

March

FCCEM UP2DATE 2023

spring is about to spring, so spring into action with UP2DATE!

Seasons change, but the mission of FCCEM remains unchanged: We exist to meet needs, heal wounds, and connect people to Jesus. Read on to learn how we intend to pursue that mission in the coming weeks.



Holy Week and more



join us from wherever you are for a Maundy Thursday moment

Maundy Thursday is the day on the Christian calendar, three days before Easter Sunday, **set aside to remember the night Jesus instituted what we call “the Lord’s Supper” (communion)** and on which he was arrested, tried, and sentenced to die by crucifixion. This year we will observe Maundy Thursday with a brief moment of remembrance around the communion table in our upper level worship center.

In what should be about a fifteen minute experience we'll hear the story of the night Jesus was betrayed and focus our attention on the power and meaning of the sacrifice Jesus chose to make on our behalf.

You can attend the service either in-person or by phone on **Thursday, April 6, beginning at 6:30 p.m.**

To complete the evening, **following the service those able and willing are invited to join together for a meal at the Moline Village Inn on 53rd St.**

we will gather for an Easter Sunday breakfast potluck

Our practice of holding breakfast potlucks on the first Sunday of every month reached a glorious zenith in March, when more than 20 people joined us for the meal, what we think was the largest non-Easter Sunday breakfast potluck since we launched them in the summer of 2011. Praise God!

Because Easter Sunday (April 9) is the second Sunday of April this year, **we will NOT hold a breakfast potluck on April 2.** We will instead hold **our annual Easter Sunday breakfast potluck on the 9th (9:00 a.m.)** then resume our schedule of monthly breakfasts on May 7.

witness and celebrate the baptism of Kirsten Byerly

On Easter Sunday, our worship will begin in the upper level worship center – in the pews, for those who prefer or need such seating, or on the platform in front of the baptistry. We will start from that location in order to witness and celebrate the baptism of Kirsten Byerly, who made her confession of faith earlier this year. Immediately after the baptism, our worship will move back to fellowship hall.

If the stairs between the upper and lower levels of the building present a challenge, we recommend that you park in the west (main) lot and enter through west entrance in order to witness the baptism, then return to your vehicle, park in the north lot, and re-enter the building through the usual entrance.



Join us in April!

April's breakfast potluck:

April 9, 9:00 a.m. (our Easter Sunday breakfast)

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Holy Week and more

(cont.)



daily devotional available at fccem.org

As of Friday, March 17, the date we finalized this issue of UP2DATE, there were 22 entries to our daily devotional series available on our website. The original and exclusive content of these devotionals explores the choices faced by a wide array of biblical characters, both Old Testament and New. With each devotional you'll discover additional levels of similarity between the choices people made back then and the choices we face today.

You can access the devotionals in two formats, one more timely than the other: 1) On our website at <https://fccem.org/in-the-spotlight/our-choices-are>, updated daily except on Sundays; 2) In print format at Mission Central, where you'll find a new week's worth of content every Sunday.

The devotionals are brief – each one a no more than 5-10 minute read – and can serve as a helpful addition to your journey to the cross this year. Join us!

a chance to honor and celebrate the people of your life

A final UP2DATE reminder of your invitation to remember, honor, and testify to the people of your life – those who live on, both in this life and in your memories – through **an Easter season donation to FCCEM in their honor**. Complete, detach, and include the form at the bottom of this page with your donation to identify the people to whom your donation witnesses. We will publish a list of donors and those honored both on a sheet on the tables in worship on Easter Sunday and the two Sundays following, and in the April issue of UP2DATE. **The deadline for donations is April 7.**

information directory update

We offer the following corrections and additions to your 2023 information directory

- **Marsha Jones:** Her correct email address is jonez49@yahoo.com
- **Kirsten Byerly:** 554 31st Ave / East Moline, IL 61244 / (309) 269-4681
kirstenbyerly2@gmail.com



EASTER SEASON OFFERING 2023

Your Name _____

Return with your gift by April 7

Please write/print legibly!

Whom you wish to honor/remember _____

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what's inside JOEL?



This monthly series summarizes one or more Bible books, NOT to tell you everything you need to know about them, but rather to tell you enough to raise your curiosity about their contents and possible usefulness in your life and our world. We invite you to receive these brief summaries as invitations to strengthen (or perhaps revive or even launch) your connection to Scripture. A word from God awaits you in the pages of that Bible that sits on your shelf or table, or in your mobile device. Go get it!

Most of the Old Testament's prophetic books are small in length, but large in impact. Consider Joel. Three chapters of misery and hope.

The book opens with a vivid description of a locust or grasshopper infestation:

6 *A vast army of locusts has invaded my land, a terrible army too numerous to count. Its teeth are like lions' teeth, its fangs like those of a lioness.*

7 *It has destroyed my grapevines and ruined my fig trees, stripping their bark and destroying it, leaving the branches white and bare. (Joel 1.6-7)*

The writer follows that description with a call for national prayer and repentance, a change of heart and practice to which God will respond favorably:

18 *Then the LORD will pity his people and jealously guard the honor of his land.*

19 *The LORD will reply, "Look! I am sending you grain and new wine and olive oil, enough to satisfy your needs. (Joel 2.18-19)*

In the book of Joel, the fortunes of the people of Judah turn from natural disaster to spiritual renewal and, ultimately, a new kind of relationship with God:

21 *I will pardon my people's crimes, which I have not yet pardoned; and I, the LORD, will make my home in Jerusalem with my people." (Joel 3.21)*

It's the sequence of sin, confession, repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation with which we're all familiar, presented by the prophet in very earthy imagery. And that makes Joel a worthy read.

the best Bible study around will be better with you in it

In February our Sunday Bible study group completed its epic 3-1/2 year examination of the relationship of Jesus and God. Last Sunday the group launched its next great learning journey, on **ALL THINGS AFTERLIFE**.

Heaven and hell: Do they exist? If so, what will they be like and who goes where, how, and when? Will we know each other in those states? What's the destiny of people who never hear about Jesus, of people who grow up in other religions, of those who die as babies and infants, of people who are Christians in name but not practice?

The opening weeks of the study are for participants to share their views/speculations about those matters, after which the group will move to Scripture, looking first at how afterlife is defined in the Bible.

If you've ever had any interest in joining a Bible study group, ours is about the best you'll find. Sessions are energetic, curious, informative, genuinely friendly, and seriously funny. You'll learn a lot and experience an uncommon depth of connection to others. **9:00 a.m. Sundays**, except on breakfast potluck Sundays, when the group meets after worship. **[NOTE: NO Sunday group Bible study on Easter Sunday, April 9.]**

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multicultural potluck launches renewed We Are Together series

To inaugurate our new We Are Together event series, we will hold a multicultural potluck on **Saturday, April 22, beginning at 5:00 p.m.**

What is a multicultural potluck? It's a meal to which we invite you to bring food if you can and want to (*if you can't bring food, come anyway because...you know the rest*), in this case we ask that the food reflect the culture(s) of your choice. "Culture" can refer to a nation – as in French or Italian food – or it can refer to a region – such as Cajun food within the U.S. As an example, over the years our pastor has prepared Norwegian, English, Indian, German, and Bulgarian dishes – some in celebration of his family lineage, others just to testify to the diversity of food around the globe (*and yes, he's chosen a new cuisine for this event!*)

To this potluck, **we ask you also to bring your ideas for future We Are Together events.** Beginning Sunday at Mission Central and at our website you'll find a form you can fill out and bring with you to the meal (*or just get it to the church as you can*). **On the form, give your ideas** for events, activities, mission projects, WHATEVER ways you can think of that would bring us together as a congregation. No hard and fast rules for the events other than that they be something we can do, and do together – meals, game nights, movies, tours, WHATEVER! We will give all submitted ideas to the new We Are Together team for their consideration. We can't guarantee that we'll implement every idea, but the team will look at and praise God for them all.



new ministry teams to hold first meetings

We have been surprised and blessed by the number of people who have volunteered to serve on one or both of the new ministry teams we're creating: **We Are Together**, which will create and implement events intended to bring us together for food, fun, fellowship, service to others, or whatever, and **Empower FCCEM**, which will create and implement fundraisers in support of our ministries.

Since most of the people who have signed up so far have offered to serve on both teams, we're going to hold the meetings **on the same night, one after the other**.

FIRST MEETING, Wednesday, March 29: We Are Together, 6:30-7:30pm / Empower FCCEM, 7:45-8:45 pm



If you haven't signed up, just show up! We will praise God for your help.



a fellowship hall furnace/AC system update

In pursuit of options for our aged and frail fellowship hall furnace and air conditioning system, on Friday morning of this week we met with the service manager of the local Trane corporate location in Davenport. The essential message we received was that there are some repair options for us to consider if we can't afford to replace the system (*which at this time we can't*). He will put together additional information about those options and send them to us by email next week. **There WILL be a cost to even the smallest of repairs/improvements** we make to the system, so as you are able, please stay faithful in your financial support of our church.

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a reminder

It's Thursday evening and outside a sturdy wind is whipping small to medium sized snowflakes from west to east, with the passage of time slowly covering our neighborhood's lawns with one final reminder of the winter season's most decorative device. Spring arrives early next week, along with it temperatures in the 50's, so whatever tonight's "blizzard" deposits will be a memory by the workweek's Monday launch.

But for now, the snow's putting on an awesome show. The air is filled with – take your pick – tens- or hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of individual particles, each at the mercy of Mother's Nature's heaving breaths. What's striking to me about the flakes is how similar they seem, at least as viewed from the protected comfort of our living room. As far as I can tell, they're all the same size and shape, and make the same minuscule impact when they land atop their brother and sister flakes already parked on the earth's surface.

Though they look the same, I know they aren't. There are no two identical snowflakes, an assertion I could probably verify in our front yard at the moment were I proficient with and in possession of a microscope. On the ground around me this evening lie millions of unique citizens of creations, crystalline structures whose individuality is known only to God.

I tell you about a late season snow event only to remind you that God knows YOUR uniqueness too. Sure, you have lots in common with lots of people. You probably reflect your family's identity in numerous ways (praise God!), but you are your own one. There is no one like you anywhere, and won't be going forward. God knows you and loves you for the one-of-a-kind wonder that you are.

In the modern political vernacular, "snowflake" is a snarky allegation of a person's thin skin. In God's eyes, every snowflake is worthy of applause. So are you.

spring cleaning FCCEM arrives twice

We're holding this year's version of our annual spring cleaning in two parts:

Saturday, March 25, starting at 9:00 a.m. – We'll focus on readying the building for Easter Sunday, both fellowship hall and the upper level worship center. That means we'll clean out the baptistry, vacuum carpets, sweep/mop the fellowship hall floor, clean the bathrooms, assess the needs of the kitchen, and attend to any other identified needs.

Saturday, April 15, starting at 9:00 a.m. – This session will involve a larger-scale cleaning operation. From the lower level classrooms to the Helmets of Hope inventory area, from the Memorial Room to the upper level office and who knows what else.

Obviously, the more hands involved in each of these cleaning projects, the faster they will get done. If you're available for either or both, just show up and we will celebrate your help.



To join us by phone for worship or any other event

1. Call 309-306-0038.
2. When asked for an access code, enter 964600.
3. During or after the greeting from FCCEM, press the * key.



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To Donate Online to FCCEM

1. Visit fccem.org/donate.
2. At the bottom of the page, click the “**Donate to FCCEM**” button.
3. Complete the form presented in the resulting box with such details as the amount of your gift, your desired means of payment, contact info, etc. Choose to pay by card or bank transfer at the bottom of the box.
4. The default recipient of your gift is our **general fund**, where most donations are deposited. If you’re donating to a specific ministry - e.g. “Christmas Season Donation...,” “Helmets of Hope,” etc - use the “**Give to:**” drop down menu in the upper right corner of the box to specify the target of your gift.
5. Click the slider next to the words “**Cover fees?**” if you want to add to your donation the small fee that is deducted from online donations so that we receive the full amount you intend to give.
6. When you’ve provided and double-checked the accuracy of all the required information, click the “**Give \$x.xx**” button at the bottom of the form. **And you’re done! 100% safely and securely!**

warm up for winter done for the season

The first winter season for our Warm Up for Winter clothing ministry is about over, a season in which we learned a lot in advance of next winter.

We need to sort and edit our current collection of winterwear items (*some items, though generously donated, don’t meet the “new or gently used” standard we set for donations*), then pack and store the pieces we want to keep to preserve them from the elements until next season. In addition, we will invest more effort in getting the word out about our ministry, and do so earlier in the year. One idea that arose during this week’s board meeting was to set up a display of items at the Churches United meal site in west Davenport for an entire week, say in September or early October.

Thanks for your prayerful and perhaps item-donation support for the inaugural year of Warm Up for Winter. Help us pray and work for, and then get excited about the possibility of better outcomes next year.



metronet communications era formally, completely underway

We’re pleased to announce that the transition to Metronet for our communications services is now complete. The fibre optic line from a 7th Street light pole the company laid in late December on the top of the soil has now been buried, and we have formally and finally severed all ties with AT&T, our former provider – and did so **WITHOUT additional charges!**



FYI, our new Metronet phone+Internet service will cost us approximately \$8/month more than we paid last year with AT&T, but approximately \$50/month LESS than what we would have paid this year with AT&T because our rates were scheduled to rise considerably. For that extra \$8/month we now have Internet download speeds that are 8-10 times faster than before, and a Wi-Fi signal that reaches reliably and satisfactorily to the upper level of our building without additional cost. A good change indeed!

