

The Christian Visitor February 2023



We are called to share our Christian Faith and Christ's Love with all people.

Our Life Together in February

Fellowship

There will be a fellowship hour on Sunday, February 19th immediately following worship hosted by the Hustlers.

Elders Breakfast

There will be an Elders Breakfast before church on Sunday, February 19th in the fellowship hall hosted by Joan Ricks.

Church Board

The Church Board will meet on Sunday, February 12th immediately following worship.

If you have any items to add to the agenda, please notify the church office.

Worship Leaders

Please consider serving as worship leader in February. A sign up sheet is on the table in the narthex.

Memorial Gifts

Memorial Gifts to First Christian Church have been received in memory of

Thelma Rhodes

Bible Study

We are planning to start a bible study focused on the parables soon. In the coming weeks, there will be a survey looking for the best times to meet and a sign up sheet for those interested in participating. Please consider joining in this study.



Week of Compassion Special Offering February 19th & 26th

As the relief, refugee, and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Week of Compassion works with partners to alleviate suffering throughout the world, with a vision of a world where God's people transform suffering into hope.

This year's Week of Compassion Special Offering will be received February 19th & 26th. Because of your generosity, Week of Compassion meets people and communities in the midst of grief and lament, in the deepest moments of 'How could this happen?', as the very real presence of God's unfailing compassion.

More in the Life and Witness of the First Christian Church

A PASTOR'S PONDERING

This month begins the holy season of Lent. It begins on February 22nd with Ash Wednesday. The word Lent comes to us from the Old English word *lencten*, which means “to lengthen,” and refers to the lengthening days of spring. It was in use in the church before the year 900 at least. Lent has traditionally been a time for Christians to prepare for the Lord’s passion and resurrection through special observances, self-examination, repentance, prayer, fasting, self-denial, and meditating on the holy texts. It’s a time for us to “get in touch” with our deeper selves and to renew our deepest connections with God. We’re going to observe Ash Wednesday this year with a service of prayer and imposition of ashes (as I’ve done every year of my ministry). I think it’s important for us to “set the tone” for the season.

This Lent, we’ll step into another worship series entitled, *Gifts of the Dark Wood*. During this series, we’ll explore the various ways in which we walk in darkness and how that journey can present us with several spiritual gifts. These gifts come to us in surprising wrappings. You’ll have to come to worship, or tune in to our YouTube videos to see what those gifts are, claim them, and integrate them into your own spiritual walk.

I will say this about Lent and about our congregation in general. Prayer is a huge component of Lent, and it should be a huge component of our observance of it. Indeed, prayer should be a huge component of our daily lives. I’d like for us to establish and carry out some good prayer practices during Lent that, hopefully, will become a habit for us.

Prayer can take many forms, and can carry different meanings for different people. Prayer can be our words spoken on our own behalf, either silently or aloud. Those words can be formulaic (such as the Lord’s Prayer, one of the traditional Creeds, or Collects). Or, they can be completely extemporaneous. When I pray publicly, I prefer my prayers to be planned out, because I want my words to be precise when I pray on behalf of the gathered people. All of my prayers in worship are written out, and many times, I use the same prayers from week to week so they become ingrained in us and become part of our collective story.

There are different kinds of spoken prayer. There are prayers of *intercession*, in which we offer prayer for the benefit of others. There are prayers of *adoration*, in which we speak praise words to God. There are prayers called *collects*, in which the thoughts and intentions of a community are gathered, or “collected,” and offered to God. Our Gathering Prayer is really a *collect*. There’s *grace* that we say before meals, which can take several forms. Prayers may be spoken on behalf of a community, or they can be responsive, with the congregation speaking a line after each petition. The prayers said during communion are traditionally known as *The Great Thanksgiving*, because communion is the *Eucharist*, or “meal of thanks.”

Many, many times, prayer is carried out without words — beyond words. The Bible tells us that the “Spirit intercedes for us, in sighs that are too deep for words.” There are the prayerful acts of *meditation* and *contemplative* prayer, normally carried out with just a single word, or even just a vocal tone, or completely wordless. But there’s really no “right” or “wrong” way to pray. Prayers are simply our intentional conversation with God — speaking to God, and especially creating space just to *listen* to God speak to us!

Prayer, really, is all about a way for us to move energy. Because prayer is energy. It’s *spiritual* energy. It’s how we tap into Holy Spirit and bring our own life force into alignment with the Divine. The Psalms call it “walking in God’s way.” Christians normally call it “doing God’s will.” Prayer builds and maintains divine cords of energy that connect us to God in love. Sometimes, music can be a form of prayer, because music is energy too! In fact, our whole life can be a prayer, if we intend it to be so!

(Continued on back)

Office Hours:
 Tue—Fri: 9:00 am—1:00 pm
 Church Phone: 217-784-5460
 gcfcdoc@yahoo.com
 fecdocgc.com

February 2023

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3	4
			Secretary Vacation	Secretary Vacation			
5 10:15 AM Worship	6	7	8	9	10	11	
12 10:15 AM Worship 11:30 AM Church Board	13	14	15	16	17	18	
19 Week of Compassion 8:30 AM Elder's Breakfast 10:15 AM Worship 11:30 AM Fellowship	20	21	22 Ash Wednesday	23	24	25	
26 Week of Compassion 10:15 AM Worship	27	28					

**LOCAL
BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES
*February 2023***

- 1 Ashley Nicole Spears
- 2 Lindsey Graham
- 10 Ruth Reiners
- 14 Dayne White
- 21 Hailey Johnson
Jessica Moore
- 22 Dennis Higgins
- 25 Janet Iverson
- 29 Sue McClard



We're going to discover several different kinds of prayer during Lent and build a spiritual toolbox for you to use in your daily life and work. The church needs to be a *praying* community. That's really what sets us apart of other types of communities. We should abide in prayer. We should, as Paul teaches us, "pray continually." How do we do that? Did you know that breath can be a prayer? It really is all about our intention to stay in contact with, and in connection to God from minute to minute. We're going to build practices of praying whenever we're together as a community, from board meetings to fellowship events, from worship to cleaning or decorating the building. I'd like for us to begin thinking of prayer first, before anything else happens.

My prayer for you all is that you experience a holy, life-giving, self-affirming, and energy-creating Lent this year. You deserve it! May it be so! May it be so for us!

Pastor - David Massey-Brown
Administrative Assistant - Jennifer Hagan
Choir Director - Tim Ricks
Church Pianist - Joan Ricks
Custodians - Jeff and Cheryl Elder

10:15 a.m. Worship Service
Church Phone 784-5460
Email address: gcfccdoc@yahoo.com
Website: fccdocgc.com

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED