



The Journey

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HOW DO WE RESPOND?

What comes after our Stewardship Campaign? We have spent a great deal of time over the past few weeks thinking, discussing, and praying about how to be good stewards of the gifts that God gives to us, now we are called to live out our commitments. So what comes after our Stewardship Campaign, Thanksgiving. In my mind, this is a very appropriate response.

The Apostle Paul writes that generosity is enabled by the transforming grace of God manifested in the life of Jesus Christ and made accessible through the Holy Spirit. Dr. Kelly Liebengood writes that “Paul dedicated about five years of his ministry to collect money from Gentile Jesus-followers in order to alleviate suffering due to extreme financial hardship in Jerusalem among some of the Jewish followers of Jesus.” He urged members to participate in this offering in obedience to the gospel (2 Corinthians 9:13) and in imitation of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 8:9).

To Paul, it was the responsibility of the Gentile Christians to support the church, and the members that were struggling within it in Jerusalem. Yet there is more. Dr. Liebengood also states that “Paul regards generosity towards the Jewish followers of Jesus in Jerusalem as proof that Gentile followers of Jesus have indeed been transformed by the Spirit of the self-giving Jesus Christ, that they have indeed become participants in the spiritual blessings of Israel’s one true God (Romans 15:26-27 and 8:1-17)...The collection was a tangible indication that the God of Israel had transformed these Gentiles into the likeness of God’s generous, self-giving image.” In response to all that God had provided for them and as a sign of their spiritual transformation, giving was not something they chose to do, it was who they were.

In the next few weeks, we will celebrate with our families and our friends, give thanks for the past year and what we have been given, and afterward we will begin to prepare ourselves for the celebration of the coming of Jesus Christ, in human form, for all people. Through his life, ministry, death, resurrection, and continued presence Jesus shows us who we are called to be and how we can make a difference in our communities and in the world. These celebrations remind us that our reflections on stewardship are never over, because our blessings and our transformation are never over. They continue so we can generously share the glory of God with the world.

Thanks be to God, Amen.

SAVE THE DATE!

There will be a very important Congregational Meeting concerning the 2022 Budget on December 12. It will take place after the Lessons and Carols 9:30 am Worship Service. Please plan to attend.

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, November 18**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

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

DEAR CONGREGATION,

I am excited to tell you that we will be participating in the Christmas Charities Christmas stockings! We have 100 stockings to be filled for ages 2-10. They are located in the Narthex and need to be returned to the church by November 28. There is a list of suggested items inside each stocking. If you are unable or uncomfortable shopping for the stockings, you can send a check to the church with the amount you want to spend made out to FCC with Christmas Charities on the memo line.. We have several groups who have volunteered to shop for you. If you have questions call Cindy Burger at -----



**SHORT TERM
PRAYER CONCERNS**



Not Published Online

CHURCH CALENDAR

- Nov. 15 10:30 am Quilters
4:30 pm Christian Ed. Meeting
- Nov. 17 6 pm Men’s Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Nov. 21 **Thanksgiving Sunday**
10:30 am **Rehearsal** - Hanging of the Greens
- Nov. 22 10:30 am Quilters
- Nov. 24 6 pm Men’s Group
- Nov. 25 12 pm **Church Office Closes**
- Nov. 26 **Thanksgiving Office Closed**
- Nov. 28 9:30 am **Hanging of the Greens**
- Nov. 29 10:30 am Quilters
5:30 pm ECM Board Meeting
- Dec. 1 11:30 am Phoebe Circle
6 pm Men’s Group
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Dec. 6 10:30 am Quilters
- Dec. 11 10:00 am til noon **Christmas Fest**
- Dec. 12 9:30 am **Lessons & Carols**
10:30 am **Congregational Budget Meeting**

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, Jasper, AL

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7
Service: 80
Small Groups: 25

THIS WEEK’S FOOD BASKET is in memory of Ann Koontz by Don & Norma Muncy.



GIVE AND FORGET by Rachel Hackenberg

Peter came up and said to Jesus, "Lord, how often will my sibling sin against me, and I forgive them? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times." - Matthew 18:21-22 (ESV)

Seventy-seven times. Or seventy times seven, depending on the biblical version of Matthew 18:21-22 you're reading. Or seven times a day, per Luke 17:4. That's how often we should mindfully consider the person in front of us, acknowledge the harm they have caused us, and release the harm (and/or the person) from further damage.

Be mindful ... seventy-seven times.

Acknowledge ... seventy times seven.

Release ... seven times a day.

Guidance for faithful stewardship encourages the same disciplined steps: Be mindful. Acknowledge. Release. Be mindful of community, of creation, of God - seventy-seven times. Acknowledge need, desire, greed, fear - seventy times seven. Release first fruits, release 10%, release possessiveness, release consumption - seven times a day.

With a little magical math (and some technological tools), I can faithfully turn those sevens into ones:

Be mindful ... once a year when setting up auto-giving.

Acknowledge ... one at a time when adding a new financial commitment to my budget.

Release ... once per month according to a pre-set payment schedule.

"One" is not quite seventy times seven or seventy-seven times or seven times a day. But one can still be a faithful measure of giving. Because giving - like forgiving - is too often at the mercy of a moment and an emotion. It can be subject to the pressures of any given day. It can be drowned out by crises. It can be out of the way, like swinging by the ATM before worship to get cash for the offering plate. For my financial giving to be faithful, my best effort is to set it and forget it. Just once.

Prayer : May the autopay of my checking account and the e-giving of my apps be acceptable to you, O God of all goodness, my rock, and my redeemer.

HARRIS HOME FOR CHILDREN NEEDS OUR HELP

The Community Outreach Committee for its November project is requesting financial donations for Harris Home for Children. This safe haven for neglected or abused children began in 1954 when Chessie Harris took a few neglected children into her small home. Through her determination to care for more children, Harris Home has grown into a larger campus to serve many more children who cannot remain with their parents. It is also the only emergency crisis service for children in the State of Alabama. Obviously, Harris Home is always in need of financial help to cover the expense of caring for the children. We can help by writing a check to FCC with Harris Home in the memo line.

Thank you for caring about those in need in our community.

**AL AND NWFL CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S
MINISTRIES REGIONAL PROJECT**

CWM's service project for November is WellHouse. Our monetary support helps to further the mission of the WellHouse, which seeks to honor God by rescuing and providing opportunities for restoration to female victims of human trafficking.



Human trafficking is a \$10 billion industry in the U.S. alone. It is the fastest growing criminal activity, second only to drug trafficking. Forty percent of human trafficking happens here in the Southeast.

The average age of entry is 12-14 years old. Eighty percent of victims are females and up to 50% are minors. There are over 2 million active runaways and all at risk of being recruited into prostitution within 48 hours of running away.

For more information check out the WellHouse website at: WWW.THE-WELLHOUSE.ORG

You can make a donation by writing your check to the church, noting "WellHouse" in the memo line. Your donation to this worthy cause is tax deductible.

Thank you for your consideration of this worthy cause,
Ruth Lackey, CWM November Service Coordinator

2021 THANKSGIVING OFFERING

From the very beginning of the movement, Disciples have founded institutions of higher learning, encouraging students in their intellectual pursuits. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is still committed to higher education. The fifteen colleges and universities and the seven theological institutions in covenant with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) encourage students in their intellectual pursuits and nurture them as leaders to transform church, society, and world. The Thanksgiving offering supports everything from scholarships, to religious life offices, to faculty growth and development at our supported colleges and universities. The offering also provides scholarship and support for our theological education institutions. Each of our seminaries and divinity houses is committed to educating and forming Christian leaders for church and society. Generations of pastors, community leaders, and agents of social transformation have been educated at our theological institutions.

On November 21 & 28, we will collect the Thanksgiving special offering. As we continue to struggle with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, our higher education institutions are facing unprecedented challenges and need our support now, more than ever. Even as they work diligently to ensure safe and healthy learning environments, the financial realities faced by many of our schools are adding additional stress to students, faculty, and staff.

This November, please give generously to this year's Thanksgiving offering. Your gifts make a world of difference as Disciples continue our legacy of supporting education and our institutions of higher learning. Note Thanksgiving Offering on the memo/note line or your check made out to FCC and place it in the collection plate on Sunday or mail it to the Church Office. You may also designate Thanksgiving Offering if you contribute through PayPal. (<http://fcc-hsv.org/who-we-are/how-to-give/>).

Thank you for your support.

MANY THANKS to the congregation of First Christian Church for your strong support of the CWM October Project. Because of your generosity we are sending check for \$790 to the Neaves-Davis Center for Children. Please be assured that your donations will be put to good use to benefit the youth of Huntsville and Madison County through the many programs and services provided by the Neaves-Davis Center.

Janet Sholes

STRIVING FIRST FOR GOD'S KINGDOM

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV

Sermon Nov. 14, 2021

Scripture Verses:

Matthew 6: 23-35

November begins a busy time in the life of the church. Thanksgiving will soon be here and the week afterward we begin Advent. This is truly a time of Thanksgiving. The weather, our neighborhoods, and even the insides of our homes are changing as we make room for friends and family and prepare to celebrate with them. There are instances when we can sense the holiday spirit in the air and we revel in the fact that another year will soon be upon us.

There are some downsides as well. Soon we will have to fight the crowd at the mall looking for presents. Our calendars are full of events, each of which are important, but seem to devour any freedom that we have to enjoy the season. We have to rush to make sure that the house is clean, dinner is cooked, and we are ready for our guests. These times of celebration can become times of stress and worry.

Amid these celebrations, and the coming New Year, the church turns its eyes to stewardship. Practically speaking, we would like to know what to expect so we can create our budget and use the resources of our members wisely, but there is more. A part of our Thanksgiving celebration should be how we decide to use the gifts we are so thankful for. God provides so much and while we may have our personal worries, for most of us, what is essential is there. So how do we provide for the church and others, how can our gifts spread the glory of God?

It is clear that Jesus understood the human desire to worry and he knew about anxiety especially when it came to the future. Jesus also knew our desire to be prepared. Time and time again he attempted to prepare the disciples for his coming death and resurrection, but they did not listen to him, perhaps because his vision of the future did not fit into their plans.

So, if anxiety and preparation for the future are normal, why would Jesus tell us not to worry about our life or about tomorrow? To understand this scripture passage, we have to recognize the context of Jesus' words. This section about worry is located in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus talks about the correct use of mammon, an Aramaic word meaning money or possessions. According to Douglas Hare, this passage serves as a commentary on Jesus' sayings about treasures and generosity.

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Kingdom continued

In this manner, he is telling us not to be concerned about money or possessions. Worry will not resolve these troubles worry, does not have the ability to solve any of life's problems, but this does not mean that we must become carefree and irresponsible.

One of the reasons that we have so much trouble with this passage is because we take Jesus' words literally. We hear about the birds of the air and lilies of the field and believe that they become models of behavior. This is simply not the case. We know for a fact that many birds are not adequately fed or lilies that wilt before they achieve their full bloom.

We read this passage incorrectly because we do not recognize it as poetry. The images of birds and lilies are larger than life symbols of the love and care of God that lead us to realize that the same God who provides for nature will provide for us as well. Our worry, our anxiety, does nothing to help the situation; in fact, it can be detrimental to our faith, for it is all too easy to take the next step and stop trusting in God.

I am reminded of a story I once heard. You may have heard it before. Once upon a time, a stranger rode his tired horse down a backcountry road on his way home from a long journey. It was late afternoon and the man was tired and hungry. Ahead he saw a small village. "I'll get something to eat there and find a place for the night." he thought.

Suddenly the horse tripped, throwing the stranger to the ground. As he brushed himself off, he saw that the horse had stumbled over a rock sticking out of the ground in the middle of the road. He walked over to it and dug it out of the earth so that it would not trip anyone else. It was a splendid rock, almost perfectly round and smooth. The stranger liked the rock, so rather than throwing it away, he put it in his saddlebag, climbed up on his horse, and continued into the village.

As he rode past the first houses the people of the village stopped what they were doing to stare. He waved to several of them, but no one waved back. The man got off his horse and approached a woman standing in front of a small house. "Good evening," he said cheerfully, "Could you spare a bit of food for a hungry man?"

The woman began shaking her head almost before he had finished his sentence. "We have had a poor harvest here. There is barely enough food for our fam-

ily. I am sorry." And she walked into her house and shut the door.

The man continued to the next house where a farmer was working on his wagon. "Do you have a place at your table for a hungry traveler?" he asked. "It didn't rain during the last month before harvest," the farmer said. "What little we have is needed for our children."

At every home the stranger heard the same sad story: The harvest had been poor and there was not enough food to make it through the winter. Everyone was worried about themselves and their immediate family.

Completely discouraged and very hungry the man sat down under a tree in the village square. "Poor people," he thought, "in a few weeks they will be as hungry as I am." Then he had an idea. He reached into his saddlebag, took out the stone, and addressed the villagers. "Gentlefolk", he shouted, "Your worries are over. I have in my hand a special stone that will help you survive the long winter. This is a magic stone. With it, you can make stone soup."

"Stone soup?" an old man repeated. "I have never heard of stone soup." "The wonder of stone soup," the stranger continued, "is that it not only feeds hungry people, it also brings people together. Now, who has a large pot?"

Quickly a huge iron pot was found and delivered to the stranger in a wheelbarrow. "The kettle is barely large enough, but it will do," the stranger said. "Now we must fill the pot with water and start a fire." Eager hands carried buckets of water and firewood. Soon the pot was placed over a roaring fire. As the water began to boil the stranger dramatically raised the magic stone above his head, and then he gently placed it in the kettle.

"Stone soup needs salt and pepper," the stranger announced. Two children ran to find salt and pepper. After the water boiled for a few minutes, the stranger sipped the brew. "This stone makes an excellent soup, but it would be better if we had a few carrots."

"We have a few carrots that we're willing to share," a farmer replied. Immediately his daughter ran home and returned with an apron full of carrots. "It's too bad the harvest was so bad," said the stranger. "Stone soup is always tastier when we add a cabbage or two. "I think I know where to find a cabbage," a young mother shouted as she dashed towards her

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Kingdom continued home. When she returned she was carrying three large cabbages.

The stranger was busy slicing carrots and cabbages with his hunting knife. "The last time I made stone soup was at the castle of a rich man. He added a few potatoes and a bit of beef." Several people talked quietly, "A bit of beef and we can eat like rich people", they whispered. They went home and soon returned not only with beef and potatoes, but some brought milk, onions, and barley too.

By the time the soup was ready it was almost dark. It was the most delicious soup that they had ever smelled and to think, it all came from the magic stone. The stranger finally declared that it was done and invited everyone to have as much as they could eat. After everyone had eaten their fill, some folk brought out their fiddles. Everyone began to sing and dance - and they continued till the wee hours of the morning. Never had the people had such a wonderful party.

The next morning the village gathered to say goodbye to the stranger. As he mounted his horse a small child called out, "You forgot to take your magic stone!" The stranger smiled. "I am going to leave the stone with you as a gift of gratitude for your hospitality," he said. "Remember, as long as you make stone soup, you will never have to worry about being hungry."

As he rode off a grandfather put his arm around the shoulders of his young granddaughter and said, "Do you remember the other bit of magic that the stranger promised when you make stone soup?" "Yes," she said, "the stone brings people closer together."

God knows what is necessary for our lives. Jesus' words are meant to draw us from our frantic pursuit of what we think is necessary to a calmer vision of God's care in the world. He tells us quite plainly that if we strive first for the Kingdom of God and for God's righteousness, then these things will take care of themselves. God will provide, but this may happen in ways that we do not expect.

As we look forward to Thanksgiving we turn our thoughts from the material, the temporal, all the things that separate us from God and renew our relationships through worship, fellowship, and celebration. In this manner we strive first for the Kingdom of God and for God's righteousness, setting those things above all others and hoping to make the world a better place.

Our church, our services, our celebrations are like

stone soup; their purpose is to bring us together. So together let us go forth and spread the good news of Jesus Christ, knowing that we have what we need because we have each other.

Thanks be to God, Amen.

COVID-19 CHURCH PROTOCOLS

(Approved by the Board on October 14.)

- **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.
- **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.
- Coffee (only) service will resume on December 5
- **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