



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 14, 2025
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Lighting the Advent Wreath

One: We have lit the first two candles, the candles of HOPE and PEACE. Today we light the third candle, the candle of JOY. This should be the easy one, because JOY is all around us - in the children, the lights, the music, the gathering together. But how often do we let our busy-ness, our preparations or our memories push JOY to the side? JOY is like an underground spring that wells up within us, but JOY is also a choice, an attitude. Like a muscle, it needs to be exercised. So today we open ourselves to JOY, trusting that God has already planted it within us...all we need to do is give it care and offer to share it with the world.

Many: Loving God, we open ourselves to you, trusting that this is how you made us: you created us for joy, in our hearts and our lives. Show us the creative power of hope; teach us the peace that comes from justice; and fill us with the kind of joy that cannot be contained, but must be shared. Prepare our hearts to be transformed by you that we may walk in the light of Christ.

One: Rejoice in God always, rejoice. For God has created you with the capacity for joy. Trust in God's good will for all of creation and open yourself to God's gentle, transforming love. Go forth in hope, peace, and joy.

Sermon

From The Rev. Kara Hillhouse

Luke 1:46-55

Looking for the Holy

Mary's Magnificat, the song of praise she sings to the Lord, for all the faithfulness he has shown to his people, is found only in the gospel of Luke. It's a remarkable passage, in great part because it doesn't make sense. Mary shouldn't be rejoicing, shouldn't be praising God. Her life is pretty much falling to pieces, yet there she is feeling blessed and thankful. She sees the holy in the midst of what could easily have been called a disaster. What can we learn from Mary and her ability to look at things through eyes of faith? Join us this Third Sunday of Advent for a time of meaningful worship, beautiful music, and fellowship. We'll see you at First!

Pastor Kara



Scripture Readings

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 shall be 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 traveler, 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.”

Luke 1:46-55

“And Mary said, ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.’”



Community Prayer

O God of Isaiah and John the Baptist, through all such faithful ones you proclaim the unfolding of future joy and renewed life. Strengthen our hearts to believe your advent promise that one day we will walk in the holy way of Christ, where sorrow and sighing will be no more and the journey of God’s people will be joy. Amen.

“Reprinted and Revised Common Lectionary Prayers,
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Prayers & Praises

December 14, 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, recently passed away.

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:

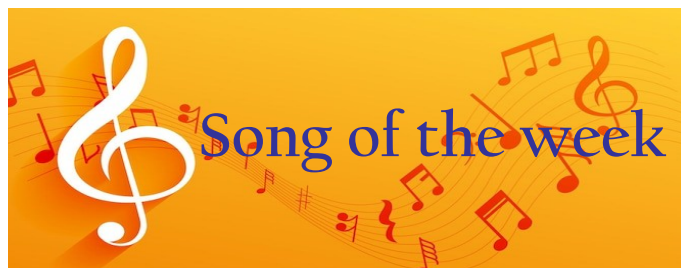
- Rev. Bruce Frogge, Cypress Creek CC in Spring, TX

In the Nebraska Region: CCN Regional Board - Regional Church

Our Global Ministries Missionaries in: Taiwan

"Dear God, We lift up the pastors, elders, and members of the PCT, especially those in Hualien and other regions severely impacted by disasters. Strengthen their ministries of presence, healing, and rebuilding. Bless the students and teachers of Yushan Theological Seminary and the Indigenous communities who bear heavy burdens. May your Spirit deepen our partnership, that together we may embody compassion, justice, and resilience. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen."

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



My Soul Gives Glory to My God

My soul gives glory to my God; my heart pours out its praise. God lifted up my lowliness in many marvelous ways.

My God has done great things for me: yes, holy is God's name. All people will declare me blessed, and blessings they shall claim.

From age to age to all who fear, such mercy love imparts, dispensing justice far and near, dismissing selfish hearts.

Love casts the mighty from their thrones, promotes the insecure, leaves hungry spirits satisfied; the rich seems suddenly poor.

Praise God, whose loving covenant supports those in distress, remembering past promises with present faithfulness.

