



**Newsletter of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Bellingham, WA Vol.73, No 1 ~ January 2023**

We acknowledge that we gather on the ancestral land of the Coast Salish peoples, including the Lummi, Nooksack, and Semiahmoo who have lived in this region since ancient times. May we live consciously and respectfully, honoring Coast Salish neighbors.

✍️✍️ Pastor's Pen ✍️✍️

Friends,

We spent four weeks getting ready for Christmas and when it arrived, it almost left us without opportunity to worship. The snow and the ice were spectacular. The quiet peace held us to a whisper and the glistening ice mesmerized us with shimmering display. Grace appeared and the temperatures warmed, enough to allow the roads access and made it possible for us to worship. We welcomed again the newborn baby Jesus, born for all of us. Christmas is a season wrapped in many emotions, a time in which we get in touch with feelings of joy or those that have been concealed, or under the surface. We hold them close and maybe even acknowledge that they are there. Christmas, a time of promise and regrets, great joy and deep pain, alleluias and amens.

**First Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
An Open & Affirming
Congregation**

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Pastor's Pen (continued)



First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

A movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God welcomed us.

All of Us. Ministers

Rev. Debbie Little, Interim Pastor

Amelia Nye, Accompanist

April Thomson, Office Administrator

Rev. Bill Robey, Regional Minister

Rev. Terri Horde Owens

General Minister and President

Sunday Schedule

10:50AM Gathering Time
11:00AM Worship
12:15PM Fellowship Time
2:00PM Book Group (4th Sunday)

Office Hours

Tuesday - Friday
9:00AM - 12:00PM (noon)

Our staff are in and out of the office throughout the week. Please feel free to stop by during their office hours or make an appointment that fits your schedule.

Officers

Dick Talley, Moderator
Leslie Pinkston, Vice-Moderator
Betty Schmidling, Secretary
Cheryl Perry, Treasurer

Important Links:

Regional Website (incl. monthly newsletter)
<https://northernlightsdisciples.org/>

General Church Website: disciples.org

How fitting for us that as we enter a New Year, we move closer to calling a settled pastor. Just like the Advent, Lent is on its way. Before we catch our breath, it will be time to mark our foreheads with ashes. In the Christmastide season, in between, we need to do some serious work to be ready to receive a pastor. We need to untie some of the knots that have kept us from growing—tradition, complacency, unrest, uncertainty and communication gaps. We need to do a better job of working together and of being willing to do the spiritual work that will allow us to welcome a new pastor.

Dear people, it is time to work together, to stop doing things randomly without sharing the knowledge of what you are doing, without training someone to come alongside, without letting the pastor and leadership know. It is time to let go of holding a task in isolation, without sharing that task with someone new. It is time to step out in leadership, or let go of leadership. It is time to trust and it is time to risk. From my pastoral perspective, I see potential but I also have experienced a lack of trust. Imagine that you are leaving. You must consider what information needs to be shared so that things run smoothly. What do you need to let go of? That is what I am doing as interim pastor, but that is also what you need to be doing as congregation. Open the way for the Spirit of Christ to move you to the next chapter, or find the courage to close this ministry. May we seek to find answers.

Your's in Christ, *Debbie*



LISTENING CONFERENCE-SUNDAY

JANUARY 15, 2023

Unfortunately, we had to cancel the Listening Conference on December 18 because of weather and low attendance. The Conference is rescheduled for January 15th following worship (weather permitting). The church will be providing lunch so that you might be encouraged to stay to vote on some church business for the new year and to give the search committee your thoughts about what skills and priorities you have for a new settled pastor.

We will first have a brief Congregational Meeting to present the 2023 Proposed Budget and the Proposed Officers for 2023. Then the Search Committee will

lead a discussion (probably an hour) to gain the congregation's input the hopes, dreams, and skills that they see needed in our next settled pastor. The Search Committee's job is to represent the congregation in finding a settled pastor who can lead our congregation on our journey of faith and answer the question of "what is God calling the FCC Bellingham to do and be?". This can only be done by your participation and input! The LISTENING CONFERENCE will be your opportunity to discuss and share.

**Search Committee: Renee Hoemann, Linda Heyne, Jimmie Talley, Bob Fisher, Kris Anne Lewis, and Kathy Wheeler. Dick Talley is acting as convener and chair (without vote)*

Praise and Thanksgiving

What a generous congregation you are! I did not expect a Christmas gift. It was so thoughtful to give all the staff cards of appreciation and financial support. Thank you so much for these kind gifts and recognition. You made my heart full. I had forgotten how humbling it is to receive this kind of love. Bless your generous hearts, Debbie

Dear Ones,

Thank you all for the unexpected Christmas gift! I so appreciate your warm welcome to this community, your kindness, and your thoughtful generosity. Know that this gift will be put to good use serving God's people. ~ April Thomson



THERE IS MUCH TO DO... A NEW YEAR TO GET READY

It has been a long time since you called a new pastor—over 20 years. The Search Committee is busy working to prepare for the next steps. It will soon be time to gather your insights and dreams to properly convey what kind of person you wish to call to be your next pastor. Meanwhile there are some things to think about.

Building

1. The building has not been well maintained in some time. There has been a great effort to get things done but there is still much to do. We need to make sure that our heating ducts are clean, our heating system works, that doors are secure, that proper lighting is in place around the church and in the parking lot to ensure safety. There are plumbing issues: particularly toilets and sinks that need to be replaced as well as repaired.
2. The care of the building has been lacking as well. There is not a proper vacuum. For a building of this size, you need a commercial machine.
3. The parking lot is inefficiently lit or not at all. It is unsafe in the dark. This needs immediate attention.
4. Oversight of the building has been minimal. One or two people have been trying to keep the building vacuumed and clean. We do hire a service for cleaning the bathrooms but that is not enough to keep the building properly maintained. Kathy Wheeler has spent countless hours vacuuming and cleaning the sanctuary, entry, kitchen, hallways and fellowship hall. James has done repairs and maintenance without anyone knowing what has been done. It is not right to rely on one or two volunteers to maintain the building. Consider what happens when that person is away, ill, or gone.
5. I am working on putting together a building team with the three churches using the building. This team needs to be formed and functioning so that we can communicate needs and brainstorm together how we might handle improvements. My aim is to get this group together soon. This church needs to have representation on that team and it needs to be more than one person.
6. In addition, there is no communication about what has been done: repairs, inspections, issues, and where things are located need to be documented and put in the office so that when a problem arises, there is a plan or at least a person to consult.
7. The Trustees and myself have been meeting with those who use the building to ensure that they have insurance. We are checking that there are at least two people we can call if there's a question or problem. We are emphasizing that rooms are cleaned and left in good order. We are also making sure that we have a building agreement that is up-to-date, listing contact people and who has keys. This has not been done in a consistent manner. It needs to be done at least once a year.

Church Life and Ministry

Prayers

Prayer is the path on which we travel. Through prayer we connect to God and to one another. Please commit yourselves to daily prayer to guide your own relationship to God in Christ as well as to offer intercessory prayers for our church in this time of change and renewal. Without prayer, we are without a compass to guide us.

A pastor is going to want to know what you feel God is calling you to do.

Why do you exist?

What do you see as your future?



How do you intend to care for a pastor, for the space you own, for all who enter and can potentially be a part of this faith community? Specifically, how do you integrate people into the life of your church?

How are you preparing yourselves spiritually?

Worship: Worship takes a village of people to help make it happen. The Elders serve in leadership roles. We have a paid staff accompanist and a volunteer musician who make worship happen every time we gather. We have the fabulous four volunteers who are running the screens, and Zoom worship. Thanks and praise to all these wonderful people.

In addition, volunteers are needed to:

1. Set up and clean up communion; order or let the office know what needs to be ordered
2. Change the paraments (colors of the seasons) and assist the pastor or better yet worship team to choose banners for seasons.
3. Serving Diaconate: to pass the offertory and communion trays; to see that candles are lit each Sunday
4. Scripture Readers- If you are willing to serve on this team, let the pastor know and you will be added to the rotation of readers.
5. Hospitality Hosts who will welcome people when they come to church and be sure to help integrate them into the life of the church.
6. Hospitality Teams: to help serve coffee hours and at memorial gatherings and dinners.

Social Media Team- We need a team of folks to design, create, manage, update, and oversee the website, Facebook page, and address whether we need or want an Instagram presence. Certainly this should be done in consultation and tandem with the minister but it needs a few people to provide oversight.

It is very important to realize that church can't happen unless people are invested. There is no such thing as retirement in the life of church. All members are needed and all life is vital to make church happen. Please find some way to share your skills and help us to be a vital, worshipping, serving community.

It is my role as your interim minister to get things ready for a settled pastor. Gary and I will be moving aside some, so that others can come forward and serve the needs of this church.

Please let me know or sign up if you will share your gifts in some way.

Faithfully in Christ, *Debbie*



FROM THE MODERATOR

I have received several newsletters from other churches around the state and country and most of them have an article or two about what has happened in their congregation in 2022 and what they are looking forward to in 2023. Here is my take on 2022.

There were three big events for us: 1) the retirement of Gary and Tamalyn 2) the sales of the south 3 acres of our land and 3) adding Debbie Little and April Thomson as Interim Pastor and Administrative Assistant, respectively. After 22½ years as our pastor Gary decided it was time. Tamalyn served as Associate for over 8 years. This retirement necessitated that we hire Debbie Little as our Interim Pastor, which has turned into a blessing.

The second big event was the sale of three acres on the south side of our property. Although we closed the sale late 2021, the financial impact was felt in 2022. We were able to upgrade our tech capabilities with a new sound and projector system in sanctuary (quite a learning curve and still a work in progress). Thank you to our tech team of Kris Ann Lewis, Linda Heyne, Jimmie Talley and Linda Sue Joyner. We were also able to do some much-needed major improvements around the building. The parking lot was resurfaced. The entire inside of building was painted (one hallway and west wing rest rooms yet to be done). The carpet has been replaced in offices,

sanctuary, fellowship hall. The east wing classrooms were all cleaned. The stove and dishwasher in kitchen were repaired. The landscaping around the building was weeded and new bark spread. The outside lighting replaced. And Interfaith moved their offices from the east wing to the west wing! Boy, that was a lot of time, effort, money, and volunteer hours. Many volunteer hours spent by congregation members (too numerous to list) cleaning, sorting out, throwing out and just plain getting things in order. A big thank you to all!!

Debbie Little came on staff as the Interim Pastor in July to lead us and to prepare us for our next Settled Pastor. Her caring spirit, leadership in worship, and pastoral skill have already proven to be a big asset for our congregation. In October we were able to hire April Thomson as the much-needed Administrative Assistant. She will be working 20 hours a week (Tuesday and Thursday in Office). Welcome April.

We continue to be challenged by both the pandemic and the weather. Still, we are a dedicated and a faithful congregation and look forward to the ministry of this church into the future. We will continue to strive to fulfill our calling and respond to "What God is calling our congregation to be".

In the next Courier, we'll look forward to 2023.

Dick Talley, Moderator.



‡ Greetings from your Faith Community Nurse ‡

Happy New Year-2023

While I was out shopping for Christmas presents I saw this saying on a woman's shirt for sale.

*Breathe in
Grace
Breathe out
Gratitude*

A lovely breath prayer to take us into the New Year as we consider whether or not to make any resolutions.

As I searched for January health focuses, I came across Healthy People 2030 objectives. One of the objectives for older adults looks at injury prevention, specifically reducing fall-related deaths. The summary of this objective states: "Falls are a major cause of death for older adults in the United States, and deaths from falls have increased in recent years. Strategies to help older adults living on their own or in care facilities prevent falls, like interventions to increase physical activity, can reduce deaths in this age group" <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives>.

The National Institute on Aging lists strategies to prevent the risks of falling. "The risk of falling — and fall-related problems — rises with age. However, many falls can be prevented. For example, **exercising, managing your medications, having your vision checked, and making your home safer** are all steps you can take to prevent a fall." Physical activity, such as walking and exercises to improve your balance (yoga, pilates, and tai chi) can all improve balance and muscle strength. You can also try lifting weights or using resistance bands to build strength. Removing throw rugs or small rugs that can cause a tripping or slipping hazard are ways to make your home safer.

There are many more strategies listed with specific actions you can take to reduce your risk of falls at: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/falls-and-fractures-older-adults-causes-and-prevention>.

On December 9, the Whatcom County Health Department put out a health release recommending folks wear a high-quality, well-fitting mask when around others in indoor spaces to protect against both acquiring and spreading these infections to others. To read the entire health release go to <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/CivicSend/ViewMessage/message/188750>.

I hope you find this information helpful to stay safe and healthy in 2023.

Blessings from your faith community nurse,
Rebecca Cavanaugh



Church Calendar

Elder of the Month: Leslie Pinkston

- 1.1 Assemble Blessing Bags
- 1.6 Zoom Bible Study
- 1.8 Memorial Service for Ann Chloe Gibson
- 1.15 Brief Business meeting followed by Listening Session
[lunch provided]
- 1.29 Guest Speaker: Ray Deck from Skookum House

Yearly reminder:
there is no
resolution that, if
kept, will make you
more worthy of love.

You, as your actual
self and not as some
made up ideal, are
already worthy.

-Nadia Bolz-Weber

