

NOVEMBER 2021

CONNECTIONS

WITH
GRATITUDE





SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 14

FRIENDS GIVING



Traditionally, Friendsgiving occurs before the Thanksgiving holiday and is celebrated by friends gathering together and bringing food to share. This year we plan to honor this tradition by sitting down for a meal together outside. We will provide the meal – we just ask that you bring yourselves! Join us on Sunday, November 14 for a Friendsgiving celebration after worship in the courtyard. We will sit together outside and eat a delicious lunch consisting of turkey, dressing, green beans, sweet potato casserole, rolls, and desserts! Are you hungry just reading that? Tickets are available for purchase at \$13 for adults and \$8 for children. Click [**HERE**](#) to buy your tickets now. We can't wait to join you around the table!



FALL SERMON SERIES

Searching

FOR THE SOUL

"The rabbis tell us the soul is a mirror of God within us. The soul fills the body, just as God fills the world. The soul outlasts the body, just as God outlasts the world. The soul is one in the body, just as God is one in the world."

- Naomi Levy, Einstein and the Rabbi: Searching for the Soul

Sharing from her unique perspective as a Jewish Rabbi, author Naomi Levy's Einstein and the Rabbi: Searching for the Soul will guide us in exploring and reconnecting with the soul. The book is structured around Levy's journey to learn more about a grieving father who writes to Albert Einstein who replies with the affirmation that "human beings are part of the whole" even though we often experience life as separate from one another or what Einstein terms an "optical delusion of consciousness." As Levy seeks to learn more about this grieving father and his life, she explores the depth of Einstein's quote, the teachings of Jewish mysticism, and the reality that each of us is called to claim the oneness that is ever present in our world. In this series we will encourage one another to reclaim our souls, live up to our gifts, explore the legacy we leave, and seek to better understand why we are here. Together we will live into the truth that we are all deeply connected to one another and the impact that has on our living in this world.

October 24 | **WHAT IS THE SOUL?**

Genesis 2:4-7, Ecclesiastes 6:6-7, Psalm 103:1-5

October 31 | **LIFE FORCE**

Exodus 20:8-11, Ecclesiastes 6:6-7, Psalm 118:1-5, Psalm 98:4-6

November 7 | **ALL SAINTS**

Psalm 34:1-10, John 11:32-44, Revelation 21:1-6a

November 14 | **LOVE FORCE**

Exodus 24:12-18, Ezekiel 36:26-28, Matthew 18:21-22

November 21 | **ETERNAL FORCE**

Exodus 37:5-11, Psalm 144:1-4, 1-Corinthians 12:12-26

ALL SAINTS

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7

ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7 WE WILL CELEBRATE ALL SAINTS IN BOTH VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON WORSHIP. IN EACH WORSHIP EXPERIENCE WE WILL CALL BY NAME THOSE WHO HAVE DIED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS AS WE CELEBRATE THEIR CONTINUAL PRESENCE IN OUR LIVES. TOGETHER WE WILL SING, PRAY, CELEBRATE, AND REMEMBER OUR LOVING, SOULFUL CONNECTION WITH ALL THOSE THAT HAVE GONE BEFORE US SPANNING TIME AND PLACE.



FIRST CHURCH BIRMINGHAM ANNUAL

CHARGE CONFERENCE

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7 AT 12:30PM

Every year we gather together as a community of faith to celebrate all we have accomplished in the past year, nominate and approve new lay leadership, as well as ratify parts of our annual operating budget. On Sunday, November 7, our District Superintendent, Rick Owen, will join us in worship for our All Saints service in the Sanctuary and then, following worship, we will hold our annual Charge Conference in the Sanctuary at 12:30pm. During this year's Charge Conference we will also offer a "State of the Church" address. All are welcome to attend. Click [HERE](#) for the live stream option.

PILGRIMAGE

During December, we will embark on the final leg of our pilgrimages. Remembering can be a painful task to undertake, but it is one we are called to faithfully pursue. Join us on Saturday, December 4, as we travel to Montgomery to visit the Equal Justice Initiative Museum and Memorial for Peace and Justice. We encourage you to visit their website [HERE](#) to learn more about what to expect. For more information, contact Tiffany Dowdy at Tiffany@firstchurchbhm.com.

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

MONTGOMERY

When: December 4 at 9:00am

Cost: \$5 each

Deadline To Register: Friday November 26

Click [HERE](#) to Register.

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY CLASS

The Sunday Morning Bible Study Class covers various topics rooted in the text of the Bible, 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. In the first half of November, we will wrap up a series on the historical background of the Gospel of Mark and then in mid-November we'll begin a series on Martin Luther's theology and his influence on Christianity. You are welcome to join any of our forthcoming class sessions as each session is self-contained in scope. We meet on Zoom each Sunday at 9:45am. Please contact Stephen Smith (stephenbsmith@gmail.com) for a link or dial-in information for our Zoom meeting.



PROJECT 12.25

We know that the Christmas season can be a financially challenging time for anyone. Throughout the years we have worked to come alongside First Church families who need additional support with children's toys, clothing, and/or groceries.

If you are a family in need of additional support this holiday season, please email Tiffany at Tiffany@firstchurchbhm.com to begin the discussion.

If you are interested in buying gifts or groceries for a family, please contact Tiffany at Tiffany@firstchurchbhm.com.

.....

Taking care of those within our congregation is only half of Project 12/25. This Christmas we will also have the opportunity to support and uplift our wider community through working with some of our community partners.

This year we are focusing on two major areas of support within our community: Magic City Acceptance Center, an organization dedicated to providing a brave and inclusive space for the LGBTQ community in Alabama, and Glen Iris Grace, a ministry from within the First Church congregation that helps to provide food for school-aged children.

Magic City Acceptance Center

This year we will be helping to provide 75 care bags for LGBTQ+ youth and young adult participants at Magic City Acceptance Center (MCAC). The purpose of these bags is to aid in self-care, resilience, and building participants up as they return home for the holidays. Some will be returning to homes that are not necessarily supportive and affirming of their sexual and gender identities.

If you are interested in purchasing the items for a care bag please reach out to Tiffany Dowdy at Tiffany@firstchurchbhm.com for further instructions. The care bags will include items like Target gift cards, fidget toys, art kits with canvases, self-care items, and candy.

Glen Iris Grace

In 2017 a group of volunteers within First Church joined together to address food insecurity for children by providing 40 bags of nonperishable food for students at Glen Iris Elementary to take home on the weekend. Five years later, Glen Iris Grace has expanded their reach and impact as they currently provide 150 bags (50 at Glen Iris Elementary and 100 at Midfield Elementary) each week.

Eliminating food insecurity is a huge undertaking but we can take small steps along the way. We invite you to consider supporting a student by donating to Glen Iris Grace at one of the following levels:

\$260 – Provide food for one student for an entire school year

\$130 – Provide food for one student for one semester

\$30 – Provide food for one student for one month

Click [**HERE**](#) to make your gift now.

In addition to a financial gift, you are also invited to support Glen Iris Grace by joining us after worship on Sunday, December 12 to pack food bags in the Large Dining Room.




ADVENT
Decorations
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 21, AFTER WORSHIP


Friends it is time to come together to decorate First Church for Advent! After worship on Sunday, November 21, you are invited to join with your First Church family to help put up Advent trees, set nativities, and hang garland and wreaths as we prepare our space for the beauty of this holy season. Many hands help make this time go by effortlessly with great speed, so we very much appreciate all those who are able to help! For those planning to help decorate we will serve a light lunch in the Large Dining Room prior to our decorating and ask for a \$5 donation per person. Make your reservation [HERE](#) for lunch and decorating. Contact Stephanie York Arnold at Stephanie@firstchurchbhm.com if you have any questions.



**BEEERS AND
CAROLS**

Joy to the world, the time has come! On Sunday, December 5 at 4:00pm, we will gather at Ghost Train Brewing for a night of beers and carols. We are kicking off the holiday season with a time of singing, visiting with church family, and MORE singing! Our Loft and Sanctuary musicians will be leading us in carols, so come with your best holiday sweater and be ready to sing your merry heart out. Aside from Ghost Train's awesome brews, we'll have hot chocolate, apple cider, and other non-alcoholic beverages available! No registration required and all ages are welcome.



CLOSE TO HOME

COMING TOGETHER AS ONE CHURCH DURING ADVENT

Advent is a time of drawing close to what feels like home. Often, home is found in the people to whom we belong and with whom we journey through life. After spending more than 18 months separated and out of the habit of our regular ways of gathering together, we want to take time this Advent to prioritize being together as ONE church family. We realize that anyone joining us for worship last year was not able to do so in-person. For those who have come to be a part of this community since then have never had the opportunity to experience Advent in-person at First Church. Therefore, we want to spend time together cherishing our sacred rituals, singing our beloved carols, lighting the Advent wreath, and getting to know one another more deeply as we celebrate that we are truly coming home this Advent - coming home to one another! Each week we will worship together in one service that will combine the best we can offer of our modern and traditional experiences. We will meet weekly in the Sanctuary at 11:00am. This is a time to remember and greet old friends, to meet and welcome new friends, and to grow together as ONE family in this holy season. We hope you will make plans to attend as we draw close to home together!

ADVENT CALENDAR

NOVEMBER 28

11:00am - Combined Worship (SANCTUARY)
REV. JONATHAN GOSS PREACHING

DECEMBER 5

11:00am - Combined Worship (SANCTUARY)
REV. STEPHANIE YORK ARNOLD PREACHING
4:00pm - Beers & Carols (GHOST TRAIN BREWING)

DECEMBER 12

11:00am - Combined Worship (SANCTUARY)
REV. JONATHAN GOSS PREACHING

DECEMBER 19

11:00am - Lessons and Carols (SANCTUARY)
CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS SERVICE
REV. STEPHANIE YORK ARNOLD PREACHING

DECEMBER 21

6:00pm - Longest Night Service (SANCTUARY)
REV. KATIE GILBERT PREACHING

DECEMBER 24

5:30pm - Christmas Eve (SANCTUARY)
CANDLELIGHT SERVICE
REV. STEPHANIE YORK ARNOLD PREACHING

DECEMBER 26

9:00am - Virtual Worship Only (YOUTUBE & FACEBOOK)
REV. JONATHAN GOSS PREACHING

JANUARY 2

11:00am - Combined Worship (SANCTUARY)
REV. STEPHANIE YORK ARNOLD PREACHING

CHURCH-WIDE RETREAT

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

You don't want to miss First Church's retreat! Our annual retreat is one of the most significant times to build community and make connections - not to mention grow spiritually. See the list below to review the themes of study we have considered together over the years:

2017 - MANNA & MERCY

A contextual walk through Scripture that is foundational to our mission and priorities

2018 - INSIDE/OUT

Exploring Richard Rohr's focus upon spiritual practices and the Trinity

2019 - JUSTICE & COMMUNITY

Exploring ways to serve and live out justice with our community partners

2020 - CALLED TO LEAD

Exploring leadership and where we as a church might be called to lead



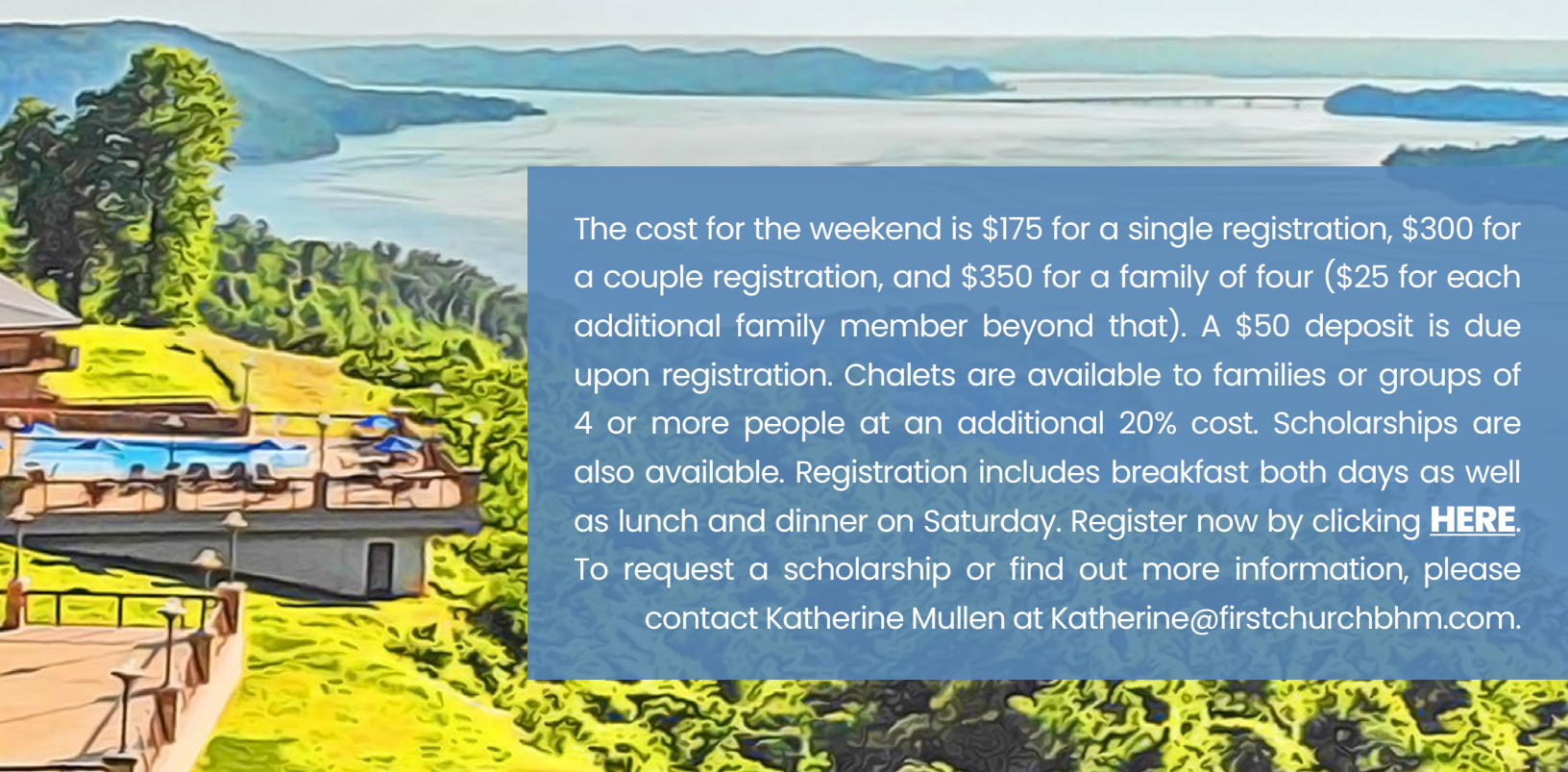
We believe that by regularly exploring Scripture, investing in internal spiritual practices, and moving outward to works of service and justice, we will grow our churchwide capacity for leadership in dynamic and transformational ways. We are excited this year to return to our theme of Manna and Mercy for our retreat. Throughout the weekend we will journey through the whole Bible – from Genesis to Revelation – using Daniel Erlander’s book *Manna and Mercy* as our guide. This will offer us a way to read the Bible that is life-giving as we:

- Learn how context shapes the meaning of Scripture
- Read the Bible through the lens of Jesus’ life, teaching, death, and resurrection
- Learn that we value inclusivity and social justice not in spite of the Bible but because of it
- Be challenged to live in a way that brings life to ourselves, our families, and to the whole world
- Live into our identities as God’s children created in love, by love, and for love

Over the years Manna and Mercy has become the theological foundation of our mission statement and six priorities at First Church. We encourage everyone to experience a Manna and Mercy retreat at least once – preferably more than once as there is always something new to learn and take away.

In addition to meaningful content, the retreat will also offer plenty of free time to get to know our church family better while enjoying all that the park has to offer. Recreational options include golfing, fishing, kayaking, canoeing, hiking, playgrounds, 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 will be available for kids from preschool through elementary. Youth, though included in the learning sessions, will have opportunities to gather together as well during the weekend.



The cost for the weekend is \$175 for a single registration, \$300 for a couple registration, and \$350 for a family of four (\$25 for each additional family member beyond that). A \$50 deposit is due upon registration. Chalets are available to families or groups of 4 or more people at an additional 20% cost. Scholarships are also available. Registration includes breakfast both days as well as lunch and dinner on Saturday. Register now by clicking [HERE](#). To request a scholarship or find out more information, please contact Katherine Mullen at Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com.



Abundance of GRATITUDE

As we continue to follow up on our Abundance stewardship campaign we have collected 174 pledges for a total of \$843,478. This goes a long way in helping fulfill our 2022 operating budget. As a reminder, our 2021 operating budget was 1.3 million dollars. While we have not yet reached our goal we are well on our way. If you have not submitted your 2022 pledge we invite you to do so by clicking [HERE](#). Your individual gifts help us achieve our collective goals for ministry.

Even though we have continued to live through a global pandemic that has brought uncertainty and struggle, First Church has continued to do well budgetarily in 2021. Through the month of September:

- **Our net income year to date was \$167,941.50 better than budget.**
- **Congregational giving was up \$66,491.78 or 7.5% better than budget year to date.**
- **Total expenses were \$106,361.28 under budget.**
- **Clergy benefits have been paid through September.**
- **Apportionment payments made through August.**
- **Plant Operation & Maintenance was \$27,817.34 under budget**

Thanks to your faithfulness and generosity 2021 has been hard but not insurmountable. We are maintaining our budget commitments and growing in our giving thanks to each of you. It is our prayer that as we move into the final months of the year we will be able to finish strong. Thank you for your generosity.



As we approach a season in which many of us will do our shopping online, we want to make sure you are aware that First Church has an Amazon Smile account. When you make a purchase through Amazon Smile 0.5% of that purchase is donated back to the charity of your choice. All you need to do is make sure you are shopping at smile.amazon.com (all of the regular Amazon products and prices can be found there) and select Birmingham First United Methodist Church as your charity of choice. We hope you will consider using Amazon Smile as an easy way to make a contribution to First Church!

STUDENT MINISTRY

AT FIRST CHURCH

WHAT WE'RE LEARNING

This month we will be kicking off a new series about friendship which gets more complicated when your friends are hurting or struggling. What should you do? What should you say? What should you not say? In this 3-week series, we'll follow the examples of Job, Ruth, Naomi, Elijah, and Eli, to see how God invites us to "be with" people when they're grieving, lonely, or feeling hopeless, and how God is already with them.

STUDENT MINISTRY GATHERING

Sundays, **November 7, 14, & 21, December 5 & 12**
FROM 4:00PM - 6:00PM IN THE LARGE DINING ROOM

SPECIAL UPCOMING EVENTS

December 17: Christmas Party and Lock-In
January 14 - 17: Serve Weekend in Memphis, TN

STAY IN TOUCH:

Keep up to date with all that we have going on and never miss out on all the fun things happening.

NEWSLETTER - Email Tiffany@firstchurchbhm.com to join

REMIND - (text reminders) Text: @fcbhmadult To: 81010

INSTAGRAM - @firstchurchbhm.youth

FACEBOOK - First Church Birmingham - Student Ministry

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 can remain a safe and peaceful place for those seeking to understand God.

- Claire Flowers

I pray that First Church serves as an example to other faith communities of the beauty of loving acceptance, that we continue to love our neighbors and seek justice, and that every person that interacts with First Church experiences the grace of Christ.

- Mallory Parish

That First Church will continue to be a welcoming place for all seekers.

- Rene Pittman



NOVEMBER CALENDAR

November 6

9:00am - Selma Pilgrimage

November 7

~ All Saints ~

November 8

6:00pm - Executive Council

November 13

2:00pm - Friendsgiving Prepapalooza
(City Kids & Student Ministry)

November 14

12:00pm - Friendsgiving

November 17

6:00pm - Trustees

November 21

12:00pm - Advent Decorations
12:00pm - Sunday School Tech Training
12:00pm - City Kids Big Advent Event

November 25

~ Church Office Closed ~

November 26

~ Church Office Closed ~

November 28

11:00am - Advent Combined Worship
(In The Sanctuary)

WEEKLY CALENDAR

SUNDAY

9:00am: Virtual Live Stream Service

9:30: City Kids Virtual Sunday School

9:45am: Virtual Sunday School

11:00am: Loft & Sanctuary In Person Worship

4:00pm: Student Ministry

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**

518 North 19th Street • Birmingham AL 35203
205-254-3186 • www.firstchurchbhm.com