



The Journey

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FROM ASHES TO AWE

The season of Lent will begin on February 17th, or Ash Wednesday, as Christians around the world worship, repent of their sins, and mark their foreheads or hands with ashes to signify our brokenness and need of forgiveness. For many the Ash Wednesday service holds special meaning because it is a reminder of life changing events, a recognition of the pain we all feel at times, but a reminder that ultimately God is in control and that our Creator grieves with us, but also moves us forward and gives us hope.

This year Ash Wednesday takes on a new meaning as COVID numbers continue to grow and we mourn the loss of those who have passed away because of this dreaded virus. The words used before the imposition of ashes remind us of our mortality “Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”, however they also call us to “Repent and follow Jesus Christ.” meaning that there is something we have to do.

All too often Christians believe that Lent is a time for sadness and despair. We do not like to look within ourselves and recognize our sin, it is far easier to see the shortcomings of others, and we certainly do not want to admit that we separate ourselves from God. Perhaps that is why Lent has been overlooked in the past, a season secondary to the glory of Easter.

If we do this we are forgetting that forgiveness and healing flow through this time of penitence. The self-reflection of Lent should lead us into the dark places of our lives so we can accept who we are, recognize our sin, be forgiven, and then be transformed through the power of God. Lent is a reminder that we are not in control, that we need the guidance, love and support of our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer and that we need each other as well to help us on our journey of faith.

There will be changes in our Sanctuary during Lent. The communion table will have a traditional black pall, a cloth laid over a casket in funeral services, in remembrance of Christ’s death. The cross will be removed until Easter and the tone of the worship service will be more contemplative. While every Sunday is a celebration of the Easter promise and the joy located within, during Lent we are preparing ourselves for the crucifixion, for it is only in Christ’s sacrifice that the glory of the resurrection can come.

But above all, Lent is a time of hope. In the darkness we have seen a great Light and have experienced the forgiveness and new life that Christ offers. Throughout this season we understand that there is hope for the world and that we can make a difference in the lives of others because we are focusing on God’s will, not our own. I pray that this year’s Lenten season will be one of healing and renewal for each of you. May the grace and love of God flow upon us as we do the hard work of repentance and look forward to the newness of life that Easter represents. Amen.

We have resumed our **9:30 a.m. Sunday in Sanctuary worship service**. The service will be broadcast live to the church parking lot and streamed on line (see next page for streaming information).

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, February 11**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

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

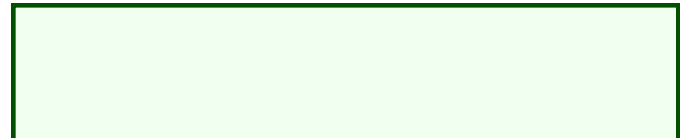
Please give a warm FCC welcome to our newest members, not listed online

Sanctuary Service Protocols

- In person worship is at 9:30 a.m.
- Sunday school classes, the nursery, children/youth gatherings, coffee, and other hospitality services are currently suspended.
- While FCC and the State recommendations are good benchmarks, we invite all people to worship with us based on their comfort level. Virtual services are offered (facebook.com/fcchsv, twitch.tv/fcchsv, or First Christian Church Huntsville on Youtube) every Sunday.
- **Attendees, including children, will wear face coverings/masks inside the church and practice social distancing (6 feet apart for non-household members) for everyone's safety.**
- Attendance is limited (approximately 75) to the ability to social distance and the service will be broadcast (107.9) to the parking lot in the event of overflow attendance.
- Enter the church through the Bell Tower Garden/Narthex doors. The doors by the church office will be locked.
- Greeters will provide hand sanitizer to all who enter and provide masks for those who have not brought their own.
- Ushers will seat people down the center/side aisles
- No choir/congregational singing.
- Following the service, rows will **leave by the side aisles** with the east aisle exiting through Family Services and the west aisle through the Narthex doors. (There will be directional signs.)
- Offerings may be placed in the brass plate when exiting the sanctuary or sent by mail.
- Please, **no congregating indoors** before or after service - social distancing outdoors.
- **Anyone with any symptoms will remain home and celebrate virtually for at least 14 days.**
- **Notify the church office immediately if you develop symptoms after attending a service.**

WEEKLY PRAYER CONCERNS

Not Listed Online



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 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**

ONLINE WORSHIP SERVICES

We have resumed in-person worship service but you may still 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

FEBRUARY YOUTH CAN DRIVE

This month the youth's mini-mission is a can drive benefiting the North Alabama Food Bank! The youth have set a goal of collecting 100 non-perishable food items **by the end of February!** Donations can be dropped off at Sunday service or during the church's office hours, 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Monday - Friday.



We are also working on developing an FCC-HSV Soup and Chili recipe guide in place of the soup and chili cook-off this year! Recipe submissions will be collected until February 21st! You may drop off or mail your submission to the church office or submit your recipe online at <https://forms.gle/UpQYWdy63iarJzG99>



FEBRUARY 17 AT 6:00 P.M.

The 2021 sign up chart for **FOOD BASKETS** is available. You may call the office at 256-881-0150 or email 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, with checks made out to First Christian Church and Food Basket on the notation line, and go to Community Outreach.



During this time of social distancing, please remember your tithes and offerings. You may use PayPal (click on the Donate button at the bottom of the linked page fcc-hsv.org/who-we-are/how-to-give), drop it off at the church office 9:00 am - 5:00 pm Monday – Friday (please call first, the person on duty may be in another part of the church or at lunch), or mail to:

First Christian Church
3209 Whitesburg Drive
Huntsville, AL 35802

COMMUNITY FREE DENTAL CLINIC

The joint outreach focus for Community Outreach and Christian Women's Ministry during the month of February is the **Free Dental Clinic**, available to low income, elderly and veteran residents of Madison County. Income levels must be equal to, or less than, 150% of the national poverty level. Clients must be 19 years of age or older. The clinic is located at 2341 Whitesburg Drive, and appointments are required. Local emergency rooms are unequipped to attend dental emergencies. Thereby the need for extractions, for many local residents living in poverty, can be accomplished with appointments at this Free Clinic.



The typical client might be a person suffering from a compromised tooth, possibly broken or infected. The general health is greatly affected by oral health making it even more important to address the oral issues. Be it a young mother trying to care for her family or an elderly veteran, the community free dental clinic is available to provide extractions and education for improved oral health. Currently, a retired dentist is on site two days a week for appointments.

CWM and Community Outreach are seeking financial assistance for the Community Free Dental Clinic, during February, to aid the continued operation of this vital service provided for the eligible residents of Madison County. If you are able, please consider a donation. In order to give, earmark your donation to First Christian Church for the Community Free Dental Clinic by whatever your preferred means of giving might be.

REGIONAL PRAYER REQUESTS

Edward Point Christian Church
Century, FL



UNPRECEDENTED

By Phiwa Langeni

Do not worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. - Philippians 4:6 (CSB)

Unprecedented: a word that tastes sour after the year that recently ended and continues to seep into our now. Lake Superior State University included the word on the 2021 Banished Words List for how it became the (un)warranted refrain for a year full of unanticipated twists and turns.

The reality is that all of life is a long series of unprecedented time units strung together. Last year was as unprecedented as the year before. Every single day of any future or past year is unlike any others you've ever experienced.

In the face of overwhelming unprecedentedness that threatens to derail everything you know: Rest. Rehydrate. Root yourself in prayer and gratitude. Remember that the world already has a savior, and it isn't you. Request what you need from God. Return to the you-shaped work God needs you to do. Repeat in perpetuity.

If no one has said it to you recently (or ever!), you are loved. You are enough. You are doing your best even as you're feeling at your worst. With God in every slice of time, we can and must faithfully re-precedent these unusual days, weeks, months, and years ahead. Indeed, God tends to be most active in those uncertain liminal spaces.

Prayer

Lift our worries from our minds and spirits, faithful God. Help us perceive your presence and activity in and all around us. Fling us into a world that's unraveling from the slow sin of normalcy, a privilege most of the world cannot enjoy. Reveal the beautifully diverse possibilities you're inviting into our work and our very selves. Accept our gratitude for being with us through it all. Amen.