

JANUARY 2020

CONNECTIONS

CELEBRATING
NEW LIFE

Curse CHURCH WORDS

Words are powerful. As Yehuda Berg puts it: "Words have energy and power with the ability to help, to heal, to hinder, to hurt, to harm, to humiliate, and to humble." From childhood into adulthood, we all learn how words can impact our lives. Unfortunately and too often, words offered from the church have been hurtful, judgmental, and painful to hear. At First Church, we believe that the words offered by the church should be loving and life-giving. In the sermon series, we will look at some of the words used by the church to hurt others. Our desire is to offer a different take on these words and reclaim the hope and life found in the Gospel. We believe the words in this sacred text call us to strive for the acceptance, inclusion, and equality of all people. At First Church, you will always hear that you are loved and that you belong.

JANUARY 12 | **SUBMISSION**
EPHESIANS 5:21-25

JANUARY 19 | **WITNESS**
MATTHEW 28:16-20

JANUARY 26 | **PURITY**
LUKE 11:33-36



We hope you will plan to come to worship on January 5, 2020, the first Sunday of the New Year, as we will celebrate the nearly 30 babies connected to our community that were born in 2019 with a "Blessing of our Babies" Sunday.

From conceiving to helping our children grow, we know parenting is often not easy. Therefore, as a church family we plan to take time to celebrate the gift of life, pray over our babies and their families, as well as remember those who are longing for their families to grow too. As a church community this is one way we can demonstrate our covenant to support and nurture one another, each child, and each family. For more information contact Linda Thorne at Linda@firstchurchbhm.com



ADVENT DECORATIONS **TAKE DOWN** SUNDAY, JANUARY 5 AFTER WORSHIP

Following worship on Sunday, January 5, we need your help to take down all of our Advent decorations as we move into the New Year. The more people who stay to help, the faster we will be able to wrap up the season and return all of our decorations to storage for next year. Mark your calendars now and plan to join us after worship to prepare for the New Year at First Church.



FEBRUARY 14-16 AT LAKE GUNTERVILLE STATE PARK

The best way to describe our Called to Lead Retreat is by first telling you what this retreat is not. This is not a retreat that will give you the five common principles of leadership or a step by step guide of what effective leaders do. Rather, we will explore how God has equipped each of us to make an impact in the world around us. Throughout Scripture, we will see that God often uses unexpected people to lead and asks them to be nothing other than who God made them to be. Pairing our Scripture readings with some creative (and fun) TED talk videos, we will begin to explore how each of us can uniquely lead in our church and our communities by authentically living into who God created us to be.

In addition to the content of the retreat, we will have plenty of free time to get to know our church family better while enjoying the recreational options of the park. Recreational options include: golfing, fishing, kayaking and canoeing, playgrounds for kids, basketball courts, and plenty of space to relax while enjoying beautiful scenery.

This retreat is for the entire family. Childcare and children's recreational options are available for kids from preschool through elementary school. Jonathan will lead sessions for our middle and high school students.

The cost for the weekend is \$175 for a single registration, \$225 for a couple registration, and \$275 for the whole family. Chalets are available to families or groups of 3 or more people at an additional 10% cost. Scholarships are also available.

To reserve your spot, request a scholarship, or if you have any questions, please contact R.G. at Rg@firstchurchbhm.com. You can register for the Called to Lead Retreat under the "Coming Up" tab on our website www.firstchurchbhm.com. The deadline for registration is Wednesday, January 15 2020.

THE RESIST HARM MOVEMENT

The Resist Harm Movement is a United Methodist movement of faithful resistance to the Traditional Plan which came into effect January 1, 2020. The goals of the Resist Harm Movement are three fold: stand in solidarity against the implementation of the harmful Traditional Plan, grow visibility of United Methodists who long for a church connection that affirms full participation of people of all ages, nations, races, classes, cultures, gender identities, sexual orientations, and abilities, and offer support to those who directly experience harm because of the Traditional Plan.

Each month Resist Harm will offer resources to help fulfill these goals by rallying around monthly themes. The themes are as follows:

JANUARY - RESIST | FEBRUARY - LOVE | MARCH - LAMENT | APRIL - LIGHT | MAY - WITNESS

The Resist Harm website (www.resistharm.com) will offer direct actions that individuals, churches, and communities can make in order to stand in solidarity, raise visibility, and support persons harmed.

As a First Church community, we will provide monthly information regarding ways to engage. However, we equally encourage you to explore the Resist Harm website for a plethora of other individual actions to promote resistance to the harm being done by the Traditional Plan.

JANUARY'S THEME IS RESIST.

Action #1

Send a letter to our Bishop calling for a moratorium on church trials against LGBTQ clergy or for clergy who perform same-sex weddings. We encourage those who feel led to send your own letter to Bishop Wallace-Padgett either by email at dpadgett@umcna.org or by mail at:

Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett
United Methodist Conference Center
898 Arkadelphia Road
Birmingham, AL 35204.

You can read a sample letter from the Resist Harm Movement webpage. As a way of leading this charge our 2019 Executive Council has already signed and mailed a letter together.

Action #2

If you are on social media you are also invited take a picture of yourself, your small group, or your congregation holding Resist Harm signs. You can make your own sign using the hashtag #ResistHarm or you can download a template from their webpage. Post your pictures on any social media platform along with #ResistHarm

LENTEN SMALL GROUPS

We hope you will plan on participating in at least one of our Lenten study groups listed below. To sign up to participate, please visit our “coming up” tab at www.firstchurchbhm.com.

Jesus

Led by Rev. Joe Elmore
Sundays, March 1 - April 5 | 9:45am
Location: First Church Parlor

In this group we will listen to what the New Testament says about Jesus, listen to what a number of modern voices say about Jesus, and then listen to some of the teachings of Jesus. Our listening will lead to conversation together.

Understanding the Six Needs of Mourning

Led by Rev. Herb Williamson
Sundays, March 1 - April 5 | 1:30pm
Location: First Church Parlor

Losing a loved one is like being left in a wilderness with no directions and not knowing where to start to find your way out. We will try to help you journey through your wilderness using the six needs of mourning to place markers along the wilderness to help you find the way.

A Book Study of *Raising White Kids* by Jennifer Harvey

Led by Tosha May
Sundays, March 1 - April 5 | 4:30pm - 6:00pm
(with the exception of March 22)
Location: Loft Lounge Area

(Please purchase your own copy of the book through a local book store or Amazon)

Raising White Kids offers age-appropriate insights for teaching children how to address racism when they encounter it and tackles tough questions about how to help white kids be mindful of racial relations while understanding their own identity and the role they can play for justice. Childcare will be available during our meeting times.

Enneagram

Led by Erika Jobes and Jessica Yarbrough
Sundays, February 9 - April 5 | 7:00pm
Location: Erika and Jessica’s home in Bluff Park

In this 9 week study you will learn about the Enneagram as a spiritual tool for personal transformation and unlimited growth. This will deepen your understanding of yourself and the world. You will learn ways in which to make peace with your ego and discover your true path to your essence.

Why Did Jesus Die?

Led by Rev. R.G. Wilson-Lyons
Tuesdays, March 3 - March 31 | 6:00pm – 8:00pm
(with the exception of March 24)
Location: First Church Parlor

Why did Jesus die? In this part of the country, we have had one dominant answer to this question. God sent Jesus to die to pay for our sins. However, throughout the history of Christianity, this question has by no means been uniformly answered. In this course, we will look at the 3 dominant understandings of the cross and Jesus’ death. We will examine both the appealing aspects and the theological problems each understanding raises. Finally, we will ask what the cross means for us as followers of Jesus 2000 years later.

For Such a Time As This: A Bible Study of the Book of Esther

Led by Rev. Emily Nelms Chastain
Tuesdays, March 3 - March 24 | 6:30pm
Location: 2nd Floor Conference Room at First Church

This 4-week study will go in-depth into the book of Esther in the Old Testament and discover the background in which Esther rose into leadership and how she sustained courage amidst a context of anxiety and exile.

A Book Study of *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter: A Woman’s Journey from Christian Tradition to the Sacred Feminine* by Sue Monk Kidd

Led by Rev. Stephanie York Arnold
Wednesdays, March 4 - April 1 | 6:00pm - 7:15pm
(with the exception of March 25)
Location: First Church Parlor

(Please purchase your own copy of the book through a local book store or Amazon)

After a jarring encounter with sexism in a suburban drugstore, author Sue Monk Kidd, finds herself on a difficult, but empowering journey to reclaim her life and her faith. Through exploring the ‘sacred feminine’ often pushed aside and hidden in our religious culture, she reshapes her life around a more wholistic understanding of God, church and relationships. Because of the popularity of this small group last fall, we are once again offering the opportunity for women of First Church to come together to explore where Monk’s story resonates with your own and how including the sacred feminine in our faith experiences can bring healing to us all.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, FROM 12:00PM - 1:30PM

SAFE SANCTUARY TRAINING

Are you planning to volunteer or work with Discovery Weekend or Arts Camp? Are you hoping to work in other ways with our children and youth in 2020? This training is for you! We need all those that can possibly attend this training to please register and be present on January 26 to help us abide by our Safe Sanctuary policy.

What does it mean to be a Safe Sanctuary Church? First Church, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, follows a policy that sets standards for the supervision of First Church children, youth, and vulnerable adults in our care.

Our next training will be on January 26 at 12:00pm in the Large Dining Room. Immediately following worship, we will provide a light lunch. The training will last from 12:00pm to 1:30pm. Please register via our church website under the coming up tab or by contacting Peg Thompson in the Church Office at 205-254-3186. Childcare for pre-school - 5th grade will be provided upon request. If you have any questions, please contact Linda Thorne at Linda@firstchurchbhm.com or Jonathan Goss at Jonathan@firstchurchbhm.com.



You are invited to attend First Church 101 on Thursday, February 6, at 6:00pm in the Parlor. This opportunity is open to anyone who is interested and will introduce you to the teachings and membership commitments of the United Methodist Church and of First Church as well as help you learn more about all of the opportunities to worship, grow, and serve. Please let us know if you plan to attend by registering under the coming up tab online or by contacting Katie Gilbert at Katie@firstchurchbhm.com.

WELCOME STEVE PITTS

We are thrilled to welcome Steve Pitts to our First Church staff in a volunteer capacity as our part time Business Administrator. Recently retired from a long career at The Southern Company, Steve has been seeking a volunteer opportunity that utilizes his experience as a Contract Administrator and Procurement Agent. He is donating his time with a few hours each week to help us better handle contracts with service providers, financial obligations, and bill paying. As our church's Finance Chair he also comes with institutional understanding and a great love for this congregation. Steve and his wife Jill have been regulars at First Church since 2014, and he enjoys running, photography, and live music. Currently Steve is in the office on Monday mornings and can be reached via email at Steve@firstchurchbhm.com.



CITY KIDS

ARTS CAMP

JUNE 15 - JUNE 19

Make plans now to register your child or volunteer for Arts Camp 2020. The 11th year of camp is sure to be the best ever. Join the Fun!
For more information contact Linda Thorne at Linda@firstchurchbhm.com



TWENTY TWENTY FIRST CHURCH LEADERSHIP

NEW LOOK LOFT

If you've been to the Loft lately, you have noticed that we've had a makeover. Thanks to Marlin Anderson, Steve McGuire, Adam Burgunder, Steve Pitts, Jenny and Chris Shaw, John Pevery, and Brian May who helped us build our new set. For those of you who worship in the Loft, we hope it will create a more meaningful worship space for you. And for those who primarily worship in the Sanctuary, we'd love for you to drop in sometime to see the new space. And for all of us, let's make sure we express our appreciation to those who helped make this new set idea come to life.



THANK YOU

This year we asked you to step up and expand our outreach for Project 12/25 and you responded in such a big way. We were able to sponsor all of our First Church families who needed a little help with gifts and groceries. We were able to provide Pathways with every material they needed to stock their classrooms as they prepare to launch the first Early Learning Center for children staying in homeless shelters in our city. And we were able to make a gift of \$4000 to the Magic City Acceptance Center that will allow them to provide gift bags and a Christmas dinner party to the LGBTQ youth in their programs. Thank you so much for your generous support and for enabling First Church to serve both our own congregation and two really important partner organizations in our city.



Executive Council

Chair: Holly Alexander
 Lay Representative to Annual Conference: Jennifer Waters
 Chair of Staff-Parish Relations: John Martin
 Treasurer: Ralph Jolly
 Lay Leader: Andy Wallace
 Chair of Trustees: Chosen by Trustees
 Chair of Finance: Steve Pitts

Class of 2020

Trudi Mullens
 Alex Rogers

Class of 2021

Tom Boulware
 David Olsen

Class of 2022

Mychal Boyd
 Russell Dearing
 (youth rep) + parent

Staff-Parish Relations Committee

Chair: John Martin
 Lay Representative to Annual Conference: Lindsey Eastwood
 Lay Leader: Andy Wallace

Class of 2020

Nathan Salter
 Fran Early
 David Glasgow

Class of 2021

John Martin
 Kyndle Powell
 Mary Kate Waters-Wright

Class of 2022

Tim Prince
 Kristie McCullough
 David Rikard

Board of Trustees

Class of 2020

Cale Smith
 Brad Green
 Adam Burgunder

Class of 2021

Lisa Malone
 Pam Crider
 Nicole LeMaitre

Class of 2022

Amanda Millwood
 Amanda Palmer
 Brian Garrett

Investment Committee:

Ralph Jolly | Thomas Waters
 Fred Ingram | Nicole LeMaitre
 John McMahon | Lindsay Luketic

Early Learning Center

Chair: Mary Beth Lloyd
 Treasurer: Susan Ragland
 City Kids: Linda Thorne
 Preschool: Renee Driskel
 Director: Robin Pate
 Pastor: Stephanie Arnold
 ELC Parent Committee chair: Ambry Dillon

Committee on Lay Leadership/ Nominating Committee

Lay Leader: Andy Wallace

Class of 2020

David Olsen
 Heide Forsythe
 Jessie Grimmett

Class of 2021

Jill Rogers
 Amanda Millwood
 Patrick Reed

Class of 2020

Katie Reed
 Paul Bell

Class of 2021

Andrew Barker
 Andrea Whitehead

Class of 2021

Lauren Dean
 Christina Burgunder

Class of 2022

Bill Schock
 Angel Garrett
 Laura Williams

NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS STARTING JANUARY 12!

SALT

SHARING AND LEARNING TOGETHER

You're invited to a new Sunday school class beginning January 12! Come join friends that you haven't met yet. The SALT Class is an intergenerational, affirming, fellowship of believers who enjoy digging into the Bible to discover guidance for today. All ages and stages of life are welcome. Come as you are . . . no preparation required! We will meet at 9:45am on the basement floor of the Education Building in room B-12 (under the Large Dining Room). John and Kathy Draper lead the class. For more information contact Kathy at kathydraper1011@gmail.com or 703-727-7219.

FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM'S ON CALL SCHEDULE

In an effort to make sure we are providing everyone in our congregation with the pastoral care needed, particularly in crisis situations, we want you to be aware of our on-call schedule going forward. If you have a pastoral care need Monday - Thursday, you can call the church office or email any of our pastors and we will respond promptly. However, if you have a pastoral care need Friday - Sunday, below is the on-call schedule for the month. You can reach the person by email, cell phone, or by clicking the "pastor on-call" option on the church phone.

JANUARY 3-5 | JONATHAN GOSS

JANUARY 10-12 | STEPHANIE ARNOLD

JANUARY 17-19 | KATIE GILBERT

JANUARY 24-26 | JONATHAN GOSS

NEW MEMBER PRAYERS FOR FIRST CHURCH

AS WE SEEK TO BE AN OPEN PLACE FOR ALL MY PRAYER FOR FIRST CHURCH IS:

An ancient proverb says "friendship is love with understanding." May First Church continue to cherish and support and offer "love with understanding" to all who gather here.

- Margaret Marsh Schock

To continue to grow through sharing the love of Jesus Christ to the surrounding community. My prayer is that my children and I can be the hands, feet, and mouth of First Church, as First Church will help us grow as Christians and women.

- Molly McCormick

We pray that First Church will continue to be a safe and supportive church home for us and for all people, nurturing and evolving our faith and spirituality.

- Katherine Bland & Peggy Vandergrift

Continue to seek diversity and include more people of color, longevity with our current leadership, increased financial resources, leadership in the larger UMC as changes unfold.

- Beth Curry & Linda Malone

For God's wisdom to continue to lead this congregation as we demonstrate the generous love of God to our community and family. May we see the good in all of God's creatures and stand with those who needs us most. May we use the resources given to us to do the most good whether it be in body or spirit or circumstance.

- Karen McMillan

My prayer is that First Church remains faithful to its mission statement of "an open place for all" and that I can help keep that commitment by pledging my time, finances, and heart. I also pray that God's love grows daily in our congregation.

- Tom McMillan



GIFTS RECEIVED BY THE CHURCH

JANUARY CALENDAR

TO THE MEMORIAL FUND

In Memory of Mary Thomaston
From Geneva Blackburn

In Memory of Carol Smallwood
From Lalah Williams

In Memory of Ted Cramer
From Geneva Blackburn
From Sue Cordell
From David and Terri Glasgow
From Julius Linn
From Marsha Robins
From Jack Sharp
From Fletcher and Betty Thorington
From Peggy West
From Joe and Jenny Walker

In Memory of Ethel Gibson
From Geneva Blackburn
From Kathy Wales
From David and Terri Glasgow
From Jane McKenzie
From Virginia McLean
From Fletcher and Betty Thorington
From Diane Unger
From Peggy West
From Marsha Robins

In Memory of Anne Clayton
From Sue Cordell
From Joe and Jenny Walker
From Fletcher and Betty Thorington
From Mr. and Mrs. Thomas N. Cordell
From John Howell III

TO THE ENDOWMENT FUND

In Memory of Anne Clayton
From Lyn and Ray Grant

TO THE CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

In Memory of Ted Cramer
From Sue Wyatt

TO SPECIAL DONATIONS

In Honor of Larry and Carol York
From Dean Thomas

In Honor of the Arnold Family
From Larry and Carol York

TO THE MUSIC FUND

In Memory of Ted Cramer
From Larry Ward

In Memory of Ethel Gibson
From Larry Ward

TO PROJECT 1225

In Honor of Joy Beth Smith
From Dominic Sims

TO GLEN IRIS GRACE

In Honor of Larry and Andrea Whitehead
From Lalah Williams

TO THE ELC

In Memory of Ted Cramer
From Lyn and Ray Grant

January 1

~ Church Office Closed ~

January 5

11:00am - Blessing of our Babies
12:00pm Advent Takedown

January 7

6:00pm - First Church Foundation

January 13

6:00pm - Executive Council

January 15

11:30am - Garden Club

January 20

~ Church Office Closed ~

January 21

6:00pm - Trustees

January 26

12:00pm - Safe Sanctuary

January 28

6:00pm - Staff Parish

WEEKLY CALENDAR

TUESDAYS:

6:30pm - Young Adult Small Group

WEDNESDAYS:

1:00pm - Prayer Shawl Knitters
5:30pm - Youth Bible Study
6:30pm - Chancel Choir Rehearsal

FRIDAYS:

~ Church Office Closed ~
6:45am - Men's Prayer Breakfast

SUNDAYS:

8:30am - Communion Service
9:45am - Sunday School
11:00am - The Loft & Sanctuary Services
5:15pm - Youth Bible Study

FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM STAFF

Senior Pastor: Stephanie York Arnold	Stephanie@firstchurchbhm.com
Pastor: R.G. Wilson-Lyons	RG@firstchurchbhm.com
Minister of Invitation: Katie Gilbert	Katie@firstchurchbhm.com
Minister of Youth & Young Adults: Jonathan Goss	Jonathan@firstchurchbhm.com
Minister of Children & Church Events: Linda Underwood Thorne	Linda@firstchurchbhm.com
Minster to the Grieving: Herb Williamson	Herb@firstchurchbhm.com
Deacon in Residence: Emily Nelms Chastain	Emily@firstchurchbhm.com
Organist: Cathy Shelton	Cathy@firstchurchbhm.com
Design: Blake Hobbs	Blake@firstchurchbhm.com
Choir Director: Patrick Evans	Patrick@firstchurchbhm.com
Loft Worship Leader: Katherine Mullen	Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com
Office Administrator: Peg Thompson	Peg@firstchurchbhm.com
Business Administrator: Steve Pitts	Steve@firstchurchbhm.com
Maintenance Supervisor: Ron Dates	Ron@firstchurchbhm.com
Nursery Director: Ginger Gambill	Ginger@firstchurchbhm.com
Wedding Director: Betsy Pate	Betsy@firstchurchbhm.com
Executive Director of Early Learning Center: Robin Pate	ELC@firstchurchbhm.com



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

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