

# The CHRISTIAN

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 FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH *(Disciples of Christ)* *Visitor*

## **Preparing the Heart for the Way of the Cross** *Inspiration Through the Music of J.S. Bach's Cantata 159*

Join us online at 10:00 am on Sunday, March 21, for a very special worship service as we continue our Lenten journey together. Under the direction of Jan Harrington, our choral scholars and guest instrumentalists (including cellist Adriana Contino and Oboist Stina Hawkinson) will offer a moving performance of J.S. Bach's Cantata BWV 159 "Sehet, wir gehn nach gen Jerusalem" (Behold, we go up to Jerusalem").

This cantata--which was written at the same time as the St. Matthew's Passion and which carries the same profound tone—was originally presented on the fifth Sunday of Lent. Based on Luke 18:31, it will proclaim the Word in music and verse (using an English translation). Pastor Helen will offer brief reflective thoughts to guide your listening and contemplation.

In the poignant text, the voice of Jesus tells the believer it is time to proceed to Jerusalem where the Cross awaits. The believer exclaims in anguish that he should not go. The believer then determines to follow Jesus and stand beside Him in His suffering. The believer then (in a movement that is considered one of the greatest in all of Bach) offers a deeply felt interpretation of the crucifixion that is yet to come. The cantata ends with a chorale that intones the grateful response of the congregation of believers to the meaning of Christ's Passion. Please see Jan's notes (page 3) for a fuller description of this Cantata.

FCC's soloists Joseph Andreola (bass), Liz Culpepper (alto), Maria Izzo Walker (soprano), and Solomon Reynolds (tenor) will join a string quintet including guest instrumentalists Adriana Contino (cello) and Stina Hawkinson (oboe) for this special service livestreamed online at [www.fccbloomington.org](http://www.fccbloomington.org). Please plan to "tune in" for this special service and also share information with friends and family.

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**Pastor's Pen***Looking Back on this Exceptional Year*

It was exactly one year ago that we faced the reality of the pandemic and cancelled in-person worship. Here are portions of the email we sent out on March 12, 2020.

*Your FCC board, at the recommendation of our FCC medical professionals and our Regional Minister, has made the decision to cancel worship services for this Sunday, March 15, 2020... Please remember: we are cancelling a service(s) of worship, not "church."... In the meantime, we are working toward live streaming our own worship services, so stay tuned and stay healthy!*

Here at FCC (not to mention in our personal lives and in the life of our nation), we've learned a lot as we've navigated this pandemic.

- We've learned that we can adapt quite quickly when circumstances call for it. It only took a week to figure out how to offer online worship and hold virtual meetings, and we've been adapting and tweaking ever since!
- We've learned that we can practice patience. Even as the weeks turned into months and months turned into a year, we have been intentional about *not* rushing back to the sanctuary, hard as it is for many of us.
- We've learned new ways to connect, show care, and practice compassion. We've cared for the vulnerable by remaining "virtual." We've sent more cards, notes, emails, and texts than we might have ever imagined. We've zoomed, made phone calls and posted updates on social media. And it has made a difference!
- We've learned that we have excellent leadership! Our board, trustees, committees, task forces, teams, group leaders, teachers, parents, and staff members have served us well! I remain in total awe of their steadfast and faithful leadership!
- We've learned the truth of that children's song: "The church is not a building...the church is God's people." Yes, even though we dearly love and miss the building (especially the sanctuary), we have learned that we can still be a church that shares the inclusive love of Christ: welcoming, serving, learning, offering opportunities for deep spiritual connection.
- Most of all we've learned that we can trust in the truth that ***nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ!*** (Romans 8:39)

Now that we are beginning to allow ourselves to prepare for a post-pandemic life, my prayer is that we will continue to adapt, and practice patience, and connect, and empower leaders, and be Christ's church, together! In the meantime, "see" you on Sunday!

Blessings,

  
Pastor Helen



## FROM THE CHOIR LOFT

Worship Through the Ministry of J.S. Bach  
 Sunday, March 21 - Online at 10:00 am

On Sunday, March 21 (the fifth Sunday of Lent) the final theme of our worship series will be “Preparing the Heart for the Way of the Cross”. We will be guided and inspired in worship through the music of J.S. Bach’s Cantata 159: *Behold, We Are Going Up to Jerusalem*. Bach constructs his cantata as a sermon/meditation. Each movement will be introduced for contemplation by Pastor Helen as the cantata becomes the fabric for our worship service.

In 1724 and 1725, Bach composed a series of “Dialogue” cantatas with solo arias and duets in them in which the soloists represent a conversation between the *Vox Christi* (the Voice of Christ) and the Soul. Cantata 159 takes as its point of departure the lines in the Gospel for the Day from Luke 18:31 where Jesus determines with the disciples to go to Jerusalem: “And taking the twelve, he said to them, *Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written of the Son of man by the prophets will be fulfilled.*”

There is a very personal feeling to this short cantata that tells the story of the way of the Cross told from the point of view of the Soul. The text of the cantata treats the reaction of the believer to Jesus' intention to go up to Jerusalem towards his atoning sacrifice on the cross. The believer is first reluctant to let the beloved Jesus go to his death, then commits to be with him as he walks his path, finally giving up the world and dying in order to be with Jesus and in gratitude for the salvation won by his death. The theme is that of Galatians 6:14: *“May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”*

The cantata starts with a dialogue in which the **bass** is the steadfast voice of Jesus and the **alto** the hesitant Soul fearfully warning Jesus not to go. In the following **aria/chorale**, a soprano sings the sixth verse of the famous chorale *O Sacred Head Now Wounded*, interrupting the Alto who sings “I will follow him still” while the cello moves in a constantly running figure, representing the Soul courageously and steadfastly following Christ as he moves through the events of the Passion for our redemption.

A brief **tenor recitative** simply sings the message that is most central to the theme of the cantata... *“I will now grieve over Jesus and comfort myself---I will know no joy until I see, and am redeemed, by You in Your glory.”* His simple declaration is followed by one of the most beautiful of Bach’s arias, *“Es ist vollbracht”* (*“It is fulfilled. The pain is over”*) sung by the **bass**. You will hear how Bach paints the text in this beautiful aria with poignant dissonances in the oboe and the strings, and with running notes depicting the Soul’s commitment to hasten to be with Jesus through the turmoil. In the end, all is calm and serene and protected.

The cantata ends with a straightforward **chorale** (a congregational hymn setting) which reflects the grateful response of the congregation of believers to the meaning of Christ’s Passion. The chorale will be virtually sung by members of the Sanctuary Choir.

The soloists will be our choral scholars: bass **Joseph Andreola**, alto **Liz Culpepper**, soprano **Maria Izzo Walker**, and guest **tenor Solomon Reynolds**.

Jan Harrington with references from Rev. David Smith (<http://www.lectionarycentral.com/quinquag/Bach159.html>) and Professor J. Mincham (<http://www.jsbachcantatas.com/documents/chapter-41-bwv-159ll.htm>)

## Family Ministries Update

By Sarah Lynne Gershon  
Student Associate Pastor

Hello Families! I am back from my retreat feeling very refreshed and blessed to be doing this work at First Christian Church. The last thing I got to do before my week off was spend some time with some of your kids who are in Pastor Helen's class preparing for Baptism. We spent time learning about prayer and spread out in the sanctuary for some prayerful practices, including burning confessions and dissolving our worries. Pastor Helen led us in a beautiful, holy time and being able to participate in that with Noah, Scott, and Maya was the perfect way to begin what was, for me, a beautiful and holy week.

I am starting to plan for Easter and our Eastertide devotional bags, and am delighted to announce that **we are planning to have an Easter egg hunt this year!** It will look different (of course!), so stay tuned for details and make sure you RSVP when you receive the invitation. We will need to know who is coming to make sure we are able to safely host this event.

I cannot wait to see you then! Thank you for all you do for your kids, this church, and the wider community.

### Candy Donations Needed for Easter Egg Hunt



We are planning for an outdoor Easter Egg Hunt on FCC's lawn this year, weather permitting. That means we will need lots of candy to stuff into those eggs.

Please consider donating bag(s) of candy for this fun event. We ask that you avoid candy that contains nuts.

Please, be sure to bring your **"Nut-Free"** candy to church by Thursday, April 1! We will have a donation box on the covered porch at our Kirkwood administrative entrance Monday-Thursday from 10:00 am - 2:00 pm



beginning March 15. Thank you for helping us make this year's egg hunt a big success!



### *It's time to order your Easter Lilies!*

We are now taking orders for Easter lilies to adorn our sanctuary on Easter Sunday.

The lilies are \$12.00 each. The deadline for ordering is March 22. An order card can be found in this newsletter. Mail or drop off your card by Monday, March 22. Please include payment at the time of the order.

Proceeds from this order are applied to FCC's Permanent Fund. You are welcome to simply donate to the fund if you do not wish to have a lily. Thank you.

	<p>Join us each Friday at 6:30 pm on <a href="http://www.fccbloomington.org">www.fccbloomington.org</a> for a Jazz Vespers Moment. What a wonderful way to ease into the weekend with meditation, music and poetry. Our theme for March is <b>Embracing</b>.</p>				
	<table> <tr> <td> <p><b>March 12</b> Embracing Gratefulness</p> </td> <td> <p><b>March 19</b> Embracing Stillness</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2" style="text-align: center;"> <p><b>March 26</b> Embracing the Future</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p><b>March 12</b> Embracing Gratefulness</p>	<p><b>March 19</b> Embracing Stillness</p>	<p><b>March 26</b> Embracing the Future</p>	
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<p><b>March 26</b> Embracing the Future</p>					

Rev. Terri Hord Owens,  
General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Hello, Disciples.

We're now in the season of Lent, a time of reflection and dedication for many of us. I shared on my personal Facebook page a reflection from Howard Thurman, the Black theologian and mystic, who loved spending time with God. And so today, I wanted to share one of his meditations called *The Sustainer of Life*:



It is of enormous reassurance to us, O Father, that thou art the sustainer and the holder of life. That despite all of our own limitations and attitudes, despite all our weaknesses and failures, despite all of the soarings of our minds and imaginations and our spirits, always we come back to the deep assurance that thou art the sustainer of life, the holder of all creation, and the guarantor of all our values.

This is of such overwhelming reassurance to us that we celebrate in simple words of praise this almighty grace. We offer, on our part, not merely the good deeds of which we are aware, at times not merely the concerns for our fellows which simply lead us to simple deeds or glorious acts of self-sacrifice, but we offer thee these things that we might become all of the possibilities of our lives. The potential is not yet realized. We offer to thee our failures, also those times when something breaks down and we do not know what or when something breaks down and we do know what. All that we might have been at a particular time and were not, all of the sense of conscience that disturbs, and whips, and tortures because we have not been in quality and in kind what we knew at the time we could have been in quality and kind. And beyond all those expressions of ourselves, our Father, we offer to thee ourselves.

This is what we want to do and sometimes we are able to do it, just to say to the Father, here am I. My life as it is at its depth, I give to thee and I want thee to hold it so that it is no longer my life to do with in accordance to my whims, my impulses, my desires, or even my needs, but to take my life and to hold it until it takes on thy character, thy mind, thy purposes. If thou wilt do this and if thou wilt help me to do, this then I can be, in myself, what is truest and surest in me and this, O God, is all, all, all.

Amen

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FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH BLOOMINGTON  
**PREPARING  
THE  
HEART**  
LENT 2021

Join us during Lent as we explore something that matters deeply to Jesus: the spiritual health of the human heart. We are reflecting on some of the ways that Jesus invites people (including us!) to prepare their hearts to receive and taste the fullness of life that is enfolded within the heart of God.

**Scripture Readings  
For Sunday Worship**

**March 14**  
*A Heart of Generosity*  
from Luke 12

**March 21**  
*Preparing the Heart for  
the Way of the Cross*  
Cantata 159 by J.S. Bach  
Matthew 13:45-46

**March 28 (Palm Sunday)**  
*A Heart of Humility*  
Mark 9:30-37, Mark 11:7-11