

FEBRUARY 2020

CONNECTIONS

CELEBRATING
COMMUNITY

FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM
AN OPEN FOR ALL
PLACE
WWW.FIRSTCHURCHBHM.COM



CALLED *to* LEAD

FIRST CHURCH RETREAT 2020

FEBRUARY 14-16 AT LAKE GUNTERSVILLE STATE PARK

We are excited that approximately 180 people from First Church will be attending our Called to Lead retreat February 14-16. We are looking forward to the opportunity to deepen our faith, learn more about our individual and collective calls to leadership, and to build new friendships. If you are not able to join us, we invite you to pray that our retreat will be a meaningful experience for everyone that not only impacts those on the retreat but our whole congregation. If you are not attending the retreat, you are invited to join Rev. Herb Williamson and Patrick Evans for a traditional service of worship in the Sanctuary on Sunday, February 16.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16

AT FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM

For those who are not able to attend the retreat at Lake Guntersville, we will have worship at 11:00am in the Sanctuary on Sunday, February 16. Please note that the Mercedes Marathon will still be taking place this weekend and directions on how to get to the church will need to be considered as you make your plans (look for further instructions at the Welcome Center and outside each worship space). In addition, the 11:00am Sanctuary service will be our only service – there will not be an 8:30am Beginnings service nor an 11:00am Loft service. There will not be any children or youth Sunday School, however, nursery care will be available from 9:00am – 12:00pm and Adult Sunday School classes are invited to meet at their discretion.

MORE OR LESS

A SERIES ON MINIMALISM

Jesus very clearly modeled a minimalist lifestyle and invited his followers not to be bound up in love of things, frustrations, or frantic activity. Minimalism is a tool that can help us find freedom - freedom from fear, worry, guilt, depression, and, instead, be present to each moment and day. By exploring Jesus' practice of minimalism we can begin to consider if too often we give our things, our thoughts, and our activities more meaning than they deserve and as a result lose our focus on our health, our relationships, our passion, our growth, and our desire to contribute beyond ourselves. Minimalism is a way to allow each of us to make more conscious decisions about where and how we spend our time, our money, and what we give emotional energy to - by reducing what we have or redirecting our focus, we can make more space for other aspects of life such as peace, quiet, laughter, and wholeness.

FEBRUARY 2 | **LESS STUFF, MORE EXPERIENCES**

MATTHEW 6:19-21

FEBRUARY 9 | **LESS ANGER, MORE ACCEPTANCE**

EPHESIANS 4:31-32, HEBREWS 12:15

FEBRUARY 23 | **LESS DISTRACTIONS, MORE STILLNESS**

PSALM 37:7, PSALM 46:10

FAT TUESDAY

AT FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM

Lent is just around the corner! But before the season of Lent begins we want to celebrate Fat Tuesday. You are invited to pick a host home to join together in fun and feasting. Listed below are homes throughout our city that are hosting a Fat Tuesday Party for you to come and enjoy. Host homes will provide the paper products and non-alcoholic beverages. The meal will be potluck so you are invited to bring something to share. All parties will be held on Tuesday, February 25 and the times are listed by each home. Please sign up on our website for the party you plan join and let them know what appetizer/dish you plan to bring to the party. Sign ups will also be available at the Welcome Center each Sunday in February.

ANDY & EMILY KEITH | Hoover
AT 11:30AM (15 PEOPLE MAXIMUM)

LAURA & SCOTT WILLIAMS | Homewood
AT 6:30PM (NO LIMIT)

JILL & NICK ROGERS | West Homewood
AT 6:30PM (30 PEOPLE MAXIMUM)

BLAKE & LACEY AMOS | Vestavia Hills
AT 6:30PM (20 PEOPLE MAXIMUM)

RICK & GLORIA DESHAZO | Near The Summit
AT 6:30PM (18 PEOPLE MAXIMUM)

JOHN & BETTY MCMAHON | Top of Red Mountain
AT 6:30PM (50 PEOPLE MAXIMUM)

LINDSAY & BERT PITTS | Mountain Brook
AT 6:30PM (25 PEOPLE MAXIMUM)

JOHN BAILEY & DAVID OLSEN | Southside
AT 6:30PM (15 PEOPLE MAXIMUM)

CALE SMITH & KEYA KRAFT | Homewood
AT 6:30PM (20 PEOPLE MAXIMUM)

STEPHANIE & STEVE ARNOLD | Vestavia Hills
AT 6:30PM (25 PEOPLE MAXIMUM)

ASH

WEDNESDAY

FEBRUARY 26 AT 12:00PM & 6:00PM

Ash Wednesday begins the season of Lent which is marked by repentance and meditation. You are invited to come to one of our Ash Wednesday services on Wednesday, February 26 at 12:00pm in St. John's Chapel or at 6:00pm in the Sanctuary. These services will offer reflection, prayer, music, and a time for receiving ashes as we begin our Lenten journey.



As a part of our efforts in working to end violence against women, First Church will host a domestic violence training on Sunday, February 9. The training is open for anyone who is interested to come and learn from experts with One Place about the signs of domestic violence and ways to support and empower those experiencing it.

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: Koinonia Sunday School Room

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.

LEARNING SESSIONS

BEFORE GENERAL CONFERENCE

In an effort to keep everyone as informed as we can ahead of General Conference May 5-15, we will offer post worship learning sessions once a month. These will be opportunities to learn about proposed plans in broad strokes, to be updated on specific ways to participate in the #ResistHarm movement, and to ask questions. Above all else, these sessions will also offer us the opportunity to pray together for our global United Methodist Church. The monthly meetings will cover similar information each time so that you can pick the meeting that best suits your schedule. Of course, you are welcome to attend multiple meetings if you prefer. See below for the schedule of meetings:

FEBRUARY 23 - FOLLOWING WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY

MARCH 22 - FOLLOWING WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY

APRIL 26 - FOLLOWING WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY

APRIL 19 - 23

FIRST CHURCH

GOES TO THE BORDER

In April of this year we will be sending another First Church team to the US/Mexico border in McAllen, Texas. We have once again partnered with the Southeast Jurisdiction's United Methodist Volunteers in Mission to develop an educational experience that also incorporates service and first hand experience involving issues related to immigration. As we seek to live into our priorities of doing justice and asking tough questions, we hope to meet those most affected by issues of immigration and learn from their experiences. We hope to speak with and learn from border patrol agents and service providers as well as local church leaders and prosecutors working on cases involving illegal entry. The approximate cost of the trip is \$800. If you are interested in signing up to join the team visit the coming up tab on our website. For other questions please contact RG Wilson Lyons at RG@firstchurchbhm.com

THE **RESIST HARM** MOVEMENT

FEBRUARY = **LOVE**

As United Methodists we believe that God is Love and that all of creation was made in love, by love, and for love. As people of grace and faith we love to share the fullness of the Gospel of love in all we do with no limitations. Therefore, as a way to resist the harm being done by the implementation of the Traditional Plan within our beloved UMC we invite you to consider participating with LOVE in the following forms of resistance this month.

- Post a picture on social media with someone you love. It can be a favorite photo of you and a close friend, family member, spouse, or even a beloved pet. When you post the picture tell us why you love the person or animal and then include the hashtags #loveislove #Godislove and #ResistHarm

- Following worship on Sunday, February 9 in the Sanctuary Stephanie and RG will share in a time of Marriage Covenant Renewal and Blessing for any and all persons who are married and who choose to stay and participate. After worship there will be a time of communal blessing followed by a time for individual vow renewal at the altar rail.

- On Sunday, February 23rd for all of our morning worship services you are invited to come to church wearing your God is Love t-shirt. You are encouraged to take photos of your Sunday school class, small groups or just folks seated near you in worship and post to social media with the hashtags #loveislove #Godislove and #ResistHarm

Throughout the month of February we will be sharing that we are resisting the harm being done by sharing **LOVE** with all!

Organ Rededication Concert

IN HONOR OF MARY ANN BATES

- Featuring Dr. Fred Teardo -

SUNDAY, MARCH 8, AT 3:00PM IN THE SANCTUARY
RECEPTION IN THE LARGE DINING ROOM TO FOLLOW

Thanks to many generous donors in 2019, we were able to have our 2000 Casavant organ restored to its pristine playing condition. The bulk of the work, which was completed by Morris Organ Curators of Atlanta from June through November, did not greatly affect the way the organ sounds but was essential for it to continue to play for years to come. The most audible work included the return of the Echo Division (the room of pipes in the back of the church) and the zimbelstern.

In celebration of this restoration, we are hosting a rededication concert given in honor of Mary Ann Bates, who has served in many positions in the North Alabama Conference, the Southeast Jurisdiction, and at Lake Junaluska. Mary Ann has two degrees in music and has served as a high school, civic, and church choral director, singer, teacher, organist, and pianist in Hartselle, Decatur, and Tuscaloosa, as well as supporting her husband, Ralph, in his life of ministry and service.

Dr. Fred Teardo, Director of Music and Organist at the Cathedral Church of the Advent in Birmingham and Instructor of Organ at Samford University, is our guest organist for the concert. Dr. Teardo received the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Yale School of Music, where he was Chapel Organist, and his Bachelor of Music degree with Highest Honors from the Eastman School of Music. Dr. Teardo has performed extensively across the United States and has appeared on Pipedreams. Please join us as we celebrate the gift of beautiful music and the restoration of our Casavant organ.

BRITTEN'S ABRAHAM & ISAAC

IN THE SANCTUARY

On Sunday, March 8 in the Sanctuary service, Patrick Evans and Cathy Shelton, with guest artist Augustine Mercante, will present a staged production of Benjamin Britten's two-person canticle Abraham and Isaac. The text comes from one of the medieval Chester Mystery Plays. In medieval England, workers' guilds would publicly perform plays based on biblical stories in order to teach the masses the important stories of faith - the Creation, Noah's Flood, the Last Judgement, and others. Benjamin Britten, the greatest English composer of opera of the 20th Century, composed this Abraham and Isaac canticle in 1952 for the English opera group. In this service, we will examine the role of sacrifice and obedience in light of a terrifying biblical story.

APRIL 24-26

DISCOVERY WEEKEND

COLLISION *OFF-CAMPUS*

| AT **SKATES 280** |

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9 FROM 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Students are invited to come and enjoy skating, dinner, and community time at Skates 280. This is a great event for students to bring a friend. Skates 280 is located at 7043 Meadowlark Dr, Birmingham, AL 35242. Please contact Jonathan Goss at jonathan@firstchurchbhm.com for more information.

CITY KIDS

ARTS CAMP

WHAT IS CITY KIDS ARTS CAMP?

Arts Camp is an action-packed week of music, movement, and visual arts enhanced with interactive Bible stories to help campers learn about the diverse nature of God's kingdom. Lunch will be served daily.

WHEN IS CITY KIDS ARTS CAMP?

June 15 - 19 | Monday - Thursday 8:45am - 1:00pm | Friday 8:45am - 7:00pm

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR CITY KIDS ARTS CAMP?

Children who have completed Kindergarten - 4th grade.

Registration is now open for campers under the coming up tab on our website.

New this year registration is also available for all youth & adult volunteers under the coming up tab on our website.



Rooted in Connection

THE MIDSOUTH WOMEN'S HERBAL CONFERENCE
MENTONE, ALABAMA, APRIL 17-19

All First Church women are invited to attend a weekend dedicated to celebrating women and the wonders of plants, herbs, and Mother Nature. We will gather to retreat, connect, and learn with wise women from across the country through herbal medicine classes, women's health workshops, ceremonies, drum circles, and more. The theme of the conference this year is "Rooted in Connection." This is an opportunity for women to have dedicated time in a nurturing environment for learning, deep healing, reconnecting, and celebrating all of the seasons of life. By reconnecting and remembering, we reclaim our own power as women and inspire others to do the same. Through ceremony and sisterhood, we will remember that we are healers, life-givers, mothers, and stewards of the land. We will develop relationships that feed our bodies, minds, and spirits, reminding us of our role in nurturing and caring for Mother Earth, her natural resources, and each other. Check out their website at <https://www.midsouthwomensherbalconference.com> for more information and to register. If you would like to room with other First Church women, write FUMC in the roommate field. Once registration is complete please contact Katie Reed at katiefdreed07@gmail.com to let her know you plan to attend.

Create and Celebrate

W O M E N ' S R E T R E A T

Mark your calendars for fun, food, and fellowship on Saturday, March 7, 2020, with our 3rd annual Women's Create and Celebrate event. You will get to choose activities like cookie decorating, painting, jewelry making, flower arranging, Zentangle designing, and more. We will begin at 9:00 a.m. and end by noon. Registration details and more information coming soon!

CONVERGE MIDWEEK

IF YOU ARE NEW TO FIRST CHURCH AND LOOKING TO PLUG INTO A COMMUNITY FOR YOUNG ADULTS THEN YOU ARE INVITED TO CONVERGE MIDWEEK EACH TUESDAY EVENING FROM 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM AT FIRST CHURCH. MEETINGS TAKE PLACE IN THE PARLOR LOCATED ON THE FIRST FLOOR OF THE OFFICE BUILDING. THIS IS AN OPEN AND WELCOMING GROUP THAT LOVES HAVING NEW FOLKS JOIN IN WITH THE GROUP. WE WILL BE DISCUSSING PARABLES FROM PETER ROLLINS'S NEW BOOK THE ORTHODOX HERETIC. PLEASE CONTACT JONATHAN GOSS AT JONATHAN@FIRSTCHURCHBHM.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION.

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.

FEB 1 - 2 | KATIE GILBERT

FEB 7 - 9 | RG WILSON-LYONS

FEB 14 - 16 | EMILY NELMS CHASTAIN

FEB 21 - 23 | STEPHANIE ARNOLD

FEB 28 - MAR 1 | JONATHAN GOSS



NEW MEMBER PRAYERS FOR FIRST CHURCH

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

That we may continue to welcome those from lives different than ours. These perspectives offer new insights to faith, opportunity for novel fellowship, and a body of Christ of real people. I hope that I become a positive hand in this welcoming body and grow in my own faith with First Church.

- Ben McCafferty

I pray that First Church continues to be a place that welcomes all people and hard questions. I pray that the church continues to engage in the community and world around it, from denominational to political issues. I pray that both the clergy and lay leaders guide the congregation with love, wisdom, and humility. Finally, I pray that First Church remembers that sharing the love of Christ is what matters most.

- Courtney McCafferty

We would continue to discern how we support the work of justice and hospitality from our home in downtown Birmingham. That we will be a place where all people experience God's radical love and acceptance, that we embody that love in all we do. Amen.

- Rosie Stafford Smith

To be open to All, to pray and act always, to follow the Spirit. To be humble. To remember our connection to all humanity through Christ. To always follow the way of Christ and never be blinded by the power and ways of the world. May compassion and love be our guide always. Amen.

- Mark Smith

We pray that the ministry of First Church will continue to grow and spread love and acceptance throughout the Birmingham area.

- Alan & Sherri Friday

That First Church continues to grow and help change minds and hearts in the community.

- Brooke & Cleve Smith



FEBRUARY CALENDAR

February 6

6:00pm - Getting To Know Us
Dinner

February 14

~ Called To Lead Retreat ~

February 19

11:30am - Garden Club

February 9

12:00pm - Marriage Covenant Renewal
1:30pm - Domestic Violence Training

February 15

~ Called To Lead Retreat ~

February 23

12:00pm - GC Learning Sessions

February 10

6:00pm - Executive Council

February 16

~ Called To Lead Retreat ~

February 25

11:30am - Fat Tuesday Parties
6:30pm - Fat Tuesday Parties

February 13

6:00pm - First Church 101

February 18

6:00pm - Trustees

February 26

12:00pm - Ash Wednesday
6:00pm - Ash Wednesday

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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