

The CHRISTIAN



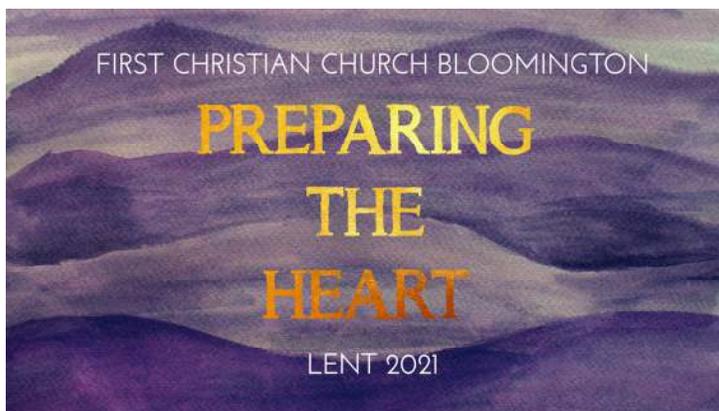
FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(Disciples of Christ)

Visitor

Preparing the Heart for Lent

Lenten Worship Series will Focus on the Spiritual Health of the Heart

The Season of Lent will give us opportunity to explore something that matters deeply to Jesus: the spiritual health of the human heart. As a matter of fact, when it comes to a life of faith, much of Jesus' life and teachings focus on "the heart." Our Lenten Worship Series, adapted from the weekly devotional material published by Illustrated Ministry, will help us reflect on some of the ways that Jesus invites people (including us!) to prepare their hearts to receive and taste the fullness of life that is enfolded within the heart of God.



Order Your Lenten Devotional Materials

It's time to order your devotional materials for Lent. Please call or email FCC soon to place your order. Let us know if you would like the material emailed as a pdf or if you would like to pick up a hard copy of the devotional material. We will also have pieces of charcoal available to use during Ash Wednesday services. While these materials are FREE, taking orders helps up print what is needed, and it also saves paper. You will be contacted when your materials are ready to pick up.

February 21:

A Heart That Chooses
Matthew 6:19-21;
Galatians 5:22-23

February 28:

A Heart That Learns
Luke 2:41-52

March 7:

A Heart that Surrenders
Matthew 19:16-26

March 14:

A Heart of Generosity
From Luke 12

March 21:

A Heart that Searches
Matthew 13: 45-46

March 28: (Palm Sunday)

A Heart of Humility
Mark 9:30-37, Mark 11: 7-11

April 4: (Easter Sunday)

A Heart that Lives!
Matthew 27:62-28:10

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Pastor's Pen
The Miracle of "The Peace"

I received a heartwarming email last week that is worth sharing. You see, it gives testimony to the truth that the act of "passing the peace" can sometimes be received as a miracle! Whether you are the "passer" or the "receiver" (or both!), when the peace of Christ flows between and among us, our community of faith is miraculously strengthened. But don't take my word for it! Read Tim and Elma Jessen's story:

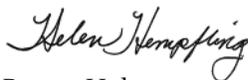
Last Sunday Elma and I were having a bad weekend. Our internet went out Friday--and landline phone, for no cause on our part. Our huge company said it couldn't be fixed until Monday, if then. So plans to ZOOM in on Church services and Campbellite class went out the window. But we believed we could get the worship service live-streamed, by just "pressing the link!" Press it we did and all of a sudden the tiny I-Phone went berserk: Don't go here; get away, etc. and etc! So Church service was "out" too. A few minutes later there appeared on my phone the following: Kate Kroll: The peace of Christ be with you. I thought it a miracle; somehow her chat at the right hand of the screen had come to me. But that was not how the miracle worked! When Helen asked for watchers to "send the peace" to someone--Kate thought of us! Looked up our phone number, and texted it to us!

How we needed that peace in that moment! How much it meant to have a "dear sister" choose to send it to us! That was a God-thing, as we like to say! God telling us through a human instrument that indeed God's peace WAS with us, and that we need not be afraid, and that even this crisis could be conquered! Thanks, Helen. Thanks Kate. And thanks to all of you who send the Peace of Christ to others--even when we're far apart and far away. Thanks be to God!

Thank you, dear FCC, for "passing the peace!" Now, if you think that it's not "your thing" to reach out to someone with "the peace," consider this fact: *it's not about you!* It's about building up the body of Christ. It's about offering and receiving something that is good and tangible and at the same time passes all understanding. Indeed, it's not *your* thing. It's—as Tim and Elma say—a "God-thing!"

Next Sunday (or sooner!), please accept my invitation to share the peace of Christ with someone(s). You may never know how your small act has served as miracle of God's grace, but that's OK. After all, it's not about you!

May the Peace of Christ be with you!



Pastor Helen



MUSIC NOTES by Jan Harrington

40 Days of Musical Meditations During Lent

Today we realized that there are now 40 episodes of Jazz Vespers Moments in our archive which could provide a daily 12-minute meditation during the Lenten season! If you've been following the Jazz Vespers Moments since March, you know that they offer an array of diverse topics varying from reflecting on such topics as grief, sadness, joy, justice or new possibilities and 34 other topics. Each one provides a moment for contemplation – your heart can be focused perhaps by a provocative poem, a beautiful revelatory take on a hymn, or a private moment to share in the Lord's Prayer. Revisiting each one opens new food for thought and prayer, even if heard before. One way to explore would be to daily open the square Jazz Vespers Moment icon on the www.fccbloomington.org web page and move on to the highest number (there are 14 numbers in all reverse chronological order) - choose, listen, and work your way back to the front - one a day; a 12-minute moment of quiet and peace to focus your day and prayer.

Upcoming Jazz Vespers Topics

February Theme: *Contemplating*

February 12 – Contemplating Loss
 February 19 – Contemplating Tranquility
 February 26 – Contemplating End of Life

March Theme: *Embracing*

March 5 – Embracing Renewal
 March 12 – Embracing Gratefulness
 March 19 – Embracing Stillness
 March 26 – Embracing the Future

Farewell to our Tenor Choral Scholar Renson Madarang

Last Sunday we bade farewell to our wonderful tenor choral scholar, **Renson Madarang**, who has brought so much joy musically and personally to our services since 2018. Renson has been offered a position beginning immediately in his native Hawaii as Project Coordinator for **Mana Maoli** - a collective of educators, artists, musicians, cultural practitioners, community organizers, and families who share a common vision of, and action toward, community empowerment through three primary purposes:

1. Community-based education and awareness.
2. Pooling and sharing of resources.
3. Sustainability at both the environmental and economic levels, as well as at the self and community level.

Renson's new job will have him flying weekly from island to island, supervising and creating projects for music and education throughout Hawaii. For the past year Renson has been on staff at IU as Native Education and Programs Assistant at IU's First Nations Educational and Cultural Center. His new job combines this dedication to diversity and cultural awareness with his musical and vocal talents. Thank you Renson for your gifts to us and may God's grace and protection follow you always.





In Our Prayers

Please hold in your prayers the family of Bob Martin, a longtime member who passed away yesterday (February 8). Visitation will be at Chandler Funeral Home next Tuesday, February 16, from 4-8 pm. A family graveside service will be held the following day, and a Celebration of Life will take place at a later date. Cards and notes of condolence be sent to his wife, Mary Alice Martin, at 4243 W. Lynwest Drive, Bloomington, 47404.

Please hold Frieda Hoffman in your prayers as she recovers from a fall that resulted in several broken ribs and two broken vertebrae. She is receiving physical therapy at Meadowood's rehab hospital. Cards and notes of encouragement may be sent to Frieda at Meadowood's address: 2455 N. Tamarack #21, 47408.

We are grateful to report that Julie Donham is now recovering at home following a lengthy hospital and rehab stay. Mike shared this update: "We brought Julie home yesterday (Feb. 8). All Glory to God and his followers. We have a long road ahead but are so thankful for prayers, doctors, nurses, and staff. Julie is doing great and loves being at home." Cards and notes of encouragement can be sent to Julie at 5900 N. Maple Grove Rd., Bloomington, 47404.



Each year, we receive a special offering for Week of Compassion. Funds received allow the Church to respond to disaster when it occurs, enabling Week of Compassion to provide immediate needs like emergency supplies, water and food. Special Offering is a time when congregations come together to lift up and celebrate this important work that we do together. **Please give to Week of Compassion during the month of February. A special envelope is included in this newsletter.** Thank you.

Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty, shade from the sun, shelter from the wind,
for the Compassionate One guides them, takes them to the best springs.

~ Isaiah 49:10 (The Message)

Ash Wednesday Worship

9:00 am on February 17 via Zoom

Join us as we enter the season of Lent with a special Ash Wednesday service at 9:00 am on February 17 via Zoom. Pastor Helen will lead worship that will include a brief time of prayer and reflection on the meaning of Lent and repentance. The service will conclude with instructions to administer “ashes” to remind us that “from dust we have been made, and to dust we shall return.” You will need to have ashes or charcoal on hand for this portion of the service, should you want to participate in the imposition of ashes. A Zoom invitation can be found on our website and will also be sent by email.



Pancakes and Ashes for FCC Families

February 16 at 6:30 pm via Zoom

It’s an FCC tradition for families to gather on the day before Ash Wednesday (also known as “Fat Tuesday”) for a celebratory meal of pancakes (with lots of wonderful toppings) and pancake games! Many of us really look forward to this fun occasion to gather and prepare to move into the season of Lent.



We can’t physically gather for Pancakes and Ashes this year, but our families will carry on the tradition with a special Pancakes and Ashes family ministry event on Zoom! Sarah Lynne Gershon will be hosting this event as our February monthly Family Ministries “Live” event.

Families with young children and FCC’s Secret Encouragers will gather on Zoom on February 16 at 6:30 pm for an online version of Pancakes and Ashes. If you are planning to join in the fun, be sure to have your pancakes ready to enjoy and to show off during this fun Zoom celebration. FCC Families will receive some fun pancake ingredients and toppings in their family devotional bags! So, we expect to see lots of creativity and fun in those pancakes. Be sure to take pictures of



your culinary creation so that we can share them in the next newsletter! Email those pictures to jennifer@fccbloomington.org.

Following the meal and the games, we will move into a more reflective space in preparation for the season of Lent. FCC Families will receive a Zoom invitation for this event.

Lenten Devotional Materials Available

Order Now by Emailing or Calling FCC!

If you are interested in receiving FCC's Lenten Devotional Materials (and a small piece of charcoal for Ash Wednesday) please order NOW! We will begin printing the materials this week so that we can make them available to you by this weekend. You will receive a small bit of charcoal for our short Ash Wednesday service (this will be through ZOOM) and a Lenten devotion called "Where Your Heart Is: An Illustrated Devotional." This is a *weekly* devotion that includes a reflection on the scripture (the same that Helen will preach on), spaces for coloring and doodling, and questions for reflection/discussion. You can order the hardcopy version of the devotion or we can email you a pdf version. Please let us know which you would like to receive. Sarah Lynne Gershon will email you once the materials are ready to pick up at FCC. She will also provide a door code should you come when staff is not available at church.

Lenten Breakfast Bible Study

6-Week Study that begins February 23

Looking for a new study opportunity during Lent? Consider joining our **Lenten Breakfast Bible Study** that will meet on **Tuesdays at 8:30 am (via Zoom)** beginning on February 23. This 6-week Bible Study will be led by Debbie White, who will be focusing this study on how the scriptures can speak to our lives.

What a great way to start your day! The study group will start the first week of Lent and will end right before Easter. We will study the scripture from the previous Sunday's worship. Please contact Sarah Lynne at sarahlynnne@fccbloomington.org if you are interested in joining,

Faith, Film and Friends

Lenten Film Study Begins February 21

Beginning February 21st, FCC's **Faith, Friends & Film** class will follow a 6-week film series entitled "Don't Be Afraid of the Dark". These films, with music and lyrics by *The Brilliance*, contain rich imagery of the paradox of life and death, beauty and fragmentation.

They are the outer world's symbology of what our inner world terrain often looks like. While we acknowledge that this includes apparent broken and befallen-ness, all of this exists in the encompassment of God's wholeness.

Each week we watch a film, and then discuss our response to it. Join us for deep exploration and sharing. Please contact Sarah Lynne Gershon if you are interested in joining.

Family Ministries Update

By Sarah Lynne Gershon
Student Associate Pastor

Hello Families!

It feels like it's been forever since I haven't gotten to see you, but that will change next week during our Pancakes and Ashes Zoom event! This event will be Feb. 16th from 6:30-7:30 pm (see page 5 for details). If you haven't told me you are coming (or not coming) please send me an email or text so I know who to expect. I sincerely hope I will see all of you! I have also invited the (formerly secret) Encouragers to come and I know they would love to see you too!

Lent devotional bags will be ready to pick up *this weekend* and it will include some supplies for the Pancake and Ashes event, so make sure you can drop by the church and grab your bag. I will send an email with the information about picking up when they are ready. There will be some pancake batter in the bag for you to use to make really creative "fancy pancakes" to show off during the event. Please make them the day before (or that Tuesday morning) and send me some overhead pictures of your fancy cakes for me to share.

Lent is a very special time of year. Like Advent, it helps us prepare for an important "mystery" of our faith—the mystery of the cross and resurrection. I remember as a child learning to love Lent and Easter just as much as Advent and Christmas, as it is a very special time in the year leading up to the wonder of Easter. I hope you will consider how you observe Lent—perhaps through one of the traditional practices of charity, prayer, and fasting—or maybe in a way unique to your family. Our Lenten devotional "Reflections on the Heart" will help you in this area.

Thank you again for all you do as parents to love and nurture your children! I look forward to seeing you on Fat Tuesday.

FCC Youth Group News



FCC's youth group is going strong as we continue to gather in a socially distant way. This past weekend, they participated in a virtual game night. They are also currently working on weekly devotionals while using art journals as a unique and creative way to express themselves. All youth are invited to participate. Anyone interested in joining the group for weekly devotionals, email Ashlyn Reynolds at ashlreyn23@gmail.com so that she can get an art journal to you.



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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The Christian Visitor

Vol. 63, no. 3

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH BLOOMINGTON
**PREPARING
THE
HEART**
LENT 2021

Join us for Lent as we explore something that matters deeply to Jesus: the spiritual health of the human heart. We will reflect on some of the ways that Jesus invites people (including us!) to prepare their hearts to receive and taste the fullness of life that is enfolded within the heart of God.

**Scripture Readings
For Sunday Worship**

February 14
Transfiguration Sunday
Mark 9:2-9

February 21
A Heart That Chooses
Matthew 6:19-21; Galatians 5:22-23

February 28
A Heart that Learns
Luke 2:41-52

March 7
A Heart that Surrenders
Matthew 19:16-26