



The Journey

Volume XXVIII No. 43
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Stewarding the Vision by Rebekah Simon-Peter

George Bullard's pivotal work, *The Life Cycle and Stages of a Congregation*, reinforces what the author of Proverbs once said, "Without a vision the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18, KJV). Turns out this proverb holds true for churches, too. Bullard demonstrates that congregational vitality hinges on one key dynamic: the maintenance and reinvention of a vitalizing vision. Programs, people and proper management aren't enough. Even money isn't enough. Without a vision, not only do people perish, but so do churches. This is especially true in the time of COVID.

I have found in the work I do with churches around the country that perhaps just one-fourth of ministries are outward-focused and designed to transform the status quo. The vast majority of ministries are inward-focused, strictly designed to comfort their members and attenders. Even as churches are coming back together, having a new vision is critical.

I fear that American Christianity has stopped daring greatly and switched to cruise control. Cruise control is great, as long as it works. But in older models of cars, as in older congregations, cruise control is not known for its durability.

I used to drive a 1995 Toyota RAV4. I loved the way it looked, felt and drove. That is, until the cruise control stopped working. In those days, the legal speed limit in Wyoming was 70 miles per hour. I would set my speed for 72, cruising paved-over prairies lined with sagebrush under the shadow of rising mountain peaks. Before long, my speed of 72 gave way to 70, then slipped down to 65 miles per hour. It was hard to tell when the cruise control first disengaged. I would think I was maintaining my speed until other vehicles appeared on the lonely highway and passed me. The same is true in older congregations. You can't stay in aging cruise control long without losing momentum. Before you know it, you've slowed down to a crawl and it's all about survival.

The survival mode isn't working for most congregations. Especially now. When faced with the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic and all its fallout, a vision is more important than ever. It reminds you that you have a say in how the future goes. That you're not just called to steward a building, or a budget, but the dreams of Jesus.

Every time I've gotten discouraged enough to consider walking away from the people who gather in his name, or from the religious community that honors him, my own waking vision of Jesus from 30 years ago reminds me that he was intentional about coming to me. Out of that profound encounter, I've developed my own Jesus-like dream, which guides my ministry. That's the power of vision. It calls you back. It reminds you why you do what you do.

When you operate without a vision, not only do you suffer, so does your community. When you refuse to exercise your right to dream like Jesus, when survival becomes more important than service, the community you serve becomes spiritually impoverished. This lack of engagement reinforces a corresponding lack of interest from the community in joining you.

Bottom line: if you find that you are just going through the motions of doing church rather than being church, of stewarding budgets and buildings rather than the dreams of Jesus, it's time to bring the miraculous back. Amen.

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, October 29**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

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

Sanctuary Service Protocols Effective November 1st

- Sanctuary services will resume on Sunday, November 1st. There will only be one 9:30 a.m. service offered for now. Virtual services will continue with live streaming and recorded services uploaded to social media platforms.
- Sunday school classes, the nursery, and youth gatherings are temporarily suspended.
- Food, coffee, and other hospitality services are also suspended.
- At this time, we encourage high risk members and families with children unable to reliably social distance are encouraged to remain home for virtual services offered on facebook.com/fcchsv, twitch.tv/fcchsv, or search First Christian Church Huntsville on youtube.com
- Attendance is limited (approximately 75) to the ability to social distance and the service will be broadcast (107.9) to the parking lot in the event of overflow attendance.
- **Attendees will wear face coverings/masks inside the church and practice social distancing (6 feet apart for non-household members) for everyone's safety.**
- Bring your own communion elements (we have pre-packaged if you forget or do not have them).
- Enter the church through the Bell Tower Garden/Narthex doors. The doors by the church office will be locked.
- Greeters will provide hand sanitizer to all who enter and provide masks for those who have not brought their own.
- Every other pew is roped off for social distancing.
- Ushers will seat people down the center/side aisles
- No choir/congregational singing.
- Following the service, rows will **leave by the side aisles** with the east aisle exiting through Family Services and west aisle through the Narthex doors. (There will be directional signs.)
- Offerings may be placed in the brass plate when exiting the sanctuary or sent by mail.
- Please, **no congregating indoors** before or after service - social distancing outdoors.
- **Anyone with any symptoms will remain home and celebrate virtually for at least 14 days.**
- **Notify the church office immediately if you develop symptoms after attending a service.**



WEEKLY PRAYER CONCERNS



Not Published Online

CONDOLENCES to the family of Jamal Groves, cousin of Sharifa Love Rutledge, who recently passed; and the family of Betty Joe Evans, aunt of Sharifa Love Rutledge, who passed on Sunday, October 25.

REGIONAL PRAYER REQUEST
First Christian Church, Tuscaloosa, AL

We are temporarily publishing, as space allows in the printed version of the *Journey*, the prayer concerns that are usually 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 and 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 memory of Steve Brown by Allison & Matthew Brown.



NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS



- 1 Cindy Allen
- 2 Judy Chaney
- 4 Debra Chandler
- 5 Melinda Blackman & Carrie Lewis
- 9 Ty Davis, Vonda Dihm, & Gary Wright
- 10 Kelsi Shrout Green, Phyllis Nicaise, Diane Pettitt, & Sunni Thompson
- 11 Sabrina Beckman & Dinah Love
- 12 Riley Beckman
- 14 Morgan Qualls
- 17 John Jordan
- 18 Ashlyn Johnson
- 20 Mack Blackman & David Browning
- 22 Iman Davis & Rob Williams
- 24 Chet May
- 25 Ann Thompson
- 26 Theresa Killough
- 27 Katherine Boles Stumb
- 28 Dottie Dale Hughes & Marilyn Martin
- 29 Jim Daniel, Emil Luft, Rick Shrout, & Jena Wright



Mission Family 4 invites all to send the Davis Family (Troy, Ty, Troy Jr., Tré, and Iman) a card shower as they pack up to join Linda in Belgium. Their departure date is November 4th so please get your cards and well wishes out to them as soon as possible.

The Davis Family
7595 Foxfire Dr SE
Huntsville 35802-2771

COMMUNITY OUTREACH IN NOVEMBER

Founded in 1954, the Harris Home for Children is a private, non-profit agency that provides full-time foster care services for neglected adolescent children in our community and around the state. It is the only emergency crisis service for children in Alabama. Harris Home provides foster care, therapeutic care, and educational services to nurture and empower its children to become capable and compassionate adults. Your monetary donations will purchase linens, household and hygiene supplies, and Christmas gift cards for the residents.



Harris Home for Children

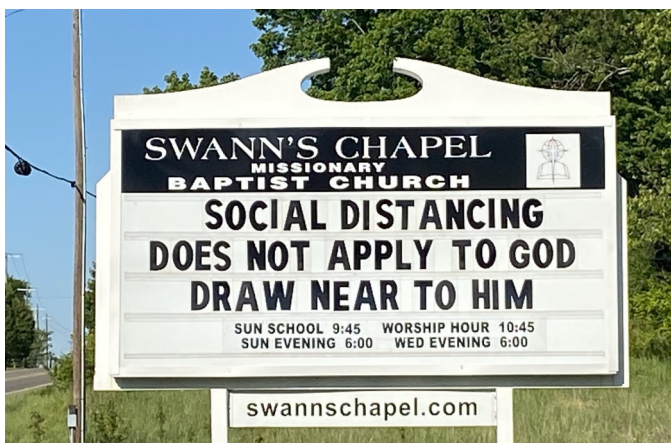
Thank you for giving!
Mary Ann Anderson

SAVE CHANGE THE DATE

The Interfaith Mission Service virtual awards event scheduled for October 27 has been postponed until November 11. Your donations to the honor conference are always welcome.

Thank you, Margaret J. Vann

Might Have To Borrow This Message...



FCC ONLINE

If you use Facebook, be sure to click Like and Follow (when you click on Follow, select See First) to keep up-to-date with church activities. www.facebook.com/fcchsv/

You may view previous sermons and other church videos on Youtube at: www.youtube.com/channel/UCzQCRY8Vfa-IDhugUnUhCKw (if you have a Youtube account, click on Subscribe and the Bell icon to get notifications when a new video is posted) or on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/pg/fcchsv/videos/ (see Facebook Like and Follow directions above.)

Dude in the Ditch by Matthew Laney

A lawyer asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. ... When a Samaritan saw him, he was moved with pity."

Luke 10:29-30 & 33 (NRSV)

As I was taught this parable while growing up in the church, I was encouraged to see myself as the priest and the Levite (the ones who pass by the beaten man) on my bad days, and to see myself as the Good Samaritan on my better days.

Now I believe that totally misses the point.

Jesus told this parable to his own people. They would not have identified with social elites like the priest or the Levite. They definitely wouldn't have identified with a despised, outcast Samaritan. His listeners would have identified with the man who was assaulted and left for dead.

Therefore, the burning question of the parable is not: "Are you willing to be like the Good Samaritan?" The parable asks a much harder question: "Are you willing to be rescued by someone you despise, someone you've been conditioned to ignore, fear, hate or reject?"

Christians already have that experience.

We were once left for dead when along came a person of a different religion, a different nationality, a different language, a person who was despised and rejected. That person stopped, poured wine into our wounds, carried us to safety, and restored us to health.

Who has been that sort of neighbor to you?

Jesus. If you have received his mercy, the same command comes: "Go and do likewise."

Prayer

Gracious God, when I asked for help, I was expecting someone like me. Thanks for sending Jesus instead.

Amen.

UPCOMING SCRIPTURES & SERMON TITLES

November 1, 2020 All Saints Sunday

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 2: 9-13
Matthew 23: 1-12

Sermon: "A Walking Sermon"

November 8, 2020

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18
Matthew 25: 1-13

Sermon: "Faithfully Waiting"

November 15, 2020

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11
Matthew 25: 14-19

Sermon: "Use Them or Lose Them"

November 22, 2020

Scripture: Ephesians 1: 15-23
Matthew 25: 31-46

Sermon: "When Did We See You?"

DRIVE IN SERVICE ATTENDANCE:

October 26 - 57

