



FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) CASPER, WY

THE CALI

SEPTEMBER
2026

September Elves

by Lenore Hetrick

Each little elf took a paint pot.
Oh, but the paint was bright!
They painted the leaves fine colors.
They painted all day and night.
September smiled when she saw them.
"What a help you are!" she said.
Each little elf was so pleased
Their faces turned bright red!



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MISSION
Statement

**"Gathering at
Christ's Table,
We Welcome
and Serve
Others."**

Church Staff:

Bryan Elliott: Lead Pastor
Rhonda Padilla: Associate Pastor
Kathy Winders: Secretary
Gracie Keizer: Music Director
Kaylee Waters: Nursery attendant
Michelle Griebel: Custodian
Ministers: Every Member!

OFFICE HOURS

Mon.-Thurs.

9:30 AM - 2:00 PM

Fridays: CLOSED

(307) 234-8964

www.fcccasper.org

fcccasper@gmail.com

SUNDAY SCHEDULE:

8:15 Worship Service

9:00 Adult Sunday School

9:15 a.m. Gr. 4-8 Sunday School

10:10 - Worship Service

11:30 - Coffee Fellowship

Noon - Choir practice & 1:00 Handbells

**CHURCH OFFICE CLOSED ON
MONDAY, SEPT. 7TH
LABOR DAY .**



Pastor Bryan's Column

Dear Church Family,

This month marks **five years as your Lead Pastor** at First Christian Church. Five years. In some ways, it seems like yesterday; in other ways, it feels like we have lived a lifetime together.

These five years have been quite an adventure—for me personally and for us as a congregation. We have worshiped together, laughed together, cried together, welcomed new people, said goodbye to others, celebrated milestones, walked through difficult seasons, and simply shared life together.

Over these five years, many people have walked through the doors of First Christian Church. Some came and stayed. Some came for a season and then moved on. Some came looking for a church home and eventually decided to keep looking. Others moved away, changed directions in life, or sadly, passed away. That is church life.

I have sometimes described life as being full of **depots**—places where people get on and off the train for a while before continuing their journey. Churches are much the same. We are blessed to share a portion of the journey with people, but we don't always get to determine how long that portion will be.

Church experts often suggest that a congregation can experience significant change in its membership over a five-year period. Looking around our congregation, we certainly have experienced some of that change. And it has caused me to think deeply about what it means to be the church.

I have pondered that question for more than thirty years of ministry.

For much of my ministry, when someone left a church—not because they moved or passed away, but because they simply chose to go somewhere else—I took it personally. I wondered, *What did I do wrong? What could I have done differently? Was my preaching not good enough? Did I fail to connect with them? Did I miss something?*

I suppose there was a little bit of self-centeredness in that thinking, but there was also something deeper: I cared.

Over the years, however, my perspective has changed. People come to churches carrying all kinds of needs, expectations, experiences, wounds, hopes and dreams. Sometimes they find what they need for a season. Sometimes they don't. Sometimes they stay for decades. Sometimes they stay for only a few months. And the reasons people give for leaving can be remarkably different.

The church isn't friendly enough.

The church is too friendly.

The pastor preaches too long.

The pastor doesn't preach long enough.

I don't like organized religion.

The worship is too expressive.

The worship is too formal.

We need more change.

We need less change

I don't say any of that to dismiss people's feelings. Their experiences are real, and their reasons are their own. Rather, I have come to understand that each of us carries our own picture of what church should be. Sometimes we can explain exactly what we're looking for. Sometimes we can't. We just know when something feels right—or when it doesn't.

That's life. And that's church life.

(CONTINUED)

.There is an old joke among pastors that says, “**During your ministry, you will make 100% of the congregation happy—some when you arrive and the rest when you leave!**” I have always appreciated that joke because there is more truth in it than I would like to admit.

I cannot please everyone. Neither can you. Neither can any congregation.

And as someone who has spent much of his life trying to make people happy, that realization has been difficult for me. But it has also been freeing. Ministry isn’t ultimately about making everyone happy. It is about faithfully following Jesus and helping others find their way toward him.

And that brings me to something much more important than church preferences, pastoral expectations, or even the inevitable changes that happen in congregational life.

Grace.

Pastor Rhonda said something on Sunday, August 16, that has stayed with me. She said:

“Have I prayed as much about this person as I’ve talked about them?” She went on to say **“Because prayer doesn’t always change the other person...but it almost always changes the person praying.”** Those words stopped me. As I look back over my ministry here at First Christian Church, I hope I prayed for you more than I talked about you. But, if I am completely honest, I know there have been times when I prayed *at* people rather *for* them. I have sometimes brought someone to God in prayer with a list of things I thought God needed to change them. What I didn’t always recognize was that perhaps God was using that prayer to change **me**.

To reshape my hearts,

To soften my words,

To increase my patience,

To teach me to listen,

To remind me that every person sitting in a pew is carrying a story I may know nothing about.

So, as I look toward these final weeks of my ministry as your Lead Pastor, I want to say something simply and sincerely: **I’m sorry.**

I’m sorry for the times I wasn’t enough as your pastor.

I’m sorry for the times I didn’t listen as carefully as I should have.

I’m sorry for the times I was distracted when you needed my attention.

I’m sorry for the times I spoke when I should have listened.

I’m sorry for the times I didn’t understand what you were carrying.

I’m sorry for the times that my humanity got in the way of your seeing Jesus.

You deserved more from me.

And yet, I also want you to know something: **I have loved being your pastor.** I have loved this congregation. I have loved the people who have walked through these doors. I have loved the conversations in hallways, the worship services, the meetings, the celebrations, the difficult conversations, the laughter, the tears, the baptisms, the funerals, the weddings, the meals and all the ordinary moments in between.

Those ordinary moments are often where ministry really happens.

(CONTINUED)

Five years ago, I stepped into this congregation as your Lead Pastor. Now, as I approach the final months of that role, I find myself less concerned with what I accomplished and much more concerned with **what kind of pastor—and what kind of Christian—I have been among you.**

My prayer is that, somehow, in spite of my imperfections, you have seen Jesus.
And my prayer for these final weeks is that I will continue to grow in that direction.
I will not suddenly become perfect. None of us will

But I can pray more.
I can listen more.
I can offer more grace.
I can assume the best more often.
I can be slower to judge and quicker to forgive.
And I can keep learning what it means to have a heart that looks more and more like the heart of Jesus.

Before we talk about someone, **have we prayed for them?**
Before we criticize, **have we offered grace?**
Before we decide someone has failed us, **have we considered what they may be carrying?**
Before we walk away, **have we asked what God might be trying to teach us?**
We are all people on a journey. We all have our rough edges. We all have moments when we get it right and moments when we don't.
And we all need grace.
Thankfully, we worship a Savior who specializes in grace.

So, my church family, as we share these final weeks together, my hope is not that we will pretend everything has always been perfect.

My hope is that we will remember **that Jesus has always been bigger than our imperfections.** And that, ultimately, is what holds us together.

Not our preferences.
Not our personalities.
Not our programs.
Not even our pastors.
Jesus.

In His Grace and Peace,

Pastor Bryan



Celebrating the Retirement of **Pastor Bryan Elliott**

will retire on **October 25, 2026**
with a celebration meal following
our 10:10 am service.

After over
32 *years of ministry*
and serving 6 congregations
in various roles:



Youth Minister



Associate Minister
for Youth and Children



Senior Minister

Thankful for the past.

Celebrating the present.

*Trusting God
for the future.*

Please join us at First Christian Church
📍 **520 CY Avenue, Casper, Wyoming**
to celebrate **Pastor Bryan**
and our congregation!



**FIRST
CHRISTIAN
CHURCH**
CASPER, WYOMING



**A Message
From Pastor Rhonda**

Fall is my favorite season. There is something about those first cool mornings and watching the leaves turn brilliant shades of gold, orange, and red. I think of it as nature's version of fireworks—a beautiful reminder that change is not always something to fear. Change can be beautiful. Change can also be necessary. The trees let go of what they cannot carry into the next season, and what looks like an ending becomes preparation for what comes next. Perhaps that is a word we need this September.

Our children and youth are returning to school. Families are adjusting to new routines. New people are walking through our church doors. Some are entering different seasons of life. We are preparing for Pastor Bryan's retirement and new pastoral leadership. Among us there is grief and gratitude, endings and beginnings—and sometimes we are carrying several of these at once.

Recently, I preached about the power of prayer and the weight our words carry. I keep returning to that because it matters deeply in a season such as this. Our children and youth may be carrying far more than we realize—school pressures, friendships, family struggles, expectations, social media, and words coming at them from every direction. A careless word can remain with someone long after it is spoken. So can a loving one. I am proud of you. I am glad you are here. You matter. I am praying for you. There is a place for you. Those words carry weight, too. And our young people are not the only ones carrying things we cannot see. The person across the sanctuary may be grieving. Someone at another worship service may be struggling with something we know nothing about. A visitor may have gathered every ounce of courage just to walk through our doors. Someone we have known for years may be hurting because of sharp words spoken within families, friendships, church, or social media.

We do not always know what another person carries. That should make us careful with our words—and generous with our love. What if this fall we became more intentional about praying for one another? Not only for those we love and understand, but also for those who challenge us, those no longer in our circles of life, those whose names we do not yet know, and those God is bringing to our doors.

Our mission says, **“Gathering at Christ's Table, we welcome and serve others.”** In a season when so much is changing, those words point us toward what remains: Jesus remains. The Table remains. The welcome remains. The call to serve remains. The Gospel remains. Our worship services may look different from one another. Leadership changes. People come and go. Communities change. We change. But the Gospel entrusted to us remains.

So perhaps our work in this season is simply to **keep planting**—kindness, prayer, grace, encouragement, welcome, forgiveness, love and belonging. We may not immediately see what grows from those seeds, but we trust God with the harvest. We also have these next two months to appreciate Pastor Bryan before his final sermon in October. I encourage you to share a story with him—a sermon you remember, a conversation, a laugh, a difficult season when his ministry mattered, or simply a moment you treasure. Sharing our stories is one way we honor what God has done among us even as we prepare for what comes next.

Maybe the changing leaves can teach us something. Letting go does not mean God is finished. Winter prepares the earth in ways we cannot see. Storms come and days grow shorter, but winter does not get the final word.
Spring comes. New life emerges. And through every season, Christ remains with us.

So let us enter this fall prayerfully. Let us surround our children and youth with love. Let us welcome the Stranger, reach across the spaces between our worship services, and be gentle with those carrying burdens we cannot see. And let us keep planting love and belonging, trusting that when the harvest comes, by God's grace, the fruit will be abundant.

In love and grace, Pastor Rhonda



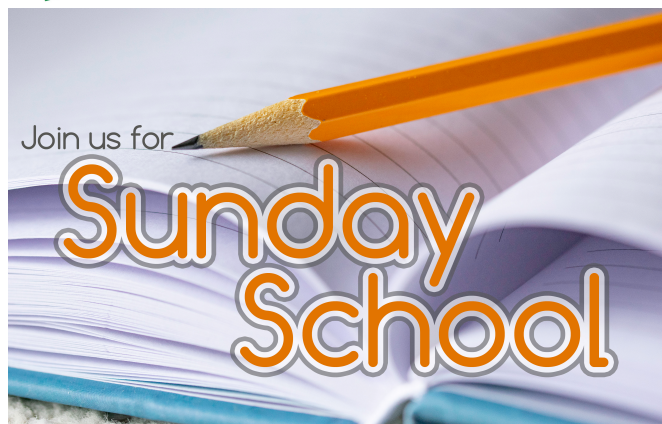
SEPTEMBER 2026

BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY

Sept. 20th.

Please come to the Potluck Lunch after the 10:10 service for fried chicken (provided by Spiritual Growth) and sides and desserts by the congregation.

A sign up sheet is on the bulletin for board for number attending and if you are bringing a side or a dessert.



SUNDAY SCHOOL KICKOFF

WHEN: SEPTEMBER 20, 2026

Sunday school for grades 5-9 will be at 9:00 a.m. in the CYF room downstairs.

PASTOR BRYAN'S RETIREMENT LUNCHEON

October 25th - after 10:10 service

BBQ meats potluck. A sign up sheet is on the bulletin board for sides and desserts.

Contact Jane Wallace if you have questions.

**Any questions, contact:
Michelle Elser**



We are re-evaluating the sandwich ministry at this time and will present more information soon.

We will begin tying blankets on September 19th @ 10:00 a.m. We have enough fleece to start with, but we are still looking for fleece. Prices have increased so it has become expensive to buy and we are still getting requests for blankets. Contact TrudyWoodard for more information.

SUNDAY AUGUST 30 is our request for donations for the School Lunch Debt at NC, KW and Roosevelt High School. Funds gathered last December were delivered to the school and we are hoping your donations this year will help some students start the year in the black. The debt for some of the students are from junior high. Please write School Lunch Debt in the memo of your check or cash in an envelope with School Lunch Debit written on the envelope.

**DIACONATE**

Aug. 23 - Martha Wallace & Dale Gregory
 Aug 30 - Martha Wallace & Trudy Woodard
 Sept. 6- Marcus Hayden & Trudy Woodard
 Sept. 13-Marcus Hayden & Bill Shughart
 Sept. 20 - Marcus Hayden & Bill Shughart
 Sept. 27- Marcus Hayden & Amanda Wardell

OFFERING STEWARD

Steve Huckfeldt

ELDERS

Aug. 23- Dewey Smith & Dennis Baker
 Aug. 30 - Carmen Goodman (both)
 Sept. 6 - Dewey Smith (both)
 Sept. 13-Dewey Smith & Nicholas Grooms
 Sept. 20- Carmen Goodman (both)
 Sept. 27-Donna Osterholt & Nicholas Grooms

ACOLYTES

Aug. 23- Rayden Herbst and Brielle Storey
 Aug. 30- Rhys Elser & Natalie Grooms
 Sept. 6-Leena Maddox & Cailynne Storey
 Sept. 13-Althea Wardell & TBD
 Sept. 20-Abel Cazier and Alex Storey
 Sept. 27-Natalie & McKenzie Grooms

OUTDOOR CLEANUP CREWS

Sept. - Belle Stapleton
 Oct - Pastor Rhonda
 Nov. & December - Belle Stapleton

Trudy Woodard
 Floyd Field
 Rhys Elser
 Blake Stupak
 Tom Dowler
 Virginia Yohn
 Joshua Black

Sept. 3
 Sept. 8
 Sept. 9
 Sept. 12
 Sept. 13
 Sept. 15
 Sept. 20

Jacque Cook
 Jackie Greenlee
 Jenn Hawley
 Donna Osterholt
 Gloria Monroe
 Rhonda Padilla

Sept. 22
 Sept. 23
 Sept. 25
 Sept. 28
 Sept. 29
 Sept. 30

ANNIVERSARIES

John & Sharon Lansing - Sept. 3, 1961
 Abel and Kylie Stewart - Sept. 5, 2009
 Tom & Melanie Dowler - Sept. 6, 1969
 John & Amanda Kirlin - Sept. 12, 2015
 Mark & Lynda Williams - Sept. 14, 1991
 Jason & Kimberly Ireland - Sept. 23, 2017
 David & Joyce Preston - Sept. 29, 1969



It is getting close to cold & flu season and it will be very much appreciated by the church mouse if you **REMEMBER** to put your coffee cups, trash, bulletins, communion cups & miscellaneous stuff from your pew in the garbage bins and place hymnals back in proper position in the hymnal rack. Remember like the scouts — **LEAVE NO TRACE!**



It is that time of year when the Nominating Committee is looking for recommendations from the congregation for Executive Board members for the 2027 year. Below is a list of what offices will need to be filled for 2027.

The elders going off this year are Dennis Baker, Nicholas Grooms and Dewey Smith.
The diaconate going off this year are Nylia Cazier, Mark Hayden, and Spencer Stupak.

Kathy Winders will go off after serving 3 years as Board Secretary .

If you have any suggestions for the Nominating Committee, either write them on the below form and mail or drop off to the church office. Thank you. Members of the nominating committee are: Dennis Baker, Cindy Huckfeldt, Tammy Heck, Carmen Goodman, Alice Kraft and Annette Ambrosino.

Per By-laws

The Nominating Committee shall receive suggested names from the congregation and may add to that list the names of congregational members who may qualify for any position. Before any person may be nominated for any office or membership on the Executive Board, he or she must be informed of the duties of the office and consent to serve if elected, and give reasonable assurance that he or she will remain in that office through his or her term. No person shall be elected to any office who is not a participating member of the church

Deadline for nominations is October 4th. Please put your nomination in the offering or mail to the church office.

President of the Congregation/Executive Board: Belle Stapleton

Vice-President: (2 yr term moving into president the last year)

Secretary of the Executive Board:

Members-at-Large: (2)

Elders:

Diaconate:

THE SPIRIT OF GENEROSITY
Generosity is an expression of joy, not obligation.



We give freely and cheerfully, trusting God to multiply every gift and use it for His glory (2 Corinthians 9:7). Your generosity strengthens our church family and helps extend our ministry far beyond these walls. We invite you to prayerfully partner with us as we continue carrying this mission forward for generations to come.

You can scan the QR code to give as you feel led. On behalf of First Christian Church, thank you for your faithful and generous hearts.



Greetings musical friends!

I just wanted to send out a written announcement concerning choir and bell practice sessions! Starting August 23rd, we will be having choir practice at 12, and bell practice at 1. You don't have to have any prior experience to participate, only a willingness to learn and make music to glorify the Lord! If you would like more information, my email address is gracietjf@gmail.com, and I am happy to reply to any questions you might have. Let's make music together!

Blessings,

Gracie Keizer, Music Director

PATRIOT DAY

9/11/2001



That Sad September Day

An ordinary Tuesday morning,
with beautiful sunny weather
But soon something would happen
To change the world forever.

Four planes went down,
Two towers fell.
A lot of people died.
And when the news spread far and wide
Millions of us cried.

We honored the heroes
Who stayed in harm's way.
We felt sad for the families,
And bowed our heads to pray.

We felt pride in our country
For sticking close together
Neighbors and strangers gathered
To give help to one another.

It happened long ago,
but it's not that far away.
The memories will always be with us
Of that sad September day.

August 2026							September 2026							October 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
							1													
2	3	4	5	6	7	8		1	2	3	4	5			4	5	6	7	8	9
9	10	11	12	13	14	15									11	12	13	14	15	16
16	17	18	19	20	21	22									18	19	20	21	22	23
23	24	25	26	27	28	29									25	26	27	28	29	30
30	31																			

September 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30 8:15AM Worship School 9:10AM Adult's Sunday School 10:10AM Worship 11:30AM Coffee Fellowship 12:00PM Choir Practice 1:00PM Handbell Practice	31 6:00PM Cub Scouts 7:00PM Boy Scouts	1 7:00PM AA	2 9:00AM QUILTERS Round 10:00AM Sermon in the Round	3 - OFFICE CLOSED 10:00AM Quilters	4 - OFFICE CLOSED 10:00AM Quilters	5
6 8:15AM Worship School 9:10AM Adult's Sunday School 10:10AM Worship 11:30AM Coffee Fellowship 12:00PM Choir Practice 1:00PM Handbell Practice	7 - OFFICE CLOSED - Labor Day 9:00AM Paper Piecing Quilters 6:00PM Cub Scouts 6:30PM Elders meeting 7:00PM Boy Scouts	8 1:00PM DWM Fellowship 7:00PM AA	9 9:00AM QUILTERS Round 10:00AM Sermon in the Round	10 - OFFICE CLOSED 10:00AM Quilters	11 - OFFICE CLOSED 10:00AM Quilters	12 - Rosh Hashanah 11:00AM Keyser bridal shower
13 - Rosh Hashanah (day 2) 8:15AM Worship School 9:10AM Adult's Sunday School 10:10AM Worship 11:30AM Coffee Fellowship 12:00PM Choir Practice 1:00PM Handbell Practice 3:00PM Primrose Service	14 9:00AM Working 4 Warriors quilting 6:00PM Cub Scouts 6:30PM STEWARDSHIP 7:00PM Boy Scouts 7:00PM Commissions 8:00PM Board meeting	15 7:00PM AA	16 9:00AM QUILTERS Round 10:00AM Sermon in the Round	17 - OFFICE CLOSED 10:00AM Quilters	18 - OFFICE CLOSED 10:00AM Quilters	19 9:00AM 3 D's quilters 9:00AM Men's Group 10:00AM Blanket Ministry
20 8:15AM Worship School 9:10AM Adult's Sunday School 10:10AM Worship 11:00AM Church Potluck 12:00PM Choir Practice 1:00PM Handbell Practice	21 - Yom Kippur 12:00PM CALL deadline quilt 6:00PM Cub Scouts 7:00PM Boy Scouts	22 7:00PM AA	23 9:00AM QUILTERS Round 10:00AM Sermon in the Round	24 - OFFICE CLOSED 10:00AM Quilters 5:00PM Mission Meal	25 - OFFICE CLOSED 10:00AM Quilters	26
27 8:15AM Worship School 9:10AM Adult's Sunday School 10:10AM Worship 11:30AM Coffee Fellowship 12:00PM Choir Practice 1:00PM Handbell Practice	28 9:00AM Working 4 Warriors quilt 6:00PM Cub Scouts 7:00PM Boy Scouts	29 7:00PM AA	30 9:00AM QUILTERS Round 10:00AM Sermon in the Round	1 - OFFICE CLOSED 10:00AM Quilters	2 - OFFICE CLOSED 10:00AM Quilters	3