



WAITING FOR RENEWAL

I was once told that you can tell how busy a person is by the ink on their calendar. If that is the case then most of the people that I know are incredibly busy. It seems as if the season of fall is always labor intensive not only in our community but in the church as well. The air gets cooler and so projects that were put off during the heat of summer are now taken up again. Harvest time is approaching, school is in full swing, and businesses look ahead to the rush of October, November and December.

Some people believe that fall is depressing. Plants become dormant or are killed with the first frost, leaves fall from the trees, and the air seems to hold a chill that speaks to the coming of winter. This is in direct contrast to the explosion of new growth that we find in spring or the warmth and freedom we experience in summer.

But for many, the fall brings a sense of renewal. The busyness of the season signals hope for the future like seeds that are prepared for the coming cycle of growth. We look forward to celebrating Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the New Year, holidays that bring friends and families together and focus on the blessings that we have received in the past and those we can share with others in the future.

In Chapter 40 of the Old Testament book of Isaiah, the prophet seeks to console the Israelites during the Babylonian Exile. The exiles had lost everything; their country, their pride, their homes, and their temple, the center of their faith, and they believed they were abandoned by God. Isaiah comforts them with words that provide hope for the future. In verse 31, he states that "...those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

Isaiah was confident that God would never desert God's people, rather strength and courage would be provided to overcome all obstacles in the course of time. The key word in this scripture is "wait", renewal may not come in our time, instead it must come in God's time when we as individuals and as a community need it the most.

Even in the busiest and most challenging of seasons renewal can be found if we focus on what is truly important, pray for strength, and remember that we are not alone no matter what occurs. We can always turn to our Church family and to our God who challenges but never deserts us.

Thanks be to God, Amen.

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, October 7**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

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

AV VOLUNTEERS

The Audio Visual team is looking for volunteers to help with the Sunday service. Since we are now live streaming, recording and using slides during our services this takes more assistance. We need volunteers to help with the slides and with the camera. No skills are necessary as training will be provided. We are asking for volunteers to be available one Sunday a month. If you are interested please contact the church office at office@fcc-hsv.org or 256-881-0150).



SHORT TERM PRAYER CONCERNS



Not Published Online

CHURCH CALENDAR

- 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
- Oct. 18 10:30 am Quilters
- Oct. 20 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Oct. 21 10 am Women's Bible Study
- Oct. 24 5 - 6 pm Trunk or Treat
5:30 & 6:15 pm Movie:
*It's the Great Pumpkin
Charlie Brown*



CONDOLENCES to the family of Candy Marbrey, sister of Jill Hall, who passed on September 27.

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



THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET is in honor of our Pastors by Marie Bittle.

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE SUNDAY, OCTOBER 3
Service: 53
Small Groups: 17

REGIONAL PRAYER REQUESTS
First Christian Church
Robertsdale, AL



COMMUNITY OUTREACH IN OCTOBER

Our sister Disciples of Christ church in Huntsville, Grateful Life Community Church, provides ministry, food, clothing, tent housing, blankets, reading glasses, bikes, over-the-counter medicines, and toiletries to those within our community who have little in the way of material goods. Also, at this time, Grateful Life's van needs repair. In October, please give generously your monetary donations that may be used for these purposes. Make your check to FCC with 'Grateful Life' in the memo line.

Thank you,
Mary Ann Anderson

SUPPORT THE CWM OCTOBER PROJECT

The Christian Women's Ministry's community project for October is support for the Neaves-Davis Center for Children. The Neaves-Davis Center houses juvenile court intake and probation services, detention services, community service programs, and the community placement and supervision program. Additional programs for detained juveniles include food services, medical services, recreational services, and library services. Religious services and activities are also provided, partially funded through community religious groups and civic organizations.

Please join CWM in supporting this worthy service. You may include your donation with your church offering by noting "Neaves-Davis Center" and the amount.

Thank you,
Janet Sholes

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. www.theknot.com/us/audrey-eckart-and-stan-ball-oct-2021



LONG TERM PRAYER CONCERNS

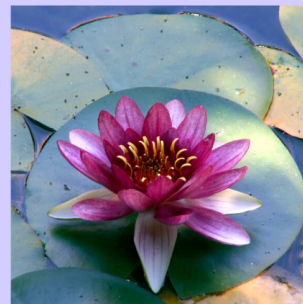


Not Published Online

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 lists.



The Vine Pastoral Counseling Center



We are available for telephone or video conference counseling sessions. Call our office today to schedule your session.

256-270-7399

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
Philippians 4:13

WHEN ALL IS LOST

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV Sermon Sept. 5, 2021

Scripture Verses: Job 1: 1; 2: 1-10

Have you ever lost everything? Have you lost a loved one? Have you suffered? Where was God in your suffering? Questions like this come up when we read the Book of Job.

Many people, even today, look at faith and ask: "What's in it for me?" Such folks often reduce God to a cosmic genie, and demand that God give them everything they ask for. Do you need a parking spot close to the store? No problem, pray and an empty space is waiting for you when you arrive. Do you need an A+ on your final exam? It does not matter that you didn't study the material, just pray and magically God will give you that A+. Are your sick? Pray for healing and God will heal you.

Such a view of God and prayer operates with the age-old belief that: If you are a righteous person, God will protect and reward you throughout your lifetime. But, if you are a sinner or an unbeliever, then God will punish you and afflict you with all kinds of suffering.

I remember reading an article by Chaplain Stephen Webster, who was in Europe during World War II. It was an angry article called "Who Gets the Breaks in Prayer?" He told his readers that he was fed up with all the stories of miraculous rescues at sea and deliverances from rafts adrift in the North Atlantic; deliverances attributed by people to God in response to their great faith.

Such incidents fostered the idea that if only we are good and say our prayers, God will never let us down. God will look after us and do precisely what we ask God to do. Chaplain Webster wanted to tell the stories of the good men and women he knew who were not rescued. They prayed and they had faith, but they were not miraculously plucked from danger. They died, but were still full of faith and trust.

The book of Job reminds us of the dangers of believing in a God who rewards piety and virtue with prosperity and success. This is a popular God in America today. Millions of people base their whole belief system on the thought that if you think positively, wear a winning smile, show your religion publicly, and tell people how much Jesus has given

to you then you will be a success, have peace of mind and you will be spared all of life's painful experiences.

But a faith that is rooted in selfishness cannot stand the test of time. The idea keeps cropping up, but that's because of who we are as human beings. We always want to know, "What's in this for me?" We will always be tempted to oversimplify God and our faith.

The Book of Job was written to debunk such an oversimplified view of God. God is far more complicated than we can imagine, and so is faith. God, in addition to being close to us, is also the Wholly Other God, the Transcendent One who is shrouded in mystery and far beyond our comprehension. Faith is complex too. Faithful people know that life is full of change, joy and hardships. Yes, there are mountaintop experiences that fill us with hope. However, there are also journeys into dark valleys of despair, doubt and suffering. Life is full of paradoxes and our experiences draws us closer to Christ; and give us compassion towards others who face their own difficulties.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the story of Job it is the classic tale of a blameless man who undergoes great suffering and simply asks the question, why? The story is told creatively. Job has everything, a wonderful family, money, power, land, respect, all those things we desperately want. He is also devout, a caring friend, the kind of person we would like to be.

Satan, the great deceiver, challenges God by stating that the only reason Job is faithful is because of the good things he has. So God takes this challenge and then takes everything away from Job. His land, his animals, his power, his family, even his health are swept away and he is literally left sitting in rags on a dug heap, his face in his hands, mourning the loss of his children, and wondering, what happened.

Job's friends try to comfort him but, like his wife, they also attempt to get Job to admit that he caused his suffering in some way. In their minds, God was punishing Job for some fault. They believed that if Job repented perhaps God would relent. But he is adamant; he had done nothing to deserve this.

...**Lost** continued

Throughout his torment Job asked, begged, and finally demanded that God answer his question. Why am I suffering, why must the good, those who believe, those who do the right things, those who have faith, suffer? Why do bad things happen to good people?

And God responds. In the mist of the whirlwind, the elemental forces of the world, the power and majesty of the great Creator, Job's demand is met. But the question is never answered directly.

Instead God challenges Job, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth, where were you in the midst of creation. Who are you to question the plans of God?"

This response does not exactly bring comfort; instead it is a dose of reality. Without darkness there can be no light, without an understanding of sin there can be no salvation, without pain, suffering and loss there can be no joy, no compassion, and no hope. God reminds Job that the nature of the world is still a mystery to us, and that we are not meant to know everything, but in the midst of all this God still cares for us. God cared enough for Job to answer even if the answer was not what he wanted.

C.S. Lewis was once asked, "Why do the righteous suffer?" "Why not?" he replied. "They're the only ones who can take it." But when he stopped lecturing about suffering and faced the real-life suffering of his own wife, he wrote these poignant words: "No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid. There is a sort of invisible blanket between the world and me. I find it hard to take in what anyone says. It is so uninteresting. Yet I want others to be about me. I dread the moments when the house is empty. If only they would talk to one another and not to me."

Lewis estimated that 4/5ths of suffering can be chalked up to human sin. A gun fired in anger, drugs peddled to children, fear, greed and anger. And it's not just that we make a bad choice or two. We are flawed. Why do bad things happen to good people? Maybe we overestimate our goodness a little.

Plenty of disasters, and even some diseases, can be traced to a mingling of human ingenuity and human fallibility. Our bodies are fallible; too, composed of strong or weak muscles and tissue, our bodies break down and fail at uncertain rates. Our physical forms were not meant to last.

And yet, when someone close to us dies nothing can be more personal. James Russell Lowell, after the death of his own child wrote, "Console if you will, I can bear it; 'tis a well-meant alms of breath; but not all the preaching since Adam has made death other than death."

Job's pain cannot be discounted and neither can ours. Elie Wiesel imagined Job, surviving his catastrophe, hurling a barb at God; "Very well, I forgive you, but what about my dead children? Do they forgive you?"

The Bible doesn't explain suffering. But in the Bible, people frequently cry out in agony, storming heaven with their protests. Maybe we need more of this defiant spirit in order to be faithful, to never stop being outraged at what is evil and never stop resisting. In Job, God answers in a whirlwind. In the New Testament, Jesus answers on a cross with His life, His blood, and His love. Jesus knew suffering, he lost those who were close to him, he felt all the hurt, all the pain, all the tears, the agony, the emptiness, the loneliness, and still he embraced us. And God refuses to leave us alone. Somehow God embraces, ennobles, and redeems our suffering. Here is the beauty, the power of the Christian faith. Jesus is there when we are hurt. He is the first to suffer with us and the first to offer comfort.

So what can we do? How can we help others? What do we say about the evil in ourselves or in our world? First of all, we can be there for people. Not like Job's friends, with poorly thought out platitudes, but we can be present and honest with those who have lost everything. And I believe that when we are there, together, we'll discover that God is there, in our midst comforting those who are suffering.

We can continue to fight for what is good and just, never bowing down to what we think is inevitable or the nature of the world. We can be reconciled with our brothers and sisters, work for the unity of the church, and share the good news that we

...**Lost** continued

find at the communion table and in our hearts. We are called to love, to care for one another, to sacrifice for the good of others, and to respond in times of crisis.

We can be the church, leaning on each other, and facing soul wrenching problems with the understanding that we are not alone. When all is lost, we are the reminder that God's love can never be taken away. We become a part of Christ's presence, and in doing so, we make a difference, Amen.

SUCH A TIME By Jennifer Brownell

"For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this." Esther 4:14 NRSV

"I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo. "So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us." - J. R. R. Tolkien

Perhaps you are daunted by the complexity of the issues facing us at the moment. Perhaps you wonder how you, one person, can make a difference. Perhaps you feel constrained by personal or political circumstances that seem to make it impossible for you to speak up or act out. Perhaps you are frightened, or weary, or despairing. Perhaps you are here for such a time as this anyway.

Esther was one of the king's wives, but the law forbade her from speaking to him. Raising her voice against the oppression of her people should have been dangerous. But her uncle both challenged and encouraged her with the words from today's scripture. Perhaps you are who you are and where you are for such a time as this, he said.

Do you hear his voice? It's still echoing, still challenging, still calling in and calling out. You – Who me? Yes you! – are exactly where and when you need to be. We do not choose the times into which we are born. But, like Esther, we can choose what we do with them.

Prayer - Holy God: We are here, now. Use us, we pray. Amen.

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

