



# The Journey

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[www.fcc-hsv.org](http://www.fcc-hsv.org)

## TIME TO GET EXCITED

I enjoy talking to people about what excites them, those things that bring them joy. It is different for everyone. In the church, I have encountered those who are excited by different kinds of music. Others love Bible Studies or discussions on Theology that lead to new forms of understanding. Some enjoy a good sermon or a particularly challenging scripture passage. There are also those who are energized by fellowship, who love to see the people who come to services and talk with them. I know members who are always excited about what is going on and others that need something special, but one of the things I have found out about joy is that it is contagious.

When you are around someone who is excited you cannot help but share their enthusiasm. What is more, when many people are excited about a project, or the direction of the church, this delight leads to new ideas, new ways of worship, and new faces in the congregation. Joy is something that others long for and that many in the world are searching for. Amid the bad news that we hear every day and the challenging times we are still enduring, we want to hear the good news that sustains our spirits and leads us to experience God.

We have many things to be excited about at First Christian Church. As fall begins new programs are starting, small groups are coming back, and while we still have to be creative about how we meet, it warms my heart to see and hear members and visitors returning. Families come back from vacation and share what they did, who they visited, and what they saw. The choir is singing during our Sunday worship service filling our hearts with the music of God. Sunday School classes and youth groups find new energy and purpose and are ready to continue their mission of education and community building. But more importantly, we celebrate the fact that God has blessed First Christian Church with the passion to look ahead to the future, to make changes where needed, and to continue to make a difference in people's lives. That is something to be excited about. Thanks be to God, Amen.

## 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.

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, August 26**, at Noon. Email to: [publisher@fcc-hsv.org](mailto:publisher@fcc-hsv.org)

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

## 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 for \$9.59 at:

[www.amazon.com/Invitation-Romans-Participant-Short-Term-DISCIPLE-ebook/dp/B00XPZ1B2I](http://www.amazon.com/Invitation-Romans-Participant-Short-Term-DISCIPLE-ebook/dp/B00XPZ1B2I)

**When:** We will meet on 9/9/2021 from 10:00 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 by phone at 256- or email at



## SHORT TERM PRAYER CONCERNS



## Not Published Online

**FCC Fall  
Chancel Choir  
Retreat**

Fun, Fellowship, & Singing!

Fri., Sept 10, 5:30 - 8  
Sat., Sept. 11, 10 - 1  
FCC Choir Room

Lineup:  
Christmas Music  
Devotionals  
Games & Food!

Contact Lauren Wilson Carter,  
Director of Music, for Details

### 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](https://facebook.com/fcchsv), [twitch.tv/fcchsv](https://twitch.tv/fcchsv), or [youtube.com/channel/UCzQCRY8Vfa-IDhuqUnUhCKw](https://youtube.com/channel/UCzQCRY8Vfa-IDhuqUnUhCKw)

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](mailto: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

Union Christian Church, Tuskegee, AL

### OPEN DATES FOR FOOD BASKETS

September 19

October 17

November 14

December 5 & 26

**THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET** is in honor of Rick & Kay Shrout's 43rd anniversary.



## AN OLDIE BUT GOODIE

by Marilyn Pagán-Banks

Hannah prayed and said, “My heart exults in the Lord; my strength is exalted in my God. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in my victory.” - 1 Samuel 2:1 (NRSV)

Hannah’s song is her emotional and spiritual response to God answering her prayers for a child - a son. Finally! Finally, God has answered.

And Hannah rejoices. She sings aloud. She is victorious and cannot contain her victory.

The beauty of her song is that it is not just all about her. Like a great lyricist, Hannah translates her victory into victory for all people who are experiencing oppression and hopelessness. Her song of victory is a song of hope for others praying and waiting on God to show up and do something.

Hannah doesn’t receive her gift and run with it, going about her business. She shares the gift of a prayer answered by using her song to gift those around her with hope and possibility and renewed faith.

I feel it when I read it. This song washes over me - like an oldie but goodie.

Maybe I am not the only one who needs a song to take me to a time and place filled with promise and triumph. To remind me of the things I have already won. Of the possibility that victory is still mine. Still ours.

We are called to sing a new song - to tell our story - our collective story. But when the weight of the world gets to be too much, and all you can do is hold on to the oldies but goodies... Baby, that’s alright...

Because hold on we must.

Prayer - In the midst of chaos our hearts exult like Hannah’s, because you, O God, have done marvelous things. We believe in your promise of love and stand in your power of redemption as we boldly sing, ¡Aleluya!

## COVID-19 CHURCH PROTOCOLS

(Approved by the Board on August 12.)

- **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.
- **Wearing face coverings/masks at all times inside the church is encouraged for everyone.**
- 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.
- **Every other row of pews is roped off on the pulpit side of the sanctuary to allow individuals to practice social distancing so that they may worship at their level of comfort. The front section on the pulpit side is the least impacted zone with our heating and cooling system.**
- **Attendees 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.**
- 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.

### WORSHIP ATTENDANCE SUNDAY, AUGUST 8

Service: 56

Small Groups: 21

## THE POWER OF PRAYER

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV      Sermon August 22, 2021  
Scripture Verses:      Ephesians 6: 10-20

The last few weeks we have been reading and studying the book of Ephesians in our worship service. We know that it was a circular letter, sent to many of the Christian communities of that day that begins with a reminder of Christ's life and the works of the apostle Paul. Later, readers are instructed how to live a Christian life, imitating God as children, and living in wisdom. In conclusion, Paul looks to the future of the church telling the readers to put on the armor of God, to prepare themselves spiritually, and pray constantly for all believers.

Paul was writing to people who knew about conflict. The persecution of Christians was a part of daily life, but at this time it was probably more social than political. Christians were seen as outcasts, belonging to a weird cult with strange ideas.

However, the writer of this letter believed that the true conflict for believers would be a spiritual struggle. The details of this battle are not important; rather, we are told to focus on the spiritual gifts that God provides for protection and service.

Clearly, we cannot rely on our strength for this struggle. We have already been reminded of the weakness of humanity. We have been warned of flaws such as greed, ignorance, impurity, and bigotry.

No, our strength is not up to the task, but this does not mean that we will fail. The writer believed that God's presence in our lives is not just spiritual; it is physical. God gives us the strength to overcome hardships and our faith in Christ becomes the bedrock of our lives that cannot be destroyed.

The image of putting on the armor of God is used so that Christians will know that God prepares us for the struggles ahead. We will not be left alone to fend for ourselves; we will be nurtured and protected.

For many, in modern culture, the use of armor and weapons either makes us uncomfortable or

leads us to think that this will be a battle against other people. This is not the case. Anyone who knows about ancient warfare can tell you that there were two kinds of military arms: defensive and offensive. Defensive items are used to protect life and offensive arms are used to kill. Armor is used to protect and preserve life.

In the same way the Apostle Paul tells us that we do not struggle against other human beings. This is not a human war that can be won through the strength of arms. Victory will not come by forcing others to believe as we do and we cannot destroy people who disagree with us. To do so would make us a part of the problem.

The struggle that Paul speaks of is with evil itself, evil as a spiritual force, not just an idea. The malevolence that is the deep-seated need within all humans to become powerful at the expense of others. The desire to take and not to give. The iniquity that resides within us and is a force in the world.

This battle is constantly fought in our souls as we attempt to become more like Christ, rejecting the wickedness within us. If we fight with one another then we have already lost because we have given into the desire to place our needs above others.

Instead, we must remember the call to unity found in this letter and throughout the scriptures, and support and pray for one another, because together we are much stronger than we are alone.

Like a soldier going into battle we are to gear up so that we can win the struggle. The terms used for the spiritual gifts that the writer speaks of come directly from the equipment of the Roman soldier. The belt that draws clothing together and protects the waist, a sign of being prepared. The breastplate that protects the chest and the back. Shoes for the feet, not just for protection, but also for traveling so that the mission and message of Christ might be spread. The helmet that protects the head and the sword of the Spirit, the only offensive armament mentioned, that is the word of God.

*Prayer* continued next page...

...**Prayer** continued.

We are also told to take up the shield of faith, but Paul is not speaking of the medieval shield that comes to mind when we think of this piece of equipment. The Roman shield was large and narrow. Its height covered the chest and the legs, but it was only designed to protect one-half of the soldier's body.

The soldier had to rely on those around him for the rest of his protection. The Roman Legionnaires had to be trained and disciplined to defend one another to be victorious. This is the kind of unity that the writer speaks of, Christians working together to declare the message of Christ boldly.

However, no piece of spiritual armor is as important as prayer. The writer tells us to pray at all times and to stay alert. Prayer is what keeps our faith fresh and alive. Without a daily regimen of prayer, our lives lack the luster and joy we need to continually worship God.

Prayer also provides support for others. Researchers have found that people who pray live longer and heal faster than those who do not. Interestingly enough, people who are prayed for also heal faster when they are sick or injured.

The writer believed that there is power in prayer because he asks the readers to pray for him. Paul puts himself on the prayer list. Personal prayer for others is a necessary part of Christian unity. Ministers, church leaders, and believers need the prayers of the faithful for support and comfort within the community of faith.

It is important to note that the conclusion of Ephesians is not the section on spiritual defensive armor. It is a call to pray, to greet and welcome a coworker that is being sent, and to live in the fullness of the peace of Christ.

Often this section of scripture is taken out of context by supporting two views that are incompatible with the Christian faith. First, some believe that we are surrounded by evil; therefore we have to shield ourselves from contact with the very world that Christ came to redeem.

Secondly, some believe that we should wage

spiritual warfare with those who do not believe as we do. We are the ones who hold the truth and others must learn it exclusively from us.

As a whole, Ephesians calls us neither to fear evil nor to believe that individuals hold a monopoly on truth. Rather we are called to be humbly confident in God who is at work within us and through us for the good of all people.

Ultimately Ephesians ends with hope. The writer of Ephesians may have foreseen spiritual struggles for Christians, and his insight holds true for us today, but we are taught that the power of God will prevail no matter what happens.

We all struggle with fear and sinfulness and know that they can become powerful enough to control our lives. However, we have felt the healing power of God, we have been forgiven, and we will be strengthened in faith.

Our struggle is not with people, it is with evil. So we are called to prepare ourselves, to pray for others, and offer the good news of the gospel to all who will hear. Only by bringing Christ's message of hope, love, peace, and unity, can we erase the power of evil and live lives that are focused on what truly matters.

Thanks be to God, Amen.

### CHURCH CALENDAR

The following are the known church related activities.

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| August 23    | 10:30 am Quilters   |
| August 25    | 6 pm Men's Group<br>7 pm Choir Rehearsal                  |
| August 30    | 10:30 am Quilters   |
| September 1  | 6 pm Men's Group<br>7 pm Choir Rehearsal                  |
| September 6  | <b>Labor Day Church Office Closed</b><br>No Quilters      |
| September 8  | 6 pm Men's Group<br>Phoebe Circle<br>7 pm Choir Rehearsal |
| September 9  | 10 am Women's Bible Study<br>6 pm Board Meeting           |
| September 12 | 11:45 am Community Outreach                               |