



The Journey

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February 21, 2022
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THE LENTEN JOURNEY

The season of Lent begins on March 2, or Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent by focusing believers on repentance and prayer. An Ash Wednesday service reminds us of our sinful nature, our need for forgiveness, and the call to forgive others. The theme of mortality is also present and our desire for eternal life that only Christ can bring. For the next 40 days, not counting Sundays, Christians will engage in a time of penitence in which we bring before God the brokenness and evil in our lives and in the world. Yet, Lent is also a time of spiritual renewal. We must focus on our lives of faith so that we truly appreciate the Paschal Mystery brought forth during Holy Week.

Oftentimes Christians give up something for the season of Lent. They give up soda, cigarettes, candy, or other things they enjoy as a sacrifice before God. This year I would like to suggest that instead of giving something up for Lent we should take something on. Perhaps we could start a habit that will lead us to further communication with God. A few ideas are, reading your Bible for at least 15 minutes a day, taking time to pray every day, sitting in silence and reflecting on your relationship with God, attending worship each Sunday in Lent, attending a weekly Bible Study or reading a book on Christian practices, donating time or money to a local charity, or inviting one person to Church each week. There are many options for taking, something on for Lent.

For the last few weeks, the scripture lessons for Sunday have focused of Jesus' ministry and teachings. Common in each of these scripture lessons is the understanding that faith calls us to action. Our confession of faith and baptism are not the end of our spiritual journey, they are only the beginning. As we walk with Christ we are called to strengthen our lives of faith, provide justice, proclaim peace, encourage hope, and love one another. I hope that Lent will be an opportunity to center our lives on these ideals and bring ourselves closer to God and each other. Thanks be to God. 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)

WANTED!

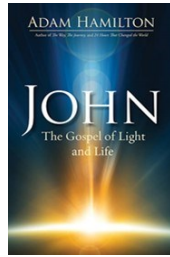
A few men to join us in our Men's Bible Worship group, Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. in the Garden Room. We are currently studying the Early Church series by Ray Vander Laan. Come join us for a freewheeling discussion and exchange of ideas on the title subject matter and many other topics.

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, February 24**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

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

**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 at 256-***** or *********.com.

CHURCH CALENDAR

- 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**
- Mar. 3 10 am *John, the Gospel of Light and Life*
- Mar. 7 10:30 am Quilters
- Mar. 8 6 pm Elders' Meeting
- Mar. 9 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Mar. 10 10 am *John, Gospel of Light & Life*
6 pm Board Meeting
- Mar. 13 2 am **Daylight Saving Time Begins**
- Mar. 14 9:30 am Esther Circle
10:30 am Quilters
5 pm Conveners' Meeting

THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET is in honor of Scarlett Green's birthday by Rick & Kay Shrout.



ATTENDANCE
February 6 Worship Service: 68
Small Groups (Sunday): 22



**SHORT TERM
PRAYER CONCERNS**



Not Published 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

REGIONAL PRAYER REQUESTS
Pleasant View Christian Church
Camp Hill, AL

ECM SUMMER & FALL REGISTRATION
Registration Packets may be picked up from ECM (Melissa Cully mornings and Mary Lynn Tipton afternoons) during the **week of February 21**. Completed Packets, with a non-refundable registration fee (to hold a spot) may be turned in to Melissa or Mary Lynn on the following schedule:
February 28 - Current Students
March 3 - Siblings of current students
March 4 - First Christian Church participating members
March 7 - New families may register for existing spots.

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

COMMUNITY FREE DENTAL CLINIC CONNECTION

Some may remember and others will not, but FCC has a personal connection with the outreach at Madison County's Community Free Dental Clinic. In our past Mary Ann Williams along with Miss Faye and Ruth Gabriel met our children weekly on Sunday mornings with warm, welcoming smiles. In case you do not know or remember, Ruth was here from Mexico where she had been a dentist. Since leaving FCC, she has gained certification as a hygienist from Wallace State and is now volunteering as a dental hygienist at the Community Free Dental Clinic. In recent conversation with Mary Ann, she praises the outreach of the service provided our brothers and

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sisters. The needs in our community are many and varied, and for the month of February the outreach focus, on the local level, is financial support for the Free Dental Clinic. Please consider this worthy cause.

SEEDS IMPERISHABLE by Quinn Caldwell

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. - 1 Peter 1:23 (NIV)

Back in the 1960s, excavations at one of the palaces of Herod the Great (yes, that Herod) turned up a bunch of 2000-year-old seeds of the Judean date palm tree. In 2005, scientists managed to get one of them to germinate.

The new tree flowered in 2011. It's begun pollinating other trees, which have begun producing fruit. Six more trees grown from other ancient caches are nearing reproductive maturity. Botanically, this is a big deal; the Judean date palm, widely praised in antiquity, has been functionally extinct for several hundred years.

Most seeds won't stay viable as long as those date palm seeds did; that took some pretty ideal accidental conditions. And yet, seeds do tend to be survivors. It's kind of their whole deal. They sprout from the places the thieving squirrels hid them. They float away on the winds of the storm that knocked their parents down. They sprout in the wake of the fire that decimated their community. They survive the inner acids of the things that eat them, and then use the pile of crap they end up in as fertilizer.

Here's what the author of First Peter, and I, and a bunch of plant nerds in Israel, want you to consider: No matter how you are or how you're feeling—scorched, thieved, knocked down, blown away, eaten alive, utterly crappy, a thousand years old, nearly extinct—it's entirely possible, maybe even likely, that something inside you, placed there long ago by someone who loves you and wills your good, is just about to germinate.

Prayer-Please, God, please. Let the thing in me that I thought was long past surviving start to grow today. Amen.

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

LIVING FOR OTHERS

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV

Sermon: Feb. 20, 2022

Scripture Verses:

Luke 6: 27-36

On October 2nd, 2006 10 young girls were held captive by a gunman in a one-room Amish school in Lancaster County, PA. By the end of the day, 5 of these young girls were killed and the gunman had committed suicide. Reporters from throughout the world invaded this small community to cover the story. However, in the hours and days following the shooting a different, unexpected story developed.

Amid their grief over this shocking loss, the Amish community didn't cast blame and they didn't point fingers. Instead, they reached out with grace and compassion toward the killer's family.

The afternoon of the shooting an Amish grandfather of one of the girls who was killed expressed forgiveness toward the killer, Charles Roberts. That same day Amish neighbors visited the Roberts family to comfort them in their sorrow and pain. Later that week the Roberts family was invited to the funeral of one of the Amish girls who had been killed. And Amish mourners outnumbered the non-Amish at Charles Roberts' funeral.

It's ironic that the killer was tormented for nine years by the premature death of his young daughter. He never forgave God for her death. Yet, after he cold-bloodedly shot those girls, the Amish community almost immediately forgave him and showed compassion toward his entire family.

In a world where conflict seems to be the norm and in a society that points the finger of blame, this reaction was unheard of. Many reporters and interested followers of the story asked, "How could they forgive such a terrible, unprovoked act of violence against innocent lives?"

The answer given was that the Amish culture closely follows the teachings of Jesus, who taught his followers to forgive one another, to place the needs of others before themselves, and to rest in the knowledge that God is still in control and can

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bring good out of any situation. Love and compassion toward others is life's theme. Judgment is to be left to God.

As the parent of a young girl at that time this story, it caused me to struggle with my understanding of forgiveness and trust in God. Could I have done the same in similar circumstances or would I have been overcome by rage and sorrow? I still do not have an answer.

There are many passages of scripture that hold messages of giving, healing, and understanding of the relationships between human beings, however, this passage gnaws at our souls because it forces us to look at the dark side of human nature. The desire for retribution and revenge when we are injured or abused.

This text comes from Jesus' Sermon on the Plain or the Level Place. And as we noted last week, there are differences between Matthew's version of this sermon and Luke's.

Earlier in Luke we are told that people came from Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon to hear Jesus. Evidently, this meant that the word of Jesus' ministry had spread, but also that his teachings were for everyone, not just those in Galilee.

The sermon itself seems to focus on the disciples, those who wish to follow Jesus, and like the Sermon on the Mount this passage holds blessings, instruction, and stories, but Luke's primary goal is to show how Jesus' followers are to treat others. Jesus teaches the crowd and the disciples not just with words but with actions as well, letting them know that the strongest message does not come from the lips, but through sacrifice and service.

This lesson is difficult to hear because it begins with instructions on how to treat your enemies. Jesus calls us to love our enemies and hate those that abuse us. This would have been seen as a strange reaction to an enemy in Jesus' day and the same can be said for our time as well. Why should we react kindly to those who do not

deserve it, who with every action, seem to spit in our face and deny the validity of our faith.

Yet, Jesus goes a step further. "Bless those that curse you, pray for those that abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt." This is quite a list of abuses, but the only response that we are to give in the face of such mistreatment is a simple saying that takes its roots in the Law of Moses, "Do to others as you would have them do to you."

This passage, found in Matthew and Luke, becomes the basis of how we are to treat others. It forms the solid ground on which stands our personal ethics; treat others how we would wish to be treated.

But does this mean that Christians are to become doormats, that others can abuse us with no consequences, of course not. It is clear that Jesus speaks to his listeners as though they are the victims. Evidently, it is assumed that such actions would be foreign to true believers. Yet, it is also obvious that we are not to think of ourselves as victims, but as examples of the love and forgiveness offered through Jesus.

In this manner our actions become more powerful than any injury we might sustain. We are called to take the initiative to love rather than retaliating or hiding our heads in the sand.

If Jesus' teaching on how we are to treat our enemies is amazing then his training on how we are to respond to our loved ones is astounding. Jesus informs his followers that loving those who love us is an easy thing to do; most people love those who love them.

In the same way it is easy to lend when we know that we will be repaid-with interest. In the words of Fred Craddock, "...just as one's lifestyle is not determined by the enemy, neither is it determined by the friend. Rather than a person hating in response to hatred and loving in response to love a Christian's behavior and relationships are prompted by the God we worship, who does not

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react but acts in love and grace toward all.”

This is what it means to be Children of God, to be kind to the grateful and the selfish, the just and the unjust. What is important to Jesus is not if a person deserves to be loved, but that we love them just the same.

In essence we become mirrors of the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ. Humanity did not deserve the ultimate gift given on the cross and we can never repay the debt that we owe our Lord, but Christ died for us anyway, not because we were worthy, but because he loved us.

If we are to model Jesus’ sacrificial love toward all human beings then we must act kindly, care for others, and give of ourselves at all times. Our lives are to become examples for others to follow, not for our ego, but the well-being of those whom we influence.

As Dr. William Willimon writes...Jesus’s intentions in the sermon become clearer when he says, after giving us these prescriptions for human behavior, “If you love those who love you, why should you be commended? Even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, why should you be commended? Even sinners do that.”

Jesus is unashamedly putting forth a very different way of living from that of the majority of the world. “Instead, love your enemies, do

good, and lend expecting nothing in return. If you do, you will have a great reward. You will be acting the way children of the Most High act, for he is kind to ungrateful and wicked people. Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate.” With that statement, Jesus’s purpose becomes clearer.

Obedience to the way of Jesus is clearly more than “just act naturally.” What he commends is not natural, not innate, at least not in our fallen state.

Why does he call us to live in such a manner? “You will be acting the way children of the Most High act.” God acts this way toward us with God’s kindness and compassion. So we choose to act this way in the world because the world is supposed to be this way. The world was not created for hatred and cruelty; the world was created by a God who is kind and compassionate. We therefore ought to live in such a way that is congruent with the deepest reality of God’s creation.

But most importantly, remember to live as a reflection of Jesus Christ by acting in love and grace towards all, because that same grace was provided for us even though we did not deserve it. In a world where we so often feel hurt and unrecognized, we know that the love of God carries us through, and provides the strength to live for others. Thanks be to God for the gift of forgiveness and hope offered through Jesus Christ, 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/fchsv](https://www.facebook.com/fchsv), [twitch.tv/fchsv](https://www.twitch.tv/fchsv), 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.

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COVID-19 CHURCH PROTOCOLS CONTINUED

- 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.



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.