



September 27, 2020

Ordinary Time, Proper 21

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#.

Mission

The mission of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Goldsboro, North Carolina is to worship God as revealed in Jesus Christ, nurture the spiritual growth of its members, serve the needs of others within and beyond the congregation, and be committed to the unity of God's people.

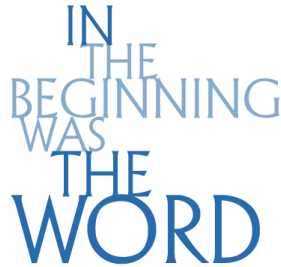
Outdoor Church

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**.



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. 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!



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. We are going slowly enough to really pay attention. This week, we will look at John 1:2-3, "He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being." We will also be making a connection between this text and Genesis through John H. Walton's book *The Lost World of Genesis 1*.



September Special Offering

Our **missions special offering for September** supports the **Reconciliation Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**. Offerings fund the Church's mission to become a pro-reconciling and anti-racist church utilizing experiential education, inclusive worship, and intentional dialogue. Through this mission, the Church seeks to promote healing, relationship, and restoration in the whole family of God. The mission provides programs for leadership development, curriculum for dialogue and learning, and partnerships within the Church and our communities. Our gifts help to **ensure the human dignity of every child, to ensure all have access to Christ's abundance, to fully flourish in education, financial stability, and friendships across God's human diversity**. For more information, visit reconciliationministry.org, where you can find out about ministries such as the "[One Bag of Tea](#)"

project. You can also contact Pastor Tom or our missions leader Ronnie Thompson. Thank you for your generosity.

PLEDGE

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Our regional Disciples office has noticed that one of the trends in giving during the pandemic is that **churches have become more insular—more self-focused**. They are concerned with sustaining their own congregation through this time. That is entirely understandable, but I am so happy to report that is not the case for our congregation. We continue to support local organizations such as Literacy Connections, the Red Cross, Boys and Girls Club, and the Boy Scouts—and we are doing this in a time where it is more needed than ever. As you reflect on your pledge during this month, keep in mind that you support a congregation obeying the Gospel mandate to be turned **outwards** in care for our neighbors. Remember to fill out and return your pledge by **Sunday, October 4th**, so the Stewardship Committee can plan our church budget for approval at our annual meeting in November.



Step into the Water: A Socially Distant Scavenger Hunt

Just because we're socially distancing doesn't mean all fun is off the table. We are going to gather on **Saturday, September 26th at 5 pm** as a number small, family-based teams, to collect care packages to distribute to members of our congregation. After bringing our contributions together, a catered meal will follow. Please **sign up** this Sunday and also **take a list** of the needed items, which will be available on Sunday. Alternatively, you can call into the church office to sign up and get emailed the list of items.



A Prayer for Repentance

In 1849, there was a cholera outbreak in America. President Zachary Taylor called for a National Day of Fasting in response, calling all Americans to "humble themselves before His throne, and while acknowledging past transgressions, ask a continuance of the Divine mercy." In his call for fasting and repentance in response to a crisis, Taylor was echoing earlier prophets such as Haggai, Habakkuk, and Joel. This month, **we are asking you to join us in penitential prayer**, while also asking for God's mercy and healing power to be present in our world broken by disease and by violence. **Would you commit to uniting with us for 30 days of daily prayers for repentance?** If so, please sign up at church, call in—or you can add your name online to the following Google form: <https://forms.gle/M7eZEYb6FyuKCjPP7>.

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 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 17:1-7; Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16; Philippians 2:1-13; and Matthew 21:23-32.

Sermon

"Why Do We Give?"

Last week George shared with us about John 3:16, about the ultimate act of love on our behalf: the sending of Christ into the world to seek and save the lost. This week, our epistle lesson expands upon what George was talking about, telling us even more about Christ's sacrifice. According to Philippians 2, Christ became poor for us. He went from being at the height of all power, all joy, all security and richness, from all the pleasure of heaven, to become human for us. To become a little baby, born outside next to animals, vulnerable and needing his mother's milk to survive. He became man for us, a day laborer in an obscure province of Roman

Palestine. He became a minister for us, healing all even if he was exhausted, homeless, and frequently sleeping outside (Matthew 8:20). So in short Philippians 2 teaches us about the poverty of Christ, the poverty of Christ on our behalf.

This passage, Philippians 2, has been used to glorify poverty, to hold up poverty as something good in-itself. But I am convinced that is not what the passage means. What Philippians 2 glorifies and holds up for us as a model is not poverty per se. It is Christ's actions of self-giving and Christ's attitude of humility. It is Christ's choice to empty himself out on behalf of others.

Crucial to understanding Philippians 2 is that phrase 'on behalf of others'. Notice that language, then: 'empty himself out on behalf of others'. Because to empty out means you have something to give others. Christ was in the bosom of the Father. He gave that up to be with us. We are called to have the same mind and to give and share with one another in humility. Christ had, and he gave away. Paul calls us to do the same.

This points us to one of the principal indignities of poverty—poverty that is not the poverty we see in Christ, but the poverty we often experience today, poverty as something *forced* upon one, poverty that is not one's choice, poverty that takes away any chance of emptying oneself out on behalf of others. Because what poverty so often means in our world is that one is stripped of one's ability to give. The ability to give to others is robbed from those who have nothing. This is one reason why poverty makes people feel less than human: because it transforms you from an equal partner, from someone who can give, to someone who is merely given to, who becomes an object of charity, who becomes just that—an object. Take away the ability to give, and a person will feel like they have no agency anymore. They will feel less than what they are meant to be, like they're not fulfilling who they are, who they were created to be, who they should be and can be.

The experience of poverty as not being able to give is the story of many in our world. I recently came across the story of someone named Wayne Harris. So let's hear his story:

Wayne is a resident of Wilkes County, North Carolina, one of the largest rural counties in North Carolina. Wayne has led a quiet and humble life and has always worked hard. He grew up on a farm and worked for a long time for Tyson. Eventually, Wayne started having trouble with his health. He started having trouble with his lower back and developed blood clots in his legs. With these health issues, Wayne could hardly walk, let alone work. I'll let Wayne's own words speak from this point. He says:

"I love working. I've worked all my life, since I was a little boy. But after a while I was in so much pain, I couldn't handle it anymore. I didn't have the strength to keep going or to do the job like I wanted to do. I just prayed that the Good Lord would keep me going. That He would show me a way.

I didn't have insurance to take care of myself, so I just kept on going. Then I couldn't work any more. It broke my heart. To be honest, it was embarrassing. As a man, I'm supposed to take care of my family. I'm supposed to be the provider, go to work and take care of my own. I've always done that. And I was trying to be strong because I believe in the Bible. But after a while, the worry really works on you. I kept praying and asking the Lord to let me get better so I could take care of my son and my three grandchildren.

When I lost my housing, it was deep down in the fall and I slept outside under a bridge for a while. I was very disappointed in myself and it was hard to understand how it got that bad. But I guess it's part of life we have to go through sometimes. There were times I was really scared. I just kept praying and holding on to my faith. It was all I had.

I wasn't look for charity. I just wanted to get my health better and find a home. Then I could start to help others again" (*The Faces of Poverty in North Carolina*, pg. 117).

What Mr. Harris is telling us in his story is that he didn't want to be merely an object of help. He wanted to be helping others. He wanted not to be given to, but to be the one giving. Wayne was only willing to receive assistance as a step on the way back toward the overall goal of his life, which was and is to assist others. Wayne wants to follow the pattern for life set out by the Christ of Philippians 2, but his current circumstances are preventing him from doing so.

We are a giving church here at First Christian. For this I rejoice and praise God daily. I am so happy to be part of a church like ours. What Philippians 2, and Wayne's story, and the similar stories of many other North Carolinians can teach us—what they can clarify for us—is *why* we give. We are doing all this giving. So *why* do we give?

We give so that others may one day have the dignity of giving. And that dignity—the dignity of being able to give—that dignity is human dignity. It is human dignity because being human is about being formed into what we were made to be, created by God to be: followers of Christ, the true image of what a fully human life looks like. The closer we get toward living the life we see in Christ, the more fulfilled as human beings we will be. So that is why we give: in order that all may have the chance to live fully into the pattern of Christ we see in Philippians 2, the pattern of full humanity, where we all have the happiness that is only found in pouring ourselves out for others. Glory be to the Lamb who was slain for us and for our salvation. Amen.

Prayers of the Parish:

With so many new crises arising daily, it can be difficult to remember to keep praying for those crises that were on our minds previously. I want to take a moment to continue to remember our teachers, students, and administrators. They started in a difficult situation a month or over a month ago, and they continue in that situation today. For teachers and students whose health is at risk, we pray. Keep them safe, and may the learning that is so essential to the healthy development of our children continue to happen, in spite of all obstacles. For administrators who are feeling the impact of lesser funding, give wisdom, assurance, patience, and hope during a time where it seems whole institutions are threatened. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

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), 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, 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

Hope that is seen is not hope (Rom 8:24). This is the difficulty, the challenge, the Israelites face as they enter the wilderness of Sin—a brutally bare landscape of sand and sun—on their way to the promised land. The land is promised: it is not present. The milk and honey is there, it has been promised by a God who is faithful and true. But the milk and honey is not here. It is there, it is not here. That the Israelites give in to the temptation to grumble is no surprise. This is how we are all tempted, while we wait. Let us take our sustenance from the Lord's Table this week, assured that the reconciliation experienced here, the hope and joy of the Table, will

lift our spirits and help keep our frustration and grumbling at bay, and thus will keep us in the blessed regions of patience and hope.

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 As we go out into the world to pour ourselves out for others, may we continually bring to our minds how much we have been given and how thoroughly we rely upon God's gifts. We can give because we have been given to. With that in mind, let us share with

others; may we give so that the Good News can be found. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.

Addresses You May Need: John E. Kleinert Jr.

38 Pebbles Court
Sanford, NC 27332

Announcements and Calendar

Scavenger Hunt, Saturday, September 26th, at 5:00 PM (church parking lot)

Outdoor Church Service, Sunday, September 27th, at 9:30 AM (see information above)

Poem for Solitude **from William Wordsworth's *Prelude***

When from our better selves we have too long
Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop,
Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired,
How gracious, how benign, is Solitude;
How potent a mere image of her sway;
Most potent when impressed upon the mind
With an appropriate human centre—hermit,
Deep in the bosom of the wilderness;
Votary (in vast cathedral, where no foot
Is treading, where no other face is seen)
Kneeling at prayers; or watchman on the top
Of lighthouse, beaten by Atlantic waves;
Or as the soul of that great Power is met
Sometimes embodied on a public road,
When, for the night deserted, it assumes
A character of quiet more profound
Than pathless wastes.