

In the Loop

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April 23, 2026
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Listening and Talking . . . by Rev. Tom Cici

The Gospel of John has Jesus talking a great deal about love to his disciples. Jesus tells us in the John 14:15-17, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.”

Most likely, Jesus is referring to the greatest commandments: To love God with your whole heart, soul, mind and strength; and the second is to love others as yourself. We follow Christ by loving others as Jesus did – loving unconditionally, loving compassionately, loving graciously with forgiveness, loving with kindness, joy, and self-giving love. In other words, life is all about love. We love because others have loved us, and God’s Loving Presence is within us and we live in God’s love.

God’s love within us – God’s Holy Spirit, God’s Advocate residing with us – has the power to transcend us. It has the power to transcend our pain into joy. In fact, if we don’t take our pain to God, and let God’s love transcend it, we will certainly pass it on to others. God’s love has the power to transcend our littleness to bigness, turn our hatred to love, respond to our injury with forgiveness, transcend our victimhood to mutuality, transcend our despair to hope, transcend our sadness to joy.

We might ask: Who is this Advocate? Quite simply it is the Holy Spirit of God abiding within each person and all creation. Our True Self is our union with God. The Holy Spirit is known by many names: Paraclete (Greek for Public Defense Attorney); Counselor; Comforter; Helper; Soul; God’s Love.

We cannot love others by our own willpower and intellect alone. Our intellect, left on its own for a lengthy time, will choose hatred and violence over love. We can love others because we are not alone. To put it another way, because we are not alone – God abiding within us and we live in God’s loving life – we can love others selflessly. Love transcends the pain of loneliness and the pain of rejection.



We can love because others have shown God’s love to us, and we graciously receive God’s love within us to share with others. It takes both – someone to show us love and graciously receiving God’s love to share with others. There is only one way, one path, one direction, one truth, one life . . . It is the direction of love.

Blessings on all as we Journey together in God’s Love!



The Ripple Effect Is Back!

Again, this year, as our summer mission project, Centennial Christian Church (and our friends) are offering to help members of our congregation as well as residents of the local community do small outdoor jobs. Homeowners would need to pay for materials, but Centennial Christian Church will provide labor and small tools. We cannot do roofs, plumbing or anything that requires a license. Work will begin as we receive jobs and as we are able to form teams.

Currently, we do not have any jobs, but we are putting articles in the Founders' Grove Neighborhood newsletter and Facebook Page. If you need assistance in doing small jobs such as painting a fence, repairing or painting a wooden porch or garage, cleaning out gutters, pouring concrete, or removing brush from a fence line (to name a few), please contact Kip Hayden or Pastor Tom Cici as soon as possible. Property owners will need to sign a Release of Liability contract.

After Pastor Tom and Kip evaluates the job(s), we will place qualifiers on the calendar and place sign-up sheets on the tables. It's just people helping and caring for people.



Link To Give

Scan the QR CODE below to place a one time gift to Centennial Christian Church that supports our ministry, programs and outreach.



OUR VISION STATEMENT

Spreading the message of God's Love, in our church and in our community, through caring for each other.




MAKE A GIFT TO CENTENNIAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH


Flower Planting

In celebration of Mother's Day, a time to honor love, care, and nurturing, the congregations of Centennial Christian Church and New Covenant Community (NCC) will come together to plant flowers and beautify our shared spiritual home.

This is a wonderful opportunity to honor the nurturing spirit of motherhood, care for God's creation, and spend meaningful time in fellowship with one another.

 Saturday, May 9

 9:00 AM

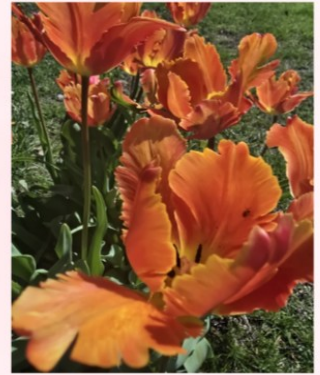
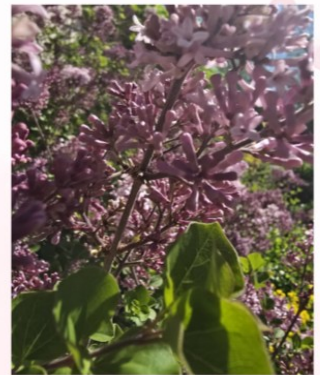
 Church Grounds

Whether you'd like to get your hands in the soil or simply come to support and enjoy the morning, all are welcome. Please bring any gardening tools or supplies you'd like to use.

"The Lord will guide you always... you will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail." - Isaiah 58:11

May this time of planting reflect the love, care, and beauty that mothers bring into our lives, and may what we grow together be a lasting blessing to all who gather here.

Where
Centennial &
NCC come
together,
Beauty
Grows.





**Registration is open for Church Summer Camp 2026!!!!
The deadline for early bird registration is April 30th.**

The church will pay 1/2 of the early registration fee. When you register select "church payment". Take a copy of your registration confirmation to the church office and pay the church for your portion of the fee by April 26th. The church will make the actual camp payment for the total amount.

Summer Camp 2026

Walter Scott Camp & Learning Center

CYF (High School): June 7-13

You & Me (formerly Grandparents & Me): June 14-17

Beginners Camp (K-3): June 18-20

JYF (3-5): June 21-June 27

Family Camp (All Ages): July 1-4

Chi Rho (Junior High): July 5-11

Register by 4/30 for reduced fee!

**Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.—
Proverbs 22:6**

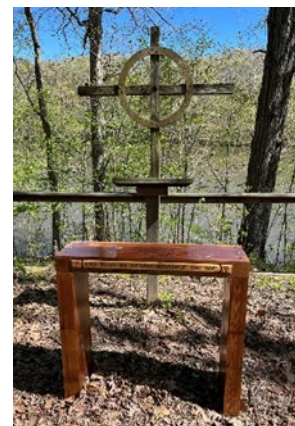
Help Us Prepare to Commission Our Campers

Members of our Worship Committee are requesting your assistance in stuffing Fannie Packs as gifts for our campers. Please donate small items such as small-packaged snacks, mini-notebooks, pens, hand-held games, gum, candy, playing cards, and other small items for all ages that can fit in a Fanny Pack. Please put them in the provided basket near the elevator across from the water fountain by May 10, 2026.

Scan me!

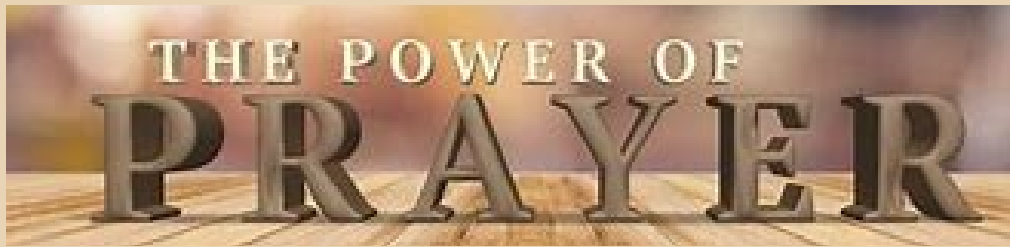


To learn more about the camp scan the QRCODE.



April & May 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				23 Generosity + Zoom Meeting: 11A TOPS: 5:15P-Proverbs Men's Dinner at Denny's in North Normal 6P	24 Ladies Luncheon at Outback Steakhouse 11A	25 CWF Gathering 8A-FH
26 Worship Service 10:15A Loose Change Offering	27	28 Elder Meeting 6:30P-FH	29 Choir 6:30P	30 TOPS: 5:15P-Proverbs Deadline for Summer Camp Registration to Save On Fee	1	2 CWF Disciples Women's Event 9A—FH
3 Worship Service 10:15A	4	5	6 Choir 6:30P	7 TOPS: 5:15P-Proverbs Outreach—11A	8	9 Planting Flowers on Church Grounds with NCC 9A
10 Second Sunday Food Pantry Worship Service 10:15A	11 Trustees Meeting 11A—FH	12 CWF 9:30A—FH	13 Choir 6:30P	14 TOPS: 5:15P-Proverbs Book Club 6:30P	15	16
17 Worship Service 10:15A	18 Worship Committee Meeting 10:30A—FH PRC 12P—FH	19	20 Choir 6:30P	21 TOPS: 5:15P-Proverbs Men's Dinner 6P	22	23



Continuing Prayers

Josh Dewar, Dale Carter, Gary Cochran, and Shari Reinle, Manny Martinez, Terry Utsinger, Nick Calhoon, Tracy Hallakan, Peggy Wade, Miles McReynolds, JoAnne Pritchard, Michelle Stevens, Nikki McCreary, Joe Taylor, Janet Keefe, Celestia Jones, David Smith, Tiffany Ward, Nancy Jones, Amber Newell, Leonard Bates, Greg Firkus & Pat Murphy, Ann Burmaster, Scott Giffith, Linda and Pete Rasmussen, Fern Scaggs, Deb Reed

At Home/Assisted Living

At home-Doris Miller, Frieda Foland, Frank and Barb Leach

Nursing Home

- Holiday Blair House - Priscilla "Pryl" Stam, 1200 E. College Ave, Room 119, Normal, IL 61761.
- The Arc-Rev. Barbara Short, Pat Iliff; Pontiac-Goldwater -Ron Geske

Military

Mark Brienen, Keyla Folsom, Troy Guyan, Benjamin Horn, Michael Iverson, John Thomas, Darrell Walton, Glen Whitecotton, Christopher Wilson-Poston

A Prayer for Peace and Protection

Loving God,

We lift up those who serve far from home—grant them courage, protection, and safe return.

We hold in our hearts the people of Gaza, Iran, and all communities caught in conflict—bring comfort to the suffering, healing to the wounded, and hope to the weary.

Soften hearts, guide leaders toward wisdom, and turn all nations toward peace.

May Your mercy rest upon every life, and may Your peace prevail.

Amen.

**Our challenge for the week –
Pray this prayer every day –**

Loving God, thank you for teaching us the universal truth that always leads to love and peace. Help us to anchor the eternity of love in our souls and embed the world with goodness and harmony.

[Wait and listen]

Upcoming Birthdays	
Aaron Todd	04/26
JoAnne Pritchard	04/28
Melissa McCoy	05/12
Sharon Fizzell	05/17

