



WHAT I LEARNED FROM CHURCH CAMP

Last week was the deadline for applications for our Regional Church Camps for 2021. I will admit to a little apprehension about camp because of the past year. In 2020 we did have church camp, just not in person. I was one of the keynoters for the online Chi-Rho camp and I can remember talking about Superheroes and prayer to kids who had just come from a few months of at home learning heading into an uncertain future. They did not know what going to school would look like in the fall, they did not know when they could go back to church, youth groups, play sports, or just pal around outside with friends. They did not know what online camp should look like, so some were talkative and spoke about what they were doing during the day, while others remained silent and only said something when we asked them a question directly.

I can remember my own fears after that night. Church camp has always been special to me. I spent my teenage summers either going to camp or as a volunteer counselor. In College, I was a part of camp staff before it was a paid position, going home on the weekends to do my laundry and sleep for a few hours, only to drive back the next Sunday afternoon for pre-camp meetings. Camp was one of the first places I felt a call to ministry and an understanding that this could be something I was good at. I felt as though I fit in at camp, when I did not fit in at school or at social events.

I have always wanted to give children and youth the same experiences that I had at camp, but after last year I realized this was an impossible task. Camp has changed, the church has changed, the world has changed, and now the youth at camp will have different experiences and unique memories, and this is not a bad thing. Yes, this year our camp numbers will probably be smaller, but the youth who arrive will truly want to be there, and if we have an experience that is fun and spirit filled, then they will want to come back. They will likely tell their friends at church or at school how wonderful camp was and our numbers will begin to pick up again. In a few years, 2020 will just be a blip on the map, something taught in history books that we will hopefully learn from. However, camp, the church and the world will be renewed and ready to move on to new questions and opportunities.

Yes, this new year will bring challenges, but it is still camp, and I have found that our program succeeds year after year because of the passion of our volunteers, the eagerness of the youth, and the Spirit of God that makes wonderful things happen during that short week. As always I learn from church camp and I can now see that our congregation and community will do the same. It is a new world, filled with hope and expectation and now is the time to immerse ourselves once again in the family of faith and come out ready for new life.

Thanks be to God, Amen.

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

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



SAVE THE DATE!

Vacation Bible School-In Person!
July 19-23 (9:00-11:30 am)
Ages 3 through 5th Grade

This year at VBS, we will explore five stories about Jesus from the Gospels of Luke and John. These stories reveal the generosity of God, the transforming power of Jesus' welcome, and offer a model for living and sharing God's hospitality. Children will be invited to see the ways Jesus welcomed and cared for all people and be challenged to welcome and share that same hospitality with everyone. Join us as we discover all are welcome at the table!

To register your child or to volunteer to help please contact Pastor Laura (256) 881-0150 or laura@fcc-hsv.org

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY STARTS JUNE 10



Joshua - *Winning the Worry Battle*, by Barb Roose will be our study topic. The participant's workbook can be purchased either on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) or [Cokesbury](https://www.cokesbury.com) websites for roughly \$12.00-ISBN 13:9781501813603

When: We will meet for 6 weeks on Thursday mornings from 10:00 until 11:30, beginning on June 10th and ending July 15th.

Where: The Family Services Room

Covid protocols will be followed as set out in church policy. If you are interested, please call the Church Office at 256-881-0150. or email office@fcc-hsv.org

IN PERSON & ONLINE WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday in-person worship services are at 9:30 a.m. but you may still stream them live at 9:30 a.m., or watch pervious services anytime, on [facebook.com/fcchsv](https://www.facebook.com/fcchsv), [twitch.tv/fcchsv](https://www.twitch.tv/fcchsv), or search First Christian Church Huntsville on Youtube. See **New COVID-19 Protocols** on page 4.



SHORT 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

First Christian Church
Ft. Walton Beach, FL

SEVERAL OPEN DATES FOR FOOD BASKETS

Sign up dates for **FOOD BASKETS** are 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, with checks made out to First Christian Church and Food Basket on the notation line, and go to our Community Outreach committee for local needs.



Back by popular Demand!

The First Christian Church Cancel Choir!

Your voice is needed, so you are encouraged and welcomed to join us. Rehearsals resume June 9th from 7:00 - 7:40 P.M. (Masks are required.) Contact Lauren Wilson, Music Director, if interested.

More information coming soon!

UPDATE ON SALVATION ARMY MOBILE KITCHEN

Every third Tuesday of the month, FCC volunteers drive and serve for two locations of the Salvation Army Mobile Kitchen. From 25-50 people receive a meal prepared by the Salvation Army on Seminole Drive. This service requires two to three people for 1 1/2 hours, 5:15 - 6:45 PM. No special driver's license is required, however the driver must complete an application and have a good driving record for SA insurance purposes. Currently the Chandlers, Coburns, and Swards are volunteering. There is always room for more help. Contact the Church Office at 256-881-0150 or office@fcc-hsv.org for more information.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROJECT FOR JUNE: WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

The Community Outreach Committee's project for June is collecting financial donations for the Foster Care Unit of the Department of Human Resources (DHR).

There are over 400 children in foster care in Madison County and funding is not adequate to cover all their needs. These children are in care through no fault of their own; they have been abused and neglected by those who should have protected them. Community Outreach, with your help, would like to ensure that the Foster Care Unit has funds on hand to use throughout the year to help our children who are suffering physically, mentally, and emotionally. A check can be made to FCC with "CO/DHR" in the memo line. Thank you for caring about the vulnerable children in our community.



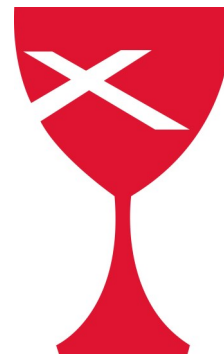
LONG TERM PRAYER CONCERNS



Please remember to keep the following individuals in your prayers.

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.



WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

- May 16 - 63
- May 23 - 82
- May 30 - 69

NEW COVID-19 PROTOCOLS

(APPROVED MAY 22)

- **Fully vaccinated individuals may choose to attend with or without masks.**
- **Attendees who are not fully vaccinated, and children who are able, will continue to wear face coverings/masks inside the church until further notice.**
- There will only be **one 9:30 a.m. service** offered for the next 12 months. 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.
- Hand sanitizer and masks are available for those who have not brought their own.
- Prepackaged communion elements will continue to be used and are available in the Narthex.
- The **nursery** will reopen on **June 6** for the 9:30 a.m. service and the 10:30 a.m. small group time.
- Attendance is limited (approximately 75) to the ability to social distance (6 feet apart for non-household members). Every other pew will be roped off for social distancing.
- **Members may vocalize** during the service, such as stating the Lord's Prayer, litanies, etc. We will begin singing the Doxology within the service and will look at adding more congregational music as state and national numbers continue to improve.
- Offerings may be placed in the brass plate when exiting the sanctuary or sent by mail.
- Food, coffee, and other hospitality services remain suspended until further notice.
- **Small groups** (including Sunday school classes) will **resume June 6** and meet in person at **8:30 a.m. or 10:30 a.m.**
- An **Intergenerational Small Group** class for children, youth, and any adults that wish to attend will meet at 10:30 a.m. beginning June 6 and continuing through August.

- 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.

THE WONDER OF IT ALL by Talitha Arnold

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. - Acts 2:43 (NRSV)

I wonder how long their wonder lasted. After the first Pentecost, I wonder how long those early Christians could sustain their amazement and awe at God's mighty deeds. The rush of the wind, the tongues of fire, the ability to understand one another in all different languages. It was a wonder-filled day.

But then the next day came, the next week, the next month...ordinary time filled with ordinary life. As a Buddhist saying goes, "Before enlightenment, the laundry. After enlightenment, the laundry." For the early Christians, perhaps it was, "Before Pentecost, bake the bread. After Pentecost, bake the bread." Or "Before Pentecost, the Roman Empire. After Pentecost, the Roman Empire."

So how long did their wonder last? How long will ours – not only after Pentecost, but also after the end of the pandemic? How long will we thank God for vaccinations? Once our congregations re-gather in person, how long will we be amazed at the everyday joy of being together?

I can guess some of my own mantras: "Before the pandemic, keep the church going. After the pandemic, keep the church going." "Before the pandemic, the stewardship campaign. After the pandemic, the stewardship campaign." Perhaps you have your own.

It's hard to sustain wonder. The early Christians knew that as well as we do. So after the first Pentecost, they continued to do all the ordinary things we still do as local churches. Break bread, pray, engage the Word, praise God, care for those in need, and figure out how to share their common life.

And their common, ordinary life became the greatest wonder of all. It still is.

Prayer

Thank you, God, for your great wonder. Amen.

Call and Response

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV Sermon May 30, 2021

Scripture - Isaiah 6: 1-8

During the sermon in many African American and Pentecostal churches a wondrous interplay between minister and congregation takes place. As the minister speaks the congregation is not silent, in fact, they explode with energy and sound, supporting the words of the preacher, and proclaiming their affirmation of the message. This has been named the call and response.

In most mainline churches this is not the case. The Sermon is not participatory, that is to say that the congregation simply sits and listens for the most part. The only way for a minister to receive feedback about the sermon is to hear what people say afterward. So yes, when you tell me that you enjoyed the sermon, that is meaningful, and I appreciate it.

However, in most cases, the true test of a sermon is not if people enjoy or even remember it; rather, it is the long term results. Did people truly hear the message, did it change their lives and empower them to accept God in a new way, or did it fall upon deaf ears?

In many ways a sermon always depends upon the model of call and response. The minister calls and there is the option for the congregation to respond. Now, this does not mean that the call comes from the minister, in fact, most preachers will tell you that their hope is that their sermon is inspired by God, although looking back through some of my sermons I would hate to lay the blame for them on God.

Even so, at their best, a sermon, a worship service, any experience with God holds a prophetic call to action, change, and service. The question is, how will we respond?

In the scripture lesson for today we hear about the call and response of Isaiah, but we need to begin with a historical note on the book of the prophet.

Isaiah can actually be separated into three, distinct time periods. The first period, which our scripture comes from, is before the Babylonian exile, the second is during the exile, and the third is afterward. Each section of Isaiah holds a different message and it is clear that the first section condemns the people for their unbelief.

The account of Isaiah's vision begins with a reference to time. The author uses the death of King Uzziah to locate the event in history. In 2nd Chronicles and 2nd Kings we hear a great deal about King Uzziah,

or Azariah, whose reign was long and prosperous, but also filled with disobedience and sin.

After his death, the nation of Judah, long since separated from the Northern Kingdom of Israel, reached a time of crisis. The Northern Kingdom had been conquered by Assyria, but because Judah had allied themselves with the Assyrians they were spared, even though they became a vassal to this vast empire.

Politically Judah was relatively safe, their economy was stable, and religion was thriving, but it seemed to make little difference in the moral lives of the of the people.

The rich became wealthier by abusing the poor, corruption and bribery were ramped; yet nothing was being done. Therefore, in the tradition of that time a prophet was called to service.

Isaiah's call to prophecy is similar to the call of Moses. Moses had a vision of God, a theophany, through the burning bush. This became a worshipful experience when God told Moses to remove his sandals because he was standing upon holy ground.

Isaiah also had a vision of God on holy ground, the temple. He saw and experienced God in ways that changed his life forever, but unlike Moses who was called to lead, Isaiah is told that he would speak to the people and they would not listen. Judah was a tree that was ready to be cut down; Isaiah's job was to make sure that there was still life in the stump.

The majesty of God is apparent in the language of the call narrative. The LORD is seen sitting on a throne high above the temple. In fact, God is so large that the hem of God's robe fills the temple itself.

God is flanked by Seraphs, or the burning ones, so named because of their zeal for the LORD. These angelic creatures had six wings, two that covered their face in a sign of humility, two that covered their feet to denote their service to God, and two that allowed them to fly, speaking to their ongoing activity in proclaiming God's holiness and glory.

The Seraphs use the threefold proclamation of the word holy to suggest the supreme or complete holiness of God. In fact, their speech is so powerful the pivots on the thresholds of the temple shook with the sound of their voices.

In this way the temple becomes a place where earth and Heaven meet. Much like Jacob's vision of the ladder between heaven and earth in Genesis 28, Isaiah is shown the ultimate power of God, but still

Response continued page 6...

...**Response** continued.

connection between the heavenly and ordinary is sustained throughout the scriptures and into our day.

Once Isaiah was in the presence of God, he discovers something disturbing about himself and about his nation. He is a man of unclean lips, he is a sinner and the people of Judah are the same.

You have to wonder if this is the first time that Isaiah has thought about this and actually confessed it aloud. It is easy to believe that those who are around us are sinful, but very difficult to look deep into ourselves and understand how we are separated from God.

Isaiah was afraid that he would be condemned, that the very sight of the Lord would lead to his death, as his tradition told him, but instead, he took the opportunity to confess his sins and God offers redemption.

One of the Seraphs takes a live coal from the altar of sacrifice in the temple and touched Isaiah's mouth with it to cleanse the affected area. With that gesture the Seraph states that Isaiah's guilt has departed and his sin has been blotted out, he has been reconciled with God.

After this time of experiencing the majesty of God, self-revelation, confession, cleaning, and reconciliation, Isaiah can now entertain notions of serving God. This experience of worship not only dealt with Isaiah's needs but also with God's need of him.

If Isaiah had not gone through this turbulent life-changing experience then would he have been able to respond to God's call? When he heard, "Whom shall I send?" could he have responded, "Here I am, send me?"

When we hear the call of the prophet Isaiah we usually respond in two ways. We either believe that

this is a fanciful tale full of mystical beings that does not relate to us, or we think that since we do not receive such a call from God then we are excluded from the work of prophesy.

We do not see God as Isaiah did, we will not have an experience with a burning bush or a ladder into heaven. Each of God's prophets, messengers, and followers experience the call in different ways.

Yet, just because this call does not come as we expect it does not mean that it is not there. Isaiah's narrative serves as a reminder for us today. It tells us to look deep into ourselves, recognize our fear and sin, and not only ask for forgiveness but how we can better serve our God.

Faith is not just about hearing the call, but responding. Actively attempting to place God first in our lives and change ourselves so that we can become the prophets, the messengers of our age. If we have not heard this call in our lives then we must ask ourselves, what is separating us from God and like Isaiah we must be ready to look within ourselves, accept our brokenness, and offer to change.

God can and will speak to us, and through us, if we open our hearts, experience the majesty of God, discover our need for our Creator, confess our sins, repent and accept cleansing, and then realize that we are now asked to become servants of God. As Charles Wesley once wrote, in this manner we can be, "changed from glory into glory," by beholding our Lord.

On this day, through the passage from Isaiah, the voice of the Lord has called out to us and asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Now the only question is, how will we respond? Thanks be to God, Amen.

