

“Message to the Angel of FCC”

July 26th, 2026

The Book of Revelation opens with Christ urging the prophet John to send a record of his apocalyptic visions to seven churches in the Roman province of Asia. For each community, the Risen One also has a message of comfort, critique, and promise addressed to “the angel of the church.”

In worship we are reflecting on these letters in like of this summer’s focus on resistance and spiritual practices. Part of our reflection includes writing messages to “the angel of FCC.” What wisdom or encouragement does the Spirit have for our community in 2026?

Here’s how to participate online:

Choose one of the letters to the seven churches. We hope you’ll read it out loud!

[Ephesus](#) (Revelation 2:1-7)

[Smyrna](#) (Revelation 2:8-11)

[Pergamum](#) (Revelation 2:12-17)

[Thyatira](#) (Revelation 2:18-29)

[Sardis](#) (Revelation 3:1-6)

[Philadelphia](#) (Revelation 3:7-13)

[Laodicea](#) (Revelation 3:14-22)

Consider the questions for group discussion and personal reflection. Inspired by your reflection, what messages do you want to send to “the angel of FCC”?

On Sunday morning, join the [livestream on FCC’s YouTube channel](#) and share your message in the chat (often to the right of the video or below). Folks worshipping at SpringHouse will gladly transcribe your message to one of the feather outlines that will be attached to a pair of angel’s wings above the communion table.

We give thanks for your presence in worship, and we hope that this Sunday you hear what “the Spirit is speaking to the churches.”

Rev. Ben Masters, Interim Minister
Rev. Dan Adolphson, Associate Pastor

Revelation 2:1-7

To the angel of the church in Ephesus, write this:

These are the words of the One
whose right hand holds the seven stars,
who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

I know your deeds, your labors, your patient endurance.
I know you cannot tolerate the wicked.
You have tested the impostors who claimed to be apostles
and found them false.
I know, too, that you have patiently endured hardship for my sake
and have not become discouraged.

I hold this against you, though:
you have abandoned the love you had at first.
Call to mind the heights from which you have fallen.
Repent and do the good you did at first.
If you don't repent, I will come to you
and remove your lampstand from its place.
But you have this in your favor:
you loathe what the Nicolaitans are doing, which I also hate.

Whoever has ears to hear,
listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.
To those who emerge victorious, I will give the right to eat
from the tree of life which stands in the paradise of God.

Questions for group discussion and personal reflection

In each letter, Christ makes a promise to those “who emerge victorious.” The Roman definition of victory is violent suppression of other, “inferior” people, but the Risen One flips the script. **How might Christ challenge our society’s definition of superiority or success?**

Ephesus was a metropolis, a hub of international trade, and one of the first cities granted permission to set up sites to worship the spirit of the Roman emperor. This summer we have touched on the theme of “worshipful resistance.” **What in our society do you feel called to challenge or change? Which spiritual practices or aspects of Sunday worship help you to resist?**

Christ commends this church for not tolerating false prophets and those who perpetuate harm, *and* laments that they have “abandoned the love you had at first.” **What encouragement do you have for Christians seeking justice without becoming hard-hearted? What encouragement do you have for Christians who avoid conflict in the name of love?**

Inspired by your conversation about the letter to the church in Ephesus, **what messages do you want to send to “the angel of FCC”?**

Revelation 2:8-11

To the angel of the church in Smyrna, write this:

These are the words of the First and the Last,
who died and came back to life.

I know your hardships and your poverty—yet you are rich.
I know the slander of those who profess to be Jewish—but are not;
they are really members of Satan's congregation.

Don't be afraid of the sufferings that come.
I tell you, the Devil is about
to send some of you to prison to test you,
and you will undergo an ordeal for ten days.
Be faithful to the point of death,
and I will give you the crown of life.

Whoever has ears to hear,
listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.
Those who emerge victorious will not be destroyed
by the second death.

Questions for group discussion and personal reflection

In each letter, Christ makes a promise to those “who emerge victorious.” The Roman definition of victory is violent suppression of other, “inferior” people, but the Risen One flips the script. **How might Christ challenge our society’s definition of superiority or success?**

The church in Smyrna had already experienced hardships before this message warned of imprisonment and urged disciples: “Be faithful to the point of death.” This year ICE agents killed two people involved in peaceful resistance; many more have been harassed and detained. **How has the witness of Minnesotans resisting Operation Surge impacted your faith? What encouragement do you have for Christians feeling hopeless about such state violence?**

The tone of this message is polemical, aggressively attacking those with whom the prophet disagrees. Name calling and demonization are on full display. **What spiritual practices keep you grounded when you want to lash out at other Christians because of their “un-Christian” actions?**

Inspired by your conversation about the letter to the church in Smyrna, **what messages do you want to send to “the angel of FCC”?**

Revelation 2:12-17

To the angel of the church in Pergamum, write this:

These are the words of the One with the sharp, two-edged sword.

I know that you live where Satan's throne is.
Yet you remain faithful to my name,
and you did not renounce your faith in me—
even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness,
who was killed in your city, where Satan lives.

Nevertheless, I have a few complaints against you.
You have among you those who hold to the teachings of "Balaam,"
who instructed Balak to put a stumbling block in front of the Israelites,
so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols
and engage in sexual immorality.
Likewise you also have among you
those who hold to the teachings of the Nicolaitans.
You must repent, or I will soon come to you
and attack these people with the sword of my mouth.

Whoever has ears to hear,
listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.
To those who emerge victorious
I will give the hidden manna and a white stone—
a stone with a new name written on it,
known only to the person who receives it.

Questions for group discussion and personal reflection

In each letter, Christ makes a promise to those “who emerge victorious.” The Roman definition of victory is violent suppression of other, “inferior” people, but the Risen One flips the script. **How might Christ challenge our society’s definition of superiority or success?**

The church in Pergamum is mourning their brother, Antipas. If this disciple refused to offer worship to the spirit of the emperor, his neighbors may have carried out vigilante punishment. Or, like Jesus, his execution may have been ordered by the Roman governor. So far this year, at least four people—two in Minneapolis—have been shot by ICE agents; many more have died in ICE custody. **How has attention to these deaths impacted your faith? Would you consider them “martyrs” (i.e., “witnesses”)? What encouragement (like manna in the wilderness) do you have for Christians feeling hopeless about such state violence?**

The tone of this message is polemical, aggressively attacking those with whom the prophet disagrees. As in other New Testament letters, “Balaam” is a slanderous epithet that invokes the memory of a prophet paid to curse Israel; allegations of “sexual immorality” are more sensationalist than sincere. However, this teacher’s reasoning about eating meat sacrificed to idols may have sounded a lot like that of the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 8). **What spiritual practices keep you grounded when you want to lash out at other Christians because of their “un-Christian” actions?**

Inspired by your conversation about the letter to the church in Pergamum, **what messages do you want to send to “the angel of FCC”?**

Revelation 2:18-29

To the angel of the church in Thyatira, write this:

These are the words of the Only Begotten of God,
whose eyes are like a blazing flame,
and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

I know your works, your love and faith, your service and endurance.
I also know that the works you have done most recently
are even greater than those you did at first.

Nevertheless, I have a complaint against you:
you tolerate “Jezebel,” who claims to be a prophet,
who leads my faithful astray so that they engage in sexual immorality
and eat food sacrificed to idols.
I have given her time to repent, but she refuses to give up her idolatry.
So I will cast her on a bed of suffering,
and I will plunge those who join her into intense suffering,
unless they repent of their ways; I will put her children to death.
Then all the churches will realize that I search hearts and minds
to give to each of you what your behavior deserves.

But I say to the rest of you in Thyatira,
to you who have not held to her teachings
and know nothing of Satan's so-called “deep secrets”:
on you I will impose no other burden.
Just hold on to what you have until I come.

To those who emerge victorious and keep my ways until the end,
I will give authority over the nations—
to rule them with an iron scepter, to shatter them like pottery—
just as I have received authority from Abba God.
And I will give them the morning star.
Whoever has ears to hear,
listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Questions for group discussion and personal reflection

In each letter, Christ makes a promise to those “who emerge victorious.” The Roman definition of victory is violent suppression of other, “inferior” people, but the Risen One flips the script. **How might Christ challenge our society’s definition of superiority or success?**

Thyatira was known for its many workers’ guilds; archaeologists have found evidence of guilds for those who worked with wool, linen, dye, clothing, leather, pottery, bronze and with the trade of enslaved people. Resistance to oppression is costly, both in terms of our financial resources and our assumptions. **Who have been models of costly resistance to you? What encouragement do you have for Christians who feel hopeless about changing our extractive, exploitative economy?**

The tone of this message is polemical, aggressively attacking those with whom the prophet disagrees. “Jezebel” is a slanderous and sexist epithet that invokes the memory of a murderous queen of Israel; throughout the centuries, her name and her worship of other deities has been associated with sexual immorality. However, this prophet’s reasoning about eating meat sacrificed to idols may have sounded a lot like that of the Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 8). **What spiritual practices keep you grounded when you want to lash out at other Christians because of their “un-Christian” actions?**

Inspired by your conversation about the letter to the church in Thyatira, **what messages do you want to send to “the angel of FCC”?**

Revelation 3:1-6

To the angel of the church in Sardis, write this:

These are the words of the One
who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

I know your conduct; I know the reputation you have
of being alive, when in fact you are dead!
Wake up and strengthen what remains before it dies.
I find that your deeds are far from complete in the sight of my God.
Call to mind how you accepted what you heard;
keep to it, and repent.
If you don't rouse yourselves,
I will come upon you like a thief, at a time you cannot know.

Yet you have in Sardis a few people
who have not soiled their garments;
these will walk with me in dressed white because they are worthy.
Those who emerge victorious will wear white clothing like this.
I will never erase their names from the book of life,
but will acknowledge them
in the presence of Abba God and the angels.
Whoever has ears to hear,
listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Questions for group discussion and personal reflection

In each letter, Christ makes a promise to those “who emerge victorious.” The Roman definition of victory is violent suppression of other, “inferior” people, but the Risen One flips the script. **How might Christ challenge our society’s definition of superiority or success?**

Like every church, the congregation in Sardis was imperfect. Imagine what it was like for these disciples to hear themselves described as dead or sleeping (“Don’t we have a reputation for being alive and active?”). **Have you ever received such a “wake up call” that jolted you out of autopilot? What compassionate encouragement would you offer to Christians who need to be “roused” to faithful resistance?**

Throughout Revelation we glimpse visions of martyred people wearing white garments. So far this year, at least four people—two in Minneapolis—have been shot by ICE agents; many more have died in ICE custody. **How has attention to these deaths impacted your faith? Would you consider them “martyrs” (i.e., “witnesses”)? What encouragement do you have for Christians feeling hopeless about such state violence?**

Inspired by your conversation about the letter to the church in Sardis, **what messages do you want to send to “the angel of FCC”?**

Revelation 3:7-13

To the angel of the church in Philadelphia, write this:

These are the words of the One who is holy and true,
who holds the key of David,
who opens what no one can close,
who closes what no one can open.

I know all about you.

Look! I have placed before you an open door,
which no one can close.

Though you have so little power,

I know you have kept my word and not denied my name.

Now I will make the people from Satan's congregation —
those who claim to be Jewish and are not, for they are liars —
come and fall at your feet
and acknowledge that I have loved you.

Because you have kept my command to endure all trials,
I will also keep you safe in the time of trial
that is going to come upon the entire empire,
to test the earth's residents.

I am coming soon.

Hold fast to what you have,
so that no one will take your crown.

Those who emerge victorious

I will make into pillars in the temple of my God,
and they will never leave it again.

I will inscribe on them the name of my God
and the name of my God's city, the new Jerusalem,
which comes down from my God in heaven.

On them I will also write my own new name.

Whoever has ears to hear,

listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Questions for group discussion and personal reflection

In each letter, Christ makes a promise to those “who emerge victorious.” The Roman definition of victory is violent suppression of other, “inferior” people, but the Risen One flips the script. **How might Christ challenge our society’s definition of superiority or success?**

Why do you think the church in Philadelphia felt so powerless? Perhaps a schism in the city’s synagogue (disparaged as “Satan’s congregation”) isolated Jewish followers of Jesus. Several disciples could have been refugees from the Roman suppression of revolution in Judea; having watched soldiers raze the temple, the promise of a new Jerusalem would have seemed like an impossible hope. **What encouragement do you have for Christians feeling similarly powerless about challenging or changing oppressive systems? What “open door, which no one can close,” do you want them to notice?**

Threats of *peirasmōs* loom over the empire; that Greek word could be translated as trial, test, or temptation. (This is why some English-speaking Christians say, “Lead us not into temptation,” while others pray, “Save us from the time of trial.”) Operation Metro Surge certainly tested Minnesotans’ resilience and tried to tempt us to give in to despair and dread. **What insights or experiences of grace do you want to “hold fast to” in the challenges to come? What “new name” (or new truth) has been written on you or your neighbors by the Spirit?**

Inspired by your conversation about the letter to the church in Philadelphia, **what messages do you want to send to “the angel of FCC”?**

Revelation 3:14-22

To the angel of the church in Laodicea, write this:

These are the words of the Amen,
the faithful and true witness,
source and sovereign of God's creation.

I know your deeds. You are neither cold nor hot.
How I wish you were one or the other—hot or cold!
But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold,
I will spit you out of my mouth!

You keep saying, “I am so rich and secure that I want for nothing.”
Little do you realize how wretched you are,
how pitiable and poor, how blind and naked!
Take my advice. Buy from me gold refined by fire,
if you would be truly rich.
Buy white garments to wear,
if the shame of your nakedness is to be covered.
Buy ointment to smear on your eyes, if you would see.

Whoever is dear to me, I will correct and discipline.
Be earnest about it, therefore. Repent!
Here I stand, knocking at the door.
If any people hear me calling and open the door,
I will enter and dine with them, and they will dine with me.

To those who emerge victorious
I will give a place to sit with me on my throne,
as I myself emerged victorious and took my seat
beside my Abba God on the heavenly throne.
Whoever has ears to hear,
listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

Questions for group discussion and personal reflection

In each letter, Christ makes a promise to those “who emerge victorious.” The Roman definition of victory is violent suppression of other, “inferior” people, but the Risen One flips the script. **How might Christ challenge our society’s definition of superiority or success?**

“Lukewarm” sounds like a metaphor to modern ears, but it was a vexing reality for residents of Laodicea. The stone pipes built by Roman engineers delivered water that was chalky and unrefreshing. Anna Carter Florence argues: **“Christ isn’t reminding us to be enthusiastic for the gospel. He’s pleading with us not to corrode it.”**

“Are we so dazzled by wealth, so captive to its pursuit, that we can no longer be a conduit for God's justice? Have we become as lukewarm and contaminated as our city water supply? Or God help us: have we built a church as malfunctioning and ill-conceived as our state-of-the-art imperial aqueduct, the pride of Rome and a misery to us who live here?”

—Anna Carter Florence, “L is for Laodicea,” in *A is for Alabaster: 52 Reflections on the Stories of Scripture* (Westminster John Knox, 2023).

Lukewarm, chalky water was a source of irritation or embarrassment for the church in Laodicea. **What would be a comparable image to rouse our congregation?** Perhaps, “You are a road dotted with traffic barrels, with no construction workers in sight”? **Or something stronger?**

Imagine a Christian in the U.S. beginning to confront hard truths, perhaps in their congregation (“We are corroding our faithful witness”) or in their society (“My family has been made comfortable at my neighbors’ expense”). **What encouragement would you offer? What spiritual practices help you stay honest with yourself?**

Inspired by your conversation about the letter to the church in Laodicea, **what messages do you want to send to “the angel of FCC”?**