



EASTER IS A BEGINNING

When I was a child Easter meant Egg Hunts, searching for my Easter basket at home, and in between those times going to church. As I grew older Holy Week and Easter began to mean so much more. I can still remember as a teenager taking part in a Maundy Thursday service where we reenacted the Last Supper. I played Judas because many of the members of the church were reluctant to and my mother asked me specifically. It was the first time I can remember, reading the story in a different light and beginning to understand the pain, sorrow, fear, and confusion the disciples must have felt and Jesus must have endured. In the service when Jesus told the apostles that one would betray him I was supposed to run out of the church and I ended up accidentally slamming the door into the narthex in my excitement. As we drove home that night I talked to my mother about what happened those days before Easter and afterward. Thinking back, those were some of my first steps toward ministry.

Last Sunday we observed the most important holy day of our calendar. Easter is the center, the good news, of our faith as we gather together to tell the story of the resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. This act of love is the ultimate answer to the promises of God, proof that death is defeated and new life offered to all, and hope for our future as we look to the day when Christ will come again.

Yet, Easter Sunday is not the end of the celebration. The season of Easter, or Eastertide, continues until Pentecost, or June 5th. In Eastertide, we are reminded that the glory of the resurrection is only the beginning of our journey of faith. Every Sunday is a mini Easter, a way to recognize the power of Christ working within us. There are still many lessons to be learned and work to be done

At its essence, Easter is a reminder that the new life offered by Christ demands transformation, yet we are so deeply tied to old convictions and our sin that this prospect contains a sense of loss and overwhelming fear. We must know that resurrection cannot occur without loss and pain. Jesus had to suffer and die on the cross so he could be raised from the dead, so too are we called to suffer, denying our selfish hearts and giving of ourselves, so that we may become servant leaders and followers of God. This may seem like an impossible task, but God has a way of making the impossible, possible. Thanks be to God, Amen.

ALL-CHURCH DINNER MAY 1, 2022

What: Dinner catered by Paul and Patti Allen

When: Sunday, May 1, 2022, at 4:00 pm.

Where: FCC McMains Hall and Family Services Area.

Menu: Pulled pork or poultry, baked beans, mac and cheese, coleslaw, bun or corn muffin, cookie, and drink.

Price: \$10 per meal - Kids 18 and under eat free!

Focus: FCC Volunteer Appreciation/Volunteer Opportunities.

To reserve your meal(s), including free kids' meals, contact Mary Ann Anderson by April 25 at 256-***** or ****. Hope to see you there!



Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, April 21**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

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

In April **Community Outreach** is encouraging support of **HEALS Dental Clinic**. Many eligible economically disadvantaged school children visiting the clinic have never visited a dentist before school. The teeth may have many decays requiring multiple visits.



The volunteer dental staff provide a reward to the child for every visit. If many visits are needed, the anticipation of a reward helps to reduce anxiety.

The reward box contains many choices for selection by the child and are not expensive. Fast food prizes (new) such as those in a Happy Meal are a great prize as are the following: book, bubbles, small stuffed toy, colored socks, hair decorations, or special pencil. The dollar stores are a great place to shop, especially if you have your child helping. Please remember the reward will return with the child to the classroom. Teachers try to get rewards in backpacks quickly.

Reward items can be placed in the basket around the food pantry cart located at the entrance to the church. If you do not wish to shop, we will do it for you. Please make check to FCC with HEALS rewards on the item line.

CHURCH CALENDAR

- April 18 10:30 am Quilters
- April 20 7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- April 21 6 pm Board Meeting
- April 24 2 pm Clasgens/Rutherford Shower
- April 25 10:30 am Quilters
6 pm *Disciples History Class*
- April 27 7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- May 1 4 pm All Church Dinner
- May 2 10:30 am Quilters
- May 4 12 pm Phoebe Circle
- May 8 11:45 am Community Outreach
- May 9 9:30 am Esther Circle
10:30 am Quilters
- May 10 10 am ECM Spring Sing/Art Show
6 pm Elders' Meeting
- May 12 6 pm Board Meeting



SHORT TERM PRAYER CONCERNS



Not Listed 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
Grateful Life Christian Church
Huntsville, AL

THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET is in memory of Mary Ann Mead, wife of Bob Mead.



ATTENDANCE
April 17 Worship Service: 122
Small Groups (During week & Sunday): 32



WEDDINGSHOWER

TIME TO CELEBRATE A NEW CHAPTER

WHO: Janie Clasgens & Brandon Rutherford

WHAT: Wedding Shower

WHEN: April 24, 2022, 2:00 PM

WHERE: Church Parlor

Their beautiful story and registry for the couple is available at www.theknot.com/ *****. All are welcome to enjoy the festivities

DESPERATELY POOR CHILDREN NEED OUR HELP

Christian Women's Ministries (CWM) hopes you will join us as we financially support House of Hope Haiti and the Pringle House of Jamaica during April.



House of Hope Haiti

Through Global Ministries, House of Hope provides a safe place and educational programs for

at-risk children in the Port-au-Prince area with a completion rate of 95%. Haiti has been in political turmoil for years and has also been devastated by several hurricanes. Life expectancy average is 63 years and adult illiteracy is over 51%. We will also be donating to the Pringle Home of Jamaica, which provides the same services for the impoverished children there. We can make a difference in the lives of children in two very poor third world countries by donating to support these causes. Checks can be made to FCC with "CWM April project" in the memo line. The need is great; please join CWM in changing lives.



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 our website fcc-hsv.org/who-we-are/how-to-give/

OPERATIVES, STANDING by Quinn Caldwell

They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it.

- Mark 11:4-6 (NRSV)

What are we to make of these bystanders? They see someone stealing someone else's ride, and they do the right thing. "What are you doing?!" they yell, running over to intervene. They know how expensive donkeys are. They know it's our job to watch out for each other.

"No, it's fine!" these two strangers say. "The Lord needs it and is gonna send it right back; Scout's honor."

"Cool cool cool," the bystanders say, and wander off.

What in the world? Why intervene with sketchy characters behaving sketchily, only to be put off by the flimsiest of explanations? Were the bystanders only interested in protecting their own consciences, not in getting too involved?

Were the two disciples just really scary looking? Were the bystanders that milquetoast?

Or was it planned? Maybe it was all set up ahead of time: the by-standing operatives, having procured the donkey, wait for the disciples and then give the password "Jesus," and the two disciples give the countersign. Maybe it's a story about how effective action requires effective organizations, careful planning, and many many people beside the one who seems to be responsible. Maybe it's a story about how, for every named player in a movement, there are scores of nameless ones, performing small essential tasks faithfully.

Prayer

Give me the discipline to be part not just of your revolution, but of your organization too, because I know somebody has to be willing to watch the donkey till you're ready to ride it. Amen.



THE EMPTY TOMB

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV Sermon: April 17, 2022

Scripture Verses: Luke 24: 1-12

We have all heard this story time and time again. Christians thrive on it because it is the center, the good news, of our faith. The resurrection is the ultimate answer to the promises of God and hope for our future as we look forward to the day when Christ will come again.

Each gospel tells of this event in its own way. The best known story of resurrection is found in the gospel of John when we hear of the belief of the disciple whom Jesus loved, the disbelief of Peter, and the appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene.

The gospel of Matthew shows us the power of God as an angel rolls the stone away from the tomb, paralyzes the Roman guards with fear, and tells the women that Jesus has been raised from the dead. In contrast, the gospel of Mark focuses on the fear that the women felt when they heard the news of the angel. They did not report this event right away because they were so afraid.

There are also many similarities between the gospel accounts, not the least of which, is the importance of women. In each gospel women are the first to hear the good news of the resurrection and become the vehicles in which the apostles and followers of Jesus first hear of this miraculous event. In this manner the women at the tomb become icons of faith, who prove their strength and courage when they share a story that the world was unprepared for and did not believe.

Unprepared for Easter. Pinewood derby. Are we ready? Are the scouts ready?

We are told in the gospel of Luke that early in the morning before dawn on the first day of the week, the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee traveled to the tomb to prepare his body as was Jewish burial custom.

They had returned after the Sabbath day of rest to complete the funeral ritual and mourn their teacher and friend. The women had been through so much in the last few days. They were a part of the crowd that saw Jesus drag the cross to Golgotha, or the place called the skull. They saw his tor-

ment and death on the cross as they watched from a distance unable to stop his pain or turn their eyes away.

Only these women were brave enough to follow Joseph of Arimathea as he took the body of Jesus and placed it in a tomb. They knew that no one else would care for Jesus, therefore, throughout the Sabbath day they rested, prayed, and steeled themselves for what had to happen.

Can you imagine the crushing sorrow and fear that these women must have felt? In a time when women were seen as second class citizens they had been welcomed into the inner circle of Jesus' disciples. Throughout the gospel of Luke we hear of women who were accepted by Jesus, followed him, and learned at his feet. Now their teacher was gone, their hope for a new world was gone, and they knew that they would have to return to Galilee alone.

The women came to the tomb expecting to find death. This was the only thing that they were prepared for; so when they found that the stone had been rolled away, looked inside the tomb, and saw that Jesus' body was gone, they were confused.

What had happened here? Had the body been taken? Did the Romans and leaders of the Jews add a final insult to the death of their teacher? But while they were standing there perplexed two men in dazzling clothes appeared beside them. The women were terrified, but these two men, later identified as angels in verse 23, simply asked them a question, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"

The women who journeyed to the tomb assumed the worst in this situation and why shouldn't they? Of course they remembered afterward that Jesus had told them of his coming death and resurrection, but nothing prepared them for this event.

Humans always expect the worst to happen; in fact we seem to thrive on threats, violence and fear. Proof of this fact was the reaction of the crowd to Jesus. Earlier in the week they had proclaimed him to be a King, but then called for his death after Pilate could find no legal reason to execute him.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem the crowd believed that great changes would be made, a political

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revolution was at hand, and they longed for this upheaval. Yet, instead of a conqueror, they received a humble man riding a donkey, who proclaimed a message of sacrifice, forgiveness, and love.

The crowd's response, the crucifixion, even the unbelief of the women and later the disciples was a resounding, "No," to Jesus' message of love and obedience. They could not accept his call for peace, the hope for change, and the very nature of his ministry. Humanity said, "No" to God on that day. But three days later God said, "Yes" to humanity.

God said, "Yes" to the very things that we had denied, through the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, love, forgiveness, reconciliation, trust, hope; they all rose with him to eternal life and eternal validity.

Because it was the Women who followed Jesus who first heard of his resurrection, we are shown that all people can experience the glory of the resurrection of Christ and that the only things that died on Easter morning were the perceptions of the world. The resurrection of Jesus meant the death of all the ways in which the world had traditionally worked, the values that the world had lived, everything that bound humanity to sin. Easter became the first day of a new creation.

Of course when these women returned from the tomb and told the apostles what they had seen and heard, the men believed that this was nothing more than an idle tale. They had not yet experienced resurrection; in fact, it would take a vision of the risen Christ to convince them of the truth of these words.

It is hard to believe in resurrection, difficult to realize that the world is no longer the same, that we are called to become a transformed people. This idea frightens us to our very core, because we are so deeply tied to old convictions and brokenness.

Yet, we must remember that resurrection cannot occur without loss and pain. Jesus had to suffer and die on the cross so he could be raised from the dead. So too are we called to suffer, to

give, and to transform ourselves so that we might become true followers and servants of God.

Even then, resurrection is only the beginning. We are taught, through the appearances of Christ to his followers after he was raised from the dead, that there is still teaching to be done, instructions to understand, and actions to perform. Our own experience with new life calls us to continue our growth as Christians for the grace of God does not release us from this work; instead it calls us to continue so we can share the good news of Jesus Christ in new and exciting ways.

It is interesting that the women at the tomb believed in the resurrection without seeing. They did not have a direct experience with the risen Christ; they only knew that the tomb was empty. Only the apostle Peter journeyed to the tomb, and while he was amazed at the sight, he still did not understand what had happened. There was no recognition of the magnitude of this event, no joy and celebration, instead, he went home to reflect and wait.

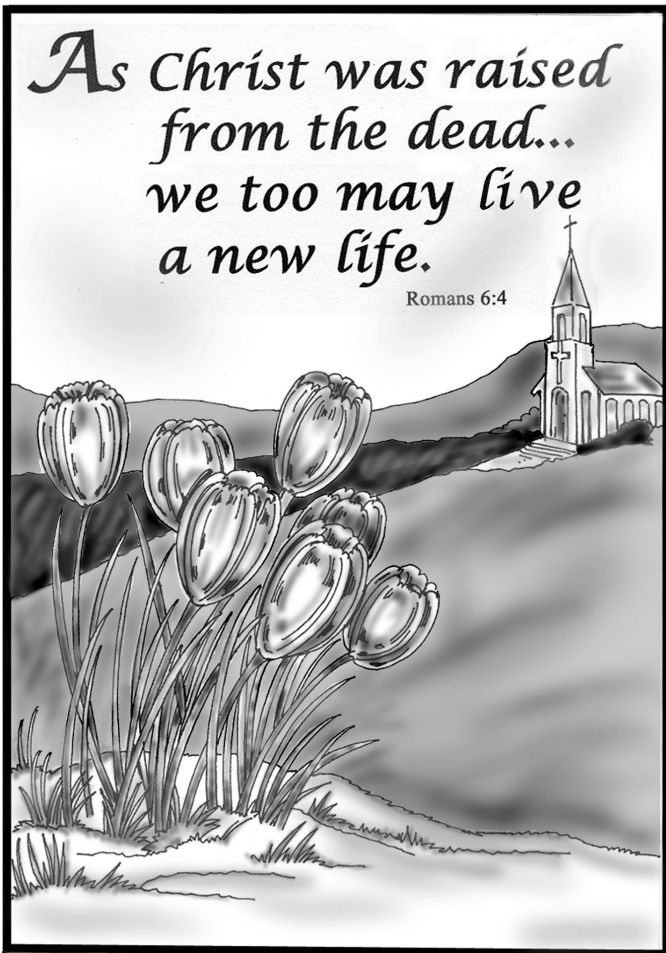
Throughout Holy Week we too have witnessed the final days of Jesus and our hearts have grown heavy because deep within us we still expect to find death at the tomb. Like the disciples, we are not ready for resurrection as nothing in our experience prepares us for this event.

But today, even though we are unprepared for the coming of Christ, even though we cannot foresee our own transformation, even though we have said, "No" to God time and time again; our Lord and Savior says, "Yes" to us.

When we turn away, tell ourselves and others that we do not know him, and deny his very existence; Christ is there, waiting to forgive, accept, encourage, and empower his brothers and sisters in faith.

Our call, on this day, is to become like the women at the empty tomb, who believed without seeing, recognized the importance of this event, and rushed to tell others that Jesus Christ had defeated death, and that he is risen, he is risen indeed. Thanks be to God. Amen.





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

COVID-19 CHURCH PROTOCOLS (Approved by the Board on March 10, 2022)

- **An in-person worship service is available at 9:30.** Virtual services (facebook.com/fcchsv, twitch.tv/fcchsv, or First Christian Church Huntsville on YouTube) are also offered 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 is optional**
- 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.
- **The front section of the Sanctuary, on the pulpit side, is the least impacted area with our heating and cooling system and every other row of pews is roped off to allow individuals to practice social distancing so that they may worship at their level of comfort.**
- Offerings may be placed in the brass plate when exiting the sanctuary or sent by mail.
- **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.**