



## THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

The staff of First Christian Church wants to say thank you for the generous Christmas gifts presented to us. These extra gifts are another expression of the many thoughtful ways in which you show your love and care for us. We do hope that everyone has a wonderfully warm and blessed Christmastide.

Thank you again and we are ever grateful for such a caring and supportive congregation and the privilege of serving you.

*Pastor Laura*

*Pastor Paul*

*Lauren Carter*

*Chris McDonald*

*Alyssa Baldwin*

*Matt Ball*

*Lynn Abernathy*

*Samantha Richard*

*Morgan Williams*

*Rick Shrout*



The 2022 sign up chart for **FOOD BASKETS** is available. **You may call the office at 256-881-0150 or email [publisher@fcc-hsv.org](mailto: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 and go to Community Outreach. Make checks payable to First Christian Church and Food Basket on the notation line.

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Wednesday, December 29**, 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.**



## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS



## SHORT TERM PRAYER CONCERNS



### NOT PUBLISHED ONLINE

### Not Published Online

#### CHURCH CALENDAR

- Dec. 30 12:30 pm **Church Office Closes**
- Dec. 31 **Church Office Closed**
- Jan. 3 Quilters
- Jan. 5 6 pm Phoebe Circle  
Men's Group  
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Jan. 9 11:45 am Community Outreach
- Jan. 10 9:30 am Esther Circle  
10:30 am Quilters  
5 pm Conveners Meeting
- Jan. 11 6 pm Elders' Meeting
- Jan. 12 6 pm Men's Group  
7 pm Choir Rehearsal
- Jan. 13 6 pm Board Meeting
- Jan. 17 10:30 am Quilters
- Jan. 19 6 pm Men's Group  
7 pm Choir Rehearsal

**CONDOLENCES** to the family of Mary Ann Mead, former member, who recently passed; and to the family of James Hayes, relative of Jeff & Sue Seward, 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 Christ Christian Church, Athens, AL

*We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us.*  
- 21st Century Vision Team



This QR code is linked to the Church's PayPal giving page for your convenience.

## YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

I've been asked to lead up a committee to help grow the number of volunteers on our AV/ Technical crew - the people that run our sound, record and livestream our services, and put the visuals on our screens. For far too long, we've relied on our friends Chuck and Michael, as volunteers, to run all our systems, week in and week out.

None of the work is particularly difficult ...in fact, it's pretty routine once you know how to do it. Have you ever...

- Shot some video with a camcorder, smart-phone or digital camera?
- Pushed some buttons to change the music on your stereo?
- Worked a slide projector, or run a Power-Point presentation?
- Used a microphone?

Our goal is to build a large group, maybe twenty or so...to help with our AV team. A group this size gives us the ability to rotate people to help out once every two, three, or four weeks. And, we don't need everyone to know how to do everything. It's OK just to want to help run camera, or run slides...that would be great.

Chuck wants to step away from this big weekly commitment, and we should show our thanks for all he has done, by giving him that opportunity. Personally, I don't want to work AV every week, and I'm not planning to, but I'm going to learn how, and I'd like you to join us. And that goes for our youth, too.

With Chuck's guidance, our church has invested in good quality AV equipment in recent years. Our committee is going to work very hard to simplify and streamline our processes...and our equipment, and make them simple to learn, and as dependable as we can.

If you'd like to help, reach out to me at 256-xxx-xxx or bclasgensxxxxxxx, or call the church office. We're scheduling evening/weekend training sessions now. Watch for more information in the Journey, the bulletin, and our social media in the weeks ahead. I hope you'll join us!

Brad Clasgens

## IRS CREDIT FOR 2021 GIVING

Thank you so much for your tithes and offerings; they have a tremendous impact on the missions and ministries of our church. Please remember that all contributions toward 2021 giving must be received by the church office **before 12:30 pm on Thursday, December 30, 2021 or postmarked by December 31.**

## THE COFFEE CART IS BACK!

Coffee is available at the Commons Area from 9:15 - 10:45 Sunday mornings. Please use the hand sanitizer station by the coffee cart before you touch anything on the cart. Thank you, the Coffee Crew!



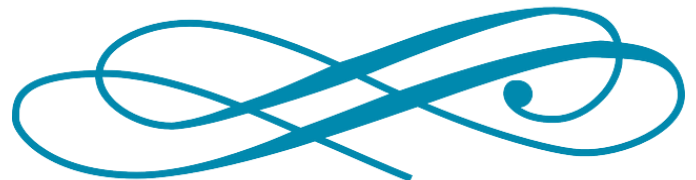
## IN PERSON & ONLINE WORSHIP SERVICES

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

## ATTENDANCE

Christmas Eve: 91    Dec. 26 Worship Service: 49  
Small Groups: 10

**CONGRATULATIONS** to Capt. xxxxxxxx (USMC), Kelsi———'s husband, who recently graduated from the Navy Strike Fighter Tactics Instructor program (TOPGUN). Approximately only the top one percent of pilots/crews are selected to attend each 12-week program.



## WHERE DID HE GO?

Rev. Paul J. Allen IV Sermon Dec. 26, 2021

Scripture Verses: Luke 2: 41-52

Patti and I tend to shop in very different ways. I do not like to go shopping so when I am forced to go I know exactly what I want and where I need to go to get it. In fact, in my head, I even plan out my route so I can get in the store, grab whatever it is I am looking for, get to the checkout quickly, and leave so I can get on with my life.

When Patti goes shopping she enters the store with a general idea of what she needs. Then she travels the aisles looking for what fits those needs and picking up items that catch her attention. I can send Patti out to the store for bread and milk and she ends up being gone for an hour, returning with several bags, and stories about how much money she saved.

Therefore, since Patti and I have such different shopping styles, when we end up going together there are usually problems. You might say that Patti is a wanderer and I like to stay on course, therefore, I tend to lose track of Patti in the shuffle.

One minute we are walking together around frozen foods and the next minute I find myself alone in canned foods and I have to begin the process of looking for my wife. I oftentimes wonder what the stockers at Wal-Mart think as I wander around the store desperately searching for my wife. There is nothing more pathetic than a lost husband searching the store for a lost loved one. Of course, Patti is not lost, she knows exactly where she is; you might say that I am the one who has lost her.

I wonder if Mary and Joseph felt the same way when they were looking for Jesus after their trip to Jerusalem? Every year the Law of Moses required all observant male Jews to journey to Jerusalem for Passover. Therefore, Joseph was required to travel to the holy city for this celebration. It is interesting to note that Mary and Jesus were not required to go, but perhaps because of their faith, or their desire to stay together as a family unit, they traveled with Joseph to celebrate the holy day.

But as they began their journey home Mary and Joseph could not find Jesus. At first, they just assumed that he was with the group of travelers going with them. At that time families or neighborhood units would often travel together for safety. Mary and Joseph must have thought that Jesus was with family or friends, safe and secure.

Yet, as they continued to search they found that Jesus was not with any of them. He was nowhere to be found. Can you imagine their panic? Where was Jesus, was he injured or hurt, could someone have taken him, what had happened to their son?

Eventually they realized that he must still be in Jerusalem and so they returned and searched the town for three days. Three days, they must have been going crazy.

My mother has told me how scary it is to lose your child for a few minutes. When I was younger she lost track of me in a supermarket. I was about four or five and I decided to play hide and seek with her. I must have done a good job because she did not notice my absence until she was at the checkout.

She spent several minutes looking for me and finally got the manager to call for me on the intercom. I thought that this was just all fun and games, but my mother was terrified. I can only imagine the fear Mary and Joseph must have felt after three days.

Finally, Jesus' parents found him at the temple. He was sitting with the teachers of the law listening and asking them questions. Jesus had been at the temple the whole time learning and teaching. The author of Luke tells us that all who heard Jesus were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

Jesus was still considered a child. He had not gone through his Bar mitzvah, but he was accepted and heard in the temple. Jesus was judged not by his age, but by his faith, understanding, and desire to learn.

His parents must have been relieved, but furious. Mary asks him, "Child, why have you treated us this way? Your father and I have been looking for you for days, you had us so worried."

*Where* continued page 5...

...*Where* continued.

Jesus simply answers, "Why were you looking for me, I was not lost, I was right where I should be, in my Father's house." Indeed Jesus was not lost, he knew where he was, he didn't know his parents were looking for him; he only knew he was where he needed to be.

Now before you think that this story is implausible, think about this. Have you ever lost someone you love, left a child in a store, or forgot to pick up your spouse after work? Sometimes you have no clue as to why you forgot them or lost your way, you just did.

I think I have told this story before but once, during a trip in North Carolina I left Patti stranded at a rest stop. This was before we had kids, and cell phones. We had stopped to rest our legs and get a drink during a long journey. To this day I still have no clue as to what I was thinking, but I got my drink, took a look at the map, walked to the car, and drove away. It took me a few minutes to understand that something, or someone, was missing.

When I realized what I had done I hurried back to the rest stop, but that meant getting off the highway, getting back on again, and turning around again so I would be on the right side of the highway for the rest stop. It took about 20 minutes. I thought Patti would be furious, but as I drove to the station I saw her in front of the building laughing. She had realized what had happened and had just gone back into the rest area to wait for me. She told me that she knew that I would come back to get her. Who else could I get to iron my shirts? Once again I lost track of Patti, she was where she was supposed to be, but I lost her.

Everyone loses things; we can even lose people. Our lives become busy and complicated, to the point where our needs and wants come before everything or everyone else. It is all too easy to turn our backs on friends, family, even the church when our selfish needs blind us to the concerns of others. Sometimes we can lose faith and lose our connection with Christ as well.

Like Mary and Joseph when a crisis occurs we search all over for where we assume Jesus will be,

but when we cannot find his presence we become angry and confused.

We ask ourselves, why would Jesus do this? Doesn't he know that this is the time that I need his most, why is he treating me like this? We search until we are exhausted, and lose hope.

But Christmas is a reminder that Christ is with us always. When we lose sight of Jesus it is not because he is lost or not with us, it is because we lose him.

We travel down the wrong path, we assume what he wants without taking the time to understand if it is His will or ours, or we walk away without looking back and in doing so we believe, wrongly, that the fault is with Jesus.

Only after we realize that Christ is not lost, that he is right where he is supposed to be, in our hearts and our lives working with us, can we truly know of the love and graciousness of God.

When we lose faith, when we lose Christ, our Lord is not stagnant. Rather he searches for us, forgives our misplaced anger and fear, and reunites us with our fellow brothers and sisters so that once again we might be one within the fellowship of faith.

At this time, like Mary, we can treasure our knowledge of Jesus in our hearts for we know that we are never alone, never lost, and never abandoned. We are bound with bonds that cannot be broken, bound in a covenantal relationship with God that cannot even be defeated in death.

The community of faith that we are worshiping in today is a response to the grace, love, and unity that we find through Christ Jesus. This spirit of faith is not lost to us; rather it only needs to be discovered again.

We have found the joy of community. We know the true power of Christians working together in a spirit of love. Now let us share this understanding with the world, so that no one will think of themselves as lost, but will understand that they are all a part of the family of God.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

## SING!

By Phiwa Langeni

*“And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.” - Luke 1:45 (NRSV)*

After she greets Elizabeth, the very first thing out of Mary’s mouth is a powerful song that emerges from the depths of her spirit. It carries the tune of God’s promises delivered through the very child Mary has just discovered is incubating in her womb.

Certainly, this was a time of fear and unknowingness – both entirely too relatable. Still, we can extract comfort in knowing that things aren’t always going to be the way they’ve been. The One whom we await is arriving with new life and possibility, even and especially in the midst of our various fears and uncertainties.

The power of music connects us to something greater than us. Our song doesn’t have to be original. It could be one written so long ago, like Mary’s or even a beloved hymn that joins our voices with those who’ve sung before us. Our song doesn’t even need a coherent tune. The music can be the cries that escape us in our bleakest moments. Or the sounds of joy and excitement as we experience glimpses of new life.

Sometimes I wish Luke would’ve included musical notations so we could harmonize, get the proper inflections, and know when to hold notes and when to quicken them. But then again, I’m glad he didn’t so that every single one of us can sing this melody of God’s radical and transformative love for all. None of us in the wrong key or off pitch. Everyone on the correct rhythm accompanied by our hearts’ beats.

## Prayer

Give us a song we can sing so we can boldly live out your good news. 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://facebook.com/fcchsv), [twitch.tv/fcchsv](https://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 service.