



# First Christian Church

## Church Life



May/June/July 2021

Volume 73—Issue 3

Inside this issue:

Pastor's Article	2-4
Dir of Communications	5
Reopening Comm.	6
Sunday at FCC	7-9
Graduates	10-12
Authors	13
Birthdays	14-16
Anniversaries	14-16
Faith Journeys	17-35
Camp KBY	36
Joys	37-41
Music	42
Prayer/Condolences	43-44
Stewardship	45-47
Photos	48-57
Outreach	58-61

## Graduation Celebration



### YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND A GRADUATION PICNIC

**WHEN?** Sunday, May 23, from 1 to 3 p.m. (*setup to begin at 12:30 p.m.*)

**WHERE?** The pavilion at Chestnut Park (*across from Angel's Attic and Pagliai's Pizza*).

**WHY?** For our first time of fellowship since March of 2020 as we celebrate all our amazing graduates (*listed on pages 10-12 of Church Life*).

**WHAT TO BRING?** Fried Chicken, paper products, and beverages will be supplied by the church. Please bring a dish to share!

First Christian Church  
111 North Fifth Street  
Murray, KY 42071

**Phone:**  
(270) 753-3824

**Church email:**

**Main:**

fccmurray@gmail.com

**Pastor Ruth:**

ruthragovin@gmail.com

**Website:**

www.fccmurray.com



## *Pastor's Article*



Dear Church Family and Friends,

This is a good news, bad news type of letter to you. I'll begin with the bad news: FCC's staff has been hard hit during this pandemic. Nancy Dycus resigned from all of her responsibilities as our creative, faithful youth and children's director after many years of service last year, ultimately giving up helping with the Children's Zoom service. *(We are grateful that our Worship and Wonder Director Allison Willis and the children's Sunday School teacher Rebecca Landolt are working with the children. Elena Roberts is doing an excellent job with the youth.)* Our organist Donnie Hendrix died of Covid-19 in November. *(We are so grateful that Judy Hill has been playing the piano during our worship service.)* Our custodian Aimee Bailey broke her ankle severely last month and will not be able to return to work for at least another six weeks, if not longer. *(We are grateful that volunteers have been helping to keep the church clean to give Aimee time to heal.)* Our Director of Communications Debbie Batteiger was in a potentially fatal car accident a few weeks ago that has left her sore and in a weakened state. The car accident acted as a big wake up call for Debbie, leading her to reflect deeply about how to best use her many talents moving forward at the stage of life she is in. She realized that, even though she truly enjoys working at the church, her deepest calling in life is working as a journalist, something she both has a degree in and has worked as here in Murray, KY, Tennessee, and Florida. She has made the difficult decision to resign from her position here as Director of Communications at the church so that she can focus her attention on journalism at a time when there are more opportunities to work from home. This is what brings her the greatest joy and energizes her. As she says in her letter of resignation, her last day with us will be on Thursday, May 27 (see page 5). Debbie has been amazing in every way: responsible, hardworking, efficient, pleasant, flexible, extremely talented. She has helped our congregation especially during this pandemic to learn to do things virtually and be more effective communicators. She will be missed by all of us, perhaps by no one more than me. Since we will not be able to have an in-person farewell gathering, I encourage you to send cards and well wishes to her at the church.

What this means at a practical level is that we will have only a skeletal crew working at the church as we move into the summer: me, Mark Dycus as our Minister of Music helped by Judy Hill, Elena Roberts working with the youth, and Allison Willis working (with the help of Rebecca) with the children. It may take some time to fill Debbie's position as Director of Communications (what we formally called the Administrative Assistant) and we will want to be very intentional in whom we hire for this essential position. Since her portfolio contains so many responsibilities, many of which I will have to assume, this issue of Church Life will cover three rather than two months: May, June, and July. I hope and pray that by the end of July we will have found someone to fill this position so that we can put out an August / September edition of Church Life. In the meantime, I encourage you to read your Tuesday emails faithfully and carefully as it will be the primary source of information moving forward. We also hope that Aimee will fully heal and return as our custodian before then. Obviously, FCC's now skeletal staff will not be able to do everything. We will need people to volunteer to help with many things over the next few months. Please let me know what you would like to do (cleaning, decluttering the fellowship hall and second floor of the education building, office work, outdoor yard work and maintenance, your idea of what needs to be done)! I would like to schedule a number of works days over the spring and summer to focus specifically on cleaning and organizing certain areas that need attention: the Sunday School rooms, the worship storage room, the area above the sanctuary, and the "dungeon." If you would be willing to be part of a clean up / organizing team, please let me know.

The good news? Yes, there is some! The personnel committee should be bringing you an update about an organist in the near future. Stay tuned to your Tuesday emails and be ready to be very pleased! Other good news? We rejoice in our graduates, whom we will celebrate at a graduation picnic and fellowship gathering at the pavilion on Sunday, May 23 from 1 to 3 PM (see page 1). We also rejoice that we are continuing to do good outreach through Laundry Love, Clutch, the Blessing Boxes (stocked by our youth), Need Line, the Calloway County Collective, filling baby bottles for Life House, and helping those in our congregation and community in need. David Robinson has been spending a portion of his every paycheck to buy items for the Blessing Boxes, which were overflowing on the tables in the fellowship hall (see p. 60). We rejoice that our Church Buildings Reopening Committee has been so intentional and prayerful in the way that they have been helping us to navigate through this pandemic and that we are again worshipping together in our magnificent sanctuary on Sundays. We rejoice that Leah and Maya Hughes brought the light of Christ into the sanctuary on Sunday, May 2. I rejoice that the Lenten and Easter seasons gave me the opportunity to present a series on Celtic Christian Spirituality and a Lenten sermon series called "Lessons from the Garden." We rejoice that we had such a wonderful Maundy Thursday celebration on Zoom.

We rejoice in the living cross adorned with live flowers in our front yard for Easter (thanks to Rebecca Landolt for organizing this!). We rejoice that on Easter we lifted balloons into the air exclaiming in unison “He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!” in a sanctuary beautifully decorated for us by Judy Lyle, Doris Cella, Celeste McAllister, Janie Eckstein, Jean and Don Bennett, Ann Thornton and others. I know we all rejoice in the many individuals who have been willing to make themselves vulnerable as they have shared about their own personal faith journeys over the past few months, first on Zoom, and now during our in-person worship celebrations in the sanctuary. I personally believe that this has been one of the most meaningful things our congregation ever has done. I encourage you to read those that are in this edition of Church Life (see pages 17-35) and to consider whether you might also be willing to share your Faith Journey at some point. Jean Bennett hopes to be able to even create a book that would contain these that would be a gift not only to the present congregation but also to those who come after us in the future. Most of all, we can rejoice that “Because He Lives, I Can Face Tomorrow!” These are some of the things I rejoice in. How about you?

In Christian Love and Service,

Pastor Ruth



***David Robinson brought this table up from ‘the dungeon’ and placed it in the narthex leading into the sanctuary, upon which we place prefab communion cups for our worship services. It is the communion table that was saved from the fire many years ago.***

## ***Note from the Director of Communications***



***In this, my last issue of Church Life as your Director of Communications, I wanted to let each of you know how much I enjoyed getting to know you over the last 3-1/2 years. I will always be grateful for the opportunities afforded to me by First Christian Church and by Pastor Ruth. It was an absolute joy to work in the church office. Most importantly, you helped me grow in my faith and showed me the goodness of humanity. God bless each of you, Debbie.***

May 4, 2021

It is with a heavy heart that I give to you today my notice. I intend for my last working day to be Thursday, May 27, 2021.

Since my car accident last month, I have been reevaluating my professional goals and have decided that in order to meet some of the ambitions I have, I need to devote my time and energy to those pursuits. I hope you understand that my leaving First Christian Church does not reflect on the church or the position but only the realization that as a writer, I need to devote full time to that practice.

Thank you for the opportunities you have given me over the last four years. I will cherish my time here always.

Sincerely,

Deborah Batteiger

# FROM THE CHURCH BUILDINGS REOPENING COMMITTEE



FCC's Church Buildings Reopening Committee is pleased to announce that we will continue to meet for worship in our sanctuary at 11 a.m., provided our county's Covid statistics remain in the yellow zone. As a measure of respect and love for each other, please observe the following guidelines established by the committee last year:

1. Wear a mask except when observing communion. (Extra masks are available in the narthex.)
2. Practice social distancing by using only the pews marked with bows.
3. Enter by the southeast door (the left one when facing the church front).
4. Exit through either of the doors on the south side. (An elder will direct those in each pew at the appropriate time to depart.)

Additional information:

- Collection plates will be available at the doors leading into the narthexes at the back of the church sanctuary and also the door at the front of the sanctuary leading into the hallway.
- Solos, duets, and ensembles are permitted, but presently no congregational singing.
- A Simplicity Service will be conducted to limit the amount of time indoors.

The committee requests your patience and support as we negotiate these unprecedented times! We hope to see you in our beautiful sanctuary at 11 AM on Sundays.

Doris Cella,  
Co-chair, Church Buildings Reopening Committee

## **SUNDAYS AT FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

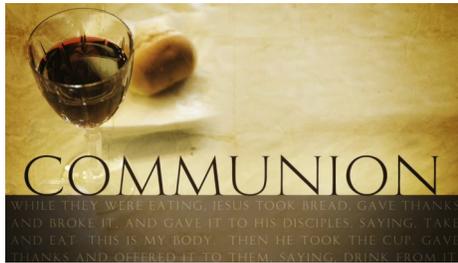
### **“Yellow Zone”** **In the Sanctuary**

**11 a.m.: In-person worship in the sanctuary** (masks and social distancing are required until we are back in a green zone). We presently have an abbreviated worship celebration in the sanctuary to reduce the amount of time people are gathered. This is for safety reasons, knowing that the likelihood of the Covid virus spreading increases the longer people are together in one space. We presently offer those elements of worship that are best done together in community: the sharing of joys and concerns, prayer, communion, music, a closing benediction. We also have enjoyed listening to one congregational member per week share about their faith journeys. As Covid rates decline we move toward a full length service that will begin to include congregational singing, the return of the choir, the Pastor’s sermon (presently done separately via manuscript and on Facebook Live), a children’s message, the serving of communion by our deacons, and the taking up of the offering. Of course, we all hope that we can resume a full worship service as soon as possible.

### **Virtually**

**11 a.m.: You may attend worship virtually via Zoom or Facebook Live.** Thanks to our tech team presently composed of John Hughes, Elena Roberts, and Joey Parker you may now attend our worship celebration virtually via Zoom or Facebook Live. The Zoom link is sent out in the Tuesday email and again on Saturdays, which also will usually include a copy of the bulletin for you to follow along. A recording of the worship celebration is then included in our Tuesday email for those who were not able to be present either in the sanctuary or virtually. We hope to continue offering people a way to attend worship virtually even after we are on the other side of the pandemic.

**SERMON:** A copy of Pastor Ruth’s sermon will be emailed out as a PDF file and also will be posted on our website. Her message can be listened to on Facebook Live (technology and internet service permitting). You may access this by going to the Facebook icon on our church’s website or through your own Facebook page. For all those who are not on the internet, every week either Pastor Ruth or one of our members hand delivers copies of the Tuesday email and the sermon.



**COMMUNION:** If you are using your at-home worship kits, we encourage you to take communion at 11 AM, as you join with others at this time to share in the bread and cup. Pastor Ruth also presides at the communion table before she brings her message on Facebook Live.

**OFFERING:** You may place your offering in the collection plates in the sanctuary, mail your check to the church at First Christian Church, 111 North Fifth Street, Murray, KY 42071, or drop it off in the secure mail slot in the door beside the one leading into the fellowship hall. You may also give online through our Givelify app. For more information about this please see page 46.

---



Haval Latif has been in Murray for a few days to visit friends and was with us in worship on Sunday, May 9 (he is pictured above with John King on the right). He presently works as a professor of English at a university in Kurdistan but is back in the United States for about a month seeking medical care in Chicago. He sends his greetings to everyone!

**Sundays at First Christian Church**  
**“Orange” or “Red” Zone**  
**Outdoors or on Zoom**

NOTE: Should we return to an “orange” or “red” zone we will begin worshipping again in our parking lot at 10 AM for a “Simplicity Sunday” service. Should it rain we will meet at 10 AM on Zoom for our worship celebration. The Zoom link will be sent out by 9 AM that morning. People may get on Zoom by 9:45 AM for a time of fellowship beforehand.

You may check to see which “zone” we are in by going to the following link:

<https://govstatus.egov.com/kycovid19>

**WEEKLY EVENTS**

**WEDNESDAY NIGHT ‘VIRTUAL’ LIVE, Wednesdays from 6-7:30 PM on Zoom.** We will continue meeting virtually over the next few months both for safety purposes and so that people who do not live in this area, who have been part of our gatherings, can continue to join with us. In addition to spending some of these evenings continuing to reflect on a lectionary passage and poem, we will also be continuing our exploration of Celtic Christian Spirituality with a presentation or two from Pastor Ruth, some guest speakers, and a discussion of J. Philip Newell’s book *Listening for the Heartbeat of God: A Celtic Spirituality*. The Zoom link and materials will be emailed out beforehand.

**CHILDREN’S GROUP:** The children meet with our Worship and Wonder Leader, Allison Willis, and their Sunday School teacher, Rebecca Landolt, on Sundays at 4 PM on Zoom.

**YOUTH GROUP (grades 6-12):** Our youth director Elena Roberts will communicate with the youth to let them know when they will be meeting.

**MEN’S GATHERING:** The third Monday of each month at 7 PM via Zoom.

**CHRISTIAN WOMEN’S FELLOWSHIP:** as they determine.

**NOTE:** Please check your Tuesday emails for information about whether other groups are meeting.

## Graduation



### **Ellen Blalock**

- Ellen will be graduating from Murray High School.
- She will be attending William and Mary and spending her first semester in Milan, Italy studying at Universita' Cattolica del Sacre Coure.



### **Cheralee Chaney**

- Graduated from Salve Regina University in Newport, RI with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree.
- She will begin working at Yale New Haven, CT Hospital.



### **Joshua K. Chaney**

- Graduated from University of Texas, Austin with a Bachelor of Science with Honors in Chemical Engineering.
- He begins working for Ferrara Candy Company in Chicago.

# Graduation



## **Nate Clause**

- Nate Clause will be receiving his Masters of Science degree in Mathematics this summer from The Ohio State University.
- He plans on working towards his PhD from The Ohio State University.



## **Elizabeth Dawson**

- Elizabeth Dawson Howard completed her Master of Arts Education Teacher Leader degree from the University of the Cumberlands.
- Elizabeth will continue teaching at Graves County Middle School, and will receive a rank change and increase in pay.



## **Emily Dawson**

- Emily will be graduating from Murray High School, summa cum laude.
- She will be starting Murray State University in the fall as an undeclared major.

## Graduation



### **Wyatt Dunham**

- Wyatt Dunham will be graduating from Calloway County High School.
- In the fall, he will be attending West Kentucky Community & Technical College. He will major in Agribusiness Economics.



### **Angela Gierhart**

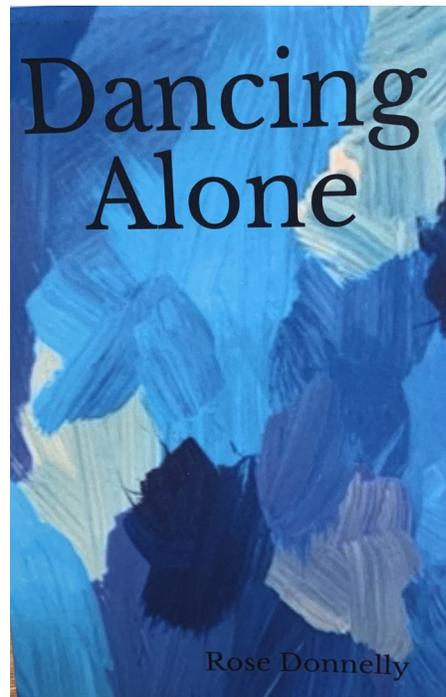
- Angela will be graduating from Murray High School.
- She will be attending Murray State University. She has received an athletic scholarship to play soccer. She will be majoring in pre physical therapy.



### **Katherine Hill**

- Katherine Hill graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Architecture from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

## First Christian Church Celebrates Two Young Authors!



Congratulations to 9-year-old **Leah Hughes** who has written a full-length, suspense-filled story called *Athena*. Athena is a wolf who lives in a cave in the Pinewood National Park with her mother, father, and siblings Wyatt and Rosie. Be ready to sit on the edge of your seat as Athena goes hunting with her father, encounters a dangerous mountain lion, and then gets caught in an avalanche. Will Athena ever find her way back home? There are copies at the church for you to read so you can find out! Author Leah Hughes will likely sign a personal copy for you if you ask her!

Congratulations to **Rose Donnelly**, presently a student at Western Kentucky University, who has published a book of her poetry entitled *Dancing Alone*. Her poems transparently share her journey from being worried about not pleasing others to finally standing in her own integrity and strength. As she summarizes in her preface: "This collection of poetry is me being unrepentant about how I feel and how I view the world around me. ... No one should put you down for how you feel; you are entitled to your emotions and never let anyone tell you otherwise" (p. 3). Thank you Rose for making yourself vulnerable as you share emotions and experiences, giving others permission to also share their truths. A copy of Rose's book is in our church library. It is also available on Amazon.



- 2 Claire Gray
- 5 Patsy Tracy
- 6 Chelsea Bolen  
Ryan Ferguson
- 10 Jim Stickler
- 12 June Vander Molen
- 14 Vicki Singleton
- 17 Bobbie Raby  
Janet Schell
- 18 Carmen Garland
- 19 Amelia Donnelly
- 20 Martha Chamberlain
- 21 Brentley Bennett  
Bret Looney
- 23 Billie Burton
- 29 Donna Cathey  
Milo Dillard
- 30 Chip Gray

*Happy  
Anniversary*

- 4 Don & Lisa Wilson  
Dwight & Allison Willis
- 18 Tim & Tory Daugherty
- 31 Fulton & Meagan Hart

# JUNE



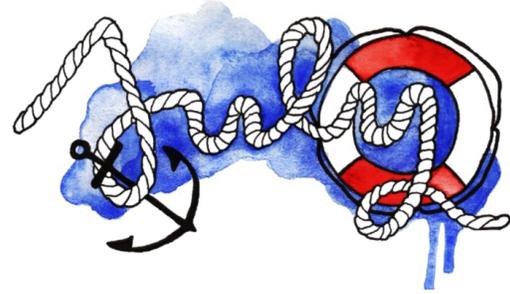
- 2 Rasha Khalil
- 4 Judy Hill
- 6 Gary White, Sr.
- 7 Shawna Rushing Munger  
Meagan Hart
- 10 Martin Tracy  
Ann Thornton
- 11 Joe Chaney  
Roger Miller
- 13 Keisa Fallin-Bennett  
Alan Chase
- 14 Emily Zimmerman
- 15 Crystal Dillard  
John King  
Tatum Nichols
- 16 Ron Cella
- 17 Judy Phelps
- 19 Rita Daughaday
- 22 Anita Cole-Paschall  
Lisa Wilson
- 24 Lynda Chaney
- 25 Rachel Ragovin
- 29 Lisa Kindall
- 30 Elijah Burkeen  
Doris Cella



- 3 Joe & Lynda Chaney
- 4 John & Patsy King
- 6 Gary & Krista Crass
- 11 Mike & Lyn Ryan



- 1 Mitch Ryan
- 3 Ruth Ragovin
- 4 Melanie Dawson
- 6 Jessica AsBridge  
Teresa Nixon
- 7 Teri Gould  
Beth Dobyns
- 8 Brian Daughaday
- 10 Raghda Abo Al Haija
- 11 Claire Jones
- 12 Keisha Kinsley
- 14 Scott McKeel
- 15 John Hughes
- 16 Kelly Dibble Stalls  
Dianne Miller
- 17 Eric Roberts
- 18 Judy Nichols
- 19 Eddie Phelps  
Phyllis Duckworth
- 20 Ann McKeel
- 21 Brenton Hall  
Drew Holton
- 22 Charlotte Van Dyke
- 23 Ellen Blalock
- 24 Dee Roberts
- 25 Gary Frank Crass  
Emily Dawson  
Dan McKeel
- 26 Tim Allbritten
- 27 Doug Vander Molen
- 28 Alison Marshall  
John Roso  
Joseph Roso



- 5 Dave & Judy Eldredge
- 6 Roger & Melanie Dawson
- 11 Doug & June Vander Molen
- 16 Chip & Erica Gray
- 18 John and Beth Roark
- 25 Blake & Shawna Munger

# Sharing of Faith Journey

## Ann Thornton



It has been a long journey! I am Dutch. All of my grandparents and many of my aunts and uncles were born in the Old Country (The Netherlands). I was born in Roseland, the most southern suburb of Chicago and brought up in the Christian Reformed Church. There were four large Christian Reformed churches, and four Reformed churches in Roseland. Ninety-nine percent of us were Dutch. We were strict Calvinists! Religion was a way of life. I went to Roseland Christian Grade School and Chicago Christian High School, which was in Englewood, another Dutch community north of Roseland. We went to church twice on Sunday. We were baptized as infants, as soon as possible. We were born into the covenant and were not to depart from it. Starting at 3 years old we had to sit quietly in church and church was from 9:30 - 11 a.m. Communion was every 3 months and choir sang only in the evening service and then only once a month. So sermons were LONG! Then we went to Sunday School. No snacks. The adults went to each other's homes for coffee and cake. In Sunday school we memorized a Bible verse and one stanza of a hymn. The rest of Sunday we visited, ate, and rested. No games, no riding bikes or going to the store. Every day we prayed before every meal and read the Bible and prayed after every meal.

In third grade, we walked to church for Catechism with the minister. We had to learn the answers to all the questions of the Heidelberg Catechism, a simplified version at first - I still remember the first question. "What is the purpose of life? Answer: To know and love God and worship Him forever." Now I believed that I could do that, but on Sunday the minister preached that if you were not good you would not go to Heaven, and to be good you had to follow a lot of rules. It was taken for granted that we believed in God and in Jesus and that the Bible was literally written by God. Now, I was a very quiet child and a good girl but I did not believe that God cared if I obeyed all the rules or not. I still loved Him. For instance, there was a firehouse across the alley behind our house. I wasn't allowed to talk to the firemen (they were outsiders) but they were nice and sometimes on Sunday afternoon when my parents were napping I would go to the firehouse and they would let me read the funnies in the newspaper. We were not allowed to read the paper on Sunday, especially the funnies. My dad always got the Sunday Tribune on Saturday night. There were a lot of rules I didn't follow and I did not think that God cared.

# Sharing of Faith Journey

As we got older we had to learn ALL the answers to Catechism questions such as "How many things are necessary for you to know that you may live and die happily? First, how great my sins and miseries are, second, how I am delivered from these sins and miseries, and third, how I am to be thankful for such deliverance."

We learned religion by following rules and memorizing not with our heart. We learned in Sunday School that God loves everyone. He loves all the little children. I loved babies and children. I took care of lots of my cousins' children and children of our friends. One day in about 5th grade, I saw a lady who lived across the street from my school who had some children. They were outside and the baby was crying so I went and asked her if I could take her baby for a walk in the buggy. The older kids went to the public school. She didn't know me but saw that I went to the Christian school and was happy for the help. I did that several times and she even let me help her in the house. But then my mother found out and she would not let me go back. I was so mad. Turns out their dad was one of the firemen.

My dad had a grocery store and, when I was in high school, I worked a couple of days a week after school and on Saturday. My parents thought that I would continue to work in the store after high school but I wanted to go to college. The only choice was Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. They did not think that a girl should go to college, especially not me. But I was determined. I majored in education but still had to read Calvin's *Institutes*, which were very boring. After 2 years I quit. Teachers were scarce and I got a job teaching 1st grade in Englewood Christian Grade School and that year I found The Christian Missionary Alliance Church with Dr. Tozer. Now I thought that these people were real Christians. They were happy, they loved everybody, they were not rigid like the Dutchmen. I went to their church. My parents were furious! I lived at home that year. I decided to go back to college and get my degree. So the next year I went to Barrington College in Providence Rhode Island, an Evangelical college a thousand miles away from Chicago. I majored in education, psychology, and theology. I detached myself from Calvinism but I did not really get into Evangelism either. I never shouted out my testimony. As part of my education, I did go to different churches and tell Bible flannel board stories in Junior Church. I could never figure out what it meant to be saved. I went through the motions. I worked to pay my way. My dad said if you leave don't expect any help from me and I said I could do it myself. I babysat, I cleaned houses, sometimes did both at the same time. I worked in the snack bar, I was a hostess in the college dining room, I was the accompanist for a voice teacher. For fun I managed the girls basketball team. I graduated!! Got a degree in education, psychology and theology. At this point I really didn't know what I believed except I still believed that God loved me and He was still with me. I just asked for guidance.

# Sharing of Faith Journey

That summer I went with couple of friends to New York State University at Oneonta to take graduate courses toward a Master's Degree in Education. While there I got a job in Saugerties, New York teaching first grade. I went home, cashed in my savings bonds for a down payment for a car and drove from Chicago to Saugerties, which is a village at the foot of the Catskills.

My parents were still angry with me. I was teaching in a public school. I did not know anyone. I was 24 years old. I taught in a school on the outskirts of Saugerties where there was a small Reformed Church. The Reformed churches in the East are much more liberal than in the Midwest. There I met my friend, Beatrice Bright, who was organist/choir director. I joined the choir and taught Sunday School. Bea took me under her wing. I was very insecure. She told me that I was brave for leaving home, that I did the right thing to push me out of my shell. She and Dave had three children and I learned how to swim, dive, ice skate, and ski along with the kids. I had Girl Scout Troops along with everything else. The first time I rode home from church with them we stopped for ice cream, I felt really guilty for buying on Sunday but I got over it.

After four years I joined the Peace Corps. I went to Nigeria. I was FREE. Nigerians are happy, welcoming people. I could believe what I wanted to. Nobody told me what to do. I was free to follow my heart. Although I was there to teach science in a government teacher training college, the Peace Corps encouraged us to be involved in the community. The college was located in a small village in the Rain Forest.

Of course, we were not allowed to proselytize but we could attend the local church. In this part of Nigeria the natives were Pagan and Christian. Abraka, where I was, had a Catholic Church and an Anglican Church. I attended the Anglican Church. I organized a Sunday School. My church at home sent me materials. They didn't care that they were from a different denomination. I decided that I could just teach them the love of God. Made some good friends and tried to help them be a little less superstitious, have less fear. I loved Nigeria. Now I also wanted to see what the Missions in the different churches were doing and I wanted to see the Northern Region. It was Pagan and Muslim. And it was in the desert. So I hitchhiked several hundred miles north during the civil wars. I accomplished both, visited missions and even saw camels. My God was with me. He protected me. I was never afraid. The people were kind. I loved them. Don't have time for stories.

# Sharing of Faith Journey

After I left Nigeria I went back to Saugerties. I taught for a couple of years, did a few other things. Went to the Methodist church where Bea was choir director. I joined the choir, taught Sunday School. There was a lot of bickering in that church. Then, one weekend, they had a group come in asking everyone if they were saved. Had people walking down the aisles crying. I said to myself - this is not what God wants and I walked out. I did not go back. For 6 years, I walked and asked God if there wasn't a church somewhere that I could belong to.

I had lost a business and was selling insurance door to door to make money to pay the bank loan. I met my husband Bud - told him to go away until the bank was paid. He wanted to help me but I had to do it myself. It took 5 years. We got married. Now I could not be married and sell insurance so I followed my dream and went back to college and got a degree in nursing. I only needed the nursing courses, which I did at night. I worked as a Home Health Aid during the day. During this time I was introduced to the Bahai Faith which I had never heard of. Bahais believe that God loves everyone. They believe in unity. That all religions come from God. There should be no prejudice. That Bahauallah is the last manifestation of God. Bud did not go to church, but he did not care what I did. I became a Bahai. My poor mother told me that now I joined a cult and I was going to go to hell for sure.

I graduated from Dutchess Community College in Poughkeepsie, New York in 1986. Worked as an RN one year in Carmel N.Y., and Bud wanted to move to Kentucky. So in 1987 we moved to Kirksey. I worked at Murray Calloway County Hospital for 26 years. I loved Murray Hospital. We were family. They teased me a lot. There were and still are very few Bahais here. At times there were a few in Hopkinsville, in Paducah, in Joppa, Illinois. I traveled around to go to meetings whenever I could. For a while when I worked Monday through Friday and weekends off I had 10 Bahais from all around at my home for dinner and a workshop every Sunday. We did this for a few months. Bahais teach love for everyone. They read and memorize beautiful prayers written by Bahauallah and Abdulbaha. It did not seem personal. I still believed in my God who loves me, watches over me, and protects me. Bud died in 2002. It was time for me to retire but I continued to work - they needed nurses. By 2013 it was time for me to quit. I became a nurse when I was 50 years old and worked for 26 years. There were very few Bahais here. Murray Hospital was my family (before the South Tower). I needed a church family.

# Sharing of Faith Journey

I visited several churches. Felt very welcome at First Christian. Pastor Ruth started a Charter for Compassion group at my friend Mona's home. Ruth was very compassionate and embraced everyone. I looked up Disciples of Christ. They have no creeds, no catechism, no rules. They include everyone, like the Bahais. So I asked Pastor Ruth if I could join First Christian Church and she said yes. I read everything that could find about the Bahai Faith and Christianity and could not find anything that said I could not go to church. So I joined First Christian Church. When I told a Bahai Friend she said that I could not do that and brought out a book of Bahai laws that said that I could visit church but could not be a member. So I wrote Bahai National Spiritual Assembly and they said that if I was a member of a church I could not go to Bahai meetings. So I said goodbye and turned in my membership. I still have Bahai friends. Laws and rules always get me in trouble.

At times I write in a journal. I came across what I wrote right after I joined FCC in 2013. I started to go to FCC because Pastor Ruth is an example of a good Christian. She includes everyone, she always says good things about everyone. She preaches that God is love. I love her sermons, without having to believe everything word for word, she makes religion real. I do not have to put up a shield and become detached. I joined because I felt the need to belong to a loving church and to be with children. Pastor Ruth and the church members have so very warmly welcomed me. I asked Pastor Ruth if she could find something for me to do and she did. Let me work at VBS, asked if I would like to go to help at Camp Kum-Ba-Ya, lets me make food sometimes, and welcomes me to small groups. I love music and Mark let me join the choir. I love choir and they are family also. So I am very grateful to be here with all of you at First Christian Church!

# Sharing of Faith Journey

## Ruth Daughaday



Church has always been in my life. From 9 months old, when I was adopted, until age of 8, I attended National City Christian in Washington, D.C. I only recall a few things: all those front steps up to the church. Also, one of the ways home was through a park that had water trickling over the road. I always begged my father to go that way so we could splash. Thirdly, in my kindergarten Sunday School class, I leaned back on the two legs of the little chair. My head hit the old-fashioned radiator behind me. It split open, not the radiator but my head. Don Bennett will say that explains a lot. We know how much heads bleed. So I started disrupting early in life. When my grandson was 12, I took him to Washington and I went to that church to walk around it and remember. I felt an attachment.

Both my parents were native Kentuckians. Thus, we left the city and moved to Mayfield. My parents, my uncle's family, my grandmother and my great-aunt were all very active in church. So my life was very much at First Christian on Ninth Street. I was active in Chi Rho and CYF. I learned to speak in front of audiences during Youth Sundays.

My best friend was a Baptist, and I went with her to GAS and VBS, but the Baptists expected us to memorize Bible verses. I did not care for that. Did any of you have to recite a Bible verse each Monday morning in school? Boy, try that now.

On to college at Murray State. Freedom at last. I was getting skeptical of some of the Bible stories by then. I lived in Woods Hall (recently torn down) on the corner of Olive Boulevard and 14th. Catty-cornered across the street was the Disciples of Christ student center. Dan and Rebecca probably remember Brother Nichols. He was at the center one Sunday evening and casually and gently scoffed at the Virgin Birth. I might not be here today if not for that. I felt vindicated and freed. I was not a bad person after all. Just one little statement meant the world to me.

# Sharing of Faith Journey

Next came marriage. We lived in Lexington, and I taught sophomore English 17 miles down the gorgeous horse farm-lined road with their stone fences. That was in Bourbon County.

After Charles finished his Ph.D. we moved to Johnson City, Tenn. I remember the minister coming to visit and saying something derogatory about the pianist. That was a turn off since ministers are supposed to be perfect, right?

Charles came to teach at MSU and we automatically joined FCC here. Brother Porter was the minister then. Charles and I were not regular attendees and then we divorced.

Rebecca, I remember talking to Pastor Chuck Moffett at First Presbyterian about my distress about the divorce. He told me some wise things about myself that are still valuable. I took my two sons to that church but we never joined. The congregants were nice to us but never asked us to be involved in anything so I never really felt a part of the church. I loved Chuck's sermons, but when he and his family left Murray, the boys and I left First Presbyterian and back to FCC. We know how David Roos was: HE certainly got me involved in things!

There was an uproar at the church. I was not happy with the way people acted—not with Christ's love as I knew it. I planned to go elsewhere but there seemed to be a reason I did not want to attend each church I thought about. So I stayed.

Many from FCC were going on the weekend spiritual retreat called the Emmaus Walk. I kept resisting going because those coming back were so intense and I didn't want that for myself. I finally gave in but chose to go to Nashville. My brother lived there and I could call him if I needed to escape. There were many touching and spiritual moments. I also learned that I had a misconception of how I was to be a Christian. That new knowledge freed me once again.

I have always felt that each minister who has come to our church was here because they filled a specific need of the church at that time. I definitely agree with the Good Ruth that our church and its spirit are awesome. I am old but my journey continues.

# Sharing of Faith Journey

## Sharon Rue



I feel fortunate every day to have been so blessed in my life. I had wonderful parents, one brother, one sister, and, of course, Ron; two wonderful children, and four OUTSTANDING grandchildren. Last month, I celebrated my 80th birthday, but don't panic, I will try to cover all those years quickly.

In 1943, my family moved to Casey, Illinois. My dad had accepted a position as head coach and history teacher. I was 2 years old; my brother was 4.

My mother was raised in the Christian Church, and she assumed that was where we would attend. But, some of the Casey Methodists told her we would never be accepted in the community if we chose another church. That was all Mom needed to hear. We attended First Christian. She didn't make a big deal of it; she was quiet and resolute.

That's just the way she was. Obviously I didn't get those genes.

I grew up in that church, was baptized at 10 years of age, and always helped with Bible School. (Mother was usually the director.) I spent my teen years in Chi Rho on Sunday evenings. Ron and I were married in that church in 1961, and became the Chi Rho sponsors for several years.

Then Uncle Sam said, "I Want You" to Ron during the Vietnam War, so he enlisted in the Air Force before the Army could snag him. When his enlistment was up we moved back to Casey and sat in the same pew as before (they had saved it for us). Now I was the Bible School Director and Sunday School Teacher.

In 1976, Ron accepted a job in Peoria, Illinois, so we packed up our two kids and our household and moved. We couldn't find any Disciples churches, so we attended the Presbyterian Church. Their congregation was warm and welcoming, but I missed Communion every Sunday, that was my quiet time every week with God. There was just something missing for me.

# Sharing of Faith Journey

After many years in the Peoria area, Ron accepted a job with Eli Lilly Pharmaceuticals in Indiana and I took a teaching position in Casey. Our parents were aging and we felt it was the right thing to do. My brother, a West Point graduate and career soldier, lived all over the world and my sister lived in Chicago which was 4 1/2 hours north. We kind of felt it was up to us. So there we were, back in Casey and our home church. Ron served as deacon, elder, and board president; and I, of course, served as deacon, Sunday School teacher, Bible School director, and choir member.

In the late 1980s both children had graduated from college and we spent several years taking care of, and doing for, both sets of parents. I would not trade those years for anything. I don't even remember what year we moved to Murray and built our house near the lake. But I DO remember the first time we set foot in Murray First Christian Church. It was Christmas Eve and it was almost magical. The sanctuary was so beautiful and this congregation was so welcoming. We had planned to visit 2 Christian Churches in the area, but we never made to that other one.

In 1992 my brother died. When we lost 3 of our 4 parents in a 10 month period, my faith deepened, then 2 years later my Mother died and my faith grew even deeper. When Ron died, with the help of friends and family – I can't explain it – but it drew me even closer to God. We made many friends in this church and I treasure each and every one of you. And so there you have it. God has been so good to me, and I am eternally grateful.

# Sharing of Faith Journey

## Carmen Garland



Unlike most people, my journey actually began before I was born. My mom went into a coma during my delivery. One of the doctors came out to tell my dad to call our pastor, our family and begin planning two funerals. Our God had a better plan. I was at risk for a few days, my mom remained in a coma for three more days, but we both survived. I was in a healthy condition way before my mom, so my grandma and grandpa took me home with them. My mom remained in the hospital for a lengthy time, developing additional complications.

So, for the most part of my first five years, I lived with my grandma and grandpa. We lived on a large farm, in a large farmhouse—with no electricity or running water, no indoor bathroom. But, my living there surrounded by loving family, and learning first hand about the glorious life of God's glory and miracles of life. I learned about those life miracles by watching my Grandma and Grandpa pray for rain, or pray for a good harvest, or safety and protection from storms, the birth of animals. I helped my Grandma with her garden as soon as I could walk.

And most importantly, she taught me the song "Jesus Loves Me." We sang that song daily—and as I got old enough to learn the meaning of that song, Grandma helped me understand no matter what happened, no matter how tough things might get, when I was afraid, hurt, unhappy, disappointed—to always remember "Jesus Loves Me." They weren't fanatics about religion, in fact, we didn't go to church very often. There was a one room church a few miles away, no heat, water, electricity—so kind of a seasonal church—but the best Bible School! A neighbor would drive his tractor and big wooden sided trailer around the country picking up all the kids with picnic baskets. We had the best time: we learned stories but more importantly, how to use those stories to be good people.

# Sharing of Faith Journey

When I was old enough to start school, I went home to live with my Mom and Dad and new brother. We began attending the Central Christian Church – a Disciples of Christ in Jacksonville, IL. I grew up with regular attendance of Sunday School, Youth Church, and Chi Rho—a Sunday night fun night for kids. We had a prayer time, games, snacks, and did service projects throughout the year. I was baptized there, and loved the beauty of Central Christian Church – the stained glass is as magical as ours is at First Christian.

I always had solid Christian roots—both from a Great Church influence, and being surrounded by people living a Christian life. I could tell lots of stories and as I was thinking about today and what I would share, I had some good memories about those years.

My family moved a couple of times to different towns. I don't really know what happened, but as a family we quit going to church. We visited churches, but none really clicked. We prayed at meal time, and I was guided to know right from wrong and made good choices as a teenager and high school student. When I think back about growing up in the 70's—a time of free love, undefined peace, and a multitude drugs easily available, I am very blessed to have stood strong with a solid journey led by my Christian values.

I came to Murray State. I visited our Christian Church and was simply moved with the stained glass, the altar area, the friendliness—so this is where I attended—now, as a college student, my attendance wasn't great but over the years, I knew I belonged here. In the dorm, we used to take turns visiting churches – one week a Baptist, Methodist, etc. I struggled a little with the Catholic Church knowing what to do, but a profound experience I remember was going home with my roommate and attending a revival. I had never attended a revival. It was almost a frightening experience for me—the preacher was yelling and accusing all of us of being terrible sinners and living lives of corruption and evil—I sat there thinking I didn't realize I was so evil but at the end when people were going forward to have this preacher lay his hands on their heads, I didn't go, I just kept thinking Jesus Loves Me, and I never went to another revival with Trish again! I have so much to be grateful for and most of my cherished, heartfelt experiences are within the First Christian Church—I was welcomed as a college student, and came here for guidance. I was married here and found comfort when my marriage led to a tough divorce. My sons went to Sunday School here, they were baptized here, they were married here and my oldest granddaughter was baptized here. I taught Sunday school, served as a Deacon, and thought we would worship as a family here at First Christian.

# Sharing of Faith Journey

When Justin and Josh and their families became connected to other churches, I still had a thought we needed to worship together so I began attending church with them, taking turns going to their churches. I enjoyed their churches. But, I always stayed connected with First Christian, staying with my CWF group—I value them and didn't want to stop meeting with them. But recently, it has taken me to a familiar and good turn with my journey of faith—I know it is important to share your faith with God and know the relationship within your family will always be deep and I am grateful my sons and their families have found their place of deep belonging. Mine is First Christian. I need to be where I belong, where my needs are met—communion is really more important than I realized. I can't wait for us to all be together, sharing the sanctuary together, looking at our beautiful stained glass windows, and praying for our lives to be back to some form of normal. While we have shared unbelievable sadness together with our members, our families, this past year, we are stronger in our faith to be thankful for our blessings and find our strength again through the love of Jesus.

# Sharing of Faith Journey

## Melanie Dawson



As you all know I am a PK – a preacher’s kid. I always felt like my dad went out of his way to make sure we didn’t feel different because we were preacher’s kids. I think that was because my dad was a preacher’s kid, too. I always thought my grandfather was more like an evangelist. He had church in his house, my grandmother would play the organ. He would do revivals in tents, he made my dad and his sister pass out religious tracks to people on the street. I wouldn’t have liked doing that. My dad had a calling to be a minister but he wanted to be part of a more stable, denominational type of church.

On June 1, 1971 my dad started at First Christian Church in Murray. I was almost 6 years old. Growing up, this church was like a second home to me. I remember in middle school when I was big enough and they let me walk to the church after school to wait for my dad. Betty Hale, the church secretary, would watch me walk from the front of the church to the back door of Wallis Drugstore to get an orangeade. Then I would play, maybe do homework, in the church nursery.

On Sundays, my dad would be in the pulpit, my mom in the choir and we (Amy, Debbie, and I) would sit with Betty Gore on the second pew. My mom would give us “the look” if we got too giggly or writing notes. It was always weird if someone else preached or we visited a church like while we were in Texas and I heard another person preach rather than my dad. I didn’t like going to churches where they were almost screaming at you about hell and damnation. That wasn’t the kind of God that my dad talked about. My dad would get excited at times, and hit the sides of the pulpit, but I never felt afraid.

I think I have always felt like God was a friend, looking out for me. I remember when I was in upper middle school or early high school and our youth leaders (Ken and Peggy, husband and wife team) were having us study the part in the Bible about worry. Ken told me to stop worrying, it was a sin. So what teenager doesn’t worry about everything? What you look like? Will I have friends? Are other kids going to be mean? So THAT just made me worry even more.

# Sharing of Faith Journey

Growing up, of course, we were at ALL church functions: Sunday school and worship on Sunday mornings, Youth Group on Sunday nights, and Wednesday night Youth Club (intergenerational). I remember one Sunday morning we didn't have to go to church because we had gotten home really late from a band contest but otherwise we were expected to be there. Sometimes you would wish you could be like other kids and not HAVE TO go to church. When I got married, I remember thinking ok NOW I get to make the decision about whether I want to go to church or not, not Dad and Mama.

So seems like there were a few Sundays that I didn't go but I realized I missed going to church and seeing friends. It wasn't a hardship, it was something that I wanted to do. I did offer to look at other churches with Roger if he was going to not have to work on Sundays and we could find a church together. But if not, I wanted to stay at my family church where I felt comfortable. So I never left and got to raise my own kids in that same church.

Now I am like everyone else, there were times when my faith was stronger, doing daily devotionals, Emmaus Walk, the weekly reunion group. I was putting in the work. There were other times when I am sure I was just going through the motions. I remember trying to barter with God (like Let's Make a Deal) during the time when I was trying to have children. It seemed so easy for others. I had had a miscarriage before Elizabeth and then there were several after her. I was taking medicine, my temperature, doing the works every day. I still remember Elizabeth asking me "what was wrong with me? Why couldn't I have a baby like so and so's mother?" Boy did that hurt, and of course, I was thinking the same thing, why? I don't remember the details of the deal but I just wanted to know if we were going to have other kids. I wanted it to be like on TV, where I would get a glimpse of sometime in the future and I would see what my family looked like. I didn't have to know HOW: adoption, foster parent, etc. but just IF there were going to be more. Of course, that glimpse never happened but later when I said "enough" I was done with the medicines, the temperature charts, etc., when I stopped worrying about it, SURPRISE, Bradley and then Emily.

I still don't understand *why some things have to happen*, especially the things that make me sad, but I think *it is okay to question, why?* You can only grow in your faith and understanding by questioning, studying with others of like faith and mind. I know I feel sorry for people that have hard and sad times to go through and they don't have their faith to fall back on.

What a step of faith my mom and dad had to have had to leave their families in Texas and move to Kentucky so my dad could get his doctorate at Vanderbilt. I am sure they thought it would be for only a few years and NOW look at all that has happened in those amazing 50 years.

# Sharing of Faith Journey

## Erica Gray



For those of you who don't know me, I am Erica Gray. I have been married to Chip almost 17 years and we have two super awesome girls—Claire is almost 12 and Laurel is 7. I work as a high school chemistry teacher and Academic Team Coach. I was born in Murray to two non-natives of Murray, so growing up we always joked that even though I was from Murray, I would never be from Murray.

When my mom and dad brought me home from the hospital in December of 1979, they pulled into our driveway on Henry Street. It's possible you could say my faith journey started then and there. Peering out from our big glass windows, we could see right across the street a brick ranch where Ann and Dan McKeel resided with just two boys—Scott and Andy. Joey would arrive in late summer of 1980. He was my "first friend." I'm a little fuzzy on the exact details, but I believe Ann and Dan may have reached out and invited my parents to attend First Christian Church. I do know that many pictures of us from my very early childhood and on involve our families at FCC. I am so lucky that I grew up in the 80s for a variety of reasons. It seemed like a safer time to be a child now that I am raising two of my own. Schedules seemed less full. The demands on working parents seemed more reasonable. No answering emails at 10 p.m. Perhaps nothing is different except that my perspective has changed from the role of child to parent. One of the most influential aspects of my childhood was my involvement in church at First Christian. We attended Sunday School every Sunday and then stayed for worship services. We had assigned seats. We actually sat in the fifth pew back on the pastor's side of the altar, where I would listen to Dr. Roos and his stories of East Texas. If I was good, mom would give me a piece of fruit punch flavored Trident gum, while I swung my legs with white ruffled socks back and forth during the sermon. Sunday School was taught by Hester Gray, Sarah VanMeter, June Vander Molen, Rebecca Landolt, Helen Campbell and many other fine women and men. Wednesday nights had us in the Fellowship Hall for Youth Club. We prayed, ate a meal usually prepared by Betty McCord, Vicky Holton, and Donna Cathey (my favorite is still the taco salad with Doritos!) and others before we played games, sang songs, or practiced for a church musical.

# Sharing of Faith Journey

As an adult now I am in absolute AWE of the time these women and men put into our church and especially its youth. (This is an area where I actually feel guilt). Dan McKeel, like so many others mentioned, worked full time, had young children, and still managed to put together an entertaining game portion each night. Ann knew the words to every children's worship song and led us beautifully as we learned the words to songs that told the story of Jonah and the Whale or other church musicals. Does anyone else remember the mid 80's hits "Ninevah City was a City of Sin?" or "Pharoah, Pharoah, let my People Go?" I consider(ed) Ann and Dan to be like a second set of parents, and I am so grateful for the love they have shown me over the years. At this point along my faith journey, I would say that my faith was primarily based on the developmentally appropriate understanding of "God is Good", "Jesus Loves You", and try to be a good person because it makes life easier. Getting eaten by a whale because you strayed from God leaves a pretty strong impression on a seven-year old.

By first grade my parents had divorced and I was visiting my dad every month, where he made sure we attended church at Third Christian Church on Fall Creek Parkway in Indianapolis. Initially I thought my dad's church must have done something wrong to be demoted to "Third." Later I was informed it was the Third Disciples of Christ Church erected in Indianapolis. Mind blown. There are cities big enough to have to NUMBER their churches?! I was so very lucky that my parents both valued the importance and routine of church in their children's lives and they even agreed upon the same denomination. It made my theological understanding much easier. Once I neared double-digits, I began to discuss baptism with my mom. She enrolled me in baptism classes with Dr. Roos, who shocked me the first time he wrote in his Bible with a purple felt tip marker. I thought he had committed a major sin. I came to understand people actually READ their Bible and take notes in it. Another epiphany for my young mind. In August of 1988 I was baptized and proclaimed that Jesus was my Lord and Savior. It didn't seem like a big deal to me because it was something I had always believed.

My teen years saw quite a bit of family upheaval, as my brother and I moved to live with our dad in Indianapolis. My mother had suffered from depression for most of her life, but her illness became so great that she could no longer care for us in the way I know she wanted to. I have never doubted how much she loved me and one of the ways I am sure of this is because of her insistence my spiritual journey continue uninterrupted. When she was barely able to function and get out of bed, she made sure my brother and I got to church every Sunday, whether she attended or not. She made sure I was surrounded by people who would love and support me.

# Sharing of Faith Journey

Even in the darkest times of my teen years, I knew that God had a plan for me. By all accounts, on paper, I should have never succeeded. As a teacher who has taught exclusively in high poverty, Title I schools, I know that students who grow up in poverty, in single-parent households, where there are issues of mental illness, abuse, neglect, or addiction can have much lower grades, higher rates of dropping out, higher rates of teen pregnancy, or follow similar destructive patterns as their parents, without a strong support system in place. Because of the support I had from my FCC family and knowing that I could rely on the path that God intended for me, I was able to achieve what so many kids in my situation could not. I think I was very good at hiding my pain and circumstances. Even my closest friends didn't suspect what my home life was like. I was well-behaved, excelled in school, and was involved in extracurricular activities. And, I was hyper-vigilant in making sure every choice I made would help me escape the cycle that my mother was trapped in. In August of 1998, I enrolled at Indiana University and started on my path to adulthood.

One of my greatest regrets on my faith journey occurs here. When I got to college, I stopped going to church. This was partly as a circumstance of finances (I had to work on Sunday), partly due to not being self-aware enough to recognize that I was missing something in my life, and partly because none of the on-campus church options appealed to me. Even at that point in my life I knew that I preferred a traditional worship service with a progressive message. The college options were mostly rock bands and I just didn't want that. It wasn't until my senior year that I learned that there was a super awesome DOC Church on Kirkwood, just outside the Sample Gates, about two blocks from where I worked. Right under my nose for four years. Insert face-palm.

One (of the many) good things that did come from my college experience was meeting my husband. We got engaged and moved to South Florida in the summer of 2003, where we began our teaching careers, or the period of our lives I refer to as "Baptism by Fire." We taught in high poverty schools where kids brought weapons into campus. Sixth graders crushed pills on the edges of sinks and snorted them during passing period. One of my students pulled a gun on the school resource officer before head-butting him in the face and later testing positive for cocaine. Chip confiscated a knife from a kindergartener who was carrying it to protect himself from gang members on his walk to school. It felt like we were living a real-life version of "Dangerous Minds." We loved the sun. We loved the beach. We loved the palm trees and pool in our tiny starter home (that cost more than the house I live in now). But we knew we couldn't stay there and raise a family. We even did some "church shopping" trying to find a place that would make it feel more like home. But it was becoming more expensive and less vacation-like with every month that passed. The writing was on the wall- and it wasn't just the gang graffiti on the fence down the street. Our future wasn't in Florida. 33

# Sharing of Faith Journey

So in January 2007, we moved back to Murray, KY. A position had come open mid-year in Paducah. We had redone my mother's home with the intention of selling it, which talk about a testament of faith, could be a whole story for another time. That we survived that stressful time was so very telling about our strength and commitment to each other. Back to Florida—I remember sitting on our green couch in our tiny 946 square foot house as we looked at the job posting I would eventually get. It was a short conversation as we both quickly saw that a life in South Florida isn't what either of us envisioned for our future family. I moved back to Murray in January and Chip stayed behind to finish his school year and try to sell our house. At this point he was sleeping on an air mattress in an empty house as he had packed all of our belongings and put them on a moving truck headed for Murray. We lived apart for 6 months, and that wasn't even the most challenging feat we'd ever face together. By August he had a job in Murray and I remember Ruth Daughaday telling me "Isn't it funny how things always work out?" Chip was immediately welcomed into our FCC family and felt at home. I will say lots of nice things about my husband, but one thing in particular is that he is very "go with the flow." I appreciated his willingness to attend "my" church even though he had been raised in another denomination. Life was looking great, except for one problem. We were carrying two mortgages on two properties with two sets of utilities, two insurances (three if you count the exorbitant wind insurance on the FL house), and two sets of property taxes. The housing crisis of 2008 was about to hit and we were in a panic. Our Florida house had offers, but buyers were unable to qualify for loans. I was getting very anxious as our realtor kept warning us that the bottom was going to fall out and we were going to be caught in the cross-fire. We felt like we were trapped without any way out. We had done what we thought young couples are supposed to do: go to college, get jobs, and buy a house. After more than a year carrying both properties on young teacher salaries, we put a for sale sign in front of the Murray house and agreed that whichever one sold first would decide our fate. One morning I walked Ollie down by the creek on Henry Street and I talked to God. I remember it so clearly. I said, "God I will do whatever you want me to do. I will go wherever you need me. Put me in the place where I can do the most good." I suppose this was my "Let Go and Let God" moment. The next week our Florida realtor called and told us we had an offer on the house with secure financing. We could close in a reasonable amount of time. It wasn't near asking price and we would lose money, but at least we'd be done with it. And that was it. That was God's answer for where he needed me. Life got even better. I found a job at Calloway that cut my commute time to four minutes and saved us over \$500/month in gas (anyone remember when gas was \$4/gallon?). In March of 2009, Chip joined our church and in May of 2009, we welcomed our first daughter, Claire.

# Sharing of Faith Journey

The role of mothering had so many decisions for me to make: breast or bottle, cloth or disposable diaper, day-care or stay-at-home; but I was certain of one thing. I wanted my child to have a strong spiritual foundation and grow up in a church that showed her how to love and serve others and to be compassionate for all of humanity, like Jesus showed us so many times in those Bible stories from my youth. In September of 2009, we celebrated Claire's baby dedication in our sanctuary. We promised to provide her with spiritual guidance, good role models and a church family that would help her grow.

Over the past decade we have seen so many blessings. Our careers have continued to grow. I finished my National Boards and Rank I when Claire was still in diapers. Chip finished his doctorate while we raised two young children. We added Laurel to the mix in 2013. We sold my childhood home and moved into our current home, where we have celebrated birthdays, learned to ride bicycles, planted little gardens with varying degrees of success, and weathered a full-blown pandemic. My best friend reminded me recently that these are the good years, and I have to agree.

Over the years my appreciation for our church has grown tremendously. The earliest footsteps along my faith journey taught me that "God is Good" and "Jesus Loves Me." In fact, "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red, brown, yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight." In recent times of racial or political unrest I have felt so relieved at our church's unifying message, from the main DOC office to the pulpit in our own sanctuary, that Jesus is for EVERYONE and WE, as the hands and feet of Jesus Christ here on Earth, will welcome, love and embrace every human being, of every color, of every ancestry, of every background, of every socio-economic status, of every sexual orientation, on every walk of life, whether or not it's easy, or popular, or comfortable, or whether or not other churches are doing it. This is the Jesus I want my girls to know and follow.

I am proud to belong to FCC. We are a small, but mighty congregation, and Don Chamberlain reminds us annually that our outreach budget shows we "bat way above our average." We love Jesus, we love our church family, and we love our community. As I continue to walk along my journey, I continue to look for messages from God. Where do you need me? Where can I do the most good? I am happy he has put me here.



## **Want to Attend Camp This Summer at Camp Kum-Ba-Ya?**

Discovery Camp (grades 1-2)

July 16-18

Young Disciples Camp (grade 3)

July 12-14

Junior Camp (grades 4-5)

June 7-11

Chi Rho Camp (grades 6-8)

July 5-10

Sailing Camp (grades 6-12)

June 21-25

CYF Camp (grades 9-12)

June 13-19

Adult Sailing Weekend

Sept. 10-12

[www.campkumbaya.org](http://www.campkumbaya.org)

Register by May 1, 2021

270-821-1332

**Registration forms for Camp Kum-Ba-Ya and Camp Wakon' Da-Ho are now available. KBY's are on the website [campkumbaya.org](http://campkumbaya.org). WKDH's can be found at [ccinky.net](http://ccinky.net).**

# Joys and Thanksgivings



Many thanks to **John Hughes** for sharing about his faith journey on February 21! We feel so blessed to have the entire Hughes family as part of our congregation and appreciate all that John has been doing by helping to oversee the technical aspects of our Sunday morning and children's zoom gatherings.

---



Many thanks to **Rachel Hughes** for sharing about her faith journey February 28! Rachel shared about the impact that her father (pictured above, who died when she was just an infant) had upon her faith as a child as he had wanted her to be raised in the small church near their farm in Tennessee and how her faith evolved and was strengthened, especially when her daughter Leah was hospitalized for Kawasaki Disease and she and John could feel so strongly the presence of God. Rachel Hughes is a direct descendant of Barton Stone, one of the founders of the Stone Campbell Restoration Movement. We are so blessed to have Rachel and her family part of our church family!

---

Congratulations to **Erica Gray** and her Academic Team at Calloway County High School! The CCHS Academic Team came away with the title of Regional Runners up in the KAAC Governor's Cup in the Region 1 competition held on February 8th, 22nd, and 23rd. Other Region 1 results included McCracken County first place, Paducah Tilghman third, and Murray High fourth place.

---

# Joys and Thanksgivings

Congratulations to Sharon Rue's granddaughter **Mia Rue** who is a freshman at Eastern Illinois University and has been elected to the student senate!

---



**Dave and Judy Eldredge** have finally returned home after Judy not having been there since last October. They were in worship on Palm Sunday and it was so good to see them there!

---

Many thanks to everyone who participated in our Maundy Thursday service!

---



Many thanks to **Gary White** for his wonderful presentation of his faith journey on Sunday, April 18.

---

**Vayda Grieves**, daughter of Justin and Natasha Grieves, was baptized on April 18, 2021 at SonRise Christian Church, Charleston, SC. The Grieves family were members of our church prior to their return to South Carolina.

# Joys and Thanksgivings



Many thanks to the **Rev. Drs. Beth and Bruce Dobyns** for bring the message and helping to facilitate our Sunday Zoom gatherings while Pastor Ruth was away visiting her grandchildren following Easter. Many thanks to her husband **Rev. Russ Ragovin** for bringing the message on Facebook on April 25.



The acolytes are back! It was wonderful to have **Maya and Leah** bring the light of Christ into our sanctuary at the beginning of worship on May 2! We look forward to the other children also returning and helping with this important ministry!

# Joys and Thanksgivings



We had a meaningful worship celebration on April 25 with **Elena Roberts** sharing about her interesting faith journey growing up Catholic in Uruguay. She hopes to get a written copy of it to us in the near future.

---

During March 7 “Gender Reveal” sharing, we learned that **Elizabeth Dawson** and **McKenna Phelps** are both expecting BOYS! **Bianca Youngman** recently announced that she is expecting a GIRL! Congratulations to all of them!

---



Former FCC youth director, **Dr. Alan Bearman**, and family visited Murray and Hopkinsville recently. Pictured from left are **Nathan Bearman**, Alan and Shelley’s son; **Jean Bennett**; and Alan.

---



From Jan Fuqua, Lyn Ryan and family: *"We are humbled by the love and support shown by the members of the First Christian Church for our parents, Carolyn and Johnny Reagan. The church family meant so much to them, and was a vital part of their lives. We are forever grateful for the home communion visits, the cards, flowers, and prayers.*

*They loved their church home and were truly blessed. For that we are most appreciative."*

---



Many thanks to our Tech Team, led by **John Hughes** along with **Elena Roberts**, **Mark Dycus**, and **Joey Parker**. They are making it possible for people to attend our worship services virtually via Zoom or Facebook Live, now that we have returned to worship in the sanctuary.

# Special Music

Many thanks to **Mark Dycus, Tory Daugherty, Amberlyn Hall,** and **Jean Bennett** for blessing us with special music now that our sanctuary has reopened.



**Amberlyn Hall**

**Jean Bennett and Mark Dycus**



**Tory Daugherty and Mark Dycus**

# Be in prayer for...

Ron Gray's Aunt Ardyth  
Aimee Bailey  
Billie Burton  
Noah Cavitt  
Joe Chaney  
Ron Cella  
Joe and Ginger Chaston  
Hannalore Clause  
Gary Frank Crass  
Krista Crass  
David Daughaday  
Sandra Daughrity  
Teresa Dowdy  
Phyllis Duckworth  
Bob Dunn  
Judy and Dave Eldredge  
Fiona Fennell  
Leon Fowler  
Laura Godfrey  
Ron Green  
Terri Gould  
Al Gribble  
Kim Hall



Elizabeth Dawson Howard  
Loretta Jobs  
Patsy King  
Ruth King  
Sandra Lay  
Katherine Lewis  
Sharon Lueck  
Cal Luther  
The Lynn Family  
Olivia Marshall  
Paula Marvin  
Bob and Celeste McAllister  
Anna McCurdy  
Eli McKeel  
Roger Miller  
Ray Neamon  
Sammy Pitman

John Pasco  
Aaron Perkins  
McKenna Phelps  
Aaron Polivick  
Ron Ratliff  
Jean Carol Ridley  
Deane Renshaw  
Bill Roberts  
Cecil Roberts  
Elena Roberts  
Sharon Rue  
Andrew Schultz  
Scott Tamaren  
Ann Thornton  
Patsy Tracy  
Will Treadway  
Jackie Underwood  
Tony and Charlotte Van Dyke  
Gary White  
Juanita Witmer  
Allison Willis  
Dwight Willis  
Linda Wilson  
Bianca Youngman

# Condolences

Our love and prayers are with Charlotte Van Dyke and family in the death of her son-in-law **Tab Jakonen** March 9, 2021, in Canada, after a courageous battle with lung cancer.

---

Our love and prayers are with Janice Morgan and her son in the death of Landon's father, **David Slawson**. He passed away on April 5, 2021 in hospice care in Ohio.

---

Our love and prayers are with the family of **Joseph Gould Sr.**, who passed away after a lengthy illness on April 21 in Rapid City, South Dakota. He had been under Hospice care. It was his birthday.

---

Our love and prayers are with Nancy Dycus in the death of her cousin **Linda Voyles**. She had been her babysitter.

---

Our love and prayers are with Vicky Holton and family in the death of her beloved cousin **Danny Ramage** on Sunday, April 25. He had been under Hospice care.

---

Our love and prayers are with Lisa Wilson in the death in Florida of her **Aunt Donna**. Please keep the Cromwell family in your prayers.

---

# FINANCIAL GIVING

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR January		
	2021	2020
<b>Income</b>	\$ 10,236.35	\$ 12,249.55
<b>Expense</b>	\$ 10,963.13	\$ 13,586.00
<b>Balance</b>	\$ (726.78)	\$ (1,336.45)

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR February		
	2021	2020
<b>Income</b>	\$ 10,032.81	\$ 15,266.96
<b>Expense</b>	\$ 12,076.30	\$ 12,951.76
<b>Balance</b>	\$ (2,043.49)	\$ 2,315.20

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR Jan-Feb		
	2021	2020
<b>Income</b>	\$ 20,269.16	\$ 27,516.51
<b>Expense</b>	\$ 23,039.43	\$ 26,537.76
<b>Balance</b>	\$ (2,770.27)	\$ 978.75

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR March		
	2021	2020
<b>Income</b>	\$ 12,914.97	\$ 11,759.97
<b>Expense</b>	\$ 16,606.28	\$ 15,876.29
<b>Balance</b>	\$ (3,691.31)	\$ (4,116.32)

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR Jan-March		
	2021	2020
<b>Income</b>	\$ 33,184.13	\$ 40,362.22
<b>Expense</b>	\$ 39,645.71	\$ 43,143.55
<b>Balance</b>	\$ (6,461.58)	\$ (2,781.33)

# FINANCIAL GIVING

## TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Thank you to everyone who has sent in their tithes and offerings to the church! We encourage you to continue to be faithful in your giving by mailing them to the church at: *First Christian Church, 111 North Fifth St., Murray, KY 42071.*

NOTE: A mail slot has been installed that goes in through the door leading into the freezer room so that you may put your checks in there, knowing that they will be secure.

## ONLINE GIVING

Missing worship service? No problem. Make your tithes and offerings with Givelify from wherever you are, using your computer or your Smart phone app.

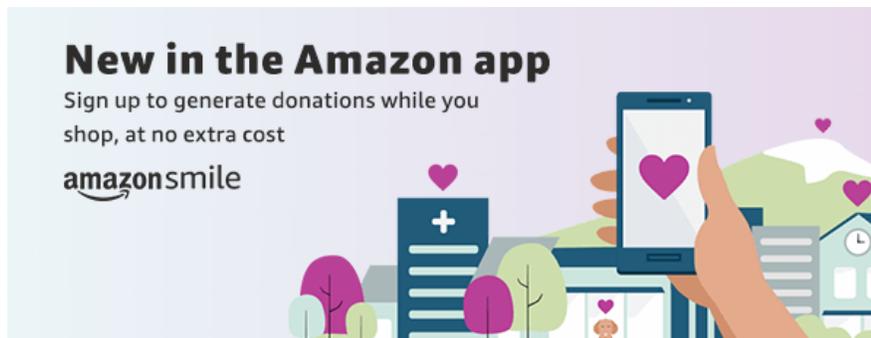
To make a computer donation, go to <https://www.givelify.com/givers> to start giving. To make a mobile donation, we recommend you download the Givelify app for Android or iPhone. It's free to download and use. It's totally safe and secure, and for tax time you have one-tap access to your complete donation records.

# STEWARDSHIP



Remember, always start at **smile.amazon.com** and Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to our church. To support First Christian Church when shopping on Amazon, simply click on the following link: **<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/61-0482959>** and shop! It's that easy!

**First Christian Church earned \$19.94 from the period between October 1 to December 31, 2020**

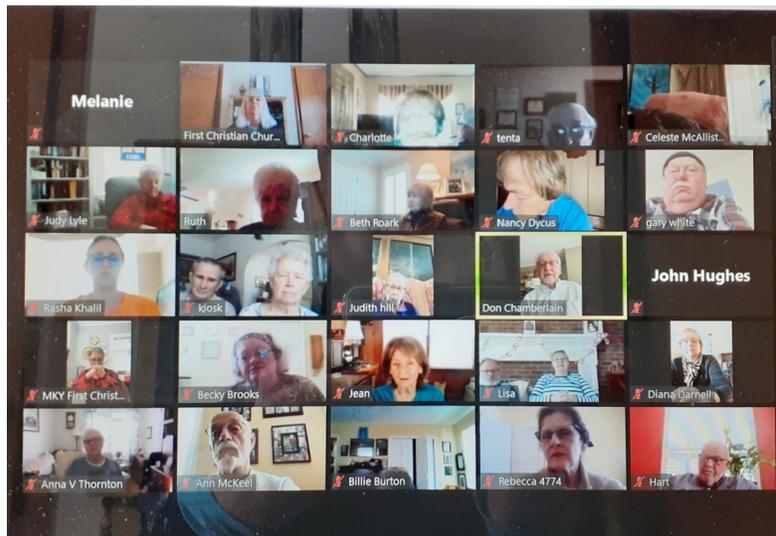


*Want to help make a difference while you shop in the Amazon app, at no extra cost to you? Simply follow the instructions below to select "First Christian Church" as your charity and activate AmazonSmile in the app. They'll donate a portion of your eligible mobile app purchases to us.*

*How it works:*

- 1. Open the Amazon app on your phone*
- 2. Select the main menu (=) & tap on "AmazonSmile" within Programs & Features*
- 3. Select "First Christian Church" as your charity*
- 4. Follow the on-screen instructions to activate AmazonSmile in the mobile app*

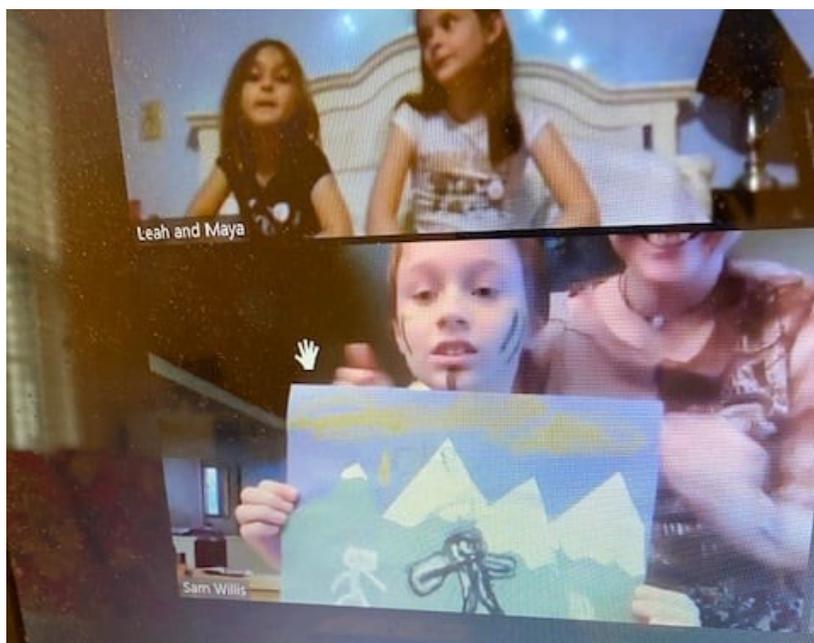
# Simplicity Sunday Worship



# We're Back!

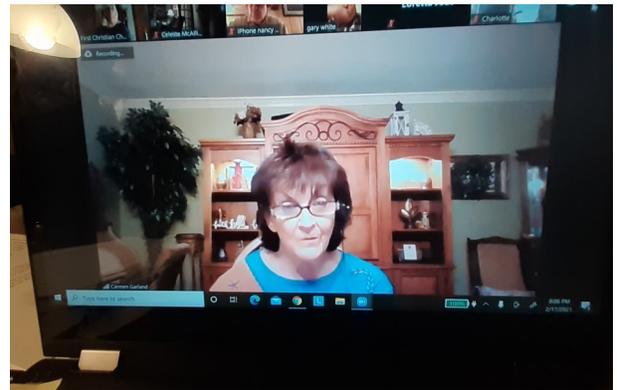
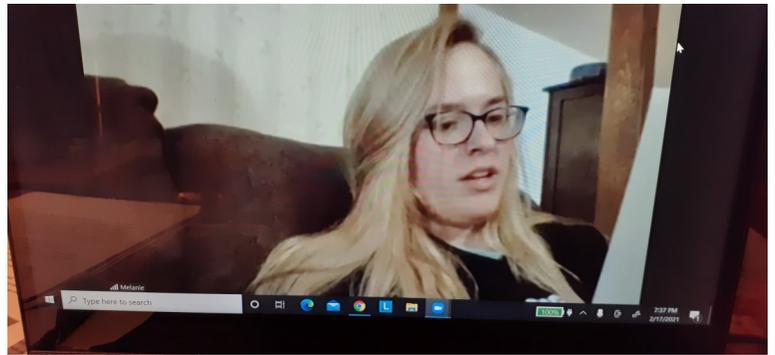
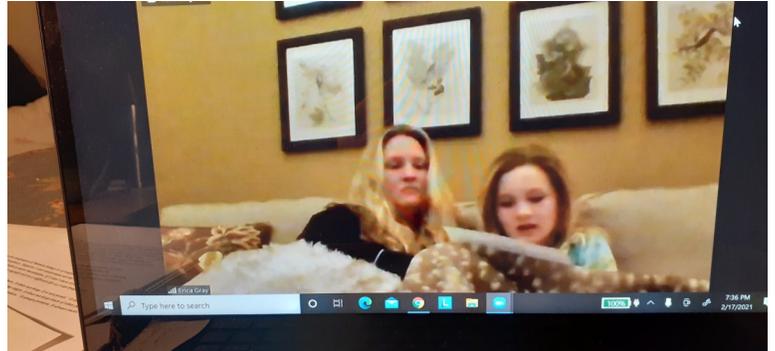
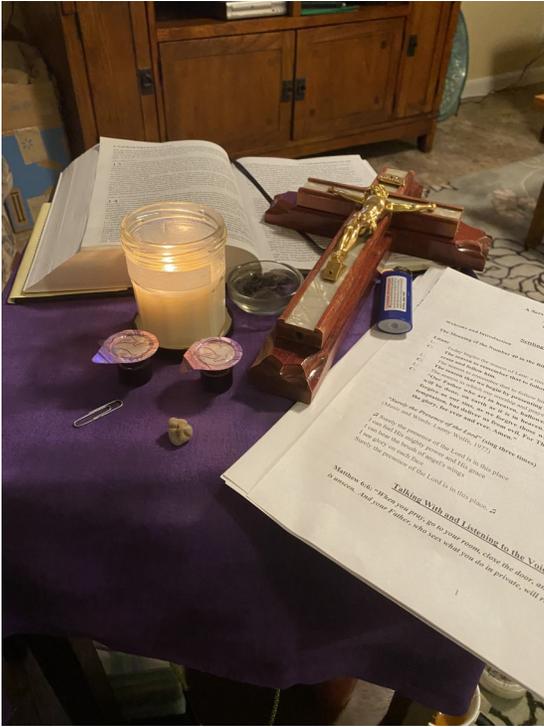


# The Kids Have Been Zooming!



# Ash Wednesday

## February 17, 2021



# Palm Sunday

March 28, 2021

Many thanks to Church Buildings Reopening Committee for their hard work on preparing the sanctuary for our return on Palm Sunday; to **Judy Hill** for providing music; and to **Ruth Daughaday** for sharing her interesting and inspirational faith journey (laced with humor) during worship!



  
Palm  
Sunday



# Pastor Ruth resumes home visitation on Palm Sunday March 28, 2021

Pastor Ruth resumed at-home visitation on Palm Sunday for the first time since March of 2020, bringing out communion and flowers from people's gardens that had been used to decorate the sanctuary.



**Jackie  
Underwood**



**Phyllis  
Duckworth**



**Deane  
Renshaw**



**Norma Jean  
Williams**

# Easter

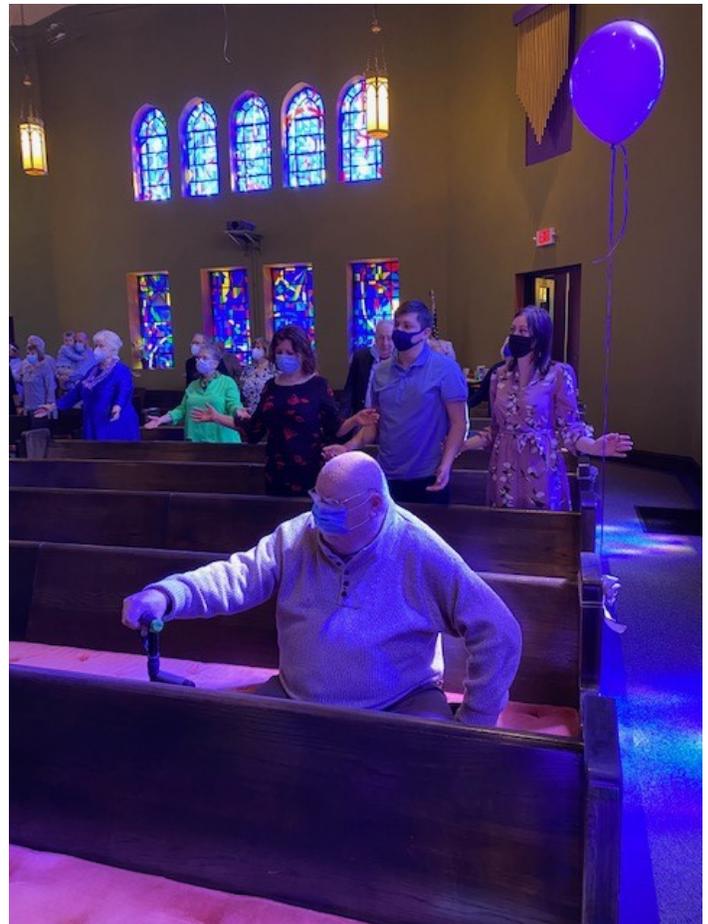
## April 3-4, 2021

Many thanks to all those who decorated the sanctuary for Easter Sunday and brought flowers and helped create the beautiful living cross outdoors. We had a great turnout in the sanctuary, with many others zooming in on Easter. What a blessing it was to be back in our beautiful sanctuary.



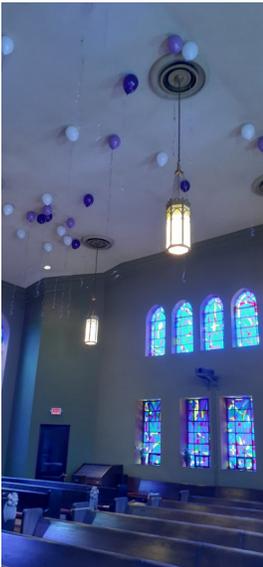
# Easter

April 3-4, 2021



# Easter

April 3-4, 2021



# Mother's Day Service

May 9, 2021





## **Outreach**

### **NEED LINE**

The Need Line pantry is low on the following items: toaster pastries, shelf stable milk, juice boxes, cheese snacks or cheese crackers (no peanut butter), soups, Jiffy mix, peanut butter. Personal hygiene items that are needed include: toothpaste, toothbrushes, and small bottles of mouthwash. Need Line is located at 509 N. 8th St, and is open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. For more information, call 270-753-6333. If you drive up, they will meet you at your car and take your donations.

### **BLESSING BOX**

Please don't forget our blessing box, located in the back of the church. If you are able, please think about donating non-perishable food items and dropping them off directly to the blessing box (please do not bring to the church). There is a need in the community and bringing a few items, as you are able, is much appreciated. When collecting items, please do keep in mind that some of those needing food are homeless and do not have a way to cook.

### **CANDLE PROJECT**

From Rebecca Landolt: "I have ordered 50 more candles for the on-going project for our youth in cooperation with HOPE CALLOWAY. In addition I delivered to the HOPE CALLOWAY office last week the 14 candles we had left from the original shipment. According to Nathan Carter at HOPE CALLOWAY, they have a continuous ad about the project on their website and plan to also focus on this during to the Easter season. If you would like to 'Shine a Light on Homelessness in Calloway County', write a \$10 check (or more) to 'Hope Calloway' with a notation for the candle project."

# **Outreach**

## **BABY BOTTLE FUNDRAISER**

Life House will be asking churches to contribute to its Baby Bottle Fundraiser this year by collecting change and placing it in baby bottles provided by the organization. To receive your baby bottle, pick one up in the back of the sanctuary. Please turn the filled bottles in by Fathers Day, June 20.

## **LYSOL/CLOROX WIPES/GLOVES/MASKS**

Many thanks to all the many people who have been providing Lysol and Clorox wipes, gloves, masks, and cleaning materials to our church! We still need more and are asking, if you are able, to donate what you can to the church. They will be essential once we return to in-person worship!

## **LAUNDRY LOVE**

Please continue to collect quarters for Laundry Love. Even though we have not been able to participate in this important ministry by helping people as they do laundry, we are helping by giving the resource centers at Murray Independent and Calloway County schools gift cards so families can do laundry at iWash. Each time we participate in Laundry Love it costs us a few hundred dollars. We encourage you to put aside some quarters to bring to the church when it resumes again.

## **MAIN STREET YOUTH CENTER**

Main Street Youth Center is in need of individually wrapped snacks. Donations may be dropped off at the youth center from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. Monday through Wednesday, at 513 South Fourth St. For more information, call the center at 270-753-8336.

# David Robinson's Contributions from the Heart

David Robinson exhibits a Christ-like servant heart in all that he does for our church and our community. In addition to helping to oversee our Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets with Rebecca Landolt, the Need Line Back Pack program with Teresa Nixon, shoveling snow and ice off our steps in winter, overseeing our recycling efforts, helping with the sound system and getting communion ready on Sundays, he also takes \$40 out of every paycheck he earns to purchase food to put in the Blessings Boxes around our community. These photos show his recent contributions, which were put into Blessing Boxes by our youth under the leadership of Elena Roberts. If you ever get the opportunity, you might go and visit the back room in the “dungeon” which he has turned into an Outreach Room to store and assemble outreach items. We love, respect, and appreciate David so much!



## Little Acts of Kindness Bags ministry

Celeste and Bob McAllister continue their “Little Acts of Kindness Bags” ministry. Below are recent photos of some new bags that Celeste has made, along with a table full of items to fill them. We have a number of bags in our narthex, ready for you to fill and hand out to those you may come across who are in need of encouragement, love and care.

