

The Good News

First Christian Church www.fccanniston.org February 2009
Anniston, AL 256-236-1316 email: fccanniston@bellsouth.net

⊕ What is “Unbinding Your Heart”? ♥

First Christian Church is preparing to embark on a new adventure called “Unbinding Your Heart” and we want everyone to be involved. We will be getting ready all this month by praying for those involved and organizing the small groups that are at the center of the experience. ⊕ ♥

“Unbinding Your Heart” is the congregation-wide part of the “Real Life Evangelism” series by Martha Grace Reese, a Disciples pastor who conducted a study of churches that are growing. The first book, “Unbinding the Gospel,” which was studied in Sunday school, helped many of our members change their attitudes about evangelism, and more importantly, it moved people into deeper relationships with Jesus. You will be hearing more about this in worship. ⊕ ♥

“Unbinding Your Heart” isn’t about learning how to convert your neighbors. It’s about developing your relationship with Christ to the point that it bubbles over into the rest of your life. It is more than a book study; it’s a prayer and faith-growing experience. You won’t want to miss out! ⊕ ♥

We are planning to create as many small groups as we need to make sure there’s one that works for everybody. The groups will meet weekly during the six weeks of Lent. The book also includes a daily prayer journal for you to move through individually. The cost of the book is \$20, but if that is a hardship for you, we’ll get you a book. See the back of the calendar for more details. ⊕ ♥

Sat., Feb. 14 ~ Valentine’s Habitat Benefit ~ 6-9 pm ♥ Ω !!

Wed., Feb. 18 ~ PfP PLUS ~ UBH Edition ~ 6:15 pm ⊕ ♥ !!

Wed., Feb 25 ~ Ash Wednesday ~ UBH Kick-off ~ 6:00 pm ⊕ ♥ !!

Sun., Feb. 22 ~ Council Meeting ~ 12:30 pm

"Home Is Where the Heart Is"

Mark the Date! Ω

Saturday, February 14th from 6:00-9:00 we will host a Dessert and Coffeehouse Talent Show to benefit Habitat. We need your help!

Dessert Makers Ω

Sign up on the Engaged Faith table to bring in a dessert. We prefer desserts that can be presented attractively in individual servings, like you would get at a restaurant.

Set-up and Clean-up Ω

We will be asking everyone to stay after worship on Feb. 8th to help get the Fellowship Hall ready, and Feb. 15th to help put things back together.

Decorating Ω

Volunteers are needed on Saturday afternoon to help decorate the Fellowship Hall for the event. Sign up on the Engaged Faith table.

Volunteers for the Event Ω

We need people to receive donations at the door, to serve at tables, to plate desserts and pour drinks, to wash dishes, and help clean up that night. Sign up on the Engaged Faith table.

Are You a Talent Scout? Ω

We need people to perform. Do you have a friend that sings or plays an instrument? Ask them if they will participate, and have them contact Pastor Rebecca to schedule a slot.

Pause for Prayer Returns ⊕

Our weekly contemplative prayer service, "Pause for Prayer" will start up again this month, on Wednesday, **February 4th at 5:00**. Do you have a friend that needs some quiet time with God? Bring them along! ⊕ !!

On February 18th, we will resume **Pause for Prayer PLUS** (People Learning and Understanding Scripture), our Bible study bonus night. That part of the evening will begin at 6:15, after regular prayer service. This month's Bible study will be focused on preparing us to begin our "Unbinding Your Heart" experience. You won't want to miss it! ⊕ !!

Ash Wednesday Service ⊕

The season of Lent is designed to prepare us to welcome the Good News of Easter. This year at FCC, we are coming together for Lent in a shared experience of prayer and faith-sharing called "Unbinding Your Heart". We will ask God's blessing on this experience and mark the beginning of Lent at our Ash Wednesday Service on **Wednesday, February 25th at 6:00**. Pause for Prayer that night will just be music for meditation, with no structured service included. Come along and bring a friend. ⊕ !!

From the Pastor's Pen...

Beloved Church,

The signs of the times are not pretty. National chain stores are closing, more job cuts are announced every day, and retirement incomes have plummeted. How can we stay grounded in our faith in the face of such uncertainty?

One way to remain focused on God's providence is to make a discipline of giving thanks. Gratitude may seem like a feeling that comes and goes, but we can choose to be thankful simply by counting our blessings. The act of doing so tends to bring true feelings of gratitude to life. So let me give thanks!

First of all, thanks for all you do to make First Christian Church such a wonderful place to be in ministry! Thanks for the generous Christmas bonus you shared with me and the staff.

I give thanks to God for the beautiful Christmas season we shared and the exciting activities we have coming up. I give thanks for the chance we will all have to renew and deepen our faith through the "Unbinding Your Heart" experience. I give thanks for the journey toward Easter that will begin at the end of this month.

And though things may be tight, I give thanks that I have a home, food to eat, and friends to celebrate with!

Peace and grace,

Pastor Rebecca

p.s. See you in church!

Service Schedules ♥

February Meetings ♥

Elders – Sun., Feb. 1, 12:30

Partnership – Sun., Feb. 15, 12:30

Council – Sun., Feb. 22, 12:30

Elders ♥:

Feb. 1: Marie Bittle

Feb. 8: Mary Elizabeth Johnson

Feb. 15: Anne Phillips

Feb. 22: Judy Bell

Communion Set-Up/Service ♥:

Arlan Roszell & Colin Green

Fellowship Hosts ♥:

Feb. 1: Eva McCullough

Feb. 8: Suzy Spiceland

Feb. 15: Karen & J.R. Reaves

Feb. 22: Laura & Shelley Phillips

Liturgists / Kids Message ♥:

Feb. 1: Dick Bell / Rebecca L.

Feb. 8: Janie Morrow / Judy B.

Feb. 15: Colin Green / Rebecca L.

Feb. 22: Bill Rowland / Suzy S.

Floater / Pre-School / CC ♥:

Feb. 1: Joanne W. / Janna S. / Karen R.

Feb. 8: Deane A. / Suzy S. / Marie B.

Feb. 15: Karen R. / Janie M. / Lori H.

Feb. 22: MaryLib J. / Anne P. / Laura P.

One + One + One Key

⊕ = You ♥ = Church Ω = World

!! = Bring a friend!

Disciples Women ⊕

CWF/Disciples Women will meet Tuesday, February 10th at 6:00 pm at Pastor Rebecca's house. Marie Bittle will provide the program. Come and bring a friend so we have a big group to start off the new year!

Interfaith Ministries Luncheon

You are invited to the Interfaith Ministries Annual Meeting Luncheon on Sunday, February 8th at First Baptist Church of Oxford. Lunch will start being served at noon, and the meeting will begin at 1:00. The cost for lunch is \$8.00. Please call IM at 237-1472 to make a reservation. Ω

Rebecca Littlejohn and Gerald Roberts will be providing musical entertainment for the luncheon portion of the meeting. Ω

♥ For Your Information... ♥

We are still looking for 4 sponsors to cover the costs of our new "fancy" tablecloths. ♥ Each tablecloth costs \$12. We purchased these tablecloths so that we would not have to rent them for special occasions like our Valentine's Day benefit. ♥ You can also still order an FCC T-shirt for only \$15.00. ♥ Sign up for either item on the Engaged Faith Table. ♥

Bible Study on Acts ⊕

Everyone junior-high-on-up is welcome to join our Sunday Morning Study in our Bible study of the Book of Acts. You can pick up copies of the overview and the class outline from Pastor Rebecca. Acts is full of incredible stories and interesting journeys. We are just studying the highlights, as it is a long book. ⊕

SMS meets every Sunday at 9:30 am in the Fellowship Hall. ⊕

Praying the Psalms ⊕

"Praying the Psalms" will meet Feb. 9th & 23rd at 5:30. In each session, the group reads through a psalm and discusses what it can teach us about having a real relationship with God. You can join at any time, and come whenever you can. See Marie Bittle for more information. ⊕

Ecumenical Book Group ⊕

The Ecumenical Book Group will be reading "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?" by Studs Terkel this spring. ⊕ They meet on Tuesdays at noon, starting Feb. 10th. The book is a collection of interviews with a variety of people about their thoughts, fears and hopes – about death. Join us for a provocative session! ⊕

2009 Council to have First Meeting in February ♥

Our 2009 Council will have its first meeting after worship on Sunday, February 22nd, in the Fellowship Hall. Your Council officers for 2009 include Moderator Marie Bittle, Vice-Moderator Judy Bell, Secretary Lela Davis, and Treasurer Suzy Spiceland. Bill Rowland serves on the Council as Chair of the Trustees. Representing the Coordinating Teams are Laura Phillips (Spiritual Formation), Colin Green (Mission), Janna Sutherland (Fellowship) and Robert Soleman (Stewardship). All Council meetings are open, and you are welcome to attend if you are interested. **Council reports are due from CT reps on Thursday, February 12th**. Information packets will be distributed after worship on Sunday, February 15th. ♥

Special Awards Given in January ♥

Congratulations to the winners of the **2008 Billy Weeks Award** for Outstanding Lay Service. This year's winners were **Marie Bittle** and **Joanne Wells**. As an Elder, a long-time member of the Spiritual Formation C-Team and its predecessors, and a member of the Evangelism Team, Marie, our new moderator, was well-deserving. Also deserving was Joanne, a Deacon and long-time member of the Mission C-Team, who has a special devotion to keeping people connected to the church through notes and phone calls. ♥

We also congratulate **Jennifer Roszell** and **Lacy Frintner**, who received **Outstanding Evangelist** awards from the Evangelism Team on January 18th. They are role models for all of us when it comes to inviting friends to church! ♥

Sharing about Stewardship ~ 2009 off to a Good Start!

As was shared in worship, our bank balance was sorely challenged in January. But you and God came through, and we have "squeaked by" according to Treasurer Suzy Spiceland. The challenges were due to extra expenses for January and residual effects from low-offering months in the fall. Thanks to your generous and faithful giving, we have been able to avoid spending money from our dwindling reserve funds. We are off to a good start, but we can't afford to let up now. Let's all remember that our stewardship is part of our spiritual discipline, a way of expressing the priorities of our faith. ♥

If you did not receive a 2008 Statement of Giving for tax purposes and would like to have one, please call the office. Thank you for your gifts! ♥

Church in Covenant Opportunities and News

Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins to preach at Regional Event - Feb. 20-21

Things are hopping at FCC these days, but not just here – the Region has some exciting stuff going on too! Plan now to attend “**Matters of the Heart – God’s Transforming Love**” on Feb. 20-21 at First Christian Church in Birmingham. Our General Minister and President, Rev. Dr. **Sharon Watkins** will be preaching at the worship service on Friday night. Her husband, Rev. Dr. **Richard Lowery**, an Old Testament professor, along with other Regional leaders, will be leading workshops on transformation.

This event is designed for congregations like ours that are in processes of renewal and transformation. Pastor Rebecca helped write part of the worship service. Registration, at \$20 per person, is required for Saturday’s workshops only. Anyone can attend the worship service on Friday night. We will be car-pooling. You won’t want to miss this exciting event!

If you missed Rev. Watkins’ appearance at the National Prayer Service, or just want to see it again, you can connect to a video or the transcript through www.disciples.org. Remember, she is also coming for our quasiquintennial (125th anniversary) in June 2010!

Pastor Rebecca invited to preach during General Assembly

Pastor Rebecca has been invited to be one of the sixty guest preachers who will fill Indianapolis-area pulpits on the Sunday morning of General Assembly this summer. She will be preaching at Emmanuel United Church of Christ in Shelbyville, IN.

Regional Prayer Calendar

In 2009, we will continue to send cards with our prayer blessings to our partner churches in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region. This year, we are inviting Iglésia to join us in signing the cards. The Prayer Calendar for February is:

Feb. 1: First Christian Church, Cullman, AL – CJ Cobb and David Christopher

Feb. 8: First Christian Church, Bessemer, AL – Kim Pilkinton

Feb. 15: Pleasant View Christian Church, Camp Hill, AL – Horace Gregory

Feb. 22: Bethlehem Christian Church, Ft. Deposit, AL – Bennie Stanford

South Baldwin Christian Church, Foley, AL – Ken Vaughn, board chair

A Cherokee tale used in Rev. Watkins' sermon at the National Prayer Service:

One evening a grandfather was teaching his young grandson about the internal battle that each person faces.

"There are two wolves struggling inside each of us," the old man said.

"One wolf is vengefulness, anger, resentment, self-pity, fear..."

"The other wolf is compassion, faithfulness, hope, truth, love..."

The grandson sat, thinking, then asked: "Which wolf wins, Grandfather?"

His grandfather replied, "The one you feed."

Celebrating the Unity and Diversity of the Body of Christ!

First Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
1327 Leighton Ave.
Anniston, AL 36207

Visit us at www.fccanniston.org

Sunday School 9:30 a.m.
Sunday Worship 11:00 a.m.