

RELIGION

FROM THE PULPIT

God's plan for our broken world

By Brad Bryant
FOR THE PANTAGRAPH

Today's "news": war, famine, disease, disasters, debt, broken relationships ... reminds us how separated we are from God's plan of unity and peace: vastly different from God's initial "garden of Eden."

Christians use familiar "Lord's Prayer" words: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven..." (Luke 11:2) Without thinking about these words, we ask God to BRING his kingdom on the earth; allowing God's desires to be done on OUR earth, just like in heaven! These are powerful prayers.

Remember: Jesus promised to physically return "in the last days": "Keep watch ...you do not know on what day your Lord will come... You...must be ready... (he) will come... when you do not expect him." (Matthew 24:42,44)

Until then, Christ's church is fragmented - people and denominations divided, not presenting a united message of Jesus' hope to our broken world. Jesus even prayed for believer unity, "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you... May they be brought to complete unity..." (John 17:21,23)

Even with today's fragmented body of Christ, God blesses His world through those pieces. Each person, each denomination, brings a portion of the truth that is God. Working together, we bring a clearer message, because there is al-

ways more to God than humans can understand. God is larger than any creed, any set of books, or any prophet's description. Blending each understanding of God's plan, we can weave them into a more complete and beautiful mosaic.

One gift that God offers our world through the Community of Christ is a vision of Zion: God's kingdom on Earth - an invitation to co-create this new world with God. It is our witness that Zion life IS possible, centered in the ministry of the living Jesus Christ, and available to everyone who chooses to follow his teachings.

The kingdom is both a present reality (where people can experience the presence and ministry of Jesus today), as well as a future hope for all people to be liberated from sin, poverty and captivity, growing into eternal relationship.

Zion requires a covenant people who listen, commit and respond to God, transforming personal lives into God's vision, shedding our basic selfishness, and focusing resources and ministry, bringing Christ's blessings to others. Zion is a gathered community, choosing Christ-centered lives, growing into spiritual and temporal unity.

We are not hiding from the

world's evils, but bring acts of hope and healing. Zion-building includes people who desire to help change the world for the better, being Christian examples for their neighbors. Zion shall be a people of one heart, one mind, who live in righteousness and have no poor among them.

To be in this world, Zion must be a place. Zion is represented worldwide in communities where Jesus' followers choose to live their faith journey together. There must also be a "center" place, where Jesus himself returns to establish his government on the earth in the last days. "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord...he will reign forever" (Revelations 11:15) "...before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion" (Revelations 14:1) In these places, God's people can demonstrate his truths and divine purposes.

"In the last days...the Lord's house shall be established... and all nations shall flow unto it; ...many people shall... say, 'Come...let us go up to the mountain of the Lord... he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths, for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem'" (Isaiah 2:1-3)

Zion-building also is a process. God's entire universe

is in process, moving to fulfill God's plan. Zion is an environment where people explore the relationships between worldly and sacred activities. Zion participates in the world, taking upon itself the world's problems and injustice, working to reconcile the world to God.

God invites you into this co-creating experience: restoring the cause of Zion to our planet, pursuing peace, reconciliation, and healing of the spirit for all. Focus your skills, time, resources on today's injustice and inequality, preparing for the rebirth of a healthier world - physically and spiritually, and for the return of Jesus.

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Got an opinion?


WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR



WEST TWIN GROVE
Christian Church

309-963-4138
www.westwingrove.org



Five miles west of 155/174 on Rt. 9 to Twin Grove Church Road (810E)

9:15 am.....Bible Study
10:30 am.....Worship
6:00 pm.....Gospel Opry


Holy Apostles
Orthodox Christian Church
1670 W. Hovey Ave. Normal
Sunday: Divine Liturgy 9:30 am
www.holyapostlesbn.org
Fr. John D. Brown
(309) 263-7532 465741

First Presbyterian Church

2000 E. College Ave. • Normal, IL • 452-4459

Sunday Worship Services
8:30 a.m.
10:00 a.m.

 Childcare Available
www.firstpresnormal.org 

Christ Church (PCA)


FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST
108 N. Regency Drive, Bloomington
Sunday Service.....10:30 A.M.
Sunday School.....10:30 A.M.
Wednesday Testimonies....7:30 P.M.

BIBLE LESSON SUBJECT: **Christ Jesus**

Care for small children at services

Bloomington-Normal Area United Methodist Churches

Calvary United Methodist
Sunday School.....9:15 A.M.
Worship.....8:00, 9:15 & 10:45 A.M.
Nursery Provided
1700 N. Towanda Ave., Normal 452-5413


UNIVERSITY CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(Disciples of Christ)

Worship.....9:30 a.m.

North St. at Fell Ave.,
Downtown Normal • 452-2346
Everyone is Welcome!