



The Journey

Volume XXIX No. 38
September 20, 2021
www.fcc-hsv.org

JUMPING RIGHT IN

When Abby was a small child the church I was serving held a retreat at Camp Caroline, the regional campground in North Carolina. Patti was not able to go so I decided to take Abby with me and make it a father daughter experience. We had a wonderful time. One of the members took his boat out on the water with all the kids and even let me take the wheel for a time. We sat around the campfire on Saturday night, ate a wonderful meal, and played games throughout the week, but the one thing Abby was truly fixed on was riding in the boat and going fishing.

This was the first time Abby had ever been in a boat and I have to admit that I was a little nervous about what her reaction would be. I love the water, I grew up swimming in farm ponds and in the ocean. I learned how to row a canoe and sail on Dawson's Creek, a small saltwater creek around the camp. Patti, on the other hand, hates boats and hates water where she cannot see the bottom. She is not very fond of fish and does not like the feel of lake or ocean water. She says it feels slimy.

That day I wondered how Abby would feel, would she be like me or like her mother. True to form Abby took the matter in her own hands, jumped right in the boat, and laughed and screamed with joy as we raced across the water. She even jumped in the creek to swim. As I watched her I had to wonder, what had I been so worried about? Even at that young age Abby understood that new experiences are nothing to be afraid of. In fact, you may enjoy them. She was fearless as a child, always talking to new people wherever we went, wanting to go climb trees or try zip-lining. Some of these experiences were wonderful and some we would never do again, but we always had an adventure.

I think that ministry and mission are other examples of experiences where it is better to bravely try something new. We all like to be cautious and pick our timing, but we have to be careful that the timing does not pick us. If we sit and wait we miss the experience of total immersion, the wonderful feeling of God's grace literally filling every pore and working through us for the good of the church. Sometimes this means taking risks, making changes, and doing something we have never done before. Not everything we try succeeds, but when they do they become new avenues for the church to grow and expand its commitment to God.

In the next few weeks jump into the ministry of First Christian Church. Take part in our Bible Studies, if you are not coming already, try a Sunday School class, go to a retreat, come to our youth and children's groups, invite one of your coworkers or neighbors to a worship service, attend a committee meeting and hear about the work they accomplish. Become a part of the mission of the church and you will feel the Holy Spirit filling you and calling you to a new commitment to God. Amen.

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, September 23**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

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

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

CHURCH CALENDAR

- Sept. 22 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Sept. 23 10 am Women's Bible Study
- Sept. 26 9:30 am Children's Sabbath
- Sept. 27 10:30 am Quilters
- Sept. 29 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Sept. 30 10 am Women's Bible Study
- Oct. 4 10:30 am Quilters
- Oct. 6 6 pm Men's Group
Phoebe Circle
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Oct. 7 10 am Women's Bible Study
- Oct. 11 9:30 am Esther Circle
10:30 am Quilters
5 pm Conveners' Meeting
- Oct. 12 6 pm Elders' Meeting
- Oct. 13 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Oct. 14 10 am Women's Bible Study

2021 DISCIPLES WOMEN FALL RETREAT

September 24-26, 2021

Rolling Hills Conference Center

521 County Road 304, Calera, AL

Theme: WonderFull World

Resource Leader: Rev. Ayanna L Garrett,

Associate Dean of Student Life

at Christian Theological Seminary

Register online at www.alnwildisciples.org/womens-retreat-registration or with forms from the retreat display in the church narthex. Contact Mary Ann Anderson at or for more information.



**SHORT TERM
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**

REGIONAL PRAYER REQUESTS
First Christian Church, Pensacola, AL

CONGRATULATIONS to Andy & Caroline Herron, and big sister & big brother, on the birth of on September

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12
Service: NR Small Groups: 23

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.



October Birthdays



Not Published Online



THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET is in honor of Jackie Voliniski's birthday by Ron Volinski.

2021 SPECIAL OFFERING

The annual Reconciliation Ministry Special Offering will be received on September 26th and October 3rd.

Reconciliation Ministry is the church wide mission fund which supports programs and program partners that enable full human flourishing for everyone in every community. We believe that the Christian Church (Disciple of Christ) is uniquely equipped to encourage racial equity and justice in the communities where we worship and serve. Your gifts to Reconciliation Ministry promote our mission of creating a just and loving society.

Your generosity has supported our ability to provide grant awards to Bethany College's Equity Community Guide, Diversity Audit and the Region of Greater Kansas City's Becoming Beloved Community Program, as well as denominationally-sponsored educational events such as Facing Brokenness and Love is an Action Word webinars. Within the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region, your generosity supports the Anti-Racism Ministry, providing leadership training and other resources such as the "Voices from the Community" video series and discussion guide.

The prophet Isaiah reminds us that God's salvation is for ALL of us. The scripture in Isaiah 56:1 reads, "This is what the LORD says: "Maintain justice and do what is right, for my salvation is close at hand and my righteousness will soon be revealed." We all have a role in revealing God's justice. It is our call as the community of faith, the body of believers, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Your giving promotes our capacity to respond and to reveal God's love and justice in such a time as this!

You can note "Reconciliation Offering" for any amount, whatever your preferred method of donating to Huntsville First Christian Church. Half of your gifts to this special offering stay within the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region.

Please give generously.

WORK LEFT UNDONE

by John Edgerton

Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider how you have fared... You have looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I blew it away. Why?" says the Lord of hosts. "Because my house lies in ruins, while all of you hurry off to your own houses."

- Haggai 1:7-9 (NRSV)

The book of Haggai is about what to do when high hopes are dashed.

The faithful had long prayed for an end to their exile. And when it came, it was so sudden it was hard to believe. But soon, troubles found them again. Their hopes for a season of joy and rebirth were scattered by a dose of reality. Their hearts were broken. Why was this happening?

God explained: the people were not yet finished working. They had counted their homecoming as complete before that was really true. Because the building of the Temple - the most important work of all - was left unfinished. "Finish the work" God said, "only then can your hopes flourish." The people were weary, but God strengthened them.

I write this as Covid-19 is making a huge resurgence. Across the country, school plans and church plans and family plans are all up in the air again. Hopes for a season of joy and rebirth are being scattered. I think of all we have been through, and my heart breaks. Why is this happening?

Then I remember the prophet Haggai. And I know that the work of caring for the vulnerable - the most important work of all - is left unfinished. And with a sigh full of deep understanding, I hear a voice. "Finish the work" God says, "only then can your hope flourish."

Prayer

God, we are weary. Give us the strength to do what must be done.

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.

TRUE GREATNESS

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV

Sermon Sept. 5, 2021

Scripture Verses:

Mark 9: 30-37

Football season has begun again and it shows at the Allen house. My wife has already told me that she does not appreciate being a football widow and my free time is filled with games I would like to watch but may not have time for.

One of the things that fascinates me about Football, about any sport really, is the constant arguments over rankings. In college it is the BCS and the constant complaint about the fairness or unfairness of the system, even with a playoff. In the NFL your ranking is based off wins and losses but in the case of ties it comes down to division wins, league wins, and then points scored. Never mind discussions about who is the best quarterback, running back, receiver, etc. those run forever. Every sports fan has an opinion and they usually can defend their opinion rigorously.

Really, that is the way it is in our society as a whole. We constantly debate greatness be it sports teams, political parties, singers, actors, anyone and everyone with influence. Just look at reality shows like America's Got Talent or American Idol. They all have opportunities for their viewers to vote on their favorites and millions do. We are obsessed with who and what is the best, but sometimes we forget what is best for us is not necessarily what is best for others.

Who is the greatest? This is the same question that the disciples were discussing on their way to Capernaum. Notice that this conversation occurs immediately after Peter's confession that Jesus was the Messiah. This is the central point of Mark's gospel, a change of idea and action that moves the story of Jesus forward to the crucifixion and resurrection.

It is after Peter's confession that Jesus begins to explain the true nature of greatness. It is not about position or possessions, but being a servant to all. Jesus is the image of this servant leadership and its ultimate expression is his death on the cross for the sake of the world.

The scripture lesson for today is the second time that Jesus predicts the passion. When the disciples heard Jesus' words they were silent, they simply did not know how, or perhaps were afraid to, to respond.

It is telling that the disciples, who had walked with Jesus and shared his fame and infamy, were afraid to ask questions about such a critical statement. They simply did not believe that this could happen so they didn't talk about it and moved to another topic, out of Jesus' earshot, that they felt comfortable with; who would be the greatest among them in the coming Kingdom?

When they arrived at Capernaum the disciples were surprised when Jesus brought up their argument. The word for argument in Greek used in this passage implies private remarks that are not intended to be overheard. The disciples were talking about something they did not want Jesus to know about and so they were embarrassed and once again refused to answer.

It is only human to want to understand where you fit in the scheme of things, to find out where you rank amongst your peers? Who does not wonder this? Even ministers do it. When we get together we often talk about how our churches are going, but what we really want to know is how many members do you have now, what new projects are beginning, how many youth do you have. In our own way we are trying to measure the health and success of our church and our ministry compared to others.

Who was the greatest apostle? All of the disciples had been given the authority to preach, teach, and heal in the name of Christ and they succeeded, but there was no real leader among them, no one that stood out, and no one that truly understood what Jesus was doing

If this argument is so human and so natural, why were the disciples embarrassed? Because they realized the difference between Jesus' self-denial and their own desire for power. They did not follow Jesus to serve others, only to serve themselves.

Now their leader was telling them that he was going to suffer and die and this shattered their illusions so they found ways to pick up the pieces. Who would lead after Jesus was gone, who would continue the struggle, who was going to be in charge? They all made a case for themselves.

It is easy to deride the disciples for their lack of faith, but we ask these same questions. According to Lamar Williamson, Jr., "The question of true greatness lies at the heart of international politics

Greatness continued page 4...

...**Greatness** continued.

and rivalry, social struggles over pecking order and pay scales, competitive sports, relationships between and within families, and tensions among and within churches.”

We assume that greatness is measured by strength, prowess, military might, money, fame, power, those things that enable us to gratify our desires and impose our will upon others. When we achieve these goals we call this success. But Jesus measures greatness not by success but by service.

He sat down in the position of a teacher, called the disciples around him and said, “Whoever wants to be first must be last and servant of all.” This flew in the face of everything that the disciples, and we, have been taught about success. A servant, a slave, the lowest of the low. Who wants to be compared to that?

Their confusion must have been evident so Jesus reiterated the idea with a simple parable. He asked a child to stand among them and said, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not me but the one who sent me.”

In our culture this does not seem odd; we value children, call them our future, advance their education, and safeguard their health. However in antiquity children were on the lowest rung of the societal ladder. Childhood was a struggle to survive; 1/3 of births ended in the death of the child or the mother because of disease and bad hygiene, 2/3 of children died before the age of 16, children had no rights, no voice and could even be sold to repay a debt.

By using a child as a symbol of his ministry Jesus identified himself as the lowliest, the least, the servant of all and he called the disciples, and us, to follow in his footsteps, to humbly serve, to think not of our own success but of the well-being of others. Jesus calls us to become servant leaders.

Often we are so immersed within the values of our culture that we seldom feel the bite of Jesus’ words. We are simply not interested in outcasts especially in a society where rank and stature are of primary importance. We victimize the powerless using their efforts to make our lives easier.

We are energized by the need to be great and the need to succeed, but when it comes to serving others we have all kinds of excuses. We do not have the

time or the energy, or those who receive our help will misuse what we give them. It is easy to shut our eyes and see what we want to see, never thinking about the world beyond us.

But whenever we attempt to do this, Jesus is there, challenging us, putting his arms around the afflicted and saying, “Whoever welcomes this person in my name not only welcomes me, but the one who sent me.”

As Christians we are called to seek out the nameless and the faceless, to welcome the disenfranchised, and give voice to those who cannot speak for themselves. We are called to reach out in mission, not trying to impose our culture on other societies, but by sharing our knowledge, providing resources, and seeking to build relationships. When we welcome people as family, treat them with love and respect, and show them that they have a place in our community we are welcoming Christ, we are welcoming God into our lives, and we are living out our call to faith.

Jesus calls us to remove the barriers that hinder us from welcoming everyone to become a part of our faith and becoming a vital part of the Body of Christ. In doing so we not only help others but we promote the ministry of Christ and remind the world that he lived, died, and was resurrected for all people. This is good news that must be shared in word and in deed, Amen.



ECM’s Miss Mary Scarecrow
Botanical Garden Scarecrow Trail