



The Journey

Volume XXIX No. 3
January 18, 2021
www.fcc-hsv.org

A Message from the General Minister and President Rev. Teresa "Terri" Hord Owens

Dear Disciples:

Here at the beginning of a new year, there is no doubt that our church – as much of the rest of the world – is in a wilderness season. We find ourselves wandering, longing for the comfort of what we once knew and wondering what the future holds. I believe that this moment, like all wilderness moments, holds great opportunity for us, if we are brave enough to imagine what might be. I want to invite you to imagine with me.

Several intertwining crises present themselves in this moment, each with a particular opportunity: The pandemic, which has caused the cancellation of our General Assembly and forced so many churches out of their buildings, provides an opportunity to re-envision what church looks like in all expressions and to explore what it means to be a church sent out. The racial justice reckoning happening across the United States gives us an opportunity to revisit our commitment to be a pro-reconciling/anti-racist church; that is, to be the church we say we are. The economic crisis, in which the wealth gap is widening and leaving many without access to resources, gives us an opportunity to discern how we will love and serve our neighbors, even as we work toward a more just economy for all. The political unrest in the context of American democracy gives us an opportunity to explore what it means to be witnesses to the story of Jesus in a time of such division and change. And the ever-present crisis of climate change provides an opportunity to reaffirm our call to care for God's good creation, even as we confess and repent our participation in its destruction.

In this moment, then, our calling is clear. As a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world, we are called to imagine a church that bears witness to God's limitless love. We will need to act with courage. We will need to give ourselves permission to change, to let go of processes and structures and practices that don't serve us well any longer. We will need to let go of fear – the fear of what might happen if we do change, and the fear of the unknown future. I'd like to share with you some ways we can live into this calling this year by focusing on four key areas: covenant, story, tools, and practice.

Covenant: The Governance Committee of the General Board is doing some important work exploring what it means to live in covenant. They've been reflecting on the theological foundations of our governing documents, reviewing possible revisions to the Design, and reexamining how we make decisions and how we speak as a church. As we prepare to hear more about this work later this year, I hope you will pray for those who are discerning a way forward, and for your congregation as it lives in covenant with the whole church.

Story: It is time for us to shape a new narrative for ourselves, particularly in terms of what we see when we imagine ourselves an anti-racist church. Establishing common values and practices lived out in individual contexts will help us shape a vision of a shared future. Every day we must tell our story, share the good news, and make decisions that hold us accountable to be the church we say we are. In the coming months, I will be sharing ideas and inviting others into conversation with me, as together we imagine our new story. Please make sure you're signed up for my Dear Disciples newsletter and follow Disciples social media so you won't miss these opportunities to imagine with me.

Tools: There are some new tools already in the works that will help us do ministry together. I hope you have heard about Alex, a new Disciples database that will eventually replace the yearbook. It will provide a real-time directory and help us track church wide data trends and help our regional and general expressions sup

Message continued next page...

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, January 21** at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

3209 Whitesburg Drive, Huntsville, Alabama 35802 Telephone: 256-881-0150 **Leave a message.**

...**Message** continued.

port congregations more effectively. New communication tools are being developed as well; you can now sign up for email newsletters that bring you the news you want, whether that's updates on justice efforts, messages from me, news from the whole church, or resources particularly for pastors. In addition, increased collaboration among regional and general ministries are helping us work in covenant with one another. Building relationships across the church, across laity and clergy, and across generations will be key to infusing our church with new energy as we all share our gifts in ministry. You can learn more about Alex at disciples.org where you can also sign up for newsletters and connect with ministries across the church.

Finally, practice: Grounded in spiritual growth and development, we begin with love, letting love lead us into action testifying to the church we say we are. Our faith practices help us understand that love: We share communion at the Lord's Table as an expression of God's expansive welcome. We practice baptism and proclaim that we walk in new life. We study and share the ancient stories that point to a new world. We pray together, a practice that reminds us that we are not alone, that we are created and loved by God. We serve our neighbors, acknowledging that we are connected to each other and that we are called to live not for ourselves but for the sake of the world. I hope, as we move into this new year, that you will stay connected to your local congregation, and that you will embrace the practices of our faith that give you life.

Church, we are called to imagine a new world. We are called to imagine God's reign fully come, and to discern how we can participate in making it so. We call ourselves Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. It is time for us to be the church we say we are: to seize the opportunity of this wilderness moment and to move forward with courage, permission to change, and freedom from fear, to imagine a church that bears witness to God's limitless love. I'm glad to be in ministry with you.

Rev. Teresa "Terri" Hord Owens
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
in the United States and Canada

Thank you, First Christian for your generosity during the Christmas season. The donations to the Community Outreach December project were \$1315: the 26 \$25 Walmart gift cards delivered to CASA through DHR were greatly appreciated and the \$665 that went to Adult Services were received with much gratitude. Community Outreach

If you would like to receive your **2020 Giving Statement** please contact the church office either by phone or email. We can send your statement by email or mail, just indicate how you wish to receive it.

Thank you for your generosity,
FCC Office, 256-881-0150 office@fcc-hsv.org

Shining in the Shadows by Kenneth L. Samuel

He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me. I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel.' - John 1:30-31 (NLT)

Ego. So much energy, pride, reputation, and identity packed into that three-letter word.

Not much that we do in life escapes the pervasive consideration of how it will affect our persona. Having learned well that our "playing small does not serve the world," we practice humility with a guarded caution. No one who knows their value ever wants to be overlooked or denied the recognition they've earned.

Yet, here is John the Baptist, the prolific first-century prophet of Israel, using all his personal and spiritual cachet to promote the significance of an upstart Nazarene rabbi with sketchy credentials. In turning the spotlight away from himself toward Jesus, John the Baptist was practicing much more than guarded humility.

John was signaling that his own greatness could only be realized by his diminishment in the presence of one greater than himself.

Every healthy ego knows when to bow before virtues that are more worthy and more enduring than itself.

When strong personalities surrender their demands in service of family cohesion, families survive.

When political officials sacrifice personal aggrandizement for public service, democracy is renewed.

When outstanding athletes keep their prominence in check to recognize the prowess of their teammates, championships are won.

John the Baptist surrendered his greatness to Jesus; Jesus surrendered his greatness to Love; and Love surrenders all without ever losing its own awesome value.

Prayer: Lord, use my greatness in service of that which is greater than me. Amen.

ONLINE WORSHIP SERVICES

Due to the surge in COVID-19 cases, we have temporarily returned to virtual/online services on several online platforms.

Stream live at 9:30 am on Sundays (or watch previous services anytime) on YouTube at: www.youtube.com/channel/UCzQCRY8Vfa-IDhuqUnUhCKw

You may also stream services live on Sundays at 9:30 am, watch previous services, videos for children, and special activities on our Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/fcchsv/videos

Finally, stream services at 9:30 am on Sunday at: www.twitch.tv/fcchsv

JANUARY SERVICE PROJECT FOR CWM

January has traditionally been blanket month for CWM service activity. Once again, CWM is partnering with Church World Service in their Blankets+ program. We are the "+" in the blanket project. FCC in Huntsville, Alabama, can make a difference all around the world as the need arises. \$10 can provide a warm blanket for anyone left homeless by an earthquake or other natural disaster. Please consider a monetary donation to FCC with CWM "Blankets" in the memo line. Margaret J. Vann

REMINDER FROM THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

During the month of January, the nominating committee requests that you give prayerful consideration to suggestions for leaders to serve First Christian Church during the program year July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2023. It is the effort of this committee to put forth a strong slate of leaders to guide our congregation forward. Please contact any member of the committee including Holly Ahlbin, Karen Ball, Beverly Cannon, Jim Daniel, Cameron Douglas, Ann Thompson, and Nancy Waites with suggestions and/or questions.

The 2021 sign up chart for **FOOD BASKETS** is available. You may email the office at publisher@fcc-hsv.org or call 256-881-0150 to select a Sunday to remember or honor a friend, loved one, anniversary, birthday, or other special occasion. Donations are \$25.00 with checks made out to First Christian Church and Food Basket on the notation line.



WEEKLY PRAYER CONCERNS



Not Published Online

REGIONAL PRAYER REQUESTS

Village Christian Church
Auburn, AL

We are temporarily publishing, as space allows in the printed version of the *Journey*, the prayer concerns that are usually listed in the Sunday bulletins. Concerns are listed for one month unless we receive an update. Long term prayer concerns are published monthly in the *Journey*. Send requests to publisher@fcc-hsv.org or call the church office at 256-881-0150 and leave a message. **Please notify the Pastors or the church office if you are going to the hospital and would like to be contacted**