

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Montgomery, Alabama exists to demonstrate and proclaim God's joyful, unconditional love and to provide an inclusive environment of spiritual growth and nurturing for God's children.

## *Revealing...*

Ours was a clever idea, a good idea. Turns out, the idea bombed and I'm glad for it. The story begins with my wife's and my respect for behavioral economics, a subcategory of The Dismal Science that predicts human behavior based on what real humans do. I assume you know some real humans, the kind who try to maximize their happiness (and income!), but who also have biases, irrationalities that inconveniently get in our ways. I'm a former smoker. I know. Anyway, my wife not long ago read about research on real estate that demonstrated how the incentives of selling lower-priced homes aren't totally aligned between owner and real estate agent. Take, for example, my \$125,000 house. It's lovely, I think. It's also in a poor neighborhood. Five miles west of here, prices triple.

Real estate agents work for commissions. 3% of our home isn't nothing, though it's less lucrative than transactions in ritzy suburbs. As well, research apparently suggests that hardworking agents could possibly juice up a home's selling price an extra 5%, if they put in the ole extra effort. Thing is, the agent's take-home pay for that effort is less for homes like ours than others. In dollar terms, the Realtor would get just \$187 more for boosting our price 5%, whereas we'd get six grand. That's real money! For us... If our abode cost \$375,000, the commission feels more tempting. Thus, the Isners schemed. "What if," we told ourselves, "We split that potentially extra 5% with our agent?" Say we offered the standard commission to a point, then shared whatever additional proceeds the agent could negotiate 50/50. Postulating 5% above the original \$125,000, we'd realize \$3,000 we'd otherwise not get, though our agent might try harder because s/he'd be working for real money too. Win-win, right?! It's not unethical, nor would we accept an agent deceiving potential buyers. We're not trying to get Trump-style rich. We're simply aligning incentives, as I made clear to the agents I interviewed this week and shared our half-crazy idea with.

But all three turned us down! The looks on their faces went from, "Are they scamming me," to, "Are they serious," to, "I don't want this..." They understood the idea, mind you, and realized we weren't breaking laws. Rather, they declared in so many words that, "I do my job for more than money." Each declined gracefully by saying they'd prefer that any extra money go into our pockets. If that happened, they'd feel better about the service they performed. It was about more than professional ethics. It was about extracting meaning from their work. I respected that response deeply. And it showed the flaw in my original reasoning. I assumed that the relevant incentive here was profit. But these agents were also incentivized by pride, by purpose, by helping people. Which is to say that this week my faith in humanity's potential goodness was unexpectedly reaffirmed.

This is a presidential campaign year. Federal politics has the unique ability to reveal nastiness in so many of us. Those who pay close attention discover ample reason to think less of our neighbors- of ourselves- given the vitriol, demonizing and cheap thinking that emerges. Daily. Legitimate hope can drain away, making room for a cynicism that masquerades as wisdom. The Bible is clear, of course, that hope is always the truer spiritual perspective. But notice (your?) Facebook feeds, (your?) conversations and celebrations of goodness probably don't proliferate, unfortunately. Yet I just had several strangers tell me that they'd feel better about themselves if I didn't give them several thousand dollars more for their work. That 'sacrifice' would confirm their self-understandings of being a good person. And that's incentive enough to inspire their best performance.

Such is the culture we're living in, friends, if we let it rule the day. The news media probably won't bloviate about it with gusto. So let's decide, instead, to seek first God's Kingdom, believe it's already present, and let the cynics have their sad islands to themselves. Or better yet, let's invite them into this more graceful, more beloved way of being together with us. I've been converted again, and it's lovely.

**Grace and Peace,  
Shane**

## Music Notes



### Holy Season Worship

The 50 days of Easter season--the season of Lent--is a period set aside by the early church with the intent of accompanying the newly baptized or about-to-be baptized, or to remind, restore, and reconcile those who have already been baptized in the Christian faith. According to one post, "Easter Season was designed as a time to learn more about the mysteries of the faith, particularly but not only, the theology of the sacraments, especially Holy Communion, and to ... discern and respond to the gifts and calling of the Holy Spirit for ministry in Christ's name and the Spirit's power."

As you come closer to the Cross this Easter Season, you might use these small symbolic methods to align your heart, mind, and spirit in the act of worship:

Keep things simple—focus on sustenance rather than extravagance;

Pray—Begin and end each day with prayer; add a prayer to the Prayer Cross in the Great Hall and know that your prayers are heard;

Learn—Find a moment each day to read in a devotional or to pick up a sentence from the New Testament and mull it over in your mind;

Serve—only when you give of yourself for the benefit of others can you experience the joy and deep love achieved through sacrifice;

Worship—come to church and be part of "corporate" worship—find the camaraderie of the family of seekers and believers who sit with you in the sanctuary;

Sing! After all, our lord is the "Lord of the Dance."

Happy Holy Season, Happy Easter,

**Su Ofé**  
**Worship Division Chair**  
**Director of Music**

## Flowering of the Cross

During our Easter morning activities, we will continue our rich traditions of the flowering of the cross. We flower the cross that our Cloverdale Christian Church members brought with them when they moved there congregation to First Christian. We all bring flowers from our yards (or wherever you wish to get them) and place them within the wire frame of the cross. The result is a beautiful cross totally covered with blooms, in honor of our risen Lord and Savior. It is also a symbol of gratitude and remembrance for Cloverdale Christian Church and their ministry that continues here at First Christian.

## Great News!

Shane will be sharing the joy of the resurrection on Easter Sunday, March 27. He will bring the morning message at the Easter Sunrise Service in the garden at 7:00 a.m. He will also bring the Easter sermon at the 10:00 a.m. Worship Service. We are excited that he will be with us on Easter.

## Maundy Thursday Worship

### Thursday, March 24th

### 6:30 p.m.

Maundy Thursday, the Thursday before Easter, lifts up the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The word "Maundy" is derived from the Latin word *mandatum*, which means a commission, especially a verbal commission. It is associated with Jesus' command after the Lord's supper, found in John 13:34: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another."

We will celebrate this commandment of love on Thursday, March 24 at 6:30 p.m. in the sanctuary. The worship service will be focused around thirteen of our men recreating Leonardo DaVinci's painting of the Last Supper. The men will freeze in the pose of the painting of the twelve disciples and Jesus.

It will be a beautiful experience as we see the Lord's Supper and come forward for communion. Invite a friend to come with you on this holy evening.

The nursery will be open.



Last words are important words for people who know that death is near. This was the case from Jesus with his last words from the cross. He speaks in the hour of his death, and the cross becomes the place of reconciliation between God and humankind.

During lent we will consider the words of Jesus from the cross. May they give us a divine understanding of his love.

**Sunday, March 6:**

“My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me”

Mark 15:33-34

**Sunday, March 13:**

“I Am Thirsty”

John 19:28-29

“It is Finished”

John 19:30

**Sunday, March 20: Palm Sunday**

“Father, Into Your Hands I Commend My Spirit”

Luke 23:44-45

**Sunday, March 27: Easter**

“He is Risen”

John 20:1-18

***Easter Sunrise Service  
and Breakfast***

Our Easter Sunrise Worship and breakfast is Easter Sunday at 7:00 a.m. in our prayer garden. Shane Isner will bring the message at the sunrise service and also at the 10:00 a.m. worship service.

Breakfast will be served in the Great Hall following the sunrise service. The breakfast will be served by our men, and donations will be accepted. Please sign up at the Information Board if you plan on attending.

Following breakfast is Sunday School at 9:00 a.m. and Easter morning worship at 10:00 a.m.

Come Spend Easter Morning at First Christian.  
Praise God! He is Risen!

***Special Worship in Lent***

**Every Sunday in Lent**

“The Seven Last Words of Jesus”

**Wednesday March, 16**

Lenten Worship “The Sound of the Passion”

**Thursday March, 24**

Maundy Thursday and Holy Communion

**Sunday March, 27**

Easter Sunrise Service in the Garden

**Easter Worship**

“He is Risen”

***A Special Worship Service***

The Season of Lent affords us an excellent opportunity to listen to the sounds of the Passion of Jesus. To listen to the sounds of that last week in the earthly life of Jesus.

On Wednesday, March 16 at 6:00 p.m. following the Wednesday meal at 5:30 p.m., we will gather in the Sanctuary to hear the sounds of the passion in worship. The sounds of his final week of life– weeping, the clanking of coins, the dripping of water, the shouting of the crowd, and the crowing of a rooster.

By focusing on the sense of hearing, our worship will bring the scriptures to life in a new way. Circle Wednesday, March 16 on your calendar and come be blessed in this special Lenten Service.



Please join us for an EGGcellent time at First Christian’s annual Easter Egg Hunt and luncheon for kids of all ages! It will be Saturday, March 26th beginning at 10:30 a.m. with fun and games. We are in need of plastic eggs, candies and helping hands.

If you would like to help plan and coordinate this event, contact Deborah Batson at

514-6047 or [dbatson@elmore.rr.com](mailto:dbatson@elmore.rr.com).

Thank you so much!!



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

### ***Easter Lily Dedication***

We will decorate our sanctuary for Easter with 13 Easter lilies and 3 mums. The symbolism is a beautiful lily for each of the twelve disciples and one for our Lord Jesus. And the three mums symbolize the love and power of the holy trinity– the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. May the flowers lift up the beauty and Glory of God. The Easter lily's will be planted in our garden following Easter Sunday.

### ***Calling all Volunteers!***

FCC needs you for the following volunteer positions:

- Worship Leader
- Greeters
- AV Room


Sign up at the Information Board.  
Your Church thanks you for your service!

### ***Men's Breakfast (Open to ALL)***



Please join us for breakfast on **March 6th at 7:45 a.m.** in the Great Hall. We will have a great breakfast, fellowship, and devotion! The cost is only \$5, and first timers eat FREE! We will also practice as disciples for the Lords Supper Tableau.

**Don Snyder  
Disciples Men**

 ...and  
who is my  
**Neighbor?**

*Regional Assembly of the  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
In Alabama-Northwest Florida*

*April 29-May 1, 2016  
Florence, Alabama*

**Hosted By:  
First Christian Church  
Of Florence, Alabama**