



## GENERAL MINISTER AND PRESIDENT ON RE-OPENING CONGREGATIONS

*I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. — John 13:34-35 (NRSV)*

Dear Church:

We are in Eastertide, when we rejoice in the good news of the resurrection, and yet so much our journey still feels like the wilderness. I continue to pray for you as we walk through these days of distancing together.

This week, some state governments are beginning to lift stay-at-home orders and allow some businesses and industries to reopen their doors. These reopening conversations are understandably raising questions about how and when churches should resume in-person worship services. These are difficult decisions, but I want to encourage you, as difficult as it is, not to rush too quickly back. It is not yet time to gather for worship in person.

I know that it is heartbreaking not to be able to gather. We want nothing more than to hug our loved ones and squeeze the hands of our grieving friends. We want nothing more than to worship together and join our voices together in song. We want nothing more than to break bread together at our beloved communion tables.

But the [phased reopening plans](#) developed by public health experts call for several benchmarks to indicate safety such as 14 days of declining case counts, widespread testing, and contact tracing. We are not there yet. The economic impact of this pandemic is devastating, to be sure, and many of the decisions to reopen business are in response. There is and will be much work to do as we care for our hurting neighbors.

Church, we don't make decisions based on economics. We make decisions based on love. And here in this time, in the midst of this pandemic, the loving thing to do is not to gather for worship. Love, as we know from 1 Corinthians 13:4-5, is patient. Love does not insist on its own way.

It is not easy to love from a distance. It is not easy to overcome our own desire for being physically close to our church family. It is not easy to give up the familiar in favor of this new way of being. It is likely we will never meet in quite the same way again. But we have a historic opportunity here. We have the chance to test new ways, learn creatively, imagine beyond old boundaries and grow in our understanding of the family of God.

Let me be clear: even as we have gathered in different ways, we are still the church. Even as we have worshiped on Facebook and YouTube from our living room couches, even as we have prayed over Zoom, we are the church, and God is at work in and through us. We will continue to be the church.

There are a number of resources available for helping congregations think through how and when to resume in-person worship services, and we have linked to several of them on our COVID-19 resource page. (Found at [disciples.org](#))

In addition, [this letter from the College of Regional Ministers](#) (again at [disciples.org](#)) offers wisdom and hope. Many regional ministers are also offering guidance based on realities in your local context. I urge you

See *Re-Opening* next page...

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, May 7**, at Noon [publisher@fcc-hsv.org](mailto:publisher@fcc-hsv.org)

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

Sunday Worship Services: 8:15 & 10:30 a.m. Christian Education for all ages - 9:15 a.m.

...*Re-Opening* continued.

to listen to them and to be in conversation with one another as you make prayerful decisions with your church leadership.

I have been inspired by the creativity, innovation, and compassion from Disciples over the past two months. You are already imagining new ways of being church, and I have confidence that we will face the future together with courage and grace, strengthened always by the love of God.

Grateful to be serving with you,  
Rev. Terri Hord Owens  
General Minister and President

### ABRAHAMIC PRAYERS WELCOMES

#### RABBI ERIC M. BERK

Abrahamic Prayers is a gathering of people from all faith traditions to pray for global peace and healing and to share our beliefs, similarities, and differences. **We will meet online via Zoom on Thursday, May 7, at 8 pm.**

What is the history of the Jewish community in Huntsville? How are they dealing with the present difficulties - of COVID-19, but also political and social realities? How can the faith communities of Huntsville work together to build bonds of trust and fellowship?

Rabbi Eric M. Berk serves as the Rabbi of Temple B'nai Sholom, Alabama's oldest synagogue in continuous use. Prior to his arrival in Huntsville, Rabbi Berk served Congregation Beth Knesset Bamidbar in Lancaster, California for seven years while simultaneously working in the hospice field, serving eight years as Spiritual Counselor, Spiritual Care Coordinator, and Chaplain for Los Angeles' only non-profit, Jewish hospice: The Skirbal Hospice, A Program of the Los Angeles Jewish Home for the Aging.

Rabbi Berk's discussion will be introduced by and followed by a period of sung, spoken, and silent prayer.

Zoom connection info and handouts with read-along text will be provided soon. See the event on the church website ([www.fcc-hsv.org](http://www.fcc-hsv.org)), keep an eye out on Facebook (First Christian Church (DOC) - Huntsville, AL), or contact Karen Ball for more details.

## LONG TERM PRAYER CONCERNS

List is not published online

Long term prayer concerns are published once a month in the *Journey*. **Please** keep the church office informed of the status of individuals you put on the lists.

### GRATEFUL LIFE COMMUNITY CHURCH SUPPORT

Community Outreach and Christian Women's Ministries are partnering in May to solicit financial support for Grateful Life Community Church, our sister Disciples church in Huntsville whose primary ministry is to the disadvantaged and homeless members of our community. If you would like to contribute, please write your check to FCC with Grateful Life in the memo line and mail it to FCC.

Thank you.

Stream worship service at 10:30 am on Sundays (and previous services are available) at:

[www.youtube.com/channel/UCzQCRY8Vfa-IDhuqUnUhCKw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzQCRY8Vfa-IDhuqUnUhCKw)

You may also stream service on Sundays at 10:30 am (and see announcements throughout the week) on Facebook at: [www.facebook.com/First-Christian-Church-DOC-Huntsville-AL-227266764409](https://www.facebook.com/First-Christian-Church-DOC-Huntsville-AL-227266764409)

Finally, stream services at 8:15 and 10:30 am on Sunday at: [www.twitch.tv/fcchsv](https://www.twitch.tv/fcchsv)

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Thank you.



Parking lot expansion/accessible parking project at church.



Making sidewalk accessible by lowering to parking lot/drive level. Curb to be cut and removed as well.



Looking south, old curb removed to create more parking spaces.

## WEEKLY PRAYER CONCERNS

List is not published online

We are temporarily publishing, as space allows in the printed version of the *Journey*, the prayer concerns that are usually 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 and 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 REQUEST**  
Cedar Plains Christian Church, Falkville, AL



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