



# The Journey

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**DEAR DISCIPLES** September 3, 2021

by Rev. Terri Horde Owens General Minister and President

I know that you, like me, have been watching the news from Afghanistan over the past few weeks. I have been praying for the victims of last week's attack, and all those who have now been displaced from their homes. I've been praying for our military families, and the Disciples chaplains who are serving faithfully – I know this has been a difficult time for so many.

I also know that Disciples want to know how to help. Our siblings in Afghanistan are seeking safety and they are in need of immediate relief. Our church, through Week of Compassion, is working with trusted partners in the region to meet urgent needs, while also prioritizing the refugee resettlement program here in the U.S.

In the coming weeks and months, the United States is preparing to welcome tens of thousands of people from Afghanistan after several years of shrinking refugee numbers. As Disciples, we have a significant heritage of working with our ecumenical and interfaith partners to advocate for and welcome refugees.

The refugee resettlement challenge we face now is similar to urgent needs we have faced before. In 1975 following the fall of Saigon, the U.S. resettled 125,000 Vietnamese refugees, and Disciples were a big part of providing that welcome. We can do that again. We now have an opportunity to continue this work, to practice radical hospitality and offer the gift of welcome and help ramp up these services quickly.

As Disciples of Jesus Christ, our faith compels us to welcome the stranger- especially those who are in danger and seeking sanctuary. We encourage Disciples congregations to begin doing groundwork now, and prepare to welcome refugee families to your local community in the weeks and months ahead.

Disciples Refugee and Immigration Ministries has a number of resources available to support congregations in these efforts, and we'll include links so that you can find more information and get connected to others who are doing this important work. Even if you or your church has never done this before, I encourage you to check out those resources and find ways that you can help.

Some of you have already begun this work. If your congregation is preparing to welcome refugees, we'd love to hear about what you are doing. Send your stories to [news@disciples.org](mailto:news@disciples.org), or share on social media and be sure to tag #ccd. Through support for Week of Compassion, Disciples are present wherever people are in need--whether that is halfway around the world, or here in our own communities in the U.S. and Canada.

Disciples, there are so many hard things happening right now – refugees and hurricanes and wildfires and the ongoing pandemic. I'm so grateful for you, for this church, and the ways we show up for each other. I'm so grateful to be part of this movement for wholeness... I'm so grateful for God's limitless love that will not ever let us go. Thank you, Disciples, for being the church we say we are. And remember: God loves you, and so do I.

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, September 16**, at Noon. Email to: [publisher@fcc-hsv.org](mailto:publisher@fcc-hsv.org)

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



### SHARING THE JOY

Mission Family 3 invites you to join us in a unique celebration of the engagement of Stan Ball and Audrey Eckart. Many of you will recall watching Stan grow while being in our midst with his Mom and Dad, Karen and Matt. Please take time to learn more of Stan and Audrey's story on the website below. Even though we will not have the opportunity to celebrate in person, as a church family we are sending love and congratulations to the couple with anticipation of their wedding October 29, 2021. Checkout their website below as "Their story" is very special. The Knot.

### MISSING JESUS by Kaji Douša

And Jesus could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief. Mark 6:5-6 (NRSV)

There he was. Jesus - Lord God himself- -right in front of them.

The people of Capernaum were seeking something.

But they weren't seeking Jesus. And as they looked to all the wrong places? They missed the blessings Jesus was ready to share. The people were looking everywhere around God except to God.

Which we do sometimes, don't we?

The thrilling or the avoidant, the lashing out, the suspicion, the conspiracies, the ways we - or so many - try to make it through and past all the horror we have experienced, collectively and individually.

I see it in my hometown of New York City, and I see it in this story from Capernaum. Sometimes we look to the wrong places for relief, when Jesus is standing right in front of us.

And for those who would? Who risked the faith to let God help them?

They got their blessing.

I'm not saying they got this right every day. I'm not claiming that they were particularly righteous otherwise. They just risked the faith. And they were healed.

**Prayer** - May we, the many, learn from the few. And may the blessings grow. Amen.



**THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET** is in honor of Peace by Piece Quilters for their gifts to the congregation and community.

### 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](https://facebook.com/fcchsv), [twitch.tv/fcchsv](https://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.

## TAMING THE TONGUE

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV Sept. 12, 2021, Sermon

Scripture Verses: James 3: 1-12

When I was growing up I had favorite teachers in school and in church. These teachers did not just recite information; they taught me morals, ethics, and how to live as a responsible citizen and Christian. The greatest teacher I have ever had was Dorothy Odle. She taught the Jr. High Sunday School class at my mother's church in Wichita, Kansas.

If you asked Dorothy what kind of teacher she was, she would have said a poor one. Dorothy was not a trained theologian. She often had to look up the answers to our questions in her bible dictionary and told us that she was learning about the Bible just like we were.

But Dorothy showed me what it meant to live in the image of Christ. She was always kind, made sure our opinions were heard, and demanded that we respect the ideas of others as we discussed difficult topics. She was open and honest about her own strengths and flaws and made each young person in the class feel that they were special in some way. In many ways Dorothy became my model for teaching.

We have all had favorite teachers or people who changed our lives, but more importantly we have been that role model to others. As Christians we are called to be teachers, leading people through our words and actions, encouraging them to make a commitment and have faith in God. Yet, teaching is a calling and a responsibility that we cannot take lightly.

The role of teacher was sacred in the Jewish tradition. "Rabbi", a term used to describe a religious leader, meant teacher. Jesus' followers often called him rabbi. That the term was not used lightly for calling a person Rabbi meant that you would follow them and try to emulate their wisdom.

Perhaps this is why the author of James warned his readers that not many in the church should become teachers. He does not say this to diminish the role of Christian Education,

there is always a need for enlightened teaching. However, the writer wanted to be sure that we do not underestimate the power of Christian instruction.

The author of James knew that we are not perfect; however, this is not an excuse for immoral behavior. Imperfection should give us a reason to try harder and be more aware of the hurt or healing our words and actions can bring.

In chapter one, the author of James established two requirements for faith: proper speech and care for your neighbor. In the scripture lesson for today the focus is on the first requirement, speech. The writer knew the power of words. He knew that what we say could cause great harm or even greater good.

In the author's day people believed that certain words had power. The correct words could literally cause something to happen. You could curse your neighbor so that their crops would not grow, or bless a friend so they would have good luck. Curses and blessings were feared and respected.

But the writer of James was also concerned about the more mundane power that words hold. We all know that words can cut and slice as well as any knife, heard stories about how gossip has ruined relationships or how one ill-timed word caused years of mistrust and anger. While most of us do not believe in curses anymore, we have all experienced the hurt that words can cause.

When I was a child I had a great problem controlling my tongue. One day my family was invited to have dinner with a young minister just out of Seminary who had moved into the area. When we walked into his house he said, "Welcome to my humble home."

As we sat down for the meal I noticed I was getting rather warm and was beginning to sweat so I asked this young minister if he could turn down the air conditioning. He answered, "We do not have air conditioning." To which I responded, "No wonder you call your house humble."

*Taming* continued page 5...

...**Taming** continued.

And I can still remember the look on his face. I felt terrible and apologized immediately. Even at that young age I knew I had said something wrong, but the damage was already done. Words can be hard to take back.

The author of James tells us that certain kinds of speech are improper and evil. This is difficult for us to digest because we live in a society in which freedom of speech is of the utmost importance. According to PHEME PERKINS, free speech was an essential element in the emergence of modern liberal democracies, one of the crucial freedoms our country was founded on.

We often hear that a person has a right to say anything, but even in legal terms it is not lawful to yell fire in a crowded theatre. We have often seen the consequences of free speech that is unhindered by ethics. These situations remind us of how powerful words and images can be. They are literally the power of life and death.

The author of James' instruction to regulate speech connects with his warning on teaching because the writer had seen with his own eyes how those who were given power in the church could manipulate congregations for their own reasons. He saw the Apostle Paul's writings being misused by teachers who claimed that the grace of God was all a person needed, that human beings had no responsibilities in the world once they received the gift of salvation.

The author writes passionately about the ability of the tongue to set small fires that eventually become great forest fires. He believed that human hearts could not tame the tongue; rather, it takes the strength of God to help us say and do what is good and holy.

This means that we are called to a new understanding, a new sense of responsibility, for those who are considered leaders in the church and for all Christians. We must watch what we say and to whom, and we must tame our words

and our hearts if we are to set an example for others to follow.

The author of James speaks of placing a bit in the mouth of a horse so that their movements can be controlled. We also must control our desire to humiliate and denigrate those who believe differently and live in the image of Christ who sought to teach, heal, redeem and forgive. Our words and actions should reflect our faith, our devotion to the great "Rabbi" which is Jesus Christ.

We have seen the pain that rumor and gossip can bring in a community when it is held unchecked. We have seen people's lives ruined because of words said in confidence and then repeated. Yet, we have also seen lives changed because of kind words uttered at the right time.

Our words can bring healing or pain, it is for us to temper our hearts and minds and think before we speak or act. For we are all teachers, we are all ministers; we are all Christians following a God who commands us to take words of love, comfort, hope, and justice to the world.

Philip Wise writes, "One might be tempted to become mute in light of James's warning concerning the dangers of sinful speech. However, that is not what he recommends. He encourages not silence, but the wise use of words. James acknowledges that words can be hurtful and that they can injure at a distance. But he insists that words can be used for good or for evil. The key is in learning how to control our tongues. This means learning to think before we speak. It also means choosing words that do not offend or label. Is it difficult? Yes. Is it important? It obviously is."

Words hold power, for in these words come knowledge of forgiveness, hope, and salvation. Therefore, let us go forward this day as those who control their speech, who seek to bring peace and comfort instead of confusion and anger, and who follow the teachings of Christ who calls us to love one another. Thanks be to God, Amen.