



DEAR DISCIPLES: IMAGINING MORE

By Rev. Terri Hord Owens

Hello Disciples this is your General Minister and President, Terri Hord Owens. As we continue to celebrate in this Eastertide I pray that you may know the joy and hope that our risen Christ represents for each and every one of us who follows him.

I'm continuing to think and pray about what it really means to imagine who we are as a new church for a new world. I'm encouraged by Jesus's declaration that he came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. Paul tells the Philippians in that beautiful first chapter that I love so much, that his prayer for them is that they would grow more and more in love and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. In the wonderful blessing and benediction that Paul offers in Ephesians, he says now unto the one who was able by the power that works in you to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we could ask or think. I love that language from the King James those words exceedingly, abundantly...more than we could ask or think.

God is a God who can do more than we can even imagine and for me that's what it means to actually get inside God's imagination. Walter Bruggeman reminds us that the prophetic voice must do more than simply criticize. It must energize. It must provide an alternate to the unjust reality and that's where our imaginations come in. If we could understand God's heart, that if bear witness to the limitless love of God but that we are called to do work, that will disrupt inequities, that will promote peace and justice, that we are called to truth-telling and peacemaking. I believe that God will answer our prayer to enlighten and enliven our imaginations so that we can do more.

I invite you to visit disciples.org and take advantage of a wonderful new resource that we've provided call Imagine More. It's not only a video but customizable video resources and sermon outlines and resources that you can use with your congregation in worship. We've got to get inside God's imagination the one who was able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think. So let's get inside the mind of God let's allow the Holy Spirit to help us imagine more so that we can do more and be more. So that we can be that movement for wholeness in a fragmented world, that anti-racist church. So that we can be the church we say we are. Visit disciples.org and let's together imagine more--you fill in the blank imagine more...

Remember, God loves you and so do I.

We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us.

- 21st Century Vision Team

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, May 12**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

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



SHORT TERM PRAYER CONCERNS



You are cordially invited to celebrate the happiness of McKenzie Williams at her bridal shower hosted by Mission Family 2 on Sunday afternoon, May 22, 2 - 4 pm, in the FCC Parlor. McKenzie and her fiancé Justin Foscue are registered at Lawren's, Pottery Barn, and other sites on www.theknot.com/foreverfoscue/registry. You can read their romantic story on that site as well.

Not Published Online

CHURCH CALENDAR

- May 9 11 am Esther Circle
10:30 am Quilters
5 pm Conveners' Meeting **Canceled**
- May 10 10 am ECM Spring Sing/Art Show
6 pm Elders' Meeting
- May 11 6 pm Men's Group
- May 12 6 pm Board Meeting
- May 16 10:30 am Quilters
5:30 pm ECM Board Meeting
- May 17 7 pm Worship Committee Meeting
- May 18 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- May 22 2 pm Williams/Foscue Shower
- May 23 Paul on Sabbatical through August 22
10:30 am Quilters
- May 29 Pentecost Offering
- May 30 **Memorial Day - Church Office Closed**
10:30 am Quilters
- June 1 6 pm Men's Group
- June 5 **Pentecost Sunday**
Pentecost Offering
- June 6 10:30 am Quilters


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
Cedar Plains Christian Church
Falkville, AL

ATTENDANCE

May 8 Worship Service: 94
Small Groups (During week & Sunday): 33

THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET is given in memory of Ann McNaron. 





Grateful Life Community Church

GRATEFUL LIFE COMMUNITY CHURCH SUPPORT

Christian Women's Ministries and Community Outreach are asking for financial support for Grateful Life Community Church during May. This church, our sister Disciples congregation in Huntsville, serves the disadvantaged and homeless members of our community. If you would like to contribute, please write your check to FCC with Grateful Life in the memo line and mail it to FCC.

Thank you.

The 2022 sign up chart for **FOOD BASKETS** is available. You may contact the office at publisher@fcc-hsv.org or 256-881-0150 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/



YOU WERE SO GENEROUS!

Through your generosity, \$1,385 was divided between House of Hope in Haiti and Pringle House in Jamaica, both serving very at-risk children in these poor, strife-ridden countries. This is one of the few times we hear about the outcomes of our donations. Mary Ann Anderson has been the CWM contact person for Global Ministries, the umbrella organization for the two Houses. She has been in correspondence with a girl in Pringle House for a few years and the young girl is very happy in the boarding school, a safe and caring environment. Thank you for providing this safety net for several children! Your gifts make a bigger difference than you can know.



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

TUNE MY HEART by Vince Amlin

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 (NRSV)

Last week, my wife and I went to the Milwaukee Art Museum. In one of the galleries, there was a video installation playing on a loop. As we made our way into the next wing, my wife started humming a quick, four-note pattern.

"That's the music that was playing over that video," she said, and hummed it again.

"Uh...no it wasn't," I insisted. "It sounded like this." And I sang a slow, descending three notes.

We both looked at each other confused.

"Now we have to go back," she said. And we did.

The moment we opened the doors to the gallery, I heard those quick four notes she had hummed.

"You were right," I admitted.

But even as I said it, underneath them came my slow, descending motif. We were both right. Both lines had been playing over and over, and each of us had heard only one of them.

Another example of the way the Spirit is made manifest, the way beloved community is built.

Not by choosing one line to sing in unison, but by learning each of our parts well enough to find the rich harmonies between them.

Not by convincing others to hear God's voice the way I hear it. But by encouraging everyone to listen deeply to what the Spirit may be saying only to them.

Prayer - Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing your grace.

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 pervious services anytime, on [facebook.com/fcchsv](https://www.facebook.com/fcchsv), [twitch.tv/fcchsv](https://www.twitch.tv/fcchsv), or [Youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com). (Clickable links)

HEARING THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV

Sermon: May 8, 2022

Scripture Verses:

John 10: 23-30

The human voice is fascinating. Scientists have found out that each person's voice is distinctive; they are as individual as fingerprints or the patterns in the Iris of your eye. Of course, we know that voices can be imitated, some comedians and entertainers make a living off of this talent, but the imitated voice, no matter how well done, is never quite right. You can always tell the difference between the imitated voice and the real thing.

I have noticed the power of the human voice in my life. Patti, Abby, and Joe can pick out my voice even when they do not see me. When I say hello as I walk through the door, even when they are in the other room, they know that I have come home.

My dogs know my voice, and when I call for them to come, even when they are in another room. They will find me, especially if I have cheese. In the same way, I recognize my family's voices and respond quickly when they need me. When Patti calls for help I come running as fast as I can because I know that my wife needs me and I want to help as soon as possible.

In today's scripture passage Jesus says that His sheep know him when they hear his voice. This Sunday is sometimes referred to as "Good Shepherd Sunday" because the scripture readings in the lectionary for all three years come from John chapter 10 and the twenty-third Psalm. These passages are some of the best known in the Bible.

But there are many today who do not want to be compared to sheep. Sheep follow the leader, even when they are being led into danger. Sheep are not the smartest animals in the world and are nowhere near the top of the food chain. Sheep are useful, but they can also be hard to care for, they need constant attention and management.

Why do we have such a hard time thinking of ourselves as helpless and in need of guidance? Why do we not want to be compared to sheep?

In our society success is measured by an individual's achievement, by the work that they have done, and the rewards they have received. Successful people are leaders, they take care of themselves, and they are on top of everything. The humble sheep just does not fit that image.

The lesson for today begins when a group of people, in the temple of Jerusalem, storm up to Jesus and demand answers. "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly."

Obviously these people were confused about Jesus' identity. He was a common man from a common family raised in an ill-respected region of the country far from Jerusalem. Yet, this ordinary person performed uncommon miracles and said extraordinary things. Jesus was beginning to come to the attention of the leaders of Israel.

"Tell us plainly, who are you? No more stories, no more parables, no more talk about gates, sheep, shepherds, yeast, and being the light of the world: just tell us who you are."

We can identify with the people who asked this question. We also want things stated plainly for us, not with a metaphor or with a story. Spell it out for us Jesus: who are you, what do you want us to be, what do you want us to say and what do you want us to do? Tell us plainly!

We are like students in a classroom who beg and plead for a study guide with all the answers before the test. We want to be assured of success; we want to know exactly what we are supposed to do and what we are supposed to think.

Sometimes I think that Jesus gets just as frustrated with us as he did with these questioners. "Tell you plainly?" he responds. "I have told you and you do not believe! The works I do in God's name might be a hint, but you do not believe because you are not one of my sheep."

Everything that Jesus said and did pointed to the idea that he was the Messiah. In John's gospel, this is not a secret; from the very beginning, Jesus is called the Lamb of God who takes away

Voice continued on page 5...

...**Voice** continued from page 4.
the sins of the world. Jesus did everything expected of a Messiah.

Even if Jesus had told them plainly, would these people have listened? Jesus did not have to tell his followers he was the Messiah, his works, his actions, and his very presence spoke the truth. These people were moved by Jesus and responded to his call without direct answers. They already knew what they needed to know.

The composer Frederick Loewe, who wrote musical scores that include *My Fair Lady* and *Camelot*, was not always a famous musician. He studied with the great masters of Europe and achieved success as a composer in his early years, but when he immigrated to the United States, he failed as a pianist. For a while, he tried other types of work including prospecting for gold and boxing, but he never gave up his dream and continued to play piano and write music. During those lean years, he could not always afford to make the payments on his piano.

One day, bent over the keyboard, he had a rare moment of inspiration, and as he played his senses were overwhelmed by the music. When he finished and looked up he was startled to see that he had an audience – three repo men who were seated on the floor.

They said nothing and did not move toward the piano. Instead, they dug into their pockets, pooled together enough money for the payment, placed it on the piano, and walked away empty-handed. Moved by the beauty of his music, these men recognized excellence and responded to it.

Jesus told those who questioned him that they do not know who he is because they are not his sheep. The sheep hear his voice. Jesus knows them and they follow him. That means we have to become sheep, that we have to follow Jesus, in order to understand who he is, and then we have to listen to him if we want our lives to be changed.

How do we hear the voice of the shepherd? As children of God, how do we learn to recognize the voice of Christ, and then follow? The first

thing we have to realize is that God always speaks to us, God is always communicating, just in ways we either fail or do not want to recognize.

Like the uniqueness of the human voice God speaks to each of us differently. Sometimes it is not a voice, God can speak through the scriptures, nature, the work we do, or the words and actions of others, but God does speak.

I can only tell you some of the ways that God has spoken to me. I have heard the voice of God through others, the laughter of my children, the gentle voice of my wife, and the support I received from church members and friends. I have heard God in nature when the wind whispers through the trees and I realize how glorious creation is. I have seen God in the actions of volunteers as they pick up debris after storms and find the strength to help others rebuild. I hear God in the voices of those who are in need when they understand they are not alone.

There have been times when it has been difficult to hear the voice of the Shepherd, but that was because of my confusion, or even lack of listening. When I calmed myself and opened my ears, I heard the voice again, and I continue to hear it.

How do you hear the voice of God and what have you done to respond? As Christians, we must ask ourselves this question every day. Are we moved by the beauty of the Shepherd's voice, do we recognize excellence when we hear it, or do we only want to hear our voices mirroring our expectations of who Jesus should be?

Thanks be to God, Amen.



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 the air flow of our heating and cooling system.**
- 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.**

HOW TO GIVE ON LINE?

Miss church, but would still like to give your tithe or offering? You may give online through PayPal by going to the church website <http://fcc-hsv.org/who-we-are/how-to-give/> and scrolling down to the donate button. You may designate your tithe or offering for the General Fund or specify a particular church ministry/fund. You may also designate if you would like this to be a recurring or single donation.