

# The Courier

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Minneapolis



## A Holy Week & Easter for the times in 2026

Holy Week 2026 included a response to the tumultuous events of the nation as well as the embrace of the joy of Easter in the face of these difficult times.



Photo by Elaine Tucker

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SpringHouse had its annual **Palm Sunday** gathering and parade, with the FCC players enacting Jesus' triumphant ride on a pink "donkey." The gathering began as we sang a traditional hymn and ended as we sang a Song of Resistance, led by Pastor Ben Masters, as we paraded in the Gathering Space before departing to our separate sanctuaries.



Following worship, members of all three congregations traveled by bus to the state capitol to participate in the Palm Sunday Path worship and action.

SpringHouse congregation members came together for a **Maundy Thursday** meal and service, and some also joined in the **Good Friday** walk commemorating the state-inflicted crucifixions of George Floyd, Renee Good and Alex Petti. Lyndale Pastors Rebecca Voekle and T. Michael Brown led this Good Friday walk; Reverend Jia Starr Brown was one of the speakers (more details on page 5). FCC had a quiet and reflective Good Friday evening service of music and scripture.

### UPCOMING Events

FCC Cabinet Meeting,  
Tuesday, April 21,  
7 pm on Zoom

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



Andy Rennert flips pancake; the Marys who visited the tomb were surprised by Jesus and an Angel

## *In Our Prayers*



Prayers of Joy that **Rodney** has finished cancer therapy and is now cancer-free; for two couples in our church celebrating wedding anniversaries – **Jon and Jen**, and **Becki and Dave**.

Prayers of concern for **S-K** taking exams to advance her counselling work; for **Deb's friend Amy** recently diagnosed with cancer; for **Darren's mother Eileen** facing more esophagus surgery; for **Ben's** 7-year old neighbor **Jesus** recovering from surgery for a ruptured appendix.

Prayers of consolation for several people entering hospice: the spouse of **Jim and Lynda's cousin Barb**, **Gary's friend Bob**, and **Rebecca's mother Marguerite**.

We pray for the families in Haiti facing rampant gang violence; for families in Iran, Lebanon and Ukraine, where missiles are striking daily, and for all the families in our own country suffering from unjust transphobic laws and unkind policies hurting the poor.

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

## *An Update from the Search Committee*

The Search Committee hosted six small group conversations between January 22 and February 7, 2026, attended by at least 24 people. We truly appreciate the time and input from those who participated.

As part of the conversations, we asked the following questions:

- What is FCC good at that you think a new minister should know about?
- How do you envision our impact on our neighborhood, our community, and the world?
- If we only have one paid minister, how does that impact your vision for FCC for the next 3-5 years? What tradeoffs might you be willing to make if we place a value on two paid pastors?
- What does being a Disciples of Christ congregation mean to you?
- What other things haven't been named yet?

Since March, Search Committee has been meeting regularly to complete the congregational profile that is used in the Search and Call process. We are drawing from what we learned in these small group conversations, along with other sources like the 2023 congregational survey, the 2024 narrative budget, the history of FCC, and other data we have gathered. We have a goal to have a draft ready by the end of April or early May that can be shared with the congregation for feedback.

At its March meeting, the FCC Board directed the Search Committee to continue its work with the understanding that our profile will be for a solo pastor. (Read more from Interim Minister Ben about this decision.) To get a good understanding of what that might mean for FCC, we invited Pastor Rhonda Hlavinka from Salem to discuss her experience as a solo pastor. She shared her journey from being in an associate pastor role, where she was part of a ministerial team, to the solo pastor role she currently has, including some of the challenges she has faced along the way. She provided us with some great insights, including how the shared ministry of SpringHouse provides support she would not otherwise have, how she has learned to lean into the gifts and talents of her congregation to ensure she isn't carrying all of the work on her own, and how she has used the skills of her admin to also provide support.

Thank you for supporting our work this winter and spring. Watch for more to come in the weeks ahead!

*Anna Bliss, Chair of Search Committee*

### *A Message from Pastor Ben Masters*

## The Courage to Answer the Call

What should a minister know about a congregation when discerning whether to serve as its pastor? A lot, according to the congregational profile used in the Search and Call process.

Your Search Committee is diligently working to complete a draft profile for FCC to review. As part of their work, they've gathered some broad data (95 people consider themselves active members), the building (remodeled in 2011, with plenty of seating but not much parking), and the neighborhood (median household income is \$51,190, lower than the US median of \$83,730). But while census records and church financial statements are important, they can't answer the big questions in the profile.

Take the first question in the "Discernment" section: "What has God uniquely called you to be and do as a congregation (both now, and looking to the future)?" That is a lifelong question, one not easily condensed into a short paragraph!

To help answer big questions like these, the Search Committee hosted small groups conversations in January and February. (Read more from committee chair Anna Bliss above.) When asked about a single paid minister, small groups spoke to five themes:

- 1) **Acknowledging financial constraints.** While some wondered how long interest from endowment funds could support the current budget, others spoke about aligning the budget with FCC's value for supporting our neighbors with food, housing, and dignity.
- 2) **Valuing a diversity of voices in the pulpit.** Without regularly hearing two distinctive perspectives from the pulpit, people envisioned more guest speakers and reflections from members.
- 3) **Adapting pastoral care.** People spoke about strengthening the care members share in community and equipping FCC's Elders to lead in this way.
- 4) **Recalibrating other pastoral duties.** People spoke about the need for a solo pastor to delegate tasks with volunteers and to balance social activism and community engagement with the priority of the Sunday service.
- 5) **Grieving a transition in identity.** One reason that FCC had two pastors was that it was once a large congregation. Selling the building at 2201 S. 1st Ave and moving to SpringHouse were two enormous transitions in FCC's identity, both of which needed to be processed. Moving to a solo pastor would be another significant transition.

At the February Cabinet meeting and the March Board meeting, leaders listened to what the Search Committee had heard. But they also listened to the still, small voice of God, calling FCC into its next chapter. Unanimously, the Board voted that the search would be for a solo pastor.

I witnessed courage on display in that meeting. Your leaders felt trepidation about this decision, and they also acknowledged that significant work needs to be done. But courage is not the same as certainty or ease. Courage is an act of faith, a bold trust that God will be close at hand to guide and empower us in the future just as God has done in the past.

Friends, God is uniquely calling you to courage. Please join me in praying for the Search Committee—Anna Bliss, KC Helmeid, Jen Kregel, Andy Rennert, and Paul Rottschaefer—that their work may be grounded in this sacred purpose and may bless FCC for years to come.

Onward in the Spirit!

Rev. Ben, your interim minister

## Stewardship Work begins for 2026-2027

*By Arlene Jorgesen Hillestad*

I volunteered to “take” the Stewardship Committee at February’s Board meeting. It includes Karen Bowman, Katy McFall, Jennifer Stockdale and myself, and our first meeting is mid-April. We plan a stewardship campaign and education about stewardship. We’ll conduct Committee activities in an egalitarian manner since we’re all leaders and we’re all followers, making decisions by consensus for our activities. Others on the team may write in the future but, for now, some of my stewardship thoughts follow...

I envision a year-long “movement” versus a quick and hurried “drive” which is thrown together only for purposes of acquiring pledges. Instead, I suggest an effort wherein the congregation learns “true” stewardship of their personal resources and the resources of the Church. While a traditional campaign for pledges is contemplated, the initiative would involve stewardship education.

Katy McFall mentioned Henri Nouwen’s book, *“Spirituality of Fundraising.”* It contains great food to feed this movement, as does, *“Money and Possessions,”* by theologian Walter Brueggemann. By delving into these books, much about real stewardship can be garnered. Brueggemann also wrote an article in the Christian Century, *The Liturgy of Abundance, The Myth of Scarcity*, which I believe the entire congregation should read. See <https://www.religion-online.org/article/the-liturgy-of-abundance-the-myth-of-scarcity/>

Join us this stewardship season where we’ll learn about ministering to the “widow and orphan,” since we’re called by God to take care of those who cannot care for themselves. Such is the way of stewarding, because it involves managing what God has given us while fulfilling God’s call to “do unto others.”

### ***Mission & Outreach update and coming events***

THANKS to all who helped make sandwiches for Groveland and Agate on March 22! The process seems to get smoother and faster all the time! 300 sandwiches!

A continued thanks to Every Meal volunteers. Our numbers of bags to deliver have returned to pre-Metro Surge levels! If you want to try volunteering, the month of May has spots available. Contact Karen Kandik or just sign up through the website!

**April:** April 22 is Earth Day and we will be marking the occasion by picking up trash in the SpringHouse neighborhood, right after worship on **April 12** (weather delay date is April 26). Bags and grabbers will be provided; bring some gloves, if you wish. Also, April is National Autism/Down Syndrome Awareness Month so wear mismatched socks (yes, MISMATCHED!) as a symbol of celebrating individuality, neurodiversity, or solidarity for Down syndrome awareness.

**May:** We will meet at the Feed My Starving Children site in Chanhassen from 12-1:45 on **May 9**. Look for details in upcoming eblasts and next month’s Courier.

## FCC Board Notes

Nineteen people attended the March 17 meeting of the General Board. Highlights of the meeting include the following:

- Karen Kandik volunteered to be the Chair Pro Tem for the meeting.
- Pastor Dan Adolphson presented a recommendation that the Board, Cabinet and church committees commit to two in-person meetings during the year. He explained how he came to make this recommendation. Discussion followed, with mostly favorable reactions. A motion was made to run a pilot program through the end of the year for the board and committees to hold two in-person meetings. The motion passed unanimously.
- Anna Bliss presented a motion from the Cabinet directing the Search Committee to continue its work with the understanding that First Christian will be searching for a solo pastor. Discussion followed. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.
- A final point of discussion and agreement was that a subcommittee should look at the Narrative Budget and revise it to fit a one-pastor staff. Arlene Hillestad and Ben Masters volunteered to serve on the committee; a third member will be added.

## FCC Calendar for April 2026

### REGULAR WEEKLY EVENTS

Sundays 9 am Choir Rehearsal  
 9 am SpringHouse Youth  
 10 am Worship, Children's Activity Table  
 Tuesdays 8 am – SH Lectionary Group  
 Wednesdays 9 am - Coffee with Community  
 Saturdays 9 am – Breakfast Club

### MONTHLY MEETINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Wed., Apr. 8 12:30 Finance Committee  
 Sat., Apr. 11 10:30 am Trustees Meeting  
 Mon., Apr. 13 5 pm SH Building Committee  
 7 pm SH Finance Committee  
 Thurs, Apr. 16 7 pm FCC and Friends Book Group  
 Sat., Apr. 18 Noon - Gardening at SH  
 Tues, Apr. 21 7 pm - FCC Cabinet Meeting  
 Mon, Apr. 27 7 pm - Worship Committee  
 Tues, Apr. 28 1 pm – Mission and Outreach Mtg

*Note: Worship services are hybrid (In person and Streamed); most meetings are on Zoom unless otherwise noted. Links are sent in emails and eblasts.*

## Grief Support group starts May 2; volunteers needed

First Christian will again host in-person Grief Groups at SpringHouse on Saturdays from May 2 through August 29. Volunteers are needed each Saturday morning during our hosting rotation to set up at 9 am, help with the check-in process, provide refreshments, and set out the display library of resource books.

These sessions are free and open to the public, regardless of religious affiliation. The meetings provide a safe, understanding environment for grief education, comfort and recovery. Some participants come once or twice, while others have been coming for weeks or months. Please call Ann Wolverton (651-276-9855) if you are able to help one time, every month or more often.

## Fundraising Concert set for April 16 at SpringHouse, 7-9 pm



Join us at SpringHouse Ministry Center on **Thursday, April 16 at 7pm** for a fundraising concert to support Prism Organizing Network!

Featuring **Bobby Jo Valentine**, we invite you to gather with us for an evening of music, community, and funding powerful LGBTQIA2S+ organizing.

We are excited to welcome Christian artist Bobby Jo Valentine - who has grown up and emerged out of a Baptist Church of strict lines and sharp edges, and has emerged into a larger, kinder, more welcoming faith...one that is excited to learn, open to growth, and focused on love.

Following the concert there will be the chance to meet with Prism leaders and learn more about the Rainbow Road organizing path that Prism is leading throughout 2026. [Click here](#) for registration/tickets



Also in concert: **Karen Wolverton** with the Minnesota Opera in a concert production of Puccini's "Elgar." April 15 and 19 at the Ordway. See details at <https://tinyurl.com/4scekkrf>

## SpringHouse News

### SH Gardening Season is Here!

**Gardening dates are: April 18 & May 9, starting at 10:00am each Saturday.**

Please consider lending a hand to maintain the gardens at SpringHouse. Each spring and summer workers are needed to rake, weed and mulch the gardens at

SpringHouse. "Many hands will make light work" as the saying goes. You don't have to be an expert gardener, just someone who doesn't mind getting their hands dirty. Bring gloves and a hand trowel if you have them, other tools will be provided. Contact Mary Vanderford at [mandmvanderford@gmail.com](mailto:mandmvanderford@gmail.com) if you have any questions.



### Explore your world with iNaturalist

The SpringHouse Green Team is hosting an iNaturalist Challenge on April 25. It operates by people downloading a free app called iNaturalist and uploading pictures with your camera that are taken that day while you walk. The pictures can be of any tree, plant, flower or mushroom you find. When transferred to the app, you can find out what you took a picture of. This helps people learn and scientists confirm or learn what is in the environment. This could be a fun event for the youth. And adults as well. This is a worldwide project. Any questions on this event may be directed to Melia Derrick at [runningbird68@aol.com](mailto:runningbird68@aol.com).



### SH Green Team to meet herons

The herons had not arrived in time for the Green Team's March meeting so we're going to try again in April. We will view the herons on Monday, April 27 at 11 am and then have our April Green Team meeting at a restaurant nearby. The heron watch will be at Marshall Terrace Park, 2740 Marshall St. NE. Stay tuned for the restaurant location.

### SH Pastors lead Good Friday Walk

Pastor T. Michael and Pastor Rebecca from Lyndale led a Good Friday Walk Through Sites of Crucifixion in South Minneapolis. The walk started at George Floyd Square on 38<sup>th</sup> and Chicago, and then proceeded to the memorials Renee Good on Portland Avenue and the Alex Pretti memorial on Nicollet Avenue. Each site had a witness, theological reflector, and song.

Local television news stations and papers carried articles about this walk. Pastor Dan has posted an hour-long video of this somber event on the FCC website ([fccmpls.org](http://fccmpls.org)). According to Pastor Dan, this event was a powerful experience.



## Sundays at First Christian Church

Worship at 10:30, in person or  
livestreamed at [fccmpls.org](http://fccmpls.org)

**Children's Table Activities** in person during worship: **Join us!**  
Children's Activities are also available online at [www.fccmpls.org](http://www.fccmpls.org)

### Revised Common Lectionary

April 12, 2026

Doubting Thomas

John 20: 19-31



*Incredulity of St.  
Thomas by Strozzi,  
Bernardo Strozzi*

### Reflections on the Word

*John 20:25 - So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord," But Thomas said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hand and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."*

When we share stories and testimonies about our faith and experiences with God, many will echo Thomas and not believe. But we can trust that Jesus works in the hearts and minds of people around us, and thus share our stories of faith with confidence, love and compassion.

*Loving God, May people I share my stories with see and feel your love through me. Amen*

Mighty Raisig, in *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, May 3**

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