



MOVING FORWARD IN HOPE

Last year I wrote about the Greek philosopher Heraclitus who is often quoted as saying, "the only constant is change." This piece of wisdom has stuck with me throughout this year, and now that we are coming to an understanding of how our world has changed due to the Coronavirus, the statement seems even more significant. Some relish change and the new challenges and opportunities it brings. For some, change is something to be avoided at any cost. Transformation is seen as the enemy because it can lead us to reflect on past mistakes and acknowledge our growing edges. Change can be positive and negative depending on the circumstances, but whatever camp we may be in, we all have to admit to ourselves that the world and the church have changed.

I have also been reading about the difference between technical and adaptive change. Technical problems often have a rather clear cut solution, your refrigerator breaks down so you call a repair person to come and fix it. A technical change is often just as simple; a change in style, class, program, or different music. Adaptive change is much more difficult. According to Scott Cormode, a professor at Fuller Seminary, "Adaptive challenges happen when we ask people to adopt new beliefs, when we hope people will pursue better values, or when we help people see that the ways that they have been doing things in the past will not work for them."

For the past year the leadership of First Christian Church has dealt with a great deal of change. Every time we thought we knew what the future would bring, something different happened. We have had to make very difficult decisions, to keep the members of our congregation safe, but still provide opportunities to worship and grow as Christians. I believe we have come out of this time stronger and with a new sense of direction for the church.

Next week our Church Board is meeting to discuss our continuing plans to reopen and the report of our visioning team for the future. We are continuing to listen to advice from the General Church, our Regional Offices, healthcare workers, and state and national guidelines to make our decisions, but we are also filled with a sense of hope, because we can see where God is leading us. The future is bright for First Christian Church because we have never given up on each other and we never let go of our faith that God would lead us through this time of difficulty into a time of rebirth.

So yes, the world is changing, and yes, First Christian Church will change with it. However, God has a purpose for our congregation and we must seek this vision and make it our own to continue to be faithful to our call to ministry. As we grow and develop as a community of faith we will look back to this time as a milestone for our church and for the world, and then look ahead to the next, so we can continue to move forward in hope. Thanks be to God, Amen.

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, May 6**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

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



**LONG TERM
PRAYER CONCERNS**



Please remember to keep the following individuals in your prayers.

Not Published Online



**WEEKLY
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

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 lists.

A donation has been made in memory of Roy & Betty Rogers to honor their love of First Christian Church Huntsville by Beth & Bill Daugherty.

THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET is in memory of Delores Edgeton by Gordon & Cathy Trowbridge.



WORSHIP ATTENDANCE
April 18 - 64
April 25 - 65
May 2 - 76

REGIONAL PRAYER REQUESTS
Macedonia Christian Church
Birmingham, AL

SEVERAL OPEN DATES FOR FOOD BASKETS
Sign up dates for **FOOD BASKETS** are 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 our Community Outreach committee for local needs.





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.

CHURCH CALENDAR

The following are the known* church related activities.

May

- 3 10:30 am Quilters
- 5 6:00 pm Men's Bible Study
- 9 Mother's Day
- 10 9:15 am Esther Circle
- 10:30 am Conveners
- 10:30 am Quilters
- 12 6:00 pm Men's Bible Study
- 13 6:00 pm Zoom Board Meeting
- 17 10:30 am Quilters
- 19 6:00 pm Men's Bible Study
- 23 Graduation Sunday
- 24 10:30 am Quilters
- 28 9 am Breakfast Bunch
- 6:00 pm Men's Bible Study
- 31 Memorial Day - Church Office Closed
- 10:30 am Quilters

* Previously, activities were listed on the calendar based on Facility Requests submissions. Some meetings are now being conducted virtually, or in other ways, so the church office has no way of knowing that those meetings are occurring. Please contact the church office (256-881-0150 or publisher@fcc-hsv.org) if you would like your group or committee, including the point of contact, included on the calendar.

PLEASE CONGRATULATE our new leaders elected by the congregation on Sunday, May 2, to serve beginning July 1, 2021.

Position	
Moderator	Andy Herron
Moderator Elect	Pam Clasgens
Treasurer	Jon Ahlbin
Asst Treasurer	Roger Sameck (1year)
Financial Secretary	Dick Christiansen
Asst Financial Secretary	Don Coburn
Asst Financial Secretary	Terry Sullivan
Elder	Monty Love
Elder	Cameron Douglas
Elder	Lisa Fitzgerald
Elder	Margaret J. Vann
Elder	Roberta Shivers
Elder	Nancy Woodall
Elder	Sabrina Beckman
Elder	Lee Boles
Deacon	Frank Fitzgerald
Deacon	Carrie/Kyle Love
Deacon	Marilee Keim
Deacon	Diane Douglas
Deacon	Sharifa Love-Rutledge
Deacon	Beverly Cannon
Deacon	Chris Haury
Deacon	Susan Griffin
Convener	Mary Ann Anderson
Convener	Anita Wood
Convener	Nancy Waites
Convener	Phyllis Leonard
Trustee	Lee Boles
Trustee	Dick Christiansen
Trustee	Dale Thomas

IN PERSON & ONLINE WORSHIP SERVICES

We have resumed in-person worship services but you may still stream them live at 9:30 am on Sundays (or watch pervious services anytime) on YouTube at: www.youtube.com/channel/UCzQCRY8Vfa-IDhugUnUhCKw

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/fchsv/videos

Finally, stream services at 9:30 am on Sunday at: www.twitch.tv/fchsv

HEALS

(Health Establishments at Local Schools)

HEALS, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization that provides school-based primary healthcare in collaboration with Huntsville City and Madison County school systems and local medical, dental, and optometry communities. Providing early intervention and health education to economically disadvantaged children has been shown to lower lifetime medical costs and delinquency rates and to foster better success in school and life. Services are offered free or at reduced rates, based on a sliding fee scale.

During the month of May, Community Outreach requests monetary donations to support the HEALS Dental Clinics, which provide on-site preventive and restorative services to students at Title 1 schools in Huntsville and Madison County. Please give generously!

Thanks, Mary Ann Anderson

THANK YOU by Donna Schaper

Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NRSV)

What you do matters. It may be hard to know that in the middle of any given day or meeting or moment. You may leave more than one task unfinished, more than one email waiting for response, more than one goal unaccomplished. Most people do, including the greatest multi-taskers among us. To do is to leave some things undone.

Sometimes it appears we are all “interims,” no matter what task we are doing or what title we have. We all walk a great path, with our steps mattering to the greater march of humanity. We can learn how to thank ourselves, in unfinished ways, for the great unfinished of our lives.

My friend practices random acts of guerilla compassion. She may over-tip the lunch waiter or give her mother’s caretaker a restaurant gift card or clean up an entire picnic area. Her creative acts of appreciation and recognition say a lot about what she might have liked for herself. Just a little nod to remembering that what we do matters is

Thank You continued next column...

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often enough to take us to the next step on the long path.

When we are thanked, we go on to thank others. Blessings multiply into happy endings; ingrati- tudes multiply into messes. How to get the appreci- ation we ourselves want? Appreciate others. How to get the encouragement we ourselves want? En- courage others. The golden rule is truly golden and has many applications. Once we know that what we do matters, we go on to help others recognize the same.

Prayer; God of compassion and appreciation, remind us that Thanksgiving doesn’t need to be kept to the month of November. Amen.

Sanctuary Service Protocols (Revised April 8)

- 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 lev-el. Virtual ser- vices are offered (facebook.com/fcchsv, twitch.tv/fcchsv, or First Christian Church Hunts- ville on Youtube) every Sunday.
- **Attendees, including children, will wear face cov- erings/masks inside the church and practice so- cial distancing (6 feet apart for non-household members) for everyone's safety.**
- Attendance is limited (approximately 75) to the ability to social distance.
- 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.
- No choir/congregational singing.
- Offerings may be placed in the brass plate when exiting the sanctuary or sent by mail.
- **Anyone with any symptoms will remain home and celebrate virtually for at least 14 days.**
- **Notify the church office immediately if you de- velop symptoms after attending a service**

SERMON TEXT SUNDAY, MAY 2, 2021

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV Sermon *Rise and Go*

Scripture - Acts 8: 26-40

When I was 14, I volunteered as a counselor at church camp for the first time. The camp was a program helping underprivileged kids allowing them to experience nature and the joy of camping. Some of these kids had never been outside the city let alone given a chance to fish, swim, and play in a safe environment.

I remember walking with my small group to the outdoor chapel at Camp Wajato when one of them stopped, stared at the cross that overlooked the pond and quietly asked me, "Paul, who is buried there?" "No one." I responded, "It is just a cross." He answered; "The only time I have ever seen a cross is in a graveyard."

That was when it hit me. I had grown up in church, both of my parents were ministers, and it seemed like there was never a time when I was separated from my faith, but this young man's experience was very different. He did not know about God, he was not a part of a church family; he did not have an opportunity to go to Sunday School or other church events. To him a cross meant nothing more than death.

After the chapel service I talked to him and continued to work with him throughout the week. He seemed thrilled that someone was paying attention to him and listening to his questions and when camp was over I remember that he ran up to me, gave me a big hug, and thanked me.

I do not know what happened to that young man, I never heard from him again, but I have to believe that I made a difference in his life, because that was the first day that I can remember feeling the presence of God guiding me as I talked to someone about Christ.

The book of Acts is filled with stories of the early church and ordinary men and women who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, did extraordinary things for the faith. One of these people is Philip. He was one of the seven chosen by the apostles to take care of the daily distribution of food to the followers of the way. Together with Stephen, and five others, Philip became a servant leader as the apostles laid hands upon him and prayed for him.

In many ways, Philip, and the six others who were chosen, became the first deacons, elders or even ministers of the Christian faith who were given authority by the people they served and by God. Unlike the apostles they had never seen the human Jesus, but they had accepted him as Lord and Savior and now they were given the strength to serve in new ways.

The gospel lesson for today picks up on the story of

Philip as the Holy Spirit sends him to the hot and dusty road that lead from Jerusalem to Gaza. Philip had been preaching to the Samaritans before this time and had converted many, in fact, the apostles Peter and John were sent from Jerusalem to see Philip's success.

Now, Philip's time in Samaria was over, God had other plans for him. But Phillip had to wonder, why this place, why a road in the middle of nowhere away from anyone? If he was such a successful evangelist wouldn't his talents be more useful in a city preaching and teaching others? Places where there were people and opportunities to share?

Then Philip sees a group traveling on the road, in particular an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her treasury. Obviously he was a foreigner, who may have been an admirer of the Jewish religion. He would have been a man of culture and breeding, an educated person who had the best of what society had to offer, a man of power and wealth, but this did not help him as he read Isaiah 53 verses 7-8. He had been to Jerusalem to worship, but for whatever reason had not found the answers he was searching for.

When Philip saw this traveler the Holy Spirit told him to join him and when he drew near and heard the Ethiopian reading from the book of Isaiah he asked if he understood what he is reading. Can you imagine, a complete stranger joins you as you are riding along, rudely asks you if you understand what you are reading and then expects to travel with you? We would consider this to be an insult, but the Ethiopian was overjoyed by Philip's offer. He responded, "How can I understand unless someone guides me?"

The Ethiopian invited Philip to sit beside him on his chariot and once again shares with him what he is reading. Then the traveler asks Philip a question, "Who was Isaiah speaking about; himself, or someone else?"

Philip needs no other invitation to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Starting with this scripture he told the full story of Jesus', life, death, and resurrection. Philip did not see the Ethiopian as a foreigner, someone to mistrust or shy away from, he saw him as an earnest inquirer who reached out to be taught and was graciously included into the actions of God.

The early church knew that we do not come to faith alone. We learn from others and pass on what we know to the next generation. Education has always been an important component of the Christian faith, and the best education does not happen in isolation. But that

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...*Rise and Go* continued.

can be hard for us to accept. We are a people who value independence and individualism. We want to do it ourselves.

When Joe was a child he wanted to do everything his own way. When he failed and I tried to help him he would bitterly complain, "I want to do it myself!" Many people do not get over this as they grow older; so often we confuse drive and dignity, thinking that the best work is done alone. Between childhood and maturity we want to be able to do it all, and we want to be able to do it on our own terms.

But faith is a team sport. We are much better at it when we pull together, learn from one another, interact with each other, and reach out to others. Most strong Christians will tell you, you can't be a Christian alone. It's impossible, because relationships are the basis of Christianity, our relationship to God, God's relationship to us, and our relationships with one another.

As they continued along the road the Ethiopian spied a body of water and cried out, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" The answer to his question is everything! Nothing like this had happened in the life of the fledgling church.

So far, Jews had been accepted into the faith, a few Samaritans had converted, but they were from the same bloodline as the Jews. Now a foreigner, who was not a part of the Jewish faith and a eunuch, and therefore unclean in the eyes of the law, wanted to be baptized. Did Philip have the authority or the right to baptize him, or anyone?

Notice these questions meant nothing to Philip. The Spirit of God had sent him to this place for a reason, now he would fulfill his purpose and welcome a fellow believer into the family of the church.

It is interesting to note that after the Ethiopian was baptized the Holy Spirit snatched Philip away and the two never saw each other again. We do not hear what happened to the Ethiopian after this experience, but this story of conversion holds a powerful message for the church of any age.

What would have happened if Philip had obeyed human logic and refused to baptize the Ethiopian? Would the church have opened its doors to gentiles and continued to expand its ministry? And if that had not happened we would not be sitting here today?

At its essence our faith is alive and growing because we know that all people are accepted in God's Kingdom. Race, creed, color, sex, do not matter when we come together to worship for we are all united as children of God who are in need of our loving Creator. It is the diversity of our relationships that drive us and allows us to thrive.

All too often we tell ourselves, now is not the time to express my faith, no one wants to hear what I think or what I believe, besides it would be rude to burden others with what I think. Philip was successful because he took a chance, was willing to listen and answer questions honestly, and continued to share the good news even with others tried to silence him.

When Helen Keller, that marvelous woman originally cut off from all hearing and seeing, who, like the Ethiopian, had no way to understand unless someone showed her, first heard of Jesus, she said, "I knew there had to be somebody like that." Jesus stands with us at the crossroads of life. He challenges us to share his message and empowers us to make a difference in people's lives because he knows we can't do this alone. But thanks be to God, we don't have to. Amen.

