



KIDS & YOUTH FALL INFORMATION

We are getting ready to kick off our fall kids & youth programming once again here at FCC. In order to try our best to meet the needs of all our FCC families, we will continue to offer in-person opportunities for children and youth on Sunday mornings and offer virtual opportunities on Wednesday evenings.

Starting on Sunday, September 5, we will return to separate age classes for children and youth for Sunday small groups. These classes will meet from 10:30-11:30 a.m.

At this time, we will still be offering Children Worship & Wonder for children ages 3 through 1st grade on Sunday mornings during the 9:30 a.m. worship. The children will be dismissed after the Children's Sermon to go to Children Worship & Wonder. We will also continue offering the Nursery on Sunday mornings for the 9:30 a.m. worship service and the 10:30 a.m. small groups.

Starting Wednesday, September 8, we will have our kids' group and our youth group meeting virtually for lessons, games, songs, etc. on Zoom. The kids' group will meet from 6:00-6:30 pm and the youth group will meet from 7:00-7:30 pm. Log-on information for each group will be sent to families.

The lessons and experiences offering on Sundays will be different from those we are offering on Wednesday nights. If families choose to participate in both, they will each be unique experiences.

Fall schedules for each group will be sent out to families by Pastor Laura for the children and Alyssa Burton for the youth.

Looking forward to growing in faith with your children and youth once again!

~Pastor Laura

Christian Women's Ministries service project for September is Hope Place. Hope Place is an agency of Crisis Services of North Alabama that provides emergency shelter, counseling, court advocacy, etc. for victims of domestic violence and their children. Please join our Circle members in supporting this worthy cause during September. You may include your donation with your church offering by noting "Hope Place" and the amount.

Thank you, Nancy Woodall

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)

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, September 2**, 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**



**SHORT TERM
PRAYER CONCERNS**



Not Published Online

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 lists.

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**

NEW WOMEN’S BIBLE STUDY

Beginning September 9

What: The Book of Romans

Materials Needed: A Bible and our text *Invitation to Romans* by Pamela M. Eisenbaum . The text can be found on Amazon at a cost of \$9.59. The following is the web link to order: www.amazon.com/Invitation-Romans-Participant-Short-Term-DISCIPLE-ebook/dp/B00XPZ1B2I

When: We will meet on 9/9/2021 at 10:00 until 11:30 a.m. and each Thursday thereafter.

How Long: Eight (8) weeks.

Where: Family Services room.

If you are interested or have any questions please contact Lisa Fitzgerald by phone at XXXXX or email at XXXXX

REGIONAL PRAYER REQUESTS
Mt. Moriah Christian Church
Letohatchee AL

THIS WEEK’S FOOD BASKET is in memory of our parents by Greg & Brenda Perkins 

OPEN DATES FOR FOOD BASKETS
September 19 October 17
November 14 December 5 & 26

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE SUNDAY, AUGUST 29
Service: 64 Small Groups: 20



SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS



Not Published Online

CHURCH CALENDAR

August 30	10:30 am Quilters
Sept. 1	6 pm Men's Group Phoebe Circle 7 pm Choir Rehearsal
Sept. 6	Labor Day Church Office Closed No Quilters
Sept. 8	6 pm Men's Group 7 pm Choir Rehearsal
Sept. 9	10 am Women's Bible Study 6 pm Board Meeting
Sept. 12	11:45 am Community Outreach
Sept. 13	9:30 am Esther Circle 10:30 am Quilters 5:00 pm Convener's Meeting
Sept. 15	6 pm Men's Group 7 pm Choir Rehearsal
Sept. 16	10 am Women's Bible Study
Sept. 20	10:30 am Quilters

COVID-19 CHURCH PROTOCOLS

(Approved by the Board on August 12.)

- **One 9:30 a.m. service** will be offered at least through May 2022. First Christian Church offers virtual services (facebook.com/fcchsv, 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.
- Food, coffee, and other hospitality services remain suspended until further notice.
- **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.



Washing our Hands and Hearts

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV Sermon August 29, 2021
Scripture Verses: Mark 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23

We live in a culture where sanitation is taken very seriously. We don't want to get sick so we wash and disinfect everything, especially during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

When I was a child my mother would always tell me to wash my hands before dinner or when I walked in the house after playing in the backyard. I was the child who loved to play in the creek behind our house collecting crawfish and hunting for snakes, worms, turtles and salamanders. She always told me that she did not want me to track dirt into the house or get sick, so I would grudgingly trudge off to the sink, wash my hands of all of two seconds and then come back to show her. Often she would send me back to wash them again.

Now I probably look strange to many people when I wash my hands because I have been told to sing happy birthday in my head to know I have washed them enough. We see this desire for sanitation very clearly in the hospital where every room not only has a sink inside the room, but outside the room as well. There is also hand sanitizer outside of the room, in the room, and as you exit the elevators or enter any wing.

We are told to wash our hands constantly. But we are also told that there is are problems with using too much antibiotic soap. We are not just killing germs we are killing good bacteria as well, lessening out immunity. **Which begs the question, can you be too clean?**

The scripture lesson for today begins when the Pharisees and scribes from Jerusalem come to question Jesus about the actions of his disciples. They noticed that Jesus' followers were eating without washing their hands. It is clear that Mark was writing to a Gentile audience because he had to explain why the Pharisees would be so offended by the disciples' actions.

In the book of Exodus it was required that the high priest ritually wash his hands and feet before he entered the temple. Over time it became

the norm for all followers to wash before entering the temple, but the Pharisees took this one step further. They believed that a person should attempt to escape defilement at all times, so they began washing their hands before meals.

They were actually doing something that we know a lot about. They were emulating the high priest, following an idea similar to the priesthood of all believers. The Pharisees hoped that by performing these external rites they could sanctify the common things of life, like eating, thereby adding a religious dimension to everything they did.

We do something very similar when we pray before eating a meal. We ask that God will bless the food and give thanks for what has been provided. We believe that prayer should undergird everything in our lives and so we pray before civic events, football games, and meetings because we believe that everything we do is within the realm of God's mercy and guidance.

But Jesus knew that this question was about more than washing hands. When he rebuked the Pharisees he was not rejecting sanitation, instead, as Rev. Samuel Chandler writes, he realized that there was a gap in the Pharisees' external religious practice and their internal belief. The Pharisees concentrated so much on what they did physically that the inward marks of faith were forgotten, or worse, avoided.

There are plenty of outward signs of religion that look holy and well meaning, but it is the inward marks of faith that are important. We tend to see outward signs but the inward signs are always more meaningful.

The Pharisaic tradition of washing hands began in all sincerity, but by Jesus' time it had become a marker of who was clean our unclean, who was in the loop or out of the loop, who was a true follower or who was an unbeliever. To the Pharisees, it would have been scandalous for anyone to claim to be a religious teacher who did not follow these rituals because it was the **rituals** that were important.

If one part of the tradition was broken, then maybe other parts would be broken. If this happened

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then the tradition could die out altogether which would lead to the death of the entire Jewish nation and faith. **Fear does that to people**; it turns minor concerns into obsessions.

Jesus knew that blind traditionalism, strict adherence to any set of beliefs, is dangerous. Blind traditionalism within Christianity has led to the burning of heretics, war between Protestants and Catholics, and the exclusion of many people who were seen as different within the church.

This does not mean that all traditions are incorrect. Jesus recognized the importance of the commandments and the spirit of the laws of Moses. If all rituals and traditions are corrupt then we would not worship together each Sunday morning, partake of communion, express our faith through baptism, tithe, and offer our gifts to God. But Jesus reminds us that our traditions become hollow and meaningless unless we remember their true basis, the worship of God.

After his argument with the Pharisees and his speech to the crowd, the disciples asked Jesus to explain what he meant. They lived in a society with strict definitions of who and what were clean and unclean. Jesus responded by saying, "Do you not see that whatever goes into a person cannot defile...it is what comes out of a person that defiles."

This flies in the face of our societal logic because we are constantly looking to blame our faults on someone else. Every time a person does something wrong we hear that they were influenced by the music they listened to, the movies they watched, or the video games they played.

Amazingly we still observe unwritten taboos concerning people, places, and things and behave as though association with them can defile us. This leads to an obsession over what influences us, so we try to censor our lives, sheltering ourselves so we will not be threatened. Above all we try to preserve the status quo so we will not get "dirty."

You can make your own decisions as to what to watch and who to associate with; I am not here to tell you that, **however I will ask one question**. What happened to personal responsibility? Why do we blame others for our faults? Is it human nature, a part of our brokenness, or is it fear?

Perhaps our deepest fear is that the status quo is not so good. Maybe our deepest fear is that we are unclean and afraid to face this fact.

We have within us every vice and fault that Jesus mentioned in this passage, and more. Our deepest fear is that we are guilty and no matter what we do we can never be clean again, so we try to look good on the outside to mask the corruption within.

That is what is so wonderful about God. Jesus takes our deepest fears and shows us that they are nothing than an illusion. Of course we are broken, yes we are sinful, but we can be made new again. We have found forgiveness, redemption and the assurance of salvation through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

When we realize this, our hearts become free and we see that all life is sanctified, not through our actions, but through the presence of God. Common things are made holy and ordinary people are made clean, not by washing their hands or saying the right prayers, but by seeing these common events and ordinary people through the eyes of Christ.

Jesus accepted the outcast, the lonely, the unclean, the guilty, the broken people of this world **and this is why he accepts us**. Jesus was not afraid to get dirty or to touch the unclean things in the world. He was not afraid to do what was necessary even if it meant breaking tradition and trying something new.

Through his example we learn how to heal the unclean places within us and share the good news of Jesus Christ that is the freedom, forgiveness, and love of God. We learn that we can be transformed, that the church must constantly be made new, and that our call is to impart the wonderful news that all people are **accepted and expected** in the Kingdom of God. Amen.

FIELD OF DREAMS

by Lillian Daniel

“Celebrate the Festival of Harvest with the first fruits of the crops you sow in your field.” - Exodus 23:16 (NIV)
When it comes to baseball, I am an agnostic. But when it comes to Iowa, I am a fan.

So I was thrilled when the recent “Field of Dreams” game between the Yankees and the White Sox became the most-watched MLB game since 2005, with 6 million viewers. I don’t think Iowa’s received that much attention since we botched the caucuses last year, but let’s not dwell on all that. Back to our beautiful Field of Dreams!

I understand that one could be cynical about a nostalgia-driven media event based on a fictional book and made-up movie script, none of which ever actually happened. But why go there? Wasn’t it amazing to see the New York and Chicago players appear amidst the stalks of corn?

Well, here’s a little Iowa backstory. The night before the big game, bad summer weather swept through the fields, as it does in Iowa. Storms crushed that carefully manicured corn. But it didn’t crush the spirits of the Iowa farmers and volunteers, who literally zip-tied those corn stalks to metal beams so they could stand up straight again. Some might call it fake, but I call it real. It was ordinary people wanting the world to see their home at its extraordinary best.

In the movie’s final scene, when Ray Kinsella’s father appears on the ballfield, he asks in all sincerity, “Is this heaven?” And his son responds, “This is Iowa.” In this, the movie’s ending, Ray does not precede his answer with a “No” or a “Yes.”

Like Ray, I aspire to live in the liminal space between heaven and earth, where there is no such thing as a flyover state and where every field is full of dreams.

Prayer - Thank you, God, for the view from heaven, also known as Iowa. Amen