



MAY 2023 NEWSLETTER

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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
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 have adopted a new seating arrangement in the sanctuary for the time being. Chairs are now set up around several round tables, encouraging worship to be experienced more communally than more traditional rows of seats would allow.
- » Worshipers are encouraged to serve communion to each other at their tables, instead of lining up at the front.
- » 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 at a table. We ask that all fellowship and mingling be done outside.
- » Worshipers are encouraged to serve communion to each other at their table, which will be explained and led during the service.
- » 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

5/6
Jack LeSage

5/8
Mary Lou Pendergrass

5/12
Steve Blinks

5/21
Julie Wojtko

5/31
Bruce Weber

SOCIAL GROUPS

5/3	6:30 pm	Crafters Group
5/17	6:30 pm	Adult Education Group

EVENTS

5/5	5:30 pm	Food Pantry Support Group
5/19	5:30 pm	Food Pantry Support Group
5/20	10:00 am	Weaving for Justice Sale
5/21	5:30 pm	Mesilla Valley Jazz & Blues

MEETINGS

5/8	6:00 pm	Pastor Search Committee (Parlor)
5/20	10:00 am	FCC Board Meeting
5/22	6:00 pm	Pastor Search Committee (Parlor)

ELDERS & WORSHIP LEADERS

May, 2023

Sunday, May 7 10:15 am

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

Sunday, May 14 10:15 am

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

Sunday, May 21 10:15 am

Worship Leader: Kamy McKenzie-Shaw
Offering: Rev. Patrick Crocker
Communion: Paul Cook

Sunday, May 28 10:15 am

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

June, 2023

Sunday, June 4 10:15 am

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

Sunday, June 11 10:15 am

Worship Leader: Melissa McKenzie-Shaw
Offering: Sandy Weber
Communion: Deb Cook

Sunday, June 18 10:15 am

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

Sunday, June 25 10:15 am

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

NEWS & LETTERS

BOARD PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Esther Devall

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

“Count your many blessings, name them one by one...” That’s a refrain from a hymn we often sing in church. But, how often do we take time to appreciate all the ways God has blessed us? Even when life is challenging, there are still roses among the thorns if we look closely enough.

Here’s a way to use the word **BLESS** to remember and appreciate our blessings (*adapted from Alvin Vander Griend, HarvestPrayer.com*):

- » **B** is for **body**. Thank God for physical health and the ability to move, breathe, and think. Pray for people who can’t enjoy these things.
- » **L** is for **labor**. Praise God for jobs and income that help meet your needs. Thank God for your employer and the people with whom you work. If you are retired, thank God for past experiences and the opportunity to enjoy a new stage in life.
- » **E** is for **emotions**. Thank God for joy, peace, and contentment. And when you experience frustration, anger, or sadness, remember that you are not alone and reach out to God for comfort.
- » **S** is for **social**. We are blessed with relationships. Thank God for family members, friends, neighbors, and our congregation.
- » **S** is for **spiritual**. Thank God for the spiritual gifts given to each of us, such as knowledge, teaching, serving, hospitality, and faith.

Take time this month to count your blessings and sing, “Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.”

Pastor's Letter

Rev. Patrick Crocker

What is the center of the Bible for you? No, I don't mean chapter & verse that's as far from the beginning as the end. (For most of us with Protestant Bibles, it's in Psalms. I'll let you look more into the interesting features of that for yourself.) I mean, what is the verse or story around which you understand everything else in Scripture and in your spiritual life? What is that, if the Bible didn't include it, your faith couldn't be what it is?

When I first considered that question some years ago, the answer was not one, but two. Or, perhaps like The Greatest Commandment, one idea expressed in two ways and two places. The first is Luke 23:34a, when Jesus is on the cross and prays, "Father, forgive them; they ain't got a clue" [my translation]. The second is John 8:1-11 which is either about a woman caught in adultery or a culture caught in self-righteousness, depending on what you're emphasizing.

Both of these centers of the Gospel show me a Divine care for who we are, as we are, with a hope for who we might yet become. I see a concern for those who are lashing out in pain as well as those who are the targets of pain that hasn't yet been transformed. I see grace and responsibility, grief and hope. I see, in stories without food, what the Lord's Table means for me.

Disciples of Christ are not alone in a joke that boils down to "Two Disciples equals three opinions." (I've heard the same said about a number of faith communities both inside and outside of Christianity.) And yet, something that Disciples will agree on is celebrating Eucharist/Communion/Lord's Supper at least weekly. It has been a defining feature of the denomination since it was just a movement trying to erase all denominations from Christianity. The founders wanted to return to worship as it was done in the earliest days, in an attempt to get as close to what Jesus originally meant as we could. We can talk about how well that worked out for us another time.

The centrality of the Table for Disciples means different things to different folks, which is why we try to have different voices talk about it as we prepare for Communion. (Though some Disciples churches will only have Communion meditations from the pastor, while others don't have the pastor involved at the Table at all.)

We practice having an open invitation, with no strings attached.

We practice taking care of something that has been entrusted into our stewardship, not sold or even given into our ownership.

We practice being gracious as forgiveness and ministry are offered to us.

With the small tables, more of us have gotten to practice being a host and ministering to others.

We practice welcome and grace so that they will become more natural. We practice hospitality and ministry so they will root deep. We practice, not to make perfect, but to make permanent – to ensure that within our hearts there is always a full table with a couple of empty seats.

Those empty seats are reserved for someone else who ain't got a clue. Just like you. Just like me.

Shalom,
Patrick

PS: For those who want to read more in the Bible version I read from on Sundays, look for The Message (translated by Eugene Peterson). It's been around a while, so you should be able to find print copies in bookstores or online suppliers. Also: biblegateway.com for free reading of many (though not all) translations.

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.