



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 December 11th, 2022



During Sunday worship in the season of Advent we will be using material from our Advent devotional "Be Ready" page 24. It is our hope that as you light your own Advent Candles you will use the same material and feel connected with us as we do the same during Sunday worship.

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.

Call to Worship

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

Community Prayer

O God of the desert and the oasis, help us rejoice and blossom even if we find ourselves in the wilderness. Empower us to trust in you. Help us seek out and celebrate the hope and joy that surrounds us. Enable us to remain with one another wherever life takes us, whether we journey into a desert or an oasis. We glorify you and rejoice in this season of hope.

AMEN

One: Be patient! God is coming to us!

Many: The One who teaches joyous songs to all of creation, comes to open our ears to life.

One: Be strong! God is coming to be with us!

Many: The One who paves a path to Bethlehem will walk with us every step of the way.

One: Do not fear! Here is your God!

Many: We worship the One who comes to save us.

Reflection

“Joy and Hope in the Wilderness” *Meditation for the 3rd Sunday of Advent*

In her article for Presbyterian Outlook Rev. Teri McDowell Ott mentioned the book *Joy: 100 Poems* by Christian Wiman. “Wiman writes that “joy is the only inoculation against the despair to which any sane person is prone, the only antidote to the nihilism that wafts through our intellectual atmosphere like sarin gas.” Ott commented that “Despair is a constant. Joy must be sought.” In this age of boosters and vaccines we do not always consider our need for a “joy inoculation.” There is so much in our lives and our world that screams despair. Whether we struggle with personal health issues or share the journey with those who do, it may seem that despair is always knocking at our door. We may not face health issues, perhaps grief is an ever present reality for us this year. The despair that knocks at our door may arise as we listen to the news and learn of the pain and suffering of so many others around the globe. It is in the season of joy that the darkness of despair seems even harsher.

Again, our passages today invite us to stand in the uncomfortable liminal space of hope and despair. How do we embrace the reality of this space without succumbing to despair? How do we find joy? Ott shared a story about one of the poets included in Wiman’s book. This poet definitely stood in the liminal space that straddled the realities of despair, hope and joy.

Wiman’s collection includes the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam, who felt a moral responsibility to write for his people during the Russian Revolution of the 1900s. When the government demanded poets write patriotic poems to inspire obedience among the working class, Mandelstam resisted. He instead wrote poetry that evoked a violent, upending kind of joy; the kind of joy that can save you when life is insufferable.

Even after he was arrested for writing a poem mocking Stalin, and exiled to a Russian corrective-labor camp, Mandelstam continued to compose poetry. His health declined. He was starving. The last time he was seen alive, he was scavenging for food out of a garbage dump. Mandelstam knew full well that he was about to die. Yet still, he resisted being consumed by his despair. According to Wiman, one of the last poems he wrote before his death was, “And I Was Alive:”

When despair seems close at hand, sometimes the best antidote is our proclamation that “we are alive!” In the midst of despair, we are invited to stand in this liminal space and by doing so we proclaim that “we are here and we are alive!” It is presence and our willingness to stand in the uncomfortable realities of our lives and our world that we find joy. This is not cheap joy, it is hard one and even more potent.

Jesus knew the power of standing firm in the liminal spaces of life. It was this willingness to embrace the challenges and the triumphs that made his life and ministry even more powerful. When John’s disciples came to Jesus asking “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: 5the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good new.” Jesus answered them by telling them to share with John what they saw, the life and ministry of Jesus. They were invited to tell John how Jesus stood in the liminal spaces of life and through his life and actions brought healing, hope and joy. Jesus stood in the places of pain, despair, grieving and loss, and brought healing, hope and joy.

The invitation for us in this Advent season is to stand in the uncomfortable liminal spaces of life knowing that God is with us. We can acknowledge the pain and despair without being overcome by it. We may find ourselves simply being with others as they deal with the struggles in life. In one way or another, all of us are called to actively seek out the points of light and hope in our lives and in the world today. When this is a struggle we can rely on one another. Sometimes, it is in coming together that we find and claim the hope and joy that is there for us all. I know for me as I deal with many of the struggles in my own life that I must rely on others to help me find the joy and hope that I often overlook. I also strive to keep a daily gratitude journal which compels me to notice and rejoice in the points of joy and hope that I experience in any given day. May we have the courage to abide in the liminal spaces of life knowing that God is always with us. We may be surprised to discover that we can rejoice and blossom like the desert.

AMEN

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 35:1-10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the Lord,
the majesty of our God.
Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
'Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.
He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you.'
Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.
A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,
but it shall be for God's people;
no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.
No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Matthew 11:2-11

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you." Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

*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

Prayers & Praises

December 11th, 2022

In Our Church

- Family:
- Marvin Thurber
 - William Deterding
 - Vic Burgess
 - Jessica Vocasek
 - Donna Baker
 - Polly Putney
 - Lois Frogge
 - Joan Dietrich
 - Mildred Brockemeyer

Relatives:

- Friends and Family of *Vic Burgess*
- Laurie Aufdemberge, *with breast cancer,*
sister of Kristi Bowker

Friends:

- Cedric Gibb, *healing prayers, friend of Cec Burkhart*
- Carson Mousel, *grandson of Bob and Eileen Kunz,*
from Mildred Brockemeyer

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:

- Disciples General Church

Our Global Ministries Missionaries:

- Alex Maldonado serving in Colombia

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



Song of the Week

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

Text: Marty Haugen, 1983

Awake! Awake and greet the new morn,
for angels herald its dawning.
sing out your joy, for Jesus is born,
behold! the Child of our longing.
Come as a baby weak and poor,
to bring all hearts together,
to open wide the heavenly door,
and lives now inside us forever.

To us, to all in sorrow and fear,
Emmanuel comes a-singing,
whose humble song is quiet and near,
yet fills the earth with its ringing.
Music to heal the broken soul
and hymns of loving kindness,
the thunder of the anthems roll
to shatter all hate and injustice.

In deepest night Christ's coming shall be,
when all the world is despairing,
as morning light so quiet and free,
so warm and gentle and caring.
One without voice breaks forth in song,
a lame one leaps in wonder,
the weak are raised above the strong,
and weapons are broken asunder.

Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night,
though cold the winter and cheerless,
the rising sun shall crown you with light,
be strong and loving and fearless;
Love be our song and love our prayer,
and love, our endless story,
may God fill every day we share,
and bring us at last into glory.