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UPCOMING Events

*Daylight Savings starts,
Sunday, March 10*

*Pastor Laurie PRC,
Thurs, March 14, 7 pm*

*FCC Board,
Tues, March 19, 7 pm*

*Coffee Hours continue,
9 am on Wed & Sat,
Happy Hours
5 pm Tues & Thurs*

FCC's March FoodShare focuses on Groveland



Groveland Food Shelf is a non-profit providing emergency groceries for those in need. Groveland operates three programs: Groveland Emergency Food Shelf (located in Plymouth Congregational Church), the MCTC Food Pantry (at Minneapolis College), and a collaboration with Liberty Community Church in North Minneapolis and their 21st Century Academy.

About 5,000 clients are served per month and over 150,000 pounds of food are distributed.

During March Food Share Month, once again we have the opportunity to help Groveland Food Shelf assist our neighbors who are experiencing food insecurity.

- \$20 buys emergency groceries for an individual for one month
 - \$50 buys emergency groceries for a family of four for one month
 - \$75 buys emergency groceries for a family of six for one month
 - \$100 buys PPE (personal protective equipment) for volunteers and staff for a Month
- (From Groveland website)

Your donations can be made in the usual ways: a check to the church office with "Groveland" in the memo line or through the Givelify app. There may also be an opportunity to bring actual food items; that is being explored!

As an added way to give, the white barrel is again available for actual, physical non-perishable donations! It is located outside the Garden Sanctuary under the coat rack. The most popular items are coffee, cooking oil, peanut butter, beans, canned meat and canned fish.) Be sure to check the expiration date!)



Gracious God, we lift up these persons in our prayers, asking the blessing of your Grace.

We pray in sympathy for **Dennis Sanders** and his family on the loss of his mother **Maria**; and for **Arlene Hillestad** at the death of her longtime friend **Susan Garry**.

We are thankful that **Mike Cackoski** was able to get our livestream back up and running; for **Soo-kyung Rennert** who has been asked to do expanded trauma training at her school; and for **Lynda Lee**, who is working to bring a Native American cultural education project into Lino Lakes

We pray in concern for **Arlene Hillestad's sister Linda**, recently diagnosed with breast cancer; for **Ardie Armstrong's supervisor Amanda**, for **Michael Vanderford** of Lyndale who had surgery to remove a blood clot.

We pray for families devastated by wildfires in Texas and Oklahoma, and for wars taking thousands of lives in Sudan, Ukraine, Gaza and other places in the world.

*Lord, hear our prayers,
Amen.*



From the desk of Pastor Dan

Take the time to ground yourself

When I opened one of my email inboxes this morning, there was a note thanking me for being part of an online journaling platform I joined 20 years during a time of transition and change in my life. 20 years! That of course took me down memory lane thinking about all that was happening in that moment, and where I am today. It reminded me that so much of what 'The Good' we have been referring to in our Lenten worship series, the work of the Gospel, is long-haul work. Pastor Laurie and I were reminded of that last week when we were at the Capitol for OutFront Minnesota's annual LGBTQ+ Lobby Day. So many of the great accomplishments that occurred last year had their roots in grass roots community work that dates back 10, 15, even 20 years or more!

I bring this up on the heels of my sermon Sunday about flipping tables and creating the kin-dom of God we've been talking about in our Lenten study and the worship series to ask the question: *how are you grounding yourself to do 'The Good'?* We live in a society where we can find out something or get something at the click of a button. While this can be helpful in many ways, we forget that the work of the gospel is often times is not rooted in instant gratification. We can get discouraged, frustrated, resentful.

As part of this worship series, we've mentioned many times about the online journal that's available for you to download: <https://www.fccminneapolis.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/FCC-Lent-Guided-Journal.pdf>. It's not too late to download it and engage in the short questions each day – you might be surprised with where it takes you as part of our Lenten journey. I know it's got me thinking about some things.

Outside of this series, this year I've reengaged with a book I've had in my collection for some time: *Blessing of the Daily: A Monastic Book of Days* by Brother Victor-Antoine d'Avila-Latourrette, in tandem with poetry from Carrie Newcomer, Bobby Jo Valentine, and Mary Oliver's *Devotions*. You've heard elder Martha Harris mention *Disciplines*, and our Disciples colleague Sandhya Jha has a wonderful social justice focused devotional *Liberating Love Daily Devotional: 365 Love Notes from God*. Maybe you're more of an auditory person – there's a host of podcasts out there that can feed your soul. Getting out in nature is also another way to take a breather and connect/reconnect with God. However you do it, taking the time to ground & refresh ourselves helps prepare and sustain us for the work of building the beautiful kin-dom of God.

Results ready from survey, discussions

What is it you most value about First Christian Church?
 What is it at First Christian that keeps you connected?
 What is First Christian good at that others might be attracted to?

These were questions posed in the online survey that members of First Christian Church took last October. Fifty-four people answered the 47 questions on the survey and the results have been tabulated and presented to the pastors and to the church board. The results are now available to everyone to read and study.

Following the survey, small group meetings were held from November 27 through December 6, both in person and on Zoom, where congregation members were invited to share more about their responses to the survey questions, as well as a few additional questions such as “What are some areas that you would like to see us grow and develop?”

Ten meetings were held, attended by a total of 56 people. The facilitators of the meetings (Kirsten Cacoski, Martha Harris, Jay Hillestad, Arlene Jorgensen Hillestad and Ron Keith) took notes during the meetings and compiled a summary of the comments made during the discussions. That summary is also available for anyone who would like to peruse the 10 pages of comments. (All comments in the summary are anonymous.)

Some highlights from the survey results are the following:

- Thirty-five people gave a “5” (Extremely Important) mark to “Bringing a message of Christ’s radical inclusive love to the world.”
- “Meetings conducted on Zoom” had the highest cumulative survey score.

Themes that emerged often in the small group discussions:

- Relationships (“Being with, seeing and talking with other people”)
- Inclusiveness (“Open to everyone, people are accepted as they are, don’t need to hide”)
- Outreach (“Doing the work of Jesus where we are/where our people are”)

Plans are being made to have a panel discussion about the survey and small group discussions during an upcoming worship service, sometime after Easter, as part of a Laity Sunday service.

If you would like to see the survey results, the small group discussion summary or both, contact Martha Harris (harrismartha@mac.com; 763-593-0814).

FCC Board Notes

Twenty people attended the February 20 meeting of FCC’s General Board. Highlights of the meeting were as follows:

- The Nominating Committee moved that Martha Harris and Margaret Hutchens be names as FCC Board Co-Chairs for a two-year term. Motion passed unanimously.

- The Trustees presented their leadership choices for the next two years: Anna Bliss, Chair; Mike Cackoski, Vice-Chair; Pat Dunlop, Treasurer; Karen Kandik, Secretary. Board approved

- The Cultivating Vision group presented the results of the congregational survey and small group discussions.

- A Stewardship Committee for 2024 was formed; Tammy Rottschaefer, Arlene Hillestad and Jen Kregel volunteered to serve.

- Pat Dunlop, FCC Treasurer, reported on the financials for the month of January. She explained that the deficit shown is not unusual for January finances.

- The Worship Committee is developing forms for adults and parents of children to give consent (or not) to being shown on camera during the live-stream.

Holy Week events coming

Lent is leading us to upcoming Holy Week events:

Palm Sunday, March 24 – SpringHouse will have its annual (and fairly odd) “Peeps Sunday,” where children and adults construct Biblical scenes out of candy Easter Peeps. The three congregations will gather to wave palms.

Maundy Thursday, March 28 – The service will be live and live-streamed, centered around the solemn remembrance of the Last Supper.

Easter Sunday, March 31 – The trumpets will sound, flowers will bloom on the cross, and the triumph of Resurrection will again be celebrated.

Courier schedule changing

This *Courier* newsletter is changing to a once-a-month publication. Since January 2009, *The Courier* has been a bi-monthly newsletter. However, the editor Martha Harris has taken on some new leadership roles at First Christian, and has decided to cut back some on other church work.

The plan is for the paper to come out on the first Thursday of every month. Items to go in the paper need to get to be sent to Martha by the Monday before the first Thursday.

Sign up to be Worship Leader!

During every worship service, the worship leader opens the service with announcements, a land acknowledgement, invitations to worship, and other remarks, and also reads the scripture text before the sermon. A full script is provided. The worship leader can do this from home via Zoom or in person in the sanctuary.



Lu Griffin, worship leader on March 3

You can volunteer for this vital worship role by signing up online on FCC’s website (fccmpls.org) under the “Registration sign up” menu.



Adventure Book photos needed

A First Christian Adventure book, a scrapbook/photo album about FCC Adventures, is in the works. In the Children’s Moment during Lenten worship, Deb has been talking to the kids about the movie “Up,” which is the inspiration for an FCC Adventure Book like the one in the movie. Deb is asking people to send her pictures of their adventures with First Christian: mission trips, book group, women’s retreat, General Assembly, picnics, etc. The list is endless!

Please send the pictures as soon as possible so the kids and Deb can work on creating our Adventure Book right away; they hope to have it ready to look at Easter

Send to deb.murphy@fccmpls.org.

By the way, if you don’t get pictures to Deb before Easter, no problem. Send them whenever you can, because we’re going to continue to add to the Adventure Book as long as we keep having adventures together!

FCC folks performing this weekend

Moxie Tucker in “She Kills Monsters”

Edison High School, March 8 & 9, 7 pm

Jimmy Tucker in “Beauty and the Beast”

Northeast Middle School, March 8 & 9, 7 pm

Karen Wolverton with Denis Evstuthin in “A Woman’s Love and Life”

Museum of Russian Art, March 10, 7 pm

Moxie and Jimmy Tucker with Vocal Essence in annual WITNESS concert

Orchestra Hall, March 17, 4 pm

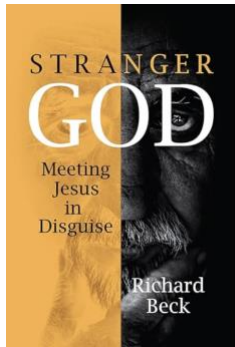
(March 3 eblast has links to ticket details)

SpringHouse Library group wants to get you books to read

The SpringHouse library committee has been meeting and working hard to revitalize the SH library. Committee members are seeking ideas on what books SpringHouse people would like to see in the library, and are also working to promote the books that are there already that people will enjoy.

Naomi Nelson, a committee member from Salem, has some comments on recently added books that are displayed on the Library Cart.

“Stranger God: Meeting Jesus in Disguise” by Richard Beck

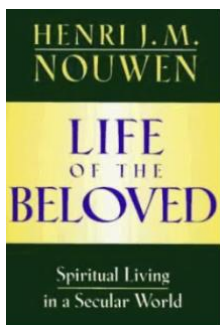


This is a book about the “strangeness of a God” who comes to us in strangers. (Matthew 25). Jesus comes to us in disguise in foreigners and refugees, in the homeless and outcasts, in the prisoner and the hungry. Beck draws on his own experiences in response to his Stranger God’s call to love and compassion for the other, the stranger.

I read this book a couple of years ago and will be reading it again and again.

The message reached down into the very depths of my soul (and in my gut). It forever changed me. I particularly saw the homeless through new eyes. I live in Uptown and am in walking distance to most places I frequent. I would encounter persons on Lyndale, Lake Street and Hennepin in particular, who would ask for money and some showed evidence they had been sleeping there. Often I felt uncertain how I should respond. With some I could but with others I was more hesitant (let’s just say it, *whatever* I was feeling had its roots in “fear”). I have truly believed that Jesus called me to love my neighbor and I have always felt a deep sadness whenever I have neglected to act like one. Thank goodness for God’s grace. This writer’s message has touched my heart and liberated me. I can now make eye contact, smile, ask their name, and see them for whom they are. *God’s Beloved*. (And their names are added to my prayer list.) That segues into the next book

“Life of the Beloved” by Henri J. M. Nouwen



Nouwen wrote “Life of the Beloved” for the secular world at the request of a secular Jewish friend. However, it has also ended up making a tremendously deep impression on searching Christians.

Henri says, “*Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the “Beloved.” Being the Beloved expresses the core truth of our existence.*” And -- the existence of all those *strangers* out there who are also His Beloved that He wants us to see.

In any Nouwen book I have read, God’s quiet voice reaches me through his words and experiences and I am changed. This one filled me with joy and peace and the embracing of His “*fierce love*” (author Brennan Manning’s expression from “Ragamuffin’s Gospel.”)

Sundays at First Christian Church

Worship (and morning bulletin) at 10:30, online at fccmpls.org

“Children’s Table” activities in person or online at fccmpls.org

Youth Group at 11:30-12:30 in Youth Room

Revised Common Lectionary

March 10, 2024

Fourth Sunday of Lent

John 3: 14-21



*First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Minneapolis,
is a partner church at SpringHouse Ministry Center*

Reflections on the Word

John 3:19 – And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light...”

So often, we are quick to put light and dark at odds, as John does in this text. But in reality, light and darkness coexist. They complement each other and tell us things about ourselves and about God that we could not know without leaving space for both. As we journey through Lent, we can ask ourselves why we spend so much time in the dark? Why are we so quick to run to light?

God, May we hold space for both dark and light in our lives so that we rediscover ourselves and reconnect with you. Amen.

Daniel Lyvers, in *Disciplines*, 2021, adapted.

**FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH
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Next issue deadline is Sunday, March 31