



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

The Rev. Kara Hillhouse, Pastor
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Week of December 7, 2025
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Lighting the Advent Wreath

One: We have lit the first candle of HOPE. This Sunday we light the second candle, the candle of PEACE. We light it knowing full well that peace is elusive, and in some parts of the world, it is almost completely absent. Yet in this season of Advent, we trust that God is never absent from us. God is always preparing something new. And even where there is war and discord, whether between countries, within families, or within our own hearts, God is present, gently leading us to new possibilities.

Many: Loving God, in this time of preparation and planning, we thank you for the hope and peace you unfailingly offer us. Show us the creative power of hope; and teach us the peace that comes from justice. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you that we may walk in the light of Christ.

One: Welcome Christ into your heart and go forth in hope and peace.

Sermon

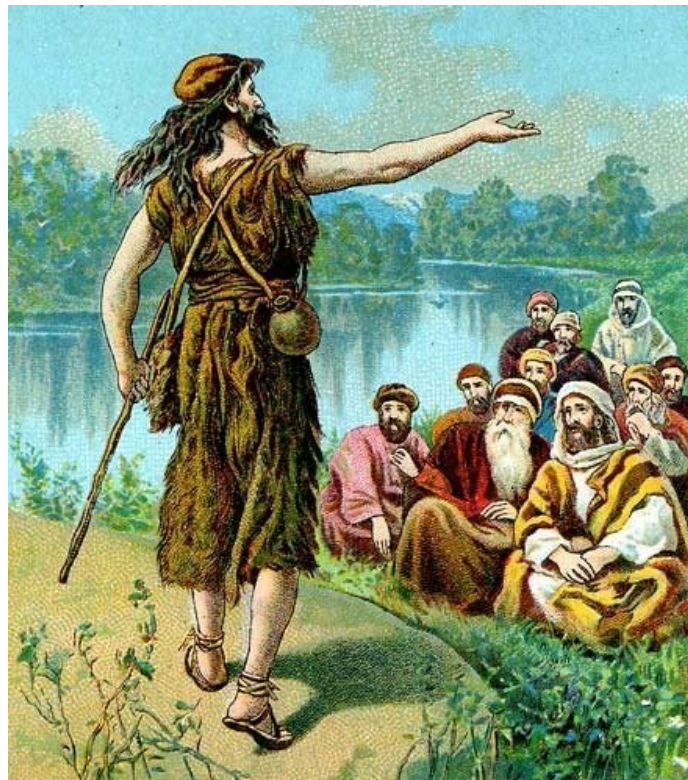
From The Rev. Kara Hillhouse

Matthew 3:1-12

Called Beyond

John (the one who would be known as "the Baptist"), a relative of Jesus (likely a cousin) was known by several names: Saint John the Forerunner and Saint John the Immerser being two of them. The Bible tells us quite a bit about John's life, from the angel Gabriel's proclaiming that he would be filled with the Holy Spirit before he was even born, to his growing up in the wilderness where God prepared him for his ministry, to all that he was destined to do, according to his father Zechariah's prophecy: "And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace." John was fully human, yet God called him to a greater purpose, and empowered him to accomplish it. Each one of us is fully human as well--imperfect, messy, yet beautiful. God calls us beyond what we feel able to do, but he equips us for the task, if we will only lean upon him. Join us for worship Sunday, as we observe the sacred traditions of the Advent season, sit and listen for the Word of God, and join together in fellowship. We'll see you at First!

Pastor Kara



Scripture Readings

Isaiah 11:1-10

“A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.”



Matthew 3:1-12

“In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.’ This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, ‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”’ Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, ‘You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our ancestor”; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ‘I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.’”

Community Prayer

Laboring God, with axe and winnowing fork you clear a holy space where hurt and destruction have no place, and a little child holds sway. Clear our lives of hatred and despair, sow seeds of joy and peace, that shoots of hope may spring forth and we may live in harmony with one another. Amen.

Prayers & Praises

December 7, 2025

In Our Church Family:

- Donna Baker
- Jim Christ
- Joan Dietrich
- Ron Hile
- Polly Putney
- Marvin Thurber
- Phyllis Thurber
- Jessica Vocasek
- Roger Vocasek

Prayers for Gwen Belden, whose brother, Al Watsek, passed away this past week.

Prayers for Jim Christ as he continues to gain strength with cardiac rehabilitation.

Prayers for Roger & Jessica Vocasek. They both have health issues.

Prayers for Katelyn Long. Katelyn is continuing to work with a specialist.

Friends:

- Lucy Reuter-Masek, mom of Kristie Christianson, prayers for recovery after the removal of a facial tumor.
- Jody Schrage, friend of Katelyn Long, prayers for healing are appreciated.
- Nikki, friend of Katelyn Long. She is recovering from recent gastric bypass surgery.
- Ron Collamore, prayers for his health.
- Deidra Parman, sister-in-law of Elaine Parman. Deidra has lymphoma only in her eyelids, and it is treatable with low dose radiation. Thank you for the prayers.

Our Timothy:

- Rev. Bruce Frogge, Cypress Creek CC in Spring, TX

In the Nebraska Region: Center on the Regional Church - Regional Church

Our Global Ministries Missionaries in:
Indonesia

"We thank you for the gift of this beautiful country and for blessing us with diversity. Please bless Indonesia, so that it truly lives up to its motto, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity). Often, our people embrace "unity in uniformity." This situation leads to conflict and a perpetual cycle of violence. Pour out your wisdom to the leaders of the nation and churches in Indonesia to stand in solidarity with the reality of oppression that continues to this day. Amen

For more information and stories about our Global Ministry partners visit www.globalministries.org



Prepare the Way, O Zion

Prepare the way, O Zion, your Christ is drawing near! Let every hill and valley a level way appear. Greet One who comes in glory, foretold in sacred story. O blest is Christ who came in God's most holy name.

He brings God's rule, O Zion; he comes from heaven above. His rule is peace and freedom, and justice, truth, and love. Lift high your praise resounding, for grace and joy abounding. O blest is Christ who came in God's most holy name.

Fling wide your gates, O Zion; your Savior's rule embrace, and tidings of salvation proclaim in every place. All lands will bow rejoicing, their adoration voicing. O blest is Christ who came in God's most holy name.

