

The Courier

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Minneapolis



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UPCOMING Events

*Cabinet meeting,
Tuesday, Feb. 17,
7 pm on Zoom*

*Coffee with Community,
9 am on Wed;
Breakfast Club, Sat, 9 am
(See eblast for Zoom links)*

Lent to bring new togetherness to SH community

The season of Lent is upon us, starting with our beloved **Mardi Gras Sunday on February 15**. We get to introduce beads, umbrellas, King Cake and of course, New Orleans-style jazz to Pastor Ben! This joyful worship service has become one of the most-attended Sunday services at First Christian. Don't miss it!

February 22, the first Sunday in Lent, marks the beginning of a SpringHouse experiment. All three churches are moving to a new worship time at 10 am for the seasons of Lent and Easter/Eastertide. This marks a return to the shared worship, fellowship, and education times that the three SpringHouse congregations had at its beginnings in 2012. All three churches are participating in the spirit of giving up something for Lent, as Salem moves its 9:30 worship time up and FCC and Lyndale move their 10:30 time back.

The 10 am worship time will be followed a time of **fellowship and faith formation from 11:15 to 12:15**. People can gather for coffee and conversation in the Gathering Space and possibly engage with one another in more structured faith formation conversations if they so choose. Plans are also in the works for reviving Sunday School time for SpringHouse kids in this time slot. **FCC's choir will rehearse at 9 am.**

Ash Wednesday February 18 will be a joint service for all three congregations. Wednesday Lenten soup suppers and evening prayer times are also being planned. More details coming.

This experiment will continue past Easter up to the start of Pentecost. At this time the clergy and congregational boards will evaluate the experiment and make decisions for the future.

Lent in Many Languages

Our English word **Lent** comes from the Old English 'lencten,' meaning Spring. Say 'lencten' out loud and you'll hear its similarity to the word 'lengthen,' which makes sense given that Spring is when we notice the lengthening of daylight.

What about other languages? At the root of **Cuaresma** (Spanish) and **Carême** (French) is a measurement of time, **Quadragesima** (Latin for 'fortieth'), since the season lasts forty days. The tradition of abstaining from certain foods inspires **Fastenzeit** (German for 'Fasting Time), **al-Sawm al-Kabīr** (Arabic for 'The Great Fast'), and **Dà Zhāi Jié** (Mandarin for 'Great Christian Fast'). Orthodox Christians characterize this season as one of 'bright sadness,' expressed in the Greek word **kharmolypē**. This year, Orthodox Lent begins on Monday, February 23, and lasts until Pascha, Sunday, April 12.

From Pastor Ben Masters

In Our Prayers



Prayers of Joy for **Deb's** birthday and for beloved guests **Lisa and Connie** from Iowa in worship with us.

Prayers of concern for **Karen Bowman's sister Debbie** as she prepares for surgery; for **Ali Hesano** as she recovers from surgery; for **Darren Armstrong's mother Eileen** and **Nat Rosenberg**, both home from the hospital; for **Misha** as he negotiates new living spaces.

Prayers of sympathy for the **Tuckers** as their friend **Tia** enters hospice, and for **Pastor Dan and Keith as family friend Bruce** is also in hospice.

Prayers to uphold neighbors afraid to leave their homes and unable to leave their detention cells; to support observers, ride-givers and grocery shoppers. Be with neighbors around the world suffering flooding, economic oppression and murderous governments.

Gracious God, we lift up these persons in our prayers, asking the blessing of your Grace and outpouring of your Love upon them. Amen

A Message from Pastor Ben



Gas Masks and the New Creation

Somehow, when I imagined gas masks I've never considered they might be pink. But here, in a bin outside the Garden Sanctuary, is a stack of gas masks—half-face respirators" engineered by 3M—with pink and purple accents, ready to protect constitutional observers from chemical attacks.

Such are the times in which we live: federal agents shoot tear gas at civilians armed with cell phones, holding the Department of Homeland Security to account for their harassment of neighbors. On January 7 and 24, agents shot bullets instead of chemicals, robbing Renee Good and Alex Pretti of life. Grief propels hundreds—thousands—of people to the streets, confronting callous evil and bitter cold in order to protest and protect. When eyes sting with irritants, and cell phone batteries die, and toes grow numb, many have come to SpringHouse for support.

In the second half of the month, our neighbor Laura Birchill had already set up a makeshift office in SpringHouse to coordinate efforts to provide rent, groceries, and rides to vulnerable people. Given the subzero temperatures, Laura also had hats, gloves, and handwarmers ready to share. So, on the day of Alex Pretti's killing, SpringHouse was ready to welcome traumatized folks into warmth and safety. Other helpers arrived: soup-makers and street medics and spiritual leaders. They keep coming, creating a waystation for mutual aid.

Mutual aid efforts are often direct person-to-person exchanges, enabled by small networks. The underlying philosophy imagines new possibilities emerging from relationships, unburdened by charitable organizations that preserve the status quo. Whether such relationships flourish at SpringHouse depends on whether members of First Christian, Lyndale, and Salem open themselves to *caritas*—that is, divine grace—which undoes expectations.

Moved by such grace, Paul claimed: "We won't recognize people by human standards. Even though we used to know Christ by human standards, that isn't how we know him now. So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived!" (2 Cor. 5:16-17) As I consider the bin of gas masks, I pray for the new creation to uproot the old—beginning within me.

I welcome your prayers, FCC: for each of us as we weather this time of trial; for the aid offered through SpringHouse to evoke true mutuality; for a radical change of hearts and a just reform to immigration laws and policies. The Spirit intercedes along with us, assuring that even in deepest winter our gardener God is tending the seeds of the new creation. May we, branches of Christ's vine, bear life-sustaining fruit for the world.

Onward in the Spirit!
Rev. Ben, your interim minister

Week of Compassion special offering



Our Mission & Outreach team invites us to give to Week of Compassion in February: February 15 and 22 are designated as Special Offering Sundays for this important Disciples outreach program.

The executive director of Week of Compassion, Rev. Vy Nguyen, writes the following:

Every crisis we name – at the border, after a storm, or in the wake of economic collapse – is really about people who carry courage

and loss in equal measure. And in every place, the church is present. Congregations open their doors. Partners remain when others leave. Communities of faith become signs of compassion and strength in uncertain times.

Thank you for your generosity, your faithfulness, and your commitment to walking alongside those whose paths have been disrupted. Together, we are the church – rooted in compassion, moving in hope.

(Note: Many of remember when Rev. Nguyen was here to speak to us at FCC several years ago during the pastor's sabbatical.)

Mark your calendars: March will be FoodShare month. Groveland Foodshelf is asking FCC to collect Ramen noodles for FoodShare. (Each contributing church will have a different donation assignment.) March 15 will be sandwich-making for Groveland.

Something for families from Week of Compassion

Week of Compassion has partnered with Obra Hispana (the Disciples' central pastoral office for Hispanic ministries) to create [The Operation Cacti Compassion Care Project](#). This is an educational and biblical resource designed for families, pastors, and churches that are directly affected by current immigration policies, and for those who seek to be in solidarity with them.

Operation Cacti has created a focused resource kit (bible study materials, leaders' manuals, and comfort items for children) that families can receive through their churches, starting in the Pacific Southwest Region. While the physical kits are being piloted in the Pacific Southwest, churches across the country are encouraged to download the storytelling and study resources for use in their own congregations.

First Christian Board Notes

Twenty-one FCC board members attended the January 20 meeting of the General Board. Items discussed included the following:

- The board welcomed and affirmed the returning and newly elected members of the board for 2026: new elder Justin Carlson, returning elders Mike Hesano and Lu Griffin; returning deacon Shannon Grady, continuing trustees Paul Rottschaefter and Lu Griffin; continuing elder Martha Harriss, continuing deacons Paul Rottschaefter, Jim Lee and Val Dunham.
- The board voted to approve the start of common worship time of 10 am for SpringHouse congregations during Lent and Easter. This new worship time will begin on Feb. 22 and end May 17.
- Arlene Hillestad has volunteered to head up the Stewardship Coommittee this year.
- The Cabinet will meet the third Tuesday in February. The Cabinet members will be Board Chair and Board Vice-Chair (or Co-Chairs), the Minister(s), Recording Secretary, Chair of Trustees, Chair of Elders, Chair of Deacons, Chair of Finance, Chair of Worship, Chair (or designee) of Mission and Outreach.
- Martha Harris outlined the basic responsibilities for the board chair and vice chair (or co-chairs). These positions are currently unfilled. The board approved Martha's offer to be the board's designated representative to the SpringHouse Board and to FCC's finance committee. KC Helmeid volunteered to be the pro tem facilitator for the second half of the board meeting.

SpringHouse News



SpringHouse a “mutual aid” site

Tear gas masks, hand warmers, coats, cell phone warmers, earplugs – boxes of these and many other items are available for community members who are in need of cold weather protection, for whatever reason.

These donations were given as part of the community-wide Mutual Aid groups that have sprung up in the wake of the ICE invasion of Minneapolis.

Lay people have volunteered to be greeters, inviting people into SH for supplies, for a place to warm up, or for a snack. Clergy are on hand to listen to and pray with people who are in need.

Pastor Dan Adolphson created a sign-up sheet, which has been shared in recent email blasts.

More Ways to Help Minneapolis

[Amazon Wish List](#) from FCC Office Administrator Seth Anderson-Matz for TC Community Aid & Neighborhood Patrols

[Casa Maria Food Pantry SignUp](#) (drivers, shoppers and deliverers of food)

[Families Helping Families](#)

[Minnesota Immigrant Rights Committee Food Cart Fundraiser](#)

[Minnesota Together](#) – Mutual aid for Minnesotans impacted by ‘Operation Metro Surge’

San Pablo/St. Paul’s (Pastor Ben’s husband is the pastor there):

*Transportation to appointments, grocery shopping, medicine pickup, community presence

[Click here to share interest](#)

[Click here to donate to their community aid fund](#)

[Stand With Minnesota](#)

SH Annual Meeting and Joint service a special time

This year’s SpringHouse annual meeting was something special. The service and meeting were rolled together into one amazing and special time to bring our community close, particularly in the wake of the shattering events that happened that same weekend: the gathering of clergy from around the country to stand in solidarity with Minnesotans, and the tragic killing of Alex Pretti on Saturday.

On Sunday, January 25, we started with sharing breakfast at tables in the Gathering Space, then segued into the service, where the three pastors spoke on the themes of Gratitude, Justice and Hope. We shared Communion with the people sitting at our tables. A pick-up choir from the three churches surrounded us as they sang a beautiful anthem. Pastor Dan led us in a “gratitude shout-out” and Pastor Ben led us to think of the “waterfall of numbers” in the budget.

In between these worshipful moments, we attended to the business of the community by acknowledging our board members and financial leaders, and by looking over our 2026 budget.



For many of us that morning, it was a healing place to be.

Sundays at First Christian Church

Worship at 10:30, in person or
livestreamed at fccmpls.org

Children's Table Activities in person during worship: **Join us!**
Children's Activities are also available online at www.fccmpls.org

Revised Common Lectionary
February 8, 2026
Salt and Light
Matthew 5: 13-20



Sermon on the Mount,
Laura James, 2010

Reflections on the Word

Matthew 5: 13a, 14a: "You are the salt of the earth; You are the light of the world..."

In Jesus sermon, being and doing are interrelated. A light has the quality of being a light, and because of that quality it helps people see. Salt has the quality of saltiness, and by its very nature salt makes food tastes better. Following Christ is both about our inner being and about how we exhibit that inner nature out in the world. In following Jesus, we are light and salt, and our inner being manifests itself in the work we do in God's kingdom

God, let me live my life so that in my work, others may see the light of your grace. Amen.

Joel T.P. Fitzgerald, *Disciplines*, 2026

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

*A Welcoming Community of Faith in the Heart of the
City*

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Next issue deadline is Sunday, March 1

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