

DECEMBER 2022

CONNECTIONS



WAITING FOR
THE **LIGHT**



FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION...

The stories, scriptures, and traditions of the Christmas season have been passed down to us throughout the generations. The root word of “generation” is “gen” meaning “origin” or “birth.” Join us this Advent season as we ask ourselves: What have those who have come before us passed on for us to continue? Who are the spiritual elders in our community who planted the seeds for the things that are now blooming? What seeds are you planting for the future? What are we being called to generate or bring forth?

From Generation to Generation... reminds us of the ways our lives, histories, actions, and stories are interconnected and woven together. The work of God is always unfolding—in and through us. This Advent, may you remember that you belong—to a story etched into the wrinkles of time, to generations that have come before and will come after, to a love that won’t let you go.

12.4.22 | **GOD MEETS US IN OUR FEAR**

LUKE 1:26-38 | ISAIAH 11:1-10

12.11.22 | **WE CAN CHOOSE A BETTER WAY**

MATTHEW 1:18-25 | ISAIAH 35:1-10

12.18.22 | **WE SEE GOD IN EACH OTHER**

LUKE 1:39-45; 56-58 | LUKE 1:46-55

12.25.22 | **WE TELL THIS STORY**

LUKE 2:1-20

1.1.23 | **GOD DWELLS WITH US**

JOHN 1:1-14 | LUKE 2:15-21

1.8.23 | **WE KEEP SEEKING**

MATTHEW 2:1-12 | MATTHEW 2:13-23

Click [HERE](#) for more information

2023 ADVENT CALENDAR

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11

12:00PM - COCOA & COOKIES (COURTYARD)

with Community On The Rise Selling #5 Recycled Plastic Gifts

4:00PM - BEERS & CAROLS (GHOST TRAIN BREWING)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18

11:00AM - 150TH CELEBRATION WORSHIP SERVICE (SANCTUARY)

featuring the FUMC Sanctuary Choir with Chamber Orchestra in the Alabama premiere of Elaine Hagenberg's Advent choral work *Illuminare*

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21

6:00PM - LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE (SANCTUARY)

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24

4:00PM - CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE (THE LOFT)

6:00PM - CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE (SANCTUARY)

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25

10:00AM - CHRISTMAS BRUNCH & SERVICE (CHAPEL & PARLOR)



BEEERS AND CAROLS

We hope you are making plans to join us at Ghost Train Brewing (3501 1st Ave S) on **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11** at **4:00PM** for a night of beers and carols! We'll be led in song by our church musicians in everyone's favorite Christmas carols. In addition to Ghost Train's variety of brews, there will be spiked hot cocoa, cider, and non-alcoholic holiday beverages. An ugly Christmas sweater or festive outfit is encouraged but not required. All age are welcome and we can't wait to see you there!



COCOA & COOKIES

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11 AFTER WORSHIP IN THE COURTYARD

Our CityKids are baking/buying delicious treats so you can create a to-go box or grab a cookie after worship. We will accept donations for the yummy goodies with all proceeds going to Community on the Rise and our 12/25 offering, supporting their WHOLE program.

Community on the Rise will also sell their ornaments, gifts, and jewelry in the Courtyard. We invite you to grab some gifts for your loved ones while you sip your cocoa!

ILLUMINARE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18 IN THE SANCTUARY

In Sanctuary worship on the fourth Sunday of Advent, the Chancel Choir will join with a twelve-piece chamber orchestra to present the Alabama premiere of Elaine Hagenberg's five-movement work, *Illuminare*.

With texts in Latin from Scripture and the Saints, the piece takes us through a season of beauty and goodness that has been disrupted by darkness and confusion. But as Light gradually returns, hope is restored, illuminating our future and guiding us in peace. *Illuminare* is a wonderful piece to move us from Advent into Christmas and our first major work with orchestra since we returned to in-person worship in 2021. We hope you'll make plans to join us in the Sanctuary on Sunday, December 18.

LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21, 6:00PM

ONE OF OUR FIRST CHURCH TRADITIONS IS TO HOST A LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE ON THE NIGHT OF THE WINTER SOLSTICE, THE LONGEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR. DURING THIS SERVICE WE LEAN INTO OUR PRIORITY OF PRACTICING AUTHENTICITY BY PROVIDING SACRED SPACE TO NAME OUR GRIEF AND SADNESS. WE RECOGNIZE THAT MANY TIMES THE JOY AND EXPECTATION OF CHRISTMAS OVERSHADOW THE PAIN, GRIEF, AND HURT THAT WE ARE EXPERIENCING IN OUR LIVES. YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN US IN THE SANCTUARY AT 6:00PM ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21 AS WE COME TOGETHER TO MARK OUR PAIN AND SORROW ON THE LONGEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR.

PROJECT 12.25

This year First Church is going to be partnering with **Community on the Rise** to ensure the best kind of Christmas gift we can give - one that is transformational - a home and a salary! We invite you to make your donation today and give it is a Christmas gift to someone you love.



Click [HERE](#) to learn more.

POINSETTIAS IN WORSHIP

YOU ARE INVITED TO PLACE A POINSETTIA IN MEMORY OR IN HONOR OF A LOVED ONE TO ADORN OUR WORSHIP SPACE ON CHRISTMAS EVE. EACH POINSETTIA IS \$12.50 AND MUST BE ORDERED BY SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18. YOU ARE INVITED TO TAKE YOUR POINSETTIA HOME WITH YOU AT THE CONCLUSION OF WORSHIP. CLICK [HERE](#) TO PLACE YOUR ORDER NOW.

Christmas Eve

Candlelight Service

4:00PM IN THE LOFT
6:00PM IN THE SANCTUARY

CLICK [HERE](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION.

CHRISTMAS BRUNCH & WORSHIP

Come join your church family on Christmas morning at 10:00am in the Parlor for coffee and a potluck brunch as we share together the joy of Christmas. At 10:30am we will move to the Chapel for a time of singing, prayer, and reflection as we wonder together at the mystery of Jesus' birth.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25 | 10:00AM - 11:00AM

NO NURSERY WILL BE AVAILABLE - WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO WORSHIP AS A FAMILY.

C H U R C H W I D E R E T R E A T
February 10-12, 2023 at Camp McDowell



cultivate

SEARCHING FOR WISDOM, CONNECTION, AND PEACE

Our annual church-wide retreat is one of the most significant times to build community and make connections - not to mention grow spiritually. Throughout the weekend, we'll gather together in group sessions for times of learning as well as opportunities for fun and community. Childcare and children's Sprouts Camp will be offered during the learning sessions for ages 12 weeks through 5th grade. Youth, though included in the learning sessions, will have opportunities to gather together as well during the weekend.

Register now by clicking [HERE](#).

Wednesday Night **DINNER & PROGRAMMING**

We are excited to offer a new Wednesday night opportunity that will begin Wednesday, January 11 and run through Wednesday, February 22. This opportunity will invite us to build connection with others, engage spiritually, enjoy a delicious meal (that we don't have to prepare), and grow our church family.

Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the return of Wednesday Nights at First Church.

STORIES FROM

150 YEARS

A FIRST CHURCH STORY OF QUIET POWER AND LONG-LASTING IMPACT

BY HANNA SCHOCK

**Ms. Gibson had been near me and around me,
and I did not know it!** -Elaine Genard



Elaine gladly left Prattville, AL in 1963 at age 17 with less than \$50. Her dream was to live in Birmingham and earn enough money to attend college. With great admiration, Elaine spoke of Miss Gibson, Director of the YW, who bent YW rules, allowing Elaine to rent a room despite her being too young and unemployed. Unsurprisingly to me, Elaine described Ethel Gibson as “the first woman of power I had encountered. But Ms. Gibson led with quiet power.” I knew “quiet power” to be a perfect phrase for Ethel, who has had a lasting impact on me and my faith journey throughout my time at our church. I told Elaine her “Ms. Gibson,” had likely just worshiped in the sanctuary next door as she had for many decades. Elaine became visibly emotional.

Click [HERE](#) to read the full story.

STARTING IN JANUARY

AWAKENINGS

NEW ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

9:45 AM IN THE FIRESIDE ROOM IN THE EDUCATION BUILDING

AWAKENINGS: Raising Consciousness through Curious Compassionate Community, is a new intergenerational Sunday School class beginning in the new year. Each week will be an interactive conversation on what Jesus described as essential to awakened human relationships: Justice - Mercy - Faith. Together - through personal story, the inspiration of scripture, the enneagram of spirituality, and more - we will help each other do the ongoing inner consciousness work that leads to more awakened action in our personal relationships and in our wider communities of influence.

You are invited to join hosts/facilitators Jessica Yarbrough and Erika Jobes, and Carie and Art Wimberly, to help begin the conversation on Sunday mornings at 9:45am beginning Sunday, January 8. A reminder that nursery care is available during the Sunday School hour for anyone who needs it. For more information please email Art at: art@thrivebham.com or Jessica at: jessicay731@gmail.com

YOUTH MINISTRY

A T F I R S T C H U R C H

NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL SERIES

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4 AT 9:45AM

WE WILL BEGIN A NEW SERIES CALLED "MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ME"

YOUTH PAJAMA CHRISTMAS PARTY

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18 FROM 4:00PM - 6:30PM IN THE YOUTH ROOM

JOIN US FOR FOOD, GAMES, AND SO MUCH MORE!

CITY KIDS UPDATES

12.4

THIS COULD GET UGLY

5:00PM-7:00PM | CRISTIN'S HOUSE

CityKids and Student Ministry will combine for a holiday event of FUN! Wear your ugliest holiday sweater to paint a canvas craft, decorate cookies, and eat pizza.

12.11

CITYKIDS SING IN WORSHIP

11:00AM | IN THE SANCTUARY

All kids ages 2 through 5th grade are invited to meet in the Wedding Room at 10:45am prior to worship to process in and help open worship in song.

12.18

THE ATRIUM - ADVENT JOY

10:00AM | ALABAMA THEATRE ROOM

All kids ages 2 through 5th grade are invited to a multi-sensory exploration with an Advent Lesson and special treat.

12.21

BABY RAVE

9:00AM | IN THE LOFT

Join us as we sing our favorite Christmas songs, dance with jingle bells, and listen to a story. While this is geared toward our younger friends, all ages are invited.

12.21

JUMPING HOLIDAY BASH

10:00AM-12:00PM | IN THE COURTYARD

Join us following the Baby Rave for a bounce house extravaganza!

12.21

PARENTS AFTERNOON OUT

12:00PM-4:00PM | CITYKIDS WING

Adults, register [HERE](#) to let your kids stick around to have an afternoon of fun for friends ages 1yr- 5th grade. Cost is \$10/person and we'll serve lunch!

For more information about any of these events, reach out to our Children's Minister, Cristin Dedmon at Cristin@firstchurchbhm.com.

FIRST CHURCH

GARDEN CLUB

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE GARDEN CLUB ON WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14 FOR A PROGRAM TITLED “LOOKING FOR LIGHT” LED BY FIRST CHURCH MEMBER JOHN ALFORD. DURING OUR TIME TOGETHER WE WILL TALK ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF LIGHT IN PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE WAY IN WHICH BAD LIGHT CAN RUIN EVEN THE MOST PERFECT SCENE. RESERVATIONS FOR LUNCH CAN BE MADE BY CONTACTING PJ HESTER AT PJCARDENHESTER@AOL.COM. BE SURE TO ALSO SAVE THE DATES FOR OUR SPRING GATHERINGS – MARCH 15 AND MAY 17.

The Amazon Smile logo features the word "amazon" in black and "smile" in orange. A curved orange arrow points from the end of "amazon" to the start of "smile".

amazon smile

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!

AS WE SEEK TO BE AN OPEN PLACE FOR ALL

MY PRAYER FOR FIRST CHURCH IS:

May God's love continue to indwell and be perfected by First Church. May we have the courage to face our fears and doubts and continue loving each other in the uncertainty. May we dare to bring peace and comfort to our communities as God has brought peace and comfort to us.

- Ryl Sahawneh

I pray that at First Church we continue to be a place where all feel welcomed, valued, and included. That we continue to ask hard questions while seeking the answer through the Gospel.

- Hannah Green

We pray that all may grow in deep community and move to a place of spiritual connection with each other and with God.

- Wil and Cristin Dedmon

We continue to reflect God's love in the way we serve and welcome all people.

- Ann Pickens

It will continue to be a beacon welcoming those who need a fresh start with a church that sees and loves their full selves and a true home for our families to grow their roots deep.

- Philip and Danielle Gibson

Continue to reach out to the community as a place of love and hope for all God's people.

- Charlie and Emily Vaughn



GIFTS RECEIVED BY THE CHURCH

TO THE MEMORIAL FUND

IN MEMORY OF ANN JACKSON

From Geneva Blackburn
From Eli Capilouto

IN MEMORY OF CHARLIE POWELL

From Brian and Angel Garrett

IN MEMORY OF JEAN MALONE

From Brian and Angel Garrett

IN MEMORY OF MARIAN DREHER LEWIS

From Dale Miller
From Sandra Killion

IN MEMORY OF ROBERT EDWARDS

From The Ecclesia-Wingard Class

IN MEMORY OF RAY GRANT

From Alton Pope

TO THE MUSIC FUND

IN MEMORY OF JEAN MALONE

From The Ecclesia-Wingard Class
From Larry Ward
From Lyn Grant

IN MEMORY OF JOHN HOLT

From Lyn Grant

IN MEMORY OF LARRY VINES

From Scott and Judee Evans

IN MEMORY OF DENNY WOODS

From Marsha Robins

TO UMCOR

IN MEMORY OF LARRY VINES

From Lyn Grant
From William Brown and SAMRC
From Frances Bertella

TO THE LIVING CHURCH FUND

IN HONOR OF ANDY KEITH

From Rebecca, Donovan, and Jim

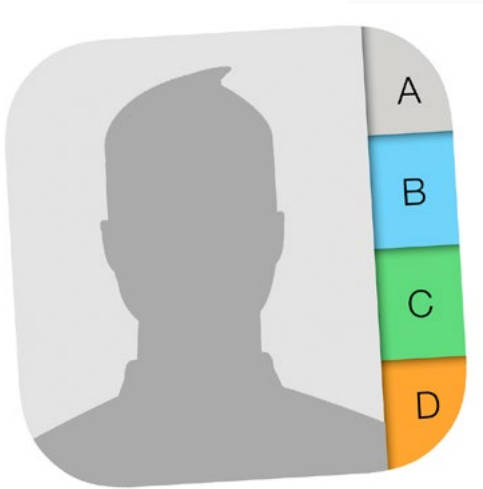
TO PARLOR RENOVATIONS

IN MEMORY OF MARIAN LEWIS, SARAH CLARK, JUNE MCAFEE, AND HELEN CHILDERS

From The AYLWIN Club

A NEW CASKET PALL WAS GIFTED **IN LOVING MEMORY OF CARL AND MARIAN DREHER**

From The Dreher Family



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.

OUR CALENDAR

SUNDAY

9:00am: Virtual Live Stream Service

9:45am: Sunday School

11:00am: Loft & Sanctuary In Person Worship

TUESDAY

7:00pm: Converge Young Adults

WEDNESDAY

6:00pm: Student Ministry

6:30pm: Chancel Choir

Click [HERE](#) to view our monthly calendar.

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 Children: Cristin Dedmon	Cristin@firstchurchbhm.com
Minister of Community Engagement: Katherine Mullen	Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com
Interim Minister of Youth: Ashley Hess	Youth@firstchurchbhm.com
Organist: Richard Byrd	Richard@firstchurchbhm.com
Design: Blake Hobbs	Blake@firstchurchbhm.com
Minister of Music: 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
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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