



NOVEMBER 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.fccl.org/worship>

Contemplative Worship Service
1st Sunday of the month, 6:30pm
In-person only at this time.

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.
- » The Pastoral Search Committee has finished collecting responses to measure the congregation's priorities for a long term pastor. They will now be analyzing the results to better inform their search moving forward.
- » 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.
- » The Communion bread and wine are served row by row. Please accept the elements and pass the trays to your neighbor.
- » 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 Rev. Patrick..

CALENDAR

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

BIRTHDAYS

| | | | |
|------|----------|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Sun. | 10:15 am | First Christian Church Worship | |
| | 10:15 am | St. John's Catholic Church Worship | 11/2 |
| Mon. | 6:30 pm | Celestial Sounds (Sanctuary) | Charlie Weathers |
| Wed. | 6:30 pm | FCC Social Hour (Parlor) | |
| | 6:30 pm | Mesilla Valley Swing (Sanctuary) | 11/20 |
| Thu. | 9:00 am | Spiritual Practices/Book Club (Zoom) | Aiden Wojtko |
| Fri. | 12:00 pm | Al-Anon | |
| | 6:00 pm | New World Drummers / Dancers | 11/22 |
| Sat. | 8:00am | HIV/AIDS Food Bank | Karen Holmes |

SPECIAL SERVICES

11/5 6:30 pm Contemplative Worship (Chapel)

SOCIAL GROUPS

11/1 6:30 pm Crafters Group
11/15 11:30 am Brown Bag Lunch
11/15 6:30 pm Adult Education Group
11/22 6:30 pm Book Discussion Group

EVENTS

11/3 5:30 pm Food Pantry Support Group
11/17 5:30 pm Food Pantry Support Group
11/18 10:00 am Weaving for Justice Sale
11/19 5:30 pm Mesilla Valley Jazz & Blues

MEETINGS

11/6 6:00 pm Pastor Search Committee (Parlor)
11/18 10:00 am FCC Board Meeting
11/20 6:00 pm Pastor Search Committee (Parlor)

ELDERS & WORSHIP LEADERS

November, 2023

Sunday, Nov. 5 10:15 am

Worship Leader: Melissa McKenzy-Shaw
Offering: Rev. Patrick Crocker
Communion: Paul Cook

Sunday, Nov. 12 10:15 am

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

Sunday, Nov. 19 10:15 am

Worship Leader: Sue Stefford-Grey
Offering: Scott Hays-Strom
Communion: Esther Devall

Sunday, Nov. 26 10:15 am

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

December, 2023

Sunday, Dec. 3 10:15 am

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

Sunday, Dec. 10 10:15 am

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

Sunday, Dec. 17 10:15 am

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

Sunday, Dec. 24 10:15 am

Worship Leader: Zanté Garcia
Offering: Deb Cook
Communion: Rev. Patrick Crocker

Sunday, Dec. 31 10:15 am

Worship Leader: Hilda McKee
Offering: Scott Hays-Strom
Communion: Deb Cook

NEWS & LETTERS

(DE)SERVING LIFE

Denali Wilson

On September 17, Denali Wilson shared with the FCC congregation about the work she is starting to help those serving life and long sentences for crimes committed as children in New Mexico. She has invited members of FCC to learn more about the organization, its work, and to make a contribution to support this work. Members can learn more and make a contribution through the website <https://de-serving.org/>, through the online fundraiser, <https://gofund.me/b512147e>, or by mailing a check to:

(De)serving Life
1300-G El Paseo Rd. #310
Las Cruces, NM 88001

A message from Denali and (De)serving Life to FCC about the work and financial need:

Every second chance is different. For all of us, it is an opportunity to be defined by more than our past and to transform our lives in small and big ways moving forward. For those who were sent to prison as children, a second chance is even more powerful. It is an opportunity to prepare for a chance at freedom for the first time in decades. It is an opportunity for hope, where before there was none.

On March 17, 2023, Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham signed SB64 into law, making these second chances possible. With the change in law, New Mexico became the 27th state to end life without parole as a sentencing option for children and provides earlier parole eligibility for people serving long adult sentences for crimes committed as children. This victory is the result of over five years of relentless advocacy led by the family members and loved ones of those serving these excessive and extreme youth sentences.

Because the new law does not include funding for the important parole representation work nor any funding to develop the other supports necessary for people returning to our community after decades of incarceration, advocacy must be provided by non-governmental advocates. (De)serving Life was founded to meet these needs and provide the services that are necessary to ensure a meaningful opportunity at parole and to invest in the success of people as they return home to our community. The changes in law will take effect this summer, and this newly-founded organization is calling on its community to help us prepare for the efforts ahead. From infrastructure to staff, the resources required to meet these immediate needs are significant, and we need your help.

When children are sentenced to life in prison in New Mexico, they are told their lives have no meaning or purpose. It does not matter what positive changes they make, nor does it matter if they have fully committed themselves to accounting for the harm they caused. They are left to feel lost and hopeless. An investment in the implementation of the Second Chance Bill and in (De)serving Life is a recognition that their positive transformation does matter, laying the foundation for a safe, supportive return to the community. It is a commitment to the belief that all children are capable of and worthy of redemption. We hope you will consider making this commitment with us through a donation today.

BOARD PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Esther Devall

GRATITUDE FOR LIFE'S CHALLENGES

As we approach Thanksgiving and Christmas, we often think about our blessings and feel a sense of gratitude to God. Most of us would probably name our families, friends, health, basic economic security, and living in a free country as blessings that enrich our lives.

It's easy to be grateful for the good things in life but how often do we feel grateful for life's challenges? Have you ever thanked God when you made a mistake, had a conflict with a family member or friend, didn't get a job you were seeking, were diagnosed with a health problem, or lost someone or something important to you? If you are anything like me, you feel embarrassed, upset, disappointed, worried, and even angry when faced with such challenges. Many times, we feel like God has let us down or abandoned us.

I don't believe in a God who punishes us by making bad things happen or who abandons us in difficult times. Instead, I believe in a God who is steadfastly beside us. We can use the challenges in life to help us grow emotionally and spiritually. Just like you don't build muscles by sitting on the couch, you don't build emotional and spiritual resilience when everything is going your way and life is easy.

I believe some of my greatest strengths and best qualities come from experiencing hardships and learning from them. For that reason, I try to be grateful when the going gets tough (although I may not feel that way at first!). I encourage you to look at life's difficulties in a new way and think about what blessings may come out of your challenges.

In closing, I'd like to share a poem by an anonymous author entitled Be Thankful:

Be thankful that you don't already have everything you desire.
If you did, what would there be to look forward to?

Be thankful when you don't know something,
for it gives you the opportunity to learn.

Be thankful for the difficult times.
During those times you grow.

Be thankful for your limitations,
because they give you opportunities for improvement.

Be thankful for each new challenge,
because it will build your strength and character.

Be thankful for your mistakes.
They will teach you valuable lessons.

Be thankful when you're tired and weary,
because it means you've made a difference.

It's easy to be thankful for the good things.
A life of rich fulfillment comes to those who are also thankful for the setbacks.

Gratitude can turn a negative into a positive.
Find a way to be thankful for your troubles and they can become your blessings.

Pastor's Letter

Rev. Patrick Crocker

Is there something about the days growing shorter and colder which prompts us to look to the past? (Though perhaps not that much colder yet, at least here.) As I consider some major Holidays in the month of November, it seems they many have the call to remember. November starts with All Saints Day (or All Hallows Day), when those friends and family members who have gone on before us are remembered and celebrated. All Souls Day, November 2nd, is set aside for remembering the lives of those who died as children. Guy Fawkes Day is celebrated in England and remains in the cultural consciousness with the rhyme which begins, "Remember, remember the fifth of November, the gunpowder, treason and plot" (though for some of us, it's just a reminder to reread/rewatch V for Vendetta). We remember Military Veterans or the end of the First World War on Veterans/Armistice Day. The month ends with Thanksgiving, a day to remember all the blessings we have received, and Advent, when we recall the waiting expectation for the Messiah.

The days call upon us to say, "I remember when my life was touched by this servant of God," or "I remember when this child taught me to play and laugh and wonder as I had once done," or "I remember when I felt threatened by the ways of the world, but then this brave soul left to serve," or "I remember when I received a gift." My father and grandfathers shared many stories with me, but my favorites were usually the ones which began, "I remember"

At the Lord's Table each Sunday, we are called to remember. In a way, it is an act of creative imagination, because we are asked to remember something which happened before we were born. And yet, just as with the Jewish traditional understanding that all of creation (past, present, and yet to be) was at Sinai when the Law was handed down, the case could be made that all of creation was gathered around the table. Perhaps that's why Jesus chose those he did as Disciples – humble or proud, militant or pacifist, uneducated or erudite, there's a place for everyone. We recall that there was a place for us and for those we most love and for those with whom we struggle to get along, and, gradually or suddenly, the veil between what was and what is grows thin. We see once again the hope seen when God looked all of creation and said, "It is very good." We remember. And remembrance leads to hope.

Shalom,
Patrick

PS: If you'd like to have a pastoral visit or chat on the phone, you're welcome to call/text me at 575-551-1717 or email me at my new email address

Rev.Patrick.Crocker@gmail.com.

COMMUNITY

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Esther Devall

Spiritual Practices usually meets on Thursdays from 10:00-11:00 am via Zoom. We will be skipping a few weeks in November due to surgery, travel plans, and the Thanksgiving holiday.

Here is the schedule:

- » Nov. 2 – Writing haikus about gratitude and thanksgiving (led by Esther).
- » Nov. 9, 16, 23 – Will not meet.
- » Nov. 30 – Walking the labyrinth at church (in-person meeting; led by Sue).
- » Dec. 7 – Discussion about writing your own theology (led by Charlotte).

We would love to have you join us! Here is the link for the Nov. 2 and Dec. 7 meetings on Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84266746936?pwd=dkdvL25oSkxlZjZza3Y3QkEwc105UT09#success>.

The link can also be located by going to the church's website, selecting the Community tab at the top, and then selecting Meetings on the drop-down menu. A blue button labeled Join Spiritual Practices should appear near the top of the page. Click on it and that will start Zoom.

ADVENT POTLUCK DINNER

Karen Holmes

Save the date: December 3rd is the first Sunday in Advent.

Please join our church family as we celebrate the season. We will have a potluck following the worship service. Afterwards, we will decorate the church and sing Christmas carols as we wait in hope, joy and anticipation for the coming Christ.

A FAREWELL POEM

To Paul and Diane Whitacre

Paul and Diane,

As you leave this valley, may the friendships you made here buoy you,
May the Spirit who greens the fields and causes the water to flow in the Rio Grande,
Watch over you and protect you. May the sunlit blue of New Mexico skies
Forever be a memory to brighten your days, no matter where you are.
May the sunset pinks and purples of the Organ Mountains forever be in your minds
To soften whatever harshness you encounter. And may the Great Comforter
Bring you many new friends to walk beside you, wherever the path in the labyrinth
May take you. We will miss you. Vaya con Dios

Paul Cook, Oct 8th, 2023
Your friends from First Christian Church

A HAIKU

Sue Stefford-Grey

MoMo chews the pen
my words skip and slide away
She love bombs my poem.



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.