



Demonstrating and proclaiming God's joyful, unconditional love and providing an inclusive environment of spiritual growth and nurturing for God's children!

FEBRUARY 2012

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

The Messenger

Lend a Hand Around the World: Guatemala Mission Opportunities

Santa Domingo Xenacoj in Guatemala is a beautiful mountain village. It is also a village that faces daily, difficult obstacles. There are no doctors or dentists in this place and small necessities like soap and toothbrushes and toothpaste are treated like treasures. Poverty is everywhere; and yet there is great faith.

During my last trip to Guatemala in July of 2011, I heard a prayer by a woman in the village. Although I do not speak Spanish, I plainly understood her thanking God for her family and her blessings. She also thanked God for sending the mission team to her home and to her village.



These are the leaders of the Village of Santa Domingo Xenacoj with Shawn Smith the Mission leader.

For the past two years I have been immensely blessed to serve the people in Santa Domingo Xenacoj. Over these last two years, I have learned about the 36-year-long civil war that has wreaked havoc on this country and its people. Recovery has been difficult, but each small gift of service is met with gratitude and joy!

Opportunities for service include laying concrete floors, installing wood-burning stoves, distributing donations, working on the medical and vision teams and conducting Vacation Bible School. Concrete floors help to keep children healthier, as dirt floors carry parasites. Most children do not have adequate footwear and these parasites enter the body through the feet.



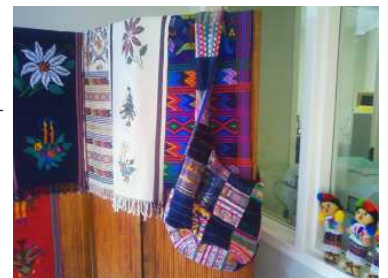
The beautiful Mirza Esperanza.

Wood-burning stoves are a huge help to families and to preserving the natural resources of Guatemala. Guatemala is very rainy and most cooking is done indoors. Women cook over open fires and are susceptible to eye and lung problems. These stoves burn far less wood than an open fire and come equipped with a chimney that ventilates the smoke up and out of the houses.

Last year the vision team helped to distribute over 200 pairs of glasses, which were purchased through donations from the Lion's Club. Some of the mission team members were trained on optical equipment and learned to diagnose vision needs. Most of the women in the village support their families by creating beautiful and detailed textiles. (See picture below-available at FCC). If these women are unable to see, then they are also unable to support their families. Medical mission teams help to diagnose and treat medical conditions.

Last year doctors were able to detect a severe heart condition in a beautiful little girl named Mirza (See picture above). A generous donation was made on behalf of this child and she was able to have a life-saving surgery to repair her heart. Mirza is now healthy and back in school.

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2012 Capital Campaign Planning Underway

Pastor's Page

Those who have been a part of FCC for some time now are aware that our regular tithes and offerings support the church's ongoing mission and ministry. Every three years, we conduct a Capital Campaign for the purpose of reducing our mortgage as well as additional capital projects that our regular operating budget cannot address.

process of planning our 2012 campaign. There is much to do as we assess the capital needs that we may have over the next three-five years. In fact, we believe that this process will take longer than earlier anticipated, which will necessitate delaying the campaign a couple of months to mid-April, with the pledge cycle beginning in June.

through May, if possible. We have mortgage payments that will continue to be covered during that time. We would also ask for your prayers as we assess our needs and prepare for this campaign. May God guide us to be faithful stewards of all that we do in ministry and mission, and responsible caretakers of the space we share.

As the end of the current three-year cycle approaches at the end of March, we are in the

Therefore, we would like to ask our members to consider extending your current pledge

Blessings, Pastor Susan



Dave Wheatcroft, Elder

I was born in Grayville, Illinois, to parents who were both school teachers. I have an older brother, Harry, and a sister, Sharon, who was adopted at age 8. My brother, Harry, preaches at New Harmony, Indiana, Christian Church. Lana and I met in high school, though we did not date until late in our senior year. I entered the Air Force in July of 1962. Lana and I wrote letters to each other for two years and were married December 20, 1964. We have two daughters: Kelly and her husband, Joseph Scott, have two children, Christopher and Samantha; and Amy and her husband, Micah Garrett, have two children, Weston and Alayna Cate. Like most grandparents, we enjoy seeing and spoiling our

grandchildren.

During my day job I serve as grounds manager for Montgomery Memorial and Eastwood Memorial Cemeteries; but evenings and weekends are devoted to cooking, playing my guitar, and getting together with friends.

Lana and I feel fortunate to be involved at First Christian, where the members truly care for one another and proclaim God's joyful, unconditional love to everyone they meet.

May God bless each of you for your service to His Church and your witness for His Son, Jesus.

**In Christian Love,
Dave Wheatcroft**

Care Group 1 Dave Wheatcroft

- Batson, David
- Batson, Deborah
- Batson, Tensley
- Batson, Tara
- Combs, Paula
- Donovan, Hannah & Haley
- Donovan, Mara
- Davis, Dessie
- Diamond, Myrna
- Diamond, Ron
- Diamond, Susan
- Fogle, Howard and Viola
- Fraley, JoAnn
- Gallenstein, Estella
- Gallenstein, Glen & Denise
- Schutz, Jane and Artie
- Watson, Janelle



Note Worthy

It is hard to believe that the Lenten and Easter season will be here very soon. The music and drama teams are beginning to plan for those very important times in our church. We want you to consider being a part of it. We would love to

have you sing with the choir during that time or help with the drama team. We will soon be receiving the chimes and will begin learning about them and how to use them in our services. Now would be a good time to step out and try some-

thing you have been interested in but never followed up on!

We look forward to working and learning with you.

Betty Nolan, Music Director

Noteworthy

Disciples Men—A New Day, New Time, And New Focus For 2012

Our first Disciples Men breakfast of 2012 will be held on **Saturday, February 4 at 8:30 a.m. in the Great Hall.** This year, our focus will be on Discipleship, and particularly on sharing our faith and Christian walk with FCC's growing group of young men.

Pastor Susan recently sent me a list of male youth and young adults, some of whom have come into the church within the past year. Many of these are new to the Christian faith and do not

have a male mentor in their lives. We want to change that.

We encourage all men in our congregation to come and be a part of this ministry. We will enjoy John and Doug's delicious breakfast (eggs, bacon, sausage, biscuits and gravy), and at our first meeting we will talk about ideas for our ministry in the coming year. Come and join us!

**Dave Wheatcroft,
Men's Group Chair**

From Your Moderator



As the church's Moderator for the upcoming year I have been provided the privilege and the pleasure of speaking to each of you through our

Messenger. Let me begin by saying that both Annette and I have been truly blessed by being a part of this church and we will seek to repay those blessings as we continue to grow with you as a church AND a family. However, we all must understand that if our church is to move forward together, we must push forward together. That means that there is no one facet of our congregation that is more important to the collective growth of First Christian Church than another. Accordingly, our collective efforts are what will determine

whether or not we are the church that God is calling us to be. I would humbly ask that each of you pray that the leadership of the church submit to the will of God and guide this church in a manner that glorifies Him. I would also ask that you pray on behalf of the Board, whose first meeting is in February, that they would discern God's presence and honor that presence in everything that they do. And finally, I would ask that you prayerfully consider where within the church your talents can be put to the best use and acting upon the answer that God provides you. The Division Chairs will be happy to help you find your niche and you, in turn, will be glorifying God by utilizing the talents that He gave you. Thank you in advance for your use of those talents!!

**With Blessings,
Tony Thacker**

Drama Team Meeting



Needed and wanted: people who have skills, talents or an interest in the area of acting, costumes, staging, props, sound, lighting, and all things dramatic and theatrical. We need you to meet at the

church at **10:00 AM on February 11, 2012** to help organize our team for our production of "The Living Last Supper" and other productions. Contact Leanne Cornwell or Rickie Brunner if you are interested or have questions.

The Great Commission and Practical Ways to Share Your Faith

Matthew 28:19-20. Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all peoples, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Many Christians are intimidated by the idea of sharing their faith. Do you think Jesus intended for the Great Commission to be an impossible task? Of course not. God wants us to love people and to be a witness of Jesus Christ in what we do every day of our lives. We're the ones that make it complicated.

Here's one example of what you can do without saying too much.

This is shared by Karen Wolff from about.com:

One of the best ways to share your faith is to demonstrate the very things you believe by staying positive and having a good attitude even in the middle of a crisis in your own life. Remember the story in the Bible about Peter walking out onto the water when Jesus called to him? He kept walking above the water as long as he stayed focused on Jesus. But once he focused on the storm, he sank. When the people around you see the peace in your life, especially when it seems like you're surrounded by storms, you can bet they'll want to know how to get what you got! On the other hand, if all they see is the top of your head as you sink into the water, there's not a whole lot to ask.

**Bobbie Morris,
Evangelism**

Super Senior Day

Join us on Wednesday, **February 22, at 10:00 a.m.** for Super Senior Day. Rev. John Lambert will be our speaker for the program that day. Lunch will be provided for \$5/person.

Please sign up at the Information Desk.



A New Year to Explore Worship

We began a new liturgical year with Advent and a new calendar year on January 1. As you may have noticed, we changed the setup in the Sanctuary to an “in the round” setup. Everyone is now closer to the communion table and those who are leading the worship service. Hopefully, you find that it is a more intimate setting.

This year I invite you to explore worship in various ways, both individually and in community. Some of you indicated that you are interested in a prayer ministry, so I hope to get you all together to talk about what this ministry will be like. The Prayer Closet is available for your use. Use and enjoy the Meditation Garden. There will be a number of ways to assist the Worship Division this year. A few short-term teams are being developed this year to look at our current worship services and see how to grow the early service. A task force will also be developed to look at an alternative worship service and what that could be like. Our children are already leading the way with a brief worship service on Wednesday evenings.

We are looking at our current technology, especially our sound and media capabilities. We welcome those who have ideas and also those who have some expertise to assist in this evaluation and expansion of our capabilities. Do you have a talent for designing and/or making costumes, stage craft, acting, lighting and all things dramatic—or want to try? Let me know!

Don’t hide your light under a bushel! Share it here at FCC! You will be encouraged to try. Any concerns, ideas, and yes, complaints are welcomed. But, please put them in writing so that we don’t misunderstand, and give it to me or put it in the Worship mailbox in the office. Worship truly is the “work” of each one of us. Praise God!


Rickie Brunner,
Division Chair

2012 Lenten Season Theme: “Lord, Teach Us To Pray”

The Season of Lent begins with a very special Ash Wednesday service on February 22 as we are introduced to the Ignatian Examen. St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, developed the Daily Examen as a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God’s presence and discern God’s direction. It is an ancient practice in the church that can help us see God’s hand at work in our whole experience. During the Wednesdays of Lent, we will

unpack the Examen more fully as we explore deepening our prayer life.

On Sundays during the season of Lent, we will be looking at Luke 11, where the disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray. We will explore the Lord’s Prayer and the spiritual formation that comes from these amazing five petitions. Join us as we seek to deepen our spiritual lives through prayer this Lenten season.




You Are invited

A Service of Commissioning
 for
 Pastor Trudy Betts

Sunday, February 12, 2012
 4:00 p.m.

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
 1705 Taylor Road
 Montgomery, AL 36117

Join us for a Chili Supper
 by our Disciples Men following the service.

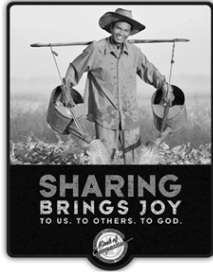


Muffins with the Minister

Are you new to the church? If so, you are invited to join Pastor Susan, **Sunday, February 19, 9:30–10:15 a.m.** in the Pastor’s Office for muffins, coffee, and conversation about the church. You will learn more about who we are and have the opportunity to get to know us better. Bring your questions! Bring your friends!



Mission Possible



Week of Compassion

Sharing Brings Joy to Us. To Others. To God.

There is enough to go around. God created a world of abundance, with enough resources to feed and sustain the entire world. Our task is to share that good news of enough by sharing what we have.

For 68 years, Week of Compassion has been making a difference by funding relief and development all over the world. Your gift ensures

that people in need will get what they need, and moves us one step closer to making sure everyone gets what is rightfully theirs, just as God created the world to be. And that fills the world with Joy!

“God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.” (2 Corinthians 9:8)

Our Week of Compassion Special Offering will be received February 19th.

Love Your Neighbor Food Ministry-Thank You

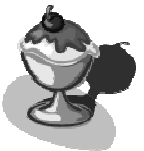
Pastor Susan,

I just want to say thank you to all of you for the groceries you give each month. Not just you, but all the people who serve. Thank you for the wonderful Thanksgiving lunch you served us. It is well remembered with lots of love.

Henrietta Leo, Donald, Donnie and Elaine Jones

Wednesday Night Meals

February 1-Country Steak w/onions, Chicken and Noodles, Baby Lima Beans, Corn Bread, Chocolate Chip Cookies, Ice Cream (**Guatemala Missions Fundraiser prepared by Dave Wheatcroft**)



February 8-Pork Chop Casserole, Field Peas, Salad, Dessert
February 15-Salisbury Steak, Rice, Green Beans, Salad, Dessert
February 22-Meatloaf, Mashed Potatoes, Italian Beans, Salad, Dessert
February 29-Poppyseed Chicken, Squash Casserole, English Peas, Salad, Dessert

Disciples Door to Door

I hope you can join Door to Door in visiting a local nursing home on **February 18 at 10:00 a.m.** We will meet at **Golden Living**. Small dogs are

welcome to help us meet and greet the residents. We will pass out goody bags. If you have questions, please contact Lexie Ofe at (334-409-0812).



Ongoing Missions

Disciples Door to Door is a mission program providing nurture and fellowship to nursing home residents in the Montgomery area. **The next mission opportunity is February 18 at 10:00 a.m.** We will meet at **Golden Living**.

To join this mission, contact Lexie Ofe at 334-590-8412.

Love Your Neighbor Food Ministry is an outreach ministry that provides food, clothing, and counseling services to assist families. **The next mission opportunity is Tuesday, February 14, at 10:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., and Wednesday, February 15, at 2:30 p.m.**

To join this mission, please contact Don Grobe at 334-312-4281 or adinadon@knology.net.

Family Promise is a temporary housing assistance program for displaced families. **The next mission opportunity is March 11-18, 2012.**

To join this mission, contact Kelly Colson at kcolson9601@gmail.com or 334-409-2327.

HIV/AIDS Task Force is a group that meets regularly to identify ways the church can assist individuals affected by HIV/AIDS.

To join this group, contact Gary Warren at 334-272-3363 or warrengwarr@aol.com.

Christians for Critters combines recycling with caring for all God's creatures. We also take supplies to the local animal shelters.

To help with this mission, see or contact Susan Friend at susanfriend@hotmail.com



Children's Messenger

"Let the children come to me . . . For it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." Mark 10:14



A Little Child Can Lead ... And Will Lead

Every now and then a child introduces a profound thought; a thought that formed as a result of his or her uniquely innocent point-of-view. These little bits of wisdom cause us to rethink our preconceived notions, either bringing us back to reality or simplifying our outlook. Then, we lovingly—and sometimes a bit sarcastically—quote, "And a little child shall lead them." It's true that children can point out the obvious and teach us a thing or two, but what if we intentionally taught them to lead? What if we encouraged them to lead? And—are you ready for this—what if we encouraged them to lead adults?

Small and medium-size churches have an advantage over mega-churches. Because of the intimacy and the small community atmosphere of the FCC congregation, we have an incredible opportunity to make something wonderful happen, not just for the children in our care, but also for the entire church. As part of FCC's children's programs, children can—and do—learn and lead worship. As we have seen in our Wednesday night "Be Fed!" worship, children, when given direction and supervision, can be a remarkable addition to worship leadership. Small churches like FCC present the perfect environment for introducing children to what it means to lead in worship, and for instilling in them that they are important to the entire body of believers.

The benefits to the congregation are numerous! When children are included in worship leadership, they bring with them a certain enthusiasm and lightheartedness, and that's something of which we all need to be reminded. After all, the scriptures tell us, "The joy of the Lord is my strength." Children bring smiles, either to our faces or to our hearts—and they bring strength. One of the most difficult things to do when coming into worship is to check your worries at the door and give God your undivided attention. Children have a blessed way of breaking down barriers, refocusing our attention, and moving us physically into a more relaxed state. With that accomplished, everyone is more ready to worship and to receive God's word. I heard a woman say one day, "When I walk in the door on Sunday and see that the children will be singing, I know it's going to be a good morning. They always set the tone for praising." Children change an atmosphere of quiet and tradition and stoic faces to one of celebration and praise!

Children's involvement in worship leadership gives adults hope. It's easy to feel hopeless when every form of electronic communication delivers news of disasters and moral failures. The trap of hopelessness snatches people when they're in the middle of personal crises. But when we witness children "getting it" and really leading with their hearts, our empty tanks are filled with fresh hope. We realize that what we're doing matters.

Children can also be an inspiration and motivator for adults. When adults witness children reciting passages of scripture by memory, they are challenged to rethink what they've done to engrave God's Word on their own hearts. Families who know how much time and rehearsal have gone in to being able to give God their best can't help but re-evaluate how they prepare for being part of worship. Another delightful benefit of including children in worship leadership is that it leads to numerical and spiritual growth. Grandparents who have not attended church in years may have renewed interest in attendance because their grandchildren are part of the worship leadership. School teachers invited to see their students in a musical may be led to be devoted and hungry Disciples of Christ. Children have monstrous influence over what adults do, and are anxious to share what they are doing in worship with the special people in their lives. The inhibition of asking someone to join you at church, which seems to be part of getting older, isn't yet present in kids. They are anxious to invite others to anything that is exciting to them, and leading worship is just that. When was the last time you really sensed that an adult was excited about leading worship? Oh, yes, a little child WILL lead them.

The children's involvement in worship will benefit our children's ministry efforts in unexpected ways, as well, because the adults who make decisions at the church will have a more positive attitude about our children's programs. They will be more likely to allocate funds and lend their support and encouragement because they witness something powerful happening.

In a smaller church, pastors are often not as hesitant to give children that initial opportunity to lead in worship, and maybe that's because there's a common feeling that "we're all family here." Those opportunities lead to lifelong commitment to worship leadership and accepting the call into full-time ministry. What pastor wouldn't love to look back in retirement and know that she was part of that?

Beverly

More Children's News



February Acolyte Schedule

- February 5 Haley Donovan
- February 12 Penelope Diaz
- February 19 Anna Colson
- February 26 Brody Day

February Worship and Wonder

- February 5 Parable of the Fishnet**
Storyteller: Lisa Day
Greeter: Ethan Hey
- February 12 Parable of the Sower**
Storyteller: Deborah Batson
- February 19 The Great Pearl (Parable)**
Storyteller: Trudy Betts
Greeter: Lexie Ofe
- February 26 Jesus and the Storm**
Storyteller: Adrianna Diaz
Greeter: Kelly Colson

February Following Jesus

- February 5 Jesus and the Paralytic**
Storyteller: Tony Thacker
Greeter: Karli Day
- February 12 Jesus and The Tax Collectors**
Storyteller: Annette Thacker
Greeter: Ethan Hey
- February 19 Jesus Calls the Twelve Disciples**
Storyteller: Teresa Houser
Greeter: Hannah Donovan
- February 28 Jesus Makes Lazarus Alive Again**
Storyteller: Jan Wallace

Xtreme Worship- Kid's Edition

Kid's helping to build God's Kingdom!
Join us every Wednesday Evening at 6:15 pm
For a JOYful worship experience led
By the children & youth of FCC!



Associate Minister



"For truly, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you." Matthew 17:20

Continued from Front Page.

Finally, there is Vacation Bible School, which is one of my favorite parts of the mission trip! Each day we begin VBS with singing and telling the stories of God with puppets. The children's voices are amazing to hear and their faces are bright with anticipation. My favorite song is about the mustard seed based on Jesus' words in the Book of Matthew. Each time the children sang this song I was filled with hope!

In Guatemala there is so much need and so much work needed for the restoration, and yet there is so much joy on the faces of the children. Hearing the stories of God through the people of God in Guatemala has reminded me that nothing is impossible when you have faith in God.

Today FCC is exploring mission possibilities to Guatemala. You are invited to attend a special presentation on past mission trips to Guatemala **Wednesday, February 1, starting at 5:30 p.m.** Dave Wheatcroft will be cooking dinner for us and all monies raised will help to support the mission fund.

Also, consider buying some of the Guatemalan handicrafts we have available for purchase. Perhaps consider having your small group purchase one of the more expensive table runners to donate to the church. These are great conversation starters with new guests and help to support the families in Santa Domingo Xenacoj.

י' הוּוּ ב דג
(God be with you)
Trudy

Young Adult Shindig In The Country!

- When:** Saturday, February 25, starting at approximately 2:00 p.m.
- Where:** Jerry and Sylvia Hancock's in Hope Hull
- Who:** Young Adults, ages 18-29
- What:** Cookout including hotdogs, hamburgers and S'mores!
Hayride! Fun, Fun, and more Fun!



**First Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)**

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Demonstrating and proclaiming God's joyful, unconditional love and providing an inclusive environment of spiritual growth and nurturing for God's children!

«AddressBlock»



FCC Member Spotlight—Michelle Vilamaa



I recently accepted an offer to serve as CEO of Medical AIDS Outreach of Alabama. In reality it was more of a call to action as my involvement and interest in MAO came only after First Christian Church identified HIV/AIDS as a mission through its visioning process and Annual Planning Event. MAO has experienced tremendous growth over the past three years. As a result of that growth, MAO is scrambling to “get its feet back under it.” The good news is that there are about 50 employees dedicated to improving health outcomes for individuals living with or impacted by HIV. The staff includes educators, social workers, nurses, administrators, and some of the very few infectious disease physicians in the state.

MAO has facilities in Montgomery, Dothan, and satellite clinics in Selma, Greenville, Troy and Clayton that support 26 counties and provide services for around 2,200 individuals. Alabama as a whole has a higher incidence of HIV infection per capita than the national average, but Montgomery County has the highest rate in the state. Approximately 75% of the individuals MAO serves are at the poverty level or below and 40% have no healthcare insurance at all. MAO relies on grants, federal and state dollars, and generous donations to provide the life-altering medications necessary to treat individuals ... and it is necessary. Studies have shown that not only do those receiving appropriate treatment and medications live close to full life expectancy, but those individuals are 96% less likely to spread the infection to others.

In two and a half months with MAO, I have been humbled by the resiliency of individuals who walk through our doors. We respond with treatment that is respectful, professional, and encourages the dignity that everyone deserves. They are mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers. They are young, old, working, disabled. They smile, joke, hug, hide. We want them to live. Without fear. Without question. Thank you for all of your prayers, support, and encouragement.

Michelle Vilamaa

