



The Journey

Volume XXIX No. 43
October 25, 2021
www.fcc-hsv.org

FOLLOWING THE PATH

This year at church camp part of our curriculum was a discussion on spiritual disciplines. One of the disciplines that we shared with our middle school campers was the use of a labyrinth. For those of you who have never had this experience, walking a labyrinth is an ancient practice used for spiritual centering, contemplation, and prayer. Entering the path of a labyrinth, you walk slowly while quieting your mind and focusing on a scripture passage, spiritual question, or prayer. A labyrinth is not a maze. It has only one path to the center. The path twists and turns back on itself many times before reaching the center but once at the center, there is only one way back out.

We used tape to create a labyrinth on the floor of our meeting hall, we also gave out finger labyrinths and some of the women in our church made for the youth, and we even used the portable labyrinth offered by the Regional Office. It was wonderful to see the youth take to this practice in different ways. Some were silly and some were reverent, but they were all silent as they made their journey, letting others take the time to find their spiritual center.

For most of us, our lives are more like a maze than a labyrinth. There are twists and turns and often we have to retrace our steps to get back on the right path. One of the blessings of being a part of a community like First Christian Church is that we do not have to take this journey alone. If we find that we are lost, there are people around us who care enough to help us find our way and walk with us in difficult times. With Christ as our guide, and the support of fellow members, even the complicated maze of life can be traversed, if we let God lead.

In the next few weeks, we have an opportunity to talk about stewardship within the church family, using our gifts and talents for the glory of God. We are called to be good stewards all the time, not just on Sunday morning. When it comes to money, we must use it wisely, in a way that will honor God and help our community. However, stewardship is not just about money. It is also about time, talents, resources, and how they are all used to support one another and build the Kingdom of God.

One of the keys of stewardship is trust in our Creator. We believe that God loves and cares for us, that God will always be with us, and when we feel lost and alone, God is there to provide direction, purpose, and hope. Perhaps you know friends or neighbors that feel as if they are alone. If so, invite them to church or one of our small group studies. Invite one of your coworkers to our special services. Let the young people in your life know about the children's programs we offer. Let us take the journey of faith together sharing the loving spirit of community we have found with others and with God. Amen.

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, October 28**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

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



November Birthdays



SHORT TERM PRAYER CONCERNS



Not Published Online

Not Published Online

CHURCH CALENDAR

- Oct. 25 10:30 am Quilters
- Oct. 27 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Oct. 28 10 am Women's Bible Study
- Nov. 1 10:30 am Quilters
- Nov. 3 6 pm Men's Group
Phoebe Circle
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Nov. 4 6 pm Board Meeting
- Nov. 7 9:30 am All Saints Sunday
- Nov. 8 9:30 am Esther Circle
10:30 am Quilters
5 pm Conveners' Meeting
- Nov. 9 6 pm Elders' Meeting
- Nov 10 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Nov. 11 **Veterans Day - Office Closed**

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
Florence, AL

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR AGAIN!!!

No, we're not talking about Halloween, but time for our yearly Stewardship Campaign! Over the next 4 weeks (October 17 - November 14) we will be talking about giving, focusing on the 3 T's: Time, Talent and Treasure. A Stewardship Moment will follow each of Pastor Paul's sermons during this time, where you will hear testimonials from members of the congregation. Each Stewardship Moment will focus on a different aspect of giving.

In addition to the weekly Stewardship Moments be looking for the Stewardship Letter in your mailboxes and email inboxes. Additional material will be available on FCC HSV social media outlets.

Please start thinking and praying about your personal stewardship journey for this year. Pledge cards will be coming out soon.

If you have any questions, please see Bob Senn, Kyle Love or Carrie German Love, who are serving as your co-chairs for the stewardship committee this year.

GIVING STATEMENTS AVAILABLE

Third Quarter Giving Statements are available in the Narthex on Sunday and in the Church Office during the week. If you are not comfortable coming to the church in-person, call or email the office (256-881-0150 or office@fcc-hsv.org) and we will email you a copy of your statement. Questions? Call 256-881-0150.

CONGRATULATIONS to Jordan

& Kelsi Green, big sister Scarlett, and proud grandparents Rick & Kay Shrou, on the birth of Clara Mae Green on October X.



Thank you ...

I've always appreciated our church family for its loving kindness, and I've definitely experienced it fully in the last few weeks. All your thoughts, prayers, and actions have helped bring me to this point in healing and recovery. With love and gratitude,

Mary Ann Anderson

SENIOR ADULT RETREAT

November 4 - 5, 2021

The Senior Adult Cabinet is planning for its annual Senior Adult Retreat on November 4-5, 2021, at Rolling Hills Retreat Center in Calera, Alabama. The theme of the retreat is "Celebrate Life!" and the keynoters will be **Rev. Dale and Mrs. Mercedes Braxton**. All who consider themselves to be senior adults in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region are encouraged to be a part of this retreat.

The Rolling Hills Retreat Center offers a lodge with motel-type rooms (with sheets, towels, pillows) and an adjacent meeting space where all meals will be served. The retreat begins just prior to lunch on Thursday, November 4, and will conclude by 1:30 p.m. on Friday, November 5. You may download a flyer and registration form [HERE](#) and you may also register on-line [HERE](#).

MISSION FAMILY 4 is pleased to invite you to an all-church Baby Shower for Brandon and Sharifa Love-Rutledge on Sunday, November 14, at 1:00 p.m. in the Commons area of the church. For the protection of the expectant mom, attendees are asked to wear masks. Fun and games will be had by all. The couple is registered at Target and babylist.com (Rutledge).

For questions, contact Roberta Shivers at -----

Please enter through the sanctuary door.



WORSHIP ATTENDANCE SUNDAY, OCTOBER 17

Service: 69

Small Groups: 17



THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET is in honor of Seb Sholes 4th birthday by Bill & Janet Sholes; and in honor of the October 29th wedding of Stan Ball & Audrey Eckart by Matt & Karen Ball.

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,
Carrie German Love

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

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)

Seeing With Your Heart

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV Sermon Oct. 24 2021
Scripture Verses: Mark 10: 46-52

I come from a family where we all wear glasses, so when I was young and was told that I needed to wear them, it seemed natural. My parents wore them, my grandparents wore them, as did my uncles, aunts, and cousins, why shouldn't I. This all changed when I was in High School and my Ophthalmologist told me that I was legally blind without my glasses. For some reason, this pronouncement took me by surprise. My prescription had just changed again and I now had to get special lenses so that my glasses would not look and feel like coke bottles.

It was the first time that I ever considered the fact that I might lose my sight. What would happen if glasses could no longer correct the multitude of problems I had with my eyes?

Then I heard of a simple procedure that could fix my problems. I researched the surgery and found that my prescription was too difficult to be corrected at that time. However, in a few years, the surgery had progressed to the point where my prescription could be corrected. Again, after a little research, and a lot of help and support from my family, I decided to have it done.

Yet, even after all the investigation, the night before the surgery I was terrified. What if something went wrong? What if I could no longer see, or the surgery made my eyesight even worse. Worst of all, what if the surgery worked, but then my sight degraded again quickly. I did not think I could take the pain of gaining my sight and then losing it.

I am not claiming to know the fear and the hope for a cure that those who are totally blind know every day, and I would not equate my own experience with theirs. But I wonder when Bartimaeus heard that Jesus was coming to Jericho, did he feel the same kind of fear and anticipation?

Did he know that this man could cure his illness, was this just one more desperate hope, or did Bartimaeus know that Jesus was different?

The crowd in Jericho thought that Jesus was something special. He was leaving the city with his disciples with a large crowd following. We do not know what happened in Jericho to make this crowd so excited. Perhaps, like the disciples, they believed that Jesus was the warrior king that would lead them in a revolt against the Romans and cleanse the temple of Roman influence.

This may be why they tried to silence Bartimaeus as he shouted. "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. By calling Jesus the son of David, Bartimaeus was publicly stating that Jesus was the King of the Jews. This could be seen as an act of treason and while the people of Jericho were willing to follow Jesus they were not willing to risk the wrath of the authorities at this time.

This is the first time in the gospel of Mark that anyone publicly declares Jesus the King of the Jews. It should have been a time of awakening, a time for the disciples to realize who they followed. Instead, they tried to silence the lone voice that recognized Christ.

Bartimaeus had to call for Jesus twice before he stopped and turned to address him. Bring him here, Jesus said, and the people around the blind man told him to take heart for Jesus was calling him. Could this mean that the crowd also expected Jesus to heal him? After all, Jesus' fame had spread throughout the area. His reputation as a healer and truth-teller preceded him.

We are told that Bartimaeus sprang from the ground, tore off his cloak, and ran to Jesus. He simply could not wait to reach this man who might have the key to his healing. What do you want me to do for you? Jesus asks. This is the same question that he asked James and John in last week's gospel lesson when they wanted to sit on his left and right-hand side when he ruled.

Yet, the answer to this question is very different. Bartimaeus did not want power or prestige, he simply answered, my teacher, let me see again. And it happened, it simply happened. There was no flash of lightning, no thunder, no earthquake, Bartimaeus was healed.

Jesus then told him what he told so many others after they had been healed, go, your faith has made you well. But, Bartimaeus did not go. He stayed and followed Jesus. It would have been very easy for Bartimaeus to start a new life, forgetting that moment of power and mystery that caused his sight to return, and focusing on his new life.

Yet, he did not. He chose to follow, to risk his life, to be a believer in Christ. A sightless man, shunned by society, was one of the first to understand the true nature of Jesus.

He became a part of something larger than himself, he found his ministry. As we continue to talk about Stewardship, how we use the gift and resources that God provides for us, we have to understand that Stewardship of any kind should lead to ministry. Why do we give to the church, so that the work of Christ can be done in the world?

We are all called to our own ministry, we are all members of the priesthood of all believers with Christ as the great high priest. In the world we live in ministry takes courage because our way of life is not the cultural norm. And so we put aside our fear and we move forward, sharing the good news, treating others with kindness and compassion, and spreading the ethic of love.

H. Bartimaeus knew about living with fear. He knew about a lack of sight firsthand, yet he conquered his fear; his fear of approaching Jesus, his fear that Christ could not return his sight, his fear that he would be rejected; and relied on his faith. Faith that God would not abandon him, faith that what he said about Christ was real, and faith that God would protect him even if he followed Jesus into danger.

Needless to say, my surgery went very well. I remember the day after the surgery waking up in the morning and seeing the numbers on my alarm clock clearly for the first time without glasses.

The fear that my eyesight would continue to get worse faded in time and now I almost take my sight for granted. Every once in and awhile I wake up and fumble around on my nightstand to find my glasses, and then I realize that I do not need them anymore.

The fear that I felt the night before the surgery was replaced by a sense of wonder. It was not a miracle, yet I regained my sight.

In our way we all live with fear. Some fears connect humanity, the fear of war, losing family members or friends, or contracting a fatal disease. Other fears are more personal, such as my fear of losing my sight, financial burdens, jobs, school, keeping friendships, or finding our way in the world.

What we fear is not as important as how we deal with our fear. Fear can paralyze us, causing us to lose hope for the future. Fear can shut us away from the rest of society making us slaves to the imagined horrors in our heads.

When Hellen Keller was asked “Isn’t it terrible to be blind?” she answered, “Better to be blind and see with your heart than to have two good eyes and see nothing.”

Bartimaeus looked past his fear on that day long ago and saw with his heart. His courage allowed him to become a part of something special, an event that would change the world. It led him to his calling and to his own ministry. Let us all go forward without fear, seeing with our hearts, and calling Jesus by name, Amen.

A THANK YOU NOTE

FCC,

Thank you so much for the prayers, calls, cards, and food after losing Jill’s sister, Candy. It’s times like these that the support of church family helps us to make this difficult journey easier.

Thank you, John & Jill

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



THE DOORWAY

By Martha Spong

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. John 13:1 (NRSV)

Jesus gathered the disciples for a dinner we have come to call the Last Supper, a story we tell every time we gather for Communion. We ritualize the different events in John's Gospel on Maundy Thursday with the washing of feet (or hands for the more cautious among us). In one version Jesus serves his followers, and in the other he serves himself to us as the bread of life and the cup of blessing.

The way we tell those stories brings us to a threshold between what was and is to come, like a doorway between memory and possibility that is right now and yet not. We tell our own stories like that. I remember my father at an airport handing me a crisp \$100 bill to take my son out to lunch. I remember his cousin, years later, making sure to sit with me at a family wedding to put me at ease. I remember eating a holiday meal with my godmother after she moved into a nursing home, an effort that cost her more than I knew. Every time I tell their stories we stand in the doorway together.

The Gospels tell us Jesus ate meals with his disciples again after the Resurrection, which makes it odd to call that Supper "Last." It gives me hope for meals to be eaten somewhere beyond the doorway, farther than I can see now, with nothing of past love lost.

Prayer

Gracious God, we thank you for love that lasts until the end and beyond. Amen.