

# FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH



Happy Advent and Christmas! As I reflect on 2017, I thank God for bringing me through seasons of increase and decrease, of highs and lows. He's helped me grow to be more like Jesus, and I'm so thankful to see him work in so many lives here at FCC. God has been doing some amazing things here at First Christian! Numerous people have been increasing in their faith in Jesus, new servants have arisen in multiple ministries, new paid staff, volunteer staff and church leaders have arisen, and we've seen an increase in several new families attending and joining, along with their children and youth. God alone is to be praised! God wants us to be active in His Kingdom in Lawrence and I am so excited about what's in store for 2018!

Holiday seasons can be spectacular: all the meals, the lights, the friends and family, the presents, the worship, and gifts we can give others. Fun. Festive. Cozy. But, for many, even with all these delights, a few *other* words come to mind. Dysfunctional. Toxic. Demoralizing. For copious people, spending time with their families can overshadow the joy of the season because of the profound, unhealthy, unchristian, relational patterns they experience. If you can relate to having anxiety around the holiday season because your families are toxic, here are some very quick tips on how to make it through this season with a bit more joy.

**Make up your mind to act like a Christian.** If you've given your life to Jesus, then commit to acting like Him. Don't pretend to be a constant victim to your emotions or bad behaviors. Instead, decide to let your devotion to Jesus rule you, not your anxiety, stress, or rage. Concur with Paul: "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20 NET).

**Get ready. It's coming.** Unhealthy patterns can surface without us realizing it or even wanting it. Take the surprise factor away, and it will decrease your anxiety and fear when it occurs. Come to grips with the fact that the unhealthiness is *probably* coming when you get around that person (or people). Make decisions beforehand that will limit your anxiety, pain, or stress. For example, can you stay at a hotel instead? Can you eat in a different room? If it's too much for you to handle, strategically devise plans to minimize your exposure to the toxicity before it arrives.



**Figure out if there's anything that you do to increase the dysfunction.** Own how, if at all, you contribute to the sick dance that takes place. Do you roll your eyes? Make inappropriate jokes? Exacerbate the problem? Bring up subjects just to spite them? Stop. Remember, that's not how Jesus related with people, *no matter how unhealthy or evil they were*. Be the Christian adult in the room.

**You need to let go of the desire to fix or change them.** People drive us "crazy" when we need something from them that they can't give. We expect them to behave differently, and when they don't, we're mad or hurt by them. Instead of responding maturely, we can then seek to control them by manipulative comments, giving the silent treatment, being passive aggressive, or being openly hostile. You absolutely must not do this. When you seek to control a person to get them to give you something they don't want to give or can't give, then—however counter-intuitive this sounds—that person has control over you. You are being ruled by their dysfunction. Let it go. Release that need. It's not in your job description. The holidays are not meant for your pet project of controlling or "fixing" your mom or dad or uncle or whomever. Let it go. You're not God. You're not a witch. Don't try to control.

**Instead, get your healthy needs met by people who love and support you.** When you have unconditional love, acceptance, and maturity from people who love you, you're not starving for it from other people. So, before the holidays, get your relationship nutrients from healthy sources. Moreover, *during* the holidays, garner needed support from healthy people (on call, if needed).

**Focus on anything at all that is positive or likeable.** This will help you have empathy. It's easy to "split" and only see the negative when someone has really hurt you or annoyed you. This makes it very difficult to empathize. Instead, focus on anything at all that you can which will help you let go of your negative feelings. Can you talk about a sports team you *both* like? A vacation? Jesus? Is there anything whatsoever which will change the subject to something tolerable?

**Take a break when you need to and pray.** Really: walk away, take a deep breath, and pray. Ask God to help you release the frustration, anxiety, or stress. Pray for the person (not *against* the person, but *for* the person). Ask God to help them be like Jesus. Of course, then keep praying the same for yourself.

For the Kingdom,

David W. Pendergrass, Ph.D.  
Senior Pastor

# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY NEWS



As I think back on 2017, I am reminded of the many good things God has done in FCC Kids. We began 2017 with only a handful of children each week; now we have 30 children who are active in the ministry. This means that 30 children learn Bible stories each week. They take those stories home (with a little help from our Practice with Parents take-home sheet) and share their new knowledge with their families and friends.



At the beginning of 2017, I taught most FCC Kids classes since we had only a few volunteers in the ministry. Our volunteer base has doubled, and volunteer recruitment continues. This means that adults have the chance to grow in their discipleship as they prepare to teach lessons and that we have more adults willing to invest in our youngest disciples of Jesus. When 2017 began, there were only a few young families at FCC. As the year ends, there are nearly 20 young families who attend FCC regularly. This means that more children (and their parents) are growing in their faith each week. What a blessing to watch God at work! As we end 2017, my prayer is that God's kingdom comes and that His will continues to be done in FCC Kids.

**Elaine W. Pendergrass (Pastor to Children)**  
elaine@fcclawrence.org



## THE GIVING TREE PRESCHOOL NEWS



Our preschool students celebrated Thanksgiving with our own "Friendsgiving" celebration. Families were invited to donate a food item to be added to a Harvest Mix made by the children the day of our celebration. This was a great way to celebrate friendship during this time of Thanksgiving. When I reflect on 2017, I am so thankful that God has provided the blessings of children and the wonderful families within our Giving Tree Preschool program.



As we move into the month of December, The Christmas season is an exciting time for us here at The Giving Tree. We look forward to learning about the letter "J", decorating Christmas trees, working on the skill of estimation with jingle bells and writing stories of what gift we would bring to baby Jesus. The children are also working hard to learn the songs for our upcoming Christmas program. We make certain, that through it all, our focus remains on the true reason for the season. We celebrate the birth of our savior, Jesus Christ. Happy Birthday Jesus!



I wish you all a very Merry Christmas, and hope the holiday season brings much happiness to your family.

**Julie Hafenstine (The Giving Tree Preschool Director)**  
www.lawrencepreschool.com





# YOUTH/COLLEGE NEWS



FCC YTH is finishing out the year in a season of growth and transition. In late August, FCC YTH hired a new Pastor to Youth & College (me, Paul Porter). I had the opportunity to jump right in by trying to establish relationships, routine, and discipleship with youth students during the fall semester. We gathered together on Wednesday nights, Sunday mornings, and other occasions. We grew together during this fall semester by trying to break emotional walls, build new friendships, and learn about who God really is. We went (Go) together to serve the community by helping wrap gifts for the 2017 Holiday Shop event. As FCC YTH moves forward into 2018, my aspirations are to use 2017 as a launch pad, so FCC YTH can Gather, Grow, and Go in order to make disciples of Jesus.

Transit College (FCC College) also experienced positive transition in 2017. In late August, when I came on to the First Christian Church as the Youth Pastor, I was additionally given the opportunity to pastor our college ministry. My objective was to start building relationships with college students inside the church and around the college campus ministries. We recently began to meet consistently on Thursday evenings for food and fellowship. Though we're just beginning to expand, it seems that quality of friendships and discipleship is going to truly increase and produce good fruit. My aspiration is to transition into 2018, in such a way that this ministry gives college students an opportunity to gather, grow, and go in order to make disciples now and continue to make disciples after graduation.

**Paul Porter (Pastor to Youth and College)**

[paul@fcclawrence.org](mailto:paul@fcclawrence.org)



@fcc\_yth



[fbl.me/fccyth](https://fb.me/fccyth)

## WORSHIP MINISTRY NEWS

Hello FCC Family,

December is upon us, and therefore the season of Advent. We introduce special worship service elements such as advent candle lightings, family scripture readings, and songs that speak of the birth of Jesus. With time set aside each year to pay special attention to the topics of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love, let us as a congregation emphasize those elements in our spiritual life. Allow the words you sing, speak, and hear to sink in to your heart, mind, and soul, so that you can grow closer to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

### **Christmas Eve Pre-Concert & Service | Sunday, Dec. 24th, 5:30-7pm**

Please make plans to attend our Christmas Eve service. Like last year, we'll enjoy a pre-service concert at 5:30pm. The concert will include musicians who have performed offertories throughout the Advent season, as well as other musical ensembles ready to lead us in worship. At 6pm, we'll hold our annual Christmas Eve service. With elements of traditional and modern hymns, scripture and teaching, special offering, and lighting candles as a congregation, you won't want to miss this service.

We continue to offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving through this season of Advent. What a wonderful gift God has given us to sing of the perfect GIFT, God in the flesh, Immanuel! How blessed we are to sing of Hope, Love, Joy and Peace. We join the heavenly chorus honoring the arrival of Jesus our Savior, Christ our Lord, "Glory to God in the highest!"

With prayers for you in this season,

**Matthew Mulnix & Greg Boyle (Modern & Traditional Worship Directors)**

[matthew@fcclawrence.org](mailto:matthew@fcclawrence.org); [greg@fcclawrence.org](mailto:greg@fcclawrence.org)

# STEWARDSHIP

I can't believe that 2017 is almost over and that Christmas is just around the corner. As I reflect back on this year I am very proud of the ministry that First Christian has been involved in. It is exciting that our new strategy of Gather, Grow, Go is already happening in the life of the Church. Our Youth and Children's Ministries are growing, the Giving Tree is thriving; we continue to support our missionaries, the Disciples and local outreach agencies. We continue to help feed the hungry through LINK, house the homeless through Family Promise and we help those families who find housing furnish their new homes through the Helping Hands Closet. We have a strong ministry and worship staff, DGroups are meeting and new ones will begin after the first of the year. We are hosting events to bring the Lawrence community to FCC in an attempt to share the love of Jesus and to invite them to come along side us as we all continue to grow in both our knowledge and love of Christ.

As it has been said many times, we are so thankful for the faithful support, the generous contributions and for the love that each one of you have for FCC. Without the gift of your time, talents, and resources, the ministry of FCC could not continue. Below we have provided the YTD totals for the Unified Budget at the end of October. We are showing YTD net income of \$8,209.00. At the end of October we should be at 83.33% of the budget, income is at 81.82% and expenses at 80.54%. The Unified Budget includes contribution income only, operating expenses and church support for Missions and Outreach.

## Unified Budget Through October 2017

YTD Income	\$ 400,041.00
YTD Expenses	\$ 391,832.00
YTD Net Income/(Loss)	\$ 8,209 .00

## Stewardship 2018 Update

If you haven't yet turned in a pledge card it is not too late! We are lacking in what we need to support our proposed budget for 2018.

Based on pledges, loose offering, and non-pledged funds we are at about 70% of what is needed. If you have not pledged please consider doing so. While we do have ample reserves, the Trustees would prefer not to use them. If you could consider an additional gift for 2018 that would be very much appreciated. The staff and leadership of FCC are so very excited about the new year and feel that we have everything in place to bring new families to the church. There is such a need in our community to make disciples, we ask that you join us in that mission!

# OUTREACH NEWS



**Perspectives™**

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Come experience 15 powerful lessons that have equipped thousands of every day believers with greater vision, hope, and passion. In Perspectives, scripture, history, culture, and strategy converge to reveal the unfolding of God's redemptive purposes. He is on a mission to bless the peoples of the earth, and you're invited to join him.

**Sundays 4-7pm | January 14th - April 29th | First Christian Church**

**Cost: \$250 - discounts available, college credit offered First night is free - come check it out!**

For more information or to register, go to the Perspectives website at: [Perspectives.org/LawrenceKS\\_S18](http://Perspectives.org/LawrenceKS_S18)

Questions? Please email, [PerspectivesLawrence@gmail.com](mailto:PerspectivesLawrence@gmail.com) or call, or text: 480-666-2114

**Live with passion. Run with purpose.**



## AN UPDATE FROM THE SWANSON FAMILY:

We had plans to come, and visit with our supporters in Kansas these past few weeks, but those plans were abruptly canceled. Melissa's father passed into Heaven early on October 28<sup>th</sup>. In your prayers for the family, we ask that you would please pray for Melissa's mother who suffers from dementia. As of now, there are temporary plans for her care in place. While taking some time to rest this fall, Ed got to do some deer hunting, and most of the Swanson family gathered for Thanksgiving. We appreciate your continued support and prayer in this season.

# FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

## LAWRENCE, KANSAS

First Christian Church exists to make disciples of Jesus.

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To make disciples of Jesus, First Christian's ministries are committed to teaching disciples to obey everything that Jesus commanded (Matt. 28:19), expressed by

**Gather, Grow, Go.**



We **Gather** to worship and care for our community.



We **Grow** to be like Jesus.



We **Go** to share the gospel and serve the world.

# FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

1000 Kentucky Street • Lawrence KS 66044

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



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David Pendergrass, Ph.D., Senior Pastor	<a href="mailto:david@fcclawrence.org">david@fcclawrence.org</a>
Elaine Pendergrass, Pastor to Children	<a href="mailto:elaine@fcclawrence.org">elaine@fcclawrence.org</a>
Greg Boyle, Traditional Worship	<a href="mailto:greg@fcclawrence.org">greg@fcclawrence.org</a>
Julie Hafenstine, Director of Giving Tree	<a href="mailto:julie@fcclawrence.org">julie@fcclawrence.org</a>
Lisa Hoag, Business Administrator	<a href="mailto:lisa@fcclawrence.org">lisa@fcclawrence.org</a>
Maddie Markley, Office Coordinator	<a href="mailto:office@fcclawrence.org">office@fcclawrence.org</a>
Matthew Mulnix, Modern Worship	<a href="mailto:matthew@fcclawrence.org">matthew@fcclawrence.org</a>
Paul Porter, Pastor to Youth and College	<a href="mailto:paul@fcclawrence.org">paul@fcclawrence.org</a>
Church Elders	<a href="mailto:elders@fcclawrence.org">elders@fcclawrence.org</a>

Want to make an announcement? Send an email to [social@fcclawrence.org](mailto:social@fcclawrence.org)

Office Hours: Monday — Friday, 9am to 4pm (closed 12-1pm)

785-843-0679

Come to First Christian this week! Traditional Worship 9am • Modern Worship 11am



# COMING IN DECEMBER

## COOKIES & COCOA AT CHRISTMAS

A Come-and-Go Fellowship Event at the Pendergrass Home  
December 10<sup>th</sup> | 2-4pm | [elaine@fcclawrence.org](mailto:elaine@fcclawrence.org)

## UGLY CHRISTMAS sweaters

On Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup>, wear Your Favorite  
Ugly Christmas Sweater (or shirt) to Service!

## Family Advent Nights

Wednesdays | December 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, & 20<sup>th</sup> | 6-7:30pm

## Tis the Season!

Dec. 2nd 11:30 am

After Party: Concert After the Parade

Dec. 3rd 9 and 11am

Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> 9 and 11am

Dec. 17<sup>th</sup> 9 and 11am

Ugly Christmas Sweater Sunday

Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> 9 and 11am

5:30pm

Christmas Concert

6:00pm

Christmas Eve Service

## GRIEF AND FORGIVENESS WHAT, WHY, AND HOW

The Pastor's Study commencing January 10 at 6pm

## A Love that Endures

a workshop on healthy marriage

February 9-10

Register on the FCC website "Events" page.

## FAMILY PROMISE

Family Promise  
Dec. 10-17<sup>th</sup> | First Christian Church  
[kathleenhayward46@gmail.com](mailto:kathleenhayward46@gmail.com)

## NEW MEMBERS CLASS

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR CHURCH

First Sunday of every month in the  
Fellowship Hall at 10:15am

Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>  
10:15am | Fellowship Hall.  
Come to learn more about FCC.

## L.I.N.K.

Lawrence  
Interdenominational  
Nutrition Kitchen

FCC Serves L.I.N.K.  
Sunday, Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> | 12:30pm  
Sign up at the Welcome Desk.



# COMMUNITY AT FCC LAWRENCE

