

# VISITOR

May 31, 2023



## Casey First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

200 SE 8<sup>th</sup> St. · P.O. Box 303 · Casey, IL 62420

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Pastor Evan Sherar, 812-698-7504, [pastor.evansherar@gmail.com](mailto:pastor.evansherar@gmail.com)

Pastor Office Hours: Monday 10 am-4 pm, Tues-Thurs 9 am-2 pm

Secretary Office Hours: Wednesday 8:00 am - Noon

**Sunday Services: 9:00 am Sunday School, 10:00 am Worship**

*To Know God-To Love God-To Serve God*

For greater context, I invite you to go and read Acts 8:26-40 in whatever translation of your choosing. But I want to focus in on verses 36 through 38 (including verse 37, which some critical editions put in a footnote because many ancient manuscripts do not have it). Here is the NRSV Updated Edition:

36 As they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” 37 And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” 38 He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.

In this story, Philip encounters a eunuch and shares with him the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The eunuch asks if there is any reason he couldn't be baptized - that is fully included without reservation - and Philip says the only condition for full inclusion is that he believe with all his heart. The eunuch then declares something strikingly similar to the christological confession that Peter gives in Matthew 16:16 - “You (Jesus) are the Christ, the son of the living God.” Philip then baptizes the eunuch. This is an act of radical inclusion. And I think this example is vitally important for Christians today, and especially during this month of June where many celebrate LGBTQ Pride.

In the ancient world, a eunuch would have been considered a sexual minority. They did not fit neatly into the world's expectations of gender and sex. They did not really fit into the category of either “man” or “woman.” Some were people who were born with both male and female characteristics. Some would choose to become eunuchs because this was what they felt was the best representation of who they were on the inside. Others, like the eunuch in this story in Acts, were servants in a royal court, trusted by queens and other female nobles with “womanly” matters that men did not usually get involved with. This eunuch may have been kind of like the queen's “gay best friend.”

Eunuchs also, because they did not fit into the “accepted” norms, would have been totally excluded from worship in the Temple in Jerusalem, and really many temples throughout the ancient world. They would not have been allowed to enter the main sanctuary where people came to worship God. There were some rooms where they were allowed, on a conditional basis, but never with full status. They would have been kept out of the holiest places, and told that because of who they were they were unclean, unholy, and that they did not belong among

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the people of God.

Eunuchs were a social taboo. And much of how eunuchs were treated aligns with how the Church has often treated lesbians, gay, bisexual, and transgender people today. Some consider LGBTQ people to be demonic and evil. Some use the term “abomination” or say homosexuality is “incompatible with Christian practice.” During the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 80’s and 90’s, gay and trans people were shunned, many denied medical care, denied religious funerals, denied burial in church-owned cemeteries. On the better end of things, sometimes these people are welcomed into churches, and allowed to attend worship services. But sometimes even churches who say “All are welcome,” have strings attached. They can attend, but their marriage isn’t a “real” marriage. They can attend, but they can’t be in leadership. They are welcome to be here, but we do not condone their “lifestyle.”

But what does Philip do when he encounters a eunuch? What happens with Philip, one of Jesus’ earliest disciples who spends years of his life traveling and ministering with Jesus through all of his earthly ministry, encounters this person who did not conform to social norms regarding gender and sexuality? What does Philip do? He does something that would have been considered radical. He baptizes him.

By baptizing this eunuch, Philip totally affirms him as a beloved child of God. Being baptized, this eunuch is fully and without restriction or secondary status included in the family of God. Philip does not ask the eunuch to repent or change from being a eunuch. He does not condemn his “lifestyle” or deny him access to holy places. Philip practices radical welcome, radical inclusion. In many ancient manuscripts, Philip does not even require anything from the eunuch, not even an explicit declaration of faith. But I think this verse 37 is important because in it, this eunuch confesses the same statement that Peter makes about Jesus - that he is the Christ and the Son of God. This is the foundational confession of Christian faith, the rock on which Jesus says his church is built. And for it to come from the mouth of a eunuch - an outcast, a queer person, someone considered unholy and unclean - is a radical affirmation of their belovedness in Christ.

I think Philip’s example should be one we, Christians, take seriously today regarding the LGBTQ community. At the very least it should give us pause when some use the words “abomination” or “sin” regarding homosexuality and transgender identity. It should challenge our assumption that this is something new that this younger generation has come up with. It should call us to examine the ways we have traditionally responded to this community, and it should inspire us to imagine something better. Imagine a world where Jesus’ radical love reigns in all aspects of our lives. How might God be calling us to love our LGBT neighbors today?

And if this newsletter happens to find it’s way into the hands of an LGBTQ+ person, even here in Casey, IL or greater Clark County - yes even here! - I want you to know that God loves you. God loves you, God loves you, God loves you. Without condition or exception. God’s love is for you. You are holy, beautifully and wonderfully made, exactly as God has made you. God made you this way for a reason. Your joy is good and holy. Your relationships are holy. Who you truly are is holy, sacred, and beloved. Above all, whatever you’ve heard and whatever you’ve experienced, I pray that you can know in the deepest part of your soul: God loves you.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Evan

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## Prayer Requests

Larry Patchett  
Kenny & Steph Shobe  
Deb Decker  
Barb Decker

Doris Taylor  
Ralph Fitch  
Dorothy Stice  
Trudy List



*Prayer Requests  
for Our Nursing  
Home Residents*

### Heartland Nursing & Rehab

Dorothy Stice  
Barb Decker

### Simple Blessings

David Hickox

### Casey Health Care

Ruth Fitch

### Cumberland Rehab

Ralph Fitch

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## JUNE SERVING SCHEDULES

ELDERS: 6/4 Kathy H, 6/11 Peggy H, 6/18 Nina M, 6/25 Debi S

DEACONS: 6/4 Becky S, Jeanne U, Michelle W, 6/11 Jenny W, Lynda G, Brad H,  
6/18 Cassie R, Connie R, Cathy S, 6/25 Shellie S, Devan S, Cheryl S

CHALLENGER REFRESHMENTS: 6/4 Debi S, 6/11 Linda S, 6/18 Sherri B, 6/25 Linda C

SOUND TECHS: 6/4 Ken W, 6/11 Cathy S, 6/18 Dyson W, 6/25 Brad H

## ANNOUNCEMENTS & UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

**May 31, 2023, Wednesday, 6:30 pm Elders Meeting**

**June 3, 2023, Saturday, Fellowship Hall reserved in the afternoon**

**June 7, 2023, Wednesday, 6:30 pm Board Meeting**

**June 18, 2023, Sunday, "HAPPY FATHER'S DAY!"**

**June 18, 2023, Sunday, Pastor Evan's last Sunday**

**June 18, 2023, Sunday, Rev. Alex Ruth will be our guest.**

**June 21, 2023, Wednesday, 9:30 am Worship Team Meeting**

**June 28, 2023, Wednesday, 6:30 pm Elders Meeting**

Happy  
*Father's*  
Day

Sunday, June 18th



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3 - Mike Hayes

8 - Katie Sherar

9 - Scott & Cheryl Stifal

11 - Chris & Jenny Winschief

12 - Charles Meeker

19 - Sherri Butcher

19 - Dan & Darlene Winn

20 - Jenny Winschief

22 - Nina Meeker

23 - Mike & Cathy Sherwood

25 - Roberta Decker


25 - Pastor Evan Sherar

26 - Mike & Kathy Hayes

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## JUNE 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3 Afternoon FH Reserved
4 Elder: Kathy H	5 MML 9 am	6	7 6:30 pm Board Mtg.	8	9	10
11 Elder: Peggy H	12 MML 9 am	13	14	15	16	17
18 Elder: Nina M  	19 MML 9 am	20	21 9:30 am Worship Team Mtg	22	23	24
25 Elder: Debi S	26 MML 9 am	27	28 6:30 pm Elders Mtg.	29	30	
		<b>FH – Fellowship Hall</b> <b>MML – Monday Morning Ladies</b> <u><b>SUNDAYS</b></u> <u><b>9:00 am Sunday School, 10:00 am Worship</b></u>				