



The Journey

Volume XXX No. 6
February 7, 2022
www.fcc-hsv.org

SEEING THROUGH THE EYES OF CHRIST

After my experience with Covid last week I have to say that I am thankful to have a wife that is a nurse, so all of my questions could be answered quickly. I am also thankful for my son Joe, who took care of both of his parents while we were sick as well as going to school and taking care of our dogs and I would like to thank everyone who called, texted, or emailed to see how we were doing. We are on the mend, although it seems to be taking longer than we would like.

Those days in quarantine allowed me time to reflect and pray on the past couple of years and also on what the future will hold. When we think about 2020 and 2021 sickness, fear and death seem to be the hallmarks of the years. Our hearts cry out with the hope that the New Year will be better, safer, and free from trepidation. It is easy to lose sight of what is good in a world that seems to be filled with evil, but as Christians our hope is founded on the sure belief that God is in control of all things, Jesus Christ provides new life, and the Holy Spirit continues to refresh our lives of faith. We are called to look at the world through the eyes of Christ, see the possibilities of humankind, and share the good news that we have become the children of God.

What will be the hallmarks of 2022? Will the world become safer, peaceful, merciful, and just, or will the same questions and doubts nag at our hearts? We cannot say for sure, but I know that unless we continue to strive to serve God and emulate Christ our enthusiasm will wane, our joy will wither, and our hope will disappear. Yet, the good news today and all days is that we are continually empowered to seek justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God for through the mystery of Jesus Christ we know that we are never alone because we are united by the love of God. Thanks be to God, Amen.

THE LADIES OF FCC are pleased to invite you to an all-church Baby Shower for Andrew and Alyssa Burton on **Sunday, February 13, at 10:30 a.m.** in the Commons Area and Parlor 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 [Amazon](#) (Alyssa Burton & Andrew Burton). For questions, contact Pastor Laura at laura@fcc-hsv.org



IN PERSON & ONLINE WORSHIP SERVICES

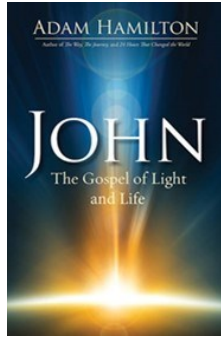
We offer in-person worship services Sunday mornings at 9:30 or you may also stream them live at 9:30, or watch previous services anytime, on facebook.com/fcchsv, twitch.tv/fcchsv, or youtube.com/channel/UCzQCRY8Vfa-IDhuqUnUhCKw

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, February 10**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

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

**NEW LENTEN BIBLE STUDY
BEGINNING MARCH 3RD**

Please join us as we prepare our hearts and minds for Easter with a study of the Gospel of John, using as our guide, Adam Hamilton's book *John, the Gospel of Light and Life* (ISBN 13: 9781791021481). This book may be purchased on Amazon for \$11.24 (Hardcover) or on the Cokesbury website for \$12.99 (paperback). In this six week study, we will meet each Thursday beginning March 3rd in the Family Services Room at 10:00 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. to watch a video and discuss the week's lesson.



If you are interested, or have questions, please contact Lisa Fitzgerald at 256-***** or *****

CHURCH CALENDAR

- 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. **Happy Valentine's Day!**
9:30 am Esther Circle
10:30 am Quilters
5 pm Conveners' Meeting
- Feb. 16. 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Feb. 21. **Church Office Closed**
10:30 am Quilters
- Feb. 23. 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal

THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET is in memory of Tom Woodall by Nancy Woodall.



ATTENDANCE

February 6 Worship Service: 51
Small Groups (During week & Sunday): 33



**SHORT TERM
PRAYER CONCERNS**



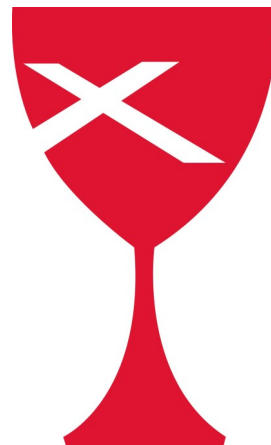
Not Published Online

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

Foley Christian Church
South Baldwin, AL



LONG TERM PRAYER CONCERNS



Not Published Online

COMMUNITY FREE DENTAL CLINIC

As has been the custom for the past several years, the outreach focus for February is the Community Free Dental Clinic located at 2341 Whitesburg Drive. Grants along with donations from individuals, churches, and businesses make possible the provision of quality free extractions and education to uninsured adult residents of Madison County. The mission is accomplished by licensed, volunteer dentists from the community. Also serving are licensed nurses, chair side assistants, and office staff who register the patients and make appointments. The clinic is not equipped to take walk ins, so an appointment is necessary. The clinic opened in 2013 and has served more than 8600 patients in the interim time. As reported to Channel 19 about three months ago, their operational budget is about \$270,000. They have remained available to the community even in recent challenging times. Their volunteer base has diminished about 50%, but the need is still there. Please consider a financial donation for this worthy cause as we continue to serve our local community with provision of vital needs.



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.

Us Too by Mary Luti

Adam said, "It was the woman. She gave it to me..." - Genesis 3:12

Many years ago, the Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands held an outdoor banquet on a soccer field for the visiting Archbishop of Canterbury. Between courses, they discussed the bloody civil war that had recently ended there.

Suddenly, the Prime Minister turned to the Archbishop and said, "I want you to bless us! I need to say in public that we were responsible too, not just the people on the other islands. So I'll quiet the crowd. Then I'll kneel down, and you can ask God to forgive us for what we contributed to the horror."

There are moments in life, the Archbishop said later, when you hear the gospel for the first time. Like when a politician says, "It wasn't just them. It was us, too."

People hardly ever voluntarily accept a share of blame. Our default position is innocence. "Not me," said Adam, "I didn't do anything. She did it to me. I'm the victim here."

You did this. We didn't. Our intentions are good. Yours are bad. Our suffering's terrible. Yours can't compare. Our story's true. Yours is a lie.

Little will change until we stop telling the story of our total innocence and their total guilt. Things change when we are willing to tell the far more important story—the one shared human narrative of ignorance, myopia, fear, error, violence, trauma, and loss.

It wasn't just them. It was us, too.

PRAYER - Strip away my sense of aggrieved innocence, O God. Show me what I don't want to know about myself. It isn't just them. It is me, too. Then let healing begin.

A FISHING STORY

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV Sermon: Feb. 6, 2022

Scripture Verses: Luke 5: 1-11

What we heard today in the gospel of Luke is a fishing story. We have all heard fish stories or maybe we have told a few of them. We have all heard about the one that got away, the day when it seemed that every hook we throw into the water landed a fish, or the funny stories of fishermen getting so excited about a catch that they fall into the water. Oh yes, we have all heard fishing stories.

Let me tell you one. My grandfather taught me how to fish. He was a pond and lake fisherman who did not like to use lures. He liked to fish with worms, a good old worm on a hook. This simple method caught him fish after fish; he knew exactly what he was doing.

One day, when I was about five, he took me out in his boat to go fishing. I was so young I did not have my own pole, so my mother bought me one of those toy plastic fishing rods you could find at toy stores. I begged my grandfather to put a hook on that toy rod, and even though he said that I would never catch a fish with it, but he did it just to please me.

Of course I soon forgot about my little fishing rod as I watched my grandfather pull in fish after fish. It was a good day, but my grandfather had not caught a "big one" yet, just little panfish.

Finally it was time to call it a day and my grandfather told me to reel in my line. That is when I noticed that something was different; the line weighed more than it did when I first threw it in. So excitedly I reeled it in and sure enough, I had caught a large catfish. My grandfather was flabbergasted! How could that simple toy catch the fish he had been waiting for all day?

I thought that my grandfather was upset that I had outfished him, even though he had caught more fish than I did. It was not until later that my grandmother told me that he was proud of me. He talked about his five-year-old grandson catching the big one to all of his friends. It be-

came one of his fishing stories, and of course, I was hooked ever since.

Luke tells a fishing story at this point so the readers of the gospel can relate to Jesus, and more importantly to Peter. We usually enjoy it when Peter shows up in a story. You can always depend on him to say things you might say if you were in his shoes. That's why the story of Peter's call to discipleship speaks to us.

It doesn't sound like other call stories? There is no burning bush like Moses and no blinding light on the road to Damascus like Paul. No, in this story, the call doesn't come as a summons, but as an invitation. This invitation comes to an ordinary man who is in the midst of a struggle to make a living for himself and his family.

Peter was exhausted from fishing through the night. The kind of fishing that they did in the Lake of Gennesaret, another name for the Sea of Galilee, was draining work. They were using gill nets, small weighted nets that don't sink very far beneath the surface.

They would fish at night so the nets were almost invisible, but in this case, Peter and his partners had caught nothing. They must have been miserable, working so hard with nothing to show for it. Even so, Peter knew he had to keep his equipment in good repair so when Jesus saw him Peter was bending down to wash and clean his net.

The crowd was pressing in on Jesus, there were too many of them, so he asked Peter to put out a little way from shore so everyone could hear him. I have always found it interesting that we don't know what Jesus said, but it must have made an impression on Peter. Why else, after a long night, would he accept this stranger into his boat and allow him to speak from it.

Afterward Jesus turned to Peter and invited him to do something. "Go out into the deep water," he says, "and there let down your nets." It sounds simple, but is it? Do you know what Jesus is asking here? He is asking Peter to trust him. To trust him so much that Peter would be willing to

Fishing continued page 5...

...**Fishing** continued from page 4
forget all he knew about fishing. This was not the right time or the right place to let out his nets.

Yet, Jesus was also asking more. Jesus was asking Peter to leave the shallow places in his life and begin to explore the depths of faith. To go to the limits of what he thought was possible, not only for him but for those around him. "Go out into the deep water," says Jesus, "trust me and see what happens."

Of course we know the rest of the story. Peter, agrees to do just that, to trust Jesus, they let down the nets, and when they began to pull them up they had caught so many fish that the nets began to break. They had to call in their partners in another boat to come and help them, so great was the load of fish. They had such an abundance that their boats began to sink because of the weight. Now that is a fishing story.

However, Peter realized that this was more than just a good day of fishing, this was more than just a coincidence, and so he does something amazing. He fell to his knees and said, "Go away from me Lord for I am a sinful man!"

Peter was frightened! He knew that someone special was there with him, but what was a Holy Man doing out on a Galilean fishing boat in the middle of nowhere? Why was he chosen to experience these things? Why was he called to service?

I bet that Peter thought about all of the same excuses that we do when God calls us. Oh, there's no use for me to go into those depths, Jesus, I have fished those waters already. I have tried to pray. I have tried to study. I have tried to become a servant like you, I have tried to live out my faith in a way that would please you, and I have come up empty every single time. I'm tired; I'm just tired of fishing the same waters. There is nothing in the depths for me.

That is just another way of saying I am not good enough to do this. I am not smart enough, I'm not young enough, I'm not old enough, I'm not faithful enough. It is probably best that you leave me alone God; that you give up on me like

I've given up on myself. I am a sinful human being. I have tried everything that you have asked me to do, and it doesn't work.

Dr. William Willoman tells a story of a friend in seminary who served briefly as a chaplain in a state prison. He received a request from a father of a young man who was interned in the prison. The young man had committed a robbery and was serving a long sentence. He was angry and embittered. The boy's father came every week to visit him, but the boy steadfastly refused to see him. The father asked the chaplain to intervene, to plead with the boy to see him, but again the young prisoner refused.

Despite this refusal, the boy's father took off work every week, boarded a bus, and traveled across the state in the hope of seeing his son. Every week it became the young chaplain's difficult task to ask the son, "Do you want to see your Father?" and then bear the word of the refusal to the waiting man. The father would thank the chaplain, gather his belongings, and head toward the door for the bus trip back home.

One day, after telling the father that once again his son would not see him, the chaplain said, "No one would do what you are doing. Your son is an embittered, defiant young man. Give up. Go back home and get on with your life. No one should have to put up with this kind of rejection, week after week. Nobody would do this."

"Jesus has put up with it for centuries," said the father, as he picked up his meager belongings and headed out. The young chaplain literally fell to his knees at this vision of the righteousness of God. Woe is me, I am a sinful man whose lips and life are not worthy of the greatness of God.

Peter cried out, "Depart from me, I am a sinful man!" But the good news is, that God never does. Jesus never gives up on us, he never fails us, and in times when we feel as if nothing we do will ever be enough he provides a glimpse of the Kingdom of God and that keeps us going.

Jesus turned to Peter and said, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will be catching people."

Fishing continued page 6...

...**Fishing** continued from page 5

Peter thought he knew who he was, but Jesus saw deeper. He saw a man who would shape and lead the early church, a dedicated follower who made mistakes but was always ready to admit them and try harder, an apostle who would inspire us to this day.

Jesus invited Peter to move from shallowness into the depths of faith and Peter dared to say yes. He trusted Jesus and in doing so became a fisher of people, spreading the good news, and showing others the depths of the Christian faith. Now that is a fishing story!

But today what story will you write as you move from the shallows into a deeper relationship with Christ? What will you say when you hear the call of Jesus? Will you be the one who got away or will you continue the story and learn to fish for people? Thanks be to God, Amen.



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 this QR code linked to our website.



COVID-19 CHURCH PROTOCOLS

- **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.
- **Coffee is temporarily suspended.**
- **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 10 days
- **Please notify the church office immediately if you develop symptoms after attending a service.**