



## MARCH 2024 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>

**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

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 (Parlor)
	6:00 pm	New World Drummers / Dancers
Sat.	8:00am	HIV/AIDS Food Bank

## BIRTHDAYS

**3/8**  
Hilda McKee

**3/12**  
Katelyn Mason

**3/16**  
Aletta Wilson

**3/18**  
Bethany Mason

**3/19**  
Rita Bureman

**3/24**  
Trevor Shaw

**3/24**  
Derek Shaw

## SPECIAL SERVICES

3/3      6:30 pm      Contemplative Worship (Chapel)

## SOCIAL GROUPS

3/6      6:30 pm      Crafters Group  
3/20      11:30 am      Brown Bag Lunch  
3/27      6:30 pm      Book Discussion Group

## EVENTS

3/1      5:30 pm      Food Pantry Support Group  
3/15      5:30 pm      Food Pantry Support Group  
3/16      10:00 am      Weaving for Justice Sale  
3/17      5:30 pm      Mesilla Valley Jazz & Blues

## MEETINGS

3/16      10:00 am      FCC Board Meeting  
3/12      6:00 pm      Pastor Search Committee (Parlor)  
3/26      6:00 pm      Pastor Search Committee (Parlor)

## ANNIVERSARIES

**3/21**  
John LeSage &  
Richard Blinks

# ELDERS & WORSHIP LEADERS

*March, 2024*

**Sunday, Mar. 3 10:15 am**

Worship Leader: Eric Hays-Strom  
Offering: Paul Cook  
Communion: Kamy McKenzie-Shaw

**Sunday, Mar. 10 10:15 am**

Worship Leader: Kamy McKenzie-Shaw  
Offering: Debby Johnson  
Communion: Paul Cook

**Sunday, Mar. 17 10:15 am**

Worship Leader: Sue Stefford-Grey  
Offering: Melissa McKenzie-Shaw  
Communion: Debby Johnson

**Sunday, Mar. 24 10:15 am**

Worship Leader: Debby Johnson  
Offering: Scott Hays-Strom  
Communion: Melissa McKenzie-Shaw

**Sunday, Mar. 31 10:15 am**

Worship Leader: Melody Burns  
Offering: Deb Cook  
Communion: Scott Hays-Strom

*April, 2024*

**Sunday, Apr. 7 10:15 am**

Worship Leader: Jeanne Knotts  
Offering: Esther Devall  
Communion: Deb Cook

**Sunday, Apr. 14 10:15 am**

Worship Leader: Deb Cook  
Offering: Paul Cook  
Communion: Esther Devall

**Sunday, Apr. 21 10:15 am**

Worship Leader: Melissa McKenzie-Shaw  
Offering: Zanté Garcia  
Communion: Paul Cook

**Sunday, Apr. 28 10:15 am**

Worship Leader: Hilda McKee  
Offering: Kamy McKenzie-Shaw  
Communion: Zanté Garcia

# NEWS & LETTERS

## *PRESIDENT'S LETTER*

*Scott Hays-Strom*

When this issue of the newsletter is published, we will be more than half-way through the season of Lent, and well on our way to Easter. Lent is a time of reflection on the great love that God shows to us through giving us the promises of Christ Jesus in his death. Jesus said that he was the way, the truth and the life. That comes in the form of a journey. He called himself “The Way” because finding true love and a fulfilling life in God is a journey. I found a wonderful acrostic from First Christian Church North Hollywood, CA as they shared a Lenten devotional. I’ve reproduced it here, and added my reflection on the coming year and the faith journey that First Christian Church of Las Cruces is on. After the acrostic, I’ve added my reflections on each word and what they mean to us as the Body of Christ in Las Cruces.

**Forward:** As our search committee is starting to look at applications of who God is calling for our next pastor, FCC is in a time of inflection. We are on our journey to serve an all-inclusive God. During the past months we’ve seen a rebirth of energy in our congregation. That energy has shown itself in seeing new faces come to visit and see who we really are. It might cause some discomfort over concerns of what we may become. Lent is a time of inflection over that discomfort. New people and new ideas can mean a time of ridding ourselves of some old traditions that we as Disciples and United Church of Christ have held for many years. Perhaps it’s time to move forward with those new ideas.

**Together:** Together, we—our whole church family together—in one mind and heart may move to where the Holy Spirit is guiding us. Together, we need to be both mindful and grateful for where we have been and now be fully open to where she leads in her wisdom. Sometimes the ideas are embryonically revealed, then slowly, unfolded like the wings of a mother hen around her chicks.

**In:** Indeed, new ideas are an evolution for our congregation. Never let it frighten us—as we, like Jesus, journey toward our Jerusalem.

**Faith:** First Christian Church’s members and friends, like the original disciples, may we accept what is revealed to us in our Lenten journey. In faith we know – “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (*Hebrews 11:1*) We can know the delight of being on our journey forward, together in faith.

## AN ACROSTIC

*Richard Follett*

F CCLC is truly at an inflection point  
O n our journey to serve our all-inclusive God  
R ight now, in Lent of 2023,  
W e are seeing a rebirth of energy in our congregation—  
A nd some may be feeling discomfort over concerns that we may be  
R idding ourselves of some rich FCCLC traditions and  
D isciplines which sustained us in the past

T ogether, though, we—our whole church family together—in  
O neness may move to where the Holy Spirit is  
G uiding us,  
E ver both mindful of and grateful for where we have been and now fully,  
T ruthfully open to where She leads in  
H er Wisdom, sometimes only  
E mbryonically  
R evealed and then slowly, gloriously unfolded like Her wings around us

I ndeed, such an evolution of our congregation  
N ever needs to frighten us—as we, like Jesus, journey toward our Jerusalem

F CCLC members and friends, like the original Disciples, may we each  
A ccept our Lenten call  
I n faith—”the assurance of things hoped for,  
T he conviction of things not seen ” (*Hebrews 11:1*)  
H ow delightful to be on our journey forward together in faith

Adapted from “Forward Together in Faith.” First Christian Church of North Hollywood, 2023 Elders’ Lenten Meditations.

# PASTOR'S LETTER

*Rev. Patrick Crocker*

As we travel our Lenten Journey, which maps and guides do we use? What practices shape us on our pilgrimage?

Growing up in South Texas, I had a vague understanding of Lent which bled over from my friends and neighbors. I knew there would be some kids who came to school with dirty foreheads one Wednesday and I knew that many would be (more or less successfully) abstaining from soda or another of the vices for the time before Easter. (And on Easter morning, many would jump back in so hard that a diabetic coma was not impossible.)

Baptist preacher & stand-up comedian Dennis Swanberg explained that “Catholics give up something for Lent; Baptists take on more projects for God.” My own family traditions were somewhere in the middle, when Lent was observed at all. Over the years, my understandings of Lent wandered among “New Years Resolutions, Part 2 (Maybe This Time It’ll Stick)” to “I Don’t Know Why, But I’m Doing This to Keep My Friends Company” to “I’m Giving This Up to Prove That It’s Not Really a Problem” to “I’m Practicing the Kin-dom of God I Want to See.”

For some, the point is suffering and the transformative power they find there-in. For others, the point is formative: creating the habits of spirit that will nurture God’s Benevolent Community. For others, the point is freeing up time/space so that more is available for prayer. For others, it is a way of reminding themselves and others that the way things are isn’t necessarily the way things have to be.

If there is a practice that has not yet become habit but might be helpful, today is an opportunity. Often on my hikes in the wilderness, I have happened upon a stalk of yucca or a length of wood that turned out to be a good support. Sometimes it would help me keep (or find) my footing, and others it would simply be a comfortable companion on the road. As I grew, I learned to leave those at the trail-head for the next traveler, with a blessing for their journey.

What do we give up or take on and why? One of the guides I appreciate on the Lenten Journey, Father Richard Rohr, wrote about this: “The poor body is always an available scapegoat to avoid touching our purse, our calendar, or our prejudices” (Wondrous Encounters: Scripture for Lent).



“This is the kind of fast day I’m after: to break the chains of injustice, get rid of exploitation in the workplace, free the oppressed, cancel debts. What I’m interested in seeing you do is: sharing your food with the hungry, inviting the homeless poor into your homes, putting clothes on the shivering ill-clad, being available to your own families. Do this and the lights will turn on, and your lives will turn around at once. Your righteousness will pave your way. The God of glory will secure your passage. Then when you pray, God will answer. You’ll call out for help and I’ll say, ‘Here I am.’” Isaiah 58:6-9a, The Message.

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](mailto:Rev.Patrick.Crocker@gmail.com).

## *FOOD PANTRY AND FAITH ACTION*

*Buddy Akin*

The Pantry (official name) is a volunteer -run food support service that caters exclusively to People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in Las Cruces, NM and surrounding areas. The Pantry operates under the 501C3 non-profit umbrella of the First Christian Church (FCC) of Las Cruces, and is housed at the church’s main location, 1809 El Paseo Road. The Pantry is financed through charitable donations, with some support from the NM Community AIDS partnership .The Pantry was founded 15 years ago by PLWHA Skip Rosenthal, RIP, former Director of an AIDS Service Organization (ASO).

The Pantry occupies a unique niche within the southern NM HIV/AIDS provider community, accepting referrals from the NM DOH, from Alianza of NM, a local ASO, as well as from area medical providers. The Pantry is a safe, non-judgemental space in which PLWHA can pick up groceries on a weekly basis, as well as see friends, find out about local support groups, workshops and events, and get free safer sex supplies.

A fundraising event to benefit The Pantry is scheduled for April 6th, noon to 7pm, at FCC, and will include a silent auction, raffle, various venders, and performances by local musical artists, and free HIV and other STI rapid testing. The goal is to fund The Pantry for the next fiscal year and also to raise community awareness and support. We hope that you can join us on April 6th and tell a friend!

# 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.**