



MARCH 2023 NEWSLETTER

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Text Message Updates

Text FCCTextMe to
(844) 467-1299

Weekly Schedule

Worship Service: Sun. 10:15am

Hybrid Worship in Person &
Streamed via Zoom and Facebook Live

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

Social Hours: Wed. 6:30pm

1st Wed: Crafters Group

2nd Wed: LGBTQ Group

3rd Wed: Adult Education Group

Spiritual Practices: Thu. 9:00am

Every Thursday on Zoom

Some practices we do regularly:
Lectio Divina, Centering Prayer, Christian
Meditation, Bible Journaling, Scripture
Doodling, Book Discussion, and more!

Announcements

- » We have lifted all the Covid restrictions. The CDC has removed the Covid restrictions and rates of infection are low in the area. This means we do not require or request persons wear masks. It is up to your discretion if you wish to wear a mask. We are also returning to indoor coffee hour and potlucks.
- » We will continue to serve Communion at the front of the Sanctuary during our Sunday service.
- » We ask that participants form two lines at a safe distance, and keep masks on while in line and after being served.
- » Individual sealed communion elements are available if desired.
- » If you are unable to come forward, a deacon will serve you at your seat.
- » To limit the length of the newsletter, the FCC Board Meeting Minutes are published as a separate document, available at <https://www.fcclc.org/community/>

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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:

- » While you may choose to wear a mask, they are no longer required or requested by FCC at this time. We may adjust this decision in the future based on the numbers.
- » Worship leaders, musicians, and speakers are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated.
- » We ask that you wear your name tag or a disposable name tag, available by the front doors.
- » Please maintain a six-foot distance between you and other members at all times when indoors.
- » When you enter, please take a bulletin, then find a spot to sit. We ask that all fellowship and mingling be done outside.
- » All who are able are invited to come forward for communion.
- » If you are not able to come forward, a deacon will serve you at your seat. Individual sealed elements are available if preferred.
- » After the final hymn please make your way outside, taking your bulletin and any 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.

CALENDAR

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Sun.	10:15 am	First Christian Church Worship
	10:15 am	St. John's Catholic Church Worship
Mon.	6:30 pm	Celestial Sounds (Sanctuary)
Wed.	6:30 pm	FCC Social Hour (Parlor)
	6:30 pm	Mesilla Valley Swing (Sanctuary)
Thu.	9:00 am	Spiritual Practices/Book Club (Zoom)
Fri.	12:00 pm	Al-Anon
	6:00 pm	New World Drummers / Dancers
Sat.	8:00am	HIV/AIDS Food Bank

BIRTHDAYS

3/8
Hilda McKee

3/16
Aletta Wilson

3/19
Rita Bureman

SOCIAL GROUPS

3/1	6:30 pm	Crafters Group
3/15	6:30 pm	Adult Education Group

ANNIVERSARIES

3/21
John LeSage & Richard Blinks

EVENTS

3/3	5:30 pm	Food Pantry Support Group
3/17	5:30 pm	Food Pantry Support Group
3/18	10:00 am	Weaving for Justice Sale
3/19	5:30 pm	Mesilla Valley Jazz & Blues

Toad Hall (*see page 8*) Stones in his Pocket (Chapel)

MEETINGS

3/13	6:00 pm	Pastor Search Committee (Parlor)
3/18	10:00 am	FCC Board Meeting
3/28	6:00 pm	Pastor Search Committee (Parlor)

SERVICES

Fridays 5:00 pm St. John's Stations of the Cross

ELDERS & WORSHIP LEADERS

March, 2023

Sunday, Mar. 5 10:15 am

Worship Leader: Karen Holmes
Offering: Kamy McKenzie-Shaw
Communion: Rev. Patrick Crocker

Sunday, Mar. 12 10:15 am

Worship Leader: Melody Burns
Offering: Paul Cook
Communion: Kamy McKenzie-Shaw

Sunday, Mar. 19 10:15 am

Worship Leader: Kamy McKenzie-Shaw
Offering: Sandy Weber
Communion: Sandy Weber

Sunday, Mar. 26 10:15 am

Worship Leader: Melody Burns
Offering: Melissa McKenzie-Shaw
Communion: Paul Cook

April, 2023

Sunday, Apr. 2 10:15 am

Worship Leader: Sue Stefford-Grey
Offering: Deb Cook
Communion: Melissa McKenzie-Shaw

Sunday, Apr. 9 10:15 am

Worship Leader: Melissa McKenzie-Shaw
Offering: Rev. Patrick Crocker
Communion: Deb Cook

Sunday, Apr. 16 10:15 am

Worship Leader: Eric Hays-Strom
Offering: Esther Devall
Communion: Rev. Patrick Crocker

Sunday, Apr. 23 10:15 am

Worship Leader: Hilda McKee
Offering: Scott Hays-Strom
Communion: Esther Devall

Sunday, Apr. 30 10:15 am

Worship Leader: Esther Devall
Offering: Sandy Weber
Communion: Scott Hays-Strom

NEWS & LETTERS

BOARD PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Esther Devall

WHAT WILL YOU ADD FOR LENT?

During the season of Lent, people of faith traditionally focus on giving up something. It may be an unhealthy food or beverage, a bad habit, or non-essential purchases. My sister became a Catholic as an adult, and each year she and my niece give up soda or chocolate or shopping for new clothes. While I admire their willingness to sacrifice something they enjoy, I have never joined in with my own sacrifice. Perhaps due to my numerous attempts at dieting and losing weight, I find it difficult to sustain practices that focus on deprivation. I find it more meaningful to improve my health by adding things – eating more fruits and vegetables, drinking more water, walking my dogs farther, or getting more sleep.

What if we took the same approach to Lent, or to our spiritual practices in general? What could we add that would bring greater meaning to life and a closer relationship to God? Here are 5 things you could add during the Lenten season:

» **Count your blessings**

Make a list of 3 things you are thankful for before you go to sleep each night.

» **Take deep breaths**

Spend a few minutes each day focusing on your breath and remembering to breathe deeply. Try to be in the present moment.

» **Enjoy nature**

Take time to watch a beautiful sunset, explore more of the natural beauty in our state, or try a new route for your usual walk.

» **Spend time with others**

Instead of scrolling through social media, use your phone to call a friend or family member. Go old school and send a card or letter to someone who has made a difference in your life. Take time to visit with neighbors, co-workers, and people at church.

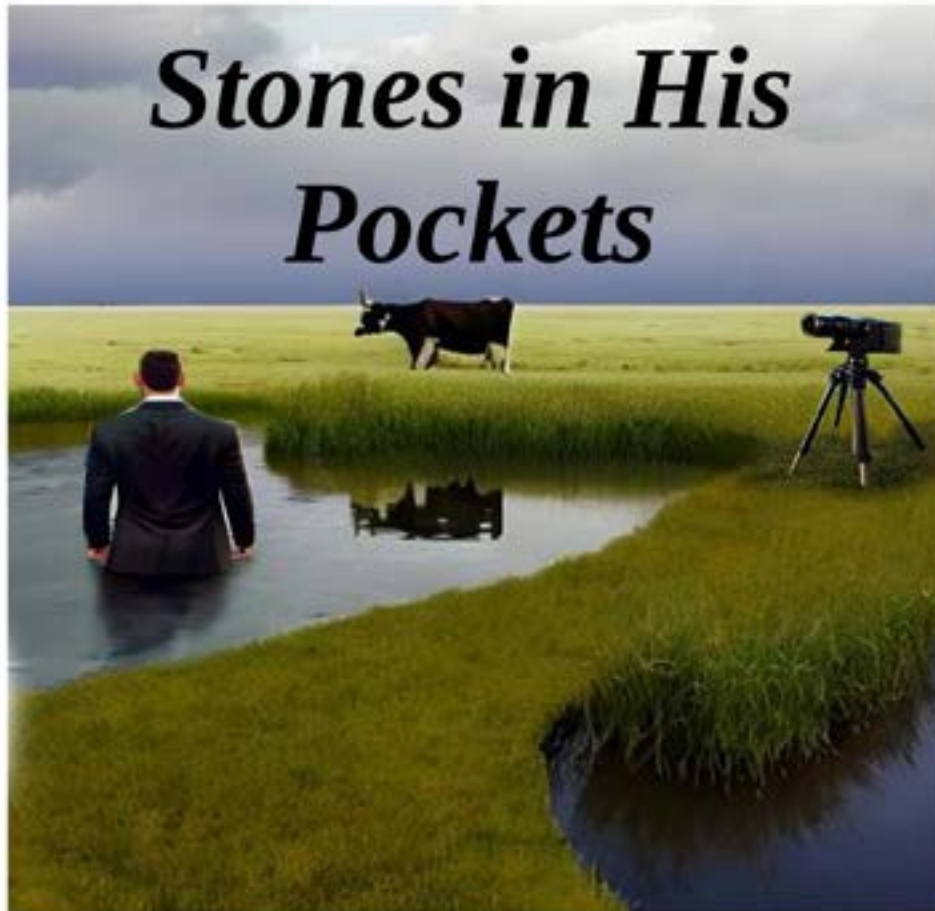
» **Listen to music**

Find music that uplifts you, encourages you, and makes you want to move. Listen to it without other distractions and let it refresh you.

There are lots more things I could add to this list, and your list might be totally different from mine. You aren't going to be "graded" on this. You aren't necessarily a "better" Christian if you give up or add things at Lent. However, adding any of these practices will bring you joy and prepare you for the celebration of Easter. So, what will you add for Lent? I look forward to hearing your ideas!

FROM THE COMMUNITY

ToadHall Productions is Proud to Present



written by Marie Jones
directed by Ken Forestal
featuring Steven Cousler and Jason Wyatt

First Christian Church
1809 El Paseo Road
in the Chapel Theatre

March 17, 18, 24, 25

7:00 PM

March 19, 26

2:00 PM

\$10 General Admission

\$5 Students/Seniors

BOOK CLUB IDEAS

Below are 5 books we are considering for our next book club at FCC. Please review the summaries below and let Patrick or Esther know if there is a particular book that speaks to you and would interest you in being part of our book club. We will start the new book on Thursday, March 30 so let us know what you think in the next 2 weeks.

Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church Is Transforming the Faith by Diana Butler Bass

For decades the accepted wisdom has been that America's mainline Protestant churches are in decline, eclipsed by evangelical mega-churches. Church and religion expert Diana Butler Bass wondered if this was true, and this book is the result of her extensive, three-year study of centrist and progressive churches across the country. Her surprising findings reveal just the opposite—that many of the churches are flourishing, and they are doing so without resorting to mimicking the mega-church, evangelical style. *Christianity for the Rest of Us* describes this phenomenon and offers a how-to approach for Protestants eager to remain faithful to their tradition while becoming a vital spiritual community. As Butler Bass delved into the rich spiritual life of various Episcopal, United Methodist, Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, and Lutheran churches, certain consistent practices—such as hospitality, contemplation, diversity, justice, discernment, and worship—emerged as core expressions of congregations seeking to rediscover authentic Christian faith and witness today. This hopeful book, which includes a study guide for groups and individuals, reveals the practical steps that leaders and laypeople alike are taking to proclaim an alternative message about an emerging Christianity that strives for greater spiritual depth and proactively engages the needs of the world.

Earthy Mysticism: Spirituality for Unspiritual People by Tex Sample

This book, says the author, is “a testimony of narratives where [a] strange God appears. Such appearances supply the mystical states that have come to shape my life. I am not helped much by conventional approaches to spirituality. I find it almost impossible to do ‘devotions.’ Daily Bible study in the sense of devoting twenty to thirty minutes a day never worked for me. I cannot get around to scheduled times for prayer on my knees with head bowed. I find labyrinths and prayer beads boring. I am ever and again distracted in silent meditation. I simply cannot sustain a spirituality based in such things. “I do not regard myself as unusual or special. My hunch, and it is more than that, is that a host of people will recognize themselves in what I describe here. What is here is, clearly, my story, but it is not about me. It is about a God of surprises, of One who comes in the ordinary and the seamy. It is about a God who will goose you. It is about mystical moments when clearly the only thing that finally matters is this God who will never leave us alone, especially in the ordinary and angular places of life. It is, I hope, a spirituality for unspiritual people.” From the Circuit Rider review: “Tex Sample’s new book, *Earthy Mysticism: Spirituality for Unspiritual People*, simultaneously says a whole lot and very little about the subject of mysticism. The word “mysticism” itself only shows up in the introduction and the last chapter, bracketing the book with a concept that Sample doesn’t fully define or even directly reflect on the meaning of. That being said, Sample never claims to be writing a scholarly view of what mysticism might be, but instead attempts to show how one can recognize the presence of the holy in everyday life. In this he succeeds powerfully.”

The Sacredness of Questioning Everything by David Dark

Is Your God Big Enough to Be Questioned? The freedom to question is an indispensable and sacred practice that is absolutely vital to the health of our communities. According to author David Dark, when religion won’t tolerate questions, objections, or differences of opinion, and when it only brings to the table threats of excommunication, violence, and hellfire, it obstructs our ability to think, empathize, and live lives of authenticity and genuine engagement. The God of the Bible not only encourages questions; the God of the Bible demands them. If that were not so, we wouldn’t live in a world of such rich, God-given complexity in which wide-eyed wonder is part and parcel of the human condition. The possibility of redemption and revolution depends on the questions we ask of God, governments, media, and everyday economies. It is by way of the questions that we resist the conformity that deadens and come alive to visions that redeem.

The Bible Tells Me So: Why Defending Scripture Has Made Us Unable to Read It by Peter Enns

The controversial Bible scholar and author of *The Evolution of Adam* recounts his transformative spiritual journey in which he discovered a new, more honest way to love and appreciate God's Word. Trained as an evangelical Bible scholar, Peter Enns loved the Scriptures and shared his devotion, teaching at Westminster Theological Seminary. But the further he studied the Bible, the more he found himself confronted by questions that could neither be answered within the rigid framework of his religious instruction or accepted among the conservative evangelical community. Rejecting the increasingly complicated intellectual games used by conservative Christians to "protect" the Bible, Enns was conflicted. Is this what God really requires? How could God's plan for divine inspiration mean ignoring what is really written in the Bible? These questions eventually cost Enns his job—but they also opened a new spiritual path for him to follow. *The Bible Tells Me So* chronicles Enns's spiritual odyssey, how he came to see beyond restrictive doctrine and learned to embrace God's Word as it is actually written. As he explores questions progressive evangelical readers of Scripture commonly face yet fear voicing, Enns reveals that they are the very questions that God wants us to consider—the essence of our spiritual study.

Being a Progressive Christian by Chuck Queen

Chuck Queen explores the following themes from a distinctly progressive Christian viewpoint: Scripture, faith, Christianity, salvation, discipleship, and the Beatitudes. Each chapter consists of seven reflections; each reflection is followed by questions that probe deeper into the topic and facilitate group discussion. As an introduction to progressive Christianity, the author wrote with the church in mind, providing a good resource for church discipleship and study groups. For example, chapter 1 includes the following topics: What the Bible Says Is Not Necessarily What God Says; The Bible Is Not an Answer Book; Reading Scripture Transformatively; Hearing the Divine Voice; How Jesus Read His Bible Experience Generally Trumps Tradition; and Honoring Sacred Texts Each reflection is designed to stir the reader's theological imagination, spark critical thinking, and nurture Christian faith and spirituality. The articles weave together personal experiences and vignettes from literature and film, with creative biblical interpretation and theological exposition. Most of all, they are intended to ignite new questions that will inspire the reader to explore, think, and embrace the mystery of the Christian spiritual path.

WHO ARE WE?

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.