



In the Loop

Centennial Christian Church
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Listening and Talking . . . by Rev. Tom Cici

Jesus, baptized by John the Baptist, was “full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil” (Luke 4:1-2). Alone in the desert with the wild animals Satan tests Jesus’ integrity, “who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus faces the questions that arise from within. Am I doing this for my own glory? Do I want to rule the world? How should I act as the Son of God?

In Gethsemane the final answer is given, “Yet, not my will but yours be done” (Luke 22:42). This utter “love to do the will of God” is the heart of our integrity, the guide that keeps us focused and fervent to do God’s will, not our own in all circumstances. We are free to follow Jesus in doing the will of God. The three temptations of Jesus show three desires of God: Defeat selfishness by living in the “Reign” of God; Humble yourself for peace; and Give God’s love and forgiveness.

In the first temptation, Jesus seems to be thinking about the manna that was given to the Israelites as they journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land. Jesus defeats the temptation of being a victim and being privileged by living in the “Reign” of God which is to be glorified to God and reconciled to all others. The Holy Spirit connects you to God and to all others.



Jesus humbled himself and was baptized by John the baptizer as an expression of solidarity with all peoples’ desire for peace. At that time, a voice from heaven loudly expressed such a desire by saying to all the people at Jesus’ baptism, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3:21). Jesus emphasizes this when he says in his Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9).

Jesus will bring a new wisdom to all humanity which is this: God is love, and we are to be the image of that Love. We can put our trust in Christ. We can give our unwavering allegiance to Christ. We can trust the promise of God to always be with us in every circumstance of life and be strengthened by God’s presence to be our true best selves. When we do that, when we love God and God’s creation, everything else falls in place.

Because Jesus Christ has overcome Satan, we are in principle free, all of us from Adam to the last infant born, free to take up the offer of Jesus to follow him out of this wilderness and into the paradise of God’s love. We are all free of the guilt, stumbling blocks, discord, and power of sin. Sin is the illusion that we are separate from God and others. Let us always strive to act as if we are not separate from God and others, and show God’s caring Presence to all we meet.

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 13th



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 17th



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 18th



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.

Being an Inclusive Church . . . by Pastor Tom Cici

--- Discuss with Our Elders and Pastor

As I've mentioned before, when Mark Rupe and I talk to others at Centennial Christian Church about the process of being an official "Open and Affirming congregation," we get the same response, "I thought we already were! This church welcomes *all* people at the Lord's Table." Though we may begin with hospitality, where we are saying "we welcome you," Scripture calls us to journey from that place to a place of mutuality ("we value you and we need you"), where we comprehend just how deeply the global community of all God's children *need* each other in order to be the people of God (the loving "Reign" of God) we are called by Scripture to be. Ultimately, this leads to the healing and wholeness that God wants for God's creation. And this means not just saying "we welcome you," but *being* the reflection of Christ's love, which the Christian Church is called to be; to witness to all God's people not just in our words, but in our *mutual* identity as members of Christ's body though we differ in many personal ways.

Our Elders and Pastor Tom would like to give everyone in our church family (CCC) opportunities to discuss being an official "Open and Affirming congregation" at one or more of these small group sessions.

Sunday, April 27 at 11:30 AM in our Fellowship Hall

Thursday, May 01 at 6:30 PM in our Fellowship Hall

Tuesday, May 06 at 10:00 AM in our Fellowship Hall

You are not required to attend any of these small group sessions. But we would like to share the process with everyone and answer any questions you may have. Additionally, we can discuss the advantages of our congregation being a more inclusive church and the healings we can share with our community. Blessings as we journey toward Easter.



OUR VISION STATEMENT

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

We Are Officially Beginning Generosity Plus

We are welcoming an “on-site” weekend visit with Rev. Melissa St. Clair, Minister of Faith & Giving CC(DOC), on April 5 and 6, 2025. **For this first in-person session, everyone in the congregation is encouraged and welcome to attend the events of this weekend**, since we’ll be establishing a biblical and theological framework for stewardship and generosity and discussing the marks of a vital congregation. Please plan to attend these activities:

April 5 (Saturday)

- 9 – 11AM, our ad-hoc committee will have an overview session.
- Noon – 3:00 PM, Lunch with Rev. St. Clair who will provide two hours of biblical and theological reflections open to the entire congregation (includes pizzas from Papa Murphy, salad, chips and beverages).

April 6 (Sunday)

- 10:15 AM, Worship Service with Rev. St. Clair preaching.
- 11:30 – 2:00 PM, pot-luck luncheon (church provides meat) followed by the concluding theological reflection and Q/A with Rev. Melissa St. Claire.

This gives everyone in our faith family several attempts to hear Melissa’s introduction of Generosity Plus and theological reflections for stewardship and generosity. Peace and prayers that God will enrich our time together and multiply the abundant blessings that are already present in your midst.



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 23. You can see him after worship service on Sundays or contact Pastor Tom via phone: 765-541-0611 (cell) or email marian64tom57@gmail.com. We would love to accommodate your schedule and tailor baptismal instructions according to your needs.

March/April 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				20 Ladies Luncheon 11:30A-Shannon's TOPS#559 5:15P-Isaiah Men's Dinner:6P Applebee's	21	22
23 Worship 10:15A	24 PRC:12P-Isaiah	25	26	27 Ladies Luncheon 11:30A TOPS#559 5:15P-Isaiah Men's Dinner:6P Applebee's	28	29
30 Loose Change Offering Myerling Home 9A-worship Worship 10:15A	31	1 April Consolidated Election:7A-GH	2 Bridge 12P-GH Choir-6:30P	3 Outreach 11A-FH TOPS#559 5:15P-Isaiah	4	5 Generosity Plus Mtg.-9A 12P-Lunch Followed by biblical and theological reflection by Rev. Melissa St. Claire
6 Worship 10:15A Potluck:11:30A followed by theological reflection by Rev. Melissa St. Claire	7 Homecoming Task Force 4:40P-GH	8 CWF: 9:30A-FH	9 Bridge 12P-GH Choir-6:30P	10 TOPS#559 5:15P-Isaiah	11	12

Fellowship Hall

GH-Great Hall

April 20, 2025
10:15 AM – Easter Service





Continuing Prayers

Paul Hayden, Jake and Jacklyn, Mary Tabor, 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 Scaggs

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

April Birthdays and Anniversaries	
Charlotte Leach	04/03
Chloe Todd	04/12
Janet Keefe	04/18
Perry Watson	04/20
JoAnne Pritchard	04/28

Our challenge for the week –

Pray this prayer every day –

Loving and merciful God, thank you for always welcoming us into your loving embrace. Help us to show your caring Presence to all we meet in our lives.

[Wait and listen.]