

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH (Disciples of Christ)

Richmond, Indiana

Service for 9-11-22



WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ministry Council this Tuesday at 6.

I'll be out of town on Wednesday...performing a wedding for some dear friends.

GREETING one another in the name of Jesus Christ

Hymn—All Who Love and Serve Your City #670 v. 1, 2, 3, 5

JOYS AND CONCERNS

--Death of Ken Jordan this week. (Visitation will be at Doan & Mills-- Wednesday afternoon 4-7. Funeral At Doan & Mills Thursday morning at 10:30.)

--June Clements asks prayers for her husband Joe, suffering from cancer.

--Debbie Harrison is suffering some internal consequences of Covid.

--Seara Burton...her family and her brother and sister officers.

--our nation...as we remember 9/11/2001. May we never forget those who died in the World Trade Center and the Pentagon that day. And may we never forget the valiant heroes of United Flight 93 that crashed in Pennsylvania.

Call to Prayer—Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying #305 (twice)

PRAYER w/ Lord's Prayer

Please Stand for our ...

LITANY OF GRATITUDE FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

LEADER -- Beloved First Responders, you saw the need in Richmond, Indiana. You looked in the mirror and said, "I can't do everything, but I can do something."

ALL: You are a blessing. And we thank God for you!

LEADER-- You signed up for training. You studied countless hours; you sweated through exams. You showed up for drills when you might have spent time with family and friends.

ALL: You are a blessing. And we thank God for you!

LEADER-- You got the pager and the uniform. You took on the responsibility to respond when your neighbors, your friends, or even a stranger passing through town needed help.

ALL: You are a blessing. And we thank God for you!

LEADER-- Your pager goes off during family meals; during the big game; and during well-deserved sleep at the end of a long day. Without hesitation, you grabbed your gear, and went to the scene where your services were needed. You set aside your comfort and your plans, that someone else might have life, or hope, or comfort.

ALL: You are a blessing. And we thank God for you!

LEADER-- Then came the tough call. Too young. The long-time neighbor. The brother or sister officer. The unimaginable scene. You gave your best. Then you went home, and hugged your loved ones, and prayed for those who had lost so much. You wondered if you'd done enough.

ALL: You are a blessing. And we thank God for you!

LEADER-- We give thanks to God for you! You exemplify for us, and the next generation, the values of courage and service and commitment. You do not seek or wish our recognition, but

today we say THANK YOU for all you do, quietly, faithfully, each day to make our community stronger and safer.

ALL: You are a blessing. And we thank God for you!

SCRIPTURE AND MESSAGE

A First Responder's First Responder

There is no doubt that in human life...everyone needs help. We get hurt by others...or by simple accidents...or by our own ... stupidity. Nature can turn against us. Our own bodies can turn against us.

It is in such scary...unstable times...that we need ... help. Nobody here...and nobody watching online...is free of this truth. We all need help... at some point in our lives.

This is just one of the reasons Jesus taught the Love He taught...and the Love He lived. To teach us not only our own need for love... but also to offer that love to others with commitment ...and with humility. Our scriptures today...are the teachings of our Lord.

Mark 9:33-35-- ³³ Then they came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" ³⁴ But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. ³⁵ He sat down,

called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.”

John 15:12-13-- ¹² “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. **SCRIPTURE PRAYER**

Mychal Judge was Brooklyn born. As a boy...he dreamed of joining the fire department...or being a priest. He actually lived...to do both. He became a priest. He then became a First Responder. Father Mychal Judge was a chaplain for the New York City Fire Department. ...And...he died on 9/11.

Father Mychal’s life...his ministry...was not ordinary. He seemed to know everyone...from the homeless...to shopkeepers...to the mayor. A friend later observed that Father Mychal did not live out his priesthood in a sanctuary. His priesthood...his ministry ...was where his hands got dirty...and where risks... were taken.

In a very real way...Father Mychal was a First Responder to First Responders. He was at the terrifying scenes when First Responders are called to help. When needed...he spoke love to them. He spoke truth...and encouragement to them ...when they were at their wits end ...when they were grieving...when they were angry...and when they were exhausted. If firefighters were injured... he was at their bedside. When they died...he gave

comfort to their families. Father Mychal...was a **true loving servant** to those First Responder heroes.

On September 10, 2001, Father Mychal was rededicating a firehouse in the Bronx. As it happened...it was his last sermon. He spoke of the dedication...and the calling...it took to be a First Responder. Yes, he was speaking to firefighters that day. But his words are true for all First Responders. ...and dare I say...his words are true for those of us who want to help...and honor...First Responders.

Father Mychal reminded them that day that every day is different. He said...*“Good days...and bad days. Up days...and down days. Sad days ...and happy days. Never a boring day on that job. But you do what God has called you to do. You show up. You put one foot in front of the another. You get on the rig and you go out and you do the job. No matter how big the call. No matter how small. You have no idea what God is calling you to...But in that moment...God needs you. God needs me. God needs all of us.”*

He ended that sermon by saying that if they did their duty...and followed their calling faithfully...then ...*“this house will be a great, great blessing to this neighborhood and to this city.”*

The very next morning...upon learning that a plane had crashed into the World Trade Center...Father Mychal responded...

by running into the danger with his brother and sister First Responders. He rushed into the North Tower lobby to help the victims...and the officers. He prayed with the living, the injured, and the dead.

While he was there...while he prayed..., the South Tower collapsed, sending debris flying into the North Tower lobby. Father Mychal was struck by this debris...and he died.

Five brother firefighters carried his body out of the North Tower. (There is a rather famous photograph shows those firefighters carrying Father Mychal's dead body. I chose not to put that image on our screen).

His body...was eventually taken to St. Peter's church and placed near the altar. Throughout that darkest of days, First Responders came to that sanctuary to pay their respects to their fallen chaplain...to cry...to pray...and then ...to return to their seemingly endless work.

I speak today of Father Mychal Judge...this man of God...to remind us all of the dedication...and the love...that serves as the foundation for the lives of all First Responders. These heroes work in places where their hands get dirty...and yes, even bloody. And yet...they remain committed to their calling. ----They work in places where their very lives are at risk. And yet...they remain committed to their calling. ----Some of their work... breaks their

hearts...and perhaps...for a moment...their spirits. And yet...they remain committed to their calling.---- Sadly... some of their work is done where they are treated with disrespect. And yet... they remain committed to their calling.

---Why do they do this? It's what true loving servants...do. It's what First Responders ...do. ...It's what **heroes** do!

This is the Love that Jesus Christ taught...lived out...and commanded of anyone who follows Him. Loving in the manner of Jesus Christ...is not easy. In fact, at times...it's downright hard. Our hands may get dirty...and yes...even bloody. Our souls will get tired and sad at all the brokenness we're called to tend. We may be treated with disrespect...or considered weak because of the way we serve others. ...and yet...if we're true to Christ's teaching...we remain committed to **our** calling.

The beauty of humans like Father Mychal...and all the First Responders we know and honor here today...is that they serve as living reminders of what Christ asks of us. If someone is in need ...we help. We go to serve. We don't wait to see if that person is "deserving" ... before we act. ...We serve them anyway.

First Responders serve regardless of the various ways we humans divide ourselves. A First Responder's help and protection ...is offered regardless of wealth...sexual preference... criminal history...addictions... level of education. If a human... any

human...is in crisis...First Responders...respond...and help.

...That's just what they do. Let us learn...and do likewise.

...In the past few weeks, we have seen this community pull together to be a loving Responder...to an injured First Responder and her family. ...Her blood family...and her Blue family.

Officer Seara Burton was shot in the line of duty on August 10, just 30 days ago. Since then, Richmond has rallied with fundraisers and prayers. Thousands gathered for a prayer vigil. Words of encouragement and support have been offered to random officers on the street. Signs of support are everywhere.

How did we learn to offer this help? We learn it from the words and life of Jesus Christ. We learn it from seeing First Responders...like Officer Seara Burton...like the many First Responders we see on our streets every day. They teach us... how to make our town more loving...and more supportive...when our fellow citizens are in need.

This is why we honor and support First Responders. Sure, we knew they were heroes before September 11, 2001. We knew it before August 10, 2022. Those days are just the most blatant reminders of the heroism ...and the dedication to service...First Responders show ...every day...even on those days when we take them for granted.

Let us vow to do better in living out the life teachings of Jesus Christ. Let us learn from the First Responders around us...to remain dedicated to the work God calls each of us to do. IF we keep to that calling...if we follow the lead of First Responders ... then...I have no doubt...that in the words of Father Mychal..."*THIS house (where we worship today) will be a great, great blessing to this neighborhood and to this city.*"

INVITATION—Living out our calling to the Christian faith...isn't easy. But nobody lives the Christian life alone. Nobody! Why? Because Jesus Christ is with us...every day...always has been...always will be...even to the end of the age. That promise comes from Him. When serving Him gets hard...we can lean on Him. Are you ready to accept that wondrous relationship?

Hymn—O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee #602 v. 1 & 3

MOMENT FOR MINISTRY

ANTHEM—*We Bow Down*

COMMUNION—Today we honor First Responders...who show a Love that is selfless...lived primarily for the benefit...and the welfare ...of others. That's what we remember here at this Table, isn't it? Every time we gather. We remember the love of God that Jesus showed to the world. Even though it meant sacrifice of

Jesus' own comfort...His own life...He offered it willingly. We needed it then. We need it now. Oh, how we need it now. Let us pause...and prepare our hearts to experience that Love...yet again.

Hymn—In this Very Room #295 v. 2 & 3

Elder's Prayer blessing Bread and Cup

Remembering Jesus' words

Partake

Closing Hymn—Shalom to You Now #436

BENEDICTION