Faith news

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
FEBRUARY 2023

Pastor's Pen

"Do We Believe?"

As we look towards the start of Lent 2023 we must, at the least, prepare ourselves for the journey through the Lenten season. For us, Lent starts February 22nd with Ash Wednesday and ends at midnight on Saturday April 8th. These 40 days (not including Sundays) represent, in part, the 40 days that Jesus prepared himself in the desert for his upcoming ministry.

Here at First Christian, we will start that preparation with a Shrove Tuesday pancake meal (at First Christian) on the 21st and officially start Lent with a short Ash Wednesday service following F.U.N. on the 22nd. Between now and then, different committees/ministry teams, staff, leaders, and I will be putting the details together for our Lenten Journey as we all prepare for one of the deepest and most rewarding times in our lives together.

To help with our activities, ministry, and overall direction during Lent - the Lenten Worship group has come up with the theme of "Believe in Jesus!". This theme will be a way of helping guide us through the ups and downs of the Lenten story. There will be times when we will be challenged, times of excitement and joy, and at times – reflection about the life of Jesus and his final days on earth. We ourselves will be faced with different growing edges of our faith journey as we study, pray, and worship together. Each year the Lenten journey helps us answer the question– do we believe in Jesus?

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Pastor's Pen

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Between now and Easter, congregational life will still be going on as we continue to worship together, have Wednesday night F.U.N. activities, adult Bible study, fellowship events, visioning and planning discussions, puppets, Revelation Praise Team, people helping with facility upgrades, the monthly breakfast gathering at Perkins, and conversations in between. We will be busy checking in with each other, stepping forward into hands-on ministry, and sharing our story of our faith with others.

With all that said, I think the question has already been answered!

Shalom,
Pastor Sheldon

Retiree Breakfast

15 people enjoyed breakfast at Perkins last month. Both the food and the service were good but the company was great!

Don't feel bad if you missed it, because we will be gathering again. All retirees (or anyone not working at the time of the get together) are invited to Perkins on February 9th at 9:00. Join us for coffee, breakfast and fellowship. Hope to see you there.

Can't make it in February? Don't worry, the retiree breakfast will take place at Perkins the second Thursday of every month.

Elders

Elders will meet Thursday, February 23rd at 9:30 a.m.

February Serving Schedule

Date	Elder	Greeters	Worship Leader
February 5	Craig Phillips	Rowena Vansice (N) Bud & Sue Pickett (W)	Amy Wilcox
February 12	Vicki Gunsaulus	Jim & Nancy Wobschall (N) Mike & Cindy Sell (W)	Madison Eddins, Kendyl LeVelle & RJ Raney
February 19	Tiff Williams	Randy Gunsaulus (N) Vicki Gunsaulus (W)	Connie Palmer
February 26	Steve Barnett	Amy Wilcox (N) Rusty Wilcox (W)	Randy Gunsaulus, Mike Sell

February Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays

3	Matt Gunsaulus
5	Jodi Albertson
6	Steve Roth, Norma Stecker
7	Joan Rusk
10	Raymond Stecker
12	Sandra Hannagan
13	Gracie Elliott
15	Dan Crook, Donna Cook, Kelli Huyser
17	Nile McCoy
22	Tammy Welcher, Paula Odekirk, Alex Klyn, Brooke Henning, Josh Weithers
24	Kim McQuin
27	Mary Ann Versteegh, Dane Warnick
28	Jim Wobschall

Anniversaries

2	Mike & Cindy Sell
7	Marlin & Sharon Browne
10	Mike & Nancy Carney
14	Scott & Julie Creech

Family Fun Night Menus:

February 1st:
Sloppy Joes
Chips
Pasta Salad
Corn
Carrots & Celery with Dip
Fruit & Cookies

February 8th:
Macaroni & Cheese
Green Beans
Lettuce Salad
Fruit & Cookies

February 15th:
Chili
Crackers & Shredded Cheese
Carrots & Celery with Dip
Pudding & Cookies

February 22nd:
Hot Dogs
French Fries
Corn
Carrots & Celery with Dip
Fruit & Cookies

(Menu subject to change)

Family Fun Night continues to meet on Wednesday nights.

Puppet practice begins at 5:00 and Bible Clubs meet at 5:30 starting with a light supper. Classes for all ages begin at 6:00.

FEBRUARY 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 5:00 p.m. - Puppets 5:30 p.m. - Supper 6:00 p.m. - Classes	2 **Groundhog Day** 9:00 a.m. - Newsletter Team	3	4
5 **Boy Scout Sunday** 10:00 a.m. - Worship Service 11:15 a.m. - Coffee Fellowship 11:15 a.m. - Lenten Worship Planning Team meeting	6	7	8 5:00 p.m. - Puppets 5:30 p.m. - Supper 6:00 p.m. - Classes 7:00 p.m. - Choirprctice	9 9:00 a.m. - Retirees Breakfast	10	11
12 10:00 a.m. - Worship Service 11:15 a.m. - Coffee Fellowship	13	14 **Valentine's Day** 7:00 p.m. - Board meeting	15 5:00 p.m. - Puppets 5:30 p.m. - Supper 6:00 p.m. - Classes	16	17	18
19 10:00 a.m. - Worship Service 11:15 a.m. - Coffee Fellowship	20 **Presidents Day** **March Newsletter Article Deadline**	21 6:00 p.m. - Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper	22 5:00 p.m. - Puppets 5:30 p.m. - Supper 6:00 p.m. - Classes 7:00 p.m. - Ash Wednesday Service	23 9:00 a.m. - Newsletter Team 9:30 a.m. - Elders meeting	24	25
26 10:00 a.m. - Worship Service 11:15 a.m. - Coffee Fellowship	27	28				

First Christian Church

Newton IA

Visioning and Planning Retreat

Sunday January 29th, 2023

Twenty-six people from our congregation met Sunday afternoon on the 29th to start the Visioning/ Planning process for First Christian Church. A huge thank you to all the people that helped with the meal, all who participated in the 3-hour discussion, and thank you to the Christian Conference Center staff for setting up the room. The group covered a lot of ground as they explored the past 10 years of ministry, the present ministry context, and what God has in store for us in the next few months and years to come. Listed below are most of the comments and thoughts that the group created around the current state of the church. They are listed below the headings I used to facilitate the meeting.

A Review of the Last Ten Plus Years at FCC

What has FCC done well?

- Welcoming
- Survive
- Music
- Provide for individual needs for members
- Beds for Kidz
- Grew in faith.
- FUN - Wednesday nights
- VBS
- Eat well :-)
- Involvement (people stepping up)
- Provide to community (food bank/giving tree/laundry night, etc.)
- Money still coming in.
- Welcome outside groups to use facility

What challenges has FCC faced?

- COVID, derecho, etc.
- Pastor turnover and church split after Rev. Ray Barnett retired
- Acceptance of “others”
- Territorial ("my pew")
- Growth (loss of)
- Participation
- Loss of people
- Lack of involvement
- What do you know about FCC? People don't know. Identity crisis

What wisdom has FCC gained?

- Forward thinking
- Curiosity
- Strength in unity
- Trust in each other

First Look at Our Core Values

- Respect (people)
- Belief in Jesus Christ
- Faith in God **
- Discipleship/evangelism
- Welcoming to all **
- Open communion
- Collaborative
- Education for all ages
- Service / ministry
- Having fun
- Family orientated
- Fellowship
- Music is a part of worship

Start to Dream a New Vision

What could FCC look like in 3 years?

Here is where things really took off and became interesting and exciting. I pushed the group to think deeper on the initial comments, i.e. *full church on Sunday morning, lots of participation on Wednesday nights, more ministry, etc.* – all great goals, but why? I directed the group to use the question "why" five times. For sake of space, I will not list all the discussion but where I think the group ultimately landed.

- "First Christian of Newton, IA builds disciples using a faith community that connects with people and families of all shapes, sizes, and backgrounds."
- "Faith in God and welcoming to all!"
- Matthew 28:19 *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*

** The two core values of ***Welcome*** and ***Faith in God*** drove most of this conversation. But wait! There is more!

Initial Steps for the Next 90 days

The last part of our time together I described the relationship of how the core values tie into the overall ministry direction of the church. I had them visualize a tree where the roots are the core values, the congregation is the trunk and branches, and the leaves are the different ministries that occur within the context of our life together. I challenged the group to take the two core values of Welcome and Faith in God and tie them into what we are doing well already and form some next steps for the next 90 days and next fall.

"Low hanging fruit" accomplishments over the last three months

- Upgrade to sanctuary screens and Pro Presenter software
- New Stove for kitchen
- Two I Pads for the Revelation Praise Team
- New curriculum for the F.U.N. youth education
- Newly formed Adult Bible Study
- Updating our website
- Fellowship in the narthex
- Worship Leaders
- Greeters

Possible 90-day upgrades to our facilities (more low hanging fruit)

- Need pulpit to be handicap accessible
- Install an outside ramp at the north door.
- Additional handicap parking
- Bathroom refresh (paint, floors, etc.)
- Cabinet/sink in Fellowship Hall
- Upgrade to programable thermostats
- LED lighting
- Motion sensor lighting
- Continue kitchen improvements

Closing Out Our Retreat

The true take away was when we started to dream out of abundance. Here is a train of thought and the one huge goal that came out of our deeper question of; **"If we are going to say we are welcoming, then what do we need to do, right now, to truly welcome people in and have a chance to share the love of God with them?"**

- **Figure out where to meet people where they are**
- **Be the salt**
- **Let people know who we are?**
- **Wednesday nights - After school pick up and program for kids. Let's get a bus!**

Getting a bus to haul kids and people around may seem like a far-fetched idea, but if we combine our faith-based core values with what we have in abundance (faithful people, great facilities, and resources) – we come up with a strategy to truly welcome people into our ministry.

All of this will take many more discussions, prayer, critical/deep thinking, and a continued faith in God. I will be in conversation with board chair Randy on forming a Vision Team in the next few weeks to help lead us in this great expression of God's love for everyone.

Until next time – let's get on the bus!

Shalom,
Pastor Sheldon

New Addresses:

Paris and Janet Becket's new address:
110 N. 5th Ave. W., Apt. #106
Newton

Julie Brown
1500 N. 5th Ave. E.
Newton
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Staff:
Sheldon Henderson, Pastor
Julie Brown, Office Manager
Tom Goeke, Custodian
Greta Wallace, Pianist
Cathi Wickett, Music Director