

The CHRISTIAN

 FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH *(Disciples of Christ)* **Visitor**

Rev. April Johnson to lead Summer Forum on Anti-Racism and Pro-Reconciliation
Register NOW for this important four part course that begins June 6

Registration is open for Rev. April Johnson's four week course, *Community Conversations: Pro-Reconciling & Anti-Racist*. This course kicks off our Summer Forum series held **weekly on Sundays beginning June 6 at 11:15 am via Zoom**. It is designed by Rev. Johnson specifically for our church! Sarah Lynne Gershon is working with Rev. Johnson on the course description for each Sunday and will be sending the information very soon!

The theme is focused on the power of stories. Rev. Johnson will help us consider the stories we are a part of, the importance of hearing a diversity of stories, and identify the miracle story that God is writing through First Christian Church in Bloomington. We will begin by defining terms used in conversation about race and racism with the goal of developing a shared language. This is an important foundation for our ongoing work together to become the anti-racist and pro-reconciling church that we say we are!

Our hope is that this course will help us develop a sense of how we, as a church community, are being called to practice anti-racism and pro-reconciliation. The rest of our summer forums in July and August will help us continue to explore what practicing anti-racism looks like in our church. *But this work will not stop after the summer!* Sarah Lynne is already working with FCC's Faith Formation team to consider how we will continue this work in the fall.

Get connected to these *Community Conversations* **now** in order to contribute to our ongoing miracle story of reconciliation. **Please register online (see link below) or by calling the church office.** If you are not sure you can attend every course, but would like to be a part of *Community Conversations* please register and email Sarah Lynne about the date you will miss. We will get you the material to catch up before the next class!

Link to Online Sign-Up:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/summer-forum-series-tickets-153535255081>

Celebrating the Ministry of Pastor Helen Hempfling

*Plan to be in worship (in-person or online) on May 30th at 10:00 am
Then join us for a picnic celebration at the Lion's Den shelter in upper Cascades Park
from 2:30-5:30 pm*

Read all of the important details of this special day on page 3 of this newsletter!

Pastor's Pen

I thank God for you. Your cards, notes, emails, texts, and phone calls have meant the world to me and my family in the wake of my father's death. Grief and gratitude—mixed together—make for a poignant and overwhelming life experience. Thank you for understanding my need to be with my mother and siblings (three sisters) last week. This is the first time in decades that it's been "just" the Hempfling women without husbands or children. We are fortunate that we get along beautifully, which made our time together both healing and renewing. One night, tears and laughter and stories flowed as we viewed our collection of home movies (8 mm film that had been digitized by a younger family member) and reminisced about our growing up years—all the while munching on a "girl's dinner" consisting of popcorn, apple slices and cheese. Another evening, we played one of my dad's favorite "parlor" games: Dictionary (the non-commercialized equivalent to "Balderdash").

We also spent some time talking about the future—making plans for an extended family gathering later this summer when we will "officially" thank God for the life of Bob Hempfling in a worship service led by Bruce. But mostly, we simply lived in the present moment, doing the ordinary things of life that (to be honest) didn't feel very ordinary without Dad's presence.

Past, Present, Future. Laughter, tears, good times, challenging times. Such is an ordinary life. It's the same sort of blessed ordinary life that you—as a **church** family—have inherited and are endeavoring to live. Our beautifully executed 195th Anniversary Celebration on April 25 offered a great opportunity to reminisce about days gone by. And a promising future lies before you as you make plans for a new phase of your life together after I am no longer with you as your pastor.

In the meantime, however, let's choose to live mostly in the present moment. Let's savor these present days together as a church family who is navigating "ordinary" times that (due to the pandemic and other circumstances beyond our control) don't feel particularly ordinary. Let's continue to practice those ordinary things that strengthen us for THIS day: giving generously, worshiping in-person and online, showing compassion to each other, praying for each other and for this world, welcoming new names and faces as family, recognizing the gifts in each other and in Christ's church, and expressing thanks to God in all circumstances.

Such is an ordinary life. And I wouldn't have it any other way! Thanks be to God.



Pastor Helen

Celebrating the Ministry of Pastor Helen Hempfling on May 30

Special Presentation during Worship at 10:00 am and Picnic Reception from 2:00-5:30 pm

For over 25 years, Pastor Helen has nurtured, comforted, guided, and loved First Christian Church in Bloomington, Indiana. And for over 25 years the FCC community has loved her. Join us as we celebrate all the gifts that Pastor Helen has so freely given to FCC and its people. We will celebrate her ministry with two events on May 30 as we give thanks for Helen and her family and wish her the very best in retirement and her move closer to her family in Boise.

The celebration will begin during worship at 10:00 am with a very special presentation to Helen by FCC Moderator Terry Daugherty on behalf of the FCC congregation. It is not possible to truly represent what Helen has meant to FCC in a tangible gift, but we will try our best to do just that. Join us in person or online for a very special worship service on May 30 at 10:00 am.

The celebration will continue that afternoon from 2:30-5:30 pm at the Lion's Den shelter at Cascades Park. This shelter has been the site of many FCC picnics, so let's have one more fun picnic in honor of Helen. Bring your own picnic meal. We will have grills fired up for anyone who wants to grill burgers or hot dogs. We will also provide bottled water and dessert! City guidelines limit attendance to 50 for any given time. So, we will have a sign-up (just like the Sunday in person worship sign-up) to monitor attendance. You can sign up online (link is below) or by calling the church office. If we go over 50, we will simply divide the time into two time slots so that we can keep the numbers at a safe level. You will be asked which time slot you would prefer when you sign-up. We will also provide a "drive-through" reception line along the circle drive at Lion's Den shelter from 2:00-2:30. If you are not comfortable with group gatherings, you can drive through the circle slowly and speak from your car to Helen and Bruce while stopping very briefly at an area on the circle drive where they will be receiving well wishes.

Sign up at:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/picnic-celebration-of-pastor-helen-hempflings-ministry-and-retirement-tickets-153551116523>



Graduation Recognition Sunday May 16!

Each Spring First Christian Church looks forward to honoring our high school and other graduates during worship. We will recognize the accomplishments of these hard-working young people on Sunday, May 16.

Please, send information about your graduate (including name of school, honors received, sports or activities, and post-graduation plans) to Ashlyn Reynolds (call the church office or email at fcc@fccbloomington.org) as soon as possible. We want to be sure to recognize all graduates. So, please let us know if you are graduating .

Congratulations!! We can't wait to see what you do next!

Baptisms and Confirmations on Pentecost Sunday, May 23 (Wear **Red!**)

Since February, Pastor Helen has been meeting monthly (Zoom as well as masked and socially distanced) with a small group of young people who are considering what it means to be a baptized member of Christ's Church. At our Pentecost Service (May 23), we will celebrate the ways that the church is strengthened through the act of baptism. Please plan to worship with us on that special Sunday. And **WEAR RED**, the color of Pentecost flames!

Pentecost Special Offering May 16 & 23

For the past thirteen months, many of us have stayed away from our places of worship to keep ourselves and our faith communities safe.

How have new church leaders responded? By spreading the word about Disciples through DoorDash, meeting with folks struggling with anxiety on Zoom, and addressing returning citizens' needs. Chaplains, pastors, and others have answered the call to be the new church.

To support them, contribute to the Pentecost Offering on May 16 and 23. Half of the gifts go to regions to support new church development. The other half goes to New Church Ministry, which trains, equips, assists, and multiplies new church leaders.

**Let's all be the new church, together.
Please give generously to this year's Pentecost offering.**



Hybrid Worship Update

Last Sunday's inaugural hybrid worship service was carried out practically without flaw, thanks to the diligent work of our COVID safety team led by Peggy Stafford and Jenn Richards. Folks who registered were sent a reminder notice that gave them specific directions, including their assigned door and pew and what to expect. Pastor Helen and elder Scott Cripe did their best to engage both the in-house folks and the at-home folks. The biggest challenge for those in the sanctuary was (and will continue to be) to discipline themselves to greet each other via a socially distant hand wave rather than a close up encounter. Weather permitting, Pastor Helen (who has been vaccinated) will be on the lawn following worship to greet folks, masked and socially distanced.

Because the sanctuary has a capacity to safely seat a limited number of people, registration is required and is open Monday through Thursday at noon. If there is someone (besides a household member) in your "safety pod" with whom you can safely share a pew, please let us know when you register. You can register by calling the church office or by going to the homepage of our website.



Music Notes

Transition *Disengagement* Farewell NEW BEGINNINGS

ADAPTING TO....

We hope that you have noticed that our monthly topics for Jazz Vespers attempt to provide a progressive cycle of meditation each month. The topics for May are no exception. Our lives are in a constant state of flux – change of seasons, change of plans, change in community, friends move away, life is an adventure of change and the cycle of life that we are called upon to embrace. The first Jazz Vespers Moment in May is anchored in these lines from the poem *Lines Written in Days of Growing Darkness* by Mary Oliver:

the vivacity of *what was*, is married to the vitality of *what will be*...

So let us go on, cheerfully enough.
this and every crisping day.

As we conclude an entire year of Jazz Vespers Moments, we hope you will find that these moments of reflection will continue to bring meaningful and provocative moments that are helpful to center your growth in the midst of change.

Speaking of transitions – two of our longest serving Choral Scholars will be leaving us soon as they complete their IU Studies and venture into their future careers. Our mezzo-soprano **Liz Culpepper** will be completing the final stages of her doctoral work from home in Austin and will only be in Bloomington intermittently through the coming year. **Joe Andreola** – the bass anchor of the quartet - has completed his Master's Degree in Vocal Performance and will be leaving Bloomington as his career path unfolds.

And finally – we say farewell to **Jono Palmer** who returns home to New Zealand on June 1 as his work on his Doctorate in Choral Conducting comes to an end. Jono's contribution to FCC has been extraordinary since the pandemic created new challenges for worship. During the past year, he has spent countless hours spearheading the purchase and installation of video and audio equipment for the sanctuary, learning as he went along about how to provide us with the best audio and video experience. He has become a master at video editing as evidenced by the increasingly beautiful visual experience he creates each week for the Jazz Vespers moments. He has done all of this while continuing to serve at FCC Bedford, where he was director of music and facilitated a similar installation of video and audio equipment.

We are so grateful for the contribution of these young artists to our music and, indeed, to our lives. It has been a privilege to know and share with them! Godspeed.

Jan Harrington



In Our Prayers...

Please hold Jane Zebenden and her family in your prayers as they mourn the death of Jane's husband Chuck, who passed away on April 26. Cards and notes can be sent to Jane at 2309 S. Sussex Drive, Bloomington, 47401. Services were held on Thursday, May 6 at the Bloomington Convention Center's Zebendon Room.

Dear Friends in Christ,

On behalf of my family, thank you for ways that your expressions of sympathy and condolence have sustained us as we grieve my father's (Rev. Dr. Robert Hempfling) death. We are truly grateful.

Blessings,
Pastor Helen

Address Change

Mark Knowles and Danielle Murry-Knowles have a new address in Minnesota for the remainder of this year. Please use the following address for Mark and Danielle:

1732 W. 7th Street, Apt. 1
Red Wing, MN 55066

Family Ministries Update

*By Sarah Lynne Gershon
Student Associate Pastor*



Hello Families! I hope you continue to enjoy the Eastertide devotional bags and are looking forward to some special baptisms at Pentecost!

As we have started in-person worship again, I wanted to tell you that I can have children's worship bins available for your kids. I will keep an eye on the registration for worship and reach out if I notice you are coming with your children, but you can also text or email me to make sure I know you are coming and want a bin. They will be sanitized and include a children's bulletin, a coloring page, some pipe-cleaners (take

them with you!), and crayons in a plastic bag. These crayons will be marked with your child's name so they will not be shared between kids. I will place the bins in the pew where you are seated. We will not be able to have the prayer-ground open right now, Worship and Wonder, or the nursery open yet. I hope to launch regular programming in the fall. Y'all pray with me that we get there by September!

Thank you for understanding, I hope to see you in church soon!



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During the month of May, Pastor Helen reflects on some of the scripture passages that have meant much to her throughout her years of ministry. While she found it very challenging to narrow her list down to five “guiding scriptures,” she hopes that these selected passages will offer you this truth: *It’s not about her. It’s not about you. It’s about God!*

**Scripture Readings
For Sunday Worship**

May 9
It’s Not About Me!
It’s About God’s Presence
Psalm 23

May 16 (Graduation Sunday)
It’s Not About Me!
It’s About God’s Children
Luke 18:15-17

May 23 (Pentecost)
It’s Not About Me!
It’s About Christ’s Church
From 1 Corinthians 12