



June 28, 2020

Ordinary Time, Proper 8

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

Minister Rev. Dr. Tom Millay

Church Telephone/Fax: (919) 735-3092 Minister's Cell: (919) 273-7030

Church email: [fccgb1609@gmail.com](mailto:fccgb1609@gmail.com) Minister's email [tom.millay54@gmail.com](mailto:tom.millay54@gmail.com)

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#.

### Church Re-gathering

Praise God, this Sunday, June 28, we get to gather again! The service 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**, but this Sunday it will be **pushed back an hour, to 10:45am**.

### Last Friday's Vigil

Last Friday's Vigil for Freedom and Resilience was a powerful service, complemented by the Poor People's Campaign's virtual march on Saturday. This was only the beginning of our region's Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation Commission (ARPR)'s Call to Action, which will go on to host conversations between Disciples churches on racial justice, issue grants for anti-racism and pro-reconciliation projects, and develop further activities as the Spirit leads. My prayer is that our church can heed the call of Ibram X. Kendi, who says that "Being an antiracist requires persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination."

### Book Study

This last Wednesday, we had our first discussion on Gabriel Bunge's *Dragon's Wine and Angel's Bread*, a book which studies the complicated relationship between anger and prayer. The Spirit was with us in our conversation, and I hope you'll be able to join next week, following our usual Wednesday church check-in, so around 7:15pm. A video will be posted to the church's Facebook on Monday, and this week we will be reflecting together on Chapters 1 & 2 of the book.



Some of our graduates were highlighted in our June newsletter. If we did not receive your info about graduates in time for the June newsletter, we will be glad to include in the July newsletter, so send any pictures you have to Andrew ([goacanes87@yahoo.com](mailto:goacanes87@yahoo.com)) and send info to Tom over email ([tom.millay54@gmail.com](mailto:tom.millay54@gmail.com)) or text (919-273-7030). The next two days are your last chance, so as advertisements say, act now! Thanks!

### Youth

Virtual Camp Caroline is started Monday June 22 and continues this Monday June 29, and will be active each Monday following until July 20. The camp activities will be available at <https://ncdisciples.org/vitual-camp/>. No registration or fee is required. To get further details, you can get in touch with Tom.

### 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: Genesis 22:1-14; Psalm 13; Romans 6:12-23; and Matthew 10:40-42.

### Sermon

#### "The Prayer Book of the Bible"

The Psalms are the prayer book of the Bible. Like a good prayer book, they have a Word for every situation. For example, the Psalm for today starts with this refrain: "How long, O LORD?" (Ps. 13:1). How long, how long, how long, the psalmist says. And how many of us have been wondering the same thing during this pandemic? How many of us, while dragging ourselves out of bed in the morning, say: "How long, O LORD?" Or, when we have not been able to gather as a church, how many of us were saying, 'How long is this going to last?' "How long, O LORD?"

This Sunday, we are gathering together for the first time in a long while. It is joyous, but it is still strange. It is bittersweet. We are able to gather as a church, but not in our church; and even our gathering is hampered by distance. So even though we are gathering this Sunday, I think we are still wondering, at least to ourselves, "How long, O LORD?"

This isn't the first time I've noticed a psalm having just the right word to say in a particular situation. Say someone is about to have a medical procedure. What better words are there to hear than Psalm 91? "You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.' For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence; he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, or the arrow that flies by day, or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you" (Ps 91:1-7).

Or say you step outside and it is a beautiful day. You need to find a word to express your gratitude. How about Psalm 19? "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and nothing is hid from its heat" (Ps 19:1-6).

What if you've just lost your job, and are in danger of losing everything else: house, car, food, providing for your family. There are many, many psalms that express the LORD's concern for the poor, those who feel at a loss for how they're going to pay for the daily necessities of life, like food, health care, and housing; psalms like Psalm 146: "Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free; the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down" (Ps 146:5-8).

And there's psalms for many other things: for healing, for confession of wrongdoing, for defeat of the enemies of justice, for despair. There's a psalm for every situation. This is what it means for the psalms to be the prayer book of the Bible: they express every concern a human being can have, and they take all these

concerns and place them before the throne of God. There's a reason why, when I did a funeral recently, and the person who had passed had earlier shared her favorite Scriptures on a notecard, nearly every one of these Scriptures were from the Psalms. It's a beloved book, because it speaks to who we are. It meets us where we are.

There is a psalm for every situation, but I want to note that searching for a psalm that expresses how you feel in this particular moment is not how most Christians throughout history have read the Psalms. There was a practice—still upheld by many—called 'reading the Psalter,' and this meant simply reading through—usually out loud—the whole book of Psalms, starting with number 1 and ending with 150.

In the history of the European West, Benedictine monks would read through the whole book of the Psalms every week, reciting about twenty psalms a day (*The Rule of St. Benedict*, Chapter 18a). Yet other monks, the desert monastics in particular, would read through the entire Psalter—all 150 Psalms—daily (*The Rule of St. Benedict*, Chapter 18b). I know of some modern Christians who will read 5 psalms a day (N.T. Wright, *The Case for the Psalms*), and that seems reasonable to me.

Yet there's something important to recognize here. If you're reading through the Psalms like this, just starting at 1 and going to 150, then you're going to be reading psalms that don't fit the situation you currently find yourself in. Our psalm for today asks God "how long shall my enemy triumph over me?" (Ps 13:2). But what if you have the blessing of peace in your life? What if no enemies come to mind? First let me say: I am glad for you. You have indeed been blessed; remember to give thanks to God for this *shalom*; it's always more fragile than we realize. But should you read this psalm if you're not in this situation? Should you read psalms of lament if you are, praise be to God, in a happy, cheerful, joyous situation? Should you read psalms of praise if you are in a terrible period of anxiety, despair, despondency, depression?

At first, it seems strange to do this, to read these psalms, when your emotions aren't fitting the ones expressed in the text. But then you remember that the Psalms are the prayer book of the *church*, not just 'your' prayer book.

What this means is that someone, somewhere in the church, is feeling exactly these things depicted in the psalm, whatever psalm you're reading. So when you're reading a psalm that is speaking an emotion not currently your own, that means you're reading the psalm as an *intercessory* prayer.

'No, I don't feel joyful; not right now.' But praise God there is someone who does! If you know someone who is happy, who has succeeded or been vindicated, think of them: offer the prayer on their behalf.

What if you hear a different prayer request that is being made to God, asking God to "uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed... deliver them from the hand of the wicked" (Ps 82:3, 4), but you are not yourself poor or oppressed? Then think of someone who is. Join your prayer to theirs; pray for the downfall of the wicked, pray for the demise of the unjust; pray that God's protection visit this one who is threatened; pray for relief.

The Psalms don't just express our feelings; they express the feelings of the whole church; and they teach us what that church is feeling.

In this way, to read through the Psalter like this, to read 1 through 150, to make the Psalter the occasion for intercessory prayer, is to have a schooling in sympathy for our brothers and sisters who make up the whole body of Christ.

'Sympathy': this word is made up of two Greek words, '*sum*,' which means 'with,' and '*pathos*,' which means 'feeling.' Sympathy means to *feel with* someone.

The Psalms thus connect us to the rest of the body. And they do it not through the head, as we know in an intellectual way that we are a part of the universal body of those who follow Christ. No, the Psalms do it through the heart: We feel as the body of Christ feels. We feel our own situation, *and* we feel what our brothers and sisters are going through. We are a united people. And the Psalms are an essential part of knitting us together.

So, as we go forth in this week, let us read the Psalms together, pray the Psalms together, and let us think of one another. Let us make intercession for our brothers and sisters as if they are what we in fact know them to be: our family. I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

**Prayers of the Parish:** As we come into God's presence today, may we ask as the disciples asked, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk 11:1). Lord, we confess we are grateful today for the book of prayers you have given us that teach us how to pray, the book of Psalms. May we seek out justice and healing and peace for our neighbors, just as the Psalms do. God whose ear is close to us, have mercy on us and heal us in all our brokenness. Be especially with those whom you have given this community to care about, and may our daily prayers for our family members who are in need give You glory, as we learn in our concerns to echo Yours.

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 those who are in nursing homes, hospices, and long-term care facilities who are feeling isolated in these long weeks of distancing. 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, and 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, and the families of Teenie Wilson and Mary Ellen Ham.*

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**

Sometimes we forget that the Gospel is simple. Our Gospel reading for the day reminds us of this fact. The Gospel is as simple as a gesture of welcome: "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me," Jesus says (Mt 10:40). And that gesture of welcome can also be something simple, as simple as offering a cup of cold water to someone who is thirsty (Mt 10:42). It's simple, but that doesn't mean it's easy. What about that

person we meet in the street—should we welcome them, too? Sometimes we hesitate. Let us confess: sometimes we hesitate. As at this table, God shares with us, and God shares without asking whether we deserve to be shared with; God simply gives. May we also share with everyone who crosses our path. May we welcome the other as the person in whom God is present. Holy Spirit, give us eyes to see. Amen.

**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**

**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**

God of mercy, teach us compassion. Make our hearts open to each other, to the world, and to You. Knit us together in the bond of Christ. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, You who are eternally one, amen.

### **Announcements and Calendar**

Outdoor Church Service, Sunday, June 28, at 9:30 AM (see information above)

Administration Meeting, Tuesday, July 7, at 6:45 PM (Conference Call)

**Some addresses:**     **Phil Ham**  
                                 1338 Windover Dr.  
                                 Brevard, NC 28712