

AUGUST 2021

CONNECTIONS

**COMING BACK
TOGETHER**

Back TO SCHOOL

SUNDAY

We are excited about our Fall Kick-Off on **SUNDAY, AUGUST 15**. On this Sunday we will celebrate life fully resuming at First Church with all of our Adult, Youth, and Children's in-person Sunday School classes returning at 9:45am. During our Sunday School time, we will have a special and fun event to celebrate our children and youth who are transitioning to a new Sunday School class. We will also celebrate the start of the new school year during worship. We will bless our teachers, students, and their backpacks as we prepare for a fantastic fall school year and the chance to embrace life together more fully.

All children and youth will meet in the Large Dining Room at 9:30am to kick-off the morning with refreshments. Programming will begin at 9:40am. Guardians are encouraged to join us as we celebrate the new school year and also to be present to help our children and youth transition to their new Sunday School classes. All elementary aged children and youth should be picked up from their new Sunday School class at 10:45am in preparation for worship at 11:00am.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 15

BLESSING OF THE BACKPACKS

During worship we will celebrate and acknowledge those who are beginning, returning to, or continuing their education experience. We invite all students and educators to bring their school bags to the worship service to receive a blessing and special prayer. We are so excited to celebrate with all of our families as we begin a new school year together.



~ BACK TO ~ SUNDAY SCHOOL

SUNDAY SCHOOL RESUMES AUGUST 15

We are excited to resume in-person Sunday School on August 15. Sunday School begins at 9:45am each Sunday morning. Many classes are exploring ways to offer both in-person options as well as virtual options as the reach of our community has grown to include those outside of our immediate area. See the list below for our classes that plan to resume in-person gatherings at this time:

Ecclesia Wingard – Bottom Floor of the Education Building (Room B11)

We are a diverse group of open-minded believers, ranging in age from 35-90, including several retired United Methodist ministers. In addition to a wonderful roster of teachers from within the class, we host a variety of outside speakers. While our lessons come primarily from the Scriptures, we also enjoy presentations on a wide range of topics (books, outreach programs, service opportunities). We gather at 9:30 to visit and chat, with the bell ringing to order at 9:45. All are welcome! For more information contact Lisa Malone at lgmalone508@gmail.com.

SALT – Bottom Floor of the Education Building (Room B12)

S.A.L.T. stands for Sharing And Learning Together—and that's the heart of this class. With equal emphasis on Bible study and fellowship, we welcome ALL. Join us 15 minutes early for coffee and meet friends you haven't met yet! From 20-something's to seniors, we share a desire to know more. We study the Bible, worship God, and seek to live like Jesus. Come as you are—no preparation required. For more information contact Kathy Draper at kathydraper1011@gmail.com.

Carolyn Pitts – Bottom Floor of the Education Building (Room B10)

This is a multigenerational class led by Bill and Cathy Ivey that is focused upon the connections between faith and social justice. For more information contact Bill Ivey at wbivey@gmail.com.

Bible Study – Bottom Floor of the Education Building (Fireside Room)

The Bible Study Class covers various topics rooted in the text of the Bible and focused on the history of the Bible's text and its ongoing historical interpretations from the biblical era to today. Topics are typically covered in short (one- to two-month) series and are taught by a rotating group of class members. We meet at 9:30 and begin discussion at 9:45. All are welcome. For more information contact Stephen Smith at stephenbsmith@gmail.com.

Parenting – Second Floor of the Education Building (Alabama Theater Room)

The Parenting Class is mostly made up of parents ranging anywhere from their 20's to their 50's though anyone is invited and welcome to join. The class is led by a rotation of teachers and is focused on different topics throughout the year. Sometimes we address specific issues in parenting and other times tackle Bible study and faith. For more information contact Katie Reed at katiefdreed07@gmail.com.

TELL ME A STORY

IN OUR GOSPEL TEXTS, JESUS REPEATEDLY INDICATES THAT WE ARE TO HAVE FAITH LIKE A CHILD. ONE OF THE WAYS WE WANT TO EXPLORE OUR INNER CHILD IS BY LISTENING AND LEARNING FROM POPULAR CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS. WE BELIEVE THAT GOD SPEAKS TO US IN ALL DIFFERENT WAYS AND THAT CHILDREN'S STORIES OPEN UP OUR FAITH IN NEW AND MEANINGFUL WAYS. WE HOPE YOU WILL JOIN US AS WE EXPLORE SOME BELOVED CHILDREN'S BOOKS AND THE THEMES THEY DRAW OUT FOR US. WE WILL TACKLE FACING OUR FEARS, LIVING AUTHENTICALLY, CHANGE AND GROWTH, PRACTICING PEACE, AND THE LEGACY WE CAN LEAVE IN OUR WORLD.

8.8 | **MONSTER TROUBLE** BY LANE FREDRICKSON

1 JOHN 4:16-21, PSALM 27:1-5, PSALM 91:1-8

8.15 | **JULIAN IS A MERMAID** BY JESSICA LOVE

GENESIS 1:24-28, PSALM 139:13-18, GALATIANS 3:28-29

8.22 | **LIFE** BY CYNTHIA RYLANT

ECCLESIASTES 3:1-8, ISAIAH 43:16-21, MATTHEW 6:25-34

8.29 | **THE STORY OF FERDINAND** BY MUNRO LEAF

ROMANS 12:1-8, MATTHEW 5:9, PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9

9.5 | **MISS RUMPHIUS** BY BARBARA COONEY

MARK 4:1-20, COLOSSIANS 3:23-24, ECCLESIASTES 3:12-13

T W E N T Y - T W E N T Y O N E

S WALK SIDE

F I L M F E S T I V A L

After a year off due to the pandemic, Sidewalk is returning to First Church in 2021. On the weekend of August 27-29 we will once again be screening Life and Liberty films in our Loft worship space as well as hosting Volunteer Headquarters in the Large Dining Room. During this event we have the opportunity to show our warm hospitality to an audience who might not ever come through our doors otherwise. As a part of our hospitality we sell concessions every year which offers a wonderful opportunity to show our community who we are. There will be multiple shifts available to help sell concessions from approximately 10:00am – 8:00pm on Saturday and approximately 1:30pm – 7:30pm on Sunday. Specific blocks of time will be determined once the films are set in the coming weeks. In addition, we plan to sell our God is Love t-shirts during high traffic times on Saturday as a way to share our message of God's inclusive love for ALL. If you are interested in helping sell concessions, sell t-shirts, or maybe even a little bit of both, please let us know by clicking [HERE](#).

FIRST CHURCH Community: groups

After more than a year apart, we are excited to re-launch our community groups this fall! These groups provide a sense of fellowship with one another and encourage deeper connection within our community. These groups meet every month or every several weeks depending on the group's preference. If you're interested in participating in a community group this fall, please read the descriptions of Dinner Groups and Life Groups listed below and email Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com.

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What is a Life Group?

A small group of 4-6 people who have a high commitment level to meet regularly and maintain confidentiality as they build an intimate spiritual community. A Life Group provides safe space for each member to be heard, encouraged, and offered accountability in their individual faith journey. Each group will decide together how often, where, and for how long they will meet. Groups can meet in one another's homes, at the church, or at a restaurant. These groups do not require study preparation, however, they do require high confidentiality and a high level of commitment.

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What is a Dinner Group?

A small group of people (approximately 12) who commit to at least one year of meeting together monthly for sharing a meal with the intention of fostering greater community and building relationships. The meal can be at a restaurant or at a group member's home. Dinner Groups are centered on fostering fun and strengthening friendships. These groups do not require study preparation.

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How do I get in a Dinner Group or Life Group?

We are thrilled you are considering participating in a Community Group at First Church. As we work to re-launch this fall please keep an eye out for more detailed information in the coming weeks or feel free to go ahead and reach out to Katherine Mullen at Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com to learn more.

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Glen Iris Grace

We are gearing up for the 2021-2022 school year with our backpack ministry, Glen Iris Grace. Beginning this month we will again be preparing bags of weekend food for students at Glen Iris and Midfield Elementary Schools. Last year we provided over 5000 bags of food at a cost of about \$6.00 per bag. We appreciate your generosity when so many children needed food during the pandemic.

The Carolyn Pitts Class for Social Justice will be packing bags once a month during the Sunday school hour, and anyone is welcome to join us. We will probably be packing on another weekday each month to be able to have around 400 bags ready each month. We will let you know the schedule after we have been in contact with the school counselors to verify our numbers. We are also aware that many students at Midfield Middle School need food for the weekend. If we have enough funds, we may be able to include them as well.

We welcome volunteers to help pack bags, to deliver bags to the schools, and to donate money to buy food. Thank you for giving to Glen Iris Grace as we strive to reach out to our neighbors who need our help.

For more information please contact:

Cathy Ivey at cathyivey@gmail.com or 205-903-9311; 2550 Genoa Way, Apt 12, Vestavia, AL 35243
or Andrea Whitehead at andrea.whitehead1024@gmail.com or 205-531-6231

STUDENT MINISTRY

AT FIRST CHURCH

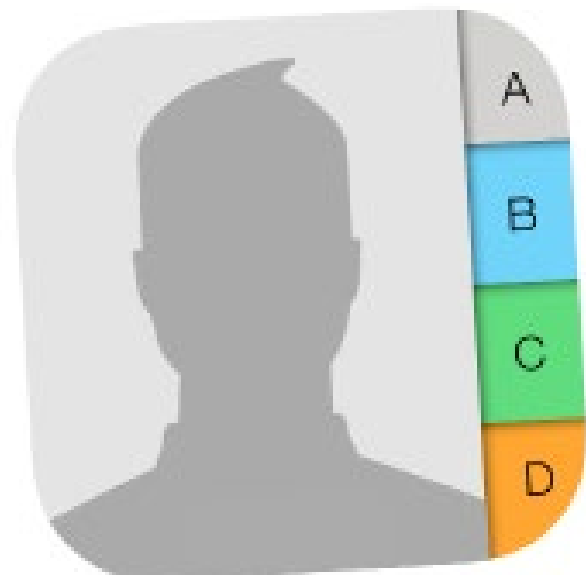
Our student ministry had an amazing summer! We traveled all over the Southeast during our Mystery Trip. Our students rafted the Ocoee River, conquered roller coasters at Six Flags, enjoyed time together at the beach, packed thousands of pounds of food through community food banks, helped clean surrounding communities by picking up litter, and partnered with several First Church Community Partners to learn about the work they lead and to participate in some of their projects. This summer was wonderful and we want to say thank you to all of the adults who helped us make sure this summer was the best yet!

If you are interested in joining our Student Ministry family, please do not hesitate to reach out. We would love to have you join us and we can always find a way to get you involved in the lives of our students.

STAY IN TOUCH

Check out our Facebook, Instagram, and email Tiffany@firstchurchbhm.com to sign up for our newsletter where you can find all of our upcoming events and programs.

INSTAGRAM - [@FIRSTCHURCHBHM.YOUTH](#)
 FACEBOOK - [FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM - YOUTH GROUP](#)



UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

We know a lot has changed in the last year and a half – many of you have moved, changed jobs, phone numbers, email addresses, etc. 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.

GREETERS NEEDED

First Church has a priority of practicing hospitality and one of the best ways we put this into action is through our Greeter Team. As people continue to find their way back into the world after a year spent away from community and church in particular, we continue to see new visitors each and every week here at First Church. We want every person who comes through our doors to feel welcomed and to know that they belong from the very moment they arrive. Currently Greeters serve in both the Loft and Sanctuary worship spaces from approximately 10:30am to 11:10am. If you are interested in helping us welcome people to worship, please fill out our form [HERE](#) and we will follow up with a training date.

GIFTS RECEIVED BY THE CHURCH

TO THE MEMORIAL FUND

IN MEMORY OF RALPH BATES

- From Jack Sharpe
- From George & Betty Likis
- From Malinda Hayes
- From William Graves
- From Anne & Neal Berte
- From Jean Malone
- From Ralph Jolly
- From Marsha Robins
- From John & Nancy Holt
- From Ecclesia-Wingard Class
- From Jeffrey Caswell
- From Geneva Blackburn
- From Bill & Cathy Ivey
- From Phillip Stutts
- From Jim & Judy Cook
- From Andy & Emily Keith
- From Larry & Shirley LeCroy
- From Linda McCartney
- From Ragan Boling

(on behalf of neighbors of the Bates family)

TO THE MEMORIAL FUND

IN MEMORY OF BUDDY RAMSEY

- From Brian & Angel Garrett
- From Carl & Andrea Hubbert

IN MEMORY OF TERILANE RAMSEY

- From Brian & Angel Garrett
- From Carl & Andrea Hubbert

IN MEMORY OF HELEN CHILDERS

- From Geneva Blackburn

IN MEMORY OF MARK DEIERHOI

- From Geneva Blackburn

TO THE MUSIC FUND

IN MEMORY OF RALPH BATES

- From David & Terri Glasgow
- From Betty Gunn

NEW MEMBER PRAYERS FOR FIRST CHURCH

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

MY PRAYER FOR FIRST CHURCH IS:

I pray that First Church remains an open place for all. I pray that it continues to search for niches where people have been excluded and marginalized, and brings them into the community of faith that supports them in their healing. I pray that the church continues to be a place that asks hard questions, and gives space for the absence of concrete answers. I pray that the focus continues to be love, and that love is demonstrated through service.

- Jenny Moon

That you continue to be a safe place to bring questions and doubts. May you open your arms to those who have never felt loving arms. May all who worship here strive for justice, equality, and mercy for all God's children.

- Barbara Foshee

My prayer for First Church is that it continues to participate in the Birmingham community to let all the people who have felt hurt, excluded, and unwelcome by other faith communities know that there are places where they can be welcomed and loved in their community.

- Kyle Holloway

I pray that First Church continues to be an open and inclusive place for all and that we continue to ask hard questions. These are the things that I have always loved and respected the most about First Church.

- Claire Holloway

My prayer is that First Church will continue to be a beacon of divine grace within the Birmingham community. That we will call one another higher, ever-expanding the circle of compassion we are fortunate enough to have been invited into. That we will walk with one another, always moving toward being made whole.

- Hanah Walker

For our circles of love, inclusion, and healing to continue to expand – without limits.

- Muriel Thompson

I can pour into the community of First Church as they pour into me.

- Sophie Griffies



AUGUST CALENDAR

AUGUST 1

12:00pm - Reception for Cristin Dedmon

AUGUST 27

~ Sidewalk Film Festival ~

AUGUST 15

9:30am - Return of Children & Youth Sunday School
9:45am - Return of Adult Sunday School

AUGUST 28

~ Sidewalk Film Festival ~

AUGUST 4

~ Office Closed for Staff Development ~

AUGUST 18

6:00pm - Trustees

AUGUST 29

~ Sidewalk Film Festival ~

AUGUST 9

6:00pm - Executive Council

WEEKLY CALENDAR

SUNDAY

9:00am - Virtual Live Stream Service

9:45am - Sunday School

11:00am - Loft & Sanctuary In Person Worship

4:00pm - Youth Group

TUESDAY

7:00pm - Converge Young Adults

WEDNESDAY

6:30pm - Chancel Choir

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 Youth & Social Justice Engagement: Tiffany Dowdy.....	Tiffany@firstchurchbhm.com
Minister of Children: Cristin Dedmon	Cristin@firstchurchbhm.com
Minister of Community Engagement: Katherine Mullen	Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com
Organist: Richard Byrd	Richard@firstchurchbhm.com
Design: Blake Hobbs	Blake@firstchurchbhm.com
Choir Director: Patrick Evans	Patrick@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: Cassandra Copeland	ELC@firstchurchbhm.com



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

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