



November 1, 2020

Ordinary Time, Proper 26 & All Saints Day

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 (weather permitting). 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**.



### 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 **Brantley Watkins** will join him for a song. Don't forget that 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 video series titled "Verse-by-Verse," where Pastor Tom walks through the Gospel of John and unpacks the rich meaning of the text. We are going slowly enough to really pay attention.

This week, we will look at John 1:15-18: "John testified to him and cried out, 'This is he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' From his fulness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law was indeed given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's bosom, who has made him known."



## **Thanksgiving Special Offering: Higher Education**

### **Thanksgiving Special Offering**

The Thanksgiving Offering benefits the Colleges, Universities, Seminaries, and Divinity Houses affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). **Higher education has been an important focus for Disciples since the very beginning of the movement.** Throughout our history, Disciples have founded institutions of higher learning to educate students and form leaders to make a difference in the world. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is still committed to higher education. Your gift to the Thanksgiving Offering helps support the education of thousands of students at our fifteen colleges and universities as well as our seven seminaries and divinity houses.

The Colleges and Universities of the Christian Church provide quality education through classes offered by some of the nation's top undergraduate and graduate faculty. Many of the campuses are comprised of state-of-the-art facilities, offer diverse degree programs, include dynamic student life activities, offer exciting athletics programs, and much more. **The Thanksgiving offering supports everything from scholarships, to religious life offices, to faculty growth and development.** By giving to the Thanksgiving Offering you are helping our institutions invest in students as they prepare themselves to become leaders.

The Thanksgiving Offering also provides scholarship and support for **our theological education institutions.** Each of our seminaries and divinity houses is committed to educating and forming Christian leaders for church and society. Generations of pastors, community leaders, and agents of social transformation have been educated at our theological institutions. They have flourished and made a difference in the world, thanks to gifts from Disciples congregations and individuals throughout the ages. These institutions continue to prepare leaders for the present age and the age to come.

Support for Disciples Mission Fund and gifts to the Thanksgiving Offering are a critical part of the ongoing collaborative work of church and higher education that is such a foundational part of the heritage of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Please give generously to this offering. **Your gift makes a difference in the lives of our students and it makes a difference in the world.**

~From our Missions leader, Ronnie Thompson



The pandemic doesn't mean we have to stop celebrating the beautiful season of fall. This year we will be having a **drive-thru Fall Festival** on **Saturday, October 31** from **1-3pm**. In preparation for the Festival, we are **collecting candy and crafts** which will be bagged and handed out to cars as they drive by. We encourage anyone who either has children or who can bring a bag to a child to stop by our drive-thru and pick up a goodie bag!



Now is the time of year some folks may be telling you 'You can't put on Christmas music yet, it's not even November!' But if you'd still like to start getting in the spirit, here is something you can do: **put together a box for Operation Christmas Child**. We will be putting boxes out for you to pick up at Sunday's service; you can also swing by the church and pick one up if you'd like. Instructions for packing can be found [here](#) or picked up at the church, and the final collection date for First Christian Goldsboro's boxes is Saturday, November 14<sup>th</sup>.



### **A Prayer for Repentance**

Many of us are nearing the end of our 30-day prayer for repentance. As a fruit of this communal practice of prayer, I invite you to **submit your own written out prayer**, to be re-printed in the bulletin and read out at our weekly service. These prayers can either be handed in on Sunday or emailed to the church's email address.

### *Prayers for Repentance*

Linda Cannon

Holy Father,

We come humbly before your throne asking forgiveness for our sins. We live in a broken world, "All we have sinned and fall short of your glory". When we repent, our sins are forgiven past, present and future!

We ask a continuance of your Divine Mercy. Even though we are Christians, we still need to confess daily to give us greater fellowship with you! Sin has stained our world with many kinds of violence and protests. We need to pray daily for peace and restoration for our leaders especially for the upcoming Election. We beseech you for strength and guidance during this

Pandemic. These are unprecedented times and we do not know how they will resolve, but God does!! Therefore, let's all: Trust and obey and pray—In Jesus name!

In Christian Love,  
Linda Cannon

Sharon Jones

Father, the creator of the earth, the heaven the sea and everything in them, I humbly bow before you to ask forgiveness for not only my transgressions but for the transgressions of our nation. Our founding fathers built our nation upon the foundation of your Word and You have blessed us for many generations even as we have transgressed against you. I cannot even imagine how your heart must ache at seeing our behaviors. Father we have distance ourselves so far from you that the time is now to return to you and to repent of our wrongs before it is too late, give us strength to stand for Your truth. I'm praying for your divine mercy Lord, even though we do not deserve it; asking for Your hand of protection against our enemies; for Your hand of healing for those suffering from the covid virus; for Your hand of judgment be withdrawn by abating this virus that has spread across our land and the world. Father, give us wisdom and discernment and the strength to put on Your armor and to stand up for Your precepts. Father help us to shake off the complacency which has filled us to allow us (as a nation) to distance ourselves from Your truth.

Father, guide us to put prayer back in our schools and public forums and to allow the remaining evidences of Your Word to remain etched in our public buildings. Renew and ignite our love for our neighbors that we would support and encourage each other rather than denigrate and cancel them out. Father, I pray for our enemies both domestic and abroad, that they may open their ears and their heart to Your Word. I pray for a revival Father that Your harvest would be full.

Father, I ask for your hand of protection for those persecuted and those in harms way. I pray for Your protection for the military and the police, who daily put themselves in the front lines to protect us and uphold our laws.

Father, I pray for the protection our President, his family and all leaders in our land. I pray that they would humbly bow before You and ask for Your wisdom and discernment when leading our country. And that they would put aside greed and power and replace it with love, compassion and a Servant heart.

Father, all that any of us have is yours and we are but the caretaker of it for you. Father, guide us to again be a light to the world and a light for You. This I ask if it is your will, in Jesus name. Amen and Amen

Sharon Jones

## 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: Joshua 3:7-17; Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37; 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13; and Matthew 23:1-12.

## Sermon

### "All Saints"

Today is All Saints' Day, and what we celebrate today is a mystery. The mystery we are celebrating is the body of Christ. As Paul teaches us in 1 Corinthians 12, we are all the body of Christ and we are each individually members of it (1 Cor 12:27). The reason this is a mystery is that the body of Christ is not limited by time. The body of Christ is an eternal reality. It exists outside of time. That is why All Saints' Day can include *all* saints, alive or dead. We are all one in Christ Jesus. Being united to Christ does not only mean that we exist in the presence of our Maker. It also means that we walk hand-in-hand with all our brothers and sisters in Christ, and that this seemingly great enemy, Death, really has no power to end our communion with one another. So we as Christians believe that those who have died do more than live on in the hearts and minds of those they effected while alive. No, those who have died *really* live on. They are alive; they are just as alive as Christ is alive, for they are joined to him.

So what are they doing right now, all these saints that have passed on before us? If the book of Revelation provides any clue, they are praying for us. In fact, Revelation provides a window into the eternity in which the saints who have passed on now live. These saints cry out to God on our behalf, on behalf of the living, asking God how long it will be until the wicked are judged and the righteous vindicated (Rev 6:10), how long it will be until those who destroy the earth are destroyed (Rev 11:18).

So the saints pray for us. But we can say more. I believe that what the saints do for us is captured well by an image we find in the book of Joshua. After a whole generation has died off while wandering in the wilderness, the Israelites are

finally ready to enter the promised land. But in order to enter that land they have to cross the Jordan River. We often think of the Red Sea when we think about making a crossing on dry land. But let's not forget that the Israelites also passed through the Jordan River on dry land, walking through it in order to get to that land that was promised to them. The story of the Jordan River crossing is dramatic, and goes like this:

There is a holy object, gilded with gold and decorated with figures of cherubim (Exodus 37:1-9), which contains the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 10:2). This object is called the ark of the covenant. It has been brought all the way from Mt. Sinai outside of Egypt to right here, the edge of the promised land. Joshua instructs a group of priests to pick up the ark of the covenant and carry it into the waters of the Jordan. As soon as the priests' feet touch the water, the river ceases to flow and stands up in a single heap, so that the people of Israel might pass through and make their way into the promised land on dry ground. The priests who are carrying the ark then move to the middle of the Jordan, and they remain there, holding back the waters, "until the entire nation finished crossing over the Jordan" (Joshua 3:17).

I love especially this image of the priests standing and holding the ark until all the number of the people of Israel make it over to the other side. It is an image of how people hold the holiness of God for others, how they make present the holiness of God and wait with it in this chaotic world. And in so doing, they are making provision for others, they are holding back that which threatens to overwhelm, so that we might walk over to the other side and be saved.

This, I think, is what the saints do. They are praying, they are making sure the presence of God remains in the world long enough for us to cross over safely to the promised land. They are making provision for us. We are always in danger of getting caught up in the turbulence of the world. The saints who have gone on before us work to hold the waters back, to keep us safe and deliver us to the other shore. They have solidarity with us; they know how difficult it is to keep faith in this life, and they work for us, watching over us and making their prayers on our behalf known to God.



One saint that has gone before us who has been on my mind this year is Rebecca McCulloh, the former pastor of Chapel Hill Christian Church. Rebecca and Chapel Hill Christian sponsored my ordination as a minister, and I continue to be marked by how she formed me. I remember how much Rebecca fought for the Kingdom of God and how she was inspired by the moral clarity of Jesus. She was inspired by how Jesus saw the least of these and would not let his audience forget them. I remember how imaginative Rebecca was as a preacher, how she would make up stories that surprised and delighted her congregation, mainly just for the fun of it. I remember her wisdom and how willing she was to share and to offer guidance to those in need, among whom I can count myself. I remember her because she was truly, in the fullest sense of the word, a pastor.

But I don't only remember Rebecca. She doesn't only live on in my thoughts. I feel her praying for me, even now: she is making sure I stick closely to the narrow way of Jesus, she is making sure I press and push myself to more fully embrace the way Jesus cared for the world, which is not an easy thing to do. So, my question to you this day is: who is praying for you? Who has passed on ahead of you that is patiently holding the ark for you, making sure you pass safely to the other side? Send up a prayer of thanks today for those who are praying for you—for otherwise, without these prayers, without the care of those saints, we know we wouldn't make it. In the name of Jesus Christ, of whose body we are a part: Amen.

#### **Prayers of the Parish:**

All Saints is a time for silence and reflection. We at First Christian ask that you observe two moments of silence today. First, a moment of silence for all those whom you remember which you have lost in the past year. Second, a moment of silence to honor all those who have passed away from COVID 19 this year. May God visit you in your times of silence and remembrance this day, and lift up your soul.

We continue 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. Be present to those in our armed forces, who are in especially precarious times. 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), for the family of Faye Rogers' sister Billie who passed last week, 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 Pittman, Jana Blackman, Joyce Sauls, and Johnnie Kleinert.*

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**

Today we are reminded that we are joined around the table not only by our visible brothers and sisters, but by all those invisible saints who have gone before us. Truly this is a table of joy, for around it are all those whom we love, whether alive or dead. I am reminded of St. Augustine, who said that we are each a fragment of the image of God, and that any time we lose someone from this earth, we lose a bit of our vision of God, because we have lost that image-fragment

which helped us to see (*City of God*, Book XXII). Around the table, all the fragments are put back together, and God comes to join us in the feast. Let us rejoice together.

**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** - We at First Christian are not ashamed of the power of the Gospel, and there's a very good reason for that: the Gospel is the healing power of God, coming to mend our broken world. May we continue to be part of God's action through the gift of our own selves: our time, our resources, and our spirits in prayer. Sanctify the gifts of the church this week, O Lord. First and last, we offer our praise to 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** We are going out into the future of our week, but as we travel forwards in time, we are looking back: we are remembering all those who have made our own faith possible. Lord, may their prayers continue to grow and mature our faith this week, as we each grow to be full members of your body. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Amen.

## **Announcements and Calendar**

Drive-Thru Fall Festival, Saturday, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1-3 PM: Church Parking Lot

Outdoor Church Service, Sunday, November 1<sup>st</sup>, at 9:30 AM (see information above)

Stewardship Committee, Wednesday, November 4<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 PM (conference call)

### **Poem for Solitude during All Saints from John Donne "Death, be not proud"**

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee

Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;

For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow

Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.

From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,

Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,

And soonest our best men with thee do go,

Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.

Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,

And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,

And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well

And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?

One short sleep past, we wake eternally

And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.