

FEBRUARY 2025

CONNECTIONS

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark dress with a light floral pattern, is seen from the back, addressing a group of people. The audience, consisting of men, women, and children, is seated in a rustic room with wood-paneled walls and large tree trunks. Many audience members are holding up their smartphones to take photos or videos, with bright flashes visible. The atmosphere appears to be a celebratory community event.

**CELEBRATING
COMMUNITY**

FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM

THIS I BELIEVE?

CHURCHWIDE RETREAT 2025

Our annual church-wide retreat at Camp McDowell will take place Friday, February 14 through Sunday, February 16. We are looking forward to spending the weekend together learning, playing games, singing karaoke, worshipping, and taking time to rest and recharge. We ask for prayers for a safe journey to the retreat and a meaningful time away. If you are not able to attend the retreat, we will have a virtual-only service on Sunday, February 16 at 9:00am.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16

**VIRTUAL
WORSHIP
ONLY**

Because of the church-wide retreat, there will be no in-person worship on Sunday, February 16. We invite you to view our virtual service which will feature content and themes from the material we are covering during retreat sessions. As a reminder our virtual service streams at 9:00am on **YouTube** and is available to stream any time following

LIVESTREAM STARTS AT 9:00AM

7 DIFFICULT SAYINGS of

Paul

The Apostle Paul is the most important person in the history of our Christian faith after Jesus. In the first half of his life, he was a major persecutor of the early church but following his own miraculous awakening he lived a remarkable life as a Jewish Jesus follower. Over the years, he set up churches in Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Ephesus. As he developed the early church, he would write letters of encouragement and admonishment to keep these churches going. It is these letters containing his thoughts and feelings, however, that have led some to love Paul and others to hate him. In this sermon series we will tackle some of Paul's more difficult topics and sayings through a contextual and historical lens to see whether we find Paul appealing or appalling. We will seek to better understand some of the major theological concepts this Apostle felt compelled to address and look for what we may glean from his life and teaching.

2.2.25

ANGRY GOD?

ROMANS 1:18-23

2.9.25

FAREWELL

(IT IS A DIFFICULT SAYING!)

PHILIPPIANS 1:3-11, ACTS 20:22

COMBINED SERVICE IN THE SANCTUARY

2.16.25

RETREAT WEEKEND

VIRTUAL WORSHIP ONLY

2.23.25

WHO INHERITS THE KINGDOM?

I CORINTHIANS 6:9-11

3.2.25

DAMNED BY ONE, SAVED BY ONE?

ROMANS 1:18-23



A CELEBRATION FOR
STEPHANIE
YORK ARNOLD
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9 | FOLLOWING WORSHIP

On **SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9** we will celebrate the past fifteen years of Stephanie York Arnold's leadership and ministry with us at First Church and bless her next steps in the journey as the General Secretary of GCSRW. Join us first for a combined worship service at 11:00am in the Sanctuary as the full staff team along with both the Loft and Sanctuary musicians lead us in worship. Then, make plans to stay after worship for snacks and an ice cream social in our Large Dining Room as we remember and celebrate all that we have accomplished in ministry together.

In addition, we are collecting a love gift to show Stephanie our appreciation for all of her years of ministry at First Church. Click [HERE](#) and scroll down to the "Love Gift" fund to make your donation online or mark "Love Gift - Stephanie" in the memo line of your check.

Wednesday Nights are back! As a reminder, dinner begins at 5:15pm with adult programming following at 6:15pm. The nursery opens at 5:30pm and children's and youth programming begins at 6:00pm. You can find the menu and register for more dinners [HERE](#). Please make note that there will be **NO WEDNESDAY NIGHT ACTIVITIES ON FEBRUARY 12** as our staff prepares for the retreat.

Wednesday Night
**DINNER &
PROGRAMMING**

As we begin a new month, a new round of small groups will begin alongside our ongoing groups. Click [HERE](#) to read more detailed information about our offerings and click [HERE](#) to register to participate.

FAT TUESDAY PANCAKE DINNER



TUESDAY, MARCH 4 AT 6:00PM

Our Fat Tuesday Pancake Dinner is making a comeback! We invite you to wear your most festive Mardi Gras outfit and bring your appetite down to the church on Tuesday, March 4 at 6:00pm for our very own fais do-do. Together we'll eat delicious food, absorb the beautiful sounds of New Orleans-style jazz music from a live band, and dance the night away! This dinner is free of charge but you must register by February 25 as we need an accurate headcount. We will also be collecting donations for our Panama Learn and Serve trip this July. Come dressed in your party suit and laissez les bons temps rouler!

Click [HERE](#) to make your reservations.

ASH



W E D N E S D A Y

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5

12:00PM IN THE CHAPEL + 6:15PM IN THE SANCTUARY

Ash Wednesday is the beginning the Lenten season. It is a time of worship marked by remembering our humanity and mortality. We recognize it is God's love that invites us into repentance and reconciliation. In worship we will receive ashes on our hands or foreheads in an act of repentance and a sign of penitence. Join us for one of our Ash Wednesday Services either at 12:00pm in the Chapel or at 6:15pm in the Sanctuary. If you plan to join us for the evening service, you are invited to join us for Wednesday night dinner starting at 5:15pm. Click [HERE](#) to make your dinner reservation.

FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM

JUSTICE & MERCY OPPORTUNITIES

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 Jordan Pittman at jordangpittman@gmail.com.

THE JUSTICE & MERCY TEAM will be gathering coats, hats, and gloves to share with our ministry partners who work directly with unhoused people and others challenged by our cold weather. This collection will take place throughout the month of February. Donations should be brought to the blue wagon in the area by the doors from the Education Building to the Courtyard.

In addition, the Justice and Mercy leadership team will be meeting in early February. If you want to offer feedback or suggestions contact Beth Curry at currybeth@bellsouth.net

FIRST CHURCH PRESCHOOL UPDATES

At the beginning of this year we introduced Group Publishing Curriculum, a program designed to engage our youngest friends with lessons, crafts, and simple, meaningful truths that reflect God's love and care. February's theme is "WOW! God can help me!" Throughout this month, we'll be exploring this theme by teaching the children about Jesus' miracles and helping them understand how God's incredible power is always there to help us. These "Big Ideas" are brought to life through a Bible story, engaging games or songs, hands-on activities, and a fun craft.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR EVERY CHILD

At First Church, we're committed to creating a nurturing and inclusive environment for all children. This month, we're incorporating:

- Activities that address multiple learning styles.
- Attention to varying sensory needs to ensure every child feels comfortable.
- A focused approach to the weekly "Big Idea" to help with understanding and retention.

WEDNESDAY NIGHT PROGRAMS FOR PRESCHOOL

We're also excited to enhance Wednesday nights with interactive engagement programs that focus on sparking awe and wonder about creation and the world around us. Each week will feature a new theme—like space!—designed to captivate young minds through textural and sensory play. These activities are carefully crafted to help children experience the beauty and creativity of God's creation in a fun, hands-on way.

CITY KIDS UPDATES

VALENTINE'S PARTY FOR KIDS!

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 6:00PM – 7:15PM

Bring your kids (nursery and elementary) for an evening of love and laughter as we enjoy a fun-filled Valentine's Party complete with exciting games and activities for all ages, crafts to take home, and a special dessert.

CONNECT RETREAT WEEKEND

FRIDAY, MARCH 14 – SATURDAY, MARCH 15

We are thrilled to announce the opportunity for a Spring Children's Retreat for 4th - 6th graders at Camp Sumatanga! This retreat is a follow up to the event on Martin Luther King Day and promises to be a fun and faith-filled weekend, focused on Wesley's Simple Rules: "Do No Harm" and "Stay in Love with God." The event will take place from late Friday afternoon through 6:00pm on Saturday.

The cost for the weekend is \$125. More information on registration coming soon.

PRE-K LUNCH & BOUNCE

TUESDAY, MARCH 12 FROM 10:00AM – 12:00PM

Bring your little ones for a morning of bouncing, playing, and lunch while parents have the opportunity to connect with other parents. The cost is \$5 for each person attending (and includes lunch). Click **HERE** to register your family's attendance.

Be sure to register anyone who will be eating, including parents and siblings.

YOUTH UPDATES

YOUTH AT SKATES 280

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 7 | 6:00PM – 9:00PM

GET READY FOR AN EVENING OF FUN, FELLOWSHIP, AND SKATING! THIS IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR YOUTH TO CONNECT AND ENJOY SOME TIME TOGETHER. THE COST IS \$25 PER PERSON AND INCLUDES DINNER AND SKATING. CLICK [HERE](#) TO SIGN UP NOW. DROP OFF AND PICK UP WILL BE AT SKATES 280.

YOUTH SPRING RETREAT AT CAMP CHANDLER

FRIDAY, APRIL 4 – SUNDAY, APRIL 6

ALL 6TH THROUGH 12TH GRADERS ARE INVITED TO JOIN US FOR OUR YOUTH SPRING RETREAT AT CAMP CHANDLER ON FRIDAY, APRIL 4 THROUGH SUNDAY, APRIL 6, 2025! THIS RETREAT IS GOING TO BE A WEEKEND PACKED WITH FUN, FAITH, AND FELLOWSHIP. THE RETREAT COST IS \$125 WHICH INCLUDES ALL MEALS, ACTIVITIES, AND LODGING FOR TWO NIGHTS. CLICK [HERE](#) TO REGISTER NOW.



The Journey, a First Church retreat for men (or any who identify as masculine), will take place at Camp McDowell (105 DeLong Road, Nauvoo, AL 35578) on April 25-27, 2025. Gather with friends, some you haven't even met yet, as we study Jesus' celebrations of joy! Check-in will open on Friday, April 25, at 5:30pm and dinner is from 6:30-7:30pm. The weekend will end on Sunday morning at 11:00am. The cost of the retreat is \$229 per person (double occupancy) with all meals included. If you have dietary restrictions or roommate preferences please note them on the form. **Deadline to register is Monday, April 14.**

Click [HERE](#) to learn more and register now.

AYLWIN FELLOWSHIP

Aylwin Fellowship is a monthly women's luncheon group that enjoys food, fellowship, and a variety of programs. We meet the first Wednesday of the month from September through May and lunch costs \$20 for the month. For more information, please contact Jenny Shaw (205) 515-6400.

FIRST CHURCH ONLINE DIRECTORY

Did you know that our online database offers us an online directory? Everyone who is a regular part of the First Church family has access to this online directory. You can find it at any time by visiting our website, clicking on the “Resources” tab and scrolling down to the tab labeled “directory.” You will need a username and password to enter the database. If you do not have this information (or cannot remember it from before), please reach out to Katie Gilbert at Katie@firstchurchbhm.com.

PRAYER TEAM INVITATION

In Philippians 4:6-7 we are given powerful words about prayer, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God.” At First Church, we believe in the supporting love of prayer. One of the commitments we make to one another is that we will pray for our church family. If you would like to support your church family through the ministry of prayer, you are invited to sign up for the weekly prayer team email. You can do so by emailing Jonathan Goss at Jonathan@firstchurchbhm.com.

GIFTS RECEIVED BY THE CHURCH

MEMORIAL FUND

IN MEMORY OF EMILY KEITH

From Marsha Robins

From Anne Wheeler & Dick Berliner

IN MEMORY OF DORIS ADAMSON

From Anne Wheeler & Dick Berliner

IN MEMORY OF FLETCHER THORINGTON

From Lyn Grant

From Marsha Robins

From John & Betty McMahon

IN MEMORY OF SEARCY JOHNSON

From Larry Johnson

IN MEMORY OF MURIEL THOMPSON

From Dallas Vice

From Whitney McDonald

From DeJuana McCary

From Brad and Gail Clement

LIVING CHURCH FUND

IN HONOR OF BRIAN & ANGEL GARRETT

From Tyla & Art Schaefer

IN HONOR OF JOHN & CHARLOTTE PEVERLY

From Sarah Griswold

CHOIR SPECIAL FUND

IN HONOR OF JIM BROWN

From John & Betsy Saxon

FINISHING WITH HOPE

IN HONOR OF CAROL & LARRY YORK

From Dean Thomas

RETREAT FUND

IN MEMORY OF MURIEL THOMPSON

From Jenny & Joe Walker

IN MEMORY OF MURIEL THOMPSON

From Jenny & Joe Walker



UPDATE YOUR **CONTACT** **INFORMATION**

We know a lot can change over time. 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.

FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM **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: Coty Smith..... Coty@firstchurchbhm.com
Wedding Director: Betsy Pate Betsy@firstchurchbhm.com
Executive Director of Early Learning Center: Cassandra Copeland ELC@firstchurchbhm.com
Nursery Coordinator: Natalie Bogart-Pierre Natalie@firstchurchbhm.com



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

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