



FIRST CHRISTIAN disciples of christ HIGHLIGHTS

Making disciples who make a difference!

March 24, 2021

Koinōvia (Koinonia)

koinē' nēə, noun: Christian fellowship

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it (John 1:1-5, NRSV).

Here we are approaching the end of the Lenten season, as we make our way to the cross and empty tomb on Easter Sunday morning, I would like to offer a final meditation. Lent, of course, is the 40 days plus Sundays between Ash Wednesday and Resurrection Sunday. It is the time in which we examine the world and reflect upon our own lives, in an effort to face our collective brokenness, so that God's healing can take place through our repentance. It is the time of preparation for the Good News of the resurrection.

And so here is the meditation: Jesus is the light of the world.

Why is that important? Because unless there is light, people will remain in the darkness. Furthermore, unless God gives us the *choice* of light, people cannot be blamed for *choosing* darkness. It would be like offering a child fried chicken or hamburgers every day for lunch. You couldn't blame her/him for not eating healthy if the child is never even given the opportunity to choose healthy food. You see, God has given to us the only begotten Son, so that the rest of us can choose to believe or not to believe. Without the love of God in Christ, without the example of Jesus' life and the grace of his death and resurrection, how in the world could we possibly select a life of faithfulness? This is the gracious gift of God. This is

what Jesus was to the world in which he lived.

And so now, I encourage you to reflect upon this: in the absence of Jesus' physical presence in this world, we are his body. And as the body of Christ, we are called to do what Jesus did. We are called to love as he loved. And we are called to *be the light*. We are placed here in this time and in this place for a specific purpose. We give people a choice between light and darkness. How can the lost and the lonely in God's world choose the light unless someone shows it to them? This is why we must be so vigilant to stand above and apart from the partisanship, from the division, from the idolatries of materialism and selfishness in this world. This is why we must hold ourselves to higher ethical standards. This is why we must insist on forgiving and loving even our enemies. For God so loved the world that he sent the only begotten Son, and because he loved the world so much, he sent us: the church. Let us be the light.

Shalom,
Rev. Joey Pusateri

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March Board Meeting Summary

The Administrative Board met both in person and via Zoom on March 18, 2021. Highlights are as follows:

- The Board welcomed Associate Pastor Catherine DeMoss to the board meeting. Catherine provided a health update and also shared a written document documenting her journey.
- Financial Report :
 - 1) Financial Report Documents - Analysis of Revenue and Expenses – February and YTD Summary and Detail and Summary of Restricted Accounts were provided and reviewed with the Board. Contributions year to date are less than budget. Increased expenses include electricity, gas, building insurance, and organ/piano tuning. Unexpected expense was the cost of \$6,200.00 for audit, required due to transition of Business Administrator position. Once Endowment income is added to budget and with the Covid-19 situation improving, it is expected the financial picture will improve.
 - 2) Carryover funds of \$13,183.29 from 2020 will remain in the account to be used if incoming contributions decrease or if it is needed to keep a positive cash flow for the next several months for normal church activity.
 - 3) Board approved removal of Patty Whaley from signature card at Community Trust Bank and placed Sherrie Cocanougher on the bank accounts effective 2/22/2021. (Sherrie has been working as bookkeeper on a part-time interim basis.)
- Board Chair Doug McMurry will appoint two (2) people – one (1) trustee and one (1) at large, to serve on the Endowment Committee. Pastor Joey and Dr. Larry Scott are current members of the four (4) person committee. The board is expected to review the appointments and take further action at the April board meeting.
- Board reviewed and approved a recommendation from the Personnel Committee to accept the Part-Time Remote Job Description hiring Sherrie Cocanougher as Part-Time Remote Business Administrator, which will be bookkeeping only.
- Personnel plans to create a Job Description for a Part-Time Facilities Administrator to address the many other duties Sherrie previously handled, with the intent of hiring a Part-Time Facilities Administrator.
- Property has a number of projects in various stages of estimates, bid procurement, etc. Lights in the Chancel have been replaced with brighter LED lights. A Spring Clean-up work day is planned on Saturday, March 20, 2021 focusing on the front landscaping, Grace Gardens, Courtyard, and Fountain.
- Board reviewed and approved a request from the Boy Scouts Troup 326 to utilize one of the church buses for a trip to Boundary Waters Canoe Area in northern Minnesota in mid-June, 2021.
- The Worship Committee, including Pastor Joey and Larry Davidson, will meet on Wednesday, March 24, 2021, to discuss, develop, and widely communicate plans for Easter Worship, given the uncertainty regarding how many people to expect this year, how to seat them, and other questions for this worship service relative to the pandemic.

WEEKLY LENT DEVOTIONALS

A Season of Renewal

FCC Elders have been sharing weekly Lent Devotionals through our FCC Midweek emails and these have also been published in the newsletter. We appreciate all the elders who provided these devotionals for this year. The following concludes our Weekly Lent Devotionals:

“He is not here. He is risen.” Luke 24:6

For many years when the Lenten season approached, my thoughts would focus on ‘sacrifice’, giving up, letting go of something special in my life. Something I thought about or spent too much time on: special foods or drinks I thought were important to my well-being? Too many email, texts? Too much TV? Too many naps?

But anything I might choose to ‘give up’ pales in comparison to what Jesus did for me and you! His own life sacrificed on the cross, a brutal, inhuman way to die! All done for our sakes ...for forgiveness of our sins and the promise of eternal life! Who could have done or given more?

In recent years, adding things to my life during Lent has become more meaningful: increased Bible study, devotional and prayer time, putting my thoughts into action and seeking ways to serve God and others. These last weeks’ Joey has been reminding and encouraging us to truly take our FCC mission seriously: “to make disciples who make a difference.”

With COVID-19 and all the unrest in our country and the world, what better time to live our mission? Joey reminds us ‘our checks have been written’. All we have to do is cash our check to make a difference in our community for God and His kingdom. All we need to do is look around for opportunities to serve, go beyond our comfort zone, think outside the box, listening to and following God’s will, not our own.

PRAYER: Lord, let there be peace on earth and let it begin with us. Give us strength and faith in all circumstances, trusting you at all times. AMEN

Jane Boyd

The following devotion is provided by Jan Bradshaw

Coming across an Old Testament scripture reference from Ezekiel and his vision of a terrifying valley of dry bones as the basis of a Lenten devotion intrigued me. I imagine that each of us has felt as if we are those dry bones at some point during this year-long valley. Whether your dry bones arise from isolation or no time to be alone, being overworked or unemployed, illness or fear of illness, loss of loved ones through death or distancing, the suffering is real. Lent has always been a time to focus on suffering...but as Christians, we already know "the rest of the story!" Hope came at Easter with Jesus' resurrection. Dry bones can live because of His love for us.

I share with you Norman Brown's 2017 devotion asking that you focus on his challenge in the last sentence!

Can These Bones Live?

Scripture Reading — Ezekiel 37:1-6

The Lord . . . brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. — Ezekiel 37:1

God showed Ezekiel a frightening vision and asked the prophet, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man, had certainly read this passage before beginning his ministry. But unlike Ezekiel, Jesus knew that he alone had to restore life by putting death to death. So he headed to Jerusalem.

As a navy chaplain and a pastor, I've dealt with death often. The first time, holding the hand of a young man my age as he died of cancer, is a sacred memory. Years later, in a graduate course, a professor urged us to see loved ones as "dead bones" to fully appreciate what they mean to us alive. Painfully difficult, it nonetheless worked.

Later, at a friend's funeral, God showed me that we're all death in the making. Christ's work at Calvary and the empty tomb became extraordinarily personal. I realized anew that he'd raised our sun-bleached bones from the sin-scorched earth to eternal life (1 Corinthians 15).

"Can these bones live?" God's question highlights the essence of Lent: walking with Jesus and following him as he dies and rises from the grave—so that our bones can come to new life. Our response to God's question reveals whether we'll spend today living for God or lying about like dead bones.

<https://todaydevotional.com/devotions/can-these-bones-live>

The following devotion is by Tom Huckleberry

Father Knows Best: Gethsemane

Matthew 26:39 - My Father, if it is possible may this cup be taken from me. Yet, not as I will, but as you will.

If you have ever been in a position of deep emotional distress, scared of what might happen then know this: Jesus knows what you are experiencing. His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane is a model for our prayers when we are in crisis.

Jesus has finished his last meal with his disciples, given them his final instructions and teachings, and instituted the sacrament of Holy Communion. He then goes off to a place called Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives to pray and prepare himself for what the next day will bring. Jesus is troubled and his soul is overwhelmed with sorrow. He knows he will be beaten, that he will experience excruciating pain and agony on the cross, be humiliated and abandoned and then die. In this first part of his prayer, his human desires and fears come to the front. If it is possible may this cup be taken from me. Isn't there some other way for his ministry to be completed other than on the cross? Could the Father have a plan B? If there is another option to the cross with the same outcome for humanity, now would be a good time for it.

Jesus had an intimate and personal relationship with God the Father. Jesus knows that the will of God and the plans of God must always take precedence over his own human desires. He knows that God's plan will always be the better plan. He knows that God's will is the best solution in any circumstance. Jesus' prayer concludes with his decision to go to the cross willingly because he knows it is God's will that he do so. Yet, not as I will but as you will. Afterwards God the Father sent an angel from heaven to Jesus to strengthened him for his ordeal.

In our own prayer life as Christians, we know we can make personal requests to God; that we can present to him our desires. We can tell him what we would like to have happen. God will listen to our petitions and pleas and will answer with what his will is, what he knows is best. Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane teaches us that our prayers cannot be complete until we acknowledge that what God's plan is for us in any circumstance has to supersede what we want for ourselves and we must yield ourselves to God's will. We are human people and we are people of faith in God and Jesus. Our prayers can be human pleas to God for what we desire. Our faith tells us we must also discern God's will then put God's will ahead of what we want. As Jesus fully knew and as we fully know, God the Father knows best. And God will always strengthen us to follow his will.

Prayer: Lord God, I will continue to make my pleas and requests to you. I will listen for what your will might be and try my best to align my will to your will. Strengthen me to accept and do your will. Amen

The following devotion is by Cheryl Gibson

We are well past the halfway mark on our Lenten journey, and in preparation for writing this devotional, I found myself back in my language arts/French classroom, as I worked with students to learn new vocabulary words, not just for a test, but forever. It always came as a surprise to them that I would retest vocabulary words all through the school year, but their endurance to persevere and learn the words paid off when they discovered “the word” in their own reading, on TV, or even in their parents’ conversations.

This personal memory of my teaching days parallels with our re-examining our spiritual walk, no matter if we are a new Christian or if we have been following Jesus for many years. To embrace the realities of our sin, to sincerely ask the Risen Christ to be in us daily, requires exercise and endurance on our spiritual path upward to Him. For me, the daily exercise of thanksgiving is key. I Thessalonians 5:18 states, “In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” As I have grown spiritually, I find myself spending more time thanking God for who He is, as well as for His many daily provisions, before I intercede for others.

Another form of spiritual exercise is the hearing and reading of God’s word. As the psalmist so beautifully proclaims: “Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.” (Psalm 139:105) How grateful I am for the Bible verses I learned as a child, thanks to the wise guidance of my faithful parents and Sunday School teachers. Even today, as I read familiar or unfamiliar Biblical passages, I am wonderfully surprised at how God reveals Himself to me. It seems the words I need that day jump off the page and go straight to my heart.

The path to the Cross of Christ requires endurance, and perhaps, the greatest test of this endurance, is found in Jesus’ words to His disciples as he prepared for the Last Supper: “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:35) What a powerful verse this is, as we realize we must offer God’s love to all, which includes those who are loveable, and those who are not. Fortunately, Jesus has left us the Holy Spirit to do in us what is humanly impossible.

I pray that as we venture forward on our Lenten journey, we will seek to have the strength to persevere and love, as we follow in the steps of our Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ!

Prayer Concerns

Bill Barker
Jerry Boyd
Steve & Pat Bruce
Rev. Catherine DeMoss
Ken & June Harmon
Josh Hensley
Nancy Mellios
Margaret Ann Milburn
Mike Miller

Susan Montgomery
Bill Morgan
Jim Page
Shauntina Phillips
Mike Swain
Bonnie Wilson
Howard Wilson
Jeff Withers
Mary Lou Withers

Shut-ins

Mindy Carter
Odell Hines
Jack Kaiser
Marianne Kirby
Marilyn Marlowe

Peggy Mitchell
Betty Ramey
Catherine Shoulty
Dorothy Warren

Kids Korner

Egg Eggstravaganza

Calling all FCC Kids! Don't forget the Easter egg hunt and activities this Sunday after worship, rain or shine!

Holy Week Family Activity Box

If you haven't gotten your box, please pick up one in the church office.

Kids Club

Keep on the lookout for Kids Club in April. Parents will be notified through various communications.

News & Announcements

Good Friday Prayer Vigil

The church sanctuary will be open for prayer on Good Friday from 6am –6pm. Everyone is welcome to come and pray.

Easter Flower Cross

If you can donate or purchase fresh flowers for the Easter cross, please contact Jan Scott (583-3478) by March 29, the deadline for ordering flowers for Easter.

Easter Flowers

Flower orders are being taken in honor or in memory of a loved one until March 31. Cost is \$11/each. Please email your order and/or mail in order with payment to the church by March 31.

Walking Track & Exercise Classes

The walking track is open with adjusted hours for cleaning. Monday-Friday, from 8-11am and 2-4pm. Our guidelines are recommended with CDC of social distancing and wearing masks. Please spread the word in the community that we are now open! **Body Recall** classes are offered on Monday, Wednesday, & Friday at 8am & 9am. On April 7, only one class is offered at 9am. For further information, contact Carolyn Walter (859-548-8203). **Healthy Back** classes will be offered beginning April 7 on Wednesdays & Fridays at 10am. Contact Rachel White (859-873-9418) for more information.



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HOLY WEEK & EASTER

PALM SUNDAY WORSHIP 10:45A
MAUNDAY THURSDAY TENEBRAE SERVICE 7P
GOOD FRIDAY PRAYER VIGIL 6A- 6P
EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE 7:30A
EASTER SUNDAY WORSHIP 10:45A

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