

# CONNECTIONS

MARCH 2025

**SEEKING  
TRANSFORMATION**



# Everything [in] between

In this series we will follow the Narrative Lectionary which uses the Gospel of Luke to guide us through the Lenten season. We will journey through familiar stories like the Good Samaritan, Mary and Martha, the Lost Sheep, Zacchaeus, and more, considering how Jesus' ministry was rooted in relationships that disrupted the established social, political, and religious divides of his time. Jesus intentionally highlighted the cultural and political polarities of his time to emphasize the radical, inclusive, and surprising love of God. And when we study these stories in their context, we see how they mirror many of the divides we still experience today.

This series is an invitation to navigate the polarities in our lives with more faith, intention, and openness to be transformed. We invite you to look beyond black and white binaries and easy answers. We encourage you to notice the dichotomies that define our lives, but also to imagine where God might be meeting us beyond the categories we create. This series is for all those who are living in a divided world but seeking more peace. It is for all those who are seeking a spiritual life that engages with complexity instead of avoiding it. And so, this Lent, we're trusting that God shows up in shades of gray, rainbow hues, and everywhere in between.

**MARCH 9 Stranger & Neighbor**

LUKE 10:25-37

**MARCH 16 Faith & Works**

LUKE 10:38-42

**MARCH 23 Rest & Growth \***

LUKE 13:6-9

**MARCH 30 Lost and Found**

LUKE 15:1-7

**APRIL 6 Righteousness & Mercy**

LUKE 19:1-10

**APRIL 13 Shouting & Silence**

LUKE 19:29-40

**APRIL 20 Grief & Hope**

LUKE 24:1-12

*\* Please note that on this Sunday in the Sanctuary  
Patrick Evans, Richard Byrd, and the Choir will lead a Lenten Hymn Festival.*

# 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! 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!

# 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 of 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.**

# HOLY WEEK

## AT FIRST CHURCH

4.13.25 | **PALM SUNDAY**

11:00AM IN THE LOFT AND SANCTUARY

4.17.25 | **MAUNDY THURSDAY**

6:00PM IN THE LOFT

4.18.25 | **GOOD FRIDAY**

12:00PM IN THE SANCTUARY

4.20.25 | **EASTER SUNDAY**

11:00AM IN THE LOFT AND SANCTUARY

## LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

For the past several years we have used A Sanctified Art's worship outlines and materials during the Lenten season. One of the gifts of using this material is the availability of a beautiful Lenten devotional filled with visual art, poetry, Scripture, questions, and reflections. This season we ordered 50 printed devotional booklets that are available on a first come basis. Please reach out to [Katie@firstchurchbhm.com](mailto:Katie@firstchurchbhm.com) to reserve your copy today. The devotional booklet is also available online and we encourage anyone who is able to access the digital copy to do so as a way to continue our stewardship of both our financial and paper resources. If you would like to follow along digitally, click [\*\*HERE\*\*](#) to access the booklet.

# Wednesday Night **DINNER & PROGRAMMING**

Wednesday Nights are one of our favorite ways to gather in community amidst our busy weeks. As a reminder, dinner begins at 5:15pm with adult programming to follow at 6:15pm. The nursery opens at 5:30pm and children's programming begins at 6:00pm. You can find the menu for the rest of the spring and register for more dinners [HERE](#).

We will have dinner on March 5 and then worship together in the Sanctuary for Ash Wednesday. There will not be small group programming this night for adults, children, or youth. However, we will still have a nursery. We will not have Wednesday Night Dinner or Programming on March 26 due to Spring Break.

As we move into the Lenten season we will kick off another round of small groups. Click [HERE](#) to read more detailed information about our small group offerings this spring as well as to register to participate.



# **PANAMA**

## **LUNCH AND SILENT AUCTION**

SUNDAY, APRIL 6 FOLLOWING WORSHIP

Mark your calendars to join us for a lunch and silent auction on Sunday, April 6 to raise money for our upcoming Panama Learn and Serve trip in July.

The team will serve a traditional Panamanian meal and we will have the opportunity to bid on some excellent silent auction items including goods, services, gift cards, and more!

# MARCH PRESCHOOL & NURSERY UPDATES

This March, we're taking a Throwback journey through timeless values, classic stories, and old-school fun! Our theme verse is Hebrews 13:8 — "Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever." Each week in Sunday School we will focus on a big idea that never goes out of style: It's Great to Be Kind, to Forgive, to Play Fair, and to Be Helpful.

## WEDNESDAY NIGHT MONTESSORI EXPERIENCES

We invite your little ones to learn through interactive play, sensory lighting, soft music, and tactile crafts—all with a nostalgic twist!

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5 "WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE"

Step into a wilderness where **ONLY WILD THINGS ARE ALLOWED!**  
We'll bring this classic story to life by "stepping into the book" and creating our own monster party.

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12 "IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD"

Inspired by Mr. Rogers, children will build their own itty-bitty Magic City and enjoy a night of make-believe in their own imaginary neighborhood.

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19 "OLD-SCHOOL MOVIE NIGHT"

We'll build pillow forts, eat popcorn, and watch a movie together—just like the good old days.



**JUNE 2 - JUNE 5 | 9:00AM - 4:00PM EACH DAY**

We are once again partnering with Fresh Air Family's Gross Out Camp for four days of outdoor fun. The camp will take place in Trussville at Holy Cross Episcopal Church (right beside the Cahaba River!) and will focus on exploring God's creation in the woods, creeks, and fields. Fresh Air Family's Director and Lead Instructor will be helping to lead our camp.

The cost for the week is \$125 per camper which includes all materials and snacks. Registration is now open and we have limited capacity. Priority will be given to First Church members and regular visitors. Click [HERE](#) to sign up now.

**PRE-K**  
**LUNCH &  
BOUNCE**  
SATURDAY, MARCH 8 | 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.

# CITY KIDS

## SAVE THE DATES

### **CAMP CONNECT SPRING RETREAT**

MARCH 14-15 | FOR 4TH-6TH GRADERS | COST: \$85

This retreat is a fantastic chance for your child to get a taste of summer camp. It's a week-end of fun, fellowship, and spiritual growth. Plus, it will help your child decide if they'd like to attend the week-long summer camp at Camp Sumatanga! Click [HERE](#) to register.

### **EASTER EGG HUNT**

APRIL 12TH | ALL AGES WELCOME

Join us for our annual Easter Egg Hunt! It's always a joyful and exciting event that's fun for the whole family.

### **OVERNIGHT CAMP AT CAMP SUMATANGA**

JUNE 8-13 | COMPLETED 3RD GRADE - 5TH GRADES | COST: \$450

Join with kids from Canterbury UMC and Grace UMC as Ashley Hess helps to lead an unforgettable week of camp for kids who have completed 3rd-5th grade. It's going to be an amazing experience full of adventure and spiritual growth!

### **ARTS CAMP**

JULY 14-17 | COMPLETED 4K - 5TH GRADE | COST: \$40

We are excited to offer Arts Camp for kids who have completed 4K-5th grade! This will be a week full of creative activities, including crafts, music, science, and recreation that will allow your child to express themselves and explore their creativity.

### **CAMP CONNECT SERVE WEEK**

JULY 21-24 | FOR 4TH - 6TH GRADERS

This will be a week of service where our kids will have the opportunity to make a real difference in our community. I'm excited to see how they'll step up and serve others.



# YOUTH UPDATES

## BREAKOUT BIRMINGHAM SUNDAY, MARCH 9 AFTER WORSHIP

AFTER WORSHIP, WE'LL HEAD TO MELLOW MUSHROOM TO ENJOY A DELICIOUS LUNCH TOGETHER BEFORE PUTTING OUR PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS TO THE TEST AT BREAKOUT BIRMINGHAM. CAN YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS ESCAPE IN TIME? COME FIND OUT! CLICK [HERE](#) TO REGISTER NOW. IT'S GOING TO BE AN UNFORGETTABLE TIME OF FELLOWSHIP AND FUN!

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## 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. WE WILL BE STUDYING CONFIRMATION MATERIAL BUT THE RETREAT IS OPEN TO YOUTH OF ALL AGES, EVEN IF YOU'VE ALREADY BEEN THROUGH CONFIRMATION. THE RETREAT COST IS \$125 WHICH INCLUDES ALL MEALS, ACTIVITIES, AND LODGING FOR TWO NIGHTS. CLICK [HERE](#) TO REGISTER NOW.

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SAVE THE  
DATES

## UPCOMING YOUTH EVENTS

SUNDAY, MAY 4  
CONFIRMATION SUNDAY

SUNDAY, MAY 18  
SENIOR SUNDAY

THURSDAY, MAY 29  
SIX FLAGS

JUNE 22 - JUNE 28  
CAMP SUMATANGA

THURSDAY, JULY 10  
SPRING VALLEY BEACH

FRIDAY, AUGUST 1  
LOCK - IN

FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM

# JUSTICE & MERCY OPPORTUNITIES

## **THE JUSTICE & MERCY LAY LEADERSHIP TEAM**

met in early February to discuss the initiatives of 2024 as well as our hopes and plans for 2025. A summary of that meeting will be shared with the Executive Council at their March meeting. As a reminder, you can click [HERE](#) to find a list of our ministry partners as well as the lay contacts for each. Feel free to contact them if you have particular interest in or questions about a partner.

# ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES

- Provide donuts and coffee for Magic City Acceptance Center by signing up [HERE](#). Additionally, MCAC has told us that their spirits in general are pretty low right now and they would appreciate any extra donations and prayers.
- Join the Community Table Gatherings at Community on the Rise any Tuesday at 10:30am. Contact Alison Watson at [Awatson@afw16.com](mailto:Awatson@afw16.com) for more information.
- Help with the WE Learn afterschool program run by West End Community Church any Monday through Thursday from 3:00pm – 5:30pm. Contact Jay Jessee at [Mjjessee@uab.edu](mailto:Mjjessee@uab.edu) for more information.
- Help with WE Build projects at Urban Ministry. Contact Johnny Miller at [jackpias@bellsouth.net](mailto:jackpias@bellsouth.net) for more information.
- The Community Furniture Bank is collecting linens, specifically sheets, blankets and towels. Bring donations to the Blue Wagon in the Education Building to be shared.

# ONE DAY OPPORTUNITIES IN MARCH

- On Saturday, March 15 join us for a Clean Up Day in West End, partnering with WECC and Black Warrior River Keepers. Meet at the WE gardens (1200 McMillon Avenue SW) at 9:00am or contact Buzzy Brown at [Tbrown0719@att.net](mailto:Tbrown0719@att.net) for more information.
- Assist Grace UMC in packing meals for Rise Against Hunger. Sunday, March 9 from 10:00am - 3:00pm. Click [HERE](#) to register to participate.
- Assist Grace United Methodist church in packing meals for Rise Against Hunger. Sunday, March 16 from 1:00-3:00. Click [HERE](#) to register to participate.

# INFORMATION ON IMMIGRANT JUSTICE

David Olsen and Sonya Pearson recently attended an educational session for churches about immigrant justice, held at Grace Episcopal Church. Click [HERE](#) to read more information about what faith communities should consider during this time.



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

## F E L L O W S H I P

**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](mailto: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](mailto:Jonathan@firstchurchbhm.com).

AS WE SEEK TO BE  
**AN OPEN PLACE FOR ALL**

*MY PRAYER FOR FIRST CHURCH IS:*

*continued growth in understanding those who differ from us  
in our beliefs and reach out to them with love and kindness.*

*Also to share our love of Christ.*

*- Martin Kircus*

*to find acceptance and understanding.*

*- Dennis Hollingsworth*

**GIFTS RECEIVED  
BY THE CHURCH**

**MUSIC FUND**

**IN MEMORY OF MURIEL THOMPSON**  
FROM LYN GRANT

**IN MEMORY OF BETTY THORINGTON**  
FROM LARRY WARD  
FROM LYN GRANT

**IN MEMORY OF PAM JOHNS**  
FROM LYN GRANT

**MEMORIAL FUND**

**IN MEMORY OF MURIEL THOMPSON**  
FROM KEVIN AND JANET VOORHEES

**IN MEMORY OF BETTY THORINGTON**  
FROM BETTY AND JOHN MCMAHON



# 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](mailto: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

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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