

AUGUST 2024

CONNECTIONS

A photograph of a school hallway filled with children. In the foreground, a young girl with blonde hair, wearing a red dress, is seen from the side, carrying a large blue and black backpack. Next to her, a boy in a plaid shirt is also carrying a backpack. In the center, a boy in a white t-shirt is seen from behind. To the right, a girl with braided hair, wearing a black t-shirt and blue shorts, is looking at a green backpack hanging on a rack. The hallway is brightly lit, and other children are visible in the background, some also carrying backpacks. The overall atmosphere is busy and typical of a school morning.

**BACK TO
SCHOOL**

SUNDAY, AUGUST 11



BRING a FRIEND to CHURCH

Who do you know that is looking for a loving church family where they can ask questions and grow in their faith? As we head into fall and back to school, we are asking each of us to consider who we might invite to join us for Sunday School and worship on Sunday, August 11. In particular, we are asking our families with middle school and high school age youth to plan to start the school year off making First Church Youth Group a priority and bring a friend with them to the youth breakfast during Sunday School on Sunday, August 11. Everyone likes being invited to belong to something that is fun and life-giving – so **BRING A FRIEND** and let's grow our reach in our community!

JUSTICE & MERCY COMBINED *Sunday School*

SUNDAY, AUGUST 11 AT 9:45AM IN THE LARGE DINING ROOM

On Sunday, August 11 we will host our second church-wide session to present the remaining six Justice and Mercy ministry partners during the Sunday School hour in the Large Dining Room. The agencies that will be presented are Alabama Coalition for Immigrant Justice, Alabama Interfaith Refugee Partnership, Black Warrior Riverkeeper, Church of the Reconciler, Community on the Rise, and Magic City Acceptance Project. Come hear your lay leaders talk about these impactful partners and how you might consider engaging.



SUNDAY, AUGUST 11 IN WORSHIP

BLESSING *of the* BACK PACKS

On Sunday, August 11, we invite all students, teachers, administrators, and others involved in education to join us during worship in both the Loft and Sanctuary for a meaningful time of blessing for the year ahead. We invite you to bring your backpacks, briefcases, or any other symbol of your educational journey to place on the altar as we pray for the upcoming school year. Whether you are starting a new journey in elementary school, venturing into college life, or guiding students as educators and administrators, this service will celebrate you. Let's start the new school year with hope, positivity, and the shared support of our church family.

BACK 2 SCHOOL BASH

AT THE **HOOVER SPLASH PAD**

SUNDAY, AUGUST 11 FROM 4:00PM - 6:00PM

Get ready to splash into the new school year at our Back to School Bash! You are invited to join us on **Sunday, August 11 from 4:00pm to 6:00pm at the Hoover Splash Pad (1060 RV Trace, Hoover, AL, 35244)** for an afternoon of laughter, games, and cool refreshments. This event is the perfect way to bid farewell to summer and greet the upcoming school season with enthusiasm.

MELTDOWN

WHEN THINGS FALL APART

Have you ever wondered where God is when things seem to be falling apart? You know, those times when our emotions seem to get the better of us and we are in the midst of a meltdown? Throughout Scripture, we encounter numerous examples of very human characters who struggle with these same feelings. We see these individuals in their moments of wisdom and grace but we also see them in the midst of utter meltdowns, when everything is falling apart and they are not at their best. In all of these stories, we find a God of love and compassion who meets people where they are no matter what. We find a God who reaches out to offer healing and restoration even in the midst of what feels like disaster, disobedience, and despair. Join us in this series as we learn from some of the greatest meltdowns in our biblical text and remember that God is always with us - even when we are not at our best.

8.4.24 | MOSES' MELTDOWN: **FRUSTRATION**
NUMBERS 20:1-13

8.11.24 | ELIJAH'S MELTDOWN: **DESPAIR**
1 KINGS 19:1-18

8.18.24 | JONAH'S MELTDOWN: **ANGER**
JONAH 4:1-11

8.25.24 | MARTHA'S MELTDOWN: **RESENTMENT**
LUKE 10:38-42

ALL IN

VOLUNTEER ACCELERATOR

Have you ever wondered where your gifts best match the needs in our church family? Or where you might enjoy serving best? At First Church we want everyone to be ALL In when it comes to our discipleship and serving. Therefore, in the middle of this month, we will launch an exciting new tool called the Volunteer Accelerator. This tool will allow you to identify your strengths which will then be matched with volunteer opportunities in our community that best utilize those gifts and strengths. The Volunteer Accelerator will help those of you who aren't sure where to serve find a place that matches your strengths. In addition, it will help those who are already serving find the areas where you can build on your strengths (which might be areas where you are already serving, or it might even surprise you with new ideas). We believe this tool will better help us better engage as a community in meaningful opportunities for service. So, be on the lookout for more information as we launch later this month.

Wednesday Night **DINNER & PROGRAMMING**

WEDNESDAY NIGHT DINNERS ARE BACK! Beginning on Wednesday, September 4, our Wednesday Night Dinner and Programming will return for the fall. Our time frame will shift to a rolling dinner from 5:15pm – 6:15pm and adult programming from 6:15pm – 7:15pm. The nursery will open at 5:30pm and children’s programming will begin at 6:00pm. You can find the menu for the rest of the fall and register for dinners [HERE](#).

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This year we are excited to roll out our entire line up of small groups for the fall.

Click [HERE](#) to read more about the variety of options for ongoing as well as short term study groups taking place on Wednesday evenings.

To sign up for a small group, click [HERE](#).

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Welcome GUIDES



Beginning on Sunday, August 11 you will see “Welcome Guides” present on our campus in addition to our “Greeters” on Sunday mornings. These “Welcome Guides” are intended to help visitors feel at ease as they enter our space, navigate to Sunday School, the nursery, find our worship spaces, and build connection with our community. A training for guides will be held on Saturday, August 3 from 9:30am – 11:00am at First Church. If you are interested in being a guide, reach out to Katie Gilbert at Katie@firstchurchbhm.com for more information.

FIRST CHURCH NAMETAGS



As we head into the fall, we will be placing another order of First Church nametags. We encourage everyone to wear a nametag as a sign of our hospitality and welcome to all who come here – as well as helping us better know one another. Nametags are \$10 each and can be ordered by clicking [HERE](#). All orders must be made by Thursday, August 15. If placing an order online is difficult for you, please reach out to Katie Gilbert at Katie@firstchurchbhm.com for assistance.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 23 - SUNDAY, AUGUST 25

T W E N T Y - T W E N T Y F O U R

SIDEWALK

F I L M F E S T I V A L

EACH YEAR FIRST CHURCH PARTNERS WITH SIDEWALK FILM FESTIVAL TO SCREEN MOVIES IN OUR LOFT WORSHIP SPACE. THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE OUR LOVE AND HOSPITALITY WITH THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WHO COME TO THE FESTIVAL OVER THE COURSE OF THE WEEKEND. ONE OF THE WAYS WE DO THIS IS BY PROVIDING CONCESSIONS FOR PURCHASE (JUST LIKE VISITING ANY OF THE OTHER VENUES WHO HOST AROUND TOWN!).

THE SIDEWALK FILM FESTIVAL WILL BE **AUGUST 23-25** AND VOLUNTEER SHIFTS WILL BE APPROXIMATELY ONE TO TWO HOURS IN LENGTH ON SATURDAY AND SUNDAY. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HELPING OVER THE WEEKEND, CONTACT [KATIE@FIRSTCHURCHBHM.COM](mailto:katie@firstchurchbhm.com). (TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE FOR THOSE WILLING TO HELP!)

Save
the
Date
FEBRUARY 14-16, 2025

T W E N T Y T W E N T Y F I V E

CHURCH-WIDE RETREAT

You are invited to save the date for our churchwide retreat February 14-16, 2025 at Camp McDowell. More information on our theme and registration will be available in the coming month.

NOVEMBER 3 - NOVEMBER 4



AWAKENING

Women's Retreat

Come join us for First Church's women's retreat "Awakening" - a transformative journey into the heart of feminine spirituality and empowerment, guided by the wisdom of Sue Monk Kidd's book *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter*. Over the course of our time together you will be invited to reclaim your voice, embrace your authentic self, and explore the depths of spiritual awakening. We will explore the topics of the Kidd's book such as reclaiming feminine power, healing from societal conditioning, and connecting with the divine feminine within and around us. The retreat will be held the first weekend of November from Friday, November 3 through Saturday, November 4 at First Church.

LABOR DAY COMBINED WORSHIP

IN THE SANCTUARY

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 1 AT 11:00 AM

On Sunday, September 1 we will combine for worship in the Sanctuary at 11:00am. You are invited to join us as we remember the United Methodist Church's rich history in advocating for worker's rights as well as just and fair labor laws in our country. Come and be inspired to continue the legacy.

JUSTICE & MERCY GIVING BASKET

We have revived our Giving Basket Initiative! You will find the drop off location in the blue wagon in the Education Building by the doors to the courtyard. For the month of August, we will continue collecting non-perishable kid friendly food items for Greater Birmingham Ministries as well as towels and shower curtain liners for Community Furniture Bank who assists with furnishings for previously unhoused women and families.

FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM

JUSTICE & MERCY OPPORTUNITIES

MAGIC CITY ACCEPTANCE CENTER

Magic City Acceptance Center (MCAC) has asked us to provide coffee and donuts for their support group for families with trans and gender expansive children ages 12 and under, "Space to Be Me." They meet the third Saturday of each month. The cost is approximately \$35-40. To sign up click [HERE](#). If you have questions, direct them to jordangpittman@gmail.com.

ONE PLACE

Charlotte Peveryly did a beautiful job of presenting the important work of One Place which provides services to victims of domestic and sexual violence at our June meeting. They have identified several areas in which members of First Church might engage. Contact Charlotte at johncharlotte80@gmail.com to learn more.

URBAN MINISTRY

Finally, the WeBuild program at Urban Ministries experienced a sad loss as a house they were working on was burglarized. Items stolen ranged from brand new appliances to small and large tools. If you would like to learn more about the specific needs, direct your questions to jenmcombs40@gmail.com or jkdramer@gmail.com.

FIRST CHURCH CHOIR INVITATION

The First Church Choir will begin regular rehearsals on Wednesday, September 4 from 6:30pm - 8:00pm. Anyone who is interested in joining us is welcome to come give it a try!

Please reach out to Patrick Evans at Patrick@firstchurchbhm.com if you are interested.

GET READY FOR THE ULTIMATE YOUTH EVENT!

SATURDAY, AUGUST 17 FROM 4:00PM TO 7:00PM

Attention all youth and teens! Mark your calendars for the skibbiest event of the summer! On Saturday, August 17 from 4:00pm to 7:00pm, we're hosting an unforgettable gathering filled with top secret games, exciting prizes, and loads of fun. Compete in thrilling games where you can showcase your skills and win amazing prizes. Plus, here's an extra incentive: Bring a friend along and you'll be automatically entered to win a \$50 Visa gift card! It's a chance to share the excitement with your friends and possibly walk away with a cool reward.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 29 AT BLUE SUSHI SAKE GRILL

MOM'S Night Out

Once a month a group of First Church moms gather together at a local restaurant for good food and good conversation. This month's gathering is on **THURSDAY, AUGUST 29 AT BLUE SUSHI SAKE GRILL AT THE SUMMIT AT 7:00PM.**

If you are interested in joining us or learning more information, please reach out to Jessica Yarbrough at jessicay731@gmail.com.

Visioning OUR FUTURE

With General Conference in the rear-view mirror and the opportunity to live fully into being an OPEN place for ALL without fear, it is time for First Church to prayerfully discern who we feel God calling us to be and what we are called to do in this next phase of our life. Executive Council is inviting the congregation to enter a time of intentional discernment this fall around what might be next for us as a congregation.

CONSIDER QUESTIONS LIKE:

- WHAT IS MOST NEEDED NOW FROM FIRST CHURCH IN OUR COMMUNITY AND WORLD?
- WHAT COULD TO BE ELEVATED FOR US TO GROW MORE INTO THE BELOVED COMMUNITY?
- WHAT ISSUES OF INJUSTICE ARE OURS ON WHICH TO SINK DEEP INTO THE WORK OF LIBERATION?
- WHAT HAVE WE NEGLECTED THAT NEEDS TO NOW BE NURTURED?
- WHAT HAS BEEN FRUITFUL BUT MIGHT NEED PRUNING FOR OTHER VITAL THINGS TO THRIVE?
- WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BE IN THIS NEXT PHASE OF OUR MINISTRY?
- WHO ARE WE BEING CALLED TO SERVE?

You are encouraged to share your prayerful thoughts and insights with Executive Council and our pastors. We are excited to see where the Holy Spirit is leading us in ministry together at this point in our history.

TIME FOR RENEWAL

Every seven years of full-time ministry in the same appointment, the North Alabama Conference allows for clergy to take time for renewal. These last few years have been full of important and, at times, difficult work from learning to lead a church during a global pandemic, multiple important staff changes, a season of exploring our future as a congregation, and preparing for General and Jurisdictional Conferences in the United Methodist Church. Along with these church milestones, in my personal life, Steve and I are preparing to become empty nesters in August after sending both of our young adult children to college. Now seems like a perfect time to take a deep breath, slow down, and make some time for renewal and discernment. I have been working with our staff and SPRC to plan when and how to best utilize this generous opportunity in a way that is most advantageous for our team and myself.

CLICK [HERE](#) TO READ MORE



SHABBATHIC

AS WE SEEK TO BE
AN OPEN PLACE FOR ALL

MY PRAYER FOR FIRST CHURCH IS:

For others, to put people first that need help before ourself.

- Kayden Morris

To continue to love like Jesus – always.

For all to know they belong, are loved, are important, and are needed.

And a prayer of thanks for a church home – for ALL of my family.

- Camille Morris

To love God and show kindness authentically, honoring God's commandment that God loves us all. Pray we continue to stand for justice and fight for all that need a place to call home because for some of us it takes 15+ years to find it.

- Lee Morris

To reach all mankind and all ages through God's word.

- Sheila Gibbs





UPDATE YOUR **CONTACT INFORMATION**

We know a lot has changed over the last year - many of you have moved, changed jobs, phone numbers, email addresses, etc. If you or your family have made any changes to your contact information in the past year, please take a moment to let us know. You may do so by contacting our Office Administrator Peg Thompson at Peg@firstchurchbhm.com.

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

9:00am

VIRTUAL LIVE STREAM SERVICE

9:45am

SUNDAY SCHOOL

11:00am

LOFT & SANCTUARY IN PERSON WORSHIP

Click [HERE](#) to view our monthly calendar.

FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM STAFF

YOU MAY REACH OUR STAFF AT 205-254-3186 OR BY EMAIL

Senior Pastor: Stephanie York Arnold Stephanie@firstchurchbhm.com
Pastor: Jonathan Goss Jonathan@firstchurchbhm.com
Executive Pastor: Katie Gilbert Katie@firstchurchbhm.com
Minister of Community Engagement: Katherine Mullen Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com
Minister of Families & Youth: Ashley Hess..... Ashley@firstchurchbhm.com
Organist: Richard Byrd Richard@firstchurchbhm.com
Design: Blake Hobbs Blake@firstchurchbhm.com
Minister of Music: Patrick Evans Patrick@firstchurchbhm.com
Office Administrator: Peg Thompson Peg@firstchurchbhm.com
Business Administrator: Steve Pitts Steve@firstchurchbhm.com
Maintenance Supervisor: Ron Dates Ron@firstchurchbhm.com
Wedding Director: Betsy Pate Betsy@firstchurchbhm.com
Executive Director of Early Learning Center: Cassandra Copeland ELC@firstchurchbhm.com
Nursery Coordinator: Andrea Hayes Andrea@firstchurchbhm.com



an OPEN place for ALL to **WORSHIP, GROW,** and **SERVE**

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