



The Journey

Volume XXX No. 9
February 28, 2022
www.fcc-hsv.org

DEAR DISCIPLES: A WORD ON GRATITUDE AND REST , February 18, 2022

By General Minister and President Rev. Terri Hord Owens

Hello Disciples. Well I'm back! This is your General Minister and President Terri Hord Owens. Thank you church for the gift of a three-month sabbatical time to rest, renew, read, reflect, rest, re-energize, reimagine... and did I say rest?

As I prepared for my sabbatical the moderator team asked me how I would like them to pray for me and I said I wanted them to pray as the Rev. Tricia Hersey known as the Nap Bishop says I wanted 'to get lost in the rest.' And so I'm grateful to God that I embraced the fullness of allowing myself to rest and remove myself for a time from the fullness of all the obligations. Thank you church for that time of rest and I return to my ministry remembering that it is so important that I ensure that my rest will continue even as I am actively serving you as General Minister and President.

I've been calling the church to imagine who we must be as a new church for a new world and as part of my reading during my sabbatical I re-read Walter Bruggeman's *The Prophetic Imagination*. And in his introduction to the 40th anniversary edition he reflects on first Corinthians 1 verses 25 through 28 and invites us to get inside God's imagination. God's imagination Disciples is as limitless as God's love for us that 1 Corinthians text tells us that God's weakness is stronger than our strength and God's foolishness is stronger than our wisdom. Just when we think we are at the limits of what we can do or be or think we must remind ourselves that with God all things are possible and nothing can be bigger than God's vision of the kingdom realized here on earth. God's limitless love is reflected in Jesus the Christ so as we prepare even for our Lenten season and as we move forward I hope that you will remember that with God all things are possible and that there are no bounds beyond which God cannot take us.

I returned 10 days before the start of our Administrative Committee and General Board meetings and I can't wait to share more about the work that came out of those meetings as we move forward as church together in the meantime let me remind you of my favorite text Philippians 1 and 6 I return from sabbatical still confident that the one who has begun this good work in all of us will complete it God bless you Disciples. Find some time to get lost in the rest even as you prepare for the work of living into the kingdom of God as Jesus has taught remember God loves you and so do I.

WANTED!

A few men to join us in our Men's Bible Worship group, Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. in the Garden Room. We are currently studying the Early Church series by Ray Vander Laan. Come join us for a freewheeling discussion and exchange of ideas on the title subject matter and many other topics.

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, March 3**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

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

Ash WEDNESDAY SERVICE

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent. It takes its name from the ceremonial imposition of ashes on the foreheads or hands of worshipers as a sign of human sin and mortality. This ancient tradition, going back at least to the tenth century, communicates the human condition before God by solemn word and sign. Our Ash Wednesday service will be held on **March 2nd at 6:00 pm** in the church sanctuary. We will sing, pray, place ashes on our foreheads or hands, and take the communion meal together as we begin our preparation for the coming of Easter.

CHURCH CALENDAR

- Feb. 28 9:30 am MF 2 Leadership Meeting
10:30 am Quilters
- Mar. 2 6 pm **Ash Wednesday Service**
- Mar. 3 10 am *John, the Gospel of Light and Life*
- Mar. 7 10:30 am Quilters
- Mar. 8 6 pm Elders' Meeting
- Mar. 9 6 pm Men's Group
Phoebe Circle
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Mar. 10 10 am *John, Gospel of Light & Life*
6 pm Board Meeting
- Mar. 13 2 am **Daylight Saving Time Begins**
- Mar. 14 9:30 am Esther Circle
10:30 am Quilters
5 pm Conveners' Meeting

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



ATTENDANCE

February 6 Worship Service: 67
Small Groups (Sunday): 25



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

Pacific Islander Agape Christian Church
Pensacola, FL

ECM SUMMER & FALL REGISTRATION

Registration Packets may be picked up from ECM (Melissa Cully mornings and Mary Lynn Tip-ton afternoons) and returned, with a non-refundable registration fee (to hold a spot), to Melissa or Mary Lynn on the following schedule:

February 28 - Current Students

March 3 - Siblings of current students

March 4 - First Christian Church participating members

March 7 - New families may register for existing spots.



LONG TERM PRAYER CONCERNS



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.



MARCH BIRTHDAYS



Not Published Online

RUMMAGE SALE UPDATE

Hello all!

I have received many questions about this year's rummage sale. As many of you know, the rummage sale is a huge ordeal that requires the volunteer efforts of many of our church members and staff. It is also important to note that I am pregnant and due on the week/weekend of the rummage sale's typically stated date. COVID is still taking a toll on the community as well. With these factors prayerfully considered, the Christian Education Committee and the staff had discussions about this event for the 2022 year and decided it is best to not hold the event. However, we still do encourage donation of items to charitable causes and wanted to share some resources to help make this easier for you! :)

www.rocketcitymom.com/huntsville-thrift-stores-donation-centers/ this link has a great list but here are a few hand picked locations!

A New Leash On Life Marketplace

707 Andrew Jackson Way NE, Huntsville, AL 35801
Downtown Rescue Mission Thrift Stores (will also pick up items from your home; call 1-855-376-7283) 1407 A N. Memorial Parkway, Huntsville, AL 35801 Or 8006 Old Madison Pike, Ste 10, Madison, AL 35758

Goodwill of Huntsville 8501 Whitesburg Drive, Huntsville, AL 35802

Alyssa Burton,
Youth Director



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.

SECOND FIDDLE

Matt Laney

John the Baptist said, "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*" - John 3:30 (NRSV)

Leonard Bernstein, the renowned orchestra conductor, was once asked, "What is the hardest position to fill?" He replied with zero hesitation:

"Second fiddle. I can always get plenty of first violinists, but to find one who plays second violin with as much enthusiasm, or second French horn or second flute, now that's a problem! And yet if no one plays second, we have no harmony."

John the Baptist was happy to play second fiddle to Jesus. He was a virtuoso at second chair. John's mantra, "He must increase and I must decrease," is a model for all of us. Less ego, more Christ. That's the Christian journey.

We put Jesus on the throne, in first chair, not only because he is more deserving but also to keep ourselves off of it. Claiming the throne for ourselves is a recipe for disaster. Our job is to play harmony following Jesus' lead.

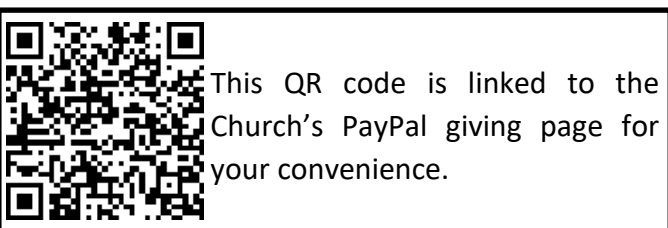
But hear this: even though Jesus is rightly the first fiddle, he had a conductor just as the star quarterback has a coach and the prima ballerina has a choreographer.

Jesus never claimed to be God. He claimed to be one with God. He gave passive acknowledgment to being the Son of God, but he never said, "I am God."

If we followed that score, this world might start singing a different tune.

Prayer

Holy Conductor, help me take my cues from Jesus who prayed, "Not my will, but yours be done."



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

A MOUNTAINTOP EXPERIENCE

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV

Sermon: Feb. 27, 2022

Scripture Verses:

Luke 9: 28-36

This week we change our spiritual focus. Ash Wednesday is March 2nd and the first Sunday of Lent follows. During this season after Christmas and Epiphany, we have been focusing on the early life and ministry of Christ. Now, we enter a time that ends with the journey to the cross. This journey begins with a time of prayer, transformation, hidden thoughts, and feelings.

There are many things that are hidden from our all too human eyes. Experiences that fool our perception and that are bigger than ourselves. We only have to remember the Optical illusions or the 3-D images that fool our senses and cause us to see something that at first glance might not be there. Ask any magician, the hand is quicker than the eye and our minds are programmed in such a way that they can be fooled quite easily.

In much the same way God's presence is often surprising and out of the ordinary. God goes beyond our human understanding and challenges us to think outside of ourselves. Just like in the Gospel lesson for today, God is the protagonist, God is the one who acts, and God is the one who transforms.

Today we read about a time when human eyes were indeed fooled, where human thoughts were incorrect. We read about the transfiguration, a truly mystical experience in which Christ's true nature is revealed.

This is a change in style and a change in theme in the gospel of Luke. Before this experience, Luke writes about the life of Jesus, about miracles, parables, and sayings, but the true mission of Jesus has not been revealed.

In the verses before this story, Jesus finally tells the disciples about his mission, but they do not understand. They have their own vision of what the messiah should be and should do; therefore they question Jesus, and when they do not like the answers, pretend he did not say anything.

Experience continued page 5...

...**Experience** continued from page 4.

So Jesus takes Peter, John, and James to a mountain, in the wilderness, away from the rest of the world to pray. Often, we do not say much about Jesus' prayer life in the church. We know that prayer was important to him because before every life-changing event in Jesus' life he stops to pray.

Today we read that Jesus takes a few chosen apostles away from the crowd, their families, and even the other disciples so they can be alone. They are the witnesses to this event, one they will not understand even after Jesus tries to explain.

I enjoy going camping with my family and friends. There is something different about getting away from the world, cooking food over a fire, and enjoying the stillness of nature. We go out in the wilderness to get away from the rest of the world. To learn, to rest, to recharge our batteries, and to remind ourselves of who we are. Sometimes we need to go away, just for a while, to find ourselves again.

We are told that while Jesus was praying he was transfigured. His face changed and his clothes became dazzling white. This aura of unnatural brilliance is associated with mystical experiences in the ancient world. It reminds us of the experience of Moses when he spoke to God directly. He also shone with an unnatural brilliance. No one could look directly at him because the light was so powerful and so pure.

Suddenly two men appear and begin talking with Jesus. The author states that these men are Moses and Elijah telling Jesus about what was going to take place.

With all these things happening you would think that the Disciples would be amazed. Yet, Luke tells the readers that the Disciples were tired and they fell asleep. Can you imagine, two of the greatest prophets of their time appeared to Jesus, their friend shined like the morning sun, and they were falling asleep? What hope do I have preaching this sermon?

Was the miraculous becoming so commonplace to the disciples that they could sleep

through such a wonderful event? Peter finally rouses himself and decides that something must be done to mark this time. Let us make three dwellings because Peter thought that they should stay at the site for a time, perhaps even make it into a shrine.

Yet, Peter's plan is interrupted by a cloud that enveloped the entire mountain. The cloud was often associated with the divine power of God. When God led the Israelites through the desert God did so through a column of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night.

If you have even been on a mountain when the clouds settle and you can't see ten feet in front of your face you know why people would believe that the cloud has mystical interpretations. It's called a whiteout and can be very dangerous because you cannot see the terrain around you. Those who live and work on mountains tell you that the best thing to do is stay put until it clears.

From this cloud a voice is heard from heaven saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen, listen to him!" This voice brings to mind the voice that was heard at Jesus' baptism, the voice that we all hear calling us to faith.

Then suddenly the cloud disappeared and there was Jesus, the same as he always was, standing alone on the mountain. Luke tells us that the disciples remained silent about what they had seen. Perhaps they thought that it had all been a dream, did this happen, after all, Jesus looked just like he used to, the mountain is the same, they were the same, wouldn't something be different if this had really happened; or maybe they thought no one would believe them.

But, Jesus was changed. His ministry had a new emphasis. This was a mountaintop experience, a time of change, but it was not a time of sunrises, soft breezes, warm friends, and music. It was a time of darkness for the subject was the death of a King. It was a time of fear as the power of God and questioning of one's self led to silence.

Experience continued page 6...

...**Experience** continued from page 5.

Jesus changed, but the disciples could not believe their eyes. They were fooled by their worldly thoughts into believing that everything was the same.

We too want to believe that nothing has to change, that the church, society, and we can stay the same and our message will continue to have relevance. We feel the presence of God all around us, yet, we remain silent because we are afraid of what others will say and do.

But we know about Transformation. As Christians, we know and believe in what we cannot see. We understand that the eyes of the heart can see and do more than the eyes of the world.

We know what it means to be spiritually transformed for when we were changed when we let Christ into our hearts and lives, we found out that nothing would ever be the same.

This week I found a quote from former president Jimmy Carter, who is still building habitat homes while he fights cancer. He says, "My faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I am, whenever I can, for as long as I can with whatever I have to try to make a difference." Former President Carter knows how life can be changed through faith but he also knows that we are called to be agents of change in the world.

And so today we join in the celebration of the transfiguration, knowing that we cannot remain silent, understanding that the power of God will see us through, and realizing that we are to prepare for a time in which all will be revealed. Thanks be to God, Amen.



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.**

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