



EASTER OFFERING 2022

Several times a year, congregations receive a special offering to support the ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The Easter Offering, received by most congregations on **April 10 & 17, 2022**, supports several of the general ministries of the Christian Church. Your gift supports college students in leadership development programs, global mission partners, health and social service ministries, the formation of new congregations, support for pastors and chaplains, and so much more.

Your gift to the Easter Offering is part of God's enduring love...

Love that creates...

- Bible studies that challenge and inspire
- Opportunities for clergy to gather in prayer
- Spiritual care for those in prison
- Resources for mental health and trauma care

Love that inspires...

- Visionary leadership that calls the us to imagine new ways of being church.
- New congregations that worship in a variety of languages and worship styles
- Ministries of compassion and care

Love that makes a difference...

- Global ministry partners who work for justice, reconciliation and peace
- Colleges, universities and theological institutions that nurture Christian leaders who are transforming church, society and the world
- Collaborative response in the wake of disaster
- Support for congregational service ministries that serve hungry neighbors

Your gift to the Easter special offering benefits general ministries, allowing us to do more together than we can alone. More ministry. More impact. More of God's love in the world.

Amen.



Join us Easter Sunday at 9:30 am as the FCC Chancel Choir presents the Easter cantata *Beautiful Christ* by Heather Sorenson. The choir will be joined by guest musicians David and Rebecca Caine, Katerina Fedoseyev (piano), Kevin Lay (cello) and Olivia Palazollo (violin). We look forward to seeing you on Easter Sunday as we celebrate the Risen Christ!

Peace,
Lauren Wilson Carter, Director of Music

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, April 7**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

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

TIME TO COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

Ladies, a year ago in March you were encouraged to keep a blessing box to hold coins for each ordinary and extraordinary blessing you received. It is now time to count those blessings and send that blessed total to FCC marked Blessing Box offering/CWM. If you did not keep a coin box, you can still reflect back on this past year and donate whatever thanksgiving amount you determine is appropriate. You can turn in your funds to your circle as well. Then start your blessing boxes again! Be sure to turn in these funds by your May circle meeting so they can be submitted to the Disciples Mission Fund.

Sue Seward, Blessing Box Coordinator



SHORT TERM PRAYER CONCERNS



Not Published Online

CHURCH CALENDAR

- April 4 10:30 am Quilters
6 pm *Disciples History Class*
- April 6 6 pm Phoebe Circle
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- April 7 10 am *John, Gospel of Light & Life*
- April 10 **Palm Sunday**
10:30 Egg Hunt
11:45 Community Outreach
- April 11 9:30 am Esther Circle
10:30 am Quilters
5 pm Conveners' Meeting
6 pm *Disciples History Class*
- April 12 6 pm Elders' Meeting
- April 13 7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- April 14 10 am *John, Gospel of Light & Life*
7 pm **Maundy Thursday Service**
- April 17 **Easter Cantata**
- April 18 10:30 am Quilters
- April 20 7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- April 21 10 am *John, Gospel of Light & Life*
6 pm Board Meeting
- April 24 2 pm Clasgens/Rutherford Shower
- April 25 10:30 am Quilters
6 pm *Disciples History Class*
- April 27 7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- April 28 10 am *John, Gospel of Light & Life*



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
First Christian Church
Birmingham, AL

THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET is in honor of Matt Ball's birthday by Karen & Stan Ball.



APRIL 3 ATTENDANCE
April 3 Worship Service: 73
Small Groups (During week & Sunday): 45



WEDDING SHOWER

TIME TO CELEBRATE A NEW CHAPTER

WHO: Janie Clasgens & Brandon Rutherford

WHAT: Wedding Shower

WHEN: April 24, 2022, 2:00 PM

WHERE: Church Parlor

Their beautiful story and registry for the couple is available at *****

. All are welcome to enjoy the festivities

A BIG THANK-YOU TO FCC!

Thank you, First Christian Church members and supporters. You gave over \$560 to the National Children’s Advocacy Center’s Healthy Families Program. Your generous gifts help first time parents in Madison County to care for their new babies by supplying them with needed diapers, clothing, formula, and many other items. Great Job!

Christian Women’s Ministries

HELP WANTED

Early Childhood Ministries is seeking a Kitchen Manager/Cook to start on May 31. Hours are 8:00 am - 2:00 pm Monday - Friday. Experience in a commercial kitchen is needed. Contact [susan @fcc-hsv.org](mailto:susan@fcc-hsv.org) for additional information.



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 our website fcc-hsv.org/who-we-are/how-to-give/

DESPERATELY POOR CHILDREN NEED OUR HELP

Christian Women's Ministries (CWM) hopes you will join us as we financially support House of Hope



Haiti and the Pringle House of Jamaica during April. Through Global Ministries, House of Hope

provides a safe place and educational programs for at-risk children in the Port-au-Prince area with a completion rate of 95%. Haiti has been in political turmoil for years and has also been devastated by several hurricanes. Life expectancy average is 63 years and adult illiteracy is over 51%. We will also be donating to the Pringle Home of Jamaica, which provides the same services for the impoverished children there. We can make a difference in the lives of children in two very poor third world countries by donating to support these causes. Checks can be made to FCC with “CWM April project” in the memo line. The need is great; please join CWM in changing lives.

OUTREACH UPDATE AND EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE

During the first quarter of 2022, FCC has sponsored several outreach campaigns, and the response of the congregation is greatly appreciated. The needs are many, and you have risen to the challenge.

WellHouse, a provider for rescue and restoration to female human trafficking victims, is a AL/NWFL Regional project. FCC sent \$875 for this cause.

Church World Service Blanket project was the recipient of \$820 from FCC. These blankets are used for warmth, shelter, and also as a carry-all.

On the Madison County needs, Community Free Dental Clinic, which provides emergency extractions for adults, was the happy recipient of \$1175 from the caring people of FCC. Again in the local arena, the Healthy Families Program of the National Children’s Advocacy Center was the recipient of \$565.

No less important are the ongoing donations of nonperishable food items delivered to the Huntsville Assistance Program (HAP) to meet immediate food security needs in Madison County. This need and opportunity to share is never-ending. Items may be left in the Narthex at any time.

GOD-RELYING GRUMBLING

Phiwa Langeni

So Moses cried out in prayer to God. God pointed him to a stick of wood. Moses threw it into the water and the water turned sweet.

Exodus 15:25 (MSG)

As we navigate the effects of a wide range of unbelievable bizarreness from the last two years, the stories of the ancient Israelites are oddly comforting. Their action-packed escape from Pharaoh's oppressive rule had plenty of bizarreness, including a series of pandemic plagues and a miraculous maneuvering of the parted Red Sea.

Adrenaline at an all-time high, the people were finally free...

...to begin a yet-to-be-realized four decades of wandering in the wilderness. On this side of liberation, the water they encountered to quench thirst and hydrate overly exerted bodies was bitter and unpotable. Moses carried the concerns to God, who regularly makes a mockery of impossible. Moses took the wood God showed him, tossed it into the water, and just like that—the water became sweet.

This was the first of several divine interventions Moses initiated on behalf of the people who, pre-pandemic et al., we might have considered chronic whiners. Now we recognize that their grumbling is one of the most God-relying things they could do. When everything comes crashing down and no way forward feels feasible, uttering their grievances relies on the faith and trust in a God who cares enough to hear them.

More than that, when the Israelites grew anxious and decided to take matters into their own hands (e.g. the golden calf fiasco in Exodus 32), God did not abandon them.

Or us.

Prayer

Loving God, hear our grumbles and prayers. Even as we human ourselves out of covenant with you, thank you for faithfully choosing, rescuing, and caring for us anyway. Amen.

GIVING OUR BEST

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV

Sermon: April 3, 2022

Scripture Verses:

John 12: 1-11

Today's scripture passage is well known to all of us. We remember the characters in this story. Lazarus, who Jesus raised from the dead. Jesus cared so much for Lazarus that he wept when he heard of his death. He was a friend, a companion, and perhaps one of Jesus' followers.

We also heard about Martha and Mary. We remember a story of another dinner when Martha served Jesus and his followers, but Mary sat at his feet listening. Martha complained that Mary should be helping her but Jesus responded, not by belittling what Martha was doing, but by reminding her that Mary's actions were just as important. She was a student, she was learning, she was opening her ears to the good news.

Six days before the Passover celebration, Jesus traveled to Bethany and ate dinner in the house of Lazarus. This was a meal of celebration and thanksgiving. Lazarus was alive and sat right beside Jesus. Martha served once again, but Mary did not take on the role of a student this time, instead, she humbly thanked Jesus by giving her best in a time of worship and adoration. She gave her best, not just through the physical gift, but the meaning behind it. Of all of Jesus' students and followers, Mary seemed to understand what Jesus was about to face and how thankful we should all be for his presence, ministry, sacrifice, and love.

Mary took a pound of costly perfume, made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and then wiped them with her hair. We have to understand that anointing was reserved for the most special of occasions; the greeting of an honored guest, choosing a King, and burial. Anointing the feet was a sign of humility, it was the task of a servant.

But Mary disregarded the cultural taboos of her time by kneeling before Jesus, unbinding her hair, which was a sign of intimacy, and humbly performing the work of a servant. Soon after, in chapter 13 of John's gospel, Jesus will bend down and wash the feet of the disciples, foreshadowing

Best continued on page 5...

...**Best** continued from page 4.
his sacrifice and love for all people.

As Mary anointed Jesus' feet we are told that the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. The gift Mary offered was expensive and she must have saved for years to be able to afford it.

It may have been purchased to prepare her brother Lazarus at the time of his death. I can envision Mary buying the nard realizing that it would be used at a funeral. If this was the case, Mary would not have even wanted to look at the perfume because it would have been a reminder of death.

Jesus changed this, he had restored Lazarus' life, and for Mary, no expense was too great and nothing was too precious to give to her friend and teacher. Mary honored Jesus by using a symbol of death to celebrate life. She poured out the very best of her substance at Jesus' feet because she loved him.

What was Mary's motivation to perform this act? Perhaps her deep love and affection for Jesus grew from their teacher and student relationship. Maybe her deep affection was because Jesus had given her brother Lazarus back. Maybe this affection stems from the idea that she knew Jesus was going to die soon, and she wanted to make a last loving gesture. We don't know what her motives were.

We do know that Mary was giving her very best to Jesus, not only an expensive possession but herself as well. In the same way, we too are called to give our very best to Jesus in a relationship of mutual love. As you read this story, you sense that Mary had given her heart to Jesus, and her loving gift was a symbol of this. We also know that we are invited to be the same kind of person, to love Jesus affectionately and intimately, and give him the best of ourselves. When we do that, the room is filled with the fragrance of wonderful perfume.

Mary's act of anointing is also a sign in the Gospel of John. It is a symbol that announced to the world that the Messiah had come. The next

day Jesus would enter Jerusalem as the crowds waved palm branches and shouted, "Hosanna, Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel!" This was to be a time of glory, but that time was fleeting.

Jesus would be a King that rode into his capital on a donkey and served his people by washing their feet. All too soon Jesus would be betrayed by the crowd who called him King and the very disciple that questioned Mary's wonderful gift for selfish reasons. Mary's perfume would be used for a funeral, not for Lazarus, but for the man who restored his life. Mary prepared Jesus for death.

As Mary continued to wipe Jesus' feet with her hair Judas complained about the extravagance of her gift. He asked why the perfume was not sold to help the poor and Jesus responded with a passage from Deuteronomy 15: 11, "The poor you always have with you."

This comment seems strange to us until we read the whole passage in context. It says, "The poor you always have with you, therefore, I command you, you shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and the poor in the land." Of course, we should help those who are in need, of course, we should feed the hungry, but concern for others was not the reason for Judas' question.

He had been given the responsibility of keeping the common purse; he held the money for the group. This was his talent his gift, but over time Judas corrupted his talent and became greedy and envious. Like far too many of us, Judas hungered for money, but he tried to cover it up by faking concern for those who were less fortunate. That was Judas' problem: greed, plain and simple. And it is a problem for us as well.

Judas, and the other disciples, misunderstood Mary's loving act. They saw it only as an expression of gratitude for the life of Lazarus, but we know that it was more. God was acting through Mary as she thanked Jesus for the gift of new life, anointed him as King, and prepared him for death. Just as Mary gave her best for Jesus, God gave God's best for us.

Best continued page 6...

...**Best** continued from page 5

During the Season of Lent we have looked deeply at our lives, asked for forgiveness and prepared ourselves for the death of Christ. We also remember that like Lazarus, Martha, Mary, and even Judas we have received gifts and are called to use them for the glory of God.

Times of celebration will come, next week we will wave palm branches and celebrate the coming of the Messiah, but we must experience the pain of Jesus' death before we can understand the glory of the resurrection.

Today we are called to follow the example of Mary and realize the importance of our actions as we express our love for Jesus and prepare ourselves for the transformation that will come in our churches and in our lives.

This is how we travel to Jerusalem, carry our burdens like Jesus carried the cross, and await the time of glory in which the world will know of the love of God found in the life, death, resurrection, and presence of our Savior.

Today we are called to offer our best to Jesus, to humbly and lovingly present ourselves to the one who gave his life so that we might receive new life. How do we do this? I like the Christmas poem, "What can I give Him, poor as I am. If I were a shepherd, I would give a lamb. If I were a wise man, I would do my part. What shall I give him? I will give him my heart."

Amen.



COVID-19 CHURCH PROTOCOLS (Approved by the Board on March 10, 2022)

- **One in-person 9:30 a.m. service** is currently offered. Virtual services (facebook.com/fcchsv, twitch.tv/fcchsv, or First Christian Church Huntsville on YouTube) are also offered 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 is optional**
- 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.
- **The front section of the Sanctuary, on the pulpit side, is the least impacted area with our heating and cooling system and every other row of pews is roped off to allow individuals to practice social distancing so that they may worship at their level of comfort.**
- Offerings may be placed in the brass plate when exiting the sanctuary or sent by mail.
- **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 14 days
- **Please notify the church office immediately if you develop symptoms after attending a service.**

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, twitch.tv/fcchsv, or Youtube.com.