

JANUARY 2024

# CONNECTIONS

A group of children are gathered around a church altar, celebrating. Several children are dressed as angels in white robes with large, translucent wings. One child in the foreground is wearing a black and white cow costume with a large headpiece. The children are clapping and looking towards the camera. The background shows other children in white robes, some with silver tinsel headbands. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an indoor church setting.

**CELEBRATING  
NEW BEGINNINGS**



# Blessing Of Our Babies

Our church is growing and, thankfully, that means we have more and more babies in our nursery! We hope you will join us in worship on **SUNDAY, JANUARY 7** to meet our newest friends with our Blessing of our Babies in both the Loft and Sanctuary services.

## ADVENT DECORATIONS

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 7 FOLLOWING WORSHIP**

Please stay briefly after worship on Sunday, January 7 to help take down our beautiful Advent decorations across our campus as we secure them for next year. Feel free to bring your lunch or grab something after we finish putting everything away.

# HOT TAKES

## JANUARY SERMON SERIES

*Hot Ones* is an American YouTube series created by Chris Schonberger and hosted by Sean Evans. It is a wildly popular show that has run for over 23 seasons. The premise of the show is that as celebrities eat increasingly hotter wings, they are asked increasingly deeper and more difficult questions. In this sermon series, we will delve into deep and tough questions of our Christian faith. Questions that may be a bit spicy and cause us to metaphorically sweat.

Each week we will offer our best thoughts and answers to what we believe are “hot takes” on the subject matter. In this series we hope to debunk these “hot takes” on our faith when it comes to deeply complex topics like Evangelism, the Trinity, the Christ, and Eternity. We hope you will join us as we share a fresh take on life-giving and vital Christian doctrine. You are invited to join us to share our view on these “hot takes.”

1.14 **EVANGELISM**

MARK 16:12-18, MATTHEW 28:16-20

1.28 **THE CHRIST**

MATTHEW 5-7

1.21 **THE TRINITY**

JOHN 1:1-5, MATTHEW 3:16-17, HEBREWS 1:1-4

2.4 **ETERNITY**

JOHN 3:1-21, JOHN 10:1-19



# Wednesday Night **DINNER & PROGRAMMING**

We are excited to bring back Wednesday Night Dinner and Programming on Wednesday, January 10. This next round of dinners will run through Wednesday, April 24. During this time around the table and in small groups we are able to build deeper connections, engage spiritually, enjoy a delicious meal, and grow our church family. We hope you will make plans (and reservations!) to join us. Click [HERE](#) to make your dinner reservations now. As a reminder, all meal reservations are due the Monday prior by 12:00pm

In addition to dinners, January brings the launch of a new round of small groups. Click [HERE](#) to read more about our January small group offerings and age-level opportunities. We encourage you to sign up ahead of time so that we can prepare for the number of participants in each space and communicate any necessary information before you arrive.

## **GRIEF GROUP**

WEDNESDAYS, BEGINNING JANUARY 10 - FEBRUARY 7 FROM 6:00PM - 7:00PM

During our first round of small groups we will offer a grief group led by Dr. Catherine Clayton Prince and Rev. Stephanie York Arnold. This group 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 the loss of someone they love and want to courageously come together for community, connection, closeness, and compassion. Please click [HERE](#) to fill out the registration form to participate.



# TRIVIA NIGHT

**JANUARY 10** AT **6:00PM** IN **THE LOFT**

Join us for our first Wednesday night of the new year as we celebrate with another round of Trivia! On Wednesday, January 10 we'll gather after dinner in the Loft to play several rounds of trivia led by our wonderful game hosts. Everyone will be divided into groups and work as a team to play and win prizes. No registration is required for trivia and it is free to play! Youth are invited to join the fun and programming for children and nursery will take place as usual.

## CHILDREN & FAMILY MINISTER JOB SEARCH

Over the last decade First Church has grown our Children's Ministry to be one that is now full of infants, preschoolers, and elementary age children. The Children and Family Minister is a person who has a deep love for children, is a teacher, an includer, and a creative team builder. They must have a deep love of God, a passion for developing the faith of children, and a call to help people see they belong and are loved as they are. Click [HERE](#) for the job description that you are invited to share with others.



2024 CHURCHWIDE RETREAT

# PARADOX

WHEN LOSS IS GAIN

**FEBRUARY 9 – 11 AT CAMP MCDOWELL**

Our "Paradox" retreat is approaching quickly and we hope you will make plans to join us! Our annual church-wide retreat is one of the most significant times to build community and make connections – not to mention grow spiritually. Childcare and children's recreational options will be available for kids from preschool through elementary. Youth will also have some of their own programming as well as participation in select larger group sessions.

Click [HERE](#) to read more and see the schedule for the weekend.

Please note that we are asking everyone to make sure their balance is paid in full by February 1. Contact Katherine Mullen at [Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com](mailto:Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com) to inquire about your remaining balance, request scholarship funds, or to find out more information.

# PROJECT 12.25



We want to express our deepest appreciation for the incredible generosity and kindness you demonstrated through your heartfelt contributions to Project 12/25. Your support played a pivotal role in transforming the holiday season for over 200 families, allowing them to provide a spectacular Christmas for their children.

The impact of your generosity goes beyond monetary value; it is a testament to the warmth and compassion within our community. The collective effort of individuals like you resulted in the collection of over \$4,000 and a room full of heartfelt gifts.

We are grateful for your part in making Project 12/25 a resounding success. Thank you once again for being a beacon of hope and joy during this festive season.

A VISIT TO THE  
**EQUAL  
JUSTICE  
INITIATIVE**  
SATURDAY, JANUARY 27

You are invited to join us on a journey of enlightenment and reflection at the Legacy Museum in Montgomery. On Saturday, January 27, let the spirit of learning blossom as we gather at the church at 8:30am for a shared carpool adventure. Together, let us cultivate a community of understanding and compassion through this eye-opening educational experience. We eagerly anticipate your attendance, as we embrace the richness of a multi-generational trip, uniting us in shared wisdom and knowledge. Click [HERE](#) to register for the event.



# Getting To **KNOW US** *Dinner*

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 6:00PM**

If you've been visiting with us at First Church in recent weeks or months you are invited to join us for our next Getting to Know Us Dinner on Thursday, January 25 at 6:00pm in the Large Dining Room. This is an opportunity to enjoy a meal around the table and spend time helping us get to know more about you as well as learning more about First Church. Childcare will be available with a reservation. Click [HERE](#) to register now.



**FIRST  
CHURCH**

**101**

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28 FOLLOWING WORSHIP

On Sunday, January 28 we will host First Church 101 after worship. A light lunch will be offered before we move into our time of learning and conversation. During our time together we will share more about United Methodist theology, polity, and Social Principles as well as what membership means at First Church and ways to find deeper connection and community. Childcare will be available with a reservation.

CLICK [HERE](#) TO REGISTER NOW.



AN INVITATION TO JOIN

# Circle 1

In March of 2022 the United Methodist Women (UMW) changed their name to United Women of Faith (UWF). Circle One is a group of women at First Church that has been a part of UMW for many years and is now part of UWF. The purpose of UWF is to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ, to develop creative, supportive fellowship, and to participate in the global ministries of the church.

In the past, Circle One has held bake sales, salad luncheons, and various other fundraising projects for missions. In the last few years, we have been in charge of running the Cake Walk at the Fall Festival, with all proceeds going to missions. We also strive to be a group in which we get to know one another and serve as support for each other. If you are interested in this kind of group dynamic, we would like to invite you to our next event on Friday, January 26 at 6:00pm at the home of Jill Rogers. We will be having dinner together and make Valentine's cards to send to our homebound church members. We would love for you to come and join us...all are welcome! Please contact Jill Rogers at (205)873-0133 for more information or to let her know you plan to be there.

**YOUTH**

**SUNDAY**

**SCHOOL**

BEGINNING ON **SUNDAY, JANUARY 21** STUDENTS ARE INVITED TO JOIN A TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY DURING SUNDAY SCHOOL FROM 9:45AM – 10:45AM AS WE BEGIN OUR CONFIRMATION SERIES "THIS IS MY FAITH." WE WILL DIVE INTO THE HEART OF OUR FAITH AS WE LOOK AT STORIES FROM THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS, UNRAVEL THE TAPESTRY OF THE EARLY CHURCH, AND EXPLORE THE PRIORITIES AND VALUES OF FIRST CHURCH. CONFIRMATION IS OPEN TO ANY STUDENT 6TH-12TH GRADE. IT IS A "CONFIRMING" OF GOD'S LOVE IN ONE'S LIFE, AS WELL AS CONFIRMING ONE'S COMMITMENT TO THE CHURCH THROUGH THE OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN IN MEMBERSHIP AT ITS CONCLUSION.

# AS WE SEEK TO BE AN OPEN PLACE FOR ALL

*MY PRAYER FOR FIRST CHURCH IS:*

***The work that the church is doing for ALL people continues so the church can grow and the world can see God is love.***

*- Glen Mackey*

***That it may always stay true to its values, being a safe place for so many who may have otherwise strayed from their faith.***

*- Ian Fleming*

***That we continue to work together to create a world where all people MATTER without having to earn the right to matter, and that we support each other in figuring out how to best live out that mission both within the congregation and in our lives. That we continue to create a place where people feel comfortable bringing their authentic, diverse selves each week with realness and vulnerability and promote diving into the hard things so that we are able to continually grow.***

*- Erika Boeing*

***That we stay loyal to our mission and goals as we go through the United Methodist breakup.***

*- Stan and Jackie Brown*





# GIFTS RECEIVED BY THE CHURCH

## TO THE MEMORIAL FUND

**IN MEMORY OF EVELYN HARDY**

FROM BERNIE HARDY

**IN MEMORY OF PEGGY WEST**

FROM DAVID AND TERRI GLASGOW

FROM LYN GRANT

FROM MARSHA ROBINS

## TO THE MUSIC FUND

**IN MEMORY OF PEGGY WEST**

FROM LARRY WARD

# OUR CALENDAR

## WEDNESDAYS

5:00pm: Dinner

5:30pm: Nursery Open

6:00pm: Small Group Programming

6:30pm: Choir

## SUNDAYS

9:00am: Virtual Live Stream Service

9:45am: Sunday School

11:00am: Loft & Sanctuary In Person Worship

[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 Community Engagement: Katherine Mullen .....	Katherine@firstchurchbhm.com
Minister of Youth & Justice: Ashley Hess .....	Ashley@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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