

THE LAWTON CHRISTIAN

The official newsletter of the First Christian Church of Lawton



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From the Pastor's Pen

by Rev. Paul Appleby

I am sitting here, reflecting on our first year in ministry together. What a year it has been. Clearly no one would have anticipated that we would be spending so much of it apart (or struggling to find toilet paper for that matter), yet here we are. Despite the physical distance, I feel we have gotten to know one another a little bit throughout 2020. In spite of the challenges presented by COVID 19, we have found new and innovative ways to continue in ministry together.

We have proclaimed the Gospel in new and exciting ways through our Monday Morning Minute(s), Virtual Church Services, and on-line Bible Studies. We have seen our board adapt, improvise, and overcome by utilizing ZOOM to continue to meet routinely to see to the administrative business of our congregation. Our Outreach ministry has continued in its feeding ministry in new and exciting ways through our Wednesday evening "to-go" service and our community

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food pantry (God bless our Agape team and volunteers who have made all this happen!). Our Elders have worked tirelessly in a ministry of distanced prayer and frequent check-ins with their flocks (including home communion and directory delivery). Speaking of our directories, I think you would be hard pressed to find another congregation that put out a 2020 photo directory in the middle of a global pandemic, yet that is precisely the effort that Piper spearheaded as you graciously sent in some amazing pics from home and elsewhere to help us keep one another “top of mind” during our time apart. While we are discussing office staff, Patty and Piper have done a great deal of leg work seeing to our 2020 Stewardship Campaign, and while pledge cards are still coming in I want to express my profound gratitude to them and to all of you that have prayerfully considered your support to our ministry. Ministry still costs money, even during a pandemic. While we are on the topic of the work of our ministry staff in 2020, David Anderson has really stepped up his music production game and has provided some excellent service music (both virtually and in person). He is to be commended for his efforts. Then there is Konrad Delger. He has gone above and beyond this year in his efforts to refresh and renovate our building and our entire congregation is in his, and his team’s debt for their work improving and maintaining our building and grounds (I’m looking at you, Sheila, Virginia, Bill, Danyle, Rick and Evan). Denise and her team have done some great work in updating our Clothes Closet as well. I also wish to note that while we have been meeting in a different format, Brian has kept our sound clear and crisp, and Evan has done a wonderful job operating the new technology in our Sanctuary. Unfortunately, our nursery workers have had to sit much of the year out (it is hard to socially distance while caring for infants and toddlers after all), but I am so grateful for their willingness to return to work as soon as we are able so to do.

Through all of this, our work together in 2020 has demonstrated the indomitable spirit our people. In the face of numerous setbacks and global uncertainty you have demonstrated a level headedness and clarity of mission that have been such a tremendous blessing to our entire community. I am excited about what 2021 has in store for us as we look for new opportunities in ministry, and I know that we will rise to the challenges ahead.

Above all, I cannot stress how profoundly grateful I am to be your pastor. We are a resilient congregation that is dedicated to following the lead of the Spirit and growing into our role as the body of Christ in our community. I can think of nowhere else I would rather be than here in ministry with you.

God Bless,



Rev. Paul Appleby
Pastor, The First Christian Church of Lawton



Worship Corner

by Rev. Paul Appleby

We are now in the season of Advent. Advent is not only that special time before Christmas, it is also a time of repentance and reflection. The name “advent” comes from the Latin words meaning “to come, to arrive”. During this time of year, we reflect fondly on Christ’s coming into the world in Bethlehem’s manger, but we also look forward with eager anticipation to his coming again in power and great glory. 2020 brings with it the added twist of waiting for a return to normalcy to come as well. These will be the themes we explore through our Advent/Christmas worship series Christ is Coming. I hope you are able to join us on YouTube at 10:00 AM throughout the season (or whenever you can during the week) as we ready our hearts and minds for God’s greatest gift to the world. Below is an overview of what you can expect in the weeks to come.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT (11/29) “... so let us wait with hope!”

Scriptures: Isaiah 64:1-9; Mark 13:24-37

Synopsis: The halls are decked, and as we turn on our radios and watch our televisions, we notice that ‘It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas’. But this year things are a little different. This year, we not only wait for the return of Christ (which is, after all half of the reason for the season of advent), and for the inevitable arrival of the holidays (there’s the other half), but are waiting for a return to normalcy after a year that has been anything but. Today we ask, not only when all of these concerns will be resolved, but we also ask, what word might God have for us while we find ourselves waiting?

Songs: The King is Coming Soon (Intro), People Look East (CH142), One Candle is Lit (CH128 v1), Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus (CH125)

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT (12/6) “... so let us prepare the way for peace!”

Scripture: Isaiah 40:1-11; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

Synopsis: As we await the arrival of Christmas, what can we do to grease the skids for that celebration of “Peace on Earth and Goodwill Toward Men.” As we await the return of Christ, how can we witness to the truth of his coming kingdom? As we await a return to normalcy what practices can we begin that will enable us to re-engage with the world with renewed purpose and vigor? It is to these questions we will turn in today’s worship service.

Songs: The King is Coming Soon (Intro), Hail to the Lord’s Anointed (CH140), Verse 2 of One Candle is Lit (CH128), O Come, O Come Emmanuel (CH119)

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THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (12/13) “... so let us rejoice!”

Scripture: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

Synopsis: There is a chill in the air. Trees are trimmed and the time is drawing near, so let us rejoice for family and friends, for hallmark movies and hot chocolate, for all those things that spark joy this time of year. Let us rejoice that Christ is coming to right wrongs, free prisoners, and bring God's joy to all the earth. Let us rejoice that amidst the sickness and uncertainty of our world, that better times are coming and soon and very soon our world will return to a sense of normalcy.

Songs: The King is Coming Soon (Intro), Joy to the World (CH143), Verse 3 of One Candle is Lit (CH128), Spirit (CH249)

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (12/20) “... so let us share God's love!”

Scripture: Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38, 46-55

Synopsis: During the Christmas season, God invites us to share in his love. God's love is so great that it overflowed the bounds of heaven to find its way into the world where it would, “bring down the powerful from their thrones and lift up the lowly, fill the hungry with good things and send away the rich empty.” God's love is coming still when we will all share in the riches of Christ's kingdom. And even now, during this time of uncertainty, God's love abides with us still... But this love isn't meant to be our private possession. Now, and in the coming days, let us look for ways to do what should come so naturally to Christians, let us share God's love with all.

Songs: The King is Coming Soon (Intro), “It Came Upon a Midnight Clear” (CH153), Verse 4 of “One Candle is Lit” (CH128), “My Soul Gives Glory to My God” (CH130)

CHRISTMAS EVE (12/24): The Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

Christmas 1 (12/27) “... so let us live as children of God.”

Scripture: Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40

Synopsis: The gifts have been opened and the Christmas music has left rotation on most of our local stations, but the Christmas season has just started. Christ was not only God's son; he is the prototype for all those who would come after him bearing the name “Christian.” As we celebrate the season and look forward to Christ's return, let's live as he did, “clothed with the garments of salvation, covered with a robe of righteousness” During this time let us look for new ways to share the gracious invitation of adoption into God's family that is promised in Christ. Let's live as children of God.

Songs: “Away in a Manger” (CH147), “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing!” (CH150)



December 2020



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 5:30 pm To-go Sack Meal	3 5:30 pm Elders' Meeting	4	5
6 10 am Virtual Worship on FCC YouTube Channel 11 am After- Words on Zoom	7 Monday Morn- ing Minute on FCC YouTube Channel	8	9 5:30 pm To-go Sack Meal	10	11	12
13 10 am Virtual Worship on FCC YouTube Channel 11 am After- Words on Zoom	14 Monday Morn- ing Minute on FCC YouTube Channel	15	16 5:30 pm To-go Sack Meal	17	18	19
20 10 am Virtual Worship on FCC YouTube Channel 11 am After- Words on Zoom	21 Monday Morn- ing Minute on FCC YouTube Channel 10 am Christmas Basket Assembly	22	23 5:30 pm To-go Sack Meal	24 Christmas Eve Christmas Eve Service on FCC YouTube Channel	25 Christmas Day	26
27 10 am Virtual Worship on FCC YouTube Channel 11 am After- Words on Zoom	28 Monday Morn- ing Minute on FCC YouTube Channel	29	30 5:30 pm To-go Sack Meal	31 New Years Eve		



Agape Ministry

We continue to ask for contributions to the Outdoor Pantry Box (on the west side of our building). You may just set your contributions on the shelves of the box. The food goes very quickly, often the same day it is stocked. The Pantry Box is incredibly successful at reaching those in need. Items needed include **ready-to-eat foods** such as the following:

- sandwiches
- fruits
- fresh vegetables
- bread
- cheese and crackers
- peanut butter
- cereal
- canned meats with easy open tops
- bottled water

Each Wednesday evening from **5:30 to 6:30 pm** we serve to-go meals outside the south side of the building. Our plan is to continue doing this until such time as folks are allowed to return to a semi-normal life again. So far this year **4,986** meals have been served (**243** of those to children).

Upcoming meals for December are as follows:

December 2 - Stuffed chicken or pork loin pieces

December 9 - Beef sandwiches

December 16 - Chili dogs

December 23 - Chicken patties

December 30 - Breakfast for dinner

If you are interested in helping, please contact either the church office or Konrad Delger, Facilities Manager.



Happy Birthday!

12/1 Luke Todd
 12/2 Bill Vaughan
 12/6 Sam Bowman
 12/12 Teckla Ryans
 12/13 Ron Honeycutt
 12/14 Wendi Lindley
 12/15 Austin Mavity
 12/20 JoJo Aubrey
 12/20 Frank Morris
 12/23 Virginia Lucas
 12/23 Fred Phillips
 12/26 Gaila Martin-Kindt
 12/30 Clint Kennedy
 12/30 Beverly Watson
 12/31 David Lindley



Happy Anniversary!

12/19 Konrad and Amber Delger
 12/23 Jay and Kathy Cooper
 12/27 David C. and Lori Anderson
 12/27 John and Piper Saville
 12/28 John and Teresa Adair



Joys

- Barbee and Bill Barker are finally on the mend!
- All COVID tests were negative for the Springli's daughter Rita and her family!
- Gene Maudlin (Becky Tannery's friend) is doing well in rehab in Elk City!

Prayer Concerns - Please Pray For:

- Family and friends of Judy Akers following her death (Judy was Marjorie Lutz's daughter)
- Family and friends of Rose following her death (Rose was a friend of Becky Tannery's son)
- Family, friends, and students of Kenneth Stallworth who passed away (he taught at Central Middle School)
- Family and friends of Mrs. White who died (her daughter is a friend of the Springli's daughter)
- Family and friends of Pat Dryburgh following his death (Pat was a friend of Helen Vinerro)
- Family, friends, and students of Cheryl McLaughlin who passed away (she taught orchestra at Central Middle School)
- Family of friends of Sandra Oathout (Don Henke's niece following her death)
- The Bowman's daughter-in-law (thyroid cancer)
- Lori Anderson, her students, and colleagues during the pandemic
- William (The Bowman's son) and wife following a miscarriage
- Mary Butler (therapy for broken ankle)
- Vickie Johnson Flores (knee surgery)
- Mary and Jimi Denning (heart issues)
- Mark Fanti (broken hip)
- Coy and Peggy Citron (health)
- Don Henke (heart procedure recovery) and wife Phyllis (health)
- Tammy Spears (surgery recuperation)
- Joe Bailey (healing)
- Barbee and Bill Barker (continued strength)
- Marge and Melissa Lutz (health)
- David Pratt (loss of job) and family recovery from flu
- Delana Huggins (medical issues)
- Konrad Delger's Father (heart issues)
- John and Piper Saville (John has COVID) also John's co-workers with COVID
- Carol Labutti (Wendi Lindley's cousin who has cancer)
- Clayton Fields (Denise Smith's Father going through therapy)
- Lois Smith (JoJo Aubrey's mother who is recuperating from a fractured pelvis)
- Gene Maudlin (Becky Tannery's friend in therapy)
- Piper's hairdresser and her hair-dresser's daughter who have COVID
- Ande (17-year-old granddaughter of Hilde Bilvais' friend. Ande has COVID)
- Kathy and husband (Melissa Pratt's sister and brother-in-law with COVID)
- All hospital staff
- Teachers, students, and educational staff
- Our city, our country, our leaders, our troops, and the world during this difficult time

A Letter to the Congregation

FCC Family & Friends,

In recent weeks, our nation has seen a resurgence in new cases of COVID-19. As many of you are aware, Oklahoma has been hit particularly hard, and current projections from the CDC indicate that levels of infection will continue to rise throughout the holiday season. In response to this increase, our Regional Minister the Rev. Pam Holt has advised all Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregations in the state to stop meeting in person for worship and to go back to online worship only until the crisis subsides.

While we have done a tremendous job social distancing, disinfecting, wearing our masks and ensuring that all applicable safety protocols have been followed during our Sunday morning worship services, it is the opinion of your Pastor, your Elders, and your General Church Board that it is simply too risky to continue meeting in person at this time. We are aware that this is the beginning of the Advent/Christmas season. Rest assured that this decision was not made lightly. The church is the body of Christ, and it was the work of Jesus to make people well, not to make them sick by unnecessarily exposing them to risk. While we acknowledge that God is always in control, we are also aware that the Lord has gifted us with the intelligence and wisdom to know when to take reasonable precautions to ensure our safety and the safety of those around us.

Further, we have resolved to carry out our annual congregational meeting to approve our 2021 budget and elect new church officers via email and mail-in ballots. The meeting was scheduled for Sunday, December 13th. Those of you who are on our church email list will receive your ballot and a copy of the budget no later than December 6th. Those who are not on our email list will receive paper ballots in the mail by the 6th as well. If you are voting by mail, please drop them in the mail by Wednesday, December 9th to ensure that they will arrive in time for a vote count on the 13th. The 13th will also be the deadline for email voting. The office will notify you of the results by Monday, December 14th.

We hope for a drastic change in the situation soon. In the meantime, the board has committed to investigate returning to in-person worship at our January board meeting. Further, we are developing new ways of engaging in fellowship, Christian education, and spiritual development throughout the Advent season. We trust that during this “most wonderful time of the year” First Christian will still help us to meaningfully connect to the Christ who is the heart of Christmas.

May God Bless You All,

Rev. Paul Appleby
Pastor

John Adair
Chair of Elders

David Aubrey
Chair of the General Board





'Tis the Season

Each year in the month of December, First Christian Church takes up an offering to bless our church staff. The monies given are pooled together and given out proportionately to our hard-working staff, as a Christmas gift from the congregation. If you would like to make a contribution to show your appreciation and support of our staff, you may do so by check. Please make your checks out to First Christian Church with "Staff Christmas Gift" in the memo section. Please have your gift to the church by **December 17th**.

Annual Congregational Meeting

December 13 will mark our annual congregational meeting.

You will receive an email link to this year's ballot, as we will not be meeting in person. The ballot will include this year's slate of officers, as well as an option to vote "yay" or "nay" on our annual budget for 2021.

Those of you who do not have an email address will receive a printed ballot and a return envelope. Please have your mail in ballots mailed back in no later than December 10th in order to ensure they are received by the 13th. Electronic ballots will be accepted until noon on December 13th.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact the church office or the pastor.



Church Staff and Contact Information

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

Administrative Assistant - Piper Saville/office@fcclawton.org

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

Facilities Manager - Konrad Delger

Financial Secretary - Patty Neuwirth

Sound Technician - Brian Herring

Media Technicians - Evan Aubrey and John Bowman

Nursery - Beverly Watson and Elizabeth Calhoun-Dean

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