



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.

Reconciliation...

Among the joys of being in a new place is meeting new people. And in profession, that includes fellow pastors. As such, I've been joining local clergy colleagues monthly for conversations about our lives, churches, society and God's many dreams.

I've been the only white person at these lunches, by the by. In June we traveled to Little Union Christian Church in Hayneville. The pastor served barbeque with cornbread and greens. And our Associate Regional Minister told a story I'd never heard, though perhaps you know it.

It was about Hayneville, where trouble occurred during the Civil Rights struggle (aka my colleague's childhood). People came to register African-Americans after the 1964 Voting Rights Act was passed. A mixed group of young people went to a store to buy a soda, I believe the story went, when a local white man tried to shoot a young black activist, Ruby Sales. But Jonathan Daniels, a white seminarian from Massachusetts, brushed her aside and took the shotgun blast full force, dying instantly. The shooter was tried and acquitted. Ms. Sales eventually dedicated her life to human rights advocacy and started an inner-city aid organization dedicated to Martin's memory.

And my African-American colleague, while recounting his recollections of the event, described vividly the store's owner, her reactions to and role in the matter, his own response. Though he was still young then, unease remained palpably written on his face decades later. Of course it was. If I've learned anything since coming to Montgomery, it's that those were challenging times- uncomfortable times- whether a fellow black person was shot at in your corner store or not.

I've run in circles previously where that discomfort was poorly understood. Friends discussed the 1960s as "glory days," when justice rolled down like waters! The Civil Rights Martyrs Monument downtown helps dispel such naiveté. Alternatively, I've had friends discuss "back then" as if something was settled, finally and for good. Civil Rights passed. Jim Crow ended. We have a black President (so please don't talk about race anymore...)! Any peek at the vast disparity in wealth and incarceration rates among whites and people of color ought dispel *that* naiveté too.

Christian scripture describes the work done in those days, and that remains in our days with the word reconciliation, i.e. the act of making broken relationships whole. Jesus accomplished this for his followers and God, classic Christianity contends. Even further, 2 Corinthians claims, "In Christ, God was reconciling *the world* to Godself...So ours is the ministry of reconciliation." In other words, as Jesus followers, the goal isn't simply personal relationship with Jesus. God wants more for us. God wants us living reconciled with all of us!

And sometimes that means facing ugly truths, avoiding easy answers and stereotypes, listening to others' hurt and fear, accepting discomfort for the sake of grace. The ministry of reconciliation isn't faith's simplest tasks, but it's among the most profound. I can't tell you how grateful I've been to sit with these fellow ministers- all wiser than me- and hear stories I'd never known, pray with fresh cadences and power, glimpse mercy and hope and wholeness.

In September, our church will join others in our denomination and take up a special offering for our "Reconciliation Ministry." This collective effort works to heal the divides- especially of race and ethnicity- that still leave Christ's Body, and God's World, less beautiful than they should be. With these funds, regions host transformation events, leaders receive anti-racism training, and churches receive grants to start local, on-the-ground reconciliation work (tutoring to lower achievement gaps, or ESL classes, or police/communities of color trust building efforts, or advocacy for reduced incarceration...). If you have desire and ability to give to those efforts, mark your calendar for Sundays September 25 and October 2. And if you have interest in starting something reconciliation related through FCC, let's talk!

Of course, you needn't establish a formal church ministry to live a reconciling life. It's our Christian opportunity to love and forgive neighbors, to seek justice and love mercy. Were we all more concerned with that over "being right" or "getting even"... Well, it's a lovely dream to dream, amen?

Grace and Peace,
Shane

Music Notes



Music and sport?

Our world is blessed with people who have the gift for athletic prowess. I'm not one of those people, but I love to watch great athletic ability showcased by healthy competition and camaraderie. That's why I love to watch the Olympics—because not only is that kind of athletic achievement something to behold, but more importantly, that kind of healthy coming-together among nations is a deep and beautiful thing.

Have you noticed that there's a common thread to every opening ceremony for every Olympic games you've ever watched? No matter where or when the games are held—they all begin with music. Music, that common language whose rhythm and beat punctuate unsaid sentences ... music brings together folks who might, in a different setting, be enemies. Music warms and lifts spirits, energizes tired souls, celebrates, renews, and speaks to each of us with words each of our souls recognizes uniquely.

I'm remembering from this year's Olympics the dance routines the women's volleyball players created to put the exclamation point on each small victory achieved by a teammate. I'm remembering the music that set the women's gymnastics floor routines aloft to unbelievable flips and turns. I'm remembering Michael Phelps with his signature earphones clamped to his head before each race. I'm remembering the samba, bossa nova, choro and carioca funk of Rio de Janeiro. Music that makes you click, clap, pat, knock, twitch, kink, nod your head, or butt-dance even when you can't get up. I think Christ the Redeemer himself dances when no one's looking.

(God, I so love your music—and I'm so very grateful to you for this unsingably wonderful, unbeatable beatable gift.)

Do you love music? Come and exercise your spirit and your voice with the choir as we begin practices this season. The first practice is Wednesday, September 28, at 6:45 p.m. in the sanctuary. This is one kind of athleticism even I can achieve, and so can you!

With love a slight samba to my step,

Su Ofe
Director of Music

Disciples Women



Women's Bible Study and Dinner

The Disciples Women met in August at the home of Fannie Ashley who was a terrific hostess. We gathered in the kitchen and helped Fannie get the meal ready. Then we had warm conversation around the table together. After dinner we moved into the living room for our bible study. On this night it was led by Bobbie Morris and we studied about Mary, the extravagant. We discussed the people in our lives who are extravagant in their giving to others and how we can be more generous in our daily lives by giving more of ourselves in many different ways. Everyone has a gift and no two are alike and all gifts are given to us by God. We are learning how to be more confident in sharing our gifts extravagantly with others.

Our next meeting is planned for Monday, **October 10, 2016** at the home of Michelle Villima. Fannie Ashley will be leading us on chapter five of our book "Strong was Her Faith" by J Ellsworth Kalas. In chapter five we read from Mark 12: 41-44 and talk about "The Mighty Widow". Won't you come join us? There will be a sign up sheet on the bulletin board in the Great Hall.

Bobbie Morris, Disciples Women



September 23-25, YMCA Camp Chandler,
Wetumpka, AL

Theme: Won't You Be My Neighbor?

Speaker: Chesla Nickelson,
Program Director for Disciples Women
Early bird registration deadline is Sept. 16.

Early bird fee is \$115.

After Sept. 16 is \$ 130.

Friday evening only: \$35

Saturday only:

(includes 3 meals, no lodging) \$75

Let's Make FCCM Debt Free in 2017!

Many years ago (before your treasurers became members here) a mortgage loan was secured to build the education wing of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Montgomery, along with the "Great Hall" and the current administrative offices. When I first became part of the Administrative ministries team, the loan balance was well above \$500,000. Through the years, additional amounts have been added to the loan for needed capital improvements, such as parking lot paving and lighting.

Over the past few years, we have been very aggressive in our debt reduction, including paying extra mortgage principal almost every month. In addition, your very fiscally conservative treasurers are holding a reserve of six months' payments, in case of an emergency involving our building.

Our mortgage loan is with River Bank and Trust. It is a 3.95% loan which matures in July 2017. At that time, we must either have the loan paid off or renegotiate the loan balance to continue any mortgage debt.

Our balance on August 3, 2016 was \$56,534. When the six-month reserve of \$16,530 is applied to this debt, we will owe approximately \$40,000. Our goal is to pay this amount off by July 1, 2017, and enjoy a symbolic burning of the mortgage, in celebration of a very special debt-free "Independence Day."

This goal will be met if:

* Current Capital Campaign pledgers review our giving and, if possible, get accounts up-to-date;

*Those who didn't pledge to the 2015 Capital Campaign review their giving and, if possible, contribute any amount you can to retire our church's debt.

Remember that the mortgage payments are outside of our church's "Operating Budget". Rather, they come from donations over and beyond what we give to keep the lights on, pay the staff, fund missions and family ministries, etc. So please do not redirect your regular offering to the mortgage debt!

And whatever you are able to do, know that we're incredibly thankful to God for this church's generosity already. Being in this position to pay off our mortgage is an incredible blessing! It will free up more resources to be and share God's unconditional love. Scripture says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." It took a while in my Christian walk to learn that personally (a story I'll share during this year's pledge drive...), but I've come to accept it's true. And that makes me very glad.

So may our hearts be blessed and filled with the "joy" that comes with giving back a portion of what God has given to us.

Finally- and again- thank you for your spectacular stewardship!

**Alice McKinney, Treasurer
CPA (Retired)**

Pay It Forward

In our spiritual journey, some of us will be called to serve as pastors, missionaries, lay leaders, even martyrs. Most of us, however, will be called to carry our cross daily in less visible—but equally important—ways. Ever since growing up in Frankfort, KY in the 1940's and 50's, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has always been an important part of my life. While serving in the Air Force for 23 years, I had the opportunity to participate in a variety of worship experiences, each a little different but all striving toward the same Christ centered purpose. For me, I found three things that mattered most:

- 1) The Lord's Table where all are welcome—no ifs, ands, or buts—
- 2) Acceptance that everyone doesn't have to fit the same mold—we can be or think differently but still unite in our love and service to Christ
- 3) A serving and supportive church that is willing to work with other churches and charitable organizations in the community for the common good.

FCC Montgomery has all these attributes; that's why I think it is important to serve and preserve this wonderful congregation—to pay it forward—for present and future generations. I found that one way to do this is by being a Legacy Builder (Legacy Builders are First Christian members who've included the church in their will or estate plan). It's a way to make a meaningful gift that keeps on giving and giving and giving! And it doesn't take a million dollars—all gifts are welcome!

More to come—stay tuned in!

Don Snyder

Fall Sermon Series



Get Ready for the Fall Sermon Series... "Church: The Portable Oasis"

We'll be studying the book of 1 Corinthians, and asking ourselves these critical questions:

Who are we, Church?! What does Church do?!

More details to follow. But get excited to explore the unique identity and powerful purpose we have from God, as First Christian. And bring your friends and neighbors to join the ride.

Or- even better- prepare to take the living water we receive together from Jesus to your neighborhoods and families, into our community and world.

This heavenly oasis is on the move!



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



TOUCHDOWN

Invite Your Neighbors and Friends to Church Day!



Date: September 11th



Wear your school's colors to worship!
And bring visitors with you. The most colors will decide
Shane and Tabitha's football allegiance.
After the church service we will have a tailgate Potluck.







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