

# The CHRISTIAN



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FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
*(Disciples of Christ)*

## Visitor

### ***New Opportunities for Outreach and Faith Formation***

First, we'd like to wish everyone a very Happy New Year! We hope this new year finds you healthy and hopeful. Although the recent Omicron variant of the COVID-19 virus keeps important guidelines for health and safety in place, we invite everyone to come together virtually in this new year to participate in new opportunities for spiritual growth and also to serve in our community and beyond. Most of the opportunities will be available via Zoom so that everyone can participate safely.

#### **New Outreach Opportunities**

FCC with the Bloomington Multi-Faith Alliance is offering a city-wide reading of the book *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* by Heather McGee. This project is brought by the newly established Faith for Racial Equity team of the Multi-Faith Alliance. FCC will be hosting a discussion group via Zoom on Tuesday, March 15. What a great opportunity for us to connect with our greater Bloomington community and strengthen our relationship with the Bloomington Multi-Faith Alliance! Find out more details on this opportunity on page 5 of this newsletter.

FCC is forming a "Welcome Team" as refugees from Afghanistan begin to arrive in Bloomington. This project is being coordinated with **Exodus Refugee Indy** and those participating on the Welcome Team will have the opportunity to help our new neighbors settle by helping with a wide range of tasks as needed. More details on this important and unique opportunity are on page 5 of this newsletter. This is an in-person opportunity.

#### **New Faith Formation Opportunities**

In addition to our on-going opportunities for spiritual growth at FCC, we will offer two new opportunities for adults to join. *The Gospel & Transformative Justice* small group will explore how the Gospel speaks to people who are at the nexus of harm. Participants will discuss short theological readings and engage in spiritual practices as well as participate in a pen-pal program for those who are incarcerated.

A new Bible Study will begin Jan. 31. Pastors Will and Sarah Lynne will co-teach the study on Romans using the Bible as the primary text. More details on these opportunities can be found on page 4 of this newsletter.

**Congregational Meeting**  
**Sunday, January 30**  
**Following worship**  
**In Person or via Livestream**

*Volume 64, number 1 January 12, 2022*

## Will Writes

This is the first newsletter of a new year. That is, if we are focused on the calendar year. The church year started back at the end of November, so we are well into Epiphany, the third of six church seasons. The school year is now just past the halfway point for most students and, for those in their senior or final year, there is a sense of heading downhill to the finish line. I don't tend to pay much attention to the lunar cycle of astrology or other such ways of marking time, but those too might be a part of our mental calculations of time.

In a broader perspective, I am well into my 60's so closer to the end of life than the beginning. This congregation has passed its 195<sup>th</sup> year on a journey that has no set timeline but is still far older than most institutions in our society. And the "church" as we know it has been going along for centuries.

Whether we look at time on a calendar or through generations there is a reality in our journey as followers of Jesus that calls us to constantly be starting anew. I quoted Mae Yoho Ward on Sunday who said, "*All I know is I'm a Christian – being born... again... and again... and again.*" There is no "one and done" in our faith journey. Worship, learning, service, and witness are ongoing parts of our lives. As we follow Jesus, we never quite catch up to him. He is always leading us into something new.

I invite you to consider what it means for you to be a part of this community called First Christian Church. What do you need now to renew or refresh your journey of faith? In the coming weeks there will be some new small group opportunities around Bible study, spiritual practices, and discussion on topics that impact all of us. Worship continues each week in person and virtually. Opportunities to serve through refugee ministries or supporting our children's ministries through Worship and Wonder leadership are good ways to draw close to God and one another. Gifts to Week of Compassion and other ministries remind us that we can touch the lives of others even if we cannot be physically present. Prayer, meditation, and study are always available to each of us.

There is no "right time" to grow faith or enter into community. Everyday, we are invited to closer relationship with Jesus and one another. ***Today is the day the Lord has made... Let us rejoice and be glad in it.***

Grace and Peace,



Will



## MINDFUL SINGING

*For Glory and for Beauty: Poetry in the Service of God*

*(This article borrows heavily on the work of the prolific hymn writer and poet Susan Cherwien (1953-2021) who died last month.<sup>1</sup>)*

Of what use are we singers  
 What good we cuckoo-callers  
 If no fire spurts from our mouths  
 No brand from beneath our tongues  
 And no smoke after our words!  
 - Unknown Ingrian Bard, 1858)

Every week we open our hymnbooks or read the texts on the screen. Some sing aloud. Some only sing in their hearts hopefully mouthing or listening to the words. We hear prayers and scripture. Hopefully these words resonate and fill our spirits. Hopefully they inspire others. Hopefully they do honor to God. The tunes are important, but what about the words? Susan Cherwien posits:

“Words are not benign. Words are not neutral. How does poetry affect the human brain? The human spirit? How do the words we sing together shape us into a body for praise and for life in Christ? Into what are we being shaped by the poetry that we sing and pray together?”

### The Sieve of Seven Questions

She continues:

Over these past 30 years of writing hymn texts, I developed a “Sieve of Seven Questions through which the texts must pass before I am satisfied that they are the best that I can do, and that they will be not only safe but perhaps even of value, to spin out into the universe carried by song: The seven questions are, I believe, worth asking regarding any text intended for worship of God, not only hymn texts but also prayers, sermons, and litanies. They are good questions to ask regarding visual art, the way print looks on a page, for vestments and flowers and worship space. Good questions for music. And they are pretty good questions for most of life, too. The seven questions are:

Is it true?  
 Is it beautiful?  
 Is it excellent?  
 Does it give God glory?  
 Can it bear the weight of mystery?  
 Is it appropriate?  
 Does it replace something of greater worth?

In this space over the coming weeks, we will explore these questions as presented by Mrs. Cherwien. In the meantime, let us mindfully sing, speak, and pray - in the words of St. Paul: *Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable— if anything is excellent or praiseworthy— think about such things.* - Philippians 4:8 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup>Susan Palo Cherwien, “The Sieve of Seven Questions”, in *CrossAccent*, Summer 2019, [www.alcm.org](http://www.alcm.org), p. 40-43.

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## Family Ministries

from Sarah Lynne Gershon

Dear Families,

I enjoyed connecting with your children and youth during our Christmas Eve program! I hope to see them more in this new year. Here are some updates on family ministries for the beginning of 2022.

### **Worship and Wonder** - *Train to be a Storyteller or Greeter: Virtual CW&W Storytelling Training*

We need a larger pool of storytellers and greeters for Worship and Wonder! Join us for a training on Feb. 4 from 6:00-9:00 pm and Feb. 5 from 9:00 am-noon. If you aren't ready to volunteer now due to COVID risks, but would like to in the future, please consider taking this training. We want you to be ready to volunteer when you feel comfortable.

### **Children's Time During Worship**

We will continue to offer children's moments and have the PrayGround open during worship with books and worship bags. I will be able to take children out of worship to the chapel gathering space on **Jan. 23, Feb. 13, and Feb. 27th.**

### **Children's Sunday School**

Jo Weddle will continue to offer Sunday School after worship to elementary aged children. She is using the *Holy Moly* curriculum and this semester they are learning about stories in the New Testament. *I will no longer be offering a class for older elementary aged kids due to lack of interest. Let me know if your older kids would like a group. My goal would be a group to prepare them to make a personal decision about being baptized into the church as a follower of Jesus.*

### **Adult Faith Formation**

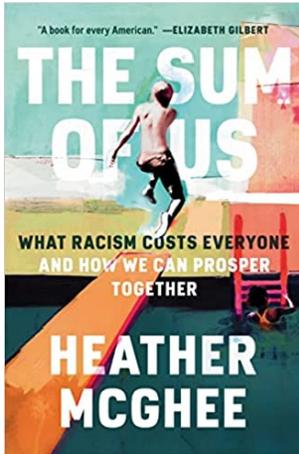
#### **The Gospel & Transformative Justice** (*faith formation and outreach ministry*)

This small group is for people interested in exploring how the Gospel speaks to people who are at the nexus of harm—both as people who have harmed and who experience harm. *This is all of us, but it is particularly poignant for people who are incarcerated.* Participants meet once a month to discuss short theological readings, bible passages, and engage in spiritual practices that help us think about how God's justice prompts us to work for accountability, relationship, and healing for all people. We will also put this into practice by becoming a pen-pal to at least one person who is incarcerated. The group will help each of us be accountable to writing, clear and kind communication, and maintaining healthy boundaries so the pen-pal relationship is safe and loving. **Co-leaders are Erin Kelley and Sarah Lynne. Meets 4th Mondays 7-8:30pm via ZOOM. Email [sarahlynn@fcbloomington.org](mailto:sarahlynn@fcbloomington.org)**

#### **Bible Study on Romans begins January 31**

Pastors Will and Sarah Lynne will be co-teaching a virtual (Zoom) Bible study will be an overview of Romans using the Bible as the primary text. It will begin January 31 via Zoom and will meet each Monday from 5:00 - 6:00 pm through early May. Contact Sarah Lynne or the church office to sign up.

## New Outreach Opportunities at FCC *Sharing Christ's Inclusive through Serving and Welcoming*



### **Bloomington-Wide Read: *The Sum of Us***

The Bloomington Multi-Faith Alliance has a new working team: Faith for Racial Equity (F4RE). They are promoting a Bloomington wide reading of the book *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* by Heather McGee. This is an excellent book that focuses on the way racial anxiety keeps us from working together for the common good. F4RE is asking faith communities to host discussion groups preceding a capstone event that will focus on practical ways we can implement wisdom from this book in Bloomington.

FCC will be hosting a discussion group on the book via Zoom on **Tuesday, March 15th from 7:00-8:15 pm**. This will be co-led by Voices of Faith member Sue Fetteshauer and Sarah Lynne Gershon.

The zoom link will be shared the week before the discussion. You can also contact Sarah Lynne for the link. Please join other Bloomingtonians in reading this book. Invite your friends to read with you and join our discussion. There is both an adult and youth edition and a discussion guide. You will see *Sum of Us* featured on our resource display by the elevator and are welcome to look at it. Contact Sarah Lynne if you would like to borrow that book or need help getting your own copy.

### **Afghan Refugee Support Update!**

I am encouraged by the interest from congregants in hosting a refugee Welcome Team! We are currently waiting for *Exodus Refugee Indy* to establish their site in Bloomington. We are hopeful that they will be ready to facilitate a welcome team in the spring. That means you still have time to express interest! Reach out to me and I will be happy to talk to you about this opportunity.

Don't what I'm referring to? *Exodus Refugee Indy* is putting together "Welcome Teams" to provide friendship and help to refugees who are resettling in Bloomington. We would love to have a group of people at First Christian Church who are interested in pitching in and offering help as they are able. The needs are wide-ranging, but expressing your interest in helping does not commit you to any particular task. Perhaps one week you could take someone to a doctor's appointment? Or help them learn to use a stove or navigate the public library? Would you like to hear about these needs and learn more about being on a welcome team? Email [sarahlynn@fccbloomington.org](mailto:sarahlynn@fccbloomington.org) and let her know!

-Sarah Lynne Gershon





### *In Our Prayers...*

Please pray for the family of Mildred Blackburn who passed away on January 1 at the age of 99. Mildred is survived by her two daughters Jerry Lou Curry (of Bloomington) and Rosemary Nigh (of Denver) as well as seven grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

Also hold in prayer the family of Don Wendling who passed away on December 29. Cards of sympathy can be sent to his daughter, Edith Lockett at 510 Donna Drive, St. Joseph, MI, 49085.



Thank you to all who stayed after worship on January 2 to help pack away our Christmas decorations.

Everything was done in record time because of all of those who helped!

Thank You for all the nice thoughts (cards, calls, emails) that came my way through my recent recovery. I'm doing well, slow, but sure. It's a work in progress.

Blessings,

*Gerry Miller*

### **Welcome to the World!**

Congratulations to Andi and Jeff Fletcher (and big brother Ethan) on the birth of their daughter Audrey Ramona Fletcher. Little Audrey was born at 5:43 am on Saturday, January 8. She weighed 7 lbs. and 6 oz. and was 20 inches long. Both Andi and baby Audrey are doing well!

Please join us in prayer for continued good health for Andi and Audrey and in welcoming this beautiful baby to the FCC family. Cards and notes can be sent to the family at 6200 W. Maple Grove Rd., Ellettsville, 47429.



### **FCC Congregational Meeting on January 30**

Please plan to join us in person or via Livestream for the FCC Congregational Meeting following worship on Sunday, January 30th. Our Board will present the proposed 2022 Budget for consideration and a vote.

An email will go out on Sunday morning to all who are on our regular email distribution. The email will include a form to vote, if you choose to attend online. If you attend in person, you may simply vote in person. If you do not receive that email, you can still vote by emailing ([fcc@fccbloomington.org](mailto:fcc@fccbloomington.org)) or calling the church office (812-332-4459) by Monday, January 31, at noon.

**THANK YOU**

Your church staff says “Thank You” for the gracious gifts we received during the Christmas season. We celebrate being part of a community of love!

*Will, Sarah Lynne, Jan, Jihye, Jennifer, Eve, Ashlyn, Ben, Linda, John.*

**January Sermon Series**

The sermon series for January is based on scripture from the *Revised Common Lectionary* which follows the liturgical year in a 3-year cycle and provides scriptural recommendations that compliment the current season of the liturgical year.

**January 16**

Martin Luther King Jr. Day Recognition  
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11  
Sermon: *Different Gifts, Same Spirit*

**January 23**

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10  
Luke 4:14-30  
Sermon: *It’s in the Book*

**January 30**

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13  
Jeremiah 1:4-10  
Sermon: *Ready, Set, Love*

Start Your Weekend with a little Jazz at FCC on January 21.

**Jazz Vespers**  
Friday, January 21 at 6:30 pm  
with the Garrett Spoelhof Trio  
featuring vocalist Wynton Gage

*Join Us (and bring a friend)*

This special ministry of FCC is brought the third Friday of each month.

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## **FCC Congregational Meeting**

**Sunday, January 30  
Following Worship**

**Online or via Livestream**

### **Scripture Readings For Sunday Worship**

#### **January 16**

Martin Luther King Jr. Recognition  
1 Corinthians 12:1-11  
*Different Gifts, Same Spirit*

#### **January 23**

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10  
Luke 4:14-30  
*It's in the Book!*

#### **January 30**

1 Corinthians 13:1-13  
Jeremiah 1:4-10  
*Ready, Set, Love*