



The Journey

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SHARING OUR TIME, TALENT, AND TREASURE

“Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received” (1 Peter 4:10).

As stewards of all that God has provided (our time, talent, and treasure), we continue to be blessed abundantly. On a daily basis, God provides for us. God gives us food, shelter, health, wealth, spiritual gifts, and the ability to use those gifts for the glory of God. Our Creator abundantly blesses and loves us providing grace and eternal life for all who look to Christ in faith. As we review all that has happened here at First Christian Church in the last few years, our hearts are challenged as we envision what God has in store for us in 2022 and beyond.

Through our annual stewardship campaign, we are asking each of you to pray for the church, but also to ask yourself what you may be able to give to the congregation in the next year. These campaigns inform our church family of the financial needs for the year ahead, share the successes of our congregation, and gives members an opportunity to respond to God’s blessings by following the Lord’s leading concerning their giving in the future.

Throughout these weeks, you will hear testimonies from members about why they support the ministry of First Christian Church. Letters and emails will be sent out providing information, opportunities to serve, and pledge cards so we can anticipate our offerings for 2022. Finally, on November 14th, we will host a “Stewardship Celebration Sunday,” where we will share in thankful anticipation of what the Lord will do for us in the future.

Our tithes and gifts are necessary to support staff salaries, operational expenses, and our church’s programs, e.g., children and youth groups, Small Group class materials for all ages, Vacation Bible School, music ministries, and worship materials. But they also allow our church to reach out in love to others through our support of local and global missions.

We give thanks for the time commitments, talents, and treasures of each member of our Church family. As we continue this time focusing on stewardship we thank you for seeking God’s direction concerning your financial support of our ministries. Prayerfully consider what we all will do to share our, “Time, Talent, and Treasure.”

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, November 4**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

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



**LONG TERM
PRAYER CONCERNS**



**SHORT TERM
PRAYER CONCERNS**



Not Published Online

Not Published Online

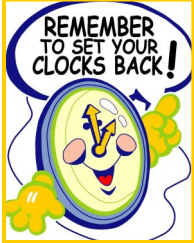
Long term prayer concerns are published once a month in the *Journey*. **Please** keep the church office informed of the status of individuals you put on the lists.

CHURCH CALENDAR

- Nov. 1 10:30 am Quilters
5 pm Conveners' Meeting
- 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
- Nov. 9 6 pm Elders' Meeting
- Nov. 10 6 pm Men's Group
- Nov. 11 **Veterans Day - Office Closed**
- Nov. 14 11:30 am Community Outreach
1:00 pm Brandon & Sharifa Love
Rutledge baby shower
- Nov. 15 4:30 pm Christian Ed. Meeting
- Nov. 21 **Thanksgiving Sunday**
- Nov. 28 9:30 am **Hanging of the Greens**
- Nov. 29 5:30 pm ECM Board Meeting

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, Tuscaloosa, AL



REMEMBER TO FALL BACK!
Remember to "fall back" by setting your clocks back one hour before going to bed on **Saturday, November 6.**

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.

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-IDhugUnUhCKw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzQCRY8Vfa-IDhugUnUhCKw)

HARRIS HOME FOR CHILDREN

NEEDS OUR HELP

The Community Outreach Committee for its November project is requesting financial donations for Harris Home for Children. This safe haven for neglected or abused children began in 1954 when Chessie Harris took a few neglected children into her small home. Through her determination to care for more children, Harris Home has grown into a larger campus to serve many more children who cannot remain with their parents. It is also the only emergency crisis service for children in the State of Alabama. Obviously, Harris Home is always in need of financial help to cover the expense of caring for the children. We can help by writing a check to FCC with Harris Home in the memo line. Thank you for caring about those in need in our community.

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 31

Service: 54
Small Groups: 29



THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET is in honor of Kelsi Shroust Green's birthday by Rick & Kay Shroust.

Heads Up!

There will be a very important Congregational Meeting concerning the 2022 Budget on Dec. 12. It will take place after the Lessons and Carols 9:30 am Worship Service. Please plan to attend.

AL and NWFL Christian Women's Ministries Regional Project

CWM's service project for November is WellHouse. Our monetary support helps to further the mission of the WellHouse, which seeks to honor God by rescuing and providing opportunities for restoration to female victims of human trafficking.

Human trafficking is a \$10 billion industry in the U.S. alone. It is the fastest growing criminal activity, second only to drug trafficking. Forty percent of human trafficking happens here in the Southeast.

The average age of entry is 12-14 years old. Eighty percent of victims are females and up to 50% are minors. There are over 2 million active runaways and all at risk of being recruited into prostitution within 48 hours of running away.

For more information check out the WellHouse website at: WWW.THE-WELLHOUSE.ORG

You can make a donation by writing your check to the church, noting "WellHouse" in the memo line. Your donation to this worthy cause is tax deductible.

Thank you for your consideration of this worthy cause,
Ruth Lackey, CWM November Service Coordinator

Hesed: The Ultimate Loving Kindness

Rev. Laura West

Sermon Oct. 31 2021

Scripture Verses:

Ruth 1:1-18

When someone says, "Let me tell you about my mother-in-law," we expect some kind of negative statement or humorous story because the mother-in-law parody has been a standard centerpiece of ridicule or comedy. The book of Ruth, however, tells a different story.

In terms of compact storytelling, Ruth is a masterpiece of narrative art. The book of Ruth is the classic love story of the Bible. Few stories in the Bible are told from a woman's viewpoint, but in the story of Ruth, not only is a woman the protagonist but the world of the story is a woman's world.

The story of Ruth occurred during one of the darkest times of the nation's history, taking place toward the end of the period of the rule of the judges. These were dark days for Israel, when "All the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes". And to top it off, the land was overtaken by famine.

We are introduced to a family and after having been introduced by their positions in the family—husband, wife, sons. Although Elimelech is named first, Naomi quickly becomes the focus of attention and other characters are named in reference to her: "Naomi's husband," "her two sons," "her daughters-in-law." The characters are introduced by names whose meanings appear to have symbolic significance and describe, to some degree, the role or the fate of the character within the story.

Because of the famine in Bethlehem, this Israelite family moves to Moab to find food. Moab was the land east of the Dead Sea. It was one of the nations that oppressed Israel during the period of the judges, so there was hostility between the two nations. The famine must have been quite severe in Israel for Elimelech to move his family there.

Naomi suffered devastating emotional losses, first with the death of her husband. Then with the death of both sons. Naomi was the last remaining person in her family. She was left without property, possessions, extended family support, and with two dependent daughters-in-law. She seemed even more destitute than she was when the family lived in Bethlehem.

Somehow Naomi had heard that there is now food in Bethlehem and must return home. Naomi sets out for the journey home, but not alone. Both of her daughters-in-law join us. They had probably gone only a short distance when Naomi urges Ruth and Orpah to return to their mothers' homes. The more prevalent term is "father's house", but the unusual formulation is appropriate because Naomi is asking the young women to return to their mothers rather than remaining with their mother-in-law.

In the book of Ruth, the expression indicates in particular Naomi's wish that her daughter-in-law would find new husbands. In their world, marriage was assumed to be the only respectable way for a woman to achieve social and economic security.

Hesed continued page 5...

...Hesed continued

Verse 8 introduces us to an important term, hesed. Literally, “deal kindly” is “do hesed.” Hesed is a Hebrew word meaning “unfailing love.” This word may be translated with a wide range of English words, including love, loyalty, mercy, kindness, faithfulness and loving kindness. The Hebrew word hesed has far more theological significance than “kindness” and is frequently used to describe God’s acts of unmerited grace and mercy. Hesed is a description of God’s covenant love, emphasizing the absolute loyalty and unwavering faithfulness of God’s love. Bound up in this “faithful love” are God’s compassion, forgiveness, and blessings. But human beings are also able to do or to show hesed to each other. To “deal kindly” (do hesed) means to demonstrate loving-kindness and loyalty that extend far beyond what the law requires, beyond anything the recipient expects or deserves to receive. Human kindness reflects the kindness (“steadfast love”) that the Lord shows to his people. According to rabbinic tradition, the main theme of Ruth is hesed, loyalty or faithfulness born of a sense of caring and commitment. All of the main characters in the book act with hesed. The story portrays Ruth and Naomi as models of hesed, that is, of loyalty and commitment that go beyond the bounds of law or duty.

After Naomi kisses Orpah and Ruth, the women all lift their voices and weep. There is some debate about whether it is only Orpah and Ruth who cry or all three. The climax of the section seems more powerful with the bonding moment in which those who have lost their husbands cry out loud.

Even in her desperate situation, Naomi had a selfless attitude. Although she had decided to return to Israel, she encouraged Ruth and Orpah to stay in Moab and start their lives over, even though this would mean hardship for her. Like Naomi, we must consider the needs of others and not just our own. As Naomi discovered, when we act selflessly, others are encouraged to follow our example.

Both daughters-in-law initially refuse to leave, and this elicits a moving plea from Naomi in which she calls Ruth and Orpah “daughters” and stresses that if she could have more sons for them to marry, she would gladly marry and bear children. But, alas, she is too old; and even if she were not, Ruth and Orpah would have to remain husbandless until these children were grown.

The Hebrew word shub (translated as “turn,” “return,” “go back,”) occurs 12 times in the first chapter. The word can refer to apostasy (turning away from God) as well as to repentance (turning back to God). So even when “turn,” or “return,” is used in a seemingly neutral (geographical) sense, it retains some of these moral overtones.

Naomi urges her daughters-in-law to turn back three times. This number corresponds to the number of times that potential converts to Judaism should be strongly discouraged. Those who persist, however, should be educated and accepted as sincere converts.

Orpah kissed Naomi farewell, even though she had promised to return with her. The character of Orpah, who is not bad but represents the norm or the expected, serves as a contrast to Ruth, who goes far beyond the norm in maintaining her loyalty.

However, Ruth clung to Naomi, an expression of loyalty and devotion, “hold fast”. The Hebrew verb used here emphasizes the

strength of Ruth’s love for her mother-in-law. Ruth’s attachment to Naomi is reminiscent of Genesis 2:24, which refers to the “clinging” of husband to wife. The connotation here is not sexual, but rather signifies Ruth’s unswerving devotion to Naomi. It’s also used to describe a person staying faithful to the Lord.

This moving plea by Ruth is among the best-known lines of the book. It expresses Ruth’s devotion and loyalty to Naomi. All that Ruth did was done for love of her mother-in-law, and for love of Naomi’s God. She made a promise on the road to Bethlehem that she was determined to keep. Ruth’s words of commitment have been immortalized over the centuries. Though it was a promise made by one woman to another, it is often quoted in wedding ceremonies as an eloquent expression of love and loyalty between spouses. But in the text Ruth expressed her affection for and commitment to Naomi. Ruth’s decision to bind herself to Naomi was ultimately based on her new faith in the God of Naomi.

Ruth offers us quite another perspective on the relationship between belief and hesed. Her impassioned speech of commitment to Naomi in chapter one, filled with its religious affirmation and divine oath, is the way in which she legitimates what she is about to do. And what she is about to do is probably the most loyal act Naomi will ever witness.

Ruth is the image of God in this story. She shows hesed to Naomi, even when Naomi resists. Relationships can be a powerful source of healing and connection and hope. At times we have the resources to provide steadfast love for others. Ruth’s loyalty to Naomi proves unshakable, and she returns to Bethlehem along with her mother-in-law. Yet Naomi never acknowledges her daughter-in-law’s fidelity. Following Ruth’s speech, she is silent.

The stories of several people in the Bible are woven together so closely that they are almost inseparable. Naomi and Ruth are a beautiful example of this blending of lives. Their cultures, family backgrounds, and ages were very different. As mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, they probably had as many opportunities for tension as for tenderness. And yet they were bound to each other. They shared deep sorrow, great affection for each other, and an overriding commitment to the God of Israel.

Ruth had no way of knowing that her way of blessing Naomi would eventually become a blessing in her own life. That’s just the divine irony of our God, who delights so much in seeing us love and bless others that he turns that love and blessing back on us in double measure. Thanks be to God!

DEAR CONGREGATION,

I am excited to tell you that we will be participating in the Christmas Charities Christmas stockings! We have 100 stockings to be filled for ages 2-10. These stockings need to be returned to the church by Nov. 28.. They are now in the Narthex . There is a list of suggested items inside each stocking. If you are unable or uncomfortable shopping for the stockings, you can send a check to the church with the amount you want to spend made out to FCC with Christmas Charities on the memo line.. We have several groups who have volunteered to shop for you. If you have questions call Cindy Burger at ----



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.

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



JOY IN THE MORNING

RACHEL HACKENBERG

Which of you desires life, and covets many days to enjoy good? O taste and see that the Lord is good. - Psalm 34:12 & 8a (NRSV)

The sounds of rain on the pavement and wind through the trees outside my window wake me up. The sun is content to bide its time this morning, waiting for the clouds to pass, which is pretty much how I feel as I draw the bedcovers closer.

The covers make the day good.

So does the pouring rain.

So does the hidden sun.

Waking up is my favorite part of the day these days, although it used to be my least favorite. With the constant hum of bad news, the brutal inclination of humanity toward violence, the inevitability of my own personal failures, and a “to do” list that seemed to stretch to the Second Coming, it used to be that greeting each new day with gratitude—let alone joy—was a stretch for my spirit. Calling a new day “good” before it even had a chance to let both shoes drop was premature, from my spirit’s perspective.

But since all those trying and terrible things weren’t likely to change any time soon—aren’t likely to change any time soon—I’ve taken to unabashedly coveting goodness first thing in the morning: Filling my lungs with the sweet scent of rain that is not mine. Savoring my heart’s desire for the sun, although its light is not within my control. Delighting in the warmth that I ache to leave and already yearn to return to. Hungering in my spirit for the goodness of God that I cannot hold or keep or command.

I taste the morning with brazen pleasure, as if life is a rare find rather than a daily rhythm. And every morning, it is good.

Prayer

My mouth is full of praise and my heart shivers with delight in your goodness, O God.