



In the Loop

Centennial Christian Church
1219 E Grove Bloomington, IL. 61701
Ph. 309-828-2185

February 22, 2024
<https://www.centennialcc.org>
email: people@centennialcc.org

Listening and Talking . . . by Rev. Tom Cici

I worked for my father for over 12 years, and I'm very thankful for that experience. But it is a blessed privilege to call God "Our Father," and to be called into such a loving relationship with God. Jesus used the name Abba ("Papa") to describe God (Mark 14:36), as we are all children of God, we are each the image and likeness of God.

When Jesus says, "Follow me" (Mark 1:17) he is calling us to action! Just as Jesus is called "Son of God," we are also children of God, and Jesus calls us to follow him. The goal of the Christian life is to grow into the maturity of Christ who shows us that God is love. Christians follow Christ in allowing God's love to affect the world through us.

Now, the Greek word for *follow* in the New Testament scriptures is *akoloutheo*, and it carries a powerful, strong meaning. It means obedience, a kind of obedience that an employee or soldier should give to an employer or commanding officer. It means love that is unconditional, abundantly gracious, self-sacrificial, and complete love. It means devotion to a great cause, a cause outside yourself and larger than yourself. It means commitment that is unflinching, unwavering, and unshakable.

So, this is serious business here! When Jesus says, "Follow me," he is asking for our devotion, our trust, our service, our loyalty. He is asking for our lives, our hearts, our souls, our minds, and our strength. "Follow me," he says.

The central imperative in the teaching of Jesus, as a profound wisdom-guide, is to transform our minds and hearts – Jesus' disciples – to live in accord with God's character. God's character is "Merciful, gracious, faithful, forgiving, and forever steadfast in love" (Exodus 34:6). This is the best that anyone can do: to act as God acts.

When Jesus says, "Follow me," he is calling us to receive a gift of a new direction; he is calling us to a new task; and he is calling us to a new commitment which is rewarding. Anyone who says, "Follow me," is giving directions, is going somewhere, and wants us to accompany him. Jesus says, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:15).

Jesus is calling us away from selfishness; away from greed and avarice; away from the worldly powers of counting, weighing, fearing, distrusting, threatening, manipulating, separating, hurting and punishing models which the isolated ego prefers. Jesus is calling us to the spirit of Christ-like compassionate, gracious, unconditional, merciful, and self-giving love. The power of humility and Love in the kingdom of God is so important!

May the One Spirit speak to and through you as we journey together.





Pastor Classes

“Pastor Class” is a series of three or four sessions offered by the pastor to help the candidate prepare for their baptism. During the sessions, we review some scriptures referring to baptism, how to notice the Holy Spirit working in your life, your identity as a daughter or son of God, and what it means to be a member of the Christian Church. Basically, we discuss what baptism is all about, why a Christian would want to get baptized, and how the person will be baptized. We then tie baptism to Holy Communion.

If any youth or adult feels God’s Spirit calling you to make preparations for your baptism on this Easter Sunday (March 31), please contact Pastor Tom by Sunday, February 18. You can see him after worship service on Sundays or call the church office (309) 828-2185 or Tom’s cell phone: 765-541-0611. We would love to accompany your schedule and tailor baptismal instructions according to your needs.

Seeking God’s Vision for Our Church

Our Elders need your assistance in seeking a God-directed vision for our faith community. Elders would greatly appreciate you attending one of these small group sessions to discuss when you felt most connected to God and this church in the past, what gifts or passions you would like to share with this faith community, and what you think God is calling this congregation to do in the near future. Please plan to participate in one of these four sessions:

- Thursday, February 29, 2024 beginning 6:30 P.M.
- Sunday, March 3rd after Worship service (Lunch available)
- Sunday, March 10th after Worship service (Lunch available)
- Monday, March 18 beginning 10:00 A.M.

Signup sheets for these small group sessions (with 10 participants per session) are available outside the main doors of our sanctuary. Questions for our discussion groups are also available. These start-up questions are enjoyable, exciting, and inspirational when shared in a group. If you are unable to attend any of these sessions, please answer the discussion questions, and forward them to the church office by April 7, 2024.

Elders will review all of your vision ideas from these sessions and look at all the written answers to our discussion questions at an Elder’s Retreat on April 19 and 20, 2024. There, at Walter Scott Camp and Learning Center, they will draft a “preferred future story,” a short vision statement, and a three-year ministry plan. Revisions and final approval will be sought from the Church Board and the entire congregation.



Questions for Our Visioning Process:

Please prepare to discuss these questions in one of our four small group sessions: **Thursday, 2/29/2024 (6:30 PM); After 10:15 Worship Sunday 3/03/2024; After 10:15 Worship Sunday 3/10/2024; or Monday 3/18/2024 (10:00 AM)**. If you are unable to attend any of these small group sessions, please answer these questions and return to Centennial Christian Church by April 7, 2024. Please pray before answering.

1. When in the past did you feel most connected to God and this church? Was it a certain program or activity, or what was it that specifically made you feel this way.
2. Based on how church is different post-COVID and based on the current size of our congregation, what purposes (such as activities, programs, services, etc.) should we be focused on in the near future?
3. What gifts or passions would you like to be able to share with this congregation? What type of activities, programs, services, etc. would we need to offer to allow you the opportunity to share your gifts or passions?
4. After thinking about the previous questions which were based on your feelings, what do you think God is calling our church to do in the near future? It could be something new that we have never done before or it could be a change to something we are currently doing.

Our Upcoming Worship Services During Holy Week of 2024:

Dramatic Reading on Palm Sunday: March 24th



The Worship service on Palm Sunday is similar to that of any other Sunday, except we have a gathering of the youth and their families near the steps to the loft for a processional with palms. Additionally, the passion story will be taken from the Gospel of Mark and presented as a dramatic reading by multiple voices reading the parts of Jesus, the High Priest, Peter, Pilate, Servant and Disciples/Bystanders. Please volunteer or say “Yes” if asked to read a part in the dramatic reading. Thank you!

Maundy Thursday Service: March 28th



This year we are inviting First Christian Church of Bloomington to join us in celebrating the institution of the Lord’s Supper by Jesus Christ. The worship service begins at 7:00 PM, and a meal does not precede it. We will have a dramatized reading of the Upper Room, and each person in attendance will have an opportunity to receive Holy Communion. After partaking of Holy Communion, you are welcome to reflect on Jesus’ commandment, “that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12).

Community Good Friday Service: March 29th



The Bloomington Normal Clergy Alliance is sponsoring a Community Good Friday Service at the First Presbyterian Church in Normal at 2000 E. College Avenue from Noon (12:00) to 1:00 PM. About ten Christian congregations are gathering to celebrate and worship God together. Pastor Tom Cici and several other ministers will help lead and engage our ecumenical worship communities in reflecting on “The Seven Last Words of Jesus.” Please contact Phil Enge of First Presbyterian Church (309) 452-4459, ext. 202 or penge@firstpresnormal.org if you would like to participate in a combined choir anthem. Hope to see you at our Community Good Friday Service.

A New Sermon Series . . . by Pastor Tom

The First Sunday of Lent, February 18, begin a new five-week sermon series: “**Recognizing Our Spiritual Gifts.**” This theme accompanies and informs our visioning process. This is the agenda of our new sermon series:

<u>Dates:</u>	<u>Scriptures:</u>	<u>Themes:</u>
Feb 18, 2024	Acts 8:26–40	Philip Baptizes an Ethiopian Eunuch
Feb 25, 2024	Exodus 18:10–24	Jethro’s Advice Accepted by Moses
March 03, 2024	John 12:1–9	Sisters Serve Dinner to Jesus
March 10, 2024	Acts 6:1–8	Seven Chosen to Serve
March 17, 2024	Ruth 2:1–16	Ruth Gleans in the Fields

People can do lots of things, but their talents and spiritual gifts all come from the same source – They come from God. God gives people the power to heal like a doctor, teach like a teacher, and preach like a preacher. God gives people the energy to invent airplanes and rockets and write poetry and make a good meal. Some of us have spiritual gifts of playing musical instruments, singing, acting, writing scripts, encouraging others, mentoring, gardening, and providing leadership. Some of us have spiritual gifts of mathematics, computer science, crafts, sewing, art, cleaning, tutoring and building things. As you can see, the list of spiritual gifts is endless and comes from the same source – God. Now, God asks us to share what we have with our neighbors and creation.

Dear Centennial Congregation,

Center for Hope Outreach Programs have much to be thankful for. One of the reasons for our gratitude is your friendship and continued support. Your generous donation of \$300 will go a long way to help the many we serve. It is because of your kind and giving heart that we are able to assist those in McLean County who are facing hardships and crisis.

We are so proud of all who have looked beyond themselves in order to care for others. Whether that is through giving, serving or prayers. Thank you for helping us to carry out our mission, to provide needed resources, support and encouragement, to the residents of McLean County.

Sincerely,

On Behalf of Patriece Gentry

Executive Director

Center for Hope Outreach Programs

1308 E. Empire St. Bloomington IL

309.808.3742



Bent School Annual School Supply Collection January 29-February 29

Outreach Supporting Bent School with Your Help!

February 2024, we will be collecting items to support Bent School. Along with sanitizing items, they have requested the following:

- Paper towels
- Pencils
- Paper/plastic cups
- Goo Gone
- Bookmarks
- Pencil erasers
- Expo Markers
- Glue sticks
- Composition notebooks
- Travel size deodorant
- Feminine products for girls



Your previous support over the years to Bent School has been a blessing to the children, and we look forward to supporting them again this year!

Please put your items in the bin located by the upstairs elevator door.

Your Outreach committee Thanks you for your support!

February 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
18 Week of Compassion begins Adult Bible Study 9A-FH Worship *10:15A	19	20	21 Adult Bible Study 10:30A-FH Bridge 12P-GH Choir 6:30P	22 Ladies Luncheon 11A-Rosie's Pub TOPS#559 5:15P-Isaiah Men's Dinner 6P-Bandana's	23	24
25 Week of Compassion Ends Loose Change Offering Adult Bible Study 9A-FH Worship *10:15A	26 PRC 12P-Isaiah	27 Elders 6:30P-FH	28 Adult Bible Study 10:30A-FH Bridge 12P-GH Choir 6:30P	29 TOPS#559 5:15P-Isaiah Visioning Group Discussion 6:30P-FH	March 1	2
3 Adult Bible Study 9A-FH Worship *10:15A Visioning Group Discussion after Worship-FH	4	5	6 Adult Bible Study 10:30A-FH Bridge 12P-GH Choir 6:30P	7 Outreach 11A-FH TOPS#559 5:15P-Isaiah	8	9
10 Second Sunday Food Pantry Adult Bible Study 9A-FH Worship *10:15A	11 Trustees 11A-GH	12 CWF 9:30A-FH	13 Adult Bible Study 10:30A-FH Bridge 12P-GH Choir 6:30P	14 TOPS#559 5:15P-Isaiah	15	16

*Online worship <https://www.facebook.com/pg/centennialcc.org>

FH-Fellowship Hall GH-Great Hall

Cookies for college students and the military

CWF will be making cookie boxes for college students and military personnel who are related to church members or are church members. These boxes will be filled at our March meeting. Please sign up by the elevator or by calling the church office. Deadline for submitting names is Sunday, March 10.

Thank you,
Julie



Prayer Request

Celia Middleton, granddaughter-in-law of the sister of Kay Carius, had her baby Monday, February 19. Baby girl is named Charlie. She weighs 11lb 4oz. Mother and daughter are doing well but will need lots of prayers of strength and support.

Continuing Prayers

James, Neil, Barb Leach, Barb Short, Cameron Cook, Angie Simpson, Karen Middleton, Jackie Steinhilber, Marla Gaines-Starke, Kip Hayden, Megan Brown, Mannie Martinez, Chuck Marseilles, Sr., Gery Conlin, Leonard Bates, Ann Burmaster, Caitlyn, Cole, Ron Geske, Pam, Ruth Ann Lowder, Dick Tarter, Scott Griffith, Janet Keefe, Jessica, Marsha, Pete Rasmussen, Robin, Fern Scaggs, Tammy, Marian Wrinkle

At Home/Assisted Living

Myerling Home-Ruth Roley; At home-Doris Miller, Frieda Folan; The Pointe (Pontiac) Rae Ann Geske

Nursing Home

The Arc-Tom (Billy) Robey, Rev. Barbara Short, Don Short; Westminster-Anita Poling; Martin Health—Ruth Ann Lowder, Earl McIntyre; Evergreen Village-Pat Iliff; Hopedale Nursing Home-Dick Tarter; Accolade (Pontiac)-Ron Geske; Bickford House - Pryscilla (Pryl) Stam

Military

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

Prayers for CCIW congregations and ministries: Davis Memorial Taylorville, Central CC Havana; Grace Christian Church, Frankfort, MI

March Birthdays and Anniversaries

Alex Cvelbar	03/01
Deb Reed	03/03
Joe Peebles	03/09
Marla Gaines-Starke	03/11
Beth and Mark Rup	03/11
Barb and Don Short	03/11
Diane Andres	03/15
Barb and Frank Leach	03/17
Ruth Valentine	03/26

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

Loving God, I'm so happy you are with me.
I'm so happy you are mine. Mountain high,
river deep, you are with me. I trust you, and
know you are loving me.
[Wait in the silence. Listen and receive.]