

THE LAWTON CHRISTIAN

The official newsletter of the First Christian Church of Lawton



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Brand New

Our 2021 Annual Congregational Meeting was an important one! For those not in attendance, and for those interested in revisiting the conversation that was held, below is a copy of Rev. Appleby's address to the church. It is filled with important information, a realistic recounting of our ministry, and a hopeful path ahead for 2023 and beyond.

In the Scriptures, we are told that new experiences are a gift not to be shied away from. In Paul's writings he promises that "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 Corinthians 5:17) At the close of the New Testament, Christ declares, "Look! I am making all things new." (Revelation 21:5b) The prophet Isaiah, however, stresses the importance of embracing the new like no one else. He proclaims, "Don't remember the prior things; don't ponder ancient history. Look! I'm doing a new thing; now it sprouts up; don't you recognize it? I'm making a way in the desert, paths in the wilderness." (Isaiah 43:18-19)

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The new can be shiny, it can be exciting, it can be laden with hope and expectation, but for it to take root, sometimes the old things must pass. It's true of all life, the tree sprouts new leaves in the Spring that will nourish it throughout the year, but come Autumn they transform into an amazing array of new colors before falling to the ground, their purpose served, to make way for the new and provide nourishment in new ways for what is to come.

It's true of years too! 2022 is now just a memory. For better or for worse, we will never see it again. Its moments are all its own, and now we find ourselves at the dawning of 2023. What this new year holds for us is in many ways predictable, we will sleep, we will rise, we will eat, breathe, love, laugh, and cry. In many ways, what the new holds is a mystery- after all, who would have predicted the events of the last three years before they unfolded.

For those of you who were at our congregational meeting, you are aware that something old is passing away. Our congregation has operated at an average budget deficit of \$54,000- every year- for the past eight years. This is simply unsustainable. Our single largest annual expenditure, bar none, is staff salary. It makes up an average of almost 70% of our annual expenditures (68.8275% to put an even finer point on it), or around \$152,625 every year. The single largest salary expense, every year, goes towards supporting a full-time senior minister. The monies allocated to keep a senior minister total around \$79,000 every year (this includes: salary, housing, insurance, pension, travel, and professional expenses). What's more, our congregation, like our city and like many Christian churches of all stripes across our country, has been shrinking every year.

Put plainly, during the coming season in the life of First Christian Church of Lawton, it is simply not feasible (and bordering on impossible) to retain a full-time ordained minister without rapidly depleting our financial resources. So, if the old way of doing church is no longer possible, what's next?

What's next, not only for First Christian Church but for many churches of all traditions, is a time of renewal- a renewal of the ministry of the common Christian. This is both a scary and an exciting time to be a part of the church, just like when the leaves that nourished a tree fall away in their season to make room for something new and lifegiving to grow. As a pastor, I cannot count the number of times I have had people tell me that they felt called to do more for their church. Sadly, in our present model, the only way for them to give of their talents the way they feel called to would mean giving up their present profession and pursuing a degree in ministry. I cannot tell you the number of regular, everyday Christians who have wanted to use their gifts to help counsel the lonely and grieving, to preach and teach the Scriptures, to move deeper into their faith through the study and sharing of Christian history and theology, to help plan ministry events, initiatives, and all sorts of other things. The trouble is, with our present models of ministry where paid professionals like myself do this work, there is very little room for Christians to grow in their own discipleship and giftedness without working myself (and folks like me) out of a job! Further, until now, there have been limited resources for the average Christian to use to learn and grow in their faith and shore up the skill sets they need to practice these ministries responsibly.

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Thankfully, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has seen this season coming—probably because we’ve seen it before. Just like Spring follows Winter, follows Fall, follows Summer, follows Spring, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has changed its models of ministry to meet the seasons in the world around them. Originally, many disciples congregations were led by plain ordinary Christians. Sometimes called Elders and Deacons, or Evangelists, or Teachers, or Pastors, or Presbyters, or Editors, or even sometimes Bishops, these people took no compensation for their work and simply looked to grow in their faith and giftedness and to encourage others to do the same. It was during just such a period that our movement became the fastest growing denomination in the United States (just prior to the founding of First Christian). In fact, some of the founders of our movement even railed against paid full-time pastors (whom they called “hireling clergy”) believing that in paying them to do the work of ordinary Christians the church was outsourcing their calling and discipleship! Seeing the need to provide ways in which for regular Christians to grow in their faith and practice, institutions like Phillips Seminary now offer high-quality, flexible, super low-cost learning opportunities through their Center for Ministry and Lay Training to help the average Christian learn what they need to know to step up and take a more active role in the ministry of their church! Further, in addition to recognizing ordained clergy as pastors, we have a long and storied tradition of commissioned ministers serving the needs of the body.

So, after much thought, prayer, and consultation with the leadership of our church and our region, I have concluded that it is time to start working myself out of a job. The wells that have sustained me and the church for so long are drying up. The seasons are changing, and I cannot ethically ask for any church that cannot afford a full-time minister to be saddled with the expenses of the care and feeding of one, even if that one is me. Put bluntly, the time will come in 2023 when I will leave First Christian Church of Lawton, and paid full-time pastoral ministry, for a season. During our remaining time together, I hope for a long Springtime of the soul. I want to devote my time and efforts to helping you find and explore your own giftedness. I want to coach, guide, and disciple as many of you as will allow it as you develop your own gifts. I want to give opportunities to you to preach, teach, counsel, lead, evangelize, and reach out in new and exciting ways, and throughout that process to offer feedback, connection with resources for further development, coaching, and advice. The church is the body of Christ, and regardless of the financial situation or the cultural opinions of the Christian faith, God will never leave it in the dust. The gifts needed to lead and guide our body through the season ahead are present right now, just like the buds on a tree, waiting to grow and develop.

So, this is a time for the new. It can be a scary time, but it can also be an exciting one, full of new life and new possibility. Remember, our God is a God who makes “new ways” out of “no-ways”. Whatever the coming year has in store for all of us as we set off on this journey, remember, God’s got this and so do we. After all, it’s just like the prophet Isaiah liked to say, “Don’t remember the prior things; don’t ponder ancient history. Look! I’m doing a new thing; now it sprouts up; don’t you recognize it? I’m making a way in the desert, paths in the wilderness.” (Isaiah 43:18-19)

Blessings & Peace, Rev. Paul Appleby

January Worship Corner: A Series of Epiphanies

An epiphany is a moment of sudden revelation or insight. The Epiphany is a Christian festival that begins January 6th and lasts until the beginning of Lent (about seven weeks this year). During this season, the church takes time to reflect on the ways in which God has revealed himself to the world, culminating in the transfiguration of Jesus on the Holy Mountain (an event celebrated this year on February 19th). During this series we will have the opportunity to hear from not only Rev. Appleby, but other members of our faith community as they share their own Epiphanies about the working of God in our world.

(Note: Epiphanies are akin to what we might today call “paradigm shifts”. They are born out of adversity. When familiar ways of seeing and doing no longer work, in that dark night of the soul, the restless soul cries out to its Creator. Grace comes in when, in those moments, the Creator answers- but to truly understand the answer, we must be willing to risk, and to try something new.)

Sunday, January 8th (Joseph: The Dreamer)

Elders: David Aubrey, JoJo Aubrey

Worship Leader: Sheila Fountain

Scriptures: Genesis 37:1-28; Romans 8:28-32

Songs: Be Thou My Vision (595); God Meant It All for Good; Restless Weaver (658)

Speaker: Rev. Paul Appleby

Sunday, January 15th (Jacob: The Wrestler)

Elders: JoJo Aubrey, David Aubrey

Worship Leader: Joe Bailey

Scriptures: Genesis 32:22-31

Songs: Out of the Depths (510); Bring Many Names (10); Strong, Gentle Children (511)

Speaker: Rev. Paul Appleby

Sunday, January 22nd (Moses: The Inquirer)

Elders: Lori Anderson, Becky Tannery

Worship Leader: Rick Van Horn

Scriptures: Exodus 3:1-15

Songs: Source and Sovereign, Rock and Cloud (12); Go Down Moses (663); God of Many Names (13)

Speaker: Rev. Paul Appleby

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Sunday, January 29th (Rahab: The Sexual Outsider)

Elders: John Adair, Lori Anderson

Worship Leader: Kathy Cooper

Scripture: Joshua 2:1-15; Matthew 1:1-16

Songs: "Once We Were No People"; "God Above, God Below (Rahab's Lullaby)" (CCLI 7171898); "O God of Vision" (288);

Speaker: Deacon Amber Delger

Deacons for January

January: Tom Springli (Team Captain), Jane Springli, Amber Delger

Baby Shower

A baby is on it's way! Mark and Nicole Wernette are expecting their first child, and we are planning a baby shower! The shower will be **Sunday, December 8th following worship**, and all at First Christian are invited. They have picked out selections at Target, Amazon, and Buy Buy Baby, and their "theme" is Winnie the Pooh. A link to their selections was emailed to the congregation, but if you did not receive it, please contact the church office.

January Book Club

Our First Christian Church book club will resume meeting this month, beginning Wednesday January 18th, at Buffalo Grove Coffee Company (605 SW E Ave) at 12:00 noon. Our book this time around is *In the Margins: A Transgender Man's Journey with Scripture* by Father Shannon T.L. Kearns, an ordained priest, playwright, and theologian. Shannon writes in an engaging and conversational manner as he weaves his own personal narrative deftly into his interpretation of some of the most important stories in the Scriptures. Part Bible study, part confessional, part invitation to exploration, *In the Margins* is a phenomenal read from start to finish and is the type of work that just begs to be discussed among friends over a nice hot cup of coffee (or tea, or hot chocolate- if that's your preference). Copies are available for Kindle on Amazon.com for \$4.99, paperback copies are available through Amazon for \$17.57, or through the church office (just let us know if you will be needing one). There are book scholarships available for those who would like to participate but are unable to afford the text. Just let Rev. Appleby know on Sunday morning or by email at pastor@fcclawton.org.

Happy Birthday!



- 1/1 Tom Springli
- 1/6 Dillon Noland
- 1/7 Dick Tannery
- 1/10 Vickie Johnson Flores
- 1/16 Adahjean Oates
- 1/22 David Aubrey
- 1/24 Jay Cooper
- 1/25 Marjorie Lutz
- 1/31 Brian Herring
- 1/31 Darlene Ramsey

Happy Anniversary



- 1/27 Coy and Peggy Citron

(If you have a birthday or anniversary that we have left out of the newsletter, please inform the church office.)

Thank You!

- We, your church staff, deeply appreciate your generous donations for our Christmas Bonuses! We are so blessed to be able to work with this community of faith!
- I appreciate so much everything that everyone did to make David's service absolutely perfect. He would have been so pleased.
I love you all so much!
Wendi Lindley
- Thank you to John Kennedy for the contribution to the general fund in memory of Linda.

December By the Numbers

December Tithes and Offerings to Date	\$10,488.84
December Expenses to Date	\$17,870.15
Difference	\$-7,381.31
Balance Transfers for December	\$ 6,500.00

November Average Sunday In-Person Worship Attendance was **48**.

Christmas Offering

Your Christmas offering equips the Oklahoma Region to echo the joy heard in summer camp settings, congregational life, seminary classrooms, and leadership gatherings. Your gift enables our Region to give support to church leaders, search committees, youth ministers and sponsors, vocational ministry students, congregational clergy and chaplains, as we do this work together. This offering will be received in addition to our regular offering on **January 1st and 8th during worship**.



January 2023



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>1 New Year's Day</p> <p>10:30 am Worship (Christmas Offering Received)</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Monday Morning Minute on FCC YouTube Channel</p> <p>6 pm Boy Scouts</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Noon - Taco Tuesday at Julio's Mexican Restaurant</p> <p>1 pm CWF Business Mtg.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>5 pm Clothes Closet Open</p> <p>5:30 pm Agape Meal and Study</p>	<p>5</p> <p>5:30 pm Elders Meet</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Noon - Just Games With Friends</p> <p>5 pm Girl Scouts</p>	<p>7</p>
<p>8</p> <p>10:30 am Worship (Christmas Offering Received)</p> <p>Baby Shower after Worship</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Monday Morning Minute on FCC YouTube Channel</p> <p>6 pm Boy Scouts</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Noon - Taco Tuesday at Julio's Mexican Restaurant</p> <p>1 pm Ruth Group</p>	<p>11</p> <p>5 pm Clothes Closet Open</p> <p>5:30 pm Agape Meal and Study</p>	<p>12</p> <p>7 pm Anna Group Meets</p>	<p>13</p> <p>10 am Treasury/ Audit Committee</p> <p>5 pm Girl Scouts</p>	<p>14</p>
<p>15</p> <p>10:30 am Worship</p>	<p>16 Office Closed for MLK Jr. Day</p> <p>Monday Morning Minute on FCC YouTube Channel</p> <p>6 pm Boy Scouts</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Noon - Taco Tuesday at Julio's Mexican Restaurant</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Noon - Book Study At Buffalo Grove</p> <p>5 pm Clothes Closet Open</p> <p>5:30 pm Agape Meal and Study</p> <p>6 pm Choir</p>	<p>19</p> <p>6:30 pm Board Meeting</p>	<p>20</p> <p>5 pm Girl Scouts</p>	<p>21</p>
<p>22</p> <p>10:30 am Worship</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Monday Morning Minute on FCC YouTube Channel</p> <p>6 pm Boy Scouts</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Noon - Taco Tuesday at Julio's Mexican Restaurant</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Noon - Book Study At Buffalo Grove</p> <p>5 pm Clothes Closet Open</p> <p>5:30 pm Agape Meal and Study</p> <p>6 pm Choir</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p> <p>5 pm Girl Scouts</p>	<p>28</p>
<p>29</p> <p>10:30 am Worship</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Monday Morning Minute on FCC YouTube Channel</p> <p>6 pm Boy Scouts</p>	<p>31</p> <p>Noon - Taco Tuesday at Julio's Mexican Restaurant</p>				

Agape/Outreach Ministry



Each Wednesday, our Agape Meal is served from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm. The meal is served in our Fellowship Hall, and following the dinner, Rev. Appleby will lead a Bible Study for those who wish to stay and participate. The meal is free and will be served one meal per person. Thank you to all who help with this ministry!

The Boy Scouts have been assisting with the meals, and we have a couple of other great volunteers, but we would always welcome help from anyone. Hilde Bilvais has provided assistance for folks with dogs and cats throughout the month and as always could use any donations to help with this ministry.

January Menu

January 4 - pork loin pieces and green beans

January 11 - pork or chicken sandwiches

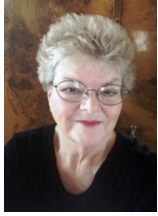
January 18 - egg rolls with rice and Asian veggies

January 25 - baked chicken

Our Dannie and Rafie Clothes Closet is open each Wednesday from 5:00 pm to 5:30 pm prior to the meal. For more information regarding the clothes closet, please call the church office or Denise Smith.

Our Outdoor Food Pantry on the south side of our church building is always in need of donations. You may either bring them to the church office or place them directly in the Outdoor Pantry. These donations go quickly! Useful non-perishable items include the following:

- Canned ravioli or spaghetti
- Other canned meats with easy-open tops
- Packages of ramen noodles
- Pop-Tarts
- Easy-open canned fruit or pudding
- Bread
- Cheese and Crackers
- Peanut butter
- Cereal
- Bottled Water



January Health Tip - Refined Sugar From Kathy Cooper, RN

What is Refined Sugar?

Refined sugar, also called table sugar, is produced by a complex extraction process from sugar cane or sugar beets. In the past the rich were the only ones who had access to refined sugar. Today we can find refined sugar in almost every household in America. The average American consumes 150-170 pounds of refined sugar a year!

Effects of refined sugar

When we bite into a delicious morning donut, we really aren't thinking about the effects this decision has on our body. We are simply happy we quenched our craving for sugar. This is actually one of refined sugar's main effect. Once we have consumed sugar throughout years of our life, our body becomes addicted to this drug. And yes, sugar is technically a drug since it does stimulate our CNS (central nervous system). Recent research is investigating the effects sugar has on our brain in connection with dementia. This is very interesting research, and I will follow it for you as it may provide some long awaited answers regarding dementia. It is being called the third type of Diabetes. More on this subject later.

However, the addictive property of sugar isn't the worst effect it has on the body. One tablespoon of refined sugar will actually weaken our immune system by 40% for up to 5 hours. Sugar does this by reducing the effectiveness of our white blood cells, which are the blood cells that fight infections. This can be especially dangerous during the flu season, because our body will have trouble fighting off day to day infections.

Ways to reduce sugar

The best way to start cutting out of refined sugar in your life is by tracking how much sugar you generally consume daily. After you have a general idea of how much sugar you consume, you should try to reduce that number by 50% the first week. This can typically be done by just swapping out sugary drinks for water.

Another way to cut out these simple sugars is to stop binge eating sugar snacks. As said before sugar is addictive, and if you just limit the consumption of sugar, you will stop craving sugar as often. Instead of eating a whole box of cookies at a time, tell yourself you will only have 2-3 cookies for the night. This will not only satisfy your craving, but it can actually cut back on the amount of sugar you consume daily. After a while you should stop getting the cravings, and you can cut out sugar all together.

Fruits and honey are great alternatives to refined sugars because they contain natural sugar rather than a simple sugar. These sugars are not harmful to the body, because they come from whole foods and provide complex carbohydrates which convert to energy rather slowly.

Christian Women's Fellowship/ OK Disciples Women News

CWF/ODW strives to empower women to demonstrate the gifts of love, compassion and kindness throughout our church community. We demonstrate our faith in God and seek His will through service and friendship. Our aim is to provide individualized care to our membership and our community.

Some of our services are sending birthday cards to members as well as other cards, offering bereavement meals, and delivering meals to the sick or recovering church members. This year we had quarterly service projects for the community added. It has been our tradition for many years to provide food baskets at Christmas, but many members felt the need for the food baskets was not as great as in the past. We decided to adopt a Medicare/Medicaid Nursing Facility for Christmas. This endeavor proved to be greatly needed and appreciated, and our women of the church responded with an outpouring of lap blankets, socks, gloves and hats, pudding and fruit cups, lotions and lip balm so that every resident of the facility was serviced (see picture below). We also took cookie trays to the staff members on each shift.

CWF supports local charities by sending gifts of money. Some of these charities are: the Holy City, Cameron Campus Ministries and the Boy Scouts.

CWF organized several pot luck meals for the congregation as well as a cookie party. We held several fund raisers to help us meet our obligations which the church members supported and showed their appreciation for our efforts. This has been a very rewarding year filled with so many memories.

Election of officers was accomplished, and the new officers are: President - Jane Springli, Vice-President- Joan Van Horn, Secretary - Kathy Cooper and Treasurer - Nancy Davis with Virginia Lucas and Marilyn Bohlender sharing the Devotional Leader position.

Kathy Cooper
CWF President



Jane Springli and Virginia Lucas prepare donations to take to the nursing home
(Photo taken by Marilyn Bohlender)

Joys and Concerns



We praise God and rejoice with the following:

- Joe Bailey says that both his daughter Melanie and grandson Nehemiah have recovered from covid and are back to work and school!
- Konrad and Amber Delger and John Saville have all recovered from covid and are back to work!
- Grandpa Joe Bailey announces that Dahlia Mae (Bushman), 5 pounds 11oz and 19 inches long, was born on Christmas day evening to their granddaughter, Madison. The delivery was by emergency C-section, two weeks early, but daughter and mother are doing well. Dahlia's great grandmother Betty and great-great-grandmother Jane, were also Christmas day babies!
- Former FCC members Tony and Donna Curtis have a joy to share! Last week when it was so cold, Union Gospel Mission in Downtown Dallas opened their doors and provided a warming station!

We pray for those who have lost loved ones:

- Family and friends of David Lindley
- Family and friends of Juanita Brown

These with ongoing concerns appreciate your continued prayers:

- Anna Maria Herbert (health issues)
- Beverly Honeycutt (arthritis pain)
- Bill Kindt (recuperating at home)
- Heather Graham (Beverly Watson's daughter awaiting open heart surgery)
- Baby Mila (very small; awaiting second surgery)
- Shelley Forrester (recuperation from covid)
- Mel Cassady (health issues)
- Delana Huggins (healing from neck surgery)
- Lori Anderson (back issues affecting her leg)
- Bill Logan (recuperating at home)
- Kerrie Oates (pressures of full-time nursing school and family)
- Jazzy, Dillon, and Baby Axel
- Darlene Miller (pneumonia, cancer)
- Helen Venniro (on hospice)
- Teckla Ryans (heart issues)
- Denise Smith's father and family
- Jim Horner (David and Lori Anderson's friend who has a cancer reoccurrence)
- Blaise Bailey (Joe Bailey's granddaughter) facing medical discharge from navy
- Ronnie and Donna Bagwell (Glenda Brown's friends). Ronnie is having cancer treatments.
- Fran Herring (upcoming cancer surgery)
- Carmine and Jana (Becky Tannery's brother-in-law and sister) need strength and healing.
- Aaron (Ursula Asuncion's son who has health issues)
- Charles and Sandee Troy (Wendi Lindley's nephew in ICU and her sister)
- Pratt Family (health, financial, and relationship issues)

Church Staff and Contact Information

Pastor- Rev. Paul Appleby/pastor@fcclawton.org

Administrative Assistant - Piper Saville/office@fcclawton.org

Director of Music - David C. Anderson/davidtunespianos@gmail.com

Facilities Manager - Konrad Delger

Sound Technician - Brian Herring

Nursery - Beverly Watson

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