



The Journey

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COMING BACK HOME

It is nice to get away from home for a while, take a vacation, and enjoy different sights and sounds, but it is just as nice to return home to what makes us comfortable. Last week Patti, Abby, Joe, and I went on vacation to Pigeon Forge, Tennessee to go to Dollywood and a few other destinations in the area. We took our small camper and stayed in a tightly packed RV park on the edge of town. Of course, it was hot, traffic was busy since everyone else in the area decided to take a vacation at the same time, and we had a few bumps in the road, however, we also loved the experience. For this trip we focused on having fun, taking time to be with one another before Abby heads off to college and Joe begins High School. We wanted to make memories, and we were certainly able to do this.

Sometimes our journeys cause us to make changes in our lives by giving us a different understanding of the world or a new focus. This allows us to rethink old beliefs and ideas and create a new self-image. But often, our travels serve as a reminder of how fortunate we truly are, that we are blessed to live in a place that provides warmth, fellowship, and love.

I think that it is necessary to get away from the usual from time to time and explore new possibilities, but I also know that comfort and joy can be found in the traditional, and when we combine the strengths of both we will find that our lives are renewed. This is what is so exciting about any journey, the possibility that we will have a life-changing experience.

First Christian Church in Huntsville has continued its spiritual journey for many years. Throughout this time there have been changes in membership, structure, leadership, and worship, but the mission of the church has remained the same, to equip the saints for the work of ministry and share the Good News of Jesus Christ with the world.

We should be proud of the heritage of our congregation, but we must also continue to look forward. The world around us is changing and we must look beyond our doors and into the community to meet the needs of those around us and share the love of Christ. Yes, this means there is change on the horizon, but through the power of God, our church will continue to grow in Spirit and it will fulfill its mission. Part of the joy of any journey is coming home. So I welcome you back to your church home. Come and experience the fellowship and love of Christ and become a part of our mission as we follow in the footsteps of 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/fchsv](https://www.facebook.com/fchsv), [twitch.tv/fchsv](https://www.twitch.tv/fchsv), or [youtube.com/channel/UCzQCRY8Vfa-IDhuqUnUhCKw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzQCRY8Vfa-IDhuqUnUhCKw)

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, August 12**, 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.

HYGIENE ITEMS FOR MORRIS ELEMENTARY

Hygiene items for Morris Elementary is the designated school project during August for Community Outreach. Morris is a pre K - 8th grade school with many students and various needs. Miss Kristie, nurse, at the school stated: the needs vary from underwear for those accidents with the younger children to sanitary items for the older students. There are always additional needs for soap, shampoo, etc. Since storage space is limited and the needs vary from year to year, this will be a monetary event only. Please, no product donations to the church. The church will submit a check to the school admin for hygiene needs and Miss Kristie will be able to purchase her most urgent needs from this fund. Make your check to First Christian and write in the item line: CO - Morris school.

Thank you for your support.

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE SUNDAY, AUGUST 8

Service: 69

Small Groups: 19



SHORT TERM PRAYER CONCERNS



Not Published Online

CONDOLENCES to the family of Danielle Jones, daughter of Carl Jones, who recently passed.

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, Huntsville, AL

OPEN DATES FOR FOOD BASKETS
September 12 & 19
November 14
October 17
December 5 & 26

THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET is in honor of James Cannon's birthday by Beverly Cannon



NEW WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Beginning in September

What: The Book of Romans

Materials Needed: A Bible and our text [Invitation to Romans](#) by Pamela M. Eisenbaum . The text can be found on Amazon at a cost of \$9.59. Following is the web link: www.amazon.com/Invitation-Romans-Participant-Short-Term-DISCIPLE-ebook/dp/B00XPZ1B2I

When: We will meet on 9/9/2021 at 10:00 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. and each Thursday thereafter.

How Long: Eight (8) weeks.

Where: Family Services room.

If you are interested or have any questions please contact Lisa Fitzgerald

AUGUST CALENDAR

The following are the known church related activities.

August 9	10:30 am Quilters 5 pm Conveners' Meeting
August 10	6 pm Elders' 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) Carolyn Brown's 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
September 1	6 pm Men's Group 7 pm Choir Rehearsal
September 6	Labor Day Church Office Closed 10:30 am Quilters

FORMS OF ASSISTANCE By Martha Spong

And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. - 1 Corinthians 12:28 (NRSV)

As a coach working with pastors, I often close a session with a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the person I'm coaching, for the gifts and talents God has given them for ministry, and for the ways those gifts are being used and developed for the good of God's kin-dom. They are inspiring preachers, fine administrators, dedicated educators, and compassionate pastors, but rare is the one who excels at all these roles all the time. Whether they partner with colleagues or work collaboratively with church leaders, one of their most important tasks is to identify and support the gifts of others for the good of the church and the world.

Paul, in his letter to the church at Corinth, points out that we all have different capacities and that they are all needed in our faith communities. My favorite mentioned in verse 28 is "forms of assistance." It brings to mind the volunteers who organized a Pet Pantry at the UCC church in North Yarmouth, Maine, providing dearly needed help to lower- or fixed-income people in the neighborhood. Not only did they see the need, they inspired others to care and to contribute time, funds, and material goods. Vision, compassion, generosity, and practicality were the gifts given to them by God.

What is your gift? How are you using it? Believe me, someone needs what you have been given and what you have to give.

Prayer

Holy One, we thank you for the capacities you have given us. Help us to see what is needed and to use our strengths to serve you. Amen.

Forgive As God Forgives

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

Scripture Verses: Ephesians 4: 25 - 5: 2

We have all had bad travel experiences, missing a turn, getting lost in the middle of the night, or your wallet or purse being stolen. But the worst seems to be when you are stuck at the airport. You are literally at their mercy going where they tell you, waiting in line, running on their timetable, eating airport food, and trying to get comfortable in those awful chairs.

I can remember one experience in particular that sums up my frustrations with airlines. Patti and I were flying back to Greenville, NC. Our flight was late so we were already tired and cranky. When we got off the plane we went immediately to baggage claim. Patti's bag was there but mine was not. So I peeked into the luggage area behind the carousel and saw my bag sitting on a cart. When I went to the counter to ask what was happening no one was there. So I went back to the luggage carousel.

By the time I got back there was a line of people waiting for their luggage. So after about fifteen minutes, with the carousel not moving and no luggage in sight, I went back to the counter. The crowd followed me and now there were agents but instead of helping those who were waiting for their bags they helped customers who were buying tickets for flights weeks ahead of us. They even asked those who were waiting for their bags to move out of line so the customers could get through.

Finally, someone yelled asking about the luggage and the agents asked for names of people who did not have their bags. They were overwhelmed by the amount of names and began to go back and get the luggage but only one bag at a time even though most of the bags were on the same cart.

It took an hour to get my luggage but the thing that really made me angry was no one said "I'm sorry. This was our mistake. We will fix the problem." That simple act of contrition, of acceptance

that there was a problem, could have eased tensions and helped the situation. Saying I am sorry costs us nothing, but seems to be very hard to do.

In the scripture passage for this week Paul encourages the readers to give up practices that lead to broken relationships with others and with God, and engage in practices that build up the community. Paul also calls for the creation of systems within the church that encourage this attitude. Paul's instructions are presented as a series of vices to avoid and virtues to embrace, consistent with the wisdom teaching of the day. Which is why it so strange for Paul to extol the virtue of anger and the importance of forgiveness.

How many times have you read a scripture passage that tells you it is OK to be angry? As Christians we shy away from anger thinking, rightfully, that it can lead to hurt feelings, destroyed relationships, and resentment. But there are things in the world we should be angry about.

When a child dies of starvation we should be angry. When an elderly person is forgotten and alone, we should be angry. When fanatics hurt the innocent in the name of religion we should be furious. This is righteous anger, justified frustration at the broken nature of the world.

But anger by itself does nothing. Paul tells us; do not let the sun go down on your anger. If you are frustrated about a situation do something about it, sitting and fuming does nothing. And more importantly, before you act, think about the people around you. How can you act in a way that will build them up and allow them to experience the love of Christ?

Paul knew about anger and frustration. He had experienced these emotions many times when he dealt with the church in Jerusalem. He tells us about his anger when he wrote about the conflict with Peter in Galatians and how he called him out in front of others because Peter did not live out his beliefs when he refused to eat with Gentile Christians in front of Jewish believers.

Paul also understood that mercy, grace, and forgiveness are more powerful than anger be

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cause they are unexpected. The world assumes that when we are wronged we will seek retribution. Mercy and forgiveness are unanticipated and often what is unexpected is more powerful!

Paul starts by covering old ground in Ephesians. He tells the readers to put away all falsehood and their old ways of living, reminding them that they must turn away from greed and lives of fear and darkness to live in the light of God.

It is hard for others to experience the light of God when Christians do not live in a godly manner. Of course we are not supposed to be perfect, but we are expected to be different, to live by another set of rules, one that tells us to speak the truth to our neighbors and act in accordance to our faith.

We cannot suppress what we believe. We cannot be Christians and keep our faith to ourselves. It must be expressed in everything we say and do. Paul tells us that we have to "put away" lying, angry actions, stealing, evil talk, bitterness, wrath, anger, wrangling, slander, and malice, all those things we are good at, and instead "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, and forgiving, just as God in Christ has forgiven you.

These attributes sound weak to us: kind, tenderhearted, and forgiving? What about those people who deserve our anger and situations that make us feel powerless? Marjorie Thompson writes, "Forgiveness does not mean denying our hurt. It is not to be a doormat or to play the martyr." Nor does forgiveness mean "putting the other person on probation," ready to snatch it back if the person doesn't live up to our expectations. And perhaps most surprisingly, forgiveness is not forgetting.

Then what is forgiveness? Webster's dictionary defines forgive as "to cease to feel resentment" or "to grant relief from payment." Marjorie Thompson goes on to describe forgiveness as making a choice to release the person who has wounded us from our judgment, however justified that judgment may be. It is a choice to leave behind our resentment and desire for revenge.

But Paul tells us that we are called to forgive because God in Christ forgave us. We have already been pardoned, mercy has been granted, and we have received the gift of new life. What would we be, how could we look God in the face, if we did not provide forgiveness to others?

Paul says that we are to imitate God, like children imitate their parents. For me, this brings to mind children at play. We all remember as children wearing our father's shoes and clumping around the house or finding old clothes in a closet, trying them, and pretending that we were adults?

Indeed we are like children putting on the shoes of our parent and stamping around the house, imitating the actions of our Creator who guides and loves us.

When God forgives, God says, "I will remember your sins no more." [Jeremiah 31:34] That's the way God is. Our sins are no longer held against us and we are given a new chance to live in community with God and with others.

The Rev. Dr. Benjamin Reeves writes, "Could it be, that the fullness of forgiveness is found in the release it brings from the burden and guilt of the past; release for the forgiver and forgiven? Or is it found in the relief it brings, the relief from tension in a relationship with a friend or family member, relief for the forgiven and the forgiver. Release and relief are all a part of forgiveness, but one or both does not bring the fullness of forgiveness. Forgiveness is of God and its fullness is most clearly seen through the prism of God's purpose.

"People are mistaken," writes theologian L. Gregory Jones, "if they think of forgiveness primarily as absolution from guilt; the purpose of forgiveness is the restoration of communion, the reconciliation of brokenness."

So, to imitate God by forgiving means to provide a door of opportunity for reconciliation that is not just a restored relationship but a new relationship between forgiver and forgiven. As Christians we know that forgiveness starts when we realize that we have already been forgiven. The next step is up to us. Thanks be to God, Amen.



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, 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.