



August 30, 2020

Ordinary Time, Proper 17

First Christian Church 1609 East Ash St. Goldsboro, NC 27530

Minister Rev. Dr. Tom Millay

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Weekly Conference Calls every Wednesday at 6:45 PM. Here is all you do:  
Dial 712-770-5505 and then wait for instructions to enter access code, which is  
300904#.

### Outdoor Church

If we were ever tempted to take gathering at church for granted, I am sure we do not do so anymore! Praise God: We will continue to have outdoor services this Sunday. Church will begin at **9:30am** and last about 30 minutes. Masks will be encouraged, and we ask that you bring your own lawn chair. For those not able to attend, our worship services will still be available online. We will still have our **Sunday conference call at 10:45am**.



### Pastor's Library No. 7

Look at the above image. Can you tell which member of the Trinity is which? Tune into the Pastor's Library this week when I share a convincing interpretation from Gabriel Bunge's *The Rublev Trinity*. This book does an excellent job both identifying the members of the Trinity and explaining the theological significance of Rublev's wonderful (and wonder-filled) icon.



### Music

"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing" (Ps. 100:1-2). We will be worshipping the Lord on Sunday. We will be entering the Lord's gates with gladness and the Lord's courts with praise. **Tom Casey** will continue playing LIVE music during the Sunday service, and **Rev. Dr. Penny Ziemer** will also be bringing us a song. More piano music from Tom Casey can be found online on the church's Facebook. Be sure to check out the online music, and feel free to share it with your friends!

IN  
THE  
BEGINNING  
WAS  
THE  
WORD

### Verse-by-Verse: Walking through the Gospel of John

Join us on Facebook for a new video series titled "Verse-by-Verse," where Pastor Tom walks through the Gospel of John and unpacks the rich meaning of the text. The series starts by answering the question: What does it mean to say "In the beginning was the Word"?

### United Church Ministries Special Offering

If you would like to make a contribution to our special offering for UCM, this is the **last Sunday** to be able to do so! Each year in August we receive a special mission offering for United Church Ministries of Wayne County. United Church Ministries is a community outreach program serving the emergency needs of people here in Wayne County. Assistance is provided for rent, food, utilities, medicine, and transportation. United Church Ministries is primarily supported by member churches. First Christian has been a member since the beginning. By supporting this special mission offering, **we answer Jesus' command to love thy neighbor and feed his sheep.** The Missions Task Force invites and seeks your generous participation in this special mission offering. In addition, if you would like to volunteer with UCM, you may contact Mary or Ronnie Thompson and they will put you in touch with the UCM Director.

## **Racial Equity Orientation Workshop**

The second Racial Equity Orientation Workshop took place on **Thursday, August 27, 7-8:30pm**. I am so grateful to be part of our Christian movement that is not limited by race, and to share this time with our brothers and sisters in Christ was a delight. Feel free to ask Pastor Tom on how to get further involved with our region's Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation taskforce.

### **Christmas Cards: Special Request**

**Tanner Bjork** is currently in Room 201 of the residential side of Kitty Askins. Sisters Jenny Bjork Moore and Heather Bjork Hill ask that you keep him in prayer and, if you like, to send Tanner a Christmas card. He loves Christmas and his room is decorated with a tree, wreath, cards, and other special decorations. Write to Tanner at: Kitty Askins Hospice Center, 107 Handley Park Ct., Room 201, Goldsboro, NC, 27534.

### **Worship**

Welcome to worship, whether in person or online! Visit us in person at 1609 E. Ash St. in Goldsboro, or online at [www.firstchristiangoldsboro.org](http://www.firstchristiangoldsboro.org) for several videos posted by 9:00 AM each Sunday: our Sermon, our Old Testament and Epistle Readings by Elders. Our lectionary readings this Sunday are: Exodus 3:1-15; Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b; Romans 12:9-21; and Matthew 16:21-28.

### **Sermon**

#### **"The Spirituality of Bob Ross"**

"They were tough.

They carried all the emotional baggage of men who might die. Grief, terror, love, longing—these were intangibles, but the intangibles had their own mass and a specific gravity, they had tangible weight.

They carried shameful memories. They carried the common secret of cowardice barely restrained. The instinct to run or freeze or hide, and in many respects this was the heaviest burden of all, for it could never be put down, it required perfect balance and perfect posture. They carried their reputations. They carried the soldier's greatest fear, which was the fear of blushing. Men killed, and died, because they were embarrassed not to.

Each morning, despite the unknowns, they made their legs move. They endured... They did not submit to the obvious alternative, which was simply to close the eyes and fall. So easy, really. Go limp and tumble to the ground... until your buddies picked you up [and took you back] to the world. A mere matter of falling, yet no one ever fell. It was not courage, exactly; the object was not valor. Rather, they were too frightened to be cowards."

That was from the opening chapter of Tim O'Brien's great novel of the Vietnam war, *The Things They Carried* (pgs. 20-21). I know this is a heavy way to begin, and I want you to hold on to this heaviness in your minds, because first we're going to talk about something that seems completely unrelated and actually quite cheerful. We're going to talk today about Bob Ross.

Now in case you don't know who Bob Ross is, let me give a brief description, because he's quite a character. I think the first thing most people notice about Bob Ross is his hair. He has huge, brown, curly, Fro-like hair, which forms a giant bowl-shape around his head. And you got to see this enormous head-of-hair on PBS throughout the 1980s and 90s, because he was the host of a delightful television show called *The Joy of Painting*.

On each show, Bob Ross paints one painting. The course of the painting follows a typical pattern, like this. First he starts out with a nice, colorful background, often of clouds or a lake. Then he starts adding details: trees, bushes, cabins, or a waterfall if he's feeling particularly spunky that day. As he adds these details, the intention of the painting begins to come into view, and it starts to look really good; you start to be impressed by it, and you say to yourself, 'Alright Bob, I see where you're going; I like it.'

And then—all of a sudden—Bob makes what seems like a horrible mistake. For example, he draws a giant black line down the middle of the painting. You end up shouting at the screen: 'No, Bob, no! What are you doing?!' It's at that point Bob turns around to the camera and says, 'Let's get crazy, folks.'

It's only then that the magic really happens. Bob starts to add something here, add something there, rework and add details like vines and leaves to the black line—a black line which, it turns out, has added a whole new perspective to the painting. After he has transformed the painting to fit around what seemed like a horrible mistake, it is always better than before, more striking and more interesting than you would have imagined it could be when it was just a pleasant background with a few trees.

The drama of a Bob Ross painting is the drama of redemption. He takes what seems like an inescapably damaged work and makes something beautiful, good, and whole.

Many people know the Bob Ross of the television show. But not everyone knows that Bob Ross was a Master Sergeant in the United States Air Force. He joined in 1961, and did not fight in Vietnam, but was a drill sergeant who prepared soldiers for battle. He was responsible for instilling that sense of shame we talked about earlier. He took his role as a disciplinarian seriously, and was even known by the nickname "Bust 'em up Bob" for his rough and even mean approach to training, full of screaming, tirades, and intimidation.

Eventually, Bob realized he didn't like what this role was doing to him, and he retired from the military after 20 years of service.

Now, the temptation at this point in his life was to grow sullen and angry about what he had been asked to do—and many people are asked to do things in war that they are not completely comfortable with, and maybe even grow more unsettled about over time. The temptation for Bob was to wallow in resentment, and remain fixated on this black line that crossed the middle of his life, which would have been a completely understandable reaction.

Instead, Bob Ross became who we all know him to be: a kind, gentle man, with a soft voice, who was absolutely crazy about the joy to be found in painting, and who wanted you to share that joy, too. His message was always: join me. You can do it. He spread and continues to spread happiness to all who encounter him through his show. Bob puts everything in perspective for us. What might seem like a disaster can indeed be transformed. It can be taken up and made new. The introduction of resurrection life can happen, through strength and persistence in 'meekness,' one of the virtues Jesus describes in the beatitudes (Mt 5:5) which is a gentle commitment to keep loving and doing good no matter the obstacles. In such a way, Bob Ross—that wonderful, goofy, hilarious, and joyful man—fulfills our scripture for the day: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

## Prayers of the Parish:

This week, we offer prayers for rebuilding and for healing in the wake of Hurricane Laura. Our brothers and sisters in Texas and Louisiana are on our hearts and minds.

We also pray for the end of violence of all kinds. May the God of peace break into our world and banish all forces of the Enemy who incite us to harm each other, and may those through whom harm has happened be free of the spiritual forces which keep them in bondage. May they know the power of the Gospel which frees us. May we all be reminded of our true enemy: Satan and all his forces who work together to wreck the lives of human beings made in the image of God. With that in mind, let our hearts be filled with love for each and every person on the face of this earth: "O Lord, make haste to help us!"

Let us lift up our weekly requests. We ask especially and continue to ask that you protect also all those who in danger today because of the pandemic, for those who provide essential services of all kinds. Visit especially: doctors, nurses, and all those working in health care; those who are in nursing homes, hospices, and long-term care facilities who are feeling isolated in these long weeks of distancing; schoolchildren, teachers, and administrators in a time of great uncertainty, and especially those students, teachers, and administrators who are now or are soon going back to school; we pray for childcare workers; for those who process food and those who stock and sell in grocery stores; visit delivery drivers and visit all Your churches, their pastors, their deacons, their elders, and their congregations. Visit all those who cannot find safe work in these moments and who are feeling more threatened than ever this week. Visit the sick, the hungry, and the imprisoned. Mourn with those who mourn. Rejoice with those who rejoice. Grant us Your peace.

Please hear our prayers for:

*Grace Price, Eloise Kleinert, Mary Ethel Lewis, Kathy and G. A. Spain, June Anderson, Willie and Faye Rogers, Rick Rogers (Faye & Willie Rogers' son), John and Becky Selzer, Rebecca Daniels, Lorraine Loch, Val Watkins (Brantley's sister-in-law), the Spain's great granddaughter Katie, Molly McEldowney (Sharon Jones' daughter) and her brother, David Reynolds, Robert Strader (June Anderson's son-in-law), Jodie Hudson, Eddie Stewart, Linda Hilburn, Lee Summerlin, Gary Bartlett, Bill Smith, Gordon Aycock (friend of June Anderson), Chuck Allen, the Kleinert Family, Family of Dennis Horne in the death of his Aunt Linda Sides and Family of Ruby Santee in the death of her sister, Margaret Medlin, Melissa Acres, Mary Anne Cowley, Ruby Santee, Linda McCoy, Ken McCoy and family, Jay and Kelley Pittmann, a praise for Dennis Isenhower's son Dennis, a praise for Ray Price, Tanner Bjork and family, and Jana Blackman.*

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Keep, O Lord, your household the Church in your steadfast faith and love, that through your grace we may proclaim your truth with boldness, and minister your justice with compassion; for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

**Communion** You may pick up individual communion packs at the entry table at the parking lot entrance Mondays from 10 to 12 or Tuesdays from 10 to 12 or use your own bread and juice at home. You may also drop off your offerings at that time.

### **A Moment for Meditation**

Many of the divisions currently present amongst Christians—from Methodist to Baptist to Catholic and more—came about because of disagreements about how Christ has saved us. Amidst this dissension, I found this story from Barton Stone to be a very helpful reminder of our identity as Disciples:

Stone urged that you did not have to know exactly how Christ had saved you to be a Christian. "He illustrated his point by the example of a father who provides plentifully for a large family of children. Some of the children know the means by which the father got the provisions, others may not know so well, while the youngest may scarcely know anything more than that the father's love supplied the provisions. Yet all of the children eat and thrive, without quarreling about the means by which the provisions were obtained. 'O,' he added, 'that Christians would do likewise!'" (Newell Williams, *Barton Stone*, pg. 144).

Let simple gratitude unite us together around the table this morning. Our Lord has saved us. Let us rejoice!

**Preparing the Lord's Table with Our Offerings** - Let us prepare the Lord's Table with our Offerings. Thank you for your faithfulness in sharing your offerings during this time. You may drop them *by the church office from 10 to 12 on Monday or Tuesday of each week, by calling Wanda for another time, or by mailing in.*

**Offering Prayer** - I continue to thank my God constant in my prayers for all of you faithful givers to First Christian. May these gifts be sanctified and sent out through the Holy Spirit, to spread the gospel to all the world, and especially to where it is needed most, those places bereft of hope and in need of living water. Praise God, from whom all blessings flow, and from whom every good and perfect gift comes down. Amen.

**Confession** - As Christians, we recognize we are not perfect. Join me in a moment of silent confession, for things done and for things left undone.

Let us rejoice: our sins are forgiven through the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. May the power of the Holy Spirit draw us all more closely to God in the week to come. Amen.

**Communion Prayer** - "Be present, be present, O Jesus, our great High Priest, as you were present with your disciples, and be known to us in the breaking of bread; you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen" (Book of Common Prayer, 834).

**Words of Institution** - On the night when he was betrayed, Jesus took the bread and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "This is my Body broken for you. Eat this in remembrance of me." In the same manner after supper, Jesus took the Cup and when he had blessed it, he gave it to his disciples, saying, "This is my blood of a new covenant, poured out for you and for many, for the forgiveness of sin. Drink it in remembrance of him."

The Gifts of God for the People of God.     *Thanks be to God!*

**The Lord's Prayer** Let us now pray together the prayer our Lord taught us, saying:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

**Benediction Prayer** Whatever happens in your life, know that God can always make something new. Don't give in to the temptation to sullenness and resentment. Be free, and go forth this week walking in the power of the gospel. No obstacle is large enough to separate us from the love of Christ. Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.

#### **Announcements and Calendar**

Outdoor Church Service, Sunday, August 30<sup>th</sup>, at 9:30 AM (see information above)