



The Journey

Volume XXX No. 2
January 10, 2022
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A NEW YEAR

Whenever a new year arrives I always have trouble remembering to write the new year when I put the date on something. It seems a simple thing to do, but it is easy to get mired in old habits and forget for a brief moment. It is easy to forget that the Christmas season is over. December seemed to pass by in a blur of greenery, presents, and worship services. Now we are in the season after Epiphany, when we celebrate the manifestation of God to the world through God's son Jesus Christ. We also remember the life of Jesus, the visitation of the wise men, his baptism in the Jordan, his journey to Jerusalem and finally to the cross.

Christmas is often called the season of lights, for obvious reasons, but now that this season is over how do we keep the spirit of joy and celebration alive in our hearts when we are faced with the winter blahs? After all, as a new year begins so do new responsibilities. This is one of the busiest times of the year in the secular world. The New Year often brings new leadership, strategic plans, and goals that need to be accomplished. In the church, often after the holiday season, all we want to do is take a little time and rest.

However, we cannot back into old habits and forget our call to faith. It is my hope that the wonder of the season of Epiphany is not lost to us. We must realize that just as Jesus' ministry grew and developed our faith must transform and increase as well. We cannot remain static and resist change for without growth we become dry, brittle, and lifeless with no spiritual fruit to nourish ourselves or others.

Through the model of Christ's life, we can see that spiritual changes are not something to be feared, rather, we should celebrate the new life and possibilities we find as we worship our Lord and Savior. Let us use the excitement of a new year to recharge our spiritual batteries, encourage our faith, and offer ourselves to God's service so that we can be a part of building the Kingdom on earth. Amen.

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY - JANUARY 18-25, 2022

The Alabama-Northwest Florida Region is hosting a prayer service by Zoom on **Tuesday, January 18, 2022, at 7:00 p.m.** You may attend online or at the church in the Garden room. All are welcome to join in this time of prayer for unity. To join the prayer service by Zoom, use this web address: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85205831489#success>.

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, January 13**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

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

CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S MINISTRIES (CWM) BLANKET MONTH 2022



CWM's January service is supporting Church World Service that will send blankets to people in need all round the world. 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 a natural disaster, tornado, hurricane, earthquake, or flood?

Church World Service 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 go to churchworldservice.org.

Margaret J. Vann, CWM Blanket Chair

CHURCH CALENDAR

- Jan. 10 9:30 am Esther Circle
10:30 am Quilters
5 pm Conveners Meeting
- Jan. 11 6 pm Elders' Meeting
- Jan. 13 6 pm Board Meeting
- Jan. 17 **Church Office Closed**
10:30 am Quilters
- Jan. 18 7 pm Region-Wide Prayer Service by Zoom
- Jan. 23 10:45 am Worship Committee
- Jan 24 10:30 am Quilters
- Jan. 31 10:30 am Quilters
- Feb. 2 6 pm Men's Group
Phoebe Circle
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Feb. 7. 10:30 am Quilters
- Feb. 8 6 pm Elders' Meeting
- Feb. 9 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Feb. 10 6 pm Board Meeting
- Feb. 13 11:45 Community Outreach
- Feb. 14 9:30 am Esther Circle
10:30 am Quilters
5 pm Conveners' Meeting



SHORT TERM PRAYER CONCERNS



Not Published Online

CONDOLENCES to the family of

Not Published Online

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

Village Christian Church, Auburn, AL

CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S MINISTRIES (CWM) VALENTINE PROJECT

CWM is seeking current names and addresses for our college students and service men and women. If you have this information, please email #####@gmail.com

Thank you for your help with this outreach

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS, ONE COIN BY ONE!

Women of FCC, do you have many wonderful memories of the holidays and feel blessed in so many ways? Hopefully you have remembered to drop a coin in your blessing box as those blessings have filled your heart. If you haven't established this practice, why not start now at the beginning of this new year? Christian Women's Ministries will be collecting your coins and bills in the month of March. There is still plenty time to count your blessings.

Sue Seward, Blessing Box Coordinator

The 2022 sign up chart for **FOOD BASKETS** is available. You may call the office at 256-881-0150 or email publisher@fcc-hsv.org 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 payment through PayPal and designate Food Basket through the link below.



This QR code is linked to the Church's PayPal giving page for your convenience.

THE COFFEE CART IS BACK!

Coffee is available at the Commons Area from 9:15 - 10:45 Sunday mornings. Please use the hand sanitizer station by the coffee cart before you touch anything on the cart. Thank you, the Coffee Crew!



ATTENDANCE

Jan. 3 Worship Service: 66
Small Groups (During week and Sunday): 49

WITH YOU I AM WELL PLEASED

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV

Sermon: Jan. 9, 2022

Scripture Verses:

Luke 3: 15-22

William Willimon once asked a group of seminary students, "Do you remember when you were ordained?" This seemed a rather strange question at the time because very few of the seminary students had been ordained.

Ordination, in most denominations, is a long process. In the Christian Church, the requirements for ordination are a Bachelor's Degree, a Masters of Divinity, a Psychological profile, several references, interviews with Regional Ministers, and ordination committees, just to name a few. There was a time when I was in seminary when thought I would never become an ordained minister.

Yet, Willimon went on to say, "You know that you are already ordained. You are a minister of the gospel." and he was correct. At our baptism we are all ordained, we all become ministers, pastors, teachers, and proclaimers of the message of Jesus Christ.

In the early rites of baptism, the church made this clear. The newly baptized Christian was provided a white robe, symbolic of the new life they would live, hands were laid on the head, a sign of the gift of the Holy Spirit that empowers us to minister to the world, and a Bible was given, a sign that this new Christian would be in the world preaching and teaching.

As time has passed Christians have overlooked this important part of baptism. We say that we believe in the priesthood of all believers, but many think that ordained pastors are the true ministers and the laity are there just to undergird and support the work of the clergy. This is simply incorrect!

The third chapter of the Gospel of Luke focuses on the ministry of John the Baptist and the beginning of Jesus' ministry. In Advent, we heard about John as the voice crying out in the wilderness, the prophet who arrived to ready the people for the coming of the Lord.

John certainly did not look or act like someone with power, yet people wanted to hear his words because of the truth within them. John was the last of the Old Testament prophets, the end of one kind of proclamation, and the beginning of something new; a **Pleased** continued on page 4...

...*Pleased* continued from page 3 connection with God that changed faith, worship, and the world around him.

John provided a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. He gave examples of how to live justly and not exploit those who are weaker. But he also knew that the Messiah would provide another kind of baptism, one that focused on the Holy Spirit and entailed a total transformation of the individual.

When John's followers asked him to declare that he was the Messiah he told them firmly, "No! One will come in my lifetime who is more powerful than me, and I will not be worthy to even untie his sandal."

John knew that his ministry was important, but it was not the end. He also knew that his words were not popular and sometimes people did not listen, yet he continued because of his faith and love for the people. Like the prophets of old, John could see the people's sin, and his own, and sometimes he despaired, but he continued because he knew of the importance of his task.

In some ways, Jesus' baptism was different from our own. A part of our baptism is the repentance of sin, a legacy of John's baptism, however, this was not true of Jesus. According to the scriptures, Jesus was sinless, his was not a baptism of repentance, but a sign that he would carry our sins to the cross.

At his baptism, Jesus was declared the Son of God. The scriptures say that Jesus was the only begotten Son, that he is the genesis, an actual part of God. However, Jesus' baptism does mirror our own in some ways. Through the sacrifice of Christ, we know that our sins are forgiven. Because of Jesus, we do not have to carry our past sins, failures, imperfections, or guilt with us. Jesus is the one who carries the weight of our sin.

In baptism we experience the Holy Spirit that lives in our hearts and our community. We are filled with the Spirit and this means that we are given the power to meet our daily challenges: those within our relationships, with our children, our parents, our job, our everyday lives, and also that we can face the challenges and injustices of the world that surrounds us.

Through baptism we become the adopted children of God. Our relationship with our Creator is

transformed and there is now a new familiarity, a closeness, and intimacy with God. So in reality, when God looks at us after our baptism God says, "This is my beloved son, this is my beloved daughter, with you I am well pleased."

Some of my favorite memories are of Abby and Joe being baptized. Seeing my children come down the steps in their white robes smiling and full of anticipation. Abby asked to be baptized, and it meant the world to her. It was a sign that she was no longer a child but that she was growing into a young woman. A bittersweet moment for her father.

Joe and was nervous and would not stop talking. He kept wondering if I would hold him down longer, something that Abby swears I did at her baptism.

And of course these stories remind me of my baptism. I was nervous and excited. Ready for everything to be over and surprised by how short the service was. My father joked that he would hold me down a little longer than the rest of the youth who were being baptized because he knew I needed more help. But I could tell he was proud of me. I had made the first step on my journey of faith, and even if I did not know it, I was different.

As wonderful as our baptism is the love and attention of God is ever greater. After we emerge from the baptismal waters dripping wet and ready for the new life God is there to accept us with open arms and provide the encouragement we need to take our first steps into ministry.

John told the crowd that when the Messiah came all people would see the salvation of God. That meant that everyone, rich or poor, slave or free, woman or man could be redeemed and become a part of God's family.

Through our baptism we become the sons and daughters of the Creator, the brothers and sisters of Christ, commissioned by the Holy Spirit to go forth into the world and share the good news that has saved and transformed us.

We are the messengers of God's mercy, called to live in communion with the poor and the oppressed, care for the abused and frightened, comfort those who are hurting and bring light to those who live in darkness.

So I ask you today, "Do you remember when you
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Pleased continued from page 4.

were ordained? Do you remember when God laid God's hands upon you, cleansed your sins, changed your life, made you a minister, and called you son or daughter?" Do you remember the joy you felt that day?

And if so, what are you doing so others can experience this same joy? Thanks be to God, Amen.

LEAVE JOHN IN JAIL by Mary Luti

"Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he." - Matthew 11:11 (NRSV)

John the Baptist is in jail. From his cell, he sends messengers to Jesus to find out if he's the Messiah. After answering them, Jesus pays glowing tribute to John. He's "the greatest man who's ever lived." When the emissaries report Jesus' reply, surely they also convey this praise.

Alone in jail, it warms John to hear how much Jesus admires him. But it also stings. Those words are like a eulogy over John's ministry. God is doing something new now, and John isn't needed. He's great, but the world won't flock to him anymore. He's in jail, and Jesus leaves him there and moves on.

Leaving John in jail is hard. To turn from a great man, a great ministry, and past glory seems heartless. But if you don't tear yourself away, you'll miss what the Spirit does next. There are always good reasons to hold onto the past, but the gospel is a Word in forward motion. It won't let us live backwards into what was or might have been. We have to leave John in jail and go on.

Leaving things behind is a path to life. So that we might have it abundantly, the Child we welcomed at Christmas left heaven for a stable, left his parents in the temple, left John in jail, made disciples leave their nets, and let the dead bury the dead. Hand to the plow, he didn't look back.

He's headed to tomorrow. On the eve of a new year, leave John in jail and follow him.

Prayer

O Child of God's tomorrow, help me leave all my Johns in jail and go with you into a brand-new day.

2021 GIVING STATEMENTS

Your 2021 Giving Statements are available in the Church Office during the week and on Sundays in the Narthex on **January 16th and 23rd**. (This saves on postage.) Please contact the church office, 256-881-0150 or office@fcc-hsv.org, if you cannot make it to church to pick up your statement. We will send your statement by email or mail depending on your preference.

COVID-19 CHURCH PROTOCOLS

Approved by the Board on October 14)

- **One 9:30 a.m. service** will be offered at least through May 2022. First Christian Church offers virtual services ([facebook.com/fcchsv](https://www.facebook.com/fcchsv), [twitch.tv/fcchsv](https://www.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.
- **Coffee (only) is from 9:15 - 10:45.**
- **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.**