

The CHRISTIAN





FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(Disciples of Christ)

Visitor

Staying Connected during the COVID-19 Crisis *All FCC face-to-face events are suspended until further notice*

As we all make adjustments to our home, work, school, and church lives, your staff at FCC is working to implement new ways for us to stay connected while COVID-19 keeps us apart. Our primary concern is in doing our part to help promote healthy choices and to support those in our community (FCC and beyond) through this stressful time for everyone.

Worship at FCC will be moved to an online format. Beginning this Sunday (March 22), we will be joining FCC Bedford to provide an opportunity for worship through an online video that we will make available through YouTube. We will make every effort to make it as simple as possible for you to view these worship videos. We will also provide a written manuscript of the service upon request. Please see page 4 for details.

FCC emails from Pastor Helen are an easy way that we can communicate updates and prayer requests and concerns with you. We will send a weekly *Pastor's Care Card* email with information regarding prayer requests and concerns. We will also send a weekly *Pastor's Postcard* email with updates on events and links to Sunday's online service. Many of you are already on these lists, but sometimes these messages get sent to your SPAM box. If you are not receiving these emails or would like to be added to the list, please call the church office.

FCC Facebook Pages (both our public page and our "in-house" members/friends group page) and our website www.fccbloomington.org are also places to look for updated information. If you are not familiar with Facebook, please reach out to a friend who is, or contact us at the FCC Office so that we can help you with that. You will need access to a computer or smart phone and internet access.

Everyone can write a note or send a card to keep in contact, and our "hot off the press" **FCC Directory** can help you! Please contact the church office for an updated copy of our FCC Directory. We can email you a pdf or mail you a hard copy.

Regular public office hours at FCC are cancelled to safeguard our staff and XPLOR Residents. That doesn't mean that we won't be working at FCC or from home. In order to stay healthy, we are restricting others from entering the church without notice. We encourage you to stay home, but if you need to come to the church, please call first to make sure someone is here to help you.

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Pastor's Pen

Practical Words of Hope and Encouragement

We all know this: none of us has experienced in our lifetimes anything like what we are experiencing right now. As people of faith, we also know this: **NOTHING** can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:38-39)!

So, we do our best to live out our faith: We persevere in tough times. We take care of each other and our neighbors by both reaching out AND keeping our distance. We remain connected and find new ways to connect with and pray for each other and our neighbors. We practice Sabbath rest with more intention. We are careful and prudent, but we don't hoard. We don't allow fear and panic to control our actions. We give generously. We trust in and witness to the love of God that is *in* this world and *for* this world.

In other words, we continue to "be the church." Rev. Erin Wathen, a Disciples Pastor who is on the staff of Week of Compassion, offers some excellent, concrete suggestions about how to "be the Church" in this unprecedented time. I share a few of them below.

Support your pastors and staff and church leaders. There is no road map for this, and there is no one right answer. Trust that the folks who ultimately make the call spent some time in prayer, discernment, and very difficult conversations. Thank them for having your best interests at heart.

Keep up with your pledge. This may seem like a small thing in the grand scheme right now, but it matters! Even the healthiest congregations can find themselves in the hole, and quick, after just a few Sundays of missed offerings.

Check on your neighbors. Your older neighbors, your neighbor on chemo, your neighbor whose kid relies on free school lunch, your neighbor who still has to go to work and could use help with childcare. Any time you help someone in your proximity, you are living out the values of your faith community. This is what we go to church to learn how to do— it is 'for such a time as this' that you have spent all those other Sundays in worship.

Pray for your church family. And send notes. Make phone calls. Check in electronically. We are one body, even when that body is not together in the flesh. There are plenty of ways to stay connected in spirit.

Practice Sabbath (*much of this paragraph was written by Pastor Helen.*) Recognize that downtime can be a gift of rest, renewal, and reset. Read and reflect on scripture. Journal. Pray. Paint. Write. Engage in daily devotions. Households can read together; prepare meals together (can you share with a neighbor?), worship online together, talk about blessings and learnings, play games, create something. It really doesn't matter as long as it offers a time to connect more intentionally with God, others, yourself.

Blessings!

Helen Hemphing
Pastor Helen

Faith Formation and Family Ministries at FCC

By Sarah Lynne Gershon

During this time of physical distance, it is more important than ever to remain connected as a community of faith. With that in mind here are the opportunities for connection with God and one another:

There will be a recorded worship service available online for us to worship together. We hope to see comments offering friendly greetings and the peace of Christ to one another on Sunday mornings. Details on this service can be found on page 4 of this newsletter.

Families with children under age 18 will receive the Lenten Family Devotional on Prayer each week. Illustrated Ministries is also providing free devotionals through a mailing list. Ashlyn will be sending devotional questions to the youth. If you do not have children under 18 or youth in your household but would like to receive the Lenten Prayer devotional, please email or call the office and let us know.

Families with children 3rd grade and under will receive the children's bulletin in their weekly package. We would also like to make sure each family with young children (3rd grade and under) have one of our Whirl Bibles (designed for children) while we are not meeting together physically. Please let us know if you need a Whirl Bible and we would be happy to lend it to you.

Concerning the adult learning hour, I am working on a way for adults to remain connected in small groups. I will be reaching out to adult small group leaders to brainstorm the best way to facilitate small group connection. Please do not hesitate to contact me with ideas.

Finally, in response to these resources (devotionals, worship, hearing the proclamation) find ways to share your thoughts with one another. For example, let's use our social media platform (Facebook) more intentionally. Request to join *FCC Group: Pictures, Events etc to share with group only* on Facebook if you haven't already (just search that title) and share pictures, reflections on your Lenten bag, the Illustrated Ministries Lenten Prayer material, or personal devotionals. Take a break from the screens, grab our newly published Directory and send cards to other members each week with encouragement and insight from your own prayer, scripture reading, and devotionals. Now is a time to lean into your faith community, offering and receiving from each other the hope and love that Christ offers.

FCC Cancellations

FCC Small Groups and Events

All FCC related events, small groups, and learning sessions been cancelled for the month of March. Sunday Worship will be moved to an online format. Updated information will be shared via email, FCC Facebook and our website www.fccbloomington.org

Spring Youth Assembly Cancelled

Indiana Disciples (our regional ministry) has cancelled the 2020 Youth Spring Assembly that would have been held in April. Ashlyn will be emailing our youth group with a list of activities and questions to help keep us connected to FCC and our spiritual growth during this time of social distancing.

Caregivers Create Cancelled in March

The March 24 session of Caregivers Create has been cancelled. Meanwhile, we hope you use this time to have some fun and play in your journals.

Join FCC as We Worship Online

Sunday Joint Worship with FCC Bedford!

We will begin providing Sunday worship online beginning at 10 am March 22. A link to this video will be provided in a Pastor's Postcard email, Facebook posts and on our website: www.fccbloomington.org.

This service of worship will be less than 40 minutes and follow our regular order of worship, including a short homily offered by Pastor Bruce Ervin, an anthem offered by our choral scholars, a "virtual" gathering at the Lord's Table, scripture, prayers, and a hymn!

Even though our service will be pre-recorded, we encourage you to gather (along with others in your household) in front of your electronic device at our regular 10 am worship hour. Then, following the worship service, we encourage you to check in "live" with each other via our public Facebook page. It will be like a "virtual" coffee fellowship hour!

Preparing to Gather at the Lord's Table while Staying at Home!

Because Disciples see communion elements as symbols of Christ's presence and reminders of Christ's life, ministry, death, and resurrections, ALL are invited to partake of communion at home.

Before you go online to worship, please plan to set out bread/crackers and juice/water or other communion symbols that will remind you of Christ's invitation to embrace the abundant life that God offers to all. You might also want to light a candle as a reminder of Christ's presence in your midst. We also encourage you to have an offering envelope with you so that you can express your gratitude to the God of abundance.



Pastoral Needs and Requests

Our prayer ministry team is still active and has covenanted to hold you in daily prayer. When you send in your prayer request via email or phone call, we will treat it in the same way we treat the yellow prayer request cards that are in our Sunday bulletins. Your prayer request will be honored! Our email and phone are listed below.

Pastor Helen is available to respond to all urgent and emergency pastoral care needs, so please do not hesitate to reach out to her either directly or by contacting the church office. In addition, we will keep you "in the loop" regarding care concerns through Pastor Helen's Pastoral Care Card that will be emailed on a regular basis. If you are not receiving these emails, please first check your SPAM email before calling the church office. We want to make sure that all FCC members and friends receive these emails.

We recently received a prayer request for Gary Hill. Gary fell last week and is recovering at Bell Trace. He injured his knee and has stitches in his scalp, but thankfully he will be okay. He cannot receive visitors (not even Gale) so cards would be appreciated. Write Gary at Bell Trace Senior Living Community, 800 Bell Trace Ct., 47408. Thank you for the ways that you care!

FCC Email: fcc@fccbloomington.org

FCC Phone: 812-322-4459



Facebook

If you haven't already liked us on Facebook, now would be a good time to find us and like us. We will use Facebook to post a variety of helpful items including Scripture for Sunday worship, links to worship videos, and articles from the Wider Church. We may begin offering Facebook Live messages as well. So, be sure to log on to Facebook and like our page. Another FCC Facebook page to join is our "in house" FCC Group: Pictures Events, etc to share with Group Only that is a private Facebook group. This private Facebook page is carefully monitored. Membership is limited to members, friends, and people that FCC staff know well. This is a safe place to post informal thoughts, more personal prayer requests and concerns, photos, and shout-outs to each other. Search for this group on Facebook and then click on "Join." Alternatively, you may email Pastor Helen and she (or someone from FCC) will send you a personal invitation to join.

Updated FCC Directories Available

Sending cards and notes of encouragement can be very meaningful during times of stress. We could all use a little support from time to time. Consider writing to someone who is living in a retirement community and cannot receive guests right now. Or perhaps you would like to send a cheery note to a student who is home unsure when they will be able to see their friends, or go back to school and their normal busy life. If you would like an updated copy of our church directory, please let us know. We can email a pdf copy or snail mail a hard copy. Contact the church office through email or phone to get your copy.

Staying On Top of Your Giving to FCC

During this time of physical separation, we will all be making changes to our routines; how we communicate, work, and even how we honor our financial obligations. We would like to offer the following simple ways to stay on top of your giving to FCC while we move our worship and ministries online. 1) Consider setting up an automatic/online payment with your bank. Many already do this because it's automatic, easy and there are no fees. Simply contact your bank to set up an automatic payment that will be sent to FCC weekly or monthly on the date that you choose. 2) Mail your check to First Christian Church at 205 E. Kirkwood Ave, Bloomington, IN 47408. 3) Lastly, you can give online through our website www.fccbloomington.org. Note that a small fee will be extracted from your donation by the company that processes these online payments. We are grateful for your continued support of the important ministries of First Christian Church.

Emergency Financial Assistance

Several people have expressed concern about the financial impact that COVID-19 might have on some of our most vulnerable. FCC has an Emergency Assistance Fund that is designated to provide such help. If you would like to make a special donation to this fund, please write a check out to FCC and write "Emergency Assistance Fund" on the memo line. Pastor Helen oversees this designated fund.



WORDS FROM THE CHOIR LOFT

As we face the unsettled and unprecedented time of caring for each other by being physically apart in order to prayerfully do our part to stem the spread of this pandemic, our music establishments around the world – including our own choir – have cancelled rehearsals and performances. At FCC, we have made the decision to cancel both our Palm Sunday Bach Cantata and the Holy Saturday performance of Haydn’s *Seven Last Words* until next year. Our choral scholars that are in town will meet with care to provide music for our YouTube streaming services as we move through the Lenten and Easter season.

When we found it necessary to suspend rehearsals and upcoming performances, our friend, the inspiring cellist Adriana Contino who was to have played for us for both the Bach and Haydn, sent some thoughts which more profoundly articulated than I can what this time could mean to us.. I share her comments here:

From Adriana:

This pandemic is forcing people all over the globe to go inward - to stay home - to be alone - to live below the river. There is a hidden opportunity here. We can meet without physically touching - keeping a distance physically - and yet, experience deep closeness and intimacy. We can bear to be alone and experience our true selves. We can greet each other with a bow - or a smile - or eye-contact which probes deeper than a handshake. We can stay home and quiet down - with the absence of diversions like sports, movie theaters, concerts, restaurants - we can talk to our family members and talk to God. We can all experience a small portion of contemplative living.

Lots of love from here and be well!

Diana

Music for Encouragement and Meditation in a Time of Tribulation and Uncertainty

The power of music to inspire and console in times of uncertainty is well-known. Below are a few links to music chosen from the archives of First Christian worship services that we hope will offer some opportunity for meditation and comfort. Since there is not enough room here to post entire texts to the anthems, we have put a short abbreviated synopsis of the text under each title. You can access the music directly through the FCC web site by going to www.fccbloomington.org, clicking on **The Arts** tab and then on **The Music** tab. At the bottom of the now visible YouTubes, click on the page number of the piece you are looking for, then see the name of the piece and open the YouTube video. Find the piece you would like to hear and listen to your heart’s content. list a few pieces each newsletter going forward.

1. *God Stir the Soil* – Roland Martin – Page 96
“God stir the soil, run the ploughshare deep...even though I weep spare no strength or toil. In the loose fresh mangled earth sow new seed....Bring fresh flowers to earth.”
2. *By Love Alone We Live* – Stephen Paulus – Page 82
“Now blessed Redeemer, these are the leaves of the Kingdom. All to be saved, All changed by Love alone... Out of death we pass into life. All to be told, all known by love alone.”

3. *My Shepherd Will Supply My Need (The 23rd Psalm)* - arr. Virgil Thompson – Page 75
The 23rd Psalm: “My shepherd will supply my need...”
4. Rivers Hawkins singing:
On Eagle’s Wings – Page 28
He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands – Page 30
5. *The Lord’s Prayer* – Malotte – Page 9
Joseph Andreola, Baritone

At your service!

FCC has a small crew of healthy young adults who have indicated a willingness to run essential errands for those of us who have chosen to remain in our homes during the COVID-19 crisis. If you are one of those who are “at risk,” please call the church office or Pastor Helen (who is working from her home office). We will connect you with someone who will help you out!

Can you serve?

If you are someone who is not “at risk” of being adversely affected by COVID-19 and you are willing to run essential errands for others, please call or email the church office (or Pastor Helen). We are compiling a list of younger adults who are willing to serve FCC’s more vulnerable members.

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

04/01	Anne	Johnson	708 S. Cory Lane #76	Bloomington	IN	47403
04/02	Joe	Parrott	543 Green Road	Bloomington	IN	47403
04/03	Jude	Walsh	3006 S. Olcott Blvd.	Bloomington	IN	47401
04/05	David	Garshaw	3740 N. Russell Road	Bloomington	IN	47408
04/06	Craig	Paient	260 S. Lori Lane	Bloomington	IN	47401
04/08	Connie	Gross	3485 S. Knightridge Road	Bloomington	IN	47401
04/10	David	Campbell	507 E. Woodridge Drive	Bloomington	IN	47408
04/11	Lily	Hoover	1250 W. Adams Hill Circle Unit 702	Bloomington	IN	47403
04/12	Andrea	Fletcher	6320 E. Bender Rd.	Bloomington	IN	47401
04/14	Mike	Griffin	3830 Woodhaven Drive	Bloomington	IN	47403
04/16	Kathy	Street	4153 Hector Drive	Bloomington	IN	47408
04/20	Tiffani	Sinn Trulock	901 Orchard Drive	Newburgh	IN	47630
04/26	Fred	Matthews	7263 S. Burch Rd	Bloomington	IN	47403
04/28	Haley	Norris	2677 N. Warren Rd.	Bloomfield	IN	47424
04/28	Lesley	Bolton	8841 S. Morning Glory Ct.	Bloomington	IN	47401
04/30	Mary Beth	Godsey	3403 N. Smith Pike	Bloomington	IN	47404

If you have a birthday that is not listed, please let us know so we can update our records.

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

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fcc@fccbloomington.org
www.fccbloomington.org
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The Christian Visitor

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Inside This Issue...

Page 1 Staying Connected during the
COVID-19 Crisis

Page 3 Faith Formation and Family ministries
during the COVID-19 Crisis

Page 4 FCC moves to Online Sunday Worship beginning
March 22

Page 5 Ways to Stay Connected with your FCC Family

Page 6 FCC Music goes online too!



**Scripture Readings
For Sunday Worship**

March 22

John 18:28-40; Psalm 145:10-13

March 29

John 19:1-16a; Psalm 146

April 5

John 19:16b-22; Psalm 24