



## NEW YEAR, NEW IDEAS

Is it just me or does time seem to be moving faster? It feels like it was just Christmas, and yet here we are almost at the end of January. Usually, after Christmas, there is a time of general quiet and peace, but this year it seems we have moved from busy season to busy season. This is a time of great change for the Church Universal and our congregation. We are still struggling with COVID and finding new ways to worship and serve. We know that things will never be the same, but we also want to find out what the new “normal” will be so our lives will not seem so confusing.

Yet, here we are in 2022 already within the season of Epiphany. In this time we celebrate the manifestation of God to the world through God’s son Jesus Christ. We also remember the life of Jesus before he began his ministry, from the journey of the Magi until his baptism in the Jordan. The Bible does not offer much information on this period of Jesus’ life perhaps because the early church did not think it was of primary importance.

As a new year begins so do new responsibilities and opportunities. Fresh visions for the future are being discussed and put into place. But throughout this time of meetings and discussions, I hope that the wonder of the season of Epiphany is not lost to us. We must realize that just as Jesus grew and developed throughout his early years our faith must change and increase in the New Year as well. We cannot remain static in our lives of service and worship for without growth we become dry, brittle, and lifeless with no spiritual fruit to nourish ourselves or others.

Yet, through the model of Christ’s life, we can see that these spiritual changes are not something to be feared, rather, we should celebrate the new life and possibilities that we find as we worship our Lord and Savior. Let us use the excitement of a New Year to recharge our spiritual batteries, encourage our faith, and offer ourselves to God’s service so that we might revel in the coming of God’s Kingdom.

Amen.

### IN PERSON & ONLINE WORSHIP SERVICES

We offer in-person worship services Sunday mornings at 9:30 or you may also stream them live at 9:30, or watch previous services anytime, on [facebook.com/fcchsv](https://www.facebook.com/fcchsv), [twitch.tv/fcchsv](https://www.twitch.tv/fcchsv), or [youtube.com/channel/UCzQCRY8Vfa-IDhuqUnUhCKw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzQCRY8Vfa-IDhuqUnUhCKw)

### CHRISTIAN WOMEN’S MINISTRIES (CWM) VALENTINE PROJECT

CWM is seeking current names and addresses for our college students and service men and women. If you have this information, please email \*\*\*\*\*@gmail.com



Thank you for your help with this outreach

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, January 27**, at Noon. Email to: [publisher@fcc-hsv.org](mailto:publisher@fcc-hsv.org)

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



## FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS



## SHORT TERM PRAYER CONCERNS



Not Published Online

Not Published Online

### CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S MINISTRIES (CWM) BLANKET MONTH 2022

CWM's January service is supporting Church World Service that will send blankets to people in need all round the world. What do you do if you are cold? At home you reach for a blanket or turn up the heat.



What if you didn't have an extra blanket or no blanket at all? What if you didn't have a home because of a natural disaster, tornado, hurricane, earthquake, or flood?

Church World Service provides blankets to those without blankets all over the world. CWM invites FCC to join us in giving blankets during the month of January. The cost of a blanket is \$10. Make your check out to FCC and mark for blankets. As one person put it, "it's about loving our neighbors on this small, interconnected planet, just as Jesus commanded".

Only \$10 per blanket warms someone, furnishes a carry-all, as well as offers protection and shelter. For more information go to [churchworldservice.org](http://churchworldservice.org).

Margaret J. Vann, CWM Blanket Chair

#### Condolences to the family of ...

We are temporarily publishing, as space allows, the prayer concerns that are normally 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](mailto:publisher@fcc-hsv.org) or call the church office at 256-881-0150 to leave a message. **Please notify the Pastors or the church office if you are going to the hospital and would like to be contacted**

#### REGIONAL PRAYER REQUESTS

Primera Iglesia, Birmingham, AL



#### ATTENDANCE

January 23 Worship Service: 47  
Small Groups (During week & Sunday): 39

## COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS, ONE COIN BY ONE!

Women of FCC, do you have many wonderful memories of the holidays and feel blessed in so many ways? Hopefully you have remembered to drop a coin in your blessing box as those blessings have filled your heart. If you haven't established this practice, why not start now at the beginning of this new year? Christian Women's Ministries will be collecting your coins and bills in the month of March. There is still plenty time to count your blessings. Sue Seward, Blessing Box Coordinator

### CHURCH CALENDAR

Jan. 24 10:30 am Quilters  
Jan. 26 6 pm Men's Group  
Jan. 31 10:30 am Quilters  
Feb. 2 6 pm Men's Group  
Phoebe Circle  
7 pm Choir Rehearsal  
Feb. 7. 10:30 am Quilters  
Feb. 8 6 pm Elders' Meeting  
Feb. 9 6 pm Men's Group  
7 pm Choir Rehearsal  
Feb. 10 6 pm Board Meeting  
Feb. 13 11:45 Community Outreach  
Feb. 14 **Happy Valentine's Day!**  
9:30 am Esther Circle  
10:30 am Quilters  
5 pm Conveners' Meeting  
Feb. 16 6 pm Men's Group  
7 pm Choir Rehearsal  
Feb. 21 **Church Office Closed**  
10:30 am Quilters

The 2022 sign up chart for **FOOD BASKETS** is available. **You may call the office at 256-881-0150 or email [publisher@fcc-hsv.org](mailto:publisher@fcc-hsv.org) to select a Sunday to remember or honor a friend, loved one, anniversary, birthday, or other special occasion.** Donations are \$25.00 and go to Community Outreach. Make checks payable to First Christian Church and Food Basket on the notation line. You may also make your payment through PayPal and designate Food Basket through this QR code linked to our website.



Please give a warm FCC welcome to returning member, Robert Mead.

**THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET** is in honor of Kathryn Shrout's 96th birthday and Jordan Green's birthday by Rick & Kay Shrout.



### YOU CAN DO IT

Christina Villa

*The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.* - Joshua 5:12 (NRSV)

In the Promised Land, it turns out, there's no free lunch from heaven. God made manna rain down on the people just long enough to tide them over till they got to a place where they could do their part to provide for themselves. God gave the fertile land, and the people would now do the gathering, sowing, reaping, and all the rest to bring crops out of the ground and onto the table.

Do you remember having someone help you learn to ride a bike, holding on and running alongside until suddenly you realize they've let go and you are – incredibly – riding a bike all by yourself? Someone helped and held on until you figured out the pedaling part and found your balance.

Usually, a wobbly new bike rider doesn't tell their helper to let go; the rider doesn't realize they can do it alone. But the helper knows and lets go, and gives the rider the exhilarating sense of pride, freedom, and accomplishment that comes with knowing you can now ride down to the corner all by yourself.

Are you waiting for manna from heaven to solve your problems? Are there challenges holding you back in life because you don't realize you can handle them? God is like the helper steadying the bicycle. God has given you what you need to survive and thrive. And God knows when to let you go, even if you don't feel ready.

### Prayer

I'll trust you to know when to let me go. Amen.

## HEARING WITH FRESH EARS

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV

Sermon: Jan. 23, 2022

Scripture Verses:

Luke 4: 14-21

Jesus was going home. After his baptism and temptation in the desert, the beginning of his ministry, teaching in the synagogues, and now that his fame had spread throughout Galilee; Jesus was finally going home.

He must have been excited and probably expected a hero's welcome. He performed three miracles in three days: stopping the storm on the Sea of Galilee, healing the Woman cursed with bleeding, and then raising a young girl from the dead. Because of these miracles and his teaching, Jesus' fame was spreading and he was popular, even though this popularity would be short-lived.

So Jesus returned home, back to the people who knew his parents, his brothers and sisters, and those who helped him grow into a man. Wouldn't they be proud to see the boy they knew return as a successful Rabbi? Of all the locations where Jesus traveled, Nazareth was the most likely place where his message would be received. Surely his friends and neighbors would understand what he was called to proclaim.

And so Jesus went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, stood in front of his neighbors and relatives, took the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, and read from chapter 61.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

He put down the scroll, turned to the crowd and stated, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

At first the crowd seemed amazed. They asked each other, "Is this Joseph's son"? Is this the boy that we knew? There is no sense of sneering or contempt some seem delighted that one of their own was reading from their texts and saying the things that they wanted to hear. They thought they knew Jesus, but did they?

Luke wants us to clearly understand that the problem with Jesus' message is not between the old and the new, this is why Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah. Nor is the problem between the known and the unknown, he used a familiar scripture passage that the people would have heard time and time again.

No, the problem the Nazarenes had with Jesus was between the known and the known, between the people of God and their memory. Jesus was preaching from familiar stories, but placing them in a new light, reminding the people that the day of the Lord is here, but that this day is not just for them, it is for the world.

He reminded his hometown that their sin was what separated them from God and often in Israel's history it was the outcast, the foreigner, or the socially unacceptable that understood God's message and did something about it.

Jesus knew what the people wanted to hear. They wanted to know that they would be okay, that soon God would redeem them, that they would not have the change, the world, and even God, would change for them. But this was not the truth.

The people thought they knew the meaning of the scriptures, just like they thought they knew Jesus, and they were wrong. They assumed Jesus that would tell them what they wanted to hear, but could not accept the truth when they heard it.

The church of today should listen very closely to Jesus' words. We need to hear this scripture lesson with fresh ears or we will fall into the same trap of the people of Nazareth. Because we also believe that we know Jesus. He is our friend, our comforter, our redeemer, our shepherd, the one who cares for us, loves us just as we are, and nurtures us in times of pain.

However there is another side of Jesus. The Jesus who overturned the tables at the temple and called the Pharisees a brood of vipers. The Jesus who cursed the fig tree and reminded the disciples of the hostility and pain they would endure when they took up their cross and followed him.

Sometimes the good news of Jesus does not sound like good news to us especially when we are reminded, like the people of Nazareth, that we are still sinful, still unworthy, and still struggling to understand the meaning and message of the Savior we follow.

Angry, confused, and hurt, the crowd took offense at his message. The keyword of this verse is offense. In Greek, it is "skandalon", or stumbling block, from which we get the word, "scandal." Jesus caused a scandal in his hometown by reading scripture and telling the people what they should have already known.

Soon the crowd became a mob that picked up Jesus and carried him outside of the village to throw him off a cliff. In just a few minutes the people of Nazareth

*Hearing* continued page 5...

...**Hearing** continued from page 4.

Jesus' neighbors, and friends, had become a part of the evil he was sent to overcome because they let their fear and hatred consume them.

Jesus slips away from this mob, we are not told how, and went his own way never returning to Nazareth. He knew that the people would not accept him again, because of their familiarity and fear.

Jesus' friends and neighbors were not prepared to hear that their understanding of God was flawed nor were they ready to accept this news from Jesus. They stayed mired in the past, remembering the child, clinging to their understanding of Yahweh, and hoping that God would act as they thought God should act.

They had put everything into a neat little box; Jesus was a confused local boy, God was their God alone, the Messiah would come to them, and the world would be as they wanted. They could not accept they were wrong.

They needed to hear the word of God again, with fresh ears and we need to hear the scriptures with the same. Dr. William Willoman tells a story about a young woman who heard a scripture passage from Matthew with fresh ears. "I had just preached as best I could on Matthew's story of the Laborers in the Vineyard, you know, the parable about how some workers came early, some came mid-day, some came late, and at the end of the day, they all were paid the same wage.

The Congregation filed out, but she lingered behind, wearing a blue usher's robe. "Where do you get these stories?" she asked.

I answered, "From growing up in South Carolina, I guess,"

"Well, I was troubled by your sermon today," she said.

"What troubled you?" I asked, in my usual non-defensive defensiveness. "I just don't think that's fair. I believe that people ought to be paid fairly for the work they do and I...."

"Wait!" I said. "That story is not original with me. That's from Matthew." "Matthew?" she asked. "Yea, Matthew. Like in the Bible?"

"Oh, sure, the Bible." She responded.

"You've never heard that story before? What is your religious background?" I asked, just praying to God she wouldn't say, "Methodist." She had not gone to church much, a bit as a kid, that's all.

"You know," I said, "I almost envy you. I have just preached a perfectly outrageous story and fifteen hundred people have filed out and told me it was a nice sermon. There is a sense in which you are the only one that got it, the only one to understand. Just for your information, the man who told that story was killed for telling it. Just after he told that story people got organized and killed him, but you got it."

Perhaps by listening with fresh ears we can get it too! Thanks be to God, Amen.



### COVID-19 CHURCH PROTOCOLS

- **One 9:30 a.m. service** will be offered at least through May 2022. First Christian Church offers virtual services ([facebook.com/fcchsv](https://www.facebook.com/fcchsv), [twitch.tv/fcchsv](https://www.twitch.tv/fcchsv), or First Christian Church Huntsville on YouTube) every Sunday. While FCC and State recommendations are good benchmarks, we invite all people to worship with us based on their comfort level.
- **Enter the church through the Bell Tower Garden/Narthex doors.** The doors by the church office are locked.
- **Wearing face coverings/masks at all times inside the church is encouraged for everyone.**
- Hand sanitizer and masks are available at the Lobby Welcome Table along with prepackaged communion elements.
- The **nursery** is open for the 9:30 a.m. service and the 10:30 a.m. small group time.
- **Every other row of pews is roped off on the pulpit side of the sanctuary to allow individuals to practice social distancing so that they may worship at their level of comfort. The front section on the pulpit side is the least impacted zone with our heating and cooling system.**
- **Attendees may vocalize** during the service, such as stating the Lord's Prayer, litanies, etc., and sing hymns/songs when lyrics are projected on the screens.
- Offerings may be placed in the brass plate when exiting the sanctuary or sent by mail.
- **Coffee is temporarily suspended.**
- **Small groups** (including Sunday school classes) will meet at **8:30 a.m. or 10:30 a.m.**
- Anyone with any symptoms will remain home and celebrate virtually for at least 10 days
- **Please notify the church office immediately if you develop symptoms after attending a service.**