



First Christian Church

Disciples of Christ

430 S. 16th St. Lincoln, NE 68508 402.475.4289

Weekly Worship

love all • live spiritually • rejoice in hope • show hospitality

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Week of August 22, 2021



Call to Worship

Feel free to follow along with our Call to Worship from today's live-streamed worship service.

One: How wonderful it is to be in a dwelling place for God!

Many: The refreshing springs of God's love clean and restore us.

One: There is a place here for everyone. No one is turned away.

Many: Praise to God who heals and sends us forth to serve.



Public Worship WILL be held at 10:30 am Sunday morning. If you are not quite ready to join us for public worship, we invite you to follow along with this printed service.

Community Prayer

God, we pray to you with joy in our hearts that you are always with us, that we are never alone. Sometimes we feel overwhelmed by the negativity that surrounds our daily lives: on the news, at work, even in our own homes. We see people act in ways that are surprising, appalling, and just plain hateful. Dress us in strength, truth, and righteousness for us to keep the faith amidst this environment. With the help of your Spirit, encourage us to seek ways, both large and small, to make changes in the world around us. Inspire us to name the evils we see and to fight them with our siblings in Christ, in our churches, our cities, and the world. That it may be so, we pray, Amen.

Check out our weekly video at www.fcclincoln.org, First Christian's Facebook page, or search for First Christian Church, Lincoln, Nebraska on YouTube.

www.fcclincoln.org/youtube

Even if you are worshipping from home, please continue your regular giving to the church in addition to your faith giving. The FCC office is accepting checks at 430 S. 16th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508. We can also mail you a debit authorization form to do automatic withdrawals. Finally, there is a "GIVE" button on the top right-hand side of the fcclincoln.org website to make an online donation via PayPal.

Scripture Reading

Psalms 84

- ¹ How lovely is your dwelling place,
O LORD of hosts!
- ² My soul longs, indeed it faints
for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy
to the living God.
- ³ Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O LORD of hosts,
my King and my God.
- ⁴ Happy are those who live in your house,
ever singing your praise.
Selah
- ⁵ Happy are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.
- ⁶ As they go through the valley of Baca
they make it a place of springs;
the early rain also covers it with pools.
- ⁷ They go from strength to strength;
the God of gods will be seen in Zion.
- ⁸ O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer;
give ear, O God of Jacob!
Selah
- ⁹ Behold our shield, O God;
look on the face of your anointed.
- ¹⁰ For a day in your courts is better
than a thousand elsewhere.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my
God
than live in the tents of wickedness.
- ¹¹ For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
he bestows favour and honour.
No good thing does the LORD withhold
from those who walk uprightly.
- ¹² O LORD of hosts,
happy is everyone who trusts in you.

Ephesians 6:10-20

- ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in
the strength of his power. ¹¹ Put on the
whole armor of God, so that you may be
able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against ene-
mies of blood and flesh, but against the
rulers, against the authorities, against the
cosmic powers of this present darkness,
against the spiritual forces of evil in the
heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the
whole armor of God, so that you may be
able to withstand on that evil day, and
having done everything, to stand firm.
- ¹⁴ Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of
truth around your waist, and put on the
breastplate of righteousness. ¹⁵ As shoes
for your feet put on whatever will make
you ready to proclaim the gospel of
peace. ¹⁶ With all of these, take the shield
of faith, with which you will be able to
quench all the flaming arrows of the evil
one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation, and
the sword of the Spirit, which is the word
of God.
- ¹⁸ Pray in the Spirit at all times in every
prayer and supplication. To that end keep
alert and always persevere in supplication
for all the saints. ¹⁹ Pray also for me, so
that when I speak, a message may be given
to me to make known with boldness the
mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an
ambassador in chains. Pray that I may de-
clare it boldly, as I must speak.

Reflection

Meditation for 13th Sunday after Pentecost

“Evil is Real but Not the Victor”

When I was a teenager I was intrigued by all the buzz around a book that later became a movie entitled “The Exorcist.” My Mom said I was too young to either read the book or see the movie. Although I would see classmates with books in brown paper book covers that I knew were this forbidden item, I complied with my Mother’s wishes and did not make an effort to read this “banned” book. I was in college when this movie was shown as a midnight offering and my friends and I eagerly attended. I was a young Christian then and remember leaving the film terrified. I could not, or maybe more accurately would not, sleep that night and spent the night reading Star Trek books. I was terrified by the images of evil I saw depicted in that movie. When I tried to talk with our chaplain about the experience, I made light of it and said “the devil has some real hygiene issues.” I did not want to share the fear that had been stirred up within me. It became clear to me that the devil and evil was not something mainline Protestants discussed.

But, we cannot escape the reality that evil weaves its way throughout scripture and history. It was important for the Apostle Paul to prepare the young believers to whom he wrote. He shares a perspective that evil was very much a part of his reality. Perhaps this had something to do with the fact that he wrote this letter from prison. He was also undoubtedly shaped by the world in which he lived. Many depictions of ancient Rome are incredibly violent and probably fairly accurate. For many, especially those in the occupied territories of the Roman Empire, it was a dark and violent time. The militaristic imagery of this passage from Ephesians might make us uncomfortable today, but Paul’s use of these metaphors drew on everyday sights and sounds for those to whom he wrote. It might be tempting for us to write off what he had to say as irrelevant for us today. But is it really?

As the author brings things to a close, the reader is urged: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” The author used the term *diabolos* in Greek, which is gets translated as “devil” but often means “adversary” when used in scripture. He went on to say: “For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” I think the implication here is that evil is so much more than its frequent personification as the devil. Evil consists of cosmic forces that have plagued human beings throughout history and continue to besiege us today. The names may change over time, but these forces represent all that is contrary to God and

God’s will for humanity. We have struggled mightily with these forces throughout the past year: fear, hatred, selfishness, and self-centeredness. We call these evil systems by many names: racism, sexism, homophobia, nationalism, and white supremacy. Like those in ancient Rome, we may feel powerless against all these forces that struggle against God. We may be tempted to sink into despair and give up.

But, our words from Ephesians remind us to take heart. We are called to stand firm in God’s power. We have resources to fight the evil we perceive around us. Richard Carlson from Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg, PA suggests in his article for *Lectionary Homiletics*:

“Thus Christians resist demonic attacks through truth, justice, right relationships, faith, trustworthiness, and the peace which the Gospel brings while at the same time launching their own counter-attacks through the utterance of the gospel through which the triumphal note of the divine peace brings those formerly held in demonic captivity into salvation and the peace of a new humanity in Christ.”

Carlson goes on to remind us that another resource is prayer. This includes an attitude of dependence on God and an openness to the Spirit’s direction. Donn F. Morgan from The Church Divinity School of the Pacific in Berkeley, CA also comments in the same edition of *Lectionary Homiletics* that God is at war with the forces of evil, and as God’s people we do not have the luxury of remaining uninvolved or neutral.

While the reality of evil is real, we do not fight it alone. We stand together with those who fight evil. We stand together as a denomination as we follow leaders like the Rev. Dr. William Barber who leads the battle against the evil of poverty through The Poor People’s Campaign. We fight the battle against the evil of hunger when we support the CROP Walk. As we stand firm in the power of God, we are empowered to fight all that is evil. God has already won the ultimate victory against evil and God leads us in the battles against the evil that exists in our world today. Paul reminds us as this passage comes to a close, “To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.”

AMEN

Prayers & Praises

August 22, 2021

In Our Church Family:

- Georgann Jordan
- Arlene Heimer
- Marvin Thurber
- William Deterding
- Jessica Vocasek
- Our sympathy to the family of Nancy Jelinek, upon her recent passing
- Vic Burgess
- Harold & Donna Baker
- Polly Putney
- Sally Mason, recovering after bicycle accident

Relatives:

- Friends and Family of Vic Burgess
- Tricia Gangwish, prayers for fighting breast cancer, aunt of Lindsay Swanson
- Mark Carpenter, with colon cancer, brother of Jill Carpenter and Dick & Roxie Pickel
- Roger Christianson, with stage 4 cancer, father of Brady Christianson
- Gene Gangwish, prayers for healing in the ICU, father of Lindsay Swanson
- David Sovey, prayers for successful surgery, grandson of Harold and Donna Baker
- Brother and Grandfather of Tony Flack, prayers for healing from respiratory illness and cancer, from Tony Flack
- John and Joyce, for safety from wildfires, brother and sister-in-law of Jim Christ
- Lester, for safety from hurricanes, cousin of Jim Christ

Friends:

- Tallu Schuyler Quinn, diagnosed with glioblastoma, prayers for healing, friend of Kaleo and D'Arcy Blosser
- Cedric Gibb, healing prayers, friend of Cec Burkhart
- Tomi, healing prayers for cancer diagnosis, friend of Sara Lugn
- Judy Nord, with bile duct cancer, friend of Dick & Roxie Pickel
- Jim Bottolfsen, for stage 3 lung cancer, friend of the Vocaseks
- Carson Mousel, 13-year-old grandson of Bob and Eileen Kunz, from Mildred Brockemeyer
- Jamin and Hailey, for the safe delivery of their baby girl, from Tony Flack
- Jeff & Kathy Bunn, for cancer diagnosis, from Vic Burgess

Our Timothy's:

- Bruce Frogge at Cypress Creek CC in Spring, TX
- Glenda Dietrich Moore, Creative Arts Ministry in Lincoln, NE

In the Nebraska Region:

- Plattsmouth FCC and Rev. Michael Lincoln

Our Global Ministries Missionaries:

- Abigail Fate serving in Mexico

Find more information and stories about our Global Ministry partners at www.globalministries.org

Song of the Week

How Lovely, Lord

Text : Arlo D. Duba, 1984

Music: Hal H. Hopson, 1983

How lovely, Lord, how lovely
is your abiding place;
my soul is longing, fainting,
to feast upon your grace.
The sparrow finds a shelter,
a place to build her nest;
and so your temple calls us
within its walls to rest.

In your blest courts to worship,
O God, a single day
is better than a thousand
if I from you should stray.
I'd rather keep the entrance
and claim you as my Lord
than revel in the riches
the ways of sin afford.

A sun and shield forever
are you, O Lord Most High;
you shower us with blessings;
no good you will deny.
The saints, your grace receiving,
from strength to strength shall go,
and from their life shall rivers
of blessing overflow.

