING THE STORY The Carols of Christmas

(A reworking of an article from 2017 for our special moment of 2020)

The Advent and Christmas season is perhaps the time when most of us actively participate in the activity of transmission of the *story* of our people through song. It is a time for carols, which are popular and traditional songs usually having the events of Christmas as their theme. This year our singing of carols will be likely be alone or in small groups – perhaps singing along with the virtual worship services or the Candlelight Christmas Eve service, or being accompanied by a wonderful YouTube rendition, or recording of your favorite carols, or perhaps playing it yourself on a keyboard or another instrument. Whatever the way you experience this traditional music, we hope it will bring you comfort, hope, and illumination in this unusual moment in the life of the world and the church. Here is some background that may lead you to a deeper understanding of this long heritage of carols for Christmas.

The term “carol” comes from the old French word “*carole*,” meaning a “round dance,” which perhaps indicates the far distant origins of such traditional songs. Carol singing at Christmas became popular in England during the mid-nineteenth century, but every culture has a type of popular song that might be categorized as *carol*. The First Noel” is an English carol and “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly” is a Polish carol, and “Silent Night” is a German carol. Medieval *caroles* tend to have memorable refrains that follow several verses of narrative.

A few of our most famous Christmas songs are not actually “carols” at all, but are narrative hymns (“It Came Upon a Midnight Clear” is one; as is “Hark, the Herald Angels Sing.”) “From Heaven on High” and “Wake, Awake the Watchmen Calls Us” are examples of German chorales. Spirituals from the African-American tradition enrich our season (“Go Tell It on the Mountain”, “Rise Up, Shepherd, and Follow,” and “Mary Had a Baby” come to mind). And of course there are many popular modern songs celebrating the sacred events of Christmas (“The Little Drummer Boy,” “Beautiful Star of Bethlehem,” “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day,” “Sweet Little Jesus Boy” are only a few.)

During this Advent and Christmas season, we hope you will allow the music of the season to enrich your life, singing at home alone or with family, teaching the children the carols of our heritage, and filling your rooms with the sound of recordings of this great and inspiring music.





In Our Prayers...

Prayers of Condolence

... for the family of Jan Parrott. Jan passed away December 3 at Bloomington Hospital (COVID). Cards and condolences can be sent to Joe at 543 Green Road, Bloomington, 47401.

... for the family of Pamela Walters (93), who passed away on November 20. Cards may be sent to her daughter Kris Linde at 3315 S. Oaklawn Cir., Bloomington, 47401.

... for the family of Judy Schmid, a lifelong FCC member who passed away November 27. Cards and notes of encouragement may be sent to her daughter Kathy Sheil (partner James Harris) at 104 E. Temperance St., Ellettsville, IN 47429.

Prayers for Healing

... for Julie Donham, who is a patient at University Hospital (Indianapolis) being treated for pancreatitis and a blood clot in her lungs. Mike reports that she is improving (hopefully, she will have been released by the time you read this article).

Prayers of Joy

... for Mark and Danielle Murry-Knowles, who announced that they are expecting a baby to be born in June. They are currently living in Minneapolis (near Danielle's parents) where they continue to work remotely as Disciples Global Mission Co-Workers in Lesotho. Their goal is to return to Lesotho in the fall of 2021. Cards may be sent to them c/o Hal and Suzanne Murry, 300 Red Wing Ave South, Unit 318, Red Wing, MN 55066.

Prayers and Best Wishes

... for Nancy Heimer, who is moving (next week) to Madison, Wisconsin, to live near her daughter Lucy. Notes may be sent to her c/o Lucy Heimer, 6322 Inner Drive, Madison, WI, 53705.

... for Mike and Sandy Rampley, who have very recently moved to the New Albany area to be near family. Notes can be sent to them at 4064 Viewcrest Loop, Floyds Knobs, IN 47119.



“When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.” Matthew 2:10

The work of the Christian Church in Indiana makes my heart rejoice! Your gifts inspire, support, and connect us to live out the Gospel call in Christ – through camps, assemblies, clergy support, retreats, trainings, enrichment, and connecting us to one another and our neighbors.

Christmas Eve at First Christian Church

Although it will be virtual, this year's Christmas Eve service will be our traditional service of lessons, carols, communion and candlelight. It will be accessible on our website and YouTube channel at 6:00 pm on Christmas Eve. Our choir and choral scholars lead our time of singing and offer special choral carols. Scott Cripe and Connie Myers will read the story of Jesus' birth. You will see images of our sanctuary decorated for the season. Pastor Bruce and I will serve at the Lord's Table and invite you to hold up your candles during the singing of Silent Night.

To prepare, please have a Christ Candle and a taper candle nearby. Also, please gather your communion elements so that we can share a holy meal together.



Advent at FCC will center around the Danish concept of Hygge (pronounced “hoo-ga”) that embraces the “art of coziness”. For many Danes, hygge is a lifestyle. It is being content, comforted in simple rituals like lighting a candle. It is a way to find moments to celebrate during a harsh or mundane time. This concept seems perfect for an Advent season that will be very different. Our Advent theme, “Ignite,” invites you to experience the season of Advent through the lighting of candles and settling in to what the Danes call “the duvet of darkness.”

December 13: Advent 3

Theme: *Ignite Joy*
Text: Luke 1:39-45
Advent Candle Lighting:
The Walsh Family

December 20: Advent 4

Theme: *Ignite Love*
Text: Luke 1:46b-55
Advent Candle Lighting:
The Jackson Family

December 24: Christmas Eve, 6:00 pm

Theme: Christ is Born!
Text: From Luke's Gospel
Traditional Service of Lessons, Carols,
Communion, and Candlelight.

Exciting FCC Staff Updates

New Staff Member



We welcome Ben Wesenberg as our Director of Online Worship. Ben is a junior at Indiana University pursuing a Bachelor of Science Degree in Audio Engineering and Sound Production at the Jacobs School of Music, with a minor in Scoring to Visual Media. A native of Amherst, MA, he brings many gifts to us, including knowledge, experience, a calm demeanor, flexibility, and a willingness to help us grow our online presence! Currently, he is assisting Jono Palmer (Director of Music at FCC Bedford) with the production of our pre-recorded worship services. In the new year, he will help us make the transition to offering high quality live-stream worship services (not yet in-person). Then, when the time comes for us to hold in-person worship services, we will continue to offer live-streamed services to our “at-home” congregation.

New Title for Staff Member

By unanimous decision of the Board, Sarah Lynne Gershon’s title has been changed from Director of Faith Formation and Family Ministries to **Student Associate Pastor**. This title reflects our support of her call to ordained ministry, and it also gives us a way to affirm her many gifts for ministry. While her focus and job description remains the same, her new title offers us a degree of flexibility as we identify ministry needs where Sarah Lynne might be able to offer her gifts.

Heads up!

Farewell Worship Service for Pastor Bruce, December 27, 10:30 am

FCC Bloomington will be joining FCC Bedford for a live-streamed worship service that will serve as Pastor Bruce’s final Sunday before his December 30 retirement. The joint service of worship will be live at 10:30 am (not 10:00) am from the Bedford Sanctuary. Pastor Bruce will offer personal words to both congregations, and Pastor Helen will offer worship leadership. The good news - we will have the advantage of him serving as an occasional “guest preacher” in Bloomington in 2021. (Rumor has it that he has an “in” with Pastor Helen!)

In the meantime, plans are still unfolding regarding our transition from joint worship services to each congregation having its own worship service. Stay tuned!



Christmas Gift Contributions for our FCC Staff



If you would like to make a special monetary Christmas gift to our dedicated FCC staff, please mail it to the church. Be sure to mark your donation “staff gift.” This is your opportunity to thank our wonderful staff who keep the ministries, mission, and day-to-day operations of FCC alive and well every day of the year!

Family Ministries Update Advent is Here!

*By Sarah Lynne Gershon
Student Associate Pastor*

Hello Families!

I hope you are enjoying your Advent/Christmas devotional bags! This includes activities, the hygge-themed Ignite table-tent devotionals, and bible stories for six weeks. It also includes the Advent candles and wreath, a daily devotional written by our General Minister and President Rev. Terri Hord Owens, and the advent calendar made by Ashlyn Reynolds. I would really appreciate pictures of your completed projects to share with our church in our private FB group or in our Newsletter. It would be a blessing for our whole community!

Speaking of blessings for our community, being able to see the Duffy-Paiements and the Kneppers lead our Advent candle-lighting ceremony was a real treat. I loved seeing Lilah act like the cute 5-yr old that she is and the older children read the scriptures and lead the prayers very well. Thank you for helping us enter into the spirit of a very “hygge” Advent by inviting us into your homes. I look forward to seeing the Walshes and the Jacksons in upcoming weeks.

I also wanted to announce that we have dropped off our stocking stuffer donation for MCUM. Tate Knepper did a fantastic job picking out the items, including some cute stuffys and LED mini flashlights!

Speaking of MCUM, don't forget that the food drive is this Sunday, Dec 13 from 1:00-3:00 pm. This will be a festive event featuring our crèche scene and a little Christmas tree, and (if we are lucky) some Christmas tunes as well. Judith Olmstead is making treat bags for people who donate items and Ashlyn will be there to take your photos. Kids can get an individual photo taken by the tree as well. Print these photos to attach to the Merry Christmas photo ornament you received in your devo bags.

Then, after the MCUM event, our first round of Secret Encourager Reveals will take place followed by a second round on Thursday! I have sent out conversation starter cards for the families and encouragers to use to get to know each other. I look forward to hearing some of the responses.

This has been a really weird year, but you all have really made it special by participating in our devotionals, passing the peace videos, Advent videos, and the Secret Encourager program. I am so grateful for our church family.

And with that, I look forward to seeing you all on Sunday!



First Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
205 E. Kirkwood Avenue
Bloomington, IN 47408

812-332-4459
fcc@fccbloomington.org
www.fccbloomington.org
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Ignite
HOPE PEACE JOY LOVE

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**Scripture Readings
For Sunday Worship**

December 13
Advent 3
Ignite Joy
Luke 1:39-45

December 20
Advent 4
Ignite Love
Luke 1:46b-55