



Christian Courier

First Christian Church of Minneapolis (Disciples of Christ)

March 28, 2009

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fccminneapolis.org

Pastor Bob's NEW blog
[The Spiritual Journey](#)

March 22 sermon by
Dennis Sanders
[First Aid](#)

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Lent soon culminates in Holy Week worship

In these final two weeks of Lent, First Christian Church Minneapolis will follow some ancient Christian practices with a few modern touches as we mark the events that lead to the great Easter celebration.

The on-going *Unbinding the Gospel prayer groups* and the Sunday morning **prayer circle** follow the traditional Lenten practice of 40 days of prayer and reflection, as Christ prayed and reflected in his 40 day wilderness time.

Palm Sunday on April 5 will recreate the moment when Jesus entered Jerusalem as we wave palms and shout "hosanna." This year we will use "eco-palms" as part of an ecumenical ecology effort. Eco-palms come from communities in Mexico and Guatemala where workers are paid fairly and engage in sustainable harvesting in order to protect the local ecosystem. The joy of greeting Jesus on Palm Sunday is always tempered with the fact that this Sunday marks the beginning of "the Passion," or the contemplation of the suffering of Jesus.

Maundy Thursday will mark the beginning of a **24-hour prayer chain**, beginning at 3 p.m. on April 9. Those participating in the prayer chain will pray in the church from 3 pm until midnight. At that time, the church will be closed, and prayer



participants will pray in their own homes. At 8 am Good Friday morning, April 10, the church will again be open for the prayer chain to continue until 3 pm on Friday, the hour traditionally understood as the hour of Christ's death on the cross.

The **Maundy Thursday communion service** will begin at 6:30. The word *Maundy* derives from the Latin *mandatum* or 'command,' from the words of Jesus at the Last Supper as recorded in the Gospel of John 13:34: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another." Before the service, Pastor Bob Brite will host a **soup supper** at the church beginning at 5:30 on Thursday evening.

The chain of prayer ends on **Good Friday** in the afternoon, and in the evening we will have a **Good Friday service** beginning at 7 pm. This service will be a time for prayer, singing of hymns and spirituals, and quiet reflection.

A Look at the Brite Side



Pastor Bob Brite

As I write this, I'm getting ready for a journey down to see my daughters in Illinois and my mother in Indiana. Katie will be performing in her last show choir competition, then preaching at Youth Sunday at Glen Oak Christian Church in Peoria, IL. (No, she's not following in her father's footsteps to my knowledge; they ask the high school seniors to give the reflections.) Then it's over to Indianapolis to check in on Mom, helping her to figure out clergy taxes (oh, such fun!) and seeing other friends. Then back to IL to see Corrie, who's currently on spring break in AZ (beats going in the summertime).

On Journeys of all kinds – personal and prayer

All the prepping and packing for the journey has been something I've been working on over the past few days; getting the church-stuff done so I can leave, doing laundry, de-clogging my car's back seat, fueling up the tank, getting in a last exercise session at Lifetime Fitness, praying for a safe journey. Journeying involves preparation, then the traveling, then accomplishing what the journey is supposed to do (in this case, checking in on people I know and love), then returning. To engage in a tired truism, all of life is a journey.

The journey of First Christian Church this year is one of prayer, prayer that opens our eyes, ears, and souls to the witness of God's Good News. The other night we, for the first time in a Board meeting since I've been here, spent more time in prayer and on the subject of prayer than on

anything else (coffee was a close second). As we continue in working through Unbinding the Gospel, and move towards the autumn-time congregation phase – where my goal for congregational participation is 125% -- prayer is the means by which our success as the people of God should be measured. It is the tool of faithfulness.

I'd like to see YOU on Sunday (yes, I'll be back by then).

Bob

Check out the Blog!!

There's a new blog on the web site, www.fccminneapolis.org, or there will be shortly. Called "The Spiritual Journey," it replaces the "Words from the Holy" piece that didn't seem to be getting much response. Register, log in, and add your comments; that's what blogs are for!!

In our prayers

Gracious God, we lift up these persons in our prayers, asking the blessing of your Grace and out-pouring of your Love upon them.

We pray for **Russ Griffin** recovering from recent surgery; for **Kathy Merkel's** mother-in-law who has been recently hospitalized; for **Elaine and Ben Tucker** as they grieve the unexpected loss of Ben's relative in a train accident; for all those who have been diagnosed with cancer including friends of **Deb Murphy** and of the **Sands-Callahan family**; for the family and friends mourning the recent death of **Pat Deweese**; for Red River Valley families and communities as they fight flood waters; for **Ernie Brennan** and others in our congregation and community who have lost their jobs or are fearful of losing their jobs or homes; for men and women serving in the armed forces and for their families who wait their return; for our homebound members, especially **Audrey Hanson** and **Helene Gorski**

Daily devotionals useful for spiritual “exercise”

Do you exercise every day? We get lots of reminders to exercise our bodies daily, but regular spiritual exercise is just as important. Many people at FCC find help with spiritual exercise through a variety of daily devotional books.

Currently, about 20 FCC people are using *Unbinding the Gospel’s* 40 day prayer journal. Each day author Martha Grace “Gay” Reese offers up a scripture passage to read, gives a brief commentary or reflection on the passage, invites readers to add further notes or drawings or ideas, and then ends the day’s reflection with a prayer. This is a pattern used by many daily devotional books: scripture, reflection, prayer.

Pat Carter, Garry Hesser, and several other FCC members use *Disciplines*, a lectionary-based devotional book published each year by Upper Room Books. The writers for *Disciplines* are pastors, professors, and lay leaders. One writer a week presents daily reflections on the week’s lectionary texts. The “Reflections on the Word” series that runs on the last page in this newsletter is based on this book.

Pat Carter also reads a devotional book that is given out at her apartment building, *The Daily Word*, in part because it gives her one more communication tool with her neighbors. Karen Kandik is currently reading *Bread and Wine*, a book of daily

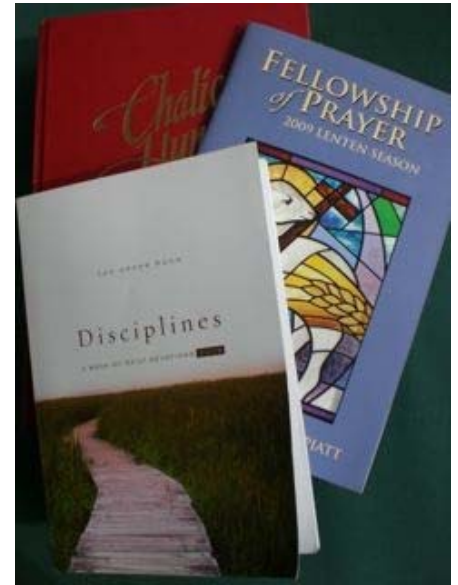
reflections written by well-known authors such as C.S. Lewis and Martin Luther King.

Copies of *Fellowship of Prayer*, a special devotional booklet for Lent written by Christian and Amy Piatt, are still available in the church Lounge. These reflections also follow the lectionary texts.

Both Pastor Bob Brite and Mike Collignon cited *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers as a favorite daily devotional. This book has been in print since 1935 and is also available online (see side box). Mike reads two other devotional books daily, *God Calling* and *Our Journey*, because he likes the different perspectives each book gives on scripture.

Our Chalice Hymnal provides a three-year cycle of daily devotional readings, using the poetry of hymns as well as Biblical readings to take readers through the entire New Testament over a three-year period. A clear explanation for how to use this hymnal-based resource can be found on pp. 777-797 in the hymnal

These are just a few of the hundreds of devotional books that are widely available to anyone interested in daily exercise – treadmills and running shoes for the body, scripture and prayers for the soul.



Where to find resources:

***The Upper Room
Disciplines***

1-800-972-0433

www.upperroom.org/bookstore

My Utmost for His Highest

is at Amazon.com and at other bookstores.

The daily readings are available online at

www.myutmost.org/index.html

***The Daily Word* and
*The Upper Room***

are two widely-used daily devotional magazines that can be ordered or found online

www.upperroom.org/devotional/

and

www.dailyword.com/

<h1>April 2009</h1> <h2>First Christian Church</h2>					<p>Regular Sunday Schedule: 9:15 Church School Classes 10:30 Worship 11:45 Fellowship Time in Lounge</p>		
			1 9 am Nikkei Group (FH) 6 pm Unbinding Gospel Group 6:30pm Bell Choir 7:45 pm Chancel Choir	2	3	4 9 am- Men's Group 10:30 am Unbinding the Gospel	
5 Palm Sunday 9 am Unbinding the Gospel 9:30 Lenten Prayer Circle	6 Mikaharu Kai (FH) -7pm Outloud! (Sanc) 8 pm AA	7 7 pm- Worshp Committee Meeting	8 5:30pm Finance Committee 6 pm Unbinding Gospel Group 6 pm District 18A (FH) 6:30pm Bell Choir 7:45pm Chancel Choir	9 Maundy Thursday 3 pm Prayer Chain starts 5:30 Soup Supper 6:30 Communion Service	10 Good Friday 3 pm Prayer Chain ends 7 pm Worship	11 9 am- Men's Group 10:30 am Unbinding the Gospel	
12 EASTER SUNDAY	13 Mikaharu Kai (FH) -7pm Outloud! (Sanc) -8 pm AA	14 7 pm Property Committee	15 9 am—Nikkei (FH) 6:30 pm Bell Choir 7:45 pm Chancel Choir	16 7 pm Carter Circle at Ann Wolverton's	17 7 pm Piano Recital (Sanc)	18 9 am- Men's Group 9am Laura Lynn/ Naomi Circle (Lounge)	
19	20 Mikaharu Kai (FH) 7 pm Book Group at Westphal's 8 pm AA	21 9 am Mpls Retired Teachers 7 pm Board Meeting	22 6:30 pm Bell Choir 7:45 pm Chancel Choir	23	24	25 9 am- Men's Group	
26	27 Mikaharu Kai (FH) -7pm Outloud! (Sanc) -8 pm AA	28	29 6:30 pm Bell Choir 7:45 pm Chancel Choir	30			

	Elders	Worship Leader	Children's Talk	Bus Driver	Diaconate
Apr. 5	Arlene Hillestad Jay Hillestad	Karen Kandik	Dennis Sanders	Garry Hesser 612-721-4905	Team 1 Grace Madsen
Apr. 12	Jay Hillestad Arlene Hillestad	Max Hurlocker	Kathy Hintz	Mike Hesano	Team 1
Apr. 19	Mary Hurlocker Max Hurlocker	Valerie Dunham	Bob Brite	Mike Morgan 612-926-9384	Team 1
Apr. 26	Max Hurlocker Mary Hurlocker	Jay Hillestad	Deb Murphy	Garry Hesser	Team 1

Board Meeting Notes

New prayer format for meeting; chair vote coming

The regular monthly Church Board meeting on March 17 featured a new format inspired by our congregation's current emphasis on prayer. Following a practice used by *Unbinding the Gospel* groups, the meeting opened by having pairs of people meet together for personal prayer. Then, throughout the meeting, board members paused to pray for the work of the church.

Board members heard updates about the kitchen coffee pot, the

Hearthstone room remodeling, and other on-going issues. No motions were presented during the meeting, so no action votes were taken.

At the April 21 meeting, the Board will be taking up a motion to use moveable chairs instead of pews in the sanctuary. All church members are encouraged to attend this meeting, or to voice opinions on the motion to Board members.

Homeless advocate to speak at Outreach meeting Mar. 29

Members of the outreach committee are encouraged to attend our next meeting, when we will discuss the 2009 outreach budget and hear more about Downtown Congregations to End Homelessness (DCEH). The newly-hired homeless advocate, Heidi Johnson, will be our guest in worship that day as well as at the outreach committee meeting after worship. How might we be supporting the mission of DCEH? Outreach committee members, please make it a point to be at this meeting!

A BIG Thank You to all who worked at the Garrison Keillor Lunch

"To the Catering Staff,

You outdid yourselves for our February luncheon! Not only was the food just what we had in mind, it was delicious! With cherry dessert yet, for George Washington's birthday! And the table settings were perfectly suited to the occasion. If people got awards for this kind of thing, you'd get the GRAND PRIZE!

Thank you all so much. It is truly appreciated. We know we can always count on you.

Your cooperation and fine work are greatly appreciated."

Margaret Tuma for the Minneapolis Retired Teachers

Six years, sixty books

FCC Book group still going strong

FCC's book group has been meeting and reading for over six years. Last we checked, we've read 60+ books.



We meet monthly (usually except for August and December) at the home of Karen Westphal in south Minneapolis. Everyone is welcome (even if you haven't finished the book!).

We've read classics (*Anna Karenina*, *Bleak House*), favorite books from our youth (*Mrs. Mike*), non-fiction (*The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, *Traveling Mercies*), mysteries (P.D. James), quirky novels (*Children of God Go Bowling*). In July, we take book group on the road and walk to Sebastian Joe's for ice cream and book talk. One month, we all brought "book reports" to share with the group.

Attendance varies between 6 and 10. Our biggest meeting was actually at church when we discussed *The DaVinci Code* a few years ago.

For our April 20 meeting, we are reading *Loving Frank*, by Nancy Horan; for May 11, our book is *Glass Castle*, by Jeannette Walls.

Bi-Weekly Calendar

Sundays at First Christian Church

Worship at 10:30 am
Church School Classes, 9:15 am
Fellowship Hour, 11:30 am

This Week at FCC

Sunday, Mar. 29

Unbinding the Gospel group 9 am
Lenten prayer circle 9:30 am
Outreach Committee 12 n
Evangelism Committee 12 n

Wednesday, Apr. 1

Unbinding the Gospel group 6 pm
Bell Choir 6:30pm
Chancel Choir 7:45pm

Friday, Apr. 3

-Article deadline for next Courier

Saturday, Apr. 4

Men's Group 9 am
Unbinding the Gospel group 10:30 am

Next Week at FCC

Sunday, Apr. 5

Palm Sunday

Unbinding the Gospel group 9 am
Lenten prayer circle 9:30 am

Tuesday, Apr. 7

Worship Committee 7 pm

Wednesday, Apr. 8

Unbinding the Gospel group 6 pm
Bell Choir 6:30pm
Chancel Choir 7:45pm

Thursday, April 9

Prayer Chain begins 3 pm
Soup Supper 5:30 pm
Maundy Thursday service 6:30 pm

Friday, April 10

Prayer Service 7 pm

Sat. April 11

Men's Group 9 am
Unbinding Gospel group 10:30 am

Reflections on the Word

From lectionary texts for Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 29

Jeremiah 31:33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people"

Reflection: Joy helps us know what life will be like when the law of God is truly written on our hearts, when we truly live in covenant with God. What joys in your own life reflect the presence of God's covenant in your heart?

Prayer: Reveal to me your covenant, O God, that I may know your ways.
Amen

from Disciplines 2009, p. 100

*A Thoughtful Church in the
Heart of the City*

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All Members of the Congregation

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