



The Journey

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CHANGE IS INEVITABLE

By now most of you have heard that I have resigned from my position as the Senior Minister of First Christian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. This does not mean that I am leaving right away, as there is much work to do to prepare the church and my family for this move. Many of you are aware of my desire to become a Regional Minister. Both of my parents were Regional Ministers, and I have been heavily involved with every Region I have been a part of in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Our denomination is at a turning point in its history, and I would like to be a part of sharing our new direction. While this work can be done in a local congregation, I believe that God is calling me to collaborate with many congregations and the General Church.

On December 9, 2023, I received a call from the Northern Lights Region to become their next Regional Minister and President. They are the newest and the largest geographical region in our denomination and their vision is still taking shape for their congregations. I will have the opportunity to develop this new region and provide resources for its members. The Regional Minister search committee and members have been compassionate and thoughtful, and the Regional Board is excited about the new possibilities for ministry we can share.

I should like to say thank you. Thank you for welcoming my family and me into the church, your families and your lives. Thank you for easing me in, realizing that I needed to make mistakes, and celebrating the successes. Thank you for treating my family as your family by helping us through some very difficult times. Most of all, thank you for sharing your gifts and letting Christ work through you. We have come through a lot together, but I believe that the church is stronger and ready for the future.

Sometimes the future can be a scary thing. I have to admit that I am nervous about starting a new position across the country. I know that there will be a learning curve, but I can only hope that the members of the Northern Lights Region will be as supportive as you have been. I also know that this church can look forward to exciting opportunities. You have wonderful staff and a strong financial foundation. You also have a vision for what you want to do and who you want to be in the coming years and one thing I know about this church is that when you set your minds to something

God has blessed us in the past seven years and you will always have a special place in my heart. Which is why this is not truly goodbye this is a see you later. I look forward to coming back to visit, hearing about the wonderful things you are doing, and seeing where God is leading you. I thought I had more time to ready myself and the church and in reality, I do, because through the love of God, the presence of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit we will always be united, and you will always be a part of my family of faith. Thank you and may God continue to bless and keep you, Amen.

The *Journey* is published on the **first and third Monday** of the month.
The **deadline** for *Journey* submissions is **9:00 a.m. Thursday, December 28**. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

3209 Whitesburg Drive, Huntsville, Alabama 35802
Telephone: 256-881-0150

**CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S MINISTRIES (CWM)
BLANKET MONTH 2024**

CWM's January service in supporting Church World Service Blanket program tells people in crisis: "You're not alone. Someone cares."



The program sends blankets to people in need all round the world. Ukraine has a special need this year. What do you do if you are cold? At home you reach for a blanket or turn up the heat.

What if you didn't have an extra blanket or no blanket at all? What if you didn't have a home because of conflict, a natural disaster, tornado, hurricane, earthquake, or flood?

Church World Service Blanket program provides blankets to those without blankets all over the world. CWM invites FCC to join us in giving blankets during the month of January. The cost of a blanket is \$10. Make your check out to FCC and mark for blankets. As one person put it, "it's about loving our neighbors on this small, interconnected planet, just as Jesus commanded".

Only \$10 per blanket warms someone, furnishes a carry-all, as well as offers protection and shelter. For more information cwsblankets.org.

Margaret J. Vann,
CWM Blanket Chair

CONDOLENCES to the family of Amy Craig (Hefele), daughter of Tom & Annelle Craig and sister of Josie Craig, who passed on Sunday, December 10.


REGIONAL PRAYER REQUESTS
First Christian Church, Meridian, MS
Alabama-Northwest Florida Regional Staff

ATTENDANCE
Dec. 10: In-Person Worship Service: 111
Small Groups (During week & Sunday): 137
Dec. 17: In-Person Worship Service: 91
Small Groups (During week & Sunday): 65

CHURCH OFFICE HOLIDAY SCHEDULE
Friday, December 22, closes at 12:30 pm
Monday, December 25, closed.
Friday, December 29, closes at 12:30 pm
Monday, January 1, closed.

CHRISTMAS WORSHIP SERVICES
Sunday, December 24, 9:30 a.m.
Sunday, December 24, 5:00 p.m.

IRS CREDIT FOR 2023 GIVING
Thank you so much for your tithes and offerings; they have a tremendous impact on the missions and ministries of our church. Please remember that all contributions to be credited toward 2023 giving must be received by the church office **before 12:30 pm on Friday, December 29, 2023** (that is when the office closes for New Year's Eve) or in the **collection plate on Sunday, December 31**. Mailed contributions may be credited toward your 2023 giving as long as they are **postmarked by December 30, 2023**. (If mailing, make sure to note collection times to ensure the appropriate postmark.)
IRS regulations require that checks received after December 31, unless received by mail post-marked December 30 or prior, will be credited to your 2024 giving and not 2023.

 The 2024 sign up chart for **FOOD BASKETS** is available. You may call 256-881-0150 or email office@fcc-hsv.org the office to select a **Sunday to remember or honor a friend, loved one, anniversary, birthday, or other special occasion**. Donations are \$25.00 and go to Community Outreach. Make checks payable to First Christian Church and Food Basket on the notation line. You may also make your donation through PayPal on our website, and designate Food Basket, at fcc-hsv.org/who-we-are/how-to-give/





CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) IN
ALABAMA-NORTHWEST FLORIDA

2023 CHRISTMAS OFFERING

The mission of the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region is to encourage and equip its congregations and pastors for the ministry of Jesus Christ in local communities and through-out the world while seeking to nurture them into deeper relationships with God, with each other, and with the whole Church.

2023 has been year filled with Assembly, Convocation, and Hispanic Encounter. Congregations have collaborated with regional staff in search processes, and new pastors have been called or are near call to several congregations. Staff and volunteers offered a meaningful summer camp experience in June, a beach/mini work camp in Florida in July, and a workday at Camp Chandler in October.

Looking forward to the new year, the search committee is interviewing for the next settled regional minister. Youthtopia and Young Adult Retreat are coming up in January. Then the HOPE-themed Regional Assembly in Fairhope in April. The full list events and ongoing activities is too long to list in this short article, but the success of each requires funding.

All gifts to the 2023 Christmas Offering are directed to the ministries of the Alabama- Northwest Florida Region. Make checks for any amount payable to First Christian Church with "Christmas Offering" on the notation line. You may also make your donation through PayPal on our website, and designate "Christmas Offering", at fcc-hsv.org/who-we-are/how-to-give/ Please give generously!

Community Outreach (CO) is asking for regular donations of hygiene products such as: sanitary pads, tampons, and/or period underwear (period-proof underwear is a relatively new period product that looks and feels like regular underwear.). The donations will support girls at three schools - Huntsville Junior High School, McNair School, and Morris School - who do not have funds to purchase these products. A donation site is located in the church Narthex. Please consider helping with this needed project.

Margaret J. Vann



Want to start a new spiritual discipline or continue a tradition? Why not keep a "blessing box" handy? You can celebrate blessings large or small on a regular basis by dropping a coin or more in as an intentional, "Thank You, God." You can use your own container or pick up a CWM blessing box (created in 1953) from your circle or from the narrow table in the Commons hallway. Contents will be collected in late March or April to support the Disciples Mission Fund.

Weekly prayer concerns are published in the Sunday bulletins. Send your requests to publisher@fcc-hsv.org or call the church office at 256-881-0150. **Please notify the Pastors or the church office if you are going to the hospital and would like to be contacted**



*Food
Pantry*

Are you up to the challenge of starting a new, beneficial habit? Why not start a new habit this Sunday? Bring one food item for the food pantry cart. Of course, more donations would be better. Our food pantry cart is located to the right as you enter the church. Can you help your neighbor?