



YOU ARE A DISCIPLE...WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

We just finished our first Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) history and polity course. We had a wonderful group of engaged participants who asked thoughtful questions, but one of these questions caught my attention. What do we share with friends and relatives when they ask us what the Christian Church believes? This can be a difficult question to answer since our denomination is congregational and we have no creeds or dogma. However, we have many beliefs that unite us. Below is a way to introduce our denomination to those who do not know about it, in a way to encourage questions and begin a discussion. I hope it is helpful when discussing our church and inviting others into our fellowship.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) emphasizes Christian unity, inclusiveness, and social action. Our identity statement, found on our website (disciples.org) states we are “a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord’s Table as God has welcomed us.”

The Disciples of Christ movement is part of the larger Restoration Movement, begun in the early 19th century by Thomas and Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone. The CC (DOC) is the oldest Christian Denomination born on American soil. The CC (DOC) recognizes the priesthood of all believers and is therefore not hierarchical in church polity. All members are ministers and use their spiritual gifts to further the mission of the church and spread the Good News of Christ. We teach believers baptism by immersion and therefore do not baptize infants, but accept baptism from other denominations. We place a heavy emphasis on communion, symbolized by the Chalice used as our denomination’s logo. Disciples of Christ congregations observe communion every week.

As members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), we dislike denominational labels and avoid putting Christians “in a box.” We believe that Christians can have a variety of doctrinal differences. “Unity, not uniformity,” as our founders put it. Our denomination’s official confession is short and simple, avoiding detailed assertions about doctrine beyond stating that Christ is Lord and Savior. As such we are a fluid group, connecting many people of vastly different beliefs.

There are no “tests of faith” to join the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) lets individual congregations and individual Christians believe and practice what they want. The CC (DOC) ordains women as pastors and encourages women to be leaders in our congregations. We believe that all people are welcome at the table of communion and within our congregations. We also believe in working with other denominations to spread the good news of Christ through mission work, evangelism, and social justice.

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, May 5**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

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



SHORT TERM PRAYER CONCERNS



You are cordially invited to celebrate the happiness of McKenzie Williams at her bridal shower hosted by Mission Family 2 on Sunday afternoon, May 22, 2:00 - 4:00 pm, in the FCC Parlor. McKenzie and her fiancé Justin Foscue are registered at Lawren's, Pottery Barn, and other sites on www.theknot.com/foreverfoscue/registry. You can read their romantic story on that site as well.

Not Published Online

CHURCH CALENDAR

- May 2 10:30 am Quilters
- May 4 12 pm Phoebe Circle
6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- May 8 11:45 am Community Outreach
- May 9 11 am Esther Circle
10:30 am Quilters
5 pm Conveners' Meeting
- May 10 10 am ECM Spring Sing/Art Show
6 pm Elders' Meeting
- May 11 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- May 12 6 pm Board Meeting
- May 15 3 pm Mission Family 4 Hybrid Trivia Night
- May 16 10:30 am Quilters
5:30 pm ECM Board Meeting
- May 18 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- May 22 2 pm Williams/Foscue Shower
- May 23 Paul on Sabbatical through August 22
10:30 am Quilters
- May 25 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- May 30 **Memorial Day - Church Office Closed**
10 am Quilters

CONDOLENCES to the family of Myrna Erwin Barron who passed on Thursday, April 14, and to the family of James Mason who passed on Tuesday, April 26.

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
Macedonia Christian Church
Birmingham, AL

THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET is in honor of Lily Margaret Brooks, granddaughter of Margaret J. Vann, who is graduating from medical School





**LONG TERM
PRAYER CONCERNS**



Not Published Online

Long term prayer concerns are published once a month in the *Journey*. **Please** keep the church office informed of the status of individuals you put on the list.



Grateful Life Community Church

GRATEFUL LIFE COMMUNITY CHURCH SUPPORT

Christian Women's Ministries is asking for financial support for Grateful Life Community Church during May. This church, our sister Disciples congregation in Huntsville, serves the disadvantaged and homeless members of our community. If you would like to contribute, please write your check to FCC with Grateful Life in the memo line and mail it to FCC.

Thank you.

ATTENDANCE

May 1 Worship Service: 66
Small Groups (During week & Sunday): 12

GHOSTS AND GHOSTING by Mary Luti

While they were talking, Jesus himself stood among them. They were terrified and thought they were seeing a ghost. He said, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones."

Luke 24:36-39 (NRSV, excerpted)

Luke says that you know the resurrection is true when the one who appears to you claiming to be Jesus offers you real flesh and bone. When the one who announces, "Fear not, it is I!" shows you hands and feet, wounds and scars. When the ghost firms up, solid, human, touchable.

The church appears in the world announcing new life, too. In the name of the living Christ we say, "Fear not!" We tell the oppressed it's not foolish to hope, we encourage the suffering to take heart, we assure the despised that God is on their side. We declare that love wins. That it always wins.

But the world can be forgiven for shrinking from us if we who claim to have been raised with Christ can't offer our bodies as proof of our claims. If we are fleshless, boneless, woundless, untouchable. If we don't have real human skin in the game. The world is right to doubt if we waft through its pain crying, "Resurrection!" but disappear when it wants to touch and see.

Luke wants us to understand that resurrection is bodily. And that every promise of life we make needs to have flesh on it, too. Suffering people don't need a church that ghosts them.

PRAYER

May your church startle the world with its resurrected presence, O Christ. Don't let us be ghosts, but make us your living, breathing Body - solid, touchable, and on the line.

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](https://www.youtube.com).

FOOD, FOLKS, AND FISHING

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV

Sermon: May 1, 2022

Scripture Verses:

John 21: 1-19

It is very clear that advertisers cater to young people. I still have jingles in my head that I learned when I was young. I know my Bologna's first and last name, I would like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony, and I like food, folks, and fun.

That McDonald's jingle is very catchy. It expresses everything that McDonald's wants to be, a place where we gather to eat, meet other people, and have a wonderful time doing it. When we heard this tune on Television the images that surrounded it were all of happy families, gathered together eating their hamburgers and sharing a laugh.

That is why I borrowed this jingle and changed it around a little for today's sermon. It captures the meaning of today's scripture because it is all about food, folks, and fishing.

As we begin the lesson Peter and some of the other disciples go fishing in the Sea of Tiberius, or Galilee. After everything that had happened over the last few weeks, the death of Jesus, the sight of the empty tomb, and seeing the resurrected Jesus appear in a locked room, Peter needed some time away to relax, and reflect on these events.

He probably needed to sort things out, get his head straight, and decide what to do next, so he went fishing. He returned home to a job that he had performed for most of his life. He went back to what he knew.

Peter and some other disciples went out at night, the traditional time for fishing, but they caught nothing. They may not have even been trying very hard. However, just after daybreak, a figure on the beach called out to them, "Children, you have no fish have you?" They answered, "No!" probably a little annoyed at the backseat fisherman.

The man answered, "Cast your net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast the net, and we know what happens next, the story is familiar. Their net was so full of fish that

they could barely haul it in.

At that moment they recognized Jesus and who wouldn't. This is the same story that frames the call of Peter in the gospel of Luke. This miracle is so familiar that Peter flung himself into the sea and swam to shore to greet this teacher, he did not even help pull in the load of fish.

But notice that unlike the story in Luke, where the net began to break because there were so many fish, in John's story, even though there were a great many fish, the net held. The gift that Jesus gave was not too much to handle, it was extravagant, but not overwhelming.

When the other disciples arrived on shore they found Jesus waiting for them. He prepared a meal so he could sit and eat with them. Jesus asked them to take their places and then he passed the bread and the fish much in the same way as he passed the bread and the cup on the night of the Last Supper.

Notice that John does not tell us if Jesus ate, this is not a test like in Luke to see if he was a ghost or had a real body, Jesus lovingly prepared a meal for his followers after a long night of work.

I come from one of those families where food is equated with love. If you love someone you feed them, you prepare extravagant dinners, try out new recipes, invite your whole family to share in the meal and then nervously wonder if they like it. My grandmother would feed me until I rolled away from the table because to her food was an expression of love.

As Disciples we also equate food with love. Let's face it, we love to eat so much that every time we show up at church we have a meal, but that is not really what I am talking about. At the center of our worship service, we have communion, a reminder of Christ's life, his sacrifice, death for our sake, and his resurrection. Jesus used the symbols of bread and wine to express his sacrificial love and we still do this to connect with him, to remember Jesus.

The elements themselves are not what is important. During a mission trip, I once used tater

Fishing continued on page 5...

...**Fishing** continued from page 4.

tots and ketchup for communion. At camp, we have used goldfish crackers and grapes, potato chips and grape soda, and even bread and fish. What is important is what the elements symbolize; the love of God, given abundantly, enough to provide for us, and more than enough to share.

After they had finished breakfast Jesus spoke to Simon Peter. "Peter, do you love me?" "Of course I love you," Peter answered. Jesus replied, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus asked the question, "Peter do you love me?" "Yes Lord you know I love you." Jesus answered, "Tend my sheep."

Jesus asked the question a third time and by now Peter must have been concerned. He saw the pattern. He had denied Jesus three times, now Jesus asked this question three times. He answered, "Lord you know everything, you know I love you!" Again Jesus answered, "Feed my sheep."

Peter loved Jesus with all his heart, but Jesus wanted him to know that with this love comes responsibility! Much as we show our love by feeding others Peter is called to show his love by feeding the sheep, by caring for the people around him and the people who will be brought to the faith.

Peter had to realize that saying you love Christ is easy, accepting the love of Christ for yourself is easy; the hard part is acting on this love. Luckily we have some great role models. In the past few weeks we have seen many examples of sharing Christ's love.

At the Regional Assembly the church members in Meridian fed everyone who attended the first night of the Assembly. They provided so much food that there was enough for the second day as well. We were all able to thank Rev. John Mobley for over 20 years of service as the Regional Pastor.

Yesterday we celebrated the life of Kathryn Shroul with a wonderful service and a reception. Family members and our congregation were able to share memories as they thanked God for a life so dear to this congregation. This afternoon we will share a meal together and remind ourselves of all the wonderful programming and ministry we

have in our congregation.

These are just a few of the things we are doing as a congregation. They are ways that we live out the love of Christ, but there are other ways we can share this love right now in our church and in our community.

How can we participate in this? We can invite someone to join us for worship or a special event, give to Week of Compassion or another special offering, share a spiritual gift or meet a need that has gone unseen in our church, attend Sunday School, and thank our teachers for the hard work they do, help someone clean up communion and the sanctuary after the service, join a committee and find a ministry we can call our own, all of these and more are ways to feed the sheep and spread the love of Christ.

I think that like Peter and the other disciples when we are faced with difficulty we return to what we know. That is not a bad thing if what we know is the love of Christ. If done right, food, folks, and fishing is not a bad way to spend your life.

Jesus knows that every once in a while we need to be comforted, but we also have to know that by accepting the call to faith we are changed and we will not be the same. We have experienced the risen Christ in our lives, we know that he has risen, and we have heard him say, "Follow me."

But often this means that we have to leave behind what we know and journey where we don't want to go. How can we do this? Remember, that before Jesus spoke to Peter he fed him; Jesus fed his disciples. More than that, he filled their nets, cooked the fish, made the bread, sat down with them, and provided everything they needed, even forgiveness.

When we accept the call of Christ we are prepared, fed, nurtured, and loved. We are given everything we need. Jesus calls and we follow, trusting in his guidance and support. Together we fish for people, feed the sheep, and share a vision of the Kingdom of God.

Amen.

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

- **An in-person worship service is available at 9:30.** 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 the air flow of our heating and cooling system.**
- 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.**