



The Journey

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MILESTONES OF FAITH

This week Joe will be a freshman in High School and next week Abby will head to Auburn for college. I have to admit that all these changes are bringing up some strong emotions. My daughter is now a young woman and ready to begin the first chapter of adulthood. My son is growing up before my eyes. He is getting taller, stronger, and more confident. Patti and I are lucky to have such great kids it will be hard to see them walk out of the door. I also find myself looking forward to everything High School will bring for Joe, trips, music recitals, teacher meetings all those times when parents can see the growth of their children. I also know that Abby will succeed in College and start a life beyond our home. These are milestones, moments in time that are life changing and that will be retained in our memories. In times to come I will look back on these days full of wonder.

Just as people grow and change so do institutions. Churches must constantly develop new ways of doing ministry, new mission opportunities, and ways of understanding how God works with us and through us as a community. For some change can be frightening. Churches bring comfort through their traditions and practices, and often it is hard to see something you love become different. However, it is through these differences that we reach out to new people and revive our spirits.

At First Christian Church we are moving forward by remembering the lessons of our past but also looking to the future. We rejoice to be a part of a congregation that worships together, builds a sense of family, does so much for the community, and provides opportunities to learn about our faith. On August 8th we will celebrate Kickoff Sunday and have a wonderful meal together that afternoon. Please invite friends, family, and neighbors to share in our joy as we thank God for First Christian Church and its ministry.

Let us also use this time to look ahead, see what our needs are now, and think about what our needs will be in the future. God has a purpose for our church and we must seek this vision and make it our own to continue to be faithful to our call to ministry. As we grow and develop as a community of faith we will look back to this time as a milestone for our church and look ahead to the next milestone so we can move forward in faith. 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/fccshv](https://www.facebook.com/fccshv), [twitch.tv/fccshv](https://www.twitch.tv/fccshv), or [youtube.com/channel/UCzQCRY8Vfa-IDhuqUnUhCKw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzQCRY8Vfa-IDhuqUnUhCKw)

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, August 5**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

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

NEW CHURCH DIRECTORY

Please contact the church office (256-881-0150 or office@fcc-hsv.org) by **Friday, August 13**, if you have changed phone numbers or email addresses since the December 2020 Directory was published. Also, let us know if there are any other changes that you would like made. **Otherwise we will use the same information as was published in the last directory.**

We can publish up to two phone numbers (e.g. husband's and wife's numbers) per family. We can also include one email address if you would like it included. If you did not have an email address included in the last directory, and would like your email included in this directory, please contact the office and let us know.

We anticipate mailing the new directories by Friday, August 20. A PDF version of the directory will be available upon request.

AUGUST CALENDAR

The following are the known church related activities.

- August 2 10:30 am Quilters
5 pm MF4 Leadership Meeting
- August 4 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- August 8 11:45 am Community Outreach
4:30 pm Mission Family Kickoff
- August 9 10:30 am Quilters
5 pm Conveners' Meeting
- August 11 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- August 12 6 pm Board Meeting
- August 16 10:30 am Quilters
- August 18 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- August 21 **(Cancelled)** 90th Birthday Party
- August 23 10:30 am Quilters
- August 25 6 pm Men's Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- August 30 10:30 am Quilters



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

Little Union, Hayneville, AL

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE SUNDAY, JULY 4

Service: 62

Small Groups: 15

OPEN DATES FOR FOOD BASKETS

September 12 & 19

October 17

November 14

December 5 & 26

THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET is in honor of Parker Sholes' 13th birthday by Bill & Janet Sholes.



WHAT IS IT?

By Vince Amlin

When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the wilderness was a fine flaky substance, as fine as frost on the ground. When the Israelites saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?"

- Exodus 16:14-15a (NRSV)

I opened the first of my Christmas gifts that year and turned to my wife in confusion. "It's...a compass?"

We lived in Chicago. I had not recently taken up orienteering.

"There's a theme," she assured me. But as I opened more presents, the theme seemed to be "things I have no use for." A pocketknife. Quick-dry shorts.

I smiled and said thanks.

The Israelites are starving. So hungry they're ready to turn back to the enslavers in Egypt. And Moses assures them: God is going to give you a gift.

The next morning, there's dew on the ground at their camp. And when the sun dries it, a fine flaky substance is left behind.

Moses says, "There it is! A gift from God!"

The people look at him confused and ask, "What is it?"

Within a couple months of unwrapping that compass, I was planning my first backpacking trip. And over the past 15 years, I've carried it down hundreds of miles of trail to some of the most spectacular places I've ever been.

It turns out that the best gifts are the ones that confuse us, that show up just before we know what to do with them and teach us who we're going to be.

Like that "bread" that the Israelites developed a taste for. The food that made them into God's people. The gift that guided and sustained them through the wilderness toward what was next.

Prayer

Confusing One, give me the gift I'm almost ready for.

SUNDAY COVID-19 PROTOCOLS

(Approved by the Board on July 8)

- **One 9:30 a.m. service** will be offered at least through May 2022. First Christian Church offers virtual services ([facebook.com/fcchsv](https://www.facebook.com/fcchsv), [twitch.tv/fcchsv](https://www.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.
- **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.**
- 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.
- A section of pews located in the front of the sanctuary, on the choir side, has every other row of pews roped off to allow individuals to practice social distancing so that they may worship at their level of comfort.
- **Members 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.
- Food, coffee, and other hospitality services remain suspended until further notice.
- **Small groups** (including Sunday school classes) will meet at **8:30 a.m. or 10:30 a.m.** A list of groups is available at the welcome table as you enter the church.
- 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.

FROM INFANCY TO MATURITY

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV Sermon August 1, 2021

Scripture Verses: Ephesians 4: 1-16

It is always interesting to witness the things that bring people closer together, especially in times of emergency. I encountered this firsthand on a mission trip to Christmount, our national campground, in North Carolina, many years ago. On the first night, at 1:15, am my group was awakened by the fire alarm and voices screaming "Get out of the building."

Of course, I jumped out of bed to see what was going on and saw that smoke was beginning to fill the left side of the cabin where we were staying. I woke up the four boys in the room with me and got them outside. Soon another group joined us and we each made a headcount. All of my youth were there, but we soon discovered that the other church group was missing a young boy.

Of course, we rushed into the building and found the boy, still asleep in his bunk. He was fine, wrapped in a sleeping bag with headphones on, so he had not even heard the commotion, but I still remember the sick feeling I had in my stomach when I heard someone say, "We are missing one."

As it turns out the fire was not bad; it was in the wall switch that controlled the fan in the room, but at that moment our group was unified by concern for an individual. This event brought us closer and we worked hard together throughout the week because we knew we could count on each other. We discovered this our first night.

In the first three chapters of the letter to the Ephesians the author reminds his audience of the ministry, life, and death of Christ. He tells them of Paul's ministry and his devotion to the early church. But, the author is writing for a reason and now gets to the true point of the letter. He had already touched on the unity that Christ brings but now this idea comes to the forefront as we are given instructions on how to live in this unity.

This idea is an ever-present theme in Paul's

writings because, just like people today, the early church was having problems getting along. Individuals in the church would quarrel over matters of doctrine and churches would disagree with other congregations about cultural practices, methods of worship, and leadership.

The author of Ephesians understood that we needed to know how Christ had unified us and that the world must know that Christ made us one people through his life, death, and resurrection. Therefore the instruction begins when the author not just asks, but begs his audience, to live lives worthy of the calling they had been given.

He reminds us that we are given gifts of the Spirit during baptism; these gifts are listed in the first few verses.

Humility - the knowledge that we are not in charge of all things. That we are just a part of what is going on in heaven and earth.

Gentleness - being kind and sensitive to each other.

Patience - knowing that things don't always happen when we want them to happen. We are not the ones who set the timetable, God does.

Love - The gift to love all as a brother and sister in Christ.

And Unity - Being joined not just with each other, but with Jesus as well. The author asks that we make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.

We do not create this unity or any of the other gifts that are given. Rather, these attributes are provided for us by God. Most importantly, they are meant to be used to guide our physical and spiritual lives. If they lie dormant, then not only are we not living up to our spiritual potential, we are also refusing the gifts of God. We are telling God that, we have no use for our Creator; we are just fine by ourselves.

In the next few verses the author uses the word one seven times; one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God; to remind us that the unity we seek is not just an

Maturity continued page 5...

...**Maturity** continued.

earthly unity. We seek this union with others because it is a gift from God and because we are modeling the unity of the trinity.

Yet, this unity is hard to come by. Everywhere we look in our world we are divided. Race, creed, nationality, gender, etc. all play a part in this separation. Even our ideas of salvation can separate us. We spend so much time trying to understand God's will for our lives that we forget that part of our call is to worship and understand the will of God together.

It is easy to shut yourself off from the rest of the world and become a community of one. We have come to the point technologically where we could shut our doors forever, order anything we need by phone or through the internet, and live in our houses for the rest of our lives, never going out, communicating only through cold technology.

If you do not believe that this can happen, it already has. Many in our society are losing their connection with their neighbors and communities and instead, find relationships through social media or develop attachments to movie or television stars. Perhaps they believe it is easier to develop a bond when the other person cannot influence their physical lives.

For most of us this is not an option, but I know how simple it is for all of us to become so involved with our own family, church, school, or workplace that everything else is put on hold. We put things off for another day instead of thinking about how we affect those around us now. But this kind of procrastination is dangerous not only to our souls but to the very Spirit of justice.

We are reminded that we have a role to play in God's grand design for the world. Our Christian lives do not end at baptism; rather this is just their beginning. The gifts that God has given us, the roles that we are called to play in the church, must be used to "equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ."

This is the key to this section of scripture. Paul tells us directly that we are the ones who equip the saints, but we are also the saints as well; the

body of Christ. Therefore, we are called to equip each other. No one is to be left out, no one will be forgotten, all people will be empowered not just by our actions, but by God.

I am fascinated by television shows and YouTube videos that show craftsmen taking old and usually worn-out equipment and then making them new again. Finding, what most of us would consider junk, and making it useful and beautiful once again. The same is done for older buildings that are repurposed and renovated to show their former glory. Old homes made new for young families or former industrial buildings turned into restaurants or community centers.

Old buildings can be made new, just like old lives can be made new. Yet, renewal never comes through the work of one person. Just as it took many hands to repair and renovate an older building it takes the work of Christians and God to provide the support that others need so that their lives can be changed.

We do not achieve a mature faith when we become Christians, in many ways this decision is the easy part. Our maturity of faith comes when we choose to sacrifice for the good of others and when we equip the saints so that the work of ministry can continue. Let us mature in our faith this day and promote the growth of the church together. Thanks be to God, Amen.

