

SEPTEMBER 2024

CONNECTIONS

GENEROUS LIVING



Too often we struggle to see and talk about the ways in which money and resources are an important part of our faith journey. These conversations can feel personal, shame-ridden, and tender. We may have felt manipulated by others in the past when it comes to expectations of our giving and, often, we don't feel we have enough to be generous.

All of these things may be true, and yet, as people of faith, the ways we handle our money and resources are an integral part of our spiritual growth. There are over 2300 passages of Scripture regarding our resources and wealth. In this series **DIGGING DEEPER: THE ROOTS OF GENEROSITY** we will consider practical steps we can take to live a more holistic, more generous life. We will engage several big themes related to generosity: gratitude for life; making the best use of our time on earth; living responsibly as stewards of the planet; and participating in the *beloved community* with a countercultural approach to valuing people and creation.

Yes, it will be about money, but money is simply a tool. It's about everything: our thinking, our relationships, our actions. It's about being a generous person in a generous church, understanding God as inherently generous. Through this lens we can embrace a Manna and Mercy approach with an attitude of abundance (about life, grace, and resources), and begin to let go of our attitude of scarcity, as we ask how we might invest our time and our money in order to live a more generous and faithful life.

9.8 | The Tree of Life

GENESIS 2:1-9

9.15 | Good Soil

MATTHEW 13:1-23, MARK 4:1-20,
LUKE 8:1-5, AND THE GOSPEL OF THOMAS

9.22 | Caring for the Earth

MARK 4:30-34

9.29 | Caring for Each Other

REVELATION 22:1-5
PLEDGE SUNDAY

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29 IN THE SANCTUARY

COMBINED WORSHIP

PLEDGE SUNDAY

The culmination of our Digging Deeper stewardship campaign will be Sunday, September 29 when we will pledge our financial resources for the ministry and mission of our beloved church. You are invited to bring your pledge card with you to worship that Sunday or to fill out your pledge card online prior to that day.

To learn more about our operating budget and where your money goes click [HERE](#).

To fill out your 2025 pledge card click [HERE](#).

LET'S WEAR SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29 **YELLOW**

FOR CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS

On Pledge Sunday, September 29, we are inviting our congregation to come to church wearing yellow. Yellow is the chosen color for Childhood Cancer Awareness Month which takes place during September. There will also be yellow ribbons available this Sunday for you to wear. We will plan to take a picture of our combined worship service in the Sanctuary to send to Benjamin Stafford Smith (7) to remind him of our prayers for him and all others journeying with cancer.



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, we recently launched an exciting new tool called the Volunteer Accelerator. This tool will allow you to identify your skills and 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 help us better engage as a community in meaningful opportunities for service. Click [HERE](#) to begin the survey now.

Wednesday Night **DINNER & PROGRAMMING**

WEDNESDAY NIGHT DINNERS ARE BACK! This fall dinner will begin at 5:15pm with adult programming to follow at 6:15pm. 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](#).

In addition, September will launch a new round of small groups. Click [HERE](#) to read more detailed information about our offerings for the entire fall semester as well as to register to participate. We invite you to find a group that fits your interests and make plans to come and join us this fall.

FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM

THIS I BELIEVE?

CHURCHWIDE RETREAT 2025

Many of us are familiar with the Apostle's Creed but have you ever wondered about the theological meaning behind the words? Have you ever questioned whether the words reflect your beliefs or if you are just reciting an old formula? On **FEBRUARY 14 - 16**, we will tackle these difficult questions and more at our church-wide retreat.

In addition to studying and learning together, our churchwide retreat will offer the opportunity for us to build connection through rest, play, meditation, singing, and sharing. There will be nursery care provided along with CityKids and youth programming. Click **HERE** to read more about this year's theme as well as details about pricing and registration.

CLICK **HERE** TO REGISTER TODAY.

FALL SENIOR LUNCH

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12 AT 12:00PM
IN THE LARGE DINING ROOM

As fall begins, we want to gather with our senior members for lunch on **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12 AT 12:00PM** in our Large Dining Room. Robby Myrick, longtime church musician and gospel singer, will be joining us to share in music during lunch. If you are interested in attending, either because you are a senior congregant or because you love our seniors, Click **HERE** to make a reservation. Deana Solfronk will prepare our meal and the cost is \$10 per person.



Getting To KNOW US Dinner

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19 AT 6:00PM

If you have been visiting with us at First Church, have recently joined First Church, or are interested in learning more, you are invited to join us for a meal together around the table. We will gather at 6:00pm on Thursday, September 19 in the Large Dining Room for good food and fellowship. Childcare is available with a reservation made by Friday, September 13. Click [HERE](#) to learn more and register to join us.



FIRST CHURCH 101

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, FOLLOWING WORSHIP

On Sunday, September 29 we will host First Church 101 after worship. A light lunch will be offered before we move into our time of learning and conversation. During our time together we will share more about United Methodist theology, polity, and Social Principles as well as what membership means at First Church and ways to find deeper connection and community. Childcare will be available with a reservation.

CLICK [HERE](#) TO REGISTER NOW.



FIRST CHURCH Community: groups

It's that time again! Every fall, we re-launch our community groups to include interested newcomers and anyone looking for community. **DINNER GROUPS** and **LIFE GROUPS** provide a sense of fellowship and encourage deeper connection within our congregation. Dinner groups meet once month, while Life Groups typically meet once a week. Both groups require a high level of commitment to building community and attending as often as you are able. If you are interested in participating in a community group this year, please fill out our online form **HERE**. If you have any questions, please email Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com.



NOVEMBER 1 - NOVEMBER 2

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 1 through Saturday, November 2 at First Church.

IT'S TAP TIME!



We'd love for you to join us in the First Church Loft on Monday nights and learn to tap dance or improve the skills you already have. There are 3 levels available and hopefully one of them will be just right for you!

Classes begin on Monday, September 16 and are free of charge. Those ages 13 and up are welcome to join us. Click [HERE](#) to sign up now. For questions and additional info, please contact Kathy Draper at kathydraper1011@gmail.com.

TAP I

5:00PM - 5:45PM

TAP III

5:45PM - 6:30PM

TAP III

6:30PM - 7:00PM

(PERFORMANCE PRACTICE)

TAP II

7:05PM - 7:45PM

PANAMA LEARN AND SERVE EXPERIENCE

JUNE 29 - JULY 7

First Church is planning on going back to Panama in 2025. We are thrilled to have this opportunity. We are starting now to build a team for our Panama Learn and Serve week in July of 2025. Panama is a beautiful country with even more beauty found in her people. First Church has been deeply connected to Panama and the people there for almost 15 years. Our connection is through a United Methodist missionary, Rhett Thompson, who has served in Panama for over 30 years. Rhett has connected us to folks in Panama that we know by name now. It is through these connections that many folks here at First Church have had life-changing experiences in Panama. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

D In Your **Dreams**

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR CITYKIDS IN SEPTEMBER

As everyone heads back to school this fall, we hope you will also consider recommitting to joining us for Sunday School. In September our CityKids will be considering "In Your Dreams," a series considers the nighttime world that awakens as the sun sets and we nod off to sleep each night. Along with our dreams and slumber, the night can also mean shadows and unfamiliar sounds. We will consider who makes us feel safe when the world is dark and scary? In this four-week series based on the life of Joseph, we'll learn about how God watches over us and loves everyone the same.

GOOD CALL

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR YOUTH IN SEPTEMBER

Coaches help their teams by guiding them towards good decisions. They create the strategy, put together a game plan, and send their players out to make it happen. Wouldn't it be nice for someone to do that for all of our decisions? Thankfully, God gives us wisdom whenever we feel like we could use a good coach. In this 4-week series from Proverbs and the Epistles, we'll learn more about the wisdom God offers us whenever we want to make godly decisions. We'll see that wise people practice what God has said and share what God has given them. We'll also look at how the Holy Spirit helps wise people follow God's guidance and how wise people's words show God's love.

FIRST CHURCH GARDENERS/LANDSCAPERS

Do you have a passion for gardening or landscaping? Do you want to keep our courtyard and garden beds as beautiful and inviting as possible? If so, we would love to have you join a group that will organize church plantings, especially in the courtyard. The group will also refresh and maintain courtyard plants twice per year, in the fall and spring. Even if you can't do the physical work, please participate if you have gardening knowledge and an eye for beauty! We also need ideas about the dry and shady 6th Avenue beds for sustainable plantings. If you are interested in joining or learning more, please get in touch with David Ansardi, dansardi@gmail.com, or 205-913-2594.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23 AT 12:00PM AT TRINITY UMC

LUNCH & LEARN ABOUT COMMUNITIES OF TRANSFORMATION

Come learn about a holistic and relational approach for churches and communities to walk with individuals and families as they move from surviving to thriving. Join us for the conversation at Trinity UMC (1400 Oxmoor Rd. Homewood). Please RSVP by September 15 to Emily Freeman Penfield at Emily.Penfield@umcna.org. Check out their website at www.communitiesoftransformation.org to learn more.

GIFTS RECEIVED BY THE CHURCH

TO THE MEMORIAL FUND

IN MEMORY OF SFC ANDREW KEITH PERKINS

FROM LIZ PERKINS

IN MEMORY OF SARAH JOLLY

FROM MATTHEW MCMILLAN

IN MEMORY OF LENA CROUCH

FROM ANDY WALLACE AND MARTIN KIRCUS

IN MEMORY OF MARTHA "MARTY" HOLLINGSWORTH

FROM THE DINNER GROUP

FROM THE JAZZY GALS

FROM BRIAN AND ANGEL GARRETT

FROM ANDREA RAINEY

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

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