



# In the Loop

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## Listening and Talking . . . by Rev. Tom Cici

The first chapter in the Gospel of Mark can be considered a synopsis of Mark's entire gospel. See if you can find the common thread that links together these three fascinating verses. (1) "As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John" (1:29). (2) Jesus had just been in the synagogue where people "were all amazed, and they kept on asking each other, 'What is this? A new teaching – with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.'" (1:27). (3) Jesus proclaims, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (1:15).

The common thread that runs throughout the Gospel of Mark is this: *We are being made well by resting in the arms of God's love.* There are three ways this happens.

First, we are made well by God treating all of us with tenderness. At Peter's invitation, Jesus goes into Peter's house and takes Peter's mother-in-law by the hand and lifts her up (Mark 1:30-35). She is living in a culture that did not highly esteem woman, and believed sickness was a punishment from God. Jesus ignores all of this. The point of this healing is the message it conveys about God's character revealed in Jesus: *God is absolutely tender!*



Secondly, Jesus shows us the reconciling character of God: The Face of God. After Peter's mother-in-law served Jesus' disciples, they brought all the sick or possessed with demons to Jesus which meant that the entire town was gathered around Peter's house. Remember Jesus was proclaiming that the "Reign" of God has come near: *when we share God's Love, compassion, mercy and right relationships with God and one another.* Sin is the illusion that we are separate from God and each other. We need to stop assuring ourselves that we are better than our neighbor and therefore more worthy.

Ask yourself this question: Can I trust God with my life, my worth, and let go of my prideful ego so that I rest in the arms of God's love alone? Do I need to push someone down to falsely ensure that my value increases? You sin when you cannot let go of your self-serving ego and trust God's Love within to direct you no matter where God's Love and mercy takes you. You are forgiven for that, but it blocks your relationship with God from your side.

Third, we are to surrender to God. After all that preaching and serving, Jesus went off to a deserted place and prayed to God. Jesus was healed, was cleansed, made well, and again went out to preach in other towns and heal others. Likewise, we – you and I – can carry the world on our shoulders or we can pray, "I give you, dear God, my life, my world, the whole world."

We are to surrender to God and put our trust in God's gracious and compassionate love. We are to be the image and likeness of God by treating all humanity with tenderness, and only with tenderness. Collectively, we are the body of Christ, the face of God, and individually we are to reveal the forgiving and reconciling character of God.

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

## **Our Upcoming Worship Services During Holy Week of 2025:**

### **Dramatic Reading on Palm Sunday: April 13<sup>th</sup>**



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: April 17<sup>th</sup>**



This year, First Christian Church of Bloomington is inviting Centennial Christian Church and hosting our joint Maundy Thursday service. The worship service begins at 7:00 PM, and a meal does not precede it. We will gather around tables in their Fellowship Hall, 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: April 18<sup>th</sup>**



We are joining the Bloomington Normal Clergy Alliance in sponsoring a Community Good Friday Service at the Mennonite Church of Normal – 805 S. Cottage Avenue from Noon (12:00) to 1:00 PM. Pastor Tom Cici and several other ministers will help lead and engage our ecumenical worship communities in reflecting on the theme: “Human Suffering and God’s Redemptive Love.” There is much strife and suffering in the world and in our nation these days, and we want to recognize the presence of this pain while also underscoring God’s ever-present love throughout such hardship. Hope to see you at our Community Good Friday Service.

## 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 or near this Easter Sunday (April 20), please contact Pastor Tom by Sunday, March 16. You can see him after worship service on Sundays or contact Pastor Tom via phone: 765-541-0611 (cell) or email [marian64tom57@gmail.com](mailto:marian64tom57@gmail.com). We would love to accommodate your schedule and tailor baptismal instructions according to your needs.

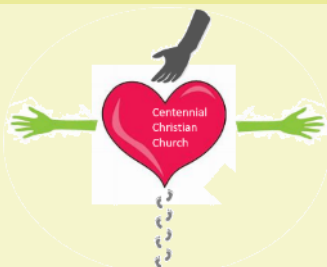
## Being an Inclusive Church . . . by Pastor Tom Cici

When I was writing “Our Vision and Core Beliefs” about Centennial Christian Church in our website, I included a section entitled “**This Church Affirms You**” with a statement that said, “This is an Open and Affirming congregation.” Mark Rupe, chairperson of our Church Board, called me and said, “When did we become an Open and Affirming congregation?” I said, “I thought we already were! We have many families with LGBTQ+ members, and this church welcomes all people at the Lord’s Table. When we say all, we mean *ALL!* What’s the problem?”

When I talk to my Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC), and Mark talks to others about this, we get the same response, “I thought we already were! This church welcomes *all* people at the Lord’s Table.”

The problem is that we are not official. Centennial Christian Church has not ratified (via a formal vote) the General Assembly Resolution 1327 proclaiming that we welcome and affirm “all God’s children though differing in race, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, nationality, ethnicity, marital status, physical and mental ability, political stance or theological perspective.”

Rev. Eli Rolan Jeong (Associate Regional Minister) and the AllianceQ from the Christian Church (DOC) in Indianapolis are helping our Elders create a process for our family of faith to proclaim that we are a people of grace and welcome acknowledging our support for the welcome of and hospitality to all. Please look for upcoming articles which may give dates and opportunities for you to discuss this topic in small group sessions with our Elders and Pastor Tom. Blessing on you during this Lenten season



## OUR VISION STATEMENT

**Spreading the message of God’s Love,  
in our church and in our community,**



## **Centennial Christian Church**

is praying for the patients, families, and  
staff of Radiology at Carle BroMenn Medical  
Center.

Partners in Healing is a program of the  
Carle Faith Community Partners.

 **Carle**Health

# March/April 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				<b>6</b> Outreach 11A-FH  TOPS#559 5:15P-Isaiah  FGNA: 7P-FH	<b>7</b> <b>World Day of Prayer</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>9*</b> <b>Daylight Saving</b>  <b>Second Sunday</b> <b>Food Pantry</b>  Worship 10:15A	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> CWF 9:30a-FH	<b>12</b> Bridge 12P-GH  Choir-6:30P	<b>13</b> TOPS#559 5:15P-Isaiah  Board meeting 6P-FH	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>16</b> Worship 10:15A	<b>17</b> Trustees 11A-GH	<b>18</b> Elders:6:30P-FH	<b>19</b> Bridge 12P-GH  Choir-6:30P	<b>20</b> Worship Cmte 10A-FH  Monthly Prayer Service:5P  TOPS#559 5:15P-Isaiah  Book Club:6:30P	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>23</b> Worship 10:15A	<b>24</b> PRC:12P-Isaiah	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> Bridge 12P-GH  Choir-6:30P	<b>27</b> Ladies Luncheon 11:30A  TOPS#559 5:15P-Isaiah  Men's Dinner:6P	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>30</b> <b>Loose Change Offering</b>  Myerling 9A-worship  Worship 10:15A	<b>31</b>	<b>1 April</b> Consolidated Election:7A-GH	<b>2</b> Bridge 12P-GH  Choir-6:30P	<b>3</b> Outreach 11A-FH  TOPS#559 5:15P-Isaiah	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> Generosity Plus Mtg.-9A

FH-Fellowship Hall

GH-Great Hall

FGNA-Founders Grove Neighborhood Association

**\*March 9– Celebration of life for Larry Carius; 2P-5P at Rob Dob's 801 N Hershey Blm.**



### **Continuing Prayers**

Jake and Jacklyn, Marby Tabor, Jessica, Amber Newell, Barb Leach, Charlotte Leach, Anita Poling, Brenda, Susie Hallahan, Quinton, Janis, Paul Dawson, Janice, Sarah Hiatt, Susie, Western North Carolina, Nathan, baby August, Debbie Holiday, Sisters Kelly Bestful and Lisa Behl, Tim, Kris Carius, Leonard Bates, Greg Firkus and Pat Murphy, Charlie Middleton, James, Neil, Cameron Cook, Jackie Steinhilber, Megan Brown, Mannie Martinez, Ann Burmaster, Pam, Scott Griffith, Jessica, Marsha, Linda and Pete Rasmussen, Fern Scags

### **At Home/Assisted Living**

At home-Doris Miller, Frieda Foland; The Pointe, Pontiac-Rae Geske;

### **Nursing Home**

The Arc-Rev. Barbara Short, Don Short; Westminster-Anita Poling; Earl McIntyre; Evergreen Village-Pat Iliff; Hopedale Nursing Home-Dick Tarter; Accolade, Pontiac-Ron Geske;

### **Military**

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

<b>March Birthdays and Anniversaries</b>	
Deb Reed	03/03
Joe Peebles	03/09
Marla Gaines-Starke	03/11
<b>Mark and Beth Rupe</b>	<b>03/11</b>
<b>Barbara and Don Short</b>	<b>03/11</b>
Diane Andres	03/15
<b>Barbara and Frank Leach</b>	<b>03/17</b>
Ruth Valentine	03/26

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

Loving and merciful God, I don't want to miss an opportunity to experience you. Your presence fills and refreshes me. Help me realize when I need to press in and reflect your Love just a little more.

[Wait and listen.]