



FIRST CHRISTIAN disciples of christ HIGHLIGHTS

Making disciples who make a difference!

February 24, 2021

Koinōvia (Koinonia)

koinē' nēə, noun: Christian fellowship

"And now, O Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in you." (Psalm 39:7, NRSV)

The season of Lent is upon us.

Lent is the period of six weeks (roughly) between Ash Wednesday and Resurrection Sunday, which begins the season of Easter.

The theme of Lent is self-reflection, world-examination and repentance. After all, Easter is the Good News of our faith. Jesus rises from the grave and we are given access to the Kingdom of God. But the Good News can't properly be understood as good, unless we know what the bad news is. And Lent is about facing the bad news: that we are the kind of creatures who sin, sometimes without even knowing it, and oftentimes fully aware. The bad news is that we live in a sinful, fallen world. Despite all the progress of human civilization, people still suffer hunger, poverty, discrimination, violence and disease. And it's our fault. We can't blame God for the consequences of choosing evil in every age.

To make things worse, we can't help from continuing to sin, and we get very easily offended when someone suggests we consider that. As a preacher of the Bible, let me promise you that scripture is very offensive to the idolatrous ways we live our lives, exalting wealth, material possessions, racial, ethnic or national affiliation, even sports, above God and God's children. If we read the Bible and are never offended, then we are probably reading it incorrectly. If we hear scripture preached and we are never offended, then we need a new preacher.

The reason that we continue to sin, the reason that we are offended so easily, is because we have a hard time letting God be God. We try to run our own lives. We do what we think is the best that we can to make things work out well for ourselves and our

loved ones. But that's not our place. We are not the director in the drama called "life." We are minor characters. God is the director. And if we let God be God, we are sure to find that He does a much better job than we do.

Lent is about facing all of this. It's about taking a hard look in the mirror and a hard look at the world and just being honest. We've made a mess of it and we don't have the ability to fix it by our own power. Now, this is not to say that we are an evil creation. Quite the contrary. We are made in the image of God and God has called us very good. We are worth saving. And our salvation is apparently worth the ultimate cost, paid by God himself. It's just that God created us with freedom to choose or reject him, so that we can know that the love God has for us and we have for God is genuine.

For many of us, Lent can and should be an uncomfortable time. But that discomfort can be the touchstone of growth and transformation. If we are honest and humble, this season can put us in the best position to experience the glorious, good news that awaits us on Easter Sunday.

I invite you to join your sisters and brothers in Christ on this Lenten journey. And let us pray for one another, as we approach the cross and empty tomb.

Shalom,
Joey Pusateri

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February Board Meeting Summary

The Administrative Board of FCC met online through Zoom on February 18, 2021. Highlights are as follows:

- Joey gave the Board an update on Catherine. She has had 2 chemo treatments so far and is due for the next one on 2/19. Her spirits are good and she appreciates all of the love and support our church family is sending her and her parents. Her father is holding down the fort at her apartment and the Connections Ministry team has organized a Meal Train for him. He posts updates on the Meal Train page and Catherine is also posting updates on her Caring Bridge page.
- Jan Scott & the Elders have organized a Prayer Vigil for her next treatment day, 2/19, covering 6:00am-5:30pm.
- The Maxine Maxey and World Outreach committees met to discuss their respective 2021 fund distributions. The Maxine Maxey distribution totaled \$13,753.66. World Outreach distribution totaled \$6,354.62. All previous fund recipients in both groups were honored in 2021. Specific dollar amounts given are available upon request.
- The Church Handbook will be reprinted shortly and distributed to all Board members for their reference. Policies & procedures needing revisions will be reviewed over the next 4-6 months and an additional reprinting will take place to incorporate new changes or additions.
- A financial report for January was not presented for review due to the transition between Sherrie & her replacement Patty Whaley. However, at the time of the Board meeting, Joey and Personnel Chair, John Funkhouser, discussed with the Board that Patty's employment had since been terminated. Sherrie and the Personnel Committee have since discussed the possibility of her working part-time from FL as our Business Administrator ONLY. An additional position would be created for a Facilities Manager to address the other duties she took care of. The Personnel Committee will be meeting again before the March Board meeting and will bring finalized details at that time. In the interim, Martha Bryant will be reviewing and paying bills.
- With the goal of reopening safely for in-person worship, Joey has been monitoring the COVID numbers from the Health Department. His benchmark is 5 consecutive days of decreasing case numbers and as the numbers stand now, he's anticipating that 2/28 would be a possible reopening date. With that in mind, Joey asked Connie McVicker and the Worship Team to begin to prepare for that.

Prayer Concerns

Bill Barker
Steve & Pat Bruce
Rev. Catherine DeMoss
Josh Hensley
Odell Hines
Jack Kaiser
Marianne Kirby
Marilyn Marlowe
Nancy Mellios
Margaret Ann Milburn
Mike Miller

Peggy Mitchell
Susan Montgomery
Bill Morgan
Jim Page
Shauntina Phillips
Betty Ramey
Mike Swain
Bonnie Wilson
Jeff Withers
Mary Lou Withers

News & Announcements

Reopening the Church

It's been a long wait and we thank you for your patience as Boyle County Covid numbers have finally dropped enough so we can reopen the church for in-person worship and small group meetings again. The same precautions will be taken of wearing masks and social distancing. We will still stream live our Sunday morning services on Facebook and YouTube for those who are not yet comfortable in returning. Small groups will meet in the chapel or gym. We are looking forward to seeing you in person this Sunday, February 28 to worship together.

In Sympathy

To Greg Barnard on the passing of his wife, Linda, on February 7.

WEEKLY LENT DEVOTIONALS

A Season of Renewal

FCC Elders are sharing weekly Lent Devotionals via email. These devotionals are also being available in newsletters as well. The following devotion is by Elmer Jackson:

Mark 15:34 - *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"*

We find Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, his disciples asleep, Jesus prays "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." Jesus has come face to face with reality.... The next day he will experience humiliation, desertion, pain and excruciating death on the cross, so, in the garden alone, he asks God for a way out.... And God is silent.

Events unfold as scripted and now Jesus is on the cross, his body broken and his blood falling on the ground around the cross. From the depths of his human soul he has one last question of the God he has always trusted, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Death remains the price we pay for having been born into this world. Beyond his teaching, his miracles, beyond all the promises of a Divine presence in a troubled world, Jesus too had to be subdued by the forces of death. Now, it is HIS time to experience the pain and suffering of a tormented body that could no longer contain the spirit. For this moment, Jesus has to share this common bond of humanity, the destiny of all of his earthly sisters and brothers, sharing the final act of this thing called life. Only by doing so could he experience true compassion and empathy for these mortals on earth.

Jesus does not give up on God. We have no way of knowing what went through His mind in those last few minutes but shortly after his cry of My God. My God he is heard to say in a clear voice, just before dying, "It is finished."...but this is not the end but rather "It is completed!" As He passes from one world to another, from the human to the Divine, with his final breath he realizes that his mission as a mortal on this globe has been completed as directed by His now welcoming Father in Heaven. He is now at One with God the Father.

During this brief dot in time from My God, My God to It is finished, Jesus passes from the mortal to the Devine. All events leading up to the cross belong to history. All events AFTER the cross belong to faith. The Jesus of history becomes the Christ of Faith.

Prayer: Dear God, we stand in awe of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. We are witness to His great love for us - a love that can come only from One who has shared our trials, sufferings, losses, loves, joy and grief. We find comfort in knowing that by his resurrection we are promised life after death. Amen

Elmer Jackson 2021

The following devotion is provided by Kathryn Ensor and written by Jess Gregory.

Matthew 5:1-12

Lent is a solemn time of directed spiritual focus. Beginning with Ash Wednesday, it is a time to remember that from dust we came and to dust we shall return. I don't think we meditate or contemplate this somber attitude enough. During Lent we often engage in a practice of fasting from something in order to remember the suffering of Christ. In our small sacrifice, we remember Christ's ultimate sacrifice for us.

How does this connect to the beatitudes? The passage begins with the people sitting down and learning from Jesus. We too, during this set apart time, are meant to sit at the feet of Christ and remember his suffering and how he taught us to live.

Reading the beatitudes reminds us what Jesus considered blessed. When we are poor in spirit, when we mourn, when we are meek, when we are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, when we are merciful, when we are pure in heart, when we make peace, when we are persecuted—this is when we are blessed. As we remember the death of Christ, may we also remember that we need to die to our own presuppositions of what it means to be blessed. These simple phrases may be common ideals for those of us who have been in the Christian faith, but they are no less revolutionary. In the same way, it may be common to pause for 40 days in remembrance of Christ's death, but it is no less revolutionary.

May we gather at Jesus's feet and be taught. May we sit in our poor spirits, our mourning, our meekness, our hunger and thirst, in a merciless world, a chaotic world, and seek the kind of blessedness that can only come from a resurrected savior who needed to suffer and be crucified in order to bring this revolutionary kingdom.

Practice: Pray through each beatitude, asking the Holy Spirit to make you more and more kingdom-minded. Which beatitude is most revolutionary to you? How can you practically engage in sitting in Jesus's teaching this Lenten season?

JESS GREGORY

The following devotion is by Gigi Biles.

During every Lenten season for the past 15 years or so, I have read and re-read Dr. Paul Ciholas's book *On the Via Dolorosa with Christ*. Dr. Ciholas was a member of our church, and he sometimes taught Wednesday evening classes. You may remember him. I would like to share with you some of Dr. Ciholas's thoughts and words.

Pilate Washes His Hands
Matthew 27

When Jesus is brought before the governor, Pilate, whom history records as a brutal man, Pilate refuses to condemn Jesus. But when the mob called out for Jesus's death, Pilate succumb to the mob and to Jewish authorities to execute Jesus; **ALTHOUGH HE KNOWS IT IS WRONG**. Pilate washes his hands saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood." He acts against his own personal integrity! Ciholas says, "In that symbolic act...that which cannot be resolved through rationality and justice has to disappear from out of consciousness. The abdication of responsibility has always marked a world in the throes of inconsistency and insecurity."

"He [Pilate] could not acknowledge that the situation was beyond him or confess that the people of Jerusalem had forced him to do what he knew was wrong." Sometimes we do the same thing. We wash our hands. We know what is the right thing to do, but we choose to do otherwise. We know that if we were to follow what we know is right--our integrity--it may cost us friends, family, a job, a career, even our souls. Tom Huckleberry, my Sunday School teacher, says that we know "What Would Jesus Do?" The question is, can we do what Jesus would do?

Pilate chose to go against his personal integrity; he succumbed to the mob and the authorities. What did it cost him? We really don't know "the rest of the story" as Paul Harvey would say. We do know that Pilate was a real person. Tradition tells us that Pilate committed suicide. Did he know that he had paid the ultimate price? Is giving up your integrity worth keeping friends, job, or career? Or, do we wish to keep our good souls?

Birthdays & Anniversaries

March 2021

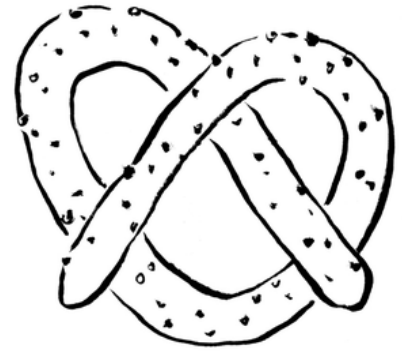
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Jerry Boyd *Jack & Julie Jones	2 Jim Sullivan	3 Abby Kerbaugh Mike May Becky Whited	4 Addison Brown Lauren Newman	5 Joey Kirk	6 Janice Gideon
7 Jenny McClure	8	9 David May	10	11	12 *Brian & Patricia Calvert	13 Paige Stevens- Sweeney *Justin & Trish Jarnagin
14 Donna Carol Welch	15 Patty Castle	16	17	18	19 Willow Snyder *Bill & Ann Barker	20
21	22	23 Edith Cottrell	24	25 Nancy Mahan	26 Kyle Bradshaw Larry Vaught	27 Claude Wagner *Ken & Margaret Clark
28 Annette Ransdell	29 Trish Jarnagin	30 Diane Reed Katie Wilson	31 Butch Pass			

FCC KIDS CORNER

It seems that we just put all the Christmas decorations away and now we have entered the Lenten Season! So what is Lent all about?

Like Advent, **Lent is a time to prepare.** But instead of preparing for Christmas, we are preparing for Easter. Instead of our excitement about the birth of Baby Jesus, we are preparing for Jesus' death and resurrection. Some of the symbols for the Lenten season are **palm**

branches and a donkey to remind us that Jesus rode a donkey into Jerusalem while people cheered for him and waved palm branches, **the rooster** that reminds us that Peter denied knowing Jesus three times before dawn, and **plastic eggs** which when they are empty remind us of the empty tomb.



So why in the world did I put a **picture of a pretzel** in an article about Lent??!!

Even though it seems odd, the pretzel is also a symbol of Lent. When early Christians would pray, they would cross their arms and touch each shoulder with the opposite hand. They also fasted very strictly during lent, making their bread with only water, flour, and salt. A young monk shaped dough in the form of praying arms for children to understand more about prayer and the pretzel was born! The simple shape of the pretzel arms folded in prayer reminds us that Jesus went into the wilderness and prayed for 40 days before going to Jerusalem where he knew he would be put to death.

Try the simple recipe below to make homemade pretzels sometime to remind you to **pray every day.**



Also during Lent, **be sure to check your mailbox every week** for a Family Activity guide with things for you and your family to do to make Lent special through prayer, love, and service. If you haven't already received your first Kids Club Lenten Activity Guide in the mail, contact Donna in the church office or Patti at pwright62@gmail.com or by phone at (812) 483-9004.

Lenten Pretzel Recipe

Ingredients

- 1 package yeast (.25 oz.)
- 1 1/2 cups warm water
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 cups flour
- 1 egg
- Extra salt for the tops- large salt works best

- Mix yeast, water, sugar, and salt in a large bowl.
- Stir in the flour, and knead until the dough is smooth.
- Roll dough into a long snake shape, then shape dough into the form of arms crossed in prayer
- Place the pretzel on a baking sheet.
- Brush the dough with a beaten egg to give it a shiny finish (optional)
- Sprinkle the top with salt, and bake in an oven preheated to 425 degrees for 15 minutes.

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This Sunday, February 28 we will have both in-person and online worship service at 10:45a. Our services will continue to be streamed live on Facebook and on our YouTube channel. We look forward to seeing you and worshipping together!

First Christian Church

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