

The CHRISTIAN





FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(Disciples of Christ)

Visitor

Lent with FCC

Join Us as We Focus on Disciplines that We Can Apply in Our Every Day Lives

FCC will Lean Into Lent this year, beginning March 2 with an Ash Wednesday Service at 7:00pm. This brief, in-person service will invite us to share in the power of confession and will conclude with the imposition of ashes as a sign of humility and repentance as we enter the season of Lent.

We will be offering two group opportunities during Lent, both with a focus on spiritual disciplines that can be incorporated into daily life. Pastor Will invites you to Explore Sacred Rhythms from our breath, to our heartbeat, to the pulse of traffic. This book study group will examine seven key disciplines to weave into your daily life. Jennifer Fettchenhauer invites you to the table, to explore the spiritual discipline of Mindfulness as it relates to Food. We will learn about food production, as well as how to better prepare food. We will focus on ALL of God's Creation, how we are all connected and the impact our choices about food have on All of God's Creation.

We will also host a Lenten Food and Supply Drive for MCUM. We are asking for donations of non-perishable food and also donations to benefit the MCUM Preschool. Donations can be brought to church on Sundays and we will also host a drive-through event in our alley in April. Stay tuned for that date!

FCC will also be providing Lenten Devotional Material that will include Laments written by YOU! We are asking everyone (all ages) to consider sending a personal Lament for the devotional material. We will be using the Psalms of Lament as we process all of the change, loss, and pain the last couple of years have brought. Consider sending a personal Lament to be included.

More details on each of our opportunities during Lent are inside this newsletter in a special Lent Insert. Please consider participating in one or all of the opportunities, and invite family and friends too. We hope you will join us for this special time in the church as we journey to the cross.

Inside This Issue:

Page 5 FCC Building Update
Welcome Crystal!

Page 7 Week of Compassion

Insert Lent with FCC Insert
*Details on services and
programming during the Lent.*

Volume 64, number 3 February 9, 2022

Will Writes

A couple of weeks ago Tish Harrison Warren, an Anglican priest and columnist for the New York Times, wrote in her column that it was time for congregations to drop their online worship option. She stated that being physically present to one another was central to our faith journey.

“For all of us - even those who aren’t churchgoers - bodies, with all the risk, danger, limits, mortality and vulnerability that they bring, are part of our deepest humanity, not obstacles to be transcended through digitization. They are humble (and humbling) gifts to be embraced. Online church, while it was necessary for a season, diminishes worship and us as people. We seek to worship wholly — with heart, soul, mind and strength — and embodiment is an irreducible part of that wholeness.”

Last week, after receiving numerous emails and tweets, she wrote a second column offering a selection of the comments she received. They ranged from support to attack, but many, she noted, invited a more nuanced understanding:

“A reader from Connecticut said: ‘I think the worst part of online services is that on a busy weekend I can have an excuse to stay at home. . . . Watching an online service while cooking dinners for the week or doing the laundry provides none of the benefits of physically being present in church. I pray that your newsletter will provide me with the motivation to get back to church!’”

And . . .

Here are excerpts from a Twitter thread by Tanya Marlow, a writer in Britain, who is homebound: ‘I want to push back on two areas I think you confuse: embodiment and interaction. I am embodied. I am always embodied because I have a body, albeit a disabled one. When I am in bed, watching a service, I am worshipping with my body. Please don’t confuse geographically less proximate with disembodied.’”

As we wend our way through the ups and downs of surges, mask mandates, uneven vaccination rates, and breakthrough COVID cases; along with our rediscovered awareness of flu and cold transmission, the church is again having to wrestle with what it means to be fully a part of the body of Christ. Back

in the 1960’s and 70’s churches built only for able bodied participants began adding elevators and ramps to accommodate those less mobile. Some even added pew cushions for the comfort of aging bodies! This is a similar challenge as we adapt to a digital reality that is shaping much of our lives. A number of people commented positively about the way we welcomed Crystal into our church family via phone this Sunday. As one of our members temporarily watching from home due to a surgery noted (I’m paraphrasing): *“Wasn’t it cool that Crystal could speak into her phone, have it transmitted through Will’s wireless mic, then sent out through a YouTube stream and then onto my TV.”*

It was cool. And we have much that can be done to enhance and improve our connections with one another, even when we cannot be physically present to one another.

On the other hand, there is something to Rev. Warren’s call to recognize the limitations of online/digital worship and church life. There is something vital in our lives that calls us together physically and spiritually whenever possible. We are only beginning to discover the possibilities and the limits of these new ways of doing church.

I invite you to the conversation. In the coming weeks and months, let’s talk about how we use these online tools. Are we participating in worship online out of need or habit? Are we creating two “classes” of church members? How do we best support and connect with those who are homebound or who join in from a distance? How do people who attend church virtually support and connect with those who are in person? What does it mean to “participate” in the life of the congregation? How can we live out our call to be the “body of Christ”?

I used to close all my newsletter articles with “See you in church!” I guess I need a new catchphrase for this new age. Any ideas?

Grace and Peace,



Will



MINDFUL SINGING - 3

*For Glory and for Beauty: Poetry in the Service of God
Reflections from Susan Cherwien’s “The Sieve of Seven Questions”¹*

The Language of Hymns – Susan Palo Cherwien

<i>Language is powerful</i>	<i>Language, spoken language</i>
<i>it is not benign</i>	<i>is powerful</i>
<i>it is not neutral</i>	<i>it is emotion</i>
<i>Language shapes us</i>	<i>it is intent</i>
<i>shapes our brains</i>	<i>coupled with vibration</i>
<i>shapes our bodies shapes our lives</i>	<i>sent out into the world.</i>

*Language sung out into the world is even more powerful.
Physics shows us nothing in the universe disappears without a trace.
Language, carried on breath, given form in this world by vibration
vibrates in us in our brains in our bodies into those around us
Into the walls out into universe. Nothing disappears without a trace.¹*

Today we conclude our series of reflections on Susan Cherwien’s “Sieve of Seven Questions.” with her last three questions. The seven questions she proposes are:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| <i>Is it true?</i> | Does it give God glory? |
| <i>Is it beautiful?</i> | Can it bear the weight of mystery? |
| <i>Is it excellent?</i> | Is it appropriate? |
| | Does it replace something of greater worth? |

Does it give God glory?

All art serves a higher purpose. This question is intimately woven with the first three—is it true, beautiful, and excellent—because if we believe that God is truth, beauty, and excellence, then works of truth, beauty, and excellence will give glory to God. But it is also here a question of whether we are lifting up God or ourselves, whether we are seeking God’s glorification or our own. whether we can make ourselves transparent enough for God to be the center of the work. And whether the higher purpose that is being served is genuinely the awareness of, and the encounter with, the Holy.

Can it bear the weight of mystery?

God is ultimately Holy Mystery. Does the text truthfully present God as not entirely knowable, not entirely graspable? Does it leave room for questions to be questions? Does the work have room for silence? For darkness? Does it replace something of greater worth? . . .

(Continued on page 6)

Family Ministries Update

by Sarah Lynne Gershon, Student Associate Pastor

Contribute to Our Lenten Devotional

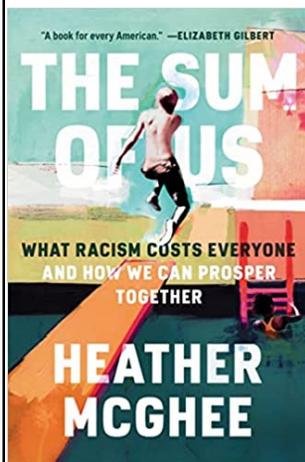
Lent is coming! The theme for this year is “Leaning into Lament” and we are gathering laments from our congregants. Please ask your children what they have missed or felt sad about this year and what helps them when they feel sad. If they would like to contribute to this devotional, send their responses to Sarah Lynne Gershon (sarahlynn@fccbloomington.org). The responses will be made anonymous, but we would love to include our children’s voices as well. While we don’t want to dwell in fear with our kids, it is always good to be able to give voice to grief and remember how we receive comfort when we are grieving.

Worship and Wonder

I am excited to be able to offer Worship and Wonder during Lent. As you all know, this is a special way for children to enter into the Lenten journey in worship that is suited for children’s ways of connecting spiritually. We will be starting this the first Sunday in March. I hope to see any of your young children then! We are asking that *all volunteers and children be vaccinated for COVID-19. Masks are also required.*

Children’s time during worship: Until Worship and Wonder begins, we will continue to offer Children’s Moments and have the PrayGround open with books and worship bags. I will be able to take children out of worship to the Chapel Gathering Space on **Feb 13 and Feb 27.**

Bloomington-Wide Read: *The Sum of Us* + Capstone Event



I have been working with the Bloomington Multifaith Alliance: Faith for Racial Equity (BMA F4RE) to plan the capstone event for the Bloomington Wide Book Read of *The Sum of Us*. While we are not yet ready to share the details of this event, I want to share with you how encouraged I am by the planning. Many of us feel discouraged about learning and reading about racism without feeling empowered for action and tangible work that will bring about positive change. This continues to be the focus of the capstone event for the organizers and I am very hopeful that this event will present opportunities for practical advocacy and action. Stay tuned and join us in reading *Sum of Us* as we make the way for racial justice work in Bloomington.

FCC will be hosting a discussion group on zoom on **Tuesday, March 15th from 7-8:15pm on Zoom**. This will be co-led by Voices of Faith member Sue Fettchenhauer and Sarah Lynne. The zoom link will be shared the week before. You can also contact Sarah Lynne for the link.



FCC REPAIR PROJECTS UPDATE

A few years ago, the “self-study” of the FCC congregation was winding down and our conversation was around a future story. As that was going on an architect and engineer were reviewing possible changes to the building to help us move into our hoped-for future. What was discovered in that process were several significant building projects that needed to be addressed ahead of undertaking remodeling and improvements. These include foundation and support beam repairs, exterior wall repairs, and supporting a staircase, among others. Terry Daugherty has compiled a short video to help us understand the scope of the work. You can see it at <https://youtu.be/xq36bqdojO8>. Take a look and send your questions or comments to Terry or Pastor Will. If there is interest we could set up a Zoom meeting for conversation.

The replacement of the termite damaged beam is under way with the slow and careful lifting of the sanctuary floor under the balcony. A contract has been signed to evaluate the potential void under the southeast basement area. Other contracts are waiting, pending the results of that evaluation. There are capital funds on hand for the current work. Additional funding will be needed as other projects are contracted.

WELCOME Crystal Hammon!

We welcome Crystal Hammon into our church community. Crystal joined on Sunday, February 6, as she renewed her confession of faith at the close of worship. Crystal has been a part of FCC for several years, involved in Bible Study with Pastor Helen and attending worship. You are invited to reach out and celebrate Crystal’s connection to our church family. Her contact information is in the church directory. Call or email the church office for that information.



Third Friday Jazz Vespers February 18 – 6:30 - GRACE

Join in with us at Third Friday Jazz Vespers next Friday, February 18 at 6:30. The theme will explore aspects of GRACE – with poetry, meditation, hymns, and, of course Jazz from The Garrett Spoelhof Trio with vocalist Wynton Gage. A beautiful time to calmly reflect at the end a busy week and prepare for the week ahead! Jazz Standards begin at 6:20 and will continue after the service until 7:30. Come with family and friends – perhaps an evening with dinner out.

In case you can’t attend in person or want to relive the in-person experience after attending, the service will also be streamed and archived on our webpage www.fccbloomington.org.

(continued from page 3)

Is it appropriate?

More questions here: does this evoke something other than the holy? Is this work a communal expression and not merely a personal one? Can an entire group of people assent to it? Can everyone who desires come and drink from this well? ...

Does it replace something of greater worth?

Hopefully, this is only question to which the answer would be “no.” Once Susan Cherwien mistakenly thought she had been commissioned to write a new text based on Psalm 90, and she couldn’t even lift pen to paper, because she thought, “Who could possibly write a text better than Isaac Watts’ ‘O God Our Help in Ages Past’? Who would want to?” We have many gifts from our ancestors in Christ, gifts that reach across the centuries to teach and reassure us. Are we dismissing the value of those gifts by our own efforts? We have treasures we haven’t even discovered: treasures in our own rites and rituals, treasures in the blessed elements of the earth, treasures in the real, the beautiful, the true.

O come let us worship together in word and song! It matters what we sing and say and ultimately do!

¹All material in this article is excerpted from Susan Cherwien, “The Sieve of Seven Questions”, in *CrossAccent*, Summer 2019, Association of Lutheran Church Musicians, pp. 40 -43, © 2019.

LOOK FOR THE SILVER LINING! THE SING FOR JOY SONG CIRCLE ON-LINE An opportunity for all to sing safely at home

The SING FOR JOY! Community Choir is **designed for the interests and abilities of senior citizens**, open to the public, and all are welcome! Singers living with dementia are invited to attend with a care partner. Interested singers can join and sing, no RSVP required! Although the SING FOR JOY! Community Choir in-person rehearsals have been suspended because of the covid surge, we want to keep singing. Join members of SFJ! as we sing along with ZOOM presenters every Wednesday from 2:45 to 4:00 pm until we resume in-person rehearsal on Wednesday April 6, at the Endwright East Center in College Mall.

SFJ! ZOOM link: <https://iu.zoom.us/j/91389772733>. To join by phone signal (AUDIO ONLY) Dial: [+1 301 715 8592](tel:+13017158592) or [+1 253 215 8782](tel:+12532158782). **When prompted enter the meeting number: 913 89772733#.** You may be asked to add another # sign. For additional info, music, and lyrics e-mail: bloomingtonsingforjoy@gmail.com. During this time of social distancing it is more important than ever to provide a musical format for people to keep singing - enriching the mind, body, and spirit. All are welcome!

(*Kira Hanger has recently been a soprano choral scholar at FCC. Maria Izzo Walker has often been a leader, too.)



WEEK OF COMPASSION PUTTING LOVE INTO ACTION

As the relief, refugee, and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Week of Compassion works with partners to alleviate suffering throughout the world. Here is a story of one such partnership near us:

In the fall of 2021, dozens of Afghan families moved into Owensboro, Kentucky. Like many cities across the United States, Owensboro was already facing a housing crisis; it wasn't that the rent was too high, but the choices too few.

Thanks to a 10-year connection with the International Center (the local office for refugee resettlement), First Christian Church of Owensboro knew they could help—and they asked Week of Compassion to come alongside with a support grant, allowing them to do even more.

An email update from Outreach co-chair Ginger Norris told the story of a community coming together: collecting household items and furniture, organizing donation storage, providing warehouse space, persuading property owners to make units available, coordinating business donations, and driving families to and from appointments and work.

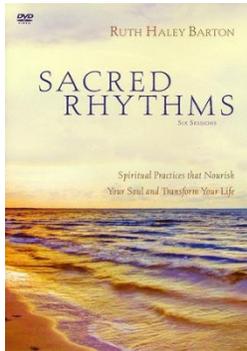
When the expected number of new residents doubled, housing needs became even greater, as did the need for cooking facilities (which hotels couldn't provide). FCC made their church kitchen available "six nights a week for Afghan cooking teams to come and prepare communal meals to take back to the hotel. The local Islamic Center as well as the Islamic Center in Evansville provided some of the food for the cooking teams – particularly the halal meat. Local farmers provided some of the fresh produce. . . . The key word for this resettlement movement has been flexibility." Partnership putting love into action is at the heart of Week of Compassion's ministry, around the world, around the year.

Senior Minister Chris Michael rejoices at the church's compassionate response: "I will say this: This church and community has been wonderful to welcome Afghan Muslims into our space. As you might imagine, I have had lots of conversations about who we are helping and why it is this difficult and demanding of our faith. What does it mean to be Christian in such a small world? Do we really mean it when we say we welcome all just as Christ welcomes us? It's a really different thing to answer those questions with Afghan Muslims cooking in your church kitchen."

We will celebrate the work of Week of Compassion through this month. Use the envelope in this newsletter to share your gift. And... Thank You for caring!

Give to Week of Compassion This Month
During Sunday Worship on February 20 and 27

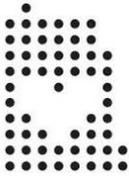
Exploring Sacred Rhythms



From our breathing to our heartbeats to the pulse of city traffic, rhythm fills our lives. Our spiritual lives also have their own rhythms as we experience joy and sadness, wonder and doubt, fear and expectation. As we journey through Lent, I invite you to join me in an exploration of our spiritual rhythms. We will be using a resource called *Sacred Rhythms*, written by Ruth Haley Barton. She describes it this way: “Spiritual disciplines are activities that open us to God's transforming love and the changes that only God can bring about in our lives. Picking up on the monastic tradition of creating a "rule of life" that allows for regular space for the practice of the spiritual disciplines, *Sacred Rhythms* takes you more deeply into understanding seven key disciplines along with practical ideas for weaving them into everyday life.”

Pastor Will is offering this in person on Sunday mornings starting March 6 from 8:30 to 9:30 in the Fireside room (or Great Hall if the group is larger). I would also be happy to offer a Zoom gathering on Sunday afternoons. There will be a cost of \$10 for the participant book. Email me at wjewsbury@gmail.com to indicate your interest in either the morning in-person gathering or an afternoon Zoom offering (and suggest a time that works for you.)

Lenten MCUM Drive



The traditional Lenten practices are prayer, fasting, and charity. Charity is often reduced to giving, but it means so much more than that. In Christian thought it is the highest form of love, an expression of God's self-giving love for us through our sacrificial giving to others. We, of course, want to practice charity all year around in hopes that charity—in the sense of love—becomes, not just something we do, but a part of who we are. Nonetheless there is a place for practicing disciplines that we wouldn't be able to sustain all year around. We regularly host food drives for MCUM and support this important organization through monetary gifts and service, but this Lent, I encourage you to give special attention to creating a discipline of charity for MCUM. For example:

- Each week when you make a grocery list remove some treats and add items for MCUM.
- Intentionally consider what some of your *favorite* pantry items are and purchase these items each week for MCUM when you go grocery shopping.
- Google “food stamp benefit chart” and see if you can bring your grocery budget closer to what you would have if you needed food stamps (for example one person gets \$204/mo). Use the extra money to donate or buy supplies for MCUM.

MCUM would also appreciate supplies for their preschool. Consider how you can make space in your time and budget for gifts to MCUM children. Hold the children at MCUM in prayer as you purchase gifts for them. MCUM told us they need:

- Books for 1–4-year old's / hard cover or soft cover
- Blocks
- Dress-up things
- Classroom supplies – art supplies, paint, paper, crayons

Bring your MCUM donations to worship each week. We will also do another drive through—Pack the Pickup—event in April. Stay tuned for that date.

Leaning into Lament - Lenten Devotional

Lent is a time to reflect on our own frailty and place our hope in God's ability to bring renewed life in the midst of loss and suffering. This Lent we will be **Leaning into Lament** using the Psalms of Lament as we process all of the change, loss, and pain the last couple years have brought.

We will be reflecting on these Psalms in our devotional, but we will also allow the psalms guide us in our own context. You are invited to send us 1-4 sentences that represent your grief, anger, penitence, and hope. These statements can reflect an individual experience or a community experience as a church. They can be in the form of questions or complaints. They can implore or curse. They can express hope or despair. Psalms of Lament hold all of these things and lays them all before God. What God appreciates is not our piety, but our honesty and vulnerability. These sentences will be anonymous and our only guidelines are that they do not express grievances with your fellow congregants and that they protect other congregant's privacy. Please send your sentences to Sarah Lynne Gershon (email to sarahlynn@fcbloomington.org or mail to the church office) by February 13.

We will incorporate your words, thoughts and feelings into this special Lenten devotional that will be provided in hard copy at church, and will also be shared weekly by email.

Practicing Every Day Mindfulness with Focus on Food

Food has always been at the center of our family and community lives. The making and sharing of food is a very natural expression of our love for one another. Any of these quotes sound familiar?

"The people who give you their food give you their heart." - Cesar Chavez

"Cooking is love made visible." - Anonymous

"There is no love sincerer than the love of food." - George Bernard Shaw

So, if God is LOVE isn't the making and sharing of food an expression of God's love through us? I think so. So, how can we come together through a **Lenten Food Journey**? How about by applying the spiritual practice of Mindfulness with Food?

In Plum Village, the Zen practice center founded by Thich Nhat Hanh, before meals they say, *"In this food I see clearly the presence of the entire universe supporting my existence."* Mindful eating means that we bring focus to choosing, preparing, tasting, and eating food. As the senses come alive, self-criticism is replaced by self-nurturing.

Through the practice of Mindfulness, we can gain a more complete understanding of where our food comes from and how our food choices impact not only our personal physical and mental health, but also the health of our planet. We can gain a better understanding of ALL of God's Creation, and how we are all (people, animals, plants, and minerals) interconnected. Our actions directly impact all of God's Creation.

This journey will "officially" begin on Ash Wednesday, March 2. Everyone's journey will be unique, so take time to reflect on why you are taking this journey. We will do this "together" by sharing information via Google Drive. I will provide Mindfulness activities to try as well as discussion posts that we can all respond to each week. We will have a Google folder to share resources, recipes and tips. If it is safe enough and the weather is good, I am hoping we can conclude this journey in late April for an outdoor Eastertide Feast. Please contact Jennifer Fettchenhauer (jennifer@fcbloomington.org) if you would like to join. I am hopeful that through mindfulness, we will have the opportunity to gain a greater appreciation for the journey of the food that nourishes us, and how our choices impact all of God's creation.



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

812-332-4459
fcc@fccbloomington.org
www.fccbloomington.org
Return Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.
US Postage Paid
Bloomington, IN 47408
Permit #217



The Christian Visitor

Vol. 64, no. 3



Join us on Sunday
(February 13)
**For a Sweet Surprise
following worship**

**Scripture Readings
For Sunday Worship**

February 13
Luke 6:17-26 and Psalm 1
Blessed Happy Are You
Beatitudes (part 1)

February 20
Luke 6:27-38
Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40
But I Say... Beatitudes (part 2)

February 27
Transfiguration Sunday
Luke 9:28-36
2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2
The Next Degree of Glory