



WEEK OF COMPASSION OFFERING

Week of Compassion is the relief, refugee, and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Your gifts to Week of Compassion bring hope out of despair, find blessings amid devastation, and help transform loss into new life. Your contributions bring tangible relief and change the course of lives.

When you give, you help rebuild communities recovering from disaster. You also empower farmers to grow new kinds of crops in a changing climate; you support refugees; you empower youth through education, and empower women through vocational opportunities. In so many different ways, your gifts of love have the power to transform lives. Love is shelter. Love is a listening ear. Love is community. Love is a hopeful future. Love is a path forward. When all else seems lost, love remains.

On Memorial Day 2019, tornadoes swept through the Miami Valley of Ohio, destroying thousands of homes and apartments and leaving a trail of downed trees and power lines in their wake. Many of the tornado-affected families have had to relocate multiple times since the tornadoes due to substandard housing conditions and inflated rent.

Two years after the storm, the Stephens family were still unable to find adequate living quarters. The family of ten was forced to live apart. In addition to dealing with unscrupulous contractors, the family had to haggle with insurance companies as they tried to rebuild their home. The Stephenses, like so many other families, remained in temporary housing and separated, pending the completion of repairs.

Yet, all was not lost. The Stephens family connected with the Miami Valley Long-Term Recovery Operations Group, and volunteer teams finished the repairs. Alongside these traditional home repair projects, and with support from Week of Compassion, the MVLTRG helped launch the Tornado Survivors' Pathways to Homeownership Project to help alleviate the housing crunch in the Dayton area. Volunteers and local nonprofits work together to transition "nuisance" properties and vacant lots into affordable, single-family housing options for tornado survivors who were displaced from rental housing, stabilizing both families and the community. First-time homeowners receive the support they need to build for their futures.

Sammy Deacon, Brethren Disaster Ministries Long-Term Project Leader, says "When you reach out to help someone else, the blessing comes back to you as well. An important aspect of the recovery effort is listening to people's stories and knowing you have the opportunity to help them—physically and spiritually." With support for long-term recovery, including innovative programs like the Pathways to Homeownership project, Week of Compassion helps create opportunities for families to thrive after disasters. Because love remains.

Compassion continued page 2...

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, February 17**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

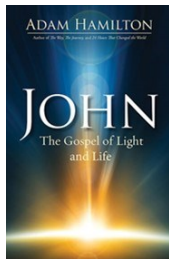
3209 Whitesburg Drive, Huntsville, Alabama 35802
Telephone: 256-881-0150 **Leave a message.**

...**Compassion** continued

Each year in February, congregations across the United States and Canada collect a special offering for Week of Compassion. First Christian Church will take up our Week of Compassion Offerings on Sunday, February 20 and 27. However, this offering supports the work of this ministry throughout the whole year! Funds received through the offering allow the Church to respond to disaster when it occurs, enabling Week of Compassion to immediately provide grants for urgent needs like emergency supplies, water, and food. Special Offering is a time when congregations come together to lift up and celebrate this important work that we do together.

**NEW LENTEN BIBLE STUDY
BEGINNING MARCH 3RD**

Please join us as we prepare our hearts and minds for Easter with a study of the Gospel of John, using as our guide, Adam Hamilton's book *John, the Gospel of Light and Life* (ISBN 13: 9781791021481). This book may be purchased on Amazon for \$11.24 (Hardcover) or on the Cokesbury website for \$12.99 (paperback). In this six week study, we will meet each Thursday beginning March 3rd in the Family Services Room at 10:00 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. to watch a video and discuss the week's lesson.



If you are interested, or have questions, please contact Lisa Fitzgerald

CHURCH CALENDAR

- 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
- Feb. 23 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Feb. 28 10:30 am Quilters
- Mar. 2 6 pm **Ash Wednesday Service**



**SHORT TERM
PRAYER CONCERNS**



Not Published Online

Condolences

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

REGIONAL PRAYER REQUESTS
Fairhope Christian Church
Fairhope, AL



ATTENDANCE
February 6 Worship Service: 71
Small Groups (During week & Sunday): 40

RUMMAGE SALE UPDATE

Hello all!

I have received many questions about this year's rummage sale. As many of you know, the rummage sale is a huge ordeal that requires the volunteer efforts of many of our church members and staff. It is also important to note that I am pregnant and due on the week/weekend of the rummage sale's typically stated date. COVID is still taking a toll on the community as well. With these factors prayerfully considered, the Christian Education Committee and the staff had discussions about this event for the 2022 year and decided it is best to not hold the event. However, we still do encourage donation of items to charitable causes and wanted to share some resources to help make this easier for you! :)

www.rocketcitymom.com/huntsville-thrift-stores-donation-centers/ this link has a great list but here are a few hand picked locations!

A New Leash On Life Marketplace

707 Andrew Jackson Way NE, Huntsville, AL 35801

Downtown Rescue Mission Thrift Stores (will also pick up items from your home; call 1-855-376-7283)

1407 A N. Memorial Parkway, Huntsville, AL 35801
or

8006 Old Madison Pike, Ste 10, Madison, AL 35758

Goodwill of Huntsville

8501 Whitesburg Drive, Huntsville, AL 35802

Alyssa Burton,
Youth Director


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)

COMMUNITY FREE DENTAL CLINIC

As has been the custom for the past several years, the outreach focus for February is the Community Free Dental Clinic located at 2341 Whitesburg Drive. Grants along with donations from individuals, churches, and businesses make possible the provision of quality free extractions and education to uninsured adult residents of Madison County. The mission is accomplished by licensed, volunteer dentists from the community. Also serving are licensed nurses, chair side assistants, and office staff who register the patients and make appointments. The clinic is not equipped to take walk ins, so an appointment is necessary. The clinic opened in 2013 and has served more than 8600 patients in the interim time. As reported to Channel 19 about three months ago, their operational budget is about \$270,000. They have remained available to the community even in recent challenging times. Their volunteer base has diminished about 50%, but the need is still there. Please consider a financial donation for this worthy cause as we continue to serve our local community with provision of vital needs.



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 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.

AV TEAM UPDATE

As you probably know, we put out a call to the congregation in December to build a new team of volunteers who can staff our Audio-Visual needs going forward. I also made a promise that a big goal of this effort would be to simplify the operation of all our systems. Ideally, the systems we currently have in place would best be handled by a team of four people. For too many years, those efforts have been routinely handled by mostly Chuck Herber and Michael Smith, with some help from others, and their monumental efforts are greatly appreciated.

We are making great progress...not only on improving the quality of our AV efforts, but in building a large team of people who will be sufficiently trained to volunteer maybe once or twice a month, instead of a small group working week-in and week-out. We now have a team of nearly TWENTY people helping on AV, and Chuck and Michael have done a great job in supporting us from the engineering and troubleshooting side. We don't expect to train everyone in all four functions of our AV team...just the ones that they enjoy helping with. If they want to learn all four, like I do, they're welcome to. Here's where things stand:

- We have eight people who can run slides, and two more training.
- We have eight people who can run audio, and two more training.
- We have seven people who can run camera, and three more training.
- We have three people who can direct and run live stream, and one more training.

I'm pleased that the quality of our services, both in person, and online, continues to improve...but many of us are still training. You might see a jerky camera move, or slides being changed too soon, or too late, or microphones not being opened on time. Please be patient with us as we all work to improve the quality of what we do every week.

If you'd like to talk about getting involved with our AV team, I welcome the opportunity to talk with you. Brad Clasgens,

ACCEPTING GOD'S BLESSINGS

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV

Sermon: Feb. 13, 2022

Scripture Verses:

Luke 6:17-26

In our text for today Jesus is coming down from the mountaintop. He had spent the day in prayer and afterward called his disciples, choosing twelve to be apostles. He then walked down and stood on a "level place", what some translations of the Bible call a plain, to speak with the multitudes that had gathered. Luke clearly states the specific geographic regions that are represented: Judea and Jerusalem, Jerusalem being the great city of the region of Judea, but also Tyre and Sidon, Gentile cities on the coast just north of Capernaum; a clear message that whatever Jesus is prepared to teach is for all people, both Jews and Gentiles.

The crowd is not only made up of curious listeners but also includes the sick, outcasts, and people with special concerns. As is usual in Luke's Gospel, Jesus' healing actions and words are closely interrelated. Luke tells us that these people came hoping to be touched by Jesus; so that they might be healed. They came looking for a miracle, looking for the blessings of God in their lives. Of course, Jesus attends to them, as we expect him to, and we are told that he heals all of them.

After this display of power the crowd anxiously waited for Jesus to speak. They anticipated being told the divine agenda, and Jesus does not disappoint, although he gives them more than they bargained for.

He begins with the beatitudes. Oh, how they loved beatitudes in Jesus' day. The crowd wanted to hear how they, the chosen people, would be blessed, how God's favor would shine upon them, how Israel would rise amongst its neighbors to prominence and stature. Oh yes, they loved the beatitudes.

And we still love to hear the beatitudes. It is one of our favorite pieces of scripture, we remember the words of Matthew clearly in our hearts and minds, blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

But these are not the words Luke records in this

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...*Blessings* continued from page 4 version of the sermon. He treats the sermon on the plain very differently. Matthew uses phrases like poor in spirit and pure in heart to make it easy to identify with and assume the virtues that are presented. We all know what it is like to be poor in spirit or to hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Luke's beatitudes are starker and are meant to make us take a long at ourselves. For every blessing, Luke also contains a woe. Blessed are the poor...but woe to the rich. Blessed are the hungry...but woe to those who are full. Blessed are the weeping...but woe to those that are laughing. Blessed are the rejected...but woe to those who are accepted.

Jesus dropped a bombshell on the crowd that day which still affects us. He took the assumptions of his culture; that the rich and powerful were blessed, and turned this idea on its ear. He presents to us a reversed world, where our primary concern is the well-being of those around us.

Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon wrote that; "Christians begin our ethics not with anxious, self-serving questions about what we ought to do as individuals to make history come out right; because in Christ God has already made history come out right. The "sermon on the plain" is the inauguration manifesto of how the world looks now that God in Christ has taken matters in hand."

In other words, these blessings and woes announce that God, through Jesus Christ, sees the world in a strikingly different way than we do. The "real world," for Christians, is one in which all of our expectations, all that society tells us, all of our common sense, is found faulty and we are now called to view everything and everyone with new lenses, a new vision of the heavens and the earth.

With this in mind Luke's beatitudes may not be as exciting as they once were. Perhaps this is why we tend to remember Matthew's version and forget about Luke's more straightforward sermon on the plain. I have to admit that when I think of the beatitudes I still begin with, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." I remember Matthew's version because it is the one I have heard the most. It calls to me.

The name even sounds better, the Sermon on the Mount, it speaks to high places, high expectations, and exalted qualities.

Maybe we ignore Luke's take on the beatitudes because it reminds us that with our blessings come responsibilities. We have to ask ourselves, what does it mean to be a Christian in a wealthy society? You may not think of yourself as wealthy, but compared to the rest of the world we are.

I was reading this week that a majority of those who live in the third world exist on less than a dollar a day, while we, who live in the richest country in the world, give less than 2% of our annual income to charity. We spend more on movies, streaming services, and fast food.

Maybe we don't want to remember Luke's blessings and woes because they make us confront something painful about ourselves. We have all been given so much, yet what do we give in return?

Do we even count ourselves among the blessed? Do we trust that God gives us enough, not only for ourselves, but so we can share what we have with others? Or do we treat our blessing like woes, something to be hidden and only brought out into daylight when we have no other choice?

I think it is difficult for us to accept that we are blessed by God because we know that in doing so God calls us to respond, and we are not sure if we are up to the task. We are satisfied with our life as it is now, we can get by with things as they are, we are comfortable, and do not want to accept any more responsibility. It is difficult enough to care for ourselves and our family let alone anyone else.

I was reminded this week of a Russian story about accepting blessings and responding in turn. In Krakov there lived a man named Isaac, son of Yekel, who was very poor. One night, as he slept, he dreamed of the distant city of Prague and a bridge with a treasure buried beneath it.

The dream was so vivid that he could not forget it, especially when it reoccurred every night for two weeks. Finally, in order to be rid of the dream, he decided to walk from Krakov to Prague to find this

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...*Blessings* continued from page 5

bridge and the truth for himself.

After several days, he arrived in Prague, found the bridge, and slipped underneath to look for the treasure. Suddenly, a soldier ordered him to stop and began questioning him. "What are you doing prowling under this bridge?" he asked. Being an honest man, Isaac told the truth, "I am looking for a treasure that I dreamed is buried underneath the bridge." The soldier roared with laughter.

"You stupid Jew! Don't you know that you cannot trust what you see in dreams? Why, for the last two weeks, I myself dreamed that far away in Krakov, in the house of a Jew named Isaac, there is as treasure buried underneath the stove in his kitchen. But wouldn't it be the most idiotic thing in the world if I were to go all the way there to look for it? You can waste a lifetime looking for treasure that does not exist." Still laughing, the soldier gave Isaac a kick and let him go.

So Isaac, son of Yekel, walked back to Krakov to his home, where he moved the stove in his kitchen and found the treasure buried there. He lived to a ripe old age as a wealthy man never forgetting to care for those around him and to look for treasure in unexpected places.

I tell you today that God's blessings are as close as a treasure buried under your stove. They are not dependent upon anyone else's judgment for God willingly offers them to all of us; and as the Body of Christ, we are called to share these blessings with others. All we have to do is trust in God and believe we can make difference in the world.

So I wonder, are you ready to embrace God's blessings, or do you think that we are looking for treasure that does not exist? Do you believe that you are blessed, and if you do, how are you going to share your gifts with others?

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.**