

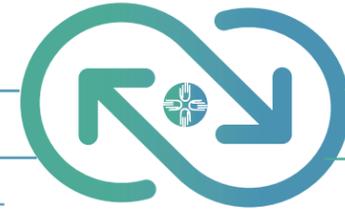


FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
TUSCALOOSA

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STEWARDSHIP



EMPHASIS 2020

FUMCT
CONNECTING POINT

SURRENDER

Christ

Acts 17:28

TIME + TALENTS + TREASURE



I remember with delight when I made the decision to surrender my life to Christ. The love and grace I experienced from Jesus was awesome. To joyfully surrender my will to Christ meant that I could live my life in a meaningful way. I felt a sense of relief as I cried tears of joy, but I knew that there had to be more. After the decision to surrender, my thoughts raced to what's next...how do I live out the *surrendered* way?

In conversations with others, it occurred to me that the next step was stewardship. God is the owner of everything and He entrusts what He owns in our care. God expects us to rightfully use what He owns for His glory. The word stewardship highlights that we are stewards who manage God's blessings. During January and February, our focus will be stewardship. The emphasis will be "Surrender" taken from Acts 17:28...

"IN GOD WE LIVE, MOVE, AND HAVE OUR BEING."

Stewardship, then, is the expression of our discipleship! Good stewardship of God's blessings helps us to grow spiritually.

I look forward to sharing about stewardship as it relates to *surrender*, not in a negative sense, but in a positive one. We will do this through four lenses. The first and most important is to surrender our lives to Christ, then we can joyfully surrender our time, talents and treasure as we make new disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of our community...our church...the world.

As we ponder our stewardship emphasis of surrender...first to Christ and then our time, talents and treasure...I invite you to think about selected words from the hymn – "Take My Life, and Let It Be."

Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord to Thee...
Take my hands, and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love.
Take my silver and my gold
Not a mite would I withhold.
Take my moments and my days
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Blessings,

DR. CLINTON HUBBARD, JR.
Senior Pastor

SOCIAL MEDIA



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CONNECTING POINT INFORMATION

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I grew up in a small church in Phenix City, Alabama. My grandfather was the song leader. My father was the Sunday school superintendent and youth director. My mother headed the children's department.

In a church of 80, it was all hands on deck. If there was a need, and you had abilities that would fill that need, you were IT!

That is where I learned to give. Dad started a youth league softball team for boys and girls. He ran a boys' basketball program. He would bring in boys who came from bad circumstances. He invested in their lives. Mom did too. None of them could afford to go out to lunch after Sunday services. She cooked what we had and we divided it up among those who came. God provided. Dad had a life-threatening health issue some years ago. One by one, sometimes in groups of three or four, men in their late 30s showed up to check on him. His "basketball boys." The seed he had planted in the boys had grown strong in these men. They loved Jesus and they loved Dad.

I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME.

Philippians 4:13

We will be talking about giving for the next few weeks. Time. Talent. Treasure. One is not any more important than the other to the church. It is time for you to pledge to invest in others for 2020. Join me as we talk about how you, with the help of Christ, can make the difference in people's lives in Tuscaloosa and literally, around the world.

Stephen Stroud
Interim Director of Contemporary Worship



SURRENDER

to Christ

TIME + TALENTS + TREASURE

Our theme this Winter is *Surrender*. The word *surrender* may have a negative connotation to some people. "Surrender in the name of the law" or "in 1945, Germany surrendered to the allied forces". Both of these examples imply a loss of power, giving up hope of victory or freedom.

However, when we *surrender* to Christ it is a positive action. We yield our ownership to Christ. We acknowledge that Christ is in control of us--our time, our talents and our treasure.

God owns it all. God is in control. If we surrender to God we admit that God is in charge and we can let go of the things that are holding us back and live our lives to the fullest.

In Job 11:13-18 (CEV) we find this assurance:

***Surrender your heart to God,
turn to him in prayer,
and give up your sins—
even those you do in secret.
Then you won't be ashamed;
you will be confident
and fearless.
Your troubles will go away
like water beneath a bridge,
and your darkest night
will be brighter than noon.
You will rest safe and secure,
filled with hope
and emptied of worry.***

Most of us don't go to the Book of Job for inspirational verses to memorize but in these five verses we find eight promises! It is worth committing to memory.

IF:

- We surrender our hearts to God everyday.
- We turn to God in prayer.
- We confess our sins to God.

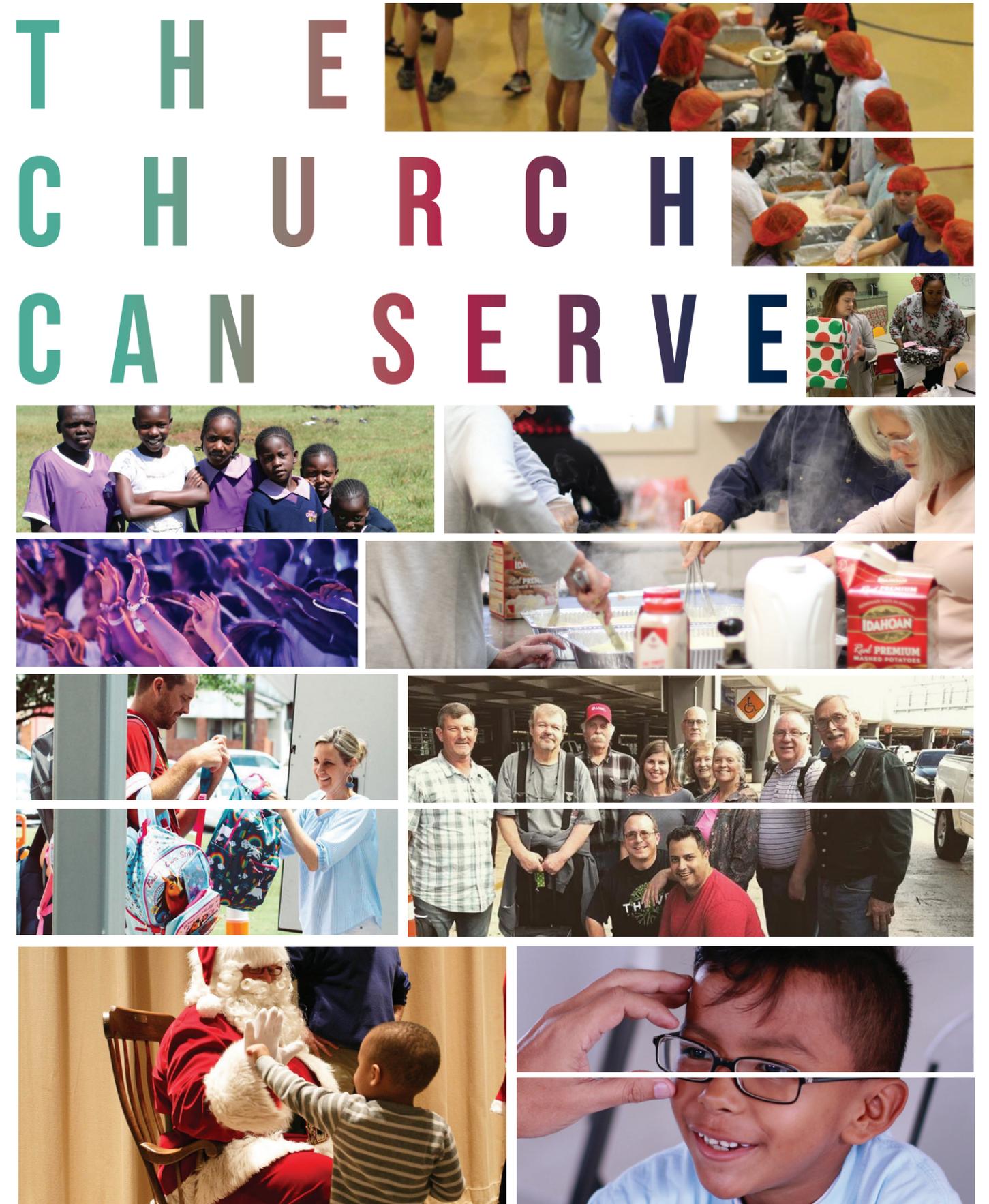
THEN:

- We won't be ashamed.
- We will be confident.
- We will be fearless.
- Our troubles will rush away like water under the bridge.
- Our dark nights of trouble will become bright days of joy.
- We will sleep well.
- We will be hopeful.
- We will not worry.

Read that IF...THEN list again. Take several deep breaths after you read it. *Do you feel the peace as you surrender your heart and your sin through prayer?*

Read and reread the Job passage this winter, particularly as Clinton and Stephen preach about *surrender*. Watch how Christ changes you as you "rest safe and secure" in his love.

THE CHURCH CAN SERVE





B E C A U S E



Y O U



G I V E,



T I M E

TEACH US TO USE WISELY
ALL THE TIME WE HAVE.

Psalm **90:12 (CEV)**

Here's a surprising statistic. Last year, the sales of paper calendars and planners increased 10 percent. In the day of smart phones and devices like Alexa that control us, many of us still rely on the tried and true paper version of the calendar. We try to control our time.

And lists! To Do lists. Grocery lists. Gratitude lists. Bucket lists. Meal and party planning lists. These help us control our time.

Parents and teachers teach the concept of using time wisely. Sunday school teachers and preachers teach us to give God the right to our time—to *surrender* our time to God. For most of us who are control freaks, that is a new (and difficult) concept. Have you ever heard anyone admit that when they surrendered control of their time to God, God took it and multiplied it in ways they never expected?

One of our volunteers that tutors elementary students at MLK Elementary tells this story:

"I try to spend at least one hour a week at the school. Sometimes it is tough to break away from work to go. I've got a deadline I'm bumping up against or some "issue" that is nagging at me. But, I go.

Sometimes on the way, I wonder 'how am I going to make up this hour?' I get there though and all the urgency I felt at the office instantly becomes irrelevant. First graders jump up to greet me. Mrs. Williams looks relieved that for the next hour she will have some assistance. I am lost to my 'urgent' work and am found in my fulfillment of 'important' work. Time flies. I leave as the children prepare to go to P.E.

When I get back to the office, I feel refreshed and my mind seems to have 'cleared'. The 'nagging' issue doesn't seem so important anymore. With my mind clear and my soul rejuvenated, I can work more efficiently and meet my deadline.

**GOD ENABLED ME TO
'GAIN' TIME THROUGH
MY 'GIVING' IT.**

God has also made me so much more aware of the big world we live in and has made me grateful for teachers like Mrs. Williams and principals like Mr. Jones and all the other faculty and staff, doing their best to teach and nurture the children at MLK Elementary.

It is very easy to live a very 'isolated' life. We have friends who are just like us and co-workers who are just like us and church members who are just like us. I am grateful that I have gotten to experience being around people at MLK who may appear to be not like me, but, in reality, they are more like me than I could ever have imagined and they have enriched my life tremendously."

Can you *surrender* one hour a week to help at MLK Elementary? at the Soup Bowl? to pray for others? Put your time in God's hands and see how your life will be enriched, with God's help.

T A L E N T S T R E A S U R E

SERVE EACH OTHER ACCORDING TO THE GIFT EACH PERSON HAS RECEIVED, AS GOOD MANAGERS OF GOD'S DIVERSE GIFTS. *1 Peter 4:10 (CEB)*

You are born with talents that give you unique skills and abilities. Your talents or gifts are not learned behaviors but you can strengthen them by practice and knowledge.

God is behind your talent. He created you and blessed you with talents. God wants you to use your gifts and talents to honor God and serve others. Surrender your talents to God and he will magnify your talents.

DO YOU SING OR PLAY AN INSTRUMENT?

Try the Bridge Worship Team, the Chancel Choir or the Youth Band.

DO YOU COOK?

Be a Soup Sister and make a batch of soup to take to those recently released from the hospital.

DO YOU HAVE A HEART FOR CHILDREN?

Volunteer at FirstKids children's ministry.

ARE YOU A DIY FAN?

Put that to work in a Habitat House build.

DO YOU LIKE TO TEACH?

Lead a WNA or Cultivate study.

ARE YOU GOOD WITH MONEY?

Get involved with Financial Peace University classes.

DO YOU LIKE TO READ?

Tutor at Central or MLK Elementary schools.

ARE YOU GOOD AT PAINTING?

Try a mission trip to Puerto Rico to help them rebuild from the hurricane.

DO YOU LIKE TO SMILE?

Join an usher or greeter team and welcome people to our church.

ARE YOU CRAFTY? Make Christmas decorations or medicine bags for mission trips.

ARE YOU COMPASSIONATE FOR THOSE WHO ARE LESS FORTUNATE?

Homeless Connect needs you on February 1st.

CAN YOU WRITE? Get on the Card Care Team and send greeting cards to those who need uplifting.

DO YOU ENJOY TALKING TO GOD?

The Prayer Team needs you.

DO YOU LIKE RISK-TAKING? Push yourself to do more than you have been doing. How about Kairos Prison Ministry? Honduras Hospital Ministry? Ministry for People with Disabilities? Love INC?

If you don't see your talent or gift highlighted here, that's great. God made us all different. Corinthians 12 reminds us that together we make God's kingdom complete.

We want to hear from you. Join us on **January 19th** in one of the Sunday services. We will distribute a spiritual gifts assessment which will help you identify your talents. Surrender your talents and gifts to God and God will prepare you to serve others with those talents and gifts.

Christ gave us two commandments: To love the Lord and to love others (Matthew 22:37-40). Using your talents to honor the Lord and to help and bless others is being obedient to God, following his great commandments. Surrender your talents to the work of the Lord.

Matthew 6:21 FOR WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE YOUR HEART WILL BE, ALSO.



Most of you know that my heart is here at FUMCT. I retired in 2015 to take a job here and I have been serving this church as a volunteer for almost 40 years! While my tithe is not a 'treasure' by the simple definition, my 10% goes where my heart is.

Here's an article that I wrote for the Connecting Point almost 15 years ago. As I consider surrendering my treasure to God, as I make my 2020 commitment to the church, I urge you to join me in investigating this mystery of surrender.

Gina Johnson, Church Administrator

The Mystery OF SURRENDERING Your Treasure

Mysteries intrigue me. I like a Robert Ludlum novel. I like to hear news reporters and historians muse about what happened to Amelia Earhart or if Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone. Everyday is a mystery to me of why my family, friends and co-workers put up with my bossy, hard-driving nature.

One of my preacher-best-friends has defined a mystery as "what is finally not explainable but is authenticated in our experience".

Tithing is a mystery to me; not the concept of it, but how it works in my life. Since 1990, I have been a faithful tither. First check of the month—FUMC-Tuscaloosa—10% off the top!

Here's the mystery. Somehow that 90% left in my bank account goes further. I know you can't go to the vending machine that sells a Coke for \$1, put in 90 cents and expect a bottle to fall.

But somehow I get through the stack of bills, past the two car payments, into the college savings fund and to the end of the month, using just that 90%. How can 90% go further or as far as 100%? God is the mystery-man. There are many things I can't explain about God but yet I know how I have experienced God, authentically.

I invite you to experience this mystery for yourself. To figure 10%, just move the decimal point on your paycheck one place to the left. Bonus: You won't need a calculator to fill out your pledge card.

Try it for one year....or even until Easter. I love a good mystery. You will too!

(Written in 2004 for Connecting Point.)