



# FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH *in* LAS CRUCES

A congregation of the  
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST & UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## JANUARY 2022 NEWSLETTER

### ABOUT FIRST CHRISTIAN

1089 El Paseo Rd, Las Cruces, NM 8801

**Sunday Worship:** 10:15am

Via Zoom and Facebook Live

<https://www.fcclc.org/worship>

**Phone:** (575) 524-3245

**E-mail:** [office@fcclc.org](mailto:office@fcclc.org), [pastor@fcclc.org](mailto:pastor@fcclc.org)

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

Until further notice, there will be no coffee hour before or after Sunday Worship.

To opt in to SMS text alerts, text **FCCTextMe** to **(844) 467-1299**.

### **Spiritual Practices**

Thursdays 10:00am

see "Meetings" page for details

### ON THE WEB



VISIT the WEBSITE

<http://www.fcclc.org>



FOLLOW on FACEBOOK

[@FirstChristianLC](https://www.facebook.com/FirstChristianLC)



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TEXT MESSAGE UPDATES

Text **FCCTextMe** to  
(844) 467-1299

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# News & Letters

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## From the Board President

### New Year and a New Thing

This is my inaugural newsletter article as your new board president. I want to begin by saying thank you for having the confidence in me to help lead First Christian Church for the next year. I want to thank the outgoing board members for all the hard work that they've undertaken and all that they have accomplished. Finally, I want to say welcome to 2022. The start of a new year, and new things happening.

In my old congregation, it became a tradition for me to deliver the first message of the New Year, and so it's appropriate to continue that tradition in the newsletter. Each year I found something to challenge myself, and my friends, for the coming year. Looking over the last two years, I'm reminded of the words God speaks to Israel in the book of Isaiah. Forget about things you've done in the past. Don't spend time living there either. You see, I am doing something new! It's welling up and ready to burst out; don't you feel it? I'm creating paths in the desert and bring water to a parched land. Look for it. It's coming! (paraphrased from Isaiah 43:18-19)

The first meeting of the board of directors was focused entirely on creating a Vision of where we feel that God is leading First Christian Church in the next 1 – 5 years. It's still a work in process but should be done shortly. We looked at the challenges that are facing our home because of COVID-19, a change in leadership (especially Pastor Bethany), all more and more in person. It's also been a challenge by a large change in our attendance numbers. We've lost several of our renters. Our largest challenge is the aging of our campus. Our building is old. So now is the time to look at what God is calling us to do, and where in Las Cruces God is calling us to be.

To meet the challenge of letting God create a new thing in us this year. God told Israel not to look back. As we look over everything that First Christian Church has been and done in the past, it's apparent that we can't look to our past to keep us moving. Many of our past guides have left us over the years. But we can't let their loss paralyze us moving forward. God is telling us we shouldn't spend all our time looking in our rear-view mirror. There are times to look back and gain wisdom from the past, but don't live there. The past is a great place to learn from but it's a terrible place to stay. Some of us hang on to our old baggage (unresolved issues, failures, and negativity) far too long. This year

we are going to learn from them and let go. If we live in the past, we will never embrace the future God has in store for us.

God promised Israel, and us that our Creator will create something new. When God starts moving people can feel it. Look around and see if you can feel it as well. God is saying in this passage that the desert and dry places will be reborn. That means that God has something better, and something different for us. But new paths in the desert means that we must keep moving forward. Sometimes it might be rough. Sometimes it might seem as hostile as walking through the desert. But keep looking forward and relying on the promise of God.

I do believe that God has been preparing us for a new calling and a new way forward, so that we can reach our full potential as a church for everyone in Las Cruces who has felt any kind of spiritual loss or separation. There are several other churches in Las Cruces that say they are Open and Affirming, but First Christian Church is the ONLY church that believes in and practices the “Whosoever” promise of John 3:16. Let us become a house of prayer for all people. Let us share the hope and love of God through Christ with our city.

This year God is calling for it to be a year of building us up to reach all that God is calling us to do. It will be a year of focusing on improvements where it is needed, and starting new things, while old things will die away. God has a fresh start for us in 2021. Let’s anticipate the new thing God is promising us. It’ll be great. When we do feel God moving and we follow along, God promises to take away impossibilities, and make possibilities. Those new paths in the desert and wilderness.

Change is hard. Change can be scary. But doing New Things in God can be exciting. So, let go of old baggage. Let go of living in the old ways. Christ has already taken them away by our new creation in him. Jesus showed us The Way in the desert and the streams in the wastelands. Through following The Way, he taught us we will transform our desert into fields of blessing and our wasteland into plentiful gardens. Let us make a church resolution for 2022 that yes, we believe this year God will do something new!

Scott Hays-Strom  
Board President

# Thoughts from Bethany

Dear FCCLC Family,

Happy New Year! I hope that you had a wonderful holiday season, and I look forward to moving into 2022 with you.

This year, I am inviting you to join me in a new spiritual practice. Tomorrow at our January 2<sup>nd</sup> service, everyone in attendance will be given a “Star Word.” If you cannot attend in person on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, you can choose your own word from the list at the bottom of my article.

My word for 2022 is courage, here is how I will start using it in my spiritual life:

I will start this month out by reading definitions of what courage means. I will pray and meditate on the meaning of courage and how I can apply it to my life now and throughout the year. To keep it fresh on my mind, I intend to post an image of it in my home office above my desk so I can reflect on it every time I sit there or walk by.

Each month, I will also include a thoughtful prompt or question in our church newsletter to give us all new ways to consider what our words mean and how we can apply them to our lives. We will start out the month of January with this prompt:

***What initial thoughts, impressions, and prayers do you have for your star word?***

The Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville, NJ describe the meaning behind Star Words this way:

1. The Magi followed a star, which ultimately led them to Jesus. Therefore, we too use all the resources we have available to us—including creative prayer practices and intention words for the new year—to move closer to Jesus.
2. We trust that God uses multiple ways to guide us and speak to us. Star words are one such lens that might provide us a way to look for God in our midst, both actively and in hindsight.
3. We trust that it is often easy to miss God in our daily midst. Having an intention word to consider both in present days, as well as to reflect on at the end of the year, allows for us to see God in ways we may not have seen God before. This is the greatest gift.
4. We know that the most common prayer practice for many involves speaking to God as opposed to silence or contemplation. We believe that star words invite a new prayer rhythm of reflection and review that can be a powerful new way to connect with God.

5. Traditionally, by not looking or sorting through the star words at their selection, we practice the spiritual task of receiving. It is not we who are in control in this moment. Instead, we trust that God is present, and we let go of our desire to cultivate or control. (<https://pclawrenceville.org/epiphany-star-words/>)

This is a practice which is used throughout many different denominations, and which I find to be deeply meaningful. I hope that you are as excited about trying this new practice as I am! I look forward to hearing how this simple practice is impacting your lives in 2022!

Be well,

Bethany (She/They)

***List of Star Words:***

ability, abundance, accept/acceptance, action, adoration, affection, alert, amaze/amazement, anticipation, aspire, astonish, awake/awakening, aware, balance, beauty, beginning, blessed, boldness, breathe, brilliant, calling, caring, celebrate, challenge, change, charity, cheerfulness, complete/completeness, courage, create/creativity, dare/daring, dazzle, delight, determination, devotion, discipline, dream, embracing, energy, enlightenment, excellence, expectant/expectation, explore/exploration, exuberance, faith, festivity, forgiveness, gentleness, glory, gratitude, harmony, holy/holiness, hope, humility/humble, imagination, invitation, Joy, knowledge, laugh/laughter, liveliness, maturity, meaning, memory, mercy, miracle, mystery, nourish/nourishment, offering, opportunity, overflowing, passion, patience, perception, perspective, plenty, possibility, precious, promise, provide, quietness, radiant, ready/readiness, receive, recreate, refine, release, renewal, restoration, sacred, satisfaction, seeing, service, simple/simplicity, sincerity, sparkle, stillness, surrender, teaching, tenderness, testimony, thanksgiving, thoughtful, together, triumph, trust, understanding, vision, whole/wholeness, wisdom

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# FCC in Las Cruces

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## Worship Covenant

In order to ensure that worship is a safe space for everyone who wants to return, we ask that you covenant with us to abide by the following safety guidelines:

Until further notice, there will be no coffee hour before or after Sunday Worship.

Face masks will be worn over your mouth and nose by all people over the age of 5 at all times indoors, even if you are fully vaccinated. If you forget, we will kindly remind you to put your mask back on. Disposable masks will be available if you forget yours at home.

Please maintain a six-foot distance between you and other members at all times when indoors, and refrain from singing unless you are a worship leader up front (no congregational singing at this time.)

Worship leaders, musicians, and speakers are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated. Anyone up front as part of the service must wear a mask regardless of vaccination status.

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When you enter, please take a bulletin and single serving communion cup, then find a spot to sit with at least one empty chair between you and another household. We ask that all fellowship and mingling be done outside.

We ask that you wear your name tag or a disposable name tag.

We will not be passing an offering plate around. You are invited to drop your offering in the container by the sanctuary doors.

You will receive the communion elements in individual containers which you can pick up on your way into worship. You may remove your mask to eat and drink in your seat. Immediately afterward, please put on your mask again.

After the final hymn please make your way outside, taking your bulletin, communion packaging, and all trash with you. There will be trash cans by the sanctuary doors.

# NOTES

This covenant will change as recommended safety measures in our county change. We will communicate any changes through email blasts and in person announcements.

The livestream recording begins at 10:10 am. At that time, any sounds above a whisper may be heard on the livestream. Anyone who gathers near the front of the sanctuary may be visible on camera.

If you have any questions about the covenant, please contact Pastor Bethany.



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# Faith Action Committee

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## About the Committee

The Faith Action Committee gathers information about justice concerns and practical needs in our community and our world, to share with the congregation so that members stay aware of opportunities to serve in Christ's name.

The committee welcomes anyone who would like to join the following members of the committee: Mike Bureman, Ralph Holmes, Rev. Bethany Meier-Evans, Aletta Wilson, Paul Whitacre. Just contact anyone of us.

We meet via zoom on the third Thursday of the month at 1:00 PM. The next meeting is January 20th. The zoom link is below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83068236435?pwd=Sk42WDBqclVPck1Jb2dQZG5PdWs5Zz09>

## Summary of 2021 Activities

### Local

On the local scene Mike Bureman continues to volunteer as needed at the Soup Kitchen and El Calvario. Please read his informative report below. I thank Mike for his wonderful service all these years, and how he and other members of the First Christian Church in Las Cruces have served.

This is from Mike Bureman:

When Rita and I started attending FCC as snowbirds in late 2006, FCC already had a long history of preparing and serving the noon meal at El Caldito on the 4th Tuesday of each month. That service continues today, although with time and the Covid 19 pandemic FCC's involvement has fallen off considerably. Presently there are only 3 or 4 of us associated with FCC, who still show up regularly to help.

Recently, because of a number of factors, we are now looking for another day to serve as the 4th Tuesday has a new crew chief who brings his own crew.

We consulted with El Caldito management who told us that the first Monday of the month was always short of volunteers. So, on the first Monday of December, we showed

up only to find the place full of volunteers. So we all left. The crew chief told us he had no explanation for so many volunteers that day and asked us to come back in January. So we will and see what happens then.

I'll keep you informed as to what day we ultimately choose.

I hope and pray, for lots of reasons, that this pandemic ends soon, because I know that is why many of you who used to volunteer, decided not to continue.

I can tell you that the strictest of Covid protocols are followed, not only by the volunteers, but the clientele, as well.

Helping to serve regularly at El Caldito is a most rewarding experience. The volunteers are all so dedicated to what we are doing and why we are there. The folks who come there to eat are all so gracious, thankful, and appreciative of what we do for them. I always leave with a warm feeling.

I would invite those of you who used to help regularly to give it another try. I would invite those of you who have never volunteered at El Caldito to also give it a try. I promise you won't regret it.

When I first learned that refugees, primarily from Central and South America were coming to Las Cruces, they were brought to the Holy Cross Retreat Center and to FCC. Those that were brought to FCC were immediately met by host families who would take the refugees to their homes and feed them and house them for a day or so, get those that needed it volunteer medical treatment and work with their sponsor families to arrange their transportation to their sponsor family and get them to either the airport or the bus station. A number of FCC members participated as host families. We did not because we did not have room in our house.

A year or so or more later, the then minister at El Calvario arranged for the refugees to be brought to El Calvario where they were met by a number of volunteers who fed them, arranged with their sponsor families for transportation and getting them to either the airport or the bus station. Some would be met by host families who took them home. The others were housed at El Calvario for however long it took to arrange their transportation to their sponsor families. Doctors and nurses also came to El Calvario to check them out. A number of FCC members, including myself, were among those volunteers. I was the primary assistant cook.

As time went on, and the number of refugees continued, other churches also received refugees including the Holy Cross Retreat Center among others. Eventually, the numbers became so great that the city remodeled the old armory where refugees would be taken there first, then taken to El Calvario or one of the other churches.

When the Trump administration instituted its Remain IN Mexico policy, volunteers from El Calvario would load up a van with supplies and take them to the refugees forced to stay in Juarez. At that time staff and volunteers at El Calvario also began to expand their efforts to help citizens and non-citizens here in the Las Cruces community with a myriad of programs including a free meal and entertainment the first Friday evening each month, free legal assistance, and housing. There is also a social worker on call to provide assistance as necessary, as well as a number of other services.

In recent months, El Calvario has been receiving asylum seekers from Haiti and Afghanistan. Some of the Afghan refugees are being settled here in Las Cruces and volunteers are always needed to help with all the many issues associated with resettlement here in Las Cruces.

El Calvario is doing lots of work throughout our community. At the vision strategy session Scott led us in a week or so ago, I suggested that the board make a visit to El Calvario and see what all it is currently involved in, because I think FCC could partner with El Calvario and help expand these programs and activities to our neighborhood and our part of town.

Mike Bureman

The committee has encouraged people to avail themselves of the Desert Spoon Food Hub (<https://www.desertspoonfoodhub.org/>). They serve customers in the Las Cruces and the El Paso area, most of the small farmers that supply food are from Southern New Mexico. They have a weekly Farm Box subscription program that you can get weekly or bi-weekly, or just a one-time order when you really like that week's contents.

### Climate Change

The committee encouraged people to continue learn about the climate change crisis and solutions. To that end the DVD video “Kiss the Ground” was promoted, and made available for people to watch and subsequently discuss. Pastor Bethany incorporated this message in a sermon as well.

An email blast was sent on the Line 3 Pipeline Replacement Project that is to be constructed in Minnesota through Native American land and an August 27<sup>th</sup> call in day to our U.S. senators to urge their support of the 30 by 30 Project to protect our land mass in the U.S. There is still an ongoing effort to stop this project. For more information go to the website below:

<https://www.stopline3.org/take-action/>

On a local level, Til Zimmerman invites people to become advocates with her formation of a local group to advocate for action to mitigate climate change.

## Health Security for New Mexicans Campaign

Aletta Wilson and Paul Whitacre have attended zoom meetings on the Health Security for New Mexicans. This plan holds promise to reduce the rate of increase in health costs for New Mexicans. For more information the latest zoom meeting may be watched at the website below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5C9exVEmzSM>

To learn more about the campaign, go to the website below:

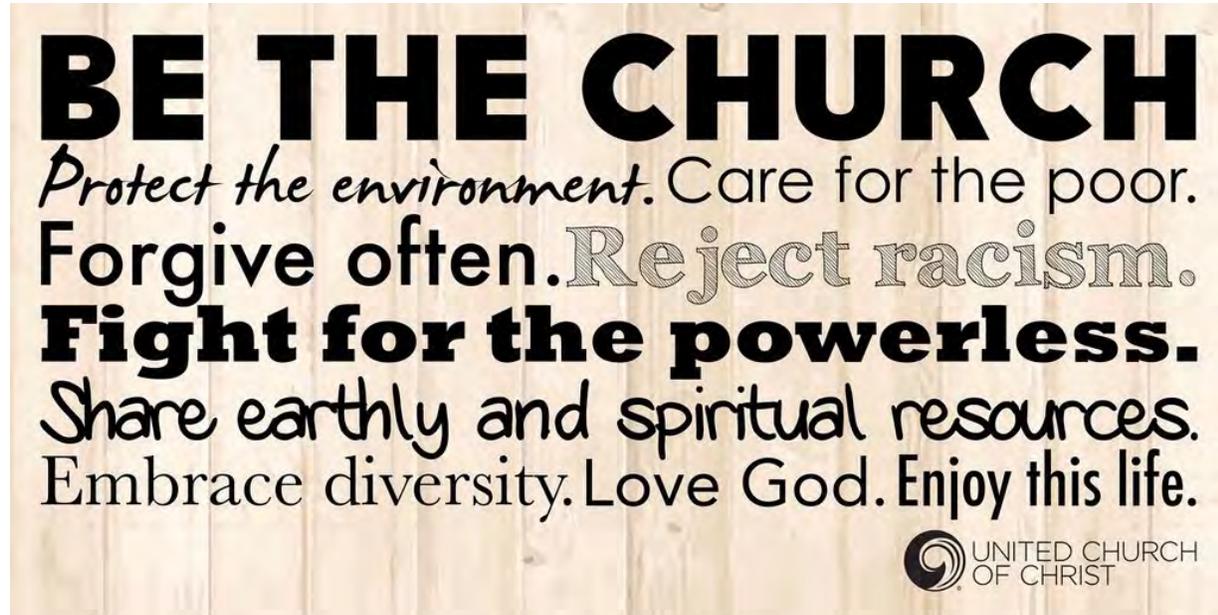
<https://www.nmhealthsecurity.org/>

Starting in 2022, we will be highlighting a charity of the month. We encourage people to save their extra change and donate it once at a worship service at the end of the month or to mail in a check to the church for that particular charity.

Lastly, I thank everyone on the committee for their ongoing efforts this past year and I look forward to working with you in 2022.

May the Lord Bless you and please stay safe,

Paul Whitacre



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# From the Community

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## Socks for the Community of Hope



To our FCC Family,

Thank you from the bottom of my heart! I love you all for making this Sock drive such a success. At 703 pair it was the largest, since I started 10 years ago. God's blessing on each of you in the New Year.

♥ Sandy Weber

"Just wanted to say thank you again for all the socks. What an undertaking it is, and you continue to do it year after year so that people can have warm, clean feet! It makes a huge difference to someone who is sleeping rough."

Nicole Martinez, LCSW  
Executive Director  
Mesilla Valley Community of Hope/  
Abode, Inc.

## Pay your Pledge with Securities

With the recent growth in financial markets, perhaps you have considered paying your pledge with stocks or bonds. The advantage is that if these assets have appreciated, donating them to the church means you won't have to pay the capital gains tax.

Now you can make such a transaction. FCC has established a brokerage account with Charles Schwab and Company. The church policy states that any gifts of securities like stocks or bonds will be sold as soon as transferred. That is, the church will not try to manage a portfolio and out guess or time moves in the markets. Thus your gift will go to work immediately.

An example may help to clarify. Assume you bought or inherited a stock at \$20/share (basis) some years ago and now it is worth \$100 a share. If you donate the actual

shares, via a transfer to FCC, you will avoid \$80 in capital gains tax that would occur if you sold the stocks yourself and then donated the cash. FCC would sell the stock for \$100. A win/win.

Another idea: people who have IRA minimum distribution requirements may rather donate that to FCC than get the 1099-R and have to pay tax on it.

There's a lot folks can do in this estate and financial planning arena! But always check with your financial and tax advisors before deciding. If you would like more information about the transfer process, please contact Bruce Weber, Treasurer.

## Noah's Ark Spotlight

Eric Hays-Strom

Since the dawn of our relationship, our home has been blessed with furkids. First there was PC Kitty, a blue point siamese that adopted us when the kitty we wanted... wanted nothing to do with us! (PC stood for Pussy Cat). Then came Pepsi, a black cat with too-long upper canines. To this mix, we added Travis and Savannah, White German Shepherds. Lacy was a black terrier of some indeterminate breed; and soon followed a tabby named Bosco who liked to sit on the dining room table and launch itself across time and space on to my shoulders, trusting in its claws to latch on to safety! Not all these furkids truly belonged to Scott and I, as we shared our home with two Little People, but we were responsible for them nonetheless. It was a warm, loving home. Four humans, and 6 furkids (and, for a while, walls that were infested with snakes AND mice - I have no idea how they co-existed).

But time took it's toll. How they left doesn't matter, each was mourned. In place of the two Whites German Shepherds we got Nikki, a Blue Heeler-Aussie mix, and Lacy was soon followed by what became for us as close as a child, Ixchel, a dachshund puppy that we adopted when it was 3 days old.

We picked her out of a litter of 5 (if I recall correctly) puppies, and visited her almost daily, holding her in our laps the day she opened her eyes for the first time. She was with us until just this past Thanksgiving when, for some unknown reason, she left our life as suddenly as she came. We had her for 10 happy years.

When Nikki left in 2015, we adopted Dakota from Cherished K-9s here in Las Cruces. She was a special case, oh, so timid. She thought I was the world's meanest ogre. She was so terrified of me. She was only a little less scared of Scott. Little by little over years of loving effort, she has come out of her shell. She now tucks her tail between her legs, quivers a little less, and approaches strangers and asks to be petted! She does a dance

when we walk - The Dance of the Happy Feet - which is often followed by a quick turn and a dash to me or to Scott to demand hugs!

She doesn't know what to make of being an only dog... but she enjoys all the attention!



## Request for Submissions

Would you like to submit articles for publication in our newsletter? Perhaps you'd like to write an article of interest to our congregation about happenings around the city, or, you've been writing poetry, or short (really short) stories. We'd be interested in publishing your submission, as long as it is appropriate to a church newsletter! If you would like to add to the newsletter, please email the Editor by the 25th of the month.

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# January Events

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## Weekly

Sun.	10:15am	Worship Service for First Christian Church
Sun.	10:15am	Worship Service for St. John's Catholic Church
Sun.	<i>after service</i>	Bible Study
Wed.	6:30pm	Mesilla Valley Swing
Thu.	10:00am	Spiritual Practices
Fri.	8:00am - 11:00am	HIV/AIDS Food Pantry
Fri.	6:00pm - 8:00pm	New World Drummers / Dancers

## Events

1/16	5:30pm	Mesilla Valley Jazz & Blues Society
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## Meetings

1/12	2:00pm	Worship Committee
1/15	10:00am	FCC Board Meeting
1/20	1:00pm	Faith Action Committee
1/22	10:00am	Tenant Meeting

## Spiritual Practices

On Thursdays, we gather at 10:00am on Zoom to do a Spiritual Practice together. All are welcome to join us, and no experience is necessary to attend. For more information, see the "Meetings" page of our website.

## Bible Study

Join us in the sanctuary immediately after our Sunday Worship for a weekly Bible Study. For more information, see the "Meetings" page of our website.

# Star Word Prompt

*What initial thoughts, impressions, and prayers do you have for your star word?*

## Elder / Worship Leader

### January

	<u>Elder</u>	<u>Worship Leader</u>
January 2	Patrick Crocker *	Sue Stefford-Grey
January 9	Paul Cook	Esther Devall
January 16	Deb Cook	Melissa McKenzy-Shaw
January 23	Scott Hays-Strom	Kamy McKenzy-Shaw
January 30	Kamy McKenzy-Shaw	Esther Devall

**\* Rev. Bethany will do Communion on January 2.**

## Birthdays

1/4	Penny Bever
1/5	Lynn Brightman
1/9	Melody Burns
1/13	Charlie Bever
1/14	Debra Darmata
1/27	Liana Brown
1/30	Allison Mason

## Anniversaries

1/4	DeAnna & Perry Steinman
1/25	Carl & Natille Zimmerman

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# Who Are We?

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First Christian Church affirms the Good News of Jesus the Christ as revealed through Scripture, tradition, experience, scholarship, and reason. Within the community of faith, we are called to discern through prayer, study, and discussion God's message for today.



**The Newsletter is published monthly by First Christian Church. It is available free of charge to members and friends of FCC. The purpose of the newsletter is to inform and to inspire, and to invite participation in the life of the congregation, the community, and the world. Submissions are welcome, including announcements of activities of interest to members, prayer concerns, thank-you notes, directory updates, etc. The editor reserves the right to edit for content and space. The due date for submissions is each month on the 25th.**