



FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

THE BRIDGE NEWSLETTER | SEPTEMBER 20, 2020

SUNDAYS: Christian Education for all ages: 9:30 am | Coffee & Conversation: 10:30 am | Worship: 11 am

SEEKING GOD'S WHOLENESS. EXPANDING THE TABLE. NURTURING JUSTICE.

THE WEEK AHEAD

Sunday, September 20

9:30 am: Sunday School

Join us for a discussion of Robert P. Jones's *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity*. We'll be discussing chapters 3-5.



Join Zoom Meeting

<https://bit.ly/3jJsg7t>

Meeting ID: 896 3778 3667

Passcode: 169822

Dial by location: +1 929 205 6099 US

10:30 am: Virtual Coffee Hour

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://bit.ly/37UEHbK>

Meeting ID: 839 5831 5129

+1 301 715 8592

11:00 am: Special Congregational Meeting

<https://bit.ly/3hvzPgt>

Worship

<https://www.facebook.com/FCC.Chattanooga/>



FROM THE TABLE

Dear Friends,

As you are well aware, First Christian Church has been engaged in a months-long discernment process surrounding the full inclusion of LGBTQI+ people in the life of our congregation. The Welcoming Committee, formed in 2019 to lead this discernment process, *has shepherded the congregation through the following activities and discussions:*

- The opportunity for church members to have one-on-one conversations with the committee to share their thoughts about the process.
- Three Community Conversations in autumn 2019 covering the experiences of LGBTQI+ people in faith communities and the experiences of churches that were open to and affirming of LGBTQI+ people.
- A Bible study on issues of sexuality in both testaments of scripture in March 2020 (abbreviated because of COVID-19 Safety concerns).
- Covenant Group Workshops (most of which were held via Zoom this summer) for members to contribute their thoughts for drafting a welcoming statement for the congregation.

Following these workshops, the committee crafted your input into a welcome statement. The purpose of the welcome statement is to communicate a commitment to inclusivity and evangelism, welcoming all to membership, leadership, and all aspects of Discipleship (including marriage and the pursuit of ordination into ministry, should they feel

called). Welcome Statements express the breadth and depth of our welcome, and are meant to express our commitment to offering the Open Table that Christ hosts.

Once the welcome statement was drafted, it was shared with the Congregational Elders, who voted unanimously to affirm the statement, and it was submitted to First Christian's board of directors who also affirmed it in a unanimous vote. The next steps in this discernment process require additional input from you.

We will hold a congregational meeting via Zoom on September 20th at 11 am to answer any questions you may have about the statement or the process.

This week, you will receive a straw poll ballot regarding the welcome statement. The straw poll ballot includes **three** options from which you may choose:

- I support the welcome statement
- I do not support the welcome statement
- I may not agree with every aspect of the statement but will support its passage

Every First Christian member is invited to fill out the straw poll ballot, place it into the submission envelope, seal the submission envelope, then place the submission envelope into the stamped return envelope and mail it in. We will be accepting straw poll ballots through September 28th.

The signature on the submission envelope will be used only by the office staff to track participation in the straw poll. **Votes will be counted by the officers of First Christian's board of directors, who will see only the ballots. That way, your ballot remains confidential.**

Continued on next page



If 80% of respondents support the Welcome Statement in the straw poll, then we will hold an official vote, which will be conducted in the same manner as the straw poll and will also require 80% support for approval. If the straw poll does not receive a supportive vote of 80%, then the process will be tabled.

If you have any questions, I invite you to be in touch with the chair of the welcoming committee, Brandon Hubbard-Heitz, or any of its members (listed below).

Thank you for your participation in this process, especially in the challenging environment COVID-19 has presented.

I am, as always, Grateful to be in ministry with you, Rev. Brandon



Welcoming Committee Members:

- Brandon Hubbard-Heitz, Chair
- Katie Wylie
- Jean Blackburn
- Kate Wallace
- Zach Atchley
- Harriet Sutton
- Jonathan Hyde, Ex Officio
- Brandon Gilvin, Ex Officio



To access in the congregational meeting via computer, use the following weblink:

Join via Zoom:

<https://bit.ly/3hvzPgt>

Meeting ID: 811 0487 0287

Passcode: 590185

For telephone access, utilize the following phone number:

1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 811 0487 0287

Passcode: 590185

Proposed Welcoming Statement:

We, the people of First Christian Church, experience God's welcoming love through Jesus Christ and affirm the worth, dignity, and gifts of all people.

As Disciples of Christ, We seek God's wholeness in a fragmented world by proclaiming the inclusive message of Jesus and practicing unity through shared worship, community service, and open dialogue.

We host the table as Christ did, offering a wide welcome to membership and full participation in the ministries of the church to people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, races, ethnicities, nationalities, disabilities, family structures, backgrounds, economic circumstances, and theological and political perspectives.

We nurture the Spirit of justice in our life and ministry in Chattanooga by working to embody God's love, peace, and hope.

We welcome You.

THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME



SEPTEMBER

- 17 Marcia Stevens
- 18 Kate Gilliard
- 19 Betty Jolly
- 20 Carolyn Hickerson, Patti Obert
- 22 Megan Coleman, Ella Wiisanen
- 23 Katie Wylie
- 25 John Catlett
- 26 Marcus Rafiee
- 28 Marsha Grant
- 29 Richard Sharpe, Jr.

Birthday Not Listed?

Email Betty Proctor at baproctor@epbfj.com

CONNECT WITH FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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- Office Hours..... Monday-Thursday 10 am-2 pm
- Bridge Newsletter Deadline Monday, 3 pm



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