



SEPTEMBER 2021

CONNECTIONS

an Abundance of
GENEROSITY



Stewardship

FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM

Stewardship at First Church is a year round conversation where we study together how we may joyfully be better stewards of all the gifts and resources we are offered in this life. A part of this yearly focus means that each year we take time to review our ministry needs and dreams of our congregation and plan an operating budget for the upcoming year. Your annual pledge makes this budgeting process most efficient for our finance team and staff and your yearly gifts make ministry and life happen for our community. We also look at ways we can grow and develop our stewardship to mean more than simply giving financial gifts to the church. You may recall that last year our children and youth stepped up and together donated new children's books to Embrace Alabama Kids (formerly the United Methodist Children's Home).



As you will see this year, our youth have developed a ministry for us to collect #5 plastics for Community on the Rise to make beautiful Power Pots like the ones that will be delivered in our stewardship bags. There are so many ways we can abundantly steward our resources together! This year we will celebrate the culmination of our stewardship season by turning in our pledges on or before Sunday, September 26.

Click [HERE](#) To Submit Your 2022 Pledge Today.

Abundance

SEPTEMBER SERMON SERIES



In the prosperity gospel driven world the word **abundance** has been misused to manipulate faithful people to give away all they have. Instead of being used to prey on vulnerable people, **abundance** is meant to show us how the Creator and Creation gift themselves to us with life. Our faith teaches us that Jesus “came that we may have life, and have it **abundantly**” (John 10:10b). Creation all around us, as instructed by our Creator, practices giving gifts to us with great **abundance**. The Creator and Creation trust that we will treat such generous gifts with love. Robin Wall Kimmerer shares, *“In the presence of such gifts, gratitude is the intuitive first response... If our first response is gratitude, then our second is reciprocity: to give a gift in return.”* In this series we will explore how life itself is an **abundant** gift to be shared by us all and how we are called to respond in gratitude with our own generosity!

9.12 | **An Abundance of Gifts Received**

Exodus 16: 11-18, Luke 8:1-3, Luke 10:25-37

9.19 | **An Abundance of Gratitude Given**

John 4: 25-30; 39-42, Luke 17: 11-19 - 10, Luke 7:36-50

9.26 | **An Abundance of Generosity Celebrated**

Luke 19:1-10, John 6:1-14, Exodus 36:1-7

Stewardship Response

RECYCLING #5 PLASTICS

Along with turning in our pledge cards, one of the ways we plan to respond with abundance for the earth's good gifts is to be led by our youth and children in collecting #5 plastics to be recycled at Community on the Rise. Why recycle #5 plastics? We deeply believe that a part of our calling is to be caretakers of all that God created, which includes our planet and environment. There are not many places that will recycle #5 plastics but we happen to be in a close relationship with one organization that does so in some very unique ways. We are partnering with Community On The Rise to collect #5 plastics so that they can turn them into beautiful creations called Power Pots. These pots are made with #5 plastics that have been collected, cleaned, shredded, heated, and pressed into a mold. You can find more about Community On The Rise and the work they are doing by checking them out on Facebook at [Community On The Rise](#).

Here is how you can help:

Check for the number. - If you use a plastic, look for a "5" inside the recycling symbol, typically located on the bottom of the container. If it has a lid it might be a different number than the container. Check both pieces. Examples of #5 plastics are yogurt containers, ketchup bottles, and medicine bottles.

Clean and rinse your plastic.

Bring your #5 plastics to First Church. We will have three collection locations - the Sanctuary, Loft, and Welcome Center.

For more information please contact Tiffany Dowdy at Tiffany@firstchurchbhm.com.

Recycling Competition

FOR CITY KIDS | SUNDAYS, SEPTEMBER 5, 12, 19

This year as an act of worship and practice of stewardship, we invite you to bring your rinsed #5 containers with you to worship each week and pop them in the boxes near the Nursery (you can't miss them!). Here's the twist: kids will compete by age to see who can bring in the most items. We'll celebrate your win at our Virtual Family Game Night on September 22. We know you love your Paw Patrol yogurt and to-go strawberry lemonade from Urban Cookhouse— help us care for creation in this friendly competition!

Getting To KNOW US Dinner

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 6:00PM | FIRST CHURCH COURTYARD

Pre-pandemic First Church regularly hosted a meal for everyone who had recently joined or had been visiting. After nearly 18 months of using Zoom coffee as a substitute, we are looking forward to the opportunity to dine together again. If you have been visiting with us at First Church, if you have recently joined First Church, if you are interested in learning more, you are invited to join us for a meal together outside. We will gather at 6:00pm in the First Church Courtyard for good food and fellowship. After we eat together, we will spend time talking about what brought you to First Church and what keeps you coming back. We look forward to getting to know each of you more personally. If you are planning to join us, click [HERE](#) to RSVP Outdoor childcare available with a reservation by Thursday, September 9.



**FIRST
CHURCH**

101

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 6:00PM | FIRST CHURCH COURTYARD

If you are new to First Church (or if you've been around and want a refresher!) we encourage you to attend our First Church 101 on Thursday evening, September 23, at 6:00pm in the First Church Courtyard. We will talk about the theology, polity, and Social Principles of the United Methodist Church as well as talk more about how we understand membership at First Church. This is a great opportunity to learn more and begin to find greater connection to the First Church community. We 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 the opportunities to worship, grow, and serve. Refreshments will be provided, so come and join us for an opportunity to connect more deeply at First Church. Click [HERE](#) to let us know you are coming. Outdoor childcare available with a reservation by Thursday, September 16.

FALL SMALL GROUPS

This fall we are offering a variety of small groups to help you deepen your learning and connection here at First Church. We hope you will find at least one small group that invites you into something new. To register for one of our Fall Small Groups click [HERE](#).

For all of our transgender and non-binary folk, we acknowledge that gender is a spectrum. Please participate in whichever group you identify with.

Dog is Love

LED BY JULIE AND LARRY CAINE

SATURDAYS, BEGINNING OCTOBER 2, 3:00 – 4:30PM (6 WEEKS)

Calling all dog lovers! This group is targeted at dog owners who love taking their dogs to parks and socializing with other pet owners. Join us every Saturday afternoon as we fellowship with one another and our furry friends! Locations will include dog parks around Birmingham and restaurants that are pet-friendly.

Hike More, Worry Less

LED BY LYNN ELGIN AND DAVID COMMER

SUNDAYS, BEGINNING OCTOBER 3, 3:30PM (5 WEEKS)

Weather permitting, this group will hike trails at Red Mountain Park, Ruffner Mountain, and at least one loop at Oak Mountain in order to experience a diversity of trails in our area. We will meet at 3:30pm at each designated trailhead or parking lot; details and schedule to follow. Hikes will be no longer than five miles and no shorter than 2 1/2 miles, with elevation gain and loss (hills) limited to 300 feet. We are open to speedsters and slow pokes alike. This won't be racing or trail running. Reading the hikes and literature of Henry David Thoreau—or Bill Bryson—beforehand might enhance the adventure.

Learning from Esther

LED BY REV. KATIE GILBERT

TUESDAYS, BEGINNING OCTOBER 5, 6:30–8:00PM (4 WEEKS)

Location: **2nd Floor Conference Room in the Office Building & Zoom**

The book of Esther is a well-known story in our Bible but what might we learn from a more careful study of the text? By considering its historical context, audience, translation, author, and more, we will explore the book of Esther as well as additional texts found in the Apocrypha. Through reading and discussion, we will consider ways to understand and interpret the text to enrich its meaning today! We will plan to meet in-person as well as offer a Zoom link for anyone who would like to participate virtually.

How to Raise Kids Who Aren't Aholes**

by Melinda Wenner Moyer (A Book Study)

LED BY CRISTIN DEDMON

TUESDAYS, BEGINNING OCTOBER 5, 8:00PM–8:45PM (6 weeks)

Location: **ZOOM**

*How to Raise Kids Who Aren't A**holes* is a deeply researched, evidence-based source which offers a fresh perspective on parenting issues for toddlers to teenagers. We will read two chapters each week and discuss questions which will be sent prior to the week's gathering. By looking at this research through a lens of faith, we will work to build practices in our homes collaboratively with our kids. Participants will be encouraged to join in conversation, but we understand that this parenting study hits during bedtime routines for many of our caretakers—therefore, this is your ticket to simply listen along as needed during bath time or rocking a baby— we would still love for you to share your input by typing in our Zoom chat even if you are busy behind the camera.

Tap Your Troubles Away

A Tap Dancing Group

LED BY KATHY DRAPER

WEDNESDAYS, BEGINNING OCTOBER 6, 6:30–7:30PM (6 WEEKS)

Location: **The Loft at First Church**

Do you feel the rhythm and don't know how to express it? When you hear a lively song, do you tap your feet to the beat, snap your fingers and nod your head? Then come feel the rhythm and Tap Your Troubles Away on Wednesday nights in the Loft. No experience necessary and if you don't have tap shoes, then hard soled shoes will work just fine! Ages 13 and up are welcome.

Brews & Bros

LED BY JONATHAN GOSS

THURSDAYS, BEGINNING OCTOBER 7, 6:30–8:00PM (4 WEEKS)

Location: **Back Forty 3201 (1st Ave N, Birmingham, AL)**

We live in a culture that at times promotes a form of masculinity that is seen as tough, powerful, and emotionless. At First Church, we believe strength is shown by those who are willing to be vulnerable, share their feelings, and participate in a community that supports one another. In the small group Brews & Bros, we will create an intentional space for male-identifying persons to share with one another and explore how God is calling us to redefine masculinity in today's world. Our discussion topics will range from how you grew up to your understanding of femininity and masculinity. The idea is to gradually ease into heavier conversations as we get to know one another while sharing a drink together around a table at a local brewery. At Back 40 they serve good food and both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. We are choosing this location so that anyone who drinks or does not drink alcohol will feel welcome.

Jesus, Gays, & Theys: An LGBTQ+ Safe Space

LED BY TIFFANY DOWDY

THURSDAYS BEGINNING OCTOBER 7, 6:30–7:30 (6 WEEKS)

Location: **First Church Dining Room**

We know that religion and faith can be difficult topics to unpack, especially if you've been raised in institutions that haven't been affirming. We want to invite anyone in the LGBTQ+ community to join together for a six-week journey of exploring, wrestling with, and unpacking some of our thoughts and ideas around faith, spirituality, and the church. While we love and thank our straight allies, this group is led by and intended for the LGBTQ+ community.

Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle

by Emily Nagoski, PHD & Amelia Nagoski, DMA (a book study)

LED BY ALIE B. GORRIE

SUNDAYS, BEGINNING OCTOBER 10, 6:00PM (4 WEEKS)

Location: **On the patio at Park 35 on Clairmont**

This book study is for female identifying folks who have ever felt overwhelmed or exhausted by unrealistic expectations placed upon them. The book tackles questions of: How can you "love your body" when every magazine cover has ten diet tips for becoming "your best self"? How do you "lean in" at work when you're already operating at 110% and aren't recognized for it? This book challenges women not to ignore the very real obstacles and societal pressures that stand between them and their well-being, but instead through scientific research helps explain with compassion and optimism what women are up against—and how to fight back.

FIRST CHURCH Community groups

After more than a year apart, we are excited to re-launch our community groups this fall! Dinner Groups and Life Groups provide a sense of fellowship 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 learning more about our community groups, you can read more on our website [HERE](#). If you are interested in participating in a community group this fall, please fill out our online form [HERE](#).

What is a Dinner Group?

A small group of people who commit to an informal time of sharing a meal together once a month with the intention of fostering greater community and building relationships. The meal can take place at a restaurant or at a group member's home or outside at a park. Dinner Groups are centered on fostering fun and strengthening friendships!

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.

CONVERGE MIDWEEK

A Young Adult Group

LED BY JONATHAN GOSS

Tuesdays, 6:30–8:00pm

Location: **Blue Room on the Third Floor of the Office Building**

Converge Midweek is an ongoing small group for young adults at First Church that is open and welcoming. Meetings take place each Tuesday evening from 6:30pm–8:00pm on the third floor of the office building in the Blue Room. We begin each meeting by checking in with one another and socializing for the first 30 minutes. For the next hour or so we have a guided conversation on a variety of topics. Conversations can focus on books of the Bible, a video series, or a book series. There is no “homework” that needs to be done before attending. Just show up and know that you belong. Converge Midweek is a great way to find community here at First Church. If you have any questions please contact Jonathan Goss at jonathan@firstchurchbhm.com

GRIEF GROUP

LED BY DR. CATHERINE CLAYTON PRINCE & REV. STEPHANIE YORK ARNOLD

Wednesdays, beginning October 13, 5:30–7:00pm (5 weeks)

Location: **Loft Lounge area at First Church**

When we lose someone or something we love, or even something we look forward to or hope for, it is normal to experience grief. The past 18 months have brought much for us to grieve as individuals, families, and as a global community. Many have experienced the death of a loved one without the traditional rituals of celebrating their lives, which means our grief may have been absent of in-person contact from our support network including hugs and opportunities to cry on and be held up by the shoulders of those we love. Our grief may be specific or ambiguous, but all grief must be acknowledged and honored in order to breathe through it with grace to allow healing to occur. In this group we will meet to listen to one another and honor one another’s grief in whatever form it takes. We welcome persons 19 and older who are grieving any of the above mentioned losses and want to courageously come together for community, connection, closeness, and compassion. Please click [HERE](#) to fill out the registration form to participate in our fall Grief Group.

❧ SAVE THE DATE ❧

CHURCH-WIDE RETREAT

FEBRUARY 11-13TH, 2022 AT LAKE GUNTERSVILLE STATE PARK

Join us as we journey together through Manna & Mercy

Registration will be live later this month. Pricing will be as follows:

SINGLE: \$175
COUPLE: \$300
FAMILY: \$350

(up to 4 members, after that each additional family member is \$25)

\$50 DEPOSIT DUE AT REGISTRATION

Sanctuary WORSHIP TEAM

Engaging worship takes place in many ways and forms...and it takes a team's effort! If you would enjoy working behind the scenes to make worship beautiful and meaningful this may be the place for you to serve. Persons on the team can help prepare the altar for worship and consider ways to artistically illustrate the theme of the service; help arrange and care for live and silk flowers as well as seasonal flowers for Lent and Advent; and provide care and preparation for the sacramental elements involved with baptism and communion. So if you enjoy working behind the scenes to make worship beautiful and meaningful this might be a place you would enjoy serving. For more information or to get plugged in contact team leader Laura Williams at swilliams1521@msn.com.



FAMILY WATER Olympics

September 12, 3:00pm - 5:00pm (Dedmon Backyard)

The Summer Olympics might've wrapped up but the heat is still on! Join us for an afternoon of outside, socially distanced water relay games. Families will compete within their own family unit teams and there are prizes for all of us - popsicles and snacks! This event will be a great way to see familiar faces and meet new ones. We hope you'll join us and invite a friend.

VIRTUAL

FAMILY GAME NIGHT

WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 22, 6:30PM - 7:30PM

Grab the people and pets who share your home for a fun night of games. A Neighbors Ice Cream Shop gift card is on the line as we get silly with our friends. If you are interested in joining us, email Cristin@firstchurchbhm.com and she'll send the link to the game that week.

Altar Flowers

We are reviving the longstanding tradition at First Church of the opportunity to place live flowers at the altar for worship. Gifting the worship service with live flowers is a beautiful way to honor the memory of a loved one, an important milestone, or recognize someone special. Live floral arrangements have been gifted for anniversaries, birthdays, graduations, weddings, and celebrations of life, etc. With each live flower arrangement, a note will be included in the worship bulletin or worship slides expressing love for the recipient and/or commemorating the event. If you are interested in purchasing live flowers to be placed on the altar of the Sanctuary, please contact Laura Williams at swilliams1521@msn.com to reserve space on the church calendar and to discuss floral options based upon what you want to spend.

Sanctuary TECH TEAM

To pull off excellent worship that enables us all to hear and see the different elements of the service takes a team of persons dedicated to running the sound board and the video screens. There is no prior experience needed nor do you need to be considered "tech savvy." If you can follow instructions, follow along in a detailed bulletin, and click a button or two, then you have the skill to be on the tech team. Training is provided for all persons and persons serve in pairs together. A few more people willing to serve would allow our tech team to rotate Sundays off and enjoy worship without having to "work" during the service. Contact Michael Kortman the Tech Team leader at mdkortman@gmail.com if you are interested in getting trained and beginning to serve.



DEAR EVAN HANSEN

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 4:00PM AT THE SUMMIT AMC

Join us for a private viewing of the film *Dear Evan Hansen* on Sunday, September 26. First Church has rented a theater for all of us to watch the highly anticipated film together! *Dear Evan Hansen* tells the story of a high school senior who suffers from a social anxiety disorder which leads him to struggle at school. His journey of self-discovery and acceptance begins following the sudden death of a fellow classmate. This film has frequent mentions of suicide, anxiety, and grief and may not be appropriate for children.

We will meet at The Summit AMC at 3:45pm. We will wear masks and distance accordingly. 175 tickets are currently available. Click [HERE](#) to register for the event!

NEW MEMBER PRAYERS FOR FIRST CHURCH

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

MY PRAYER FOR FIRST CHURCH IS:

We pray that we never lose the mystery of God's love for us and all people so that we would continue to grow in humility and gratitude.

- Art and Carie Wimberly



SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

September 5

11:00am - One Service
(In The Sanctuary)

September 12

~ Stewardship Deliveries ~
3:00pm - Family Water Olympics

September 16

6:00pm - Getting To Know Us Dinner

September 6

~ Church Office Closed ~

September 22

6:30pm - Virtual Family Game Night

September 10

~ Stewardship Deliveries ~

September 13

6:00pm - Executive Council

September 23

6:00pm - First Church 101

September 11

~ Stewardship Deliveries ~

September 15

6:00pm - Trustees

September 26

4:00pm - Dear Evan Hansen

WEEKLY CALENDAR

SUNDAY

8:45am: Pre K Virtual Sunday School

9:00am: Virtual Live Stream Service

9:45am: Virtual Sunday School

10:00am: 1st - 5th Virtual 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
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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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